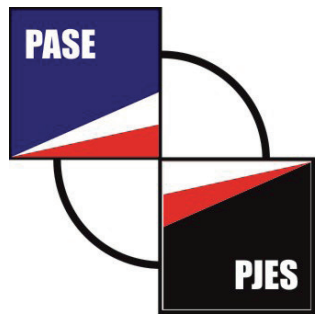

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Contents

From the Editor

The editorial board of the *Polish Journal of English Studies* welcomes you all to the second issue of our tenth anniversary volume. The present issue was originally inspired by the conference *A Passage to India - Centenary Revaluations*, which took place in June 2024 in Olsztyn, celebrating the centenary of E. M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India*. The conference was an inspiration for us, however, we decided against publishing a volume of conference proceedings and issued an open call for papers to all Forsterian scholars, inviting submissions dealing with all Forster's works and aspects of his literary oeuvre.

The resulting selection is impressively varied, the eight included papers cover major part of Forster's oeuvre from his debut novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* to the last one published in his lifetime, *A Passage to India*. We have supplemented it with a novelty in our journal, a short dramatic piece, the libretto of an opera scene inspired by the latter novel, the work of the distinguished librettist Claudia Stevens. You will also find in the volume six reviews of recently published books mostly related to Forster, and a conference report.

The papers prove on the one hand that the works of Forster are read with interest by scholars all over the world - if we include the book reviewers, the authors of the present volume represent nine nations - and of all stages of academic career. We have here seasoned Forsterians, retired university professors joining forces with young scholars preparing their PhD dissertations. For some of them it is their debut in an international scholarly journal. We hope it will be the beginning of illustrious academic careers.

The *Polish Journal of English Studies* is the official journal of the Polish Association for the Study of English. It is an honour for us but this honour sometimes comes with very sad duties. We want to say goodbye to Ms Elżbieta Fołtyńska, our longtime friend and the secretary of the Association. We will all miss her dearly and you can find recollections of her friends and colleagues in the present volume.

On an even more personal note, I would like to end this brief introduction by expressing my boundless gratitude to all those involved in the edition of our journal since 2015. I want to thank my co-editor-in-chief during the first seven years of our activities, Prof. Jacek Fabiszak, the heads of our sections, our managing editors Dr Weronika Szemińska and Dr Anna Wołosz-Sosnowska, the language editor Dr Marcin Tereszewski and the other members of our expanding language edition team, our technical editors Dr Łukasz Karpiński and

Dr Marcin Klag, the board of the PASE, the members of the advisory board, numerous reviewers, and all those who were with us through the years including all the scholars who have submitted their work for publication without whom the journal would not exist. Last but not least, I would like to thank all the readers whose continued interest makes our work a worthy enterprise.

The present volume of the *Polish Journal of English Studies* closes the tenth year of our activities. Our work is done now but only temporarily, when the celebrations end we will be again looking forward to new submissions on any subject within the English Studies, which will be considered for publication in 2025.

Krzysztof Fordoński
Editor-in-chief of the *Polish Journal of English Studies*

Beyond the Closed Circuit of Modern Tourism: "Wayfaring" and Ecological Connectedness in E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View*.

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Abstract: This article examines how E. M. Forster transcends the closed experiential circuit of modern tourism by envisioning intimate connections with people and place that emerge through the act of wayfaring. Lucy Honeychurch, initially confined within the homogeneity of English tourists and their limited experiences, temporarily breaks free by getting lost and wandering through the unfamiliar places of Florence. In Forster's 1908 novel, the loss of guidance, information, and orientation ironically leads to unexpected discoveries and intimate relations, resonating Tim Ingold's notion of "wayfaring"—an accidental and spontaneous form of movement that fosters interconnectedness. For instance, Lucy's loss of her Baedeker guidebook—emblematic of the English tourists' predetermined experience—gives rise to her newfound sense of autonomy as she navigates the world relatively independently. Her impulsive wandering into the Piazza Signoria also draws her into an intimate yet unsettling engagement with the local people and place, destabilizing yet expanding her perception of self and world. Forster's exploration of wayfaring as an alternative mode of travel, and, by extension, of being, culminates in his reimagining of the Italian landscape as a "fluid space," where rigid boundaries between entities dissolve. The trope of water used to represent the Fiesole hills transforms the landscape into a site of flux and intimacy, deepening Lucy's connection with both the natural world and George Emerson.

Keywords: Modern Tourism, Wayfaring, Fluid Space, Ecological Connectedness, E. M. Forster

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Introduction

Forster embarked on an Italian tour in October 1901 with his mother, Alice Clara Whichelo, better known as Lily, after his graduation from Cambridge. Forster's hope was to break away from the middle-class English suburban environment that had constrained him, seeking distance from its values and norms. However, Forster soon discovered himself confined within a closed circuit of English tourists, ironically returning to the very society he had come from. Simultaneously, the prospect of interacting with new people and place on his own terms seemed like a distant ideal. Forster's Italian tour consisted of a series of pensions and hotels occupied by tourists like himself and his mother. One of the hotels where Forster stayed "seemed entirely inhabited by elderly English ladies," making Forster feel as if "he might have been back in Tunbridge Wells" (Furbank 1977, 82). This homogeneous community of English tourists—whose overseas experience is marked by shallowness, passivity, and parochialism—is exemplified by the fictional tourists at the Pensione Bertolini in *A Room with a View*, a place so full of English people that Lucy feels "[i]t might be London" (Forster 2012, 3).

In addition, a systematized form of modern tourism, often exemplified by the Baedeker guidebook, restricts the freedom and autonomy of tourists. As James Michael Buzard notes, "the guidebook had, by Forster's time, already come to stigmatize its bearer in contrast to all that was indigenous, authentic, and spontaneous" by "offer[ing] the structured freedom of choosing their itineraries from within the range of choices covered by Baedeker and Murray" (Buzard 1988, 155). More often than not, Forster found himself traveling within this circumscribed circle, feeling that he merely saw what he already knew: "Forster was filled with the pleasure of recognition, … [but also with] some disappointment at the lack of surprise … for he felt 'that I know it well already'. He had done his homework and now 'nothing comes as a surprise'" (Lago 1995, 16). The combination of the systematized tourism and Forster's preparation for the tour encumbers Forster to be a kind of tourist differing from others, going off the beaten track. Forster's own evaluation of his first Italian trip as "a very timid outing" (Furbank 1977, 96) indicates the difficulty he encountered in diverging from the preestablished course to experience new things and establish fresh connections. Regarding Forster's limited experience as a tourist, Furbank writes: "neither he nor his mother had made any Italian friends, nor had they once entered an Italian home; at most they had struck up acquaintance with

an occasional Italian hotel guest or kindly museum-attendant or stationmaster" (Furbank 1977, 96). From his own detached relationship with Italian people and places, Forster experienced firsthand "the extensive power of the guidebooks in determining the kinds of experiences tourists will have at literally every step" (Buzard 1988, 157).

A Room with a View registers the author's dilemma as an English tourist in Italy, his desire to escape yet being caught in the closed experiential limit of English tourists. Like Forster, the novel's protagonist, Lucy Honeychurch, finds the systematic tourism and guidebook restricting, though she initially identifies as a tourist herself. Despite her desire to transgress and experience what she would consider genuine, her sense of the lack of meaningful events is frustratingly profound: "Here and there a restriction annoyed her particularly, and she would transgress it" but "[n]othing ever happens to [her]" (Forster 2012, 41). Her wandering into the Piazza Signoria, however, inadvertently opens the door to an event: a murder between two arguing Italians, which alters the course of events in an unexpected way. This sequence exemplifies a recurring pattern in the Italian part of the novel: Lucy's unplanned wandering and unexpected encounter with the foreign serve to puncture the closed circuit of the tourist experience, opening possibilities of new relations and experiences. This paper, concentrating on Part I of the novel, seeks to examine the ways in which Lucy's accidental wandering contributes to a temporary escape from the confined tourist experience.

This exploration draws upon Tim Ingold's notion of "wayfaring," a way of experiencing and interacting with the world in an open and spontaneous manner. Ingold, an influential anthropologist, has published numerous seminal works, including *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, and Description* (2011) and *Lines: A Brief History* (2007), both of which explore his idea on what it means to *be* as a living organism in a dynamic and diverse world. "Wayfaring," he argues, is an open and organic mode of being—one that is always in motion and interwoven with the "meshwork" of the world, fostering a vision of cohabitation (Ingold 2011, 148). In contrast, "transport," which closely resembles the system of modern tourism, entails mere existence and movement, devoid of any meaningful connection to the surroundings (Ingold 2011, 150). The fields Ingold's intellectual exploration traverses—ecology, sociology, history, music, and poetry— make his ideas particularly relevant for interdisciplinary studies, including literary analysis. Indeed, several literary scholars have examined Forster's work

through Ingold's vision of the world, highlighting their shared concerns with humanity, materiality, modernity, and ecology. Notably, Nour Dakkak analyzes the dynamic relationship between the human and nonhuman world in Forster's work—the "multisensory interactions between [Forster's] characters and the material textures of the earth"—through the lens of Ingold's anthropological insights and his focus on walking as an embodied engagement (Dakkak 2024, 13). This paper similarly examines the embodied interaction between human and nature through walking. But I specifically situate this within the context of modern tourism, arguing that Lucy's "wayfaring" invites chances, coincidences, and unexpected actions, which are relatively free of a preestablished route of movement, thus allowing room for digressions and detours as well as getting lost and misdirection. Forster scrutinizes practices like wandering, getting lost, and experiencing the landscape, as acts of transgression, forming a thread of escape from and rebellion against the systematized tourism.

Wandering Around, Getting Lost, and "Wayfaring"

While *A Room with a View* is a two-part novel with the first part set in Italy and the second part in the English countryside of Surrey, this paper places its focus on the Italian section of the text to examine the wayfaring's transgressive potential in the context of modern tourism. In Part I, the narrative unfolds predominantly within a sequence of enclosed spaces. Opening with the dialogue among English tourists, including Lucy and the Emersons, within the Pensione Bertolini, the text frequently shows its characters chatting, arguing, or having tea and food within various interiors like pensions, churches, or coaches *en route* to a picnic. Still, Forster explores the power of wayfaring as an agency of unexpected encounters and interactions by structuring the novel in an alternating pattern of interiors and exteriors. While the odd-numbered chapters in Part I mostly take place inside, the even-numbered ones show Lucy's getting lost and wandering around on the unfamiliar streets of Florence and in the countryside nearby, breaking out of her confines.

In Chapter 2, "In Santa Croce with No Baedeker," Forster portrays Lucy's getting lost and wandering around as a way out of her comfort zone. By using the trope of "being lost" in a double sense—a situation in which Lucy gets lost on her way to Santa Croce and loses her Baedeker upon arrival—Forster severs the tie that binds Lucy to the conventional route of tourists prescribed

by guidebooks. Getting lost also enables Lucy to navigate her path on her own and become more attentive to the outside world. Inexperienced, Lucy initially feels neither excitement nor freedom, but a sense of disorientation and dispiritedness: "Accordingly they drifted through a series of those grey-brown streets, neither commodious nor picturesque ... Lucy soon lost interest in the discontent of Lady Louisa, and became discontented herself." (Forster 2012, 19). When she finds herself without her Baedeker, her feeling is equivalent to that of getting lost: "Tears of indignation came to Lucy's eyes … partly because [Miss Lavish] had taken her Baedeker. How could she find her way home? How could she find her way about in Santa Croce? Her first morning was ruined" (Forster 2012, 20).

One might be tempted to read Lucy's misadventure in the light of Forster's biographical cues. The author was notoriously forgetful during his Italian tour, as Wendy Moffat describes: Forster "missed trains, misread directions, lost his gloves, mislaid guidebooks, left maps behind at every stop. Each day [Forster and his mother's] progress unraveled as they sought to retrieve items misplaced hours before" (Moffat 2010, 59). Nonetheless, Forster goes beyond a straightforward reflection of his experiences by conceptualizing his mistake-ridden way of traveling as a means to become open to the outside world as opposed to the preplanned way of traveling that keeps a tourist within the beaten track and impervious to the external world. Forster's conceptualization of getting lost and wandering around can be situated in the binary opposition between openness and closedness that the novel is built upon, as it is "structured throughout on intricately linked antitheses – rooms/views, inside/outside, medieval/classical, the ascetic/the fruitful, dark/light, lies/truth, earth/sky, blood/water" (Herz 2007, 139). The tension arising from the clash of opposing dichotomy observable in its title itself, as "a room" represents a modern, individual self—interior and enclosed—while "a view," or "a window" serves as an avenue to be open to and connected with the world outside, the world of others. I would like to extend this Forsterian dichotomy by aligning the experiences of wandering and getting lost with the latter set of values—views, outside, the fruitful, light, and truth—as these experiences offer tourists opportunities to interact with the outside world, gain new perspectives, and undergo moments of enlightenment, where truth briefly reveals itself.

Chapter 2 exemplifies this Forsterian opposition. Its opening signals Lucy's forthcoming encounter with the external world through the image of open eyes and the action of opening windows: "It was pleasant to wake up in Florence, to open the eyes upon a right bare room … It was pleasant, too, to, fling wide the

windows" (Forster 2012, 15). The following scene unfolds in a way that Lucy's wandering around and getting lost give rise to her exposure to new people and new places. Even though the experience of getting lost initially disorients the young and inexperienced Lucy, the act of navigating without guidance gradually generates the excitement of mapping and charting the place on her own: "Lucy … became discontented herself. For one ravishing moment Italy appeared. She stood in the Square of the Annunziata and saw in the living terracotta those divine babies whom no cheap reproduction can ever stale. … Lucy thought she had never seen anything more beautiful" (Forster 2012, 15). This disorienting movement disarms Lucy, prompting her to be attentive to the surroundings and appreciative of their beauty.

The way Forster portrays Lucy's unexpected amazement aligns with what Ingold theorizes as "astonishment" (Ingold 2011, 74). For Ingold, this astonishment, or "the sense of wonder," emerges from a receptiveness to the surrounding world, synonymous with "being able to *see*" the unnoticeable and/or "the perception of a world undergoing continuous birth" (Ingold 2011, 74). Ironically, Lucy's lack of geographical and historical knowledge about the place engenders this seed of "astonishment," enabling her to perceive the hidden beauty of the world around her—a beauty embodied, tellingly, in the image of "divine babies," which vividly represents this "world undergoing continuous birth" (Ingold 2011, 74). Ingold contrasts "the sense of wonder" with the sense of knowing; for him, knowledge restricts the opportunities for open and receptive interactions. Knowing, Ingold writes, is "to 'grasp' [the world] within a grid of concepts and categories," thus "[s]eeking closure rather than openness" (Ingold 2011, 75). Such observation corresponds to Forster's own "disappointment at the lack of surprise" caused by his over-preparation for and pre-knowledge about the Italian tour. Forster tries to counter this sense of disappointment by fictionalizing his travel and reimagining the experience of stepping outside structured travel.

The alternating pattern of wandering and discovering is repeated in the same chapter with Lucy's loss of Baedeker. Given that Baedeker symbolizes the systematized modern tourism, its absence signifies a lack of orientation in Lucy's tour, resulting in an intermixture of confusion and spontaneity:

> she entered the church depressed and humiliated … Of course, it must be a wonderful building. But how like a barn! And how very cold! ... She walked about disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic

> over monuments of uncertain authorship or date. There was no one even to tell her which, of all the sepulchral slabs that paved the nave and transepts, was the one that was really beautiful, the one that had been most praised by Mr Ruskin. Then the pernicious charm of Italy worked on her, and, instead of acquiring information, she began to be happy. (Forster 2012, 20-21)

In this passage, Forster shows the discordance between the tourist's preexisting knowledge and her immediate impression: while her knowledge tells her "it must be a wonderful building," Lucy's feeling says it is "like a barn". Forster further disassociates experience from knowledge, contrasting feeling "happy" from "acquiring information."

Lucy's loss of Baedeker and wandering in the Santa Croce exemplify how these experiences enable a tourist to step out of the conventional discourse of movement, knowledge, and tourism, and grow through the power of feeling and unmediated interaction with the surroundings. Lucy's initial confusion arises from her loss of her Baedeker guidebook and lack of information, preventing her from identifying which frescoes are by Giotto and which monuments are "most praised by Mr. Ruskin" (Forster 2021, 21). With wandering around without guidance, however, comes a greater sense of improvisational and navigational freedom so that Lucy becomes more attentive to the world surrounding her:

> She puzzled out Italian notices – the notice that forbade people to introduce dogs into the church – the notice that prayed people, in the interest of health and out of respect to the sacred edifice … not to spit. She watched the tourists: their noses were as red as their Baedekers … Advancing towards [the Machiavelli memorial] very slowly and from immense distances, they touched the stone with their fingers, with their handkerchiefs, with their heads, and then retreated. What could this mean? They did it again and again. Then Lucy realized that they had mistaken Machiavelli for some saint, and by continual contact with his shrine were hoping to acquire virtue. (Forster 2012, 21)

The details in the description of different types of notices and people's actions indicate a heightened level of attentiveness in Lucy. In addition, the narrator's

mocking portrayal of the other tourists with their noses "as red as their Baedekers" differentiates Lucy from those whose selfhood almost merge with their Baedekers. The remainder of the chapter shows how wandering around leads to her chance encounter with the Emersons, who emphasize the significance of an embodied feeling as a way of being alert and alive, thus questioning the intellectualism of Edwardian England. In the Santa Croce, Mr. Emerson tells Lucy: "How little, we feel, avails knowledge and technical cleverness against a man who truly feels!" (Forster 2012, 24). Throughout the novel, Forster explores the way that Lucy can feel more and know less, highlighting the pivotal role of unguided movements.

The transgressive quality of wandering around and getting lost in *A Room with a View* becomes clearer when viewed through the lens of Ingoldian "wayfaring." Like Forster's use of spontaneous movement as a means of being in the world and relating with it, Ingold's idea of "wayfaring" proposes the freely flowing movement as a fundamental way of inhabiting the world. This form of inhabitation goes beyond a mere passive existence on the surface of the world; instead, it involves an active participation in and interaction with the "flows" of the world: "By habitation [I mean that] [t]he inhabitant is rather one who participates from within in the very process of the world's continual coming into being and who, in laying a trail of life, contributes to its weave and texture" (Ingold 2007, 81).

Ingold's language in the passage above reflects his view of the world as a "meshwork"— including both human and nonhuman—in which "line[s]" of different organisms coexist and interweave with each other, resulting in an indistinguishable entanglement (Ingold 2011, 63). Wayfaring is a way of such entanglement, being part of and participating in the ever-moving meshwork, which materializes in an "embodied experience of [the] perambulatory movement" (Ingold 2011, 148) or "*going around* in an environment," (Ingold 2011,143). With the idea of "wayfaring," Ingold stresses the primacy of movement and openness in human perception of and relation with the world, and regards wandering around as one of the material embodiments of wayfaring (Ingold 2011, 75). This Ingoldian worldview of "wayfaring" and "meshwork" is eerily reminiscent of Mr. Emerson's remark that "all life is perhaps a knot, a tangle, a blemish in the eternal smoothness" (Forster 2012, 28). This shared perspective underscores the importance of mutual receptiveness and interconnectedness, depicted through the metaphor of a knotted texture/tapestry.

In contrast to the idea of "wayfaring," Ingold introduces "transport" as a mode of disconnected movement in which travelers are "carried across from a point of departure to a destination, rather than making their own way as they go along" (Ingold 2011, 17). Transport is "essentially destination-oriented" (Ingold 2011, 150), closing down the doors of interaction and interweaving with the world as a meshwork. Ingold regards the modern tourism as a prime example of transport, as modern tourists merely "[s]ki [m] across the surface of the country … to admire the view. The embodied experience of pedestrian movement was … pushed into the wings" (Ingold 2011, 38). The superficial nature of transport exemplified by the modern tourism also resonates with Mr. Beebe's observation of the English tourists: the tourists are "handed about like a parcel of goods from Venice to Florence, from Florence to Rome, living herded together in pensions or hotels, quite unconscious of anything that is outside Baedeker" (Forster 2012, 62).

From his own experience, Forster senses that the experience of traveling, or sightseeing, in the context of modern tourism is closer to the idea of "transport" than of "wayfaring". But he does not simply reflect in his work of fiction his sense of confinement within the discourse of tourism; instead, as Buzard argues, his fictional work registers a series of attempts "to investigate the conditions of existence within the discourse of tourism and the possibilities of circumventing or transcending the obstacles tourism places between the traveler/writer and the true understanding he seeks, both of himself and of the visited place" (Buzard 1988, 159). To Buzard's observation, I would like to add that Forster is particularly intrigued by the possibility of wandering around and getting lost as a material practice of "wayfaring." Such acts of wayfaring invite accidents and coincidences, bending the preplanned route of tourism and opening up possibilities of events and encounters. In addition, Forster does not portray Lucy as actively seeking for such opportunities to participate in the world; instead, the author provides his passive character with chances for wayfaring as an agency of her emotional growth and intimate experience with the outside world, thus questioning the closed circuit of modern tourism centered on acquiring information and seeing sights.

Chapter 4 marks a significant moment in Lucy's break from routine as she accidentally ventures into the unknown. Lucy's wandering is prompted by her conflicts with the values of the older English tourists, narrated as follows: "Lucy does not stand for the medieval lady [Charlotte] … Here and there a restriction annoyed her particularly, and she would transgress it … She would really like to do something of which her well-wishers disapproved. As she might not

go on the electric tram, she went to Alinari's shop" (Forster 2012, 41). Interestingly, Lucy chooses to wander around by herself, the act of transgression that "her well-wishers [would] disapprov[e]" while they would prefer "the circular tram" as a safer and more destination-oriented means of navigation. Lucy's choice reflects Forster's notion of wandering as a form of improvisatory wayfaring, contrasting with the modern machinery of the tram, which offers only a predetermined route. But Forster also acknowledges the difficulties of transgression tourists confront, because Lucy's first destination of the evening walk is the souvenir shop that would be visited by other tourists. Reading this scene, Buzard notes that that Lucy remains as a "passive witness" or "sightseer" as "her desires to break through the tourist's boundary manifest themselves in the purely visual terms of postcard, sightseeing, and souvenirs" (Buzard 1988, 164).

However, Lucy's wayfaring eventually leads to unexpected turns of events, disrupting the circumscribed circle of the tourist experience. The following sequence of Lucy's drifting into the Piazza Signoria, encountering a murder scene, and engaging with George Emerson, exposes her to the world unknown to her. The entrance to the square marks the threshold of Lucy's experiential limit, and her act of crossing it flings open "the gates of liberty [that] seemed still unopened" (Forster 2012, 41). In the square, Lucy witnesses two Italians arguing about a debt, a confrontation that escalates into in a murder, an event Lucy becomes intimately and physically involved:

> [Two Italians] sparred at each other, and one of them was hit lightly upon the chest. He frowned; he bent forwards Lucy with a look of interest, as if he had an important message for her. He opened his lips to deliver it, and a stream of red came out between them and trickled down his unshaven chin. That was all. A crowd rose out of the dusk. It hid this extraordinary man from her, and bore him away to the fountain. Mr George Emerson happened to be a few paces away, looking at her across the spot where the man had been. How very odd! Across something. Even as she caught sight of him he grew dim; the palace itself grew dim … and the sky fell with it. (Forster 2012, 42)

Although some rightly criticize this portrayal of the Italian for reproducing "the stereotypical image of the Italian as a fountain of uncontrollable and sudden

passions" (Buzard 1988, 163), Forster's emphasis also rests on Lucy's encounter and engagement with the unknown, which lies beyond the structured contours of typical tourist experiences. Lucy's wandering around offers a transgressive experience with the actualities of the city off the beaten path of the tourist route. It is Lucy's "wayfaring"—her improvisational and indeterminate line of movement—as opposed to the "transport" of the circular tram that exposes her to the series of unexpected events.

The quoted passage above is worth scrutiny, for it suggests key aspects of Lucy's transgressive wayfaring. First, Forster's representation of Lucy's wayfaring stresses the physical intimacy of her engagement, distinct from the experience of a distant witness. When Lucy becomes entangled in the murder, the victim leans towards her, pouring his blood on her body and postcards. The physicality and fluidity of the contact suggest that tourists' intimate relation with a new place and people can only be possible when it extends beyond the solid surface of the visual. It unfolds as an embodied saturation in the flow of otherness rather than as a detached observation of aestheticized images. In addition, Lucy's loss of her sight and consciousness implies that entanglement with others is not solely a visual or conscious process. This stands in contrast to the discourse of modern tourism, which often equates travel experience with "sightseeing," thereby prioritizing visual observation over the tourists' affective and embodied experiences. Similarly, Buzard reads this scene as emblematic of Forster's use of embodiment as a deep engagement in contrast to the shallowness of modern tourism: the "representation of foreign cultural authenticity by means of an irrepressible human body is a characteristic Forsterian act of metonymy: bodies assert themselves and their materiality throughout Forster's work, in opposition to the falsely spiritual and romanticized experience that is tourism's stock in trade" (Buzard 1988, 162). I would add that Forster's exploration of irrepressible physicality and its fluidity reaches its peak when Lucy's Italian travel culminates in her encounter with George Emerson within the "fluid space" of the Italian landscape.

"Fluid Space," Ecological Connectedness, and Intimacy

Ingold's concepts of wayfaring and meshwork are multidimensional, but one aspect is an ecological perspective they provide. By framing "wayfaring" as a form of habitation, forming the "*meshwork* of entangled lines of life, growth, and movement" (Ingold 2011, 63), Ingold emphasizes the vitality and interconnectedness

of living organisms over the mechanized modes of non/human existence, the latter exemplified by the act of transport and the practice of modern tourism. Similarly, Forster's exploration of wayfaring's transgressive potential culminates in his ecological vision of the fluid lifeworld that allows Lucy to transcend solid boundaries and form intimate connections. At the climax of Lucy's Italian tour, Forster reshapes the Tuscany landscape into a site of interconnection and transformation, resonating the Ingoldian version of the environment as "fluid space" where human and nonhuman beings overflow and intermesh (Ingold 2011, 64).

In disrupting the closed circuit of the tourist experience, Forster once again employs the trope of getting lost, leading to unexpected entanglements of relationships and turns of events:

> the little god Pan … presides over social contretemps and unsuccessful picnics. Mr Beebe had lost every one, and had consumed in solitude the tea-basket which he had brought up as a pleasant surprise. Miss Lavish had lost Miss Bartlett. Lucy had lost Mr Eager. Mr Emerson had lost George. Miss Bartlett had lost a mackintosh square. Phaethon had lost the game. (Forster 2012, 71)

In this cobweb of losing partners and possessions, Forster locates Lucy's transformative moment in which she forms intimacy with the foreign landscape and the strange person from a different social background, George Emerson.

Further, Lucy's interaction with the landscape and encounter with George stem from miscommunication and misguidance, both resembling the notion of getting lost, one geographically and the other linguistically. When Lucy leaves Miss Lavish and Miss Bartlett to search for Mr. Beebe and Mr. Eager, her (mis) communication with an Italian coachman—complicated by her limited proficiency in Italian—leads to a misunderstanding, resulting in the coachman guiding her to George instead of Mr. Beebe. This misdirected climb up the hill, like her unguided wandering to the basilica, leads to Lucy's intimate encounter with the surroundings: "In the company of this common man the world was beautiful and direct. For the first time she felt the influence of spring" (Forster 2012, 54).

While the discourse of tourism and guidebook underlines knowledge and information, subordinating the role of spontaneity in a tourist's experience, her guide, "the common man", does not teach and preach about the beauty of nature or the history of the place. Without the mediation of traditional knowledge, Lucy

becomes able to feel the landscape "beautiful and direct." Forster's choice of the word, "the common man," also indicates the author's preference for the common experience over the cultured, educated perspective of Italy, exemplified by Baedeker and John Ruskin. While climbing further up, Lucy is unaware and uncertain of where she is headed, but this not-knowing intensifies the wayfarer's attentiveness and openness to the surrounding environments: "She was rejoicing in her escape from dullness. Not a step, not a twig, was unimportant to her" (Forster 2012, 69-70). Being mis/guided and mis/understood enables Lucy to break away from the established tourist path and engage intimately with the landscape. In this context, every fragment of the lifeworld, even the smallest elements like "a step" or "a twig," takes on newfound importance, leading to "astonishment."

As briefly mentioned above, Forster's vision of the interconnection between the English tourist and the Italian landscape aligns with what Ingold refers to as "fluid space." Ingold proposes fluid space as a site of intermixture or "symbiotic connection" (Ingold 2011, 83) between living organisms and environments, or between lifelines and lifeworld:

> In fluid space there are no well-defined objects or entities. There are rather substances that flow, mix and mutate, sometimes congealing into more or less ephemeral forms that can nevertheless dissolve or re-form without breach of continuity. Every line – every relation – in fluid space is a path of flow, like the riverbed or the veins and capillaries of the body (Ingold 2011, 86).

Ingold's understanding of both organism and environment as flowing and intermixing challenges the conventional Western thought built upon "the absoluteness of the boundary between organism and environment" (Ingold 2011, 86). Ingold's ideas of wayfaring, meshwork, and fluid space encapsulate the fluidity and interconnectedness of lifeworld, that is, "the openness of a life … that overflows any boundaries that might be thrown around it" (Ingold 2011, 83).

Ingold's concept of the entanglement of organism and environment aligns with contemporary phenomenology, which increasingly emphasizes the embodied nature of ecological engagement. Rather than a detached observation, this engagement resembles a perambulatory movement within the landscape. Arnold Berleant exemplifies this trend in ecological phenomenology, by exploring the embodied, "kinesthetic" aspect of what he calls the "landscape experience":

> [L]ooking at a landscape is not the complete experience and, indeed, looking is but one aspect of the experience. What may happen as the experience develops is rather a dynamic interplay between viewer and landscape as we extend ourselves into the landscape, looking not *at* but from *within* the landscape, feeling its physical magnetism as it works with our bodies from every direction, and a kinesthetic sense of the landscape as something to be entered, engaged with and worked through, embraced physically, perhaps rather like swimming in the landscape (Berleant 2012, 56).

Berleant understands the landscape not as a distant object to be looked at, but as the fluid material "to be entered, engaged with and worked through, embraced physically, perhaps rather like swimming." In doing so, Berleant underscores the physical and reciprocal aspect of the landscape experience. The trope of fluidity seems to be an appropriate rhetoric that encapsulates the "kinesthetic sense of the landscape [experience]," as seen in Berleant's passage, but also in Forster's narrative.

Forster represents Lucy's landscape experience on the Fiesole hillside in the trope of fluidity. Lucy's wayfaring redefines her experience of the surrounding environments, transforming them into a fluid space in which every organism overflows its boundaries:

> The view was forming at last; she could discern the river, the golden plain, other hills … At the same moment the ground gave way, and with a cry she fell out of the wood. Light and beauty enveloped her. She had fallen onto a little open terrace, which was covered with violets from end to end. … From her feet the ground sloped sharply into the view, and violets ran down in rivulets and streams and cataracts, irrigating the hillside with blue, eddying round the tree stems, collecting into pools in the hollows, covering the grass with spots of azure foam. … Standing at its brink, like a swimmer who prepares, was the good man. (Forster 2012, 70)

If Forster adhered to the conventional representation of the Italian landscape, he would portray a panoramic version of the static landscape, observed from a fixed vantage point and resembling the typical postcard rendition. Instead, Forster mediates his representation through Lucy's pedestrian movement

through, and gradual discovery of, the landscape. The consequence is a portrayal of Lucy slowly plunging into the fluid landscape that overflows its circumscribing frame. In the perception of the moving body, the solid ground and plant life mutate into the all-encompassing watery flow, turned into "rivulets and streams and cataracts, irrigating the hillside with blue." Forster's reimagination of the green, violet hillside into the blue, azure pool signals the dissolution of rigid boundaries. This transfiguration signifies the emergence of a fluid space, facilitating intimate interactions between human and nonhuman entities, and between man and woman—Lucy and George—across their differences.

Furthermore, this passage indicates Forster's intent to tackle the conventional idea of "view" and, by extension, the practice of sightseeing. In this quote, Forster refers to the landscape as a "view," yet his portrayal aims to contest the cultural convention that limits the landscape to being merely a "view,"—a fixed, framed-in visual representation often depicted in paintings and postcards. The first sentence, the "view was forming," serves as a gesture of resistance by suggesting that the view is not a fixed, static entity. Rather, the landscape, as Berleant describes above, always engages in "a dynamic interplay" with the perceiver, constantly forming and fashioning itself in relation to them. As suggested in the title, Forster seeks to redefine the view, not as a symbol of a static object, but as an embodiment of openness towards the others and the outside. This imagination finds its powerful expression in Lucy's "landscape experience" that places its emphasis on openness, fluidity, and intimacy. The narrator's critical stance on a Renaissance painter, Alessio Baldovinetti, reflects the author's desire to break away from the conventional perception of the landscape primarily as a view to be looked at from the removed vantage point: "It was this promontory … which had caught the fancy of Alessio Baldovinetti nearly five hundred years before. He had ascended it … possibly with an eye to business, possibly for the joy of ascending. Standing there, he had seen that view of the Val d'Arno and distant Florence, which he had afterwards introduced not very effectively into his work" (Forster 2012, 66). The Italian painter's experience of the landscape is primarily a distant observation, depicted as an expansive, panoramic vista. In contrast, Forster emphasizes the embodied aspect of the landscape experience, highlighting how the landscape forms and flows in response to the tourist's physical movements and emotional responses.

Forster's interlocution with the discourse of modern tourism proposes the act of getting lost, wandering around, and experiencing the landscape as a way

of "circumventing or transcending the obstacles tourism places," as articulated by Buzard in the earlier quote (Buzard 1988, 159). These material practices prioritize the spontaneity, authenticity, and fluidity of human experience over the closed circuit of modern tourism and the confining conditions of modernity, anticipating Ingold's conceptualization of "wayfaring." Forster's attraction to and belief in wayfaring, however, gradually dwindle as his fictional investigation of the condition of modern world progresses. The failure of Leonard Bast's solitary wandering in *Howards End* (1910) represents intensified restrictions due to material and socioeconomic constraints on wayfaring. The uncanny environments of the Marabar Caves in *Passage to India* urge Foster to imagine a kind of landscape experience where the ideal of intimate interaction disrupts and dismantles human subjectivity. This contingent nature of wayfaring in Forster's later works presents an area for further research. It is expected to offer deeper insight into the closed circuit of modernity and the potential strategies for negotiation within it.

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Veiled Visions: Ekphrastic Manipulation by E. M. Forster

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Abstract: This paper examines the nature of ekphrasis in E. M. Forster's novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room with a View* (1908). These "Italian" texts stem from the same drafts and share the same vision of Italy as an opposition to deeply conventional and traditional Edwardian England. In these novels, Forster's ekphrasis and ekphrastic depictions seem to be more than just a narrative device inherited from classic epic tradition. I argue that, when viewed broadly as a tool of medialisation of the text, ekphrasis presents layers of meaning, acting as a "veil" that can both conceal and reveal. The close reading of the novels, consequently, shows that ekphrasis is a "lens" of authorial manipulation: it reflects the self-deception of Forster's characters and Forster's deception of his readers, inviting them into an interplay of perception and misperception. The writer deliberately and strategically employs ekphrasis to challenge the reader's expectations, deepen emotional resonance, and reveal profound cultural and artistic binaries and dualities embedded in the narration and plots. Mainly, this is done through the fragmentation principle and "mute" links to other texts and works of art. Weaving in different ekphrastic frameworks – muted frescoes, generalised paintings, "invisible" ekphrasis – Forster creates layered narratives that invite informed readers to engage with elements external to the novels. These elements support and broaden the stories and expand interpretative possibilities. Ultimately, in Forster's Italian novels, ekphrasis is not used just to describe artefacts but to reveal profound meanings and divides through carefully constructed frameworks.

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Classic Ekphrasis and Modern Ekphrasis

In traditional perception, ekphrasis is seen as praising a work of art (an artefact) by, usually, a poet (who is its observer, perceiver – beholder). In larger textual forms like epic, ekphrasis is an artistic *intermezzo*, insertion into the global narratorial fabric. The Homeric depiction of the shield of Achilles in *Iliad* is the most obvious example of classic ekphrasis: an artwork, a shield of divine quality and beauty, is praised by the singing *aoidos*, reflecting the key goal of ekphrasis – to integrate art into life (Becker 1995, 63). While the poetic song depicts the shield's scenes reflecting the ordinary life of the ancient Greeks (marriage, harvesting, etc.) and praises the overall beauty of the artefact, the ekphrasis, in the context of the whole *Iliad*, contrasts the other songs of the epic, as they are war-related and depict opposite phenomena: death, destruction, suffering, betrayal, etc. This peace—war binary is not accentuated directly; therefore, ekphrasis may feel like a stylistically alien fragment, extending the scope of the epic beyond the events in Troy. Such additional context brought forward, although in the form of highly poetic and sentimental insertion, justifies the need to look at ekphrases from a different perspective: I argue that, having evolved in modern writings, it can be seen as a *non*-conventional medialised tool bearing non-traditional functionality of appealing to the beholder's feelings and emotions and manipulating them to an extent greater than could be done through *aoidic* singing, thereby transforming the traditional understanding of ekphrasis.

In its classic form, ekphrasis is a poetic work that is being sung or read aloud and is dedicated to a technical (Dionysian) work of art, usually a sculpture, often a painting or an architectural building of unusual beauty (Eidt 2008; Roby 2016; Koopman 2018; Panagiotidou 2022). It usually praises it and is devoid of any criticism or other emotions attributed to it by the poet. Such classic ekphrasis is believed to be a rare form in literature, as it is associated with the detailed epic-like narration by an *aoidos*, a singing Hellenic poet who describes everything, including an extraordinary artefact. In fact, as a description of an artefact, ekphrasis is not uncommon for the literary medium: it is one of the conventional and stereotypical forms of art synthesis and art syncretism, often studied by the morphology of arts. Eventually, ekphrasis is discussed and employed in the context of the promotion of higher art forms, becoming an Apollonian product.

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, however, having witnessed the theories on intertextuality and intermediality that stemmed from the studies of the morphology of arts and syncretism, ekphrasis – in a broad contemporary sense – can be seen as a verbal description, depiction, or deiction of the visual work of art, non-verbal artefact, or any other type of medial product (Becker 1995, 14; Elleström 2014, 33). As *fin-de-siècle* and modernist writers experiment a lot with various medial forms, attempting to create modernist epics conveyed through the genre of a novel mostly, their ekphrasis – modern ekphrasis – can be seen as such that evolved into a creative tool of incorporation of one medium into another, or a reflection of one art by another. These reflections are inter-art and inter-medial, quite logically extending the context of the novels: ekphrasis used in a modernist literary text links various artefacts and attaches vast layers of history as fragments, enlarging the overall fabric of each text. Modernism repurposes ekphrasis just like any other previous literary tool and form: as an outcome of textual experiments, modern ekphrasis becomes shorter, sometimes evolving into a brief ekphrastic depiction. It may also depict new arts and media forms – such as photography, cinematography, and musical pieces – depriving paintings and sculptures of the exclusive attention of a classic ekphrasis.

As an outcome, repurposed ekphrasis changes its functionality, too: while modernists write their own epics, they switch from detailed praising depictions of an artefact by an *aoidos* to the personalised and often autobiographic presentation of feelings and emotions *caused* by this artefact. Subsequently, ekphrasis starts to reflect the *perception* of the artistic object, not the object itself: it is no longer a technical, refined, highly poetic form but a vision of art by any person of importance to the narration, which may be seen as a reflection of the overall trend of individuation and focusing on the inner self that developed at the turn of the century (Gagnier 2010). Thus, through their ekphrastic descriptions, artefacts bring the feelings and emotions of the characters to the foreground, with the technical qualities of the artefact becoming a matter of lesser importance. These unmentioned details, however, remain essential as they are the ones that may add additional meanings and extend the stories conveyed by the writers, as the relationship between the artefact (as an object of art with its history and details), the writer (who consciously chooses it), and the emotions and feelings (aroused, described, and presented as an ekphrasis to the reader) is a product of literary manipulation, a bridge that links art, history, the personality of the writer and their literary product together, a veiled vision that bears deceptive qualities.

Due to such transformation, the border between any description and a highly artistic, poetic depiction of a visual artefact (i.e., ekphrasis) becomes erased (Becker 1995, 15). One may argue, however, that E. M. Forster's texts present distinct cases of early-modernist use of ekphrasis as manipulated, reshaped instruments of narration. His novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room with a View* (1908) are traditionally referred to as his Italian texts: they share various structural elements as they stem from the same source and supplement one another. Based on Forster's classical geographical disposition of characters, these novels bring the key characters to Italy and, eventually, have significant layers of discussions on and descriptions of European arts. Consequently, both novels contain ekphrastic depictions and ekphrases which are limited in number, are meticulously measured in length, and occupy a specific position in the overall narration. Based on close reading, I argue that they aim at a particular affect required by the context and messages Forster would like to share covertly, targeting the emotions of readers. Hence, Forster's ekphrases may be seen as *medial iconotexts* in a broad meaning, that is, iconic depictions "urging the 'reader' to make sense with both verbal and iconic signs in one artefact" (Wagner 1996, 16). Seeing ekphrases as such signs would eventually make them classic cases of intermediality as "specific relations among dissimilar media products and general relations among different media types" (Elleström 2017, 510); this would also confirm that they have their own traditions and rules and are flexible, adjustable, and often veiled literary tools of modern literature. Overall, we would argue that in Forster's Italian novels, ekphrasis supports the cultural abyss, characters' splits, opposing rigid Englishness to Italian paganistic, Pan-related lifestyle; however, in this paper, I should focus on the affective functionality of ekphrases that targets the reader's emotions and, due to its veiled character, can be seen as a tool of deception or manipulation: narratives created by the writer are enriched with cultural and artistic binaries and linked through fragmentation to vast layers of arts, media, and myths. Whether overt or covert, Forsterian ekphrasis challenges the reader's perception, revealing the complexities and conflicts that lie beneath the surface of the text.

Fragmentation and Manipulations

When the one-to-one relationship of classic ekphrasis between the poetic text and the visual form becomes vague, it opens the floor for interpretations and requires narratological and linguistic analysis (Koopman 2018, 257). As W. J. T.

Mitchell argues, the "dichotomy between the text and image mirrors the relationship between the self and the other" (Panagiotidou 2022, 27); hence, modern ekphrasis establishes prisms that allow a re-evaluation of the artefacts and the historical and artistic contexts. In literature, specifically, it is based on the collaboration of texts with other media and the "parodying" quality of literature and the novel as an ever-documenting mass-form of the highly medialised twentieth century (Bakhtin 1981, 7). Relations with other media, literature's engagement with other arts – through ekphrasis and any other tools – facilitate the principle of fragmentation, when, within a larger artistic fabric, the works link to each other, extending the context, enlarging the story via references, echoes, allusions, and parallels which can be often veiled, covert, and unexplained.

Fragmentation, which has its own tradition in the Renaissance and Romanticism, makes modernist novels more profound and more complex for the informed reader if they are willing to explore the connected fragments. For example, it extends Forster's Italian novels, which are relatively short and have simple plots. In this regard, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View* may be read as pop products, or, alternatively, be studied or investigated by the curious beholder. Readers may be analysing these and other modernist texts in the same way as the novels may be analysing them: as Bakhtin says, the authors reflect themselves in the novels to an extent similar to the reader's intention to pursue such reflection (Bakhtin 1975, 106). In most cases, no one will ever uncover the genuine intentions of Forster or other artists, and the interpretations will remain speculative to a certain degree. The choice of artefacts to be described and the ekphrastic frameworks developed, however, remain conscious: Forster integrates his characters into paintings (and operatic and musical media) intentionally, and such ekphrases can be seen as "partisan representations of […] traditions and mentalités" (Wagner 1996, 37).

The revealing of such forms and cases can be done through Bakhtinian methodology, that is, structural analysis, identification of all medial elements (alien to the text or not), and their respective interpretation through semiotics, structuralism, and hermeneutics – philology overall (see Bakhtin 1975, 1981). In many instances, however, the ekphrastic cases may lack a clearly determined frame, which would require the meaning of the artefact depicted, described, or deicted to be interpreted with a certain amount of the beholder's freedom and flexibility (Bilman 2013, 13). Respectively, it may be expected that the use of ekphrases of famous paintings, covertly and overtly, would be aimed at specific

messages, conclusions, or emotions, yet this may also be veiled with other elements or meanings, associations, forming a layer of manipulated deception: a direct concept may be put in front of the beholder, yet under a particular allusive or metaphoric veil, dependent on the whole narration. If readers are keen to decipher the writer's message, be flexible, or see additional fragments attached, they will succeed. These messages and fragments that come veiled – "signs, codes, and frames" – are not "silent or inaccessible": they should be seen as cases of what Bryan Wolf calls "cultural ekphrasis" (Wagner 1996, 36), a re-unification of literary and pictorial media implanted, in Forster's case, for irony, ridicule, mockery of traditionalism, the offence of English readers. While some ekphrases remain veiled and coded to such an extent that it would be difficult to recognise them, they, nevertheless, are "images with thought, voice, and motion" and allow for a pretty confident assumption (Bilman 2013, 63).

Muted Fresco

Overall, Forster's cultural ekphrases may be seen as traditional ekphrases, generalised ekphrases, dialogic ekphrasis in terms of their frameworks, or others. The first example I would like to provide is the portrayal of Caroline Abbott in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. There, she is repeatedly associated with Santa Deodata, a local saint of the fictional town of Monteriano. While doing so, Forster incorporates a duality into ekphrases, which plays with the reader's expectations. Ostensibly a straightforward ekphrasis, it is very classic yet without poetic attributes:

> [Santa Deodata] was dying in full sanctity, upon her back. There was a window open behind her, revealing just such a view as he had seen that morning, and on her widowed mother's dresser there stood just such another copper pot. The saint looked neither at the view nor at the pot, and at her widowed mother still less. For lo! she had a vision: the head and shoulders of St Augustine were sliding like some miraculous enamel along the roughcast wall. It is a gentle saint who is content with half another saint to see her die. In her death, as in her life, Santa Deodata did not accomplish much. (Forster [1905] 2007, 108)

Here, in fact, Forster closely follows Domenico Ghirlandaio's fresco *Announcement of Death to St. Fina* (1473–75) in Collegiata di Santa Maria Assunta in San

Gimignano. The ekphrasis, however, is more than a mere description of the local saint from San Gimignano, the town that served as a prototype for Monteriano and was visited by Forster during his *grand tour* to Italy in 1901. Forster's depiction of the fresco is loaded with irony and foreshadows Caroline's own fate: in her life, she will not accomplish much either and will suffer from her own split and cultural abyss she would try to bridge. Ekphrasis of a fresco becomes a dialogic tool: it creates a duality between the visual and textual, the historical and the contemporary, the saintly and the mundane. Caroline's association with real Santa Fina (in the eyes of fictional Philip Herriton, a connoisseur of Italy and its art) suggests both her virtues and her ultimate powerlessness in the face of rigid societal norms, a theme that runs throughout the novel. An ekphrasised traditional Renaissance framework is charged with sarcasm, as Caroline cannot be a medieval saint in the modern world: seeking the ability to help people, she also launches all the dramatic events of the story that will climax with the death of a child who was associated through another ekphrasis with Christ. Eventually, the ekphrasis of Ghirlandaio's fresco becomes one of many Forsterian cultural and artistic allusions that bear prophetic functionality: the key characters, the Englishmen, are unable to understand Italy and abandon the world of traditions and stereotypes; their actions will lead to the destruction of the only human being who could bridge the divide – Forster's abyss – between two cultures and civilisations.

While being a dialogic ekphrasis in terms of the high-level motifs and topics it supports, the ekphrasis has a dual character in the physical sense, too: the actual chapel of Santa Fina in San Gimignano has *two* frescoes, and Forster provides readers with the realistic ekphrasis of the first one only, yet he also relies on the second work of Ghirlandaio, *The Funeral of St. Fina* (1473–75). While it is not described or mentioned directly, it impacts the narration. This "mute" pictorial artefact follows the actual death of Santa Fina: her deathbed and all the city towers are covered in violets, signalling a religious miracle. Unlike the fresco, which remains mute, violets are mentioned by Forster in several pictorial descriptions to build the image of Italian forests (looking like a sea) and Monteriano (as a brown castle or ship). *A Room with a View* also uses violets in a critical scene in Italy: there, George Emerson kisses Lucy Honeychurch in a meadow full of violets. Through Hellenic mythology, this contextual use of violets can be associated either with Hades kidnapping Persephone or Athenian democracy and freedom: these two interlinked motifs and the freedom—imprisonment binary are critical for both novels. Eventually, the unmentioned visual image,

the second fresco, becomes appropriated and translated into the story through non-ekphrastic tools (Becker 1995, 109). Additional fragments, however, get attached to novels only if the reader is familiar with both of them, knows that Forster worked on them in parallel, realises that Santa Deodata is Santa Fina, and that Ghirlandaio authored two artefacts on this female martyr. Forster's conscious manipulation is to present half of the story of a martyr through ekphrasis and link the other half through symbols and allusions, without direct ekphrastic incorporation.

Generalised Painting

While the above ekphrasis is dialogic, deceptive, and manipulative due to the second fresco being veiled by Forster, the comparison of the half-Italian, half-English child with Christ, on the contrary, happens overtly. In another scene of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Forster fits a seemingly regular scene of a child bathing into the ekphrastic framework, too: it is one of the cases when the writer starts sending the beholders direct messages. However, they also are incomplete or partial. They are built through the framework of the merged or generalised ekphrastic descriptions of well-known and *named* paintings, for instance:

> There she [Caroline] sat, with twenty miles of view behind her, and he [Gino] placed the dripping baby on her knee. It shone now with health and beauty: it seemed to reflect light, like a copper vessel. Just such a baby Bellini sets languid on his mother's lap, or Signorelli flings wriggling on pavements of marble, or Lorenzo di Credi, more reverent but less divine, lays carefully among flowers, with his head upon a wisp of golden straw. For a time Gino contemplated them standing. Then, to get a better view, he knelt by the side of the chair, with his hands clasped before him. | So they were when Philip entered, and saw, to all intents and purposes, the Virgin and Child, with Donor. (Forster [1905] 2007, 102-03)

Openly naming the painters and the pictorial framework, Forster builds an "inclusive rhetoric" with the primary goal of provoking by the visual image and bringing to the surface the experience of the reader (Becker 1995, 109, 15).

Upper-middle-class Englishmen on the stereotypical *grand tour* to Italy would have followed Baedeker guides and, most probably, seen the mentioned paintings in the art galleries or, upon their return home to England, at the National Gallery, as the tradition dictated to maintain a continued interest in Italian art and culture. The question is whether contemporary readers (or English readers Forster attacked in his times through his irony and sarcasm) will eventually realise that in this generalised ekphrasis, Forster confuses the details, purposely or not: what remains clear, however, is that the writer refers to a specific religious and pictorial cliché through ekphrasis, and the consequent "transmediation of fictitious media" serves its purpose, which is to provoke thought (Elleström 2014, 25). As readers may realise while reflecting on this ekphrasis, Gino Carella, unfortunately, does not stand up to the qualities of a donor, Caroline Abbott is not a martyr or Madonna who deserves admiration, and the child has no name, is always referred to as "it", and has to die due to the unwillingness of the adult Englishmen to bridge the cultural abyss. Eventually, the ekphrasis is one of several medialised instances that highlight how Englishmen transform from indicative Christians into acting demons.

Should this ekphrasis have been presented through other eyes, it could have gone differently. Philip Herriton, as a fan of Italy, however, sees it precisely through the framework of the Italian Renaissance, a framework that he admires but which, nevertheless, is alien to his culture. *A Room with a View* contains only one ekphrasis related to pictorial art (in addition to many musical ones, which reflect Lucy's soul and emotional torments) and, luckily, it presents the domestic version of such ekphrasis, giving the reader an alternative lens:

> Lucy still sat at the piano with her hands over the keys. She was glad, but he had expected greater gladness. Her mother bent over her. Freddy, to whom she had been singing, reclined on the floor with his head against her, and an unlit pipe between his lips. Oddly enough, the group was beautiful. Mr Beebe, who loved the art of the past, was reminded of a favourite theme, the *Santa Conversazione*, in which people who care for one another are painted chatting together about noble things […]. (Forster [1908] 2018, 176)

This ekphrasis belongs to Mr Beebe, a simple cleric whose perception should strengthen the image of family and blood ties. It, however, does the opposite:

in this scene (and the scene in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, too), readers are reminded of the distance between the textual ekphrasis and actual artworks (Becker 1995, 110), which bridges reality and imaginary to "carry a symbolic value" (Bilman 2013, 2). The ekphrastic framework for the English family is intermingled with Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819): the tragedy of his Lucy is integrated in detail through the ekphrasis of Gaetano Donizetti's operatic adaptation, *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, and is revived by Forster's Lucy in England in *A Room with a View*. This makes Donizetti's opera and Scott's novel two critical fragments attached to both novels of Forster. Eventually, the parallel with the holy family alludes to the would-be disownment of Lucy Honeychurch by her family. Charged with sarcasm, this ekphrasis ridicules the pictorial traditions through another stereotypical scene from Italian art, showing the unfitting character of conventionalism and encouraging the reader to seek benefits in the new world and embrace modernity. Lucy's actions that will follow – echoes to the tragedy of Scott's Lucy and Persephone's kidnapping and life in the Underworld – bring her to another kiss with George, the one that results in a marriage in exile, leaving a bitter aftertaste. Like previously, the ekphrasis receives additional meanings and encourages readers to know more about Scott's novel, Donizetti's opera based on it, as they supplement the short texts of Forster's Italian novels as their mute fragments. All of them signal inevitable tragedies, which may be seen as a semi-covert form of effect on readers who are familiar with these artefacts. Eventually, the reliance on such meanings (and artistic fragments) should be well managed to ensure a "perceptual and cognitive" act of reception (Elleström 2014, 12).

Invisible Landscape

While the previous cases are decipherable, and an informed reader can identify the manipulation, some cases are not explicit acts of deception. For instance, this is the first vision of Italy by the Englishmen, the imagery that brings forward the forest—sea binary in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*:

> [The] carriage entered a little wood, which lay brown and sombre across the cultivated hill. The trees of the wood were small and leafless, but noticeable for this – that their stems stood in violets as rocks stand in the summer sea. […] The cart-ruts were channels, the hollows lagoons; even the dry white margin of the road was

> splashed, like a causeway soon to be submerged under the advancing tide of spring. […] But as they climbed higher the country opened up, and there appeared, high on a hill to the right, Monteriano. The hazy green of the olives rose up to its walls, and it seemed to float in isolation between trees and sky, like some fantastic ship city of a dream. Its colour was brown, and it revealed not a single house – nothing but the narrow circle of the walls, and behind them seventeen towers – all that was left of the fifty-two that had filled the city in her prime. Some were only stumps, some were inclining stiffly to their fall, some were still erect, piercing like masts into the blue. (Forster [1905] 2007, 19-21)

Initially, this depiction of a town (ekphrastic as it is an urban form combining various architectural artefacts) seems to be a non-manipulative metaphor, which presents nothing unusual. The modern ekphrasis, however, is built as an interrelation of cognition, perception, and memory (Bilman 2013, 35): given the further use of the pictorial medium in the novel and the repetitiveness of similar descriptions regarding the Italian part of the story, this excerpt could be perceived as a generalised *unnamed* ekphrasis of a rather typical Renaissance Italian painting with a *sfumato* effect. By Forster's will, such landscape follows the main characters throughout the novel and can be seen in arcs, between columns, in window openings, and even on the fresco of Santa Fina. If Forster was conscious in this metaphoric depiction – and we think he was, given its repetitiveness in crucial scenes – then the contextualised fragment of Italian art should be evoked automatically in the minds of informed beholders, for whom decoding, as Bilman says, would be a learnt technique (Bilman 2013, 105). For others, there would be a need for more profound historical knowledge about the Renaissance landscape frameworks, without which the whole passage may be perceived as either an element unworthy of attention or a sensible yet unknown alien artistic code (Bilman 2013, 105).

Thinking of *why* Forster employed generalised ekphrastic depictions covertly, not naming it like in the case of Madonna and Child, there is a need to remember that Forster was overly cautious about the content of his novels and the structure of repetitions built on their pages. Throughout *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (and *A Room with a View*, too), he opposes Englishness and Italianness to reveal outdated traditionalism and conservatism, expose stereotypes, and resist the rigidness of society. He places his characters in a foreign context as part of this strategy,

surrounding them with a non-English routine, including the untypical urbanised landscape. In this case, it is the Italian town of San Gimignano, which is presented under the name Monteriano. Indeed, the towers are present in the city, and the bluish and hazy Tuscan landscape surrounds it. What we see as a manipulation for fiction is that the colours of San Gimignano are not brown: such a choice seems to be purposeful, not as an element of a fictional world but as an element needed for the metaphor of a ship. This reticence, along with the overall brown—bluish, brown—violet opposition in Italian novels supports the contrast between English sea-based culture and the Italian Renaissance legacy of which Forster was fond. This may be seen as Forster's reliance on basic mythologemes defined in various myths and stories and recorded and imprinted at the level of collective subconsciousness, forming "a woven fabric of signs" (Wagner 1996, 32).

Uninformed English readers will probably see no symbolic importance of violets or the colour brown, and they will not link violets to Santa Fina and see them as an attribute foreshadowing the development of Caroline as the bearer of this saint's archetype. The metaphor of the ship, eventually, would be acceptable. The contemporary reader, hopefully, will be willing to go deeper in their investigation of the Forsterian texts: if so, they might soon realise that this passage interacts with other elements, echoing Santa Fina and her death, Persephone and Hades' underworld, and Hellenic democracy, as well as the *sfumato*-like vagueness of Italian scenery. The reader might also notice that the colour brown dominates in the descriptions provided by the Englishmen or regarding them: Italy is made hazy by the narrator, yet English characters choose a brownish palette while perceiving the alien landscape. On the one hand, such *sfumato*—brown opposition shows that Italy is not England and that the characters are out of their regular domains and places of comfort; on the other hand, the repeated use of the ekphrastic depiction of a landscape (as an echo of Italian frescoes and paintings) supports the stereotypical imagery of Italy and feeds the intercultural abyss (Isagulov 2023, 209). Additionally, it should be borne in mind that in Italian paintings, brown is avoided in landscapes in favour of gold, shades of yellow, and red; in contrast, the English academic traditions, still very strong when Forster went on his *grand tour*, would, most probably, rely on J. M. W. Turner, John Constable, or Joshua Reynolds (Isagulov 2023), which dictates the use of all shades of brown to depict the *English* landscape. Hence, the use of brown for the Italian pictorial framework, in this case, makes the ekphrastic depiction acceptable for the English reader, domesticated. Subsequently, this supports the veiled opposition of two artistic schools and

cultural legacies (English and Italian, Renaissance and academic), supporting the abyss at another level.

As an outcome, the seemingly minor scene acquires strategic meaning and symbolic and metaphoric powers: colours of the covert ekphrasis enhance the binary of two cultures, the English–Italian abyss that will be cultivated in the novel by Forster through different medialised forms and textual modes. The dialogism, veiled and constructed through external fragments, creates a contextual vacuum, which the beholder has to fill. This vacuum can be interpreted by the reader as the irony of the arranger, Forster's sarcasm, stereotypes offensive to the English reader of the early twentieth century, or a consequence of the writer's own ambivalence, his touching of the topics but never accentuating them. The decoding of such ekphrastic depictions and other ekphrases becomes dependent exclusively on whether the reader will "notice" an ekphrasis as a medial product and attribute meaning to it (Elleström 2014, 13), or will prefer to skip it in favour of following a "simpler" logic of the text, where violets are just flowers and Caroline and Lucy are merely indecisive young women. However, the reader may see them as much more through the dialogic nature of such ekphrases. Lucy and Caroline may be perceived as modern embodiments of Santa Fina and Persephone, or fighters, or persons close to Pan and the vast legacy of Antiquity that they cannot fit into the reality of modern life due to the rigidness of society and the oppressed position of women in both England and Italy (Finkelstein 1975, 17–18).

Conclusion: Modernist Deception

Ekphrasis may function as a sophisticated deceptive or manipulative tool, enriching the narrative and challenging readers. By embedding visual references within his Italian texts, Forster creates multi-layered stories that demand careful interpretation and search for attached fragments from other arts and media. The manipulation of the writer with ekphrastic scenes and ekphrastic frameworks not only enhances the aesthetic complexity of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View* but also engages the reader in a deeper exploration of the cultural, aesthetic, and philosophical themes and integrated artistic codes.

Forster's use of ekphrasis may be seen as a manipulative narratorial technique evoking specific responses from the readership: whether through generalisation, dialogism, or classical straightforwardness, the employed pictorial fragments and frameworks invite readers to look beyond and question the perspective

of the characters or the narrator. The interplay between the visual and the textual, the real and the imagined, makes Forster's ekphrasis a means of both artistic expression and intellectual challenge.

Consequently, modern ekphrases become inseparable anchors of the text: they come as tools, modes, highly sensible or significantly veiled allusions. In most instances, if taken out of respective contexts, they do not say anything by themselves, although in the scope of the whole novel (or sometimes in the context of the writer's life, the historical context he or his readers lived in), they become ploys. It is easy to skip such ekphrastic cases and pay no attention to them; it is also possible to stop and check and find additional supporting materials that might enrich the context of the novels and their messages. Such checks could show if an ekphrasis can be regarded as an artifice, a passage with a double bottom, or a skeleton key to an additional artistic fragment. Or not: it may show that the writer meant no deception or manipulation.

Consequently, the novels and the ekphrases in them become the metaphoric, inter-art, and inter-media keyholes: the reader is always given the option of peeping into each of them and seeing another room, space, or the possibility to pass by, in ignorance or unwillingness to make it more complex and complicated. As an outcome, Forster presents the reader exclusively with such an option, and it is the reader's choice whether they want to be "lured" into another allusion, or not, as they might be willing to build their own strategy of reading based on their own experiences, historical contexts, and knowledge of art history. If the reader follows the route proposed by Forster and partially veiled by him, they will also face the veiled binaries, the conflicts they feed, the opposition of arts, artistic epochs, cultures, traditions, and mentalities – topics that may be disturbing, emotionally charged, and unpleasant. As a manipulative tool, ekphrasis helps Forster integrate pictorial frameworks and sarcastically reveal the cultural biases, splits, and divides, evoking uneasy feelings and serving as the background for deeper cultural and historical conflicts.

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Friendship's Inheritance: Posthumous Legacies and Relational Possibilities in Forster's *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*

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Abstract: Mainstream discourses have long positioned friendship as a lesser relational network than that of the traditional patriarchal family, relegating friendship to an inferior bond in the same move that holds the married couple to be the nexus of domestic and social life. E. M. Forster's *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End* serve as early-twentieth-century apologiae for recognition of nonnormative kinships through their explorations of inheritance between friends. Each novel ends with an optimistic vision of friends creating, curating, and caring for the posthumous legacy of a loved one. Key sites of analysis are Rickie Elliot's vision of a "friendship office" and the posthumous curation of his stories in *The Longest Journey*, and Ruth Wilcox's bequest of her family home to Margaret Schlegel in *Howards End*. Taken together, they expose tensions between legal protections and the encroachment of relational possibilities by institutional codification. Forster thus prefigures contemporary concerns about the privileges accrued by the married couple: from queer cultural anxieties emerging out of the AIDS crisis and the gay marriage movement, to advocacy for friends to be granted the same rights as the legally recognized couple—a movement gaining mainstream traction since COVID-19's exacerbation of the care crisis. This paper ties its textual analyses to Michel Foucault's philosophy of friendship and references to queer studies and disability studies to argue that Forster imagines and advocates for alternative social models in *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*. Ultimately, the novels offer optimistic narratives of posthumous legacies carried and cared for by the bonds

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of friendship, thereby problematizing the normative idea that a posthumous legacy is fundamentally situated within sexual reproduction and bio-heredity.

Keywords: friendship; inheritance; legacy; kinship; E. M. Forster; Michel Foucault; death care; disability; queer; homosocial; posthumous

After Forster's death in 1970, Christopher Isherwood conferred with John Lehmann about what to do with the typescript of Forster's *Maurice*. The scene, recounted at length at the start of Wendy Moffat's biography (2010), is one example of Forster orchestrating the conditions for his posthumous legacy—one to be honoured and preserved by his network of friends. Such a dynamic recalls two moments in the author's novels: the scene between Isherwood and Lehmann strikes a chord with the conference between Stephen and Herbert over publishing Rickie's stories in *The Longest Journey*, while Forster's leaving his friends in charge of his unpublished queer fiction resonates with Ruth's bequeathal of her family home to Margaret in *Howards End*.

Both these novels hinge on the theme of heredity and are entangled with the normative family structures of marriage and procreation, yet they centre on homosocial friendships. P. N. Furbank notes that "the central preoccupation of [Forster's] life, it was plain to see, was friendship" (1979, 2:295); while in a critical analysis of Forster's ethics as portrayed in his will, Daniel Monk argues that the will "demonstrates the legal space [wills] offer for the public recognition of friendship" (2020, 67). By analyzing the creation and curation of posthumous legacies in *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*, I contend that Forster's novels offer groundworks for how to conceive of friendships today. By centralizing friendship, both novels rebuff the social hierarchy that prioritizes normative family units. A focus on friendship suggests that other forms of belonging are equally—or sometimes, perhaps, more—nurturing than the standard cluster of father, mother, and child. Theorists across social science disciplines have explored the patriarchal family as the foundation of society, and so Forster's novels help us reflect not only on how the social is constituted but also on how it may be formed differently. The following argument stages a critique of the utopian vision of a "friendship office" presented by the protagonist of *The Longest Journey*, Rickie Elliot, with stopovers to consider Rickie's attitude towards Stephen Wonham, and Stewart Ansell's towards Rickie. I then turn to how *Howards End*

marks a difference between proprietary ownership and spiritual caretakership in Ruth Wilcox's ethos toward the family home. While focused on close literary analysis, this essay furthermore connects Forster's and Michel Foucault's philosophies of friendship, and brings references to queer studies, disability studies, and contemporary concerns over death care to bear on its discussions. By conjoining these discourses, the paper interpolates how the novels can inform future possibilities for friendship.

Rickie's Ideals

The Longest Journey follows Rickie through his time as an undergraduate at Cambridge, his spiritual disintegration while working at the Sawston School under the thumbs of his wife Agnes and brother-in-law Herbert Pembroke, to his tentative and ultimately unrealized redemption after aligning himself with his illegitimate half-brother, Stephen. In probably the most famous scene from *The Longest Journey*—the meadow scene, which has been analysed at length for its homoeroticism—Rickie muses to his Cambridge friend Stewart on an idealized "friendship office":

> "I wish we were labelled," said Rickie. He wished that all the confidence and mutual knowledge that is born in such a place as Cambridge could be organized. [… He] wished there was a society, a kind of friendship office, where the marriage of true minds could be registered. (Forster 2006, 64)

Friendship is the predominant theme of the novel, as evidenced by the titular reference to Shelley's poem "Epipsychidion," as well as references to David and Jonathan and Shakespeare's Sonnet 116. In his influential contribution to queer studies, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, David M. Halperin does not explore Rickie's friendship with Stewart in any detail, but he uses Rickie's friendship-office speech to begin his chapter on the formal structuring of male homosocial relationships in antiquity. Halperin "registers his appreciation for Forster's account" (Haggerty 2014, 156) when he writes that

> Forster has accurately understood what he calls […] "the irony of friendship" […]. Friendship is the anomalous relation: it exists

> outside the more thoroughly codified social networks formed by kinship and sexual ties […]. It is therefore more free-floating, more in need of "labeling" (as Forster puts it)—more in need, that is, of social and ideological definition. (Halperin 1990, 75)

My central questions here are: *is it*, though? Is friendship truly "in need" of social and ideological definition? And does Forster truly endorse this position? Judith Scherer Herz notes that "labeling or registering requires exclusivity, the normal, the compulsory" (2008, 606). The faultiness of Rickie's decision to hitch himself exclusively to Agnes is well understood, but the issue of his desire for a labelled friendship has not received due attention. Although a friendship office could hypothetically register multiple friends, it would still create its own exclusivity in the demarcation between the registered and the unregistered friend. And given Forster's depiction of the "incurably idealistic" Rickie (Page 1987, 69), readers should be suspicious of attributing the desire for "labelling" to the novel or Forster himself, rather than the character.

The Longest Journey is consistently critical, in fact often mocking, of Rickie's idealism. He is obsessed with categorizing people and situations in black and white terms—as good or bad, or one thing or another. For example, Rickie switches from the conviction that Agnes and her first fiancé Gerald Dawes (who suddenly dies, paving the way for Rickie and Agnes's failed marriage) "did not love each other," to glorifying their relationship within a few paragraphs (Forster 2006, 39–40). Rickie's memory of his dead parents is polarized, with his deep dislike of his father countered by his reverence for his mother—and this tracks onto how he vilifies Stephen when he believes him to be his father's son, and subsequently valorizes Stephen when he is revealed to be Rickie's *mother's* son.

Rickie's idealism hollows out the individual, reducing the other's complexity and holding them to an unrealistic standard. His greatest failing, which culminates the wry tragedy of the novel, is in how he treats Stephen through this tinted worldview. In the final chapters, we see Rickie slotting Stephen into the mould of a brother and then a hero, which goes against Stephen's own cry to be recognized and treated simply "as a man," "not as this or that's son," because "to look friends between the eyes is" his idea of good manners (Forster 2006, 257; 254; 255). Rickie does occasionally adopt Stephen's ethos (see 267), but the lesson never holds: Rickie makes Stephen promise to go sober (265–6), and when Stephen returns to drink, Rickie's heroic ideal smashes. Rickie's own

act of heroism at the end of the novel, when he saves Stephen from the oncoming train, is the one moment where, in Forster's words, "he did a man's duty" (Forster 2006, 282)—not a brother's duty, but the duty of one man to another. Figuratively, Rickie in this brief moment looks Stephen dead "between the eyes" as an equal, detached from symbolic or familial obligations.

But still, when the train fatally crushes him at the knees, Rickie has not learned to overcome his vacillation between extremes. His dying words to his cynical aunt, Mrs. Failing, are: "You have been right" (Forster 2006, 282). The line is somewhat enigmatic and allows for multiple interpretations (what has she been right about? Stephen? her own philosophic outlook?[1]), but the novel presents Rickie as resigned to the wrong worldview. When Rickie's idealistic "visions meet the irresistible pressure of the truth they shatter at once, with painful and destructive results" (Page 1987, 59). This shattering functions not as Rickie overcoming his penchant for idealization, but as a retrenchment of the principle upon which it lies: the impulse to categorize people in simplistic terms. Given that Forster critiques Rickie's idealism throughout the novel, readers should be wary of accepting Rickie's ideal of a friendship office without scrutiny.

Disability and (De)valuation

When speaking of friendship in *The Longest Journey*, one ought not to forget Stewart. There is another moment in the meadow scene which remains underdiscussed: namely, when Stewart grabs hold of Rickie's ankle.[2] When considered in the light of disability studies, this moment and its parallel to a prior scene illustrate how Rickie's choice to marry Agnes keeps him within the confines of an idealistic view of the body couched in ableism—a submission to normative valuations of the body that Stewart's intimate act counters. Rickie has felt a self-deprecating uneasiness in his physical embodiment since childhood due to his clubfoot,[3] which is exacerbated by his disability being a congenital

1 Richard Martin offers one interpretation: "to say that Mrs Failing was right implies accepting the superiority of artificiality over the natural, the rejection of the intellect, and the acceptance of the position 'people are not important at all'" (1974, 274).

2 Robert K. Martin offers one reading of Stewart and Rickie's tussle in his analysis of latent homosexuality in the novel (1997, 263).

3 E.g., "'Shall I ever have a friend?' he demanded at the age of twelve. 'I don't see how. They walk too fast'" (Forster 2006, 24).

condition inherited from his neglectful father.[4] Forster scholarship has traditionally read Rickie's clubfoot as symbolic of a latent homosexuality. As Jay Timothy Dolmage notes in *Disability Rhetoric*, "disability is often used rhetorically as a flexible form of stigma to be freely applied to any unknown, threatening, or devalued group" (2014, 4). However, such readings perpetuate both an insensitivity to conceding the corporeality of the disabled body and a disregard for the disabled reader's potential to self-identify with a character.[5] Consequently, critics have overlooked the way Stewart's and Agnes's responses to Rickie's disability functionally pit them as character foils.

Immediately following Rickie's friendship-office speech, he rises to keep an appointment with Agnes. Stewart interrupts this leave-taking by grabbing Rickie's ankle, because "it pleased him that morning to be with his friend" (Forster 2006, 65). This moment is contrasted by the scene in Chapter 1 when Agnes is waiting in Rickie's rooms at Cambridge. While alone, she is revolted by Rickie's differently sized shoes; she removes them, and when the bed-maker brings a pair back into the room for a rain-soaked Herbert, the sight of them makes "her almost feel faint" (9; 11–12). Agnes's disgust at simply a sign of Rickie's corporeality hints that even in the first blush of Agnes and Rickie's romance, even without the looming memory of Gerald, their relationship would always fail because of Agnes's contempt for Rickie's physical form.

Conversely, Stewart displays a casual comfort with Rickie's disabled body. While Agnes is physically repulsed by even the sight of Rickie's shoes, Stewart explicitly holds onto Rickie's ankle (albeit we do not know which) to keep Rickie beside him. Whereas Agnes "frowned when she heard [Rickie's] uneven tread upon the stairs," Stewart "with his ear on the ground listened to Rickie's departing steps" (12; 65). In the middle of these two chapters, Agnes does exhibit her own reverence for the foot: after Gerald's death, "she kissed the footprint" he left in the house—a last sign of his animated existence (53). Feet, then, are symbolically tied to intimacy in the novel. The footprint or the tread of the foot walking away are equally signs of loss attached to the wish for a loved one to return. Stewart's act of listening indicates an intimate attachment toward the particularity of Rickie's uneven gait.

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4 Rickie's self-abusive ableism is also apparent in the horror at his short-lived daughter inheriting his clubfoot (Forster 2006, 184).

5 For a crip reading of *The Longest Journey*, see Andree 2018.

Stewart recognizes and loves his friend not in spite of Rickie's disability, or in some pitying way because of his disability, but as the disabled Rickie he simply happens to be. This contrasts with Rickie's own conditional love for Stephen. When discussing Stephen's broken promise of sobriety, George E. Haggerty contends that Rickie fails to understand "what love entails. He loves Stephen, but he is afraid to accept him for who he is and instead keeps trying to change him" (2014, 164). Stewart, on the other hand, sees Rickie as a complete person and remains indifferent to—but not ignorant of—his disabled embodiment. On this level, he loves him for who he is in a destabilization of an ableist idealism of the body; but Rickie does not recognize this.

Against Registration

The need for labelling is Rickie's greatest fault. He categorizes others and himself through idealistic conventions, and this stringent categorization is what determines the tragedy of his personal relationships. Stephen offers an alternative in his creed of "here am I and there are you" (Forster 2006, 244), which advocates for a recognition of the other on a plane of equivalency. Rickie fails to adopt this attitude towards the other, instead investing in labels that do not bend to the variability and complexity of human relations, but simplify and systematize them. Michel Foucault contends that the free-floating and formless nature of friendship is the site of its very power to contest political institutions that seek to codify and categorize individuals en masse. In light of his theory of biopower, Foucault claims that

> if you ask people to reproduce the marriage bond for their personal relationship to be recognized, the progress made is slight. […] Society and the institutions which frame it have limited the possibility of relationships because a rich relational world would be very complex to manage. (Foucault 1997, 158)

Rickie's ideal of a friendship office that registers "the marriage of true minds" surrenders friendship to the same institutional control that romantic relationships submit to in the legal procedure of marriage—something that has been critiqued at length in queer activist and academic debates over gay marriage. The instinct to classify and categorize is very human, but we should be wary

of uncritically succumbing to this impulse. Comparatively, in his own life, Forster shirked the label "homosexual" for its imbrication in psychopathology—a choice to disavow the limiting proscription of an identity that comes with the baggage of a discrete definition.[6] And *The Longest Journey* elsewhere criticizes the institutional management of populations through its depiction of Herbert's treatment of the Sawston School day-boys. Late in the novel, Rickie reflects: "'Organize', 'Systematize' […]. He reviewed the watchwords of the last two years, and found that they ignored personal contest, personal truces, personal love" (Forster 2006, 270). To define friendship in absolute terms is to limit its potentiality, and to condition it through the terms of registration suggests the enclosure of a relationship into a category policed by the legal system.

Instead of advocating for new relational enclosures, *The Longest Journey* stages its hopeful, if not happy, ending in the middle of a relational network formed around the now-dead Rickie. The final chapter focalizes the curation of Rickie's stories for posthumous publication by Stephen and Herbert—who, as Rickie's half-brother and brother-in-law, are still technically part of the heteronormative family structure, but attenuate its core definition. According to Stephen's own ethos, by looking Rickie "between the eyes," Rickie is not only his half-brother, but also a friend. Stewart is peripheral to this scene; however, Forster has elsewhere established him as instrumental to the creation of Rickie's literary legacy: he and Stephen were the ones to shake up Rickie's complacency with the argument that he "*must* write […] because to write […] is you" (Forster 2006, 276). As such, Stephen, Stewart, and Herbert form an unusual and rather unlikely kinship around the dead Rickie through the publication of his novel and short stories. Versus Forster's active intent to leave a legacy behind him, Rickie's posthumous future is borne on the initiative of others. Yet the two men, fictional and historical, align in their ends through the common metaphor of artists "giving birth" to their creations.[7] As childless men, Rickie and Forster are without the traditional source of an unquestioned legacy through procreation—but as writers, the art usurps the child in how we conceive of their legacies. Rickie's stories are how he lives on through the generations, and so, Rickie has a lasting legacy in the world through his art, which Forster counterposes in the concluding chapter with the daughter that will survive Stephen's death.

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6 See Moffat 2010, 70–71

7 See, e.g., Haggerty 2014.

Although Stewart remains at a remove from Herbert and Stephen's pecuniary argument in this chapter, Robert K. Martin claims that "the parental scene at the end of *The Longest Journey* unites Stephen with Ansell and Stephen's child" (1997, 260). Haggerty and Norman Page both note the ambiguity of Stewart's position in this moment, with Stephen simply saying to his wife, "Stewart's in the house" (Forster 2006, 288). They suggest that he may be visiting the Wonhams, or may even live with them now (Haggerty 2014, 165; Page 1987, 70). Either way, Rickie has also brought these two men together into their own friendship. Rickie's memory not only survives through his stories, then, but in the alliances formed at his heels.

Ruth's Bequest

How one influences life after death and how friends safeguard a posthumous legacy are also key preoccupations for Forster in *Howards End*. The novel centres on the Schlegel sisters, Margaret and Helen (who represent liberal intellectualism), and their relationships with the Wilcoxes (staunch and pragmatic capitalists) and the lower-middle-class Leonard Bast. Leonard's tenuous friendship with the Schlegels must regrettably be set aside here, which further displaces a concerted discussion of class relations within and between the two novels. Forster was deeply invested in forging connections across class divisions, shown in both his fictional and personal writings. In reading *Howards End* and *The Longest Journey* as "sister" novels, the thematic intersection of class and inheritance appears forcefully in their parallel endings, which are notably split along a line of gender. *The Longest Journey*, which prioritizes male homosocial relations, ends on Stephen's daughter as a pseudo-pastoral figurehead for the next generation. *Howards End*, although more interested overall in cross-gender relations, is underpinned by Margaret's relationships with her sister and Ruth Wilcox; yet it ends with Helen's son as the future inheritor of the house. Leonard's bastard child, then, becomes one of two children whom Forster sets up as symbolic inheritors of England. However, this juxtaposition, with its interwoven concerns of class and gender, is beyond the scope of the current article.

The plot at stake here is instead Margaret's relationship with Ruth Wilcox—the one member of the Wilcox clan who slips, ethereally, from their cold and conventional rationalism. Ruth creates the conditions of her legacy by bequeathing her family home to Margaret, despite this bequest's interruption by the patriarchal family and the tenets of legality. Ruth intends to pass down the responsibilities of caretaker, not for an inanimate building as "property," but for

a living home. Helen sums this up when she and her sister reunite at Howards End by saying that the Wilcoxes "may take the title-deeds and the door-keys, but for this one night we are at home" (Forster 2000, 257). However, the short note forwarded from the nursing home which relates Ruth's bequest is deemed irrelevant by the Wilcoxes because there is no legal imperative to honour it (83). The novel hinges on this interrupted inheritance, as Margaret eventually marries Ruth's widower, and so the house comes to her after all.

The Wilcoxes collect properties in the capitalistic mode of "assets"; at one point, Helen enumerates their properties to a total of eight (Forster 2000, 145). Other than Ruth herself, none of the Wilcoxes have any sentimental attachment to Howards End. Her husband Henry holds onto it with vague conjectures that one of his sons might use it one day, even as he acknowledges that this is unlikely. He lets the house, then reduces it to a storage facility for the Schlegels' furniture. A capitalist imperative for ownership also manifests in the Wilcoxes' worklife: the men are employed by the Imperial and West African Rubber Company, after all. Their investment in colonialism is not vociferously decried in the novel, but Forster is not without censorious comment: "the Imperialist is not what he thinks or seems. He is a destroyer" (Forster 2000, 276).

More could be said from a postcolonial lens, but at the very least, the Wilcox position on property is not the one endorsed by the novel. Instead, *Howards End* is shaded in an agnostic spirituality attached to explicit and implicit anthropomorphizations of homes. In conversation with Henry, Margaret claims: "Houses are alive. No?"; and Forster refers to the titular house's heartbeat, houses "dying," and suggests that Howards End gains a new life once full of the Schlegels' furniture (Forster 2000, 132; 172; 219; 251). In the early days of their intimacy, Margaret observes that Ruth, "though a loving wife and mother, had only one passion in life—her house" (Forster 2000, 73). Indeed, Forster depicts Howards End as more essential to her personality than her three children.

Ruth recognizes a sympathy between her and Margaret when it comes to notions of home and belonging, seeing the loss of the Schlegels' family home at Wickham Place as a tragedy "worse than dying" (Forster 2000, 71) and subsequently seeking to compensate this loss. Notably, Ruth tells her new friend about the folklore surrounding the house but never shared these stories with her husband (Forster 2000, 61; 162). Henry can only conceive of things in terms of legal imperatives and the norms of blood inheritance. But Ruth's bequest functions not within a sterile legal system of property transference, but instead

as a spiritual passing-on of home and caretakership. Indeed, the house's interim caretaker, Miss Avery, might have had a proprietary claim to the house herself had she married Ruth's brother, Tom Howard. Yet her ongoing preservation of the property appears linked to her lifelong friendship with Ruth. Recognizing a rightful heiress in Margaret, Miss Avery eases the transition for the Schlegels' inheritance of the house by furnishing it with their belongings. Robert K. Martin refers to Ruth's bequest "as a central expression of the contrast […] between codified law and spiritual law" that typifies Forster's writing (1997, 266). This spiritual "law" is beyond Henry's practical and hegemonic worldview and so, as per his nature, he ignores Ruth's last request.

Henry and his children's perspectives on ownership and inheritance align with a common-sense rationality contingent on societal norms. Ruth and Margaret's friendship troubles this self-assured yet arbitrary rationality, and so must be quashed by the patriarch—only for the novel to affirm Ruth's choice and the women's friendship by the end. Ruth and Margaret's friendship may appear odd, and it is certainly a short-lived one for Ruth to commit such an act to honour their intimacy. Garrett Stewart, in his paper on Forster's "epistemology of dying," contends that "death in Forster is usually checked off with indifference or acrid dispatch in the voice of a third-person narrator," but that Ruth's death scene has "disappeared altogether," which he refers to as a violent elision (Stewart 1979, 105; 117). This lacuna of Ruth's death and time in the nursing home is where Jo Ann Moran Cruz stages her reading of a "motivation of revenge" behind Ruth's bequest (Moran Cruz 2015, 405). She argues that the Wilcoxes' delegation of her deathbed care to the institutional management of a nursing home provokes a "profound protest against Wilcox family values" (Moran Cruz 2015, 405). Although Moran Cruz avers that Ruth and Margaret's friendship "was never very deep" (Moran Cruz 2015, 407), her article illuminates an unnarrated space inhabited by a deepening bond that we, as readers, are not privy to.

Moran Cruz draws specific attention to the fact that Margaret repeatedly visited Ruth in the nursing home. These visits, which remain inaccessible to the reader, would surely be the closest moments between the two friends given both the chronological progression of their relationship and the intimacy of attending a dying person's final days. Moran Cruz emphasizes that Forster's imbrication in Victorian and Edwardian mores would have made the changing norms on death care concerning to him. In the Edwardian period, "family solidarity around the dying person was the ideal," yet the Wilcoxes instead opt "for the

impersonal, more removed, perhaps less costly, and certainly more mechanical solution of a nursing home" (Moran Cruz 2015, 409; 412). Forster would be critical of upper- and middle-class families relying on nursing homes for death care, since "in 1910 institutional care for the elderly and the ill was uncommon and intended mostly for servants and poor working women" (Moran Cruz 2015, 410). Margaret's repeated visits to the nursing home attest to her taking on a mantle of carer, one which the Wilcoxes primarily delegate to institutional authority.

Nevertheless, in the passages of the novel narrated to us, Margaret and Ruth repeatedly stumble in their interactions. Although the awkwardness is one-sided, Margaret apologizes after the luncheon party between her friends and Ruth because she senses that her middle-aged friend does not "blend" with her thoroughly modern peers (Forster 2000, 63–7). Moreover, Forster depicts a clumsy dance of decorum after the Wilcoxes move in across the street from Wickham Place (Forster 2000, 55–7). And yet, this series of faux pas is what first precipitates their friendship. Catherine Lanone notes that "Edwardian interaction demanded a complex choreography of gradual calls, first leaving a card, then paying a short call, before someone could be invited to tea, not to mention lunch or dinner" (Lanone 2019, 404n4). The escalating series of missteps in Chapter 8 lead to a betrayal of these conventions: Lanone observes that Margaret breaks with propriety when, embarrassed by her rudeness in the letter intended to end their acquaintance, she rushes from the breakfast table to call on Ruth—as does Ruth by admitting her at that hour of the day (Lanone 2019, 406).

These fissures in communication, the moves the women make to overstep them, and the social conventions they leave in their wake align with the formlessness of friendship as related by Foucault. When discussing intergenerational friendships, he muses that the two friends:

> face each other without terms or convenient words, with nothing to assure them about the meaning of the movement that carries them toward each other. They have to invent, from A to Z, a relationship that is still formless, *which is* friendship. (Foucault 1997, 136; emphasis added)

Foucault notably begins by situating his claim within the specificity of an intergenerational friendship, but ends by zooming out into a generality: friendship *is* the formless relation, even if intergenerational friendships more emphatically

demonstrate this point because more "translation" is necessary. In sum, Ruth and Margaret's friendship grows naturally from the relational nexus of two people, for which social norms and prescriptions cannot account.

The mutual starting point for this language is, undoubtedly, a love for the home as a place of belonging. Ruth, too, initiates a break with the norms of polite, Edwardian society in her abrupt invitation to Margaret to spend the night at Howards End. Benjamin Bateman, mobilizing *Howards End* to theorize the "queer invitation," contends that "a surprise invitation to an unvisited locale challenges [Margaret] to engage Ruth on terms disarticulated from normative relations" (Bateman 2011, 184). Ruth has sidestepped the "complex choreography" of a slowly developing acquaintanceship in her enthusiasm to share with her new friend that which is nearest to her heart. Margaret at first refuses the invitation, deferring it to the indeterminacy of "some other day" (Forster 2000, 71); but changing her mind, she again makes a mad dash towards Ruth to catch her at the train station. Bateman claims a reciprocity between the two women through this "invitation whose enunciation neither can exclusively own, both because neither knows where it will lead and because, having revived the invitation, Margaret blurs the line between inviter and invitee" (Bateman 2011, 185). The invitation to Howards End, just as Ruth's bequeathal *of* Howards End to Margaret, is interrupted by the appearance of social convention in the form of the Wilcox family (Bateman 2011, 185–6). Nevertheless, something has passed between the women that unites them. The very next chapter begins after Ruth's funeral is over. And so, while her trip with Margaret to Howards End remains forever unrealized, the depth of the connection formed by the invitation reverberates in the aforementioned lacuna between chapters. We hear the echo of its aftershocks in Forster's brief observances, like the Wilcoxes' objection to the chrysanthemums left on Ruth's grave, or how Margaret "had seen so much of them in the final week" (Forster 2000, 88).

Friendships, Tomorrow

Family abolitionist Sophie Lewis contends that "personhood was not always created" through the privileged domain of the nuclear family, "which means we could, if we wanted to, create it *otherwise*" (Lewis 2022, 2). In *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*, Forster suggests possible ways to move toward this new positionality through the nurturing and recognition of friend relations. Rickie proposes

a "friendship office" as one possibility, even as the novel questions the desirability of this hypothetical legal apparatus. *The Longest Journey* additionally offers more promising potentials through the models of Stephen's creed of "here am I and there are you," Stewart's representation of love that accepts the whole of a person as they are, and the creation of a posthumous legacy for Rickie by the men in his life. *Howards End* critiques the normatively entrenched trajectory of familial inheritance by keeping Margaret and Ruth's unconventional friendship at the heart of the novel. As related by Foucault, the formless relation of friendship disrupts power structures in its evasion of norms. And while critiques of the family are nothing new,[8] they have been gaining new ground in mainstream discourses. Lewis observes that the COVID-19 pandemic brought the care crisis to the forefront of news cycles, causing many publication venues to be more receptive to critiques of the nuclear family (Lewis 2022, 72). In a 2020 article for *The Atlantic*, Rhaina Cohen interviews various friends whose stories disrupt the norm of the monogamous romantic couple as "the planet around which all other relationships should orbit" (Cohen 2020). Cohen, like Lewis, emphasizes friendship as an avenue for addressing the care crisis, as well as a way to combat the loneliness epidemic—suggestions reminiscent of the significance of Forster's allusive acknowledgement that Margaret was present for Ruth's dying days.

The issue of the friend's position at the scene of death also recalls the long-standing debate over gay marriage versus the queer refusal to submit to legal norms.[9] While friendships (queer or not) and the gay couple are not interchangeable, the latter's move towards legal legitimacy provides an instructive touchstone for considering what future for friendships we want to create. Robyn Wiegman points out that the queer criticism of gay marriage around the 2000s often overlooked the strong impetus for seeking marriage rights that arose from the casualties of the AIDS crisis (Wiegman 2012, 339–40n38). Foucault submits that, versus relationships that are "protected forms of family life, […] the variations which are not protected are […] often much richer, more interesting and creative," but therefore critically "much more fragile and vulnerable" (Foucault 1997, 172). After loved ones were refused visitation rights in hospitals, property claims ignored by the state, and blood family turned queer partners and friends

8 For instance, Lewis traces a history of family abolitionism in communist, feminist, and Gay Liberation political movements (2022, 33–74).

9 See, e.g., Butler 2004; Ferguson 2019; Freeman 2010.

away from funerals, there were clear justifications for appeals to the state system for recognition of relationships that fell outside its purview of legitimacy.

When taken as a model for how to protect nonnormative relationships from state devaluation and nonrecognition, this suggestive history concedes ground to Rickie's vision of a friendship office as desirable. We live in governed societies, and so access to rights, for better or worse, comes through appeals to state legitimacy. Yet perhaps there is some middle ground between access to legal protections for friends becoming commonplace, and the exclusivity of definitive labels for friendship. Summarizing philosopher Elizabeth Brake, Cohen forwards that "if, for example, the law extended bereavement or family leave to friends, Brake believes we'd have different social expectations around mourning" (Cohen 2020).

To eschew the legal system in its entirety in thinking of friendship has real-world consequences. Nevertheless, I remain critical of Rickie's friendship office. And, instructively, Monk points towards Forster's own navigation of this dilemma in his will. He argues that, "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" (Monk 2020, 75). Building on this estimation, then, Forster's will threads the line between a necessary deference to a legal system and a political stance that refuses a conventional hierarchy of relations—a hierarchy prioritizing the nuclear family or the normatively recognized couple, whether married or "a type of" married. Let's not simplify our "rich relational worlds," as Rickie seems to have the irrepressible urge to do. Instead, readers may learn from the examples of Stephen, Stewart, and even Herbert's curation of Rickie's literary legacy, and the bequest that rests on the unconventional friendship between Ruth and Margaret, which the Wilcoxes seek, and fail, to render inconsequential. The odd combination of men brought together to oversee a childless author's posthumous publication and the intergenerational friendship wherein spiritual sympathy trumps normative logics of blood are sites of interpersonal transformation that can be the seeds of a social reformation. The formlessness of friendship means that its contours arise from the individuals it links together, without the codes of overdetermined social roles like father, mother, daughter, son. Indeed, "only connect," the epigraph to *Howards End*, is Forster's imperative to foster interpersonal ties that challenge and surpass established relational categories. If hegemonic ideals of the family unit must be deconstructed in order to think the social world differently, then friendship unearths a field from which to work towards political change.

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Playing the Girl: The Possibilities of Forster's Domestic Comedy

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Abstract: E. M. Forster once described what he had learnt from Jane Austen as "the possibilities of domestic humor" (Furbank & Haskell 2004, 14). His work has indeed often been labelled 'domestic comedy', 'social comedy' or 'comedy of manners', but few scholars have engaged seriously with the tactics and implications of his comedy. This paper suggests that one specific way in which Forster makes use of these possibilities is by exposing the constructed and performative nature of domestic femininity – and making fun of its absurdities.

Forster's domestic comedy is gentle in tone and outwardly in tune with the middle-class milieus that it portrays. In keeping with Eileen Gillooly's concept of 'feminine humour', it undermines "the authority of [the cultural construction of femininity] even as it faithfully records the conditions, virtues, and behaviours required of life in the feminine position" (1999, 12).

In *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*, the two novels that best represent his domestic comedy, Forster stages scenes and situations in which his female characters are expected to 'play their part' in order to uphold the rigid gender norms of Edwardian society. Lucy Honeychurch's earnest effort to be ladylike involves studious mimicry as well as the occasional comic blunder, while Margaret Schlegel's campaign as the submissive wife is shown to be both conscious and conflicted. Drawing on such illustrative examples, this paper demonstrates how Forster employs his distinct sense of humour to explore women's attitudes and ambivalence towards this mandated performance of femininity, as well as to expose the hypocrisy of the society that demands it of them.

Keywords: domestic comedy, feminine humour, performance, gender, femininity

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Introduction

On the evening of June 20th 1952, E. M. Forster gave an interview that would be published in *The Paris Review* the following year. The interviewers, Forster biographers Furbank and Haskell, describe the scene of Forster's King's College rooms thus:

> A spacious and high-ceilinged room, furnished in the Edwardian taste. […] Books of all sorts, handsome and otherwise, in English and French; armchairs decked in little shawls; a piano, a solitaire board, and the box of a zoetrope; profusion of opened letters; slippers neatly arranged in wastepaper basket. (Furbank & Haskell 2004, 1-2)

In this most Forsterian of domestic settings, the author was asked what specifically he had learnt from Jane Austen, and answered: "I learned the possibilities of domestic humor. I was more ambitious than she was, of course; I tried to hitch it on to other things" (Furbank & Haskell 2004, 14). This phrase, *the possibilities of domestic humour*, along with a curiosity as to those "other things", has long accompanied my reading of Forster. The idea that Forster was inspired by Austen to make deliberate use of the domestic sphere and its particular humour for his own "ambitious" purposes is one that I find both enlightening and suggestive.

Indeed, Forster has often been referred to as a writer of 'domestic comedy', 'social comedy' or 'comedy of manners' (e.g. Oliver 1960, Beer 1962, Singh 1986, Page 1987, Fordoński 2005, Bradshaw 2007). John Colmer even dares to claim that "[b]y common consent E. M. Forster is a master of domestic comedy" (1982, 113). At least in terms of the two novels that this paper is concerned with, *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*, these labels seem relatively uncontested. It is my impression, however, that Forster's humour has been taken for granted, rather than taken seriously as an object of study in its own right. That is, while Forster is generally acknowledged to be a writer of comedy, the actual methods and implications of his comedy remain largely unexamined. In one sense, the same fundamental ideas which colour all of Forster's work – the sanctity of the individual and of personal relations – are also present in his domestic comedy. In another, I would suggest, his choice of domestic humour as the main mode of *A Room with a View* and *Howards End* opens up possibilities for a more nuanced exploration of gender and specifically the condition of women, than his less comedic novels allow for.

Feminine Humour

In *Smile of Discontent: Humor, Gender, and Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (1999), Eileen Gillooly traces a strain of feminine humour through the works of Fanny Burney and Jane Austen to, among others, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope and Henry James. Gillooly describes this tradition of feminine humour as "appropriating the cultural construction of femininity for its own purposes" and contriving to "undermine the authority of that construction even as it faithfully records the conditions, virtues and behaviors required of life in the feminine position" (1999, 12). Notably, while its tactics have been "*gendered* feminine", feminine humour is not exclusively employed by women writers (Gillooly 1999, xix). Indeed, Gillooly suggests that the "goals and tactics of feminine humor – notably its subversiveness, diffuseness, and self-deprecation – have much in common with the humor of others who are similarly marginalized (and consequently gendered feminine)" in a masculine-dominated culture (1999, xxv).

I would argue that Forster's humour shares many of these 'feminine' tactics and traits: it is generally understated, subtle and diffused through the narrative. To a great extent, it relies on the keen observation of and sympathetic interest in the social conditions and personal development of his female protagonists, i.e. what Gillooly aptly refers to as "faithfully record[ing] […] life in the feminine position" (1999, 12). Furthermore, Gillooly posits that because "standard taxonomies" tend to be based on more traditional, male-authored comedy, many works that employ these subtler comedic tactics "have consequently been ignored almost entirely in considerations of humor" (1999, xviii-xix). Perhaps this goes some way towards explaining why Forster's humour and its many possibilities have yet to be fully explored.

This paper pays particular attention to Forster's engagement with the construction and performance of femininity in *A Room with a View* and *Howards End* – as *one* of those "other things" that Forster uses his domestic comedy for. I will present some representative examples of scenes in which the female characters *play their parts* in order to uphold the rigid gender norms of Edwardian society. My hope is to demonstrate how Forster employs his distinct sense of humour to explore women's practical experience with, and ambivalence towards, this performative aspect of domestic labour, as well as to expose the absurdity of the society that demands it of them.

The choice to include substantial passages from the novels in my discussion may need a note of explanation. First, as has been mentioned, Forster's comedy is inherently diffuse and intrinsic to his narrative. Rather than, for example, relying on identifiable joke structures with set-ups and pay-offs, Forster's comedy emerges within the context of a particular situation and stems from the idiosyncrasies and interactions of the characters and from the narrator's specific turns of phrase in describing them. To pick out individual lines or shorter passages to exemplify this kind of comic writing is therefore both difficult and counter-productive; this is one reason why I find a longer quotation more illustrative. Furthermore, I like to think of this *situational* or *scenic* quality to Forster's writing as an indicator of his place in a domestic comedy tradition which harks back, beyond Austen, to the theatrical comedy of the Restoration period. While this comedic legacy is not the focus of the present paper, it deserves to be mentioned as it has a certain bearing on my perception and presentation of Forster's comedy specifically in terms of *scenes*.

Setting the Domestic Comedy Scene

The bathing scene in *A Room with a View* is one of Forster's most blatantly comic *and* symbolically significant passages. Lucy's brother Freddy Honeychurch has brought George Emerson and the rector Mr Beebe to the Sacred Lake for a spontaneous swim, and Forster depicts the scene as a celebration of youth, masculinity, freedom and nature in exalted and hilarious harmony. Many critics have commented on this iconic scene in terms of its depiction of homo-social or homo-erotic relationships, and as a contrast to the novel's conventional romantic comedy plot (e.g. Herz 2007).[1]

From my point of view of feminine performance, however, the truly interesting part begins when Lucy and her mother Mrs Honeychurch, accompanied by Lucy's fiancé Cecil Vyse, enter and interrupt the joyful scene. "Hi! Hi! *Ladies!*" is Mr Beebe's ominous cry of warning when he sees them coming, as if announcing the approach of an intruding enemy force (Forster 2000a, 122). In context, it is interesting to note how the dynamics of the scene change with the introduction of that foreign element – "*ladies*" – into it.

1 In her chapter on *A Room with a View* in *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster*, Judith Scherer Herz discusses some of those queer approaches which read the novel, and this particular scene, "more in terms of the writer's desire for George than George's desire for Lucy" (2007, 142). Notably, Lucy's desire for George is generally disregarded in this and similar discussions.

'Hi! Hi! *Ladies*!'

Neither George nor Freddy was truly refined. Still they did not hear Mr Beebe's last warning, or they would have avoided Mrs Honeychurch, Cecil and Lucy, who were walking down to call on old Mrs Butterworth. Freddy dropped the waistcoat at their feet, and dashed into some bracken. George whooped in their faces, and scudded away down the path to the pond, still clad in Mr Beebe's hat.

'Gracious alive!' cried Mrs Honeychurch. 'Who ever were those unfortunate people? Oh, dears, look away! And poor Mr Beebe, too! What ever has happened?'

'Come this way immediately,' commanded Cecil, who always felt that he must lead women, though he knew not whither, and protect them, though he knew not against what. He led them now towards the bracken where Freddy sat concealed.

'Oh, poor Mr Beebe! Was that his waistcoat we left in the path? Cecil, Mr Beebe's waistcoat –'

'No business of ours', said Cecil, glancing at Lucy, who was *all parasol and evidently 'minded'*.

'I fancy Mr Beebe jumped back into the pond.'

'This way, please, Mrs Honeychurch, this way.'

They followed him up the bank, *attempting* the tense yet nonchalant expression that is *suitable for ladies* on such occasions.

'Well, *I* can't help it,' said a voice close ahead, and Freddy reared a freckled face and a pair of snowy shoulders out of the fronds. 'I can't be trodden on, can I?'

'Good gracious me, dear; so it's you! *What miserable management! Why not have a comfortable bath at home, with hot and cold laid on?'*

'Look here, mother: a fellow must wash, and a fellow's got to dry, and if another fellow –'

'Dear, no doubt you're right as usual, but you are in no position to argue. Come, Lucy.' They turned. '*Oh, look – don't look!* Oh, poor Mr Beebe! How unfortunate again –'

For Mr Beebe was just crawling out of the pond, on whose surface garments of an intimate nature did float; while George, the world-weary George, shouted to Freddy that he had hooked a fish. […]

> 'Hush, dears,' said Mrs Honeychurch, who *found it impossible to remain shocked. 'And be sure you dry yourselves thoroughly first. All these colds come of not drying thoroughly.'*
>
> 'Mother, do come away,' said Lucy. 'Oh, for goodness' sake, do come.'
>
> 'Hullo!' cried George, so that again the ladies stopped.
>
> He regarded himself as dressed. Barefoot, bare-chested, radiant and personable against the shadowy woods, he called:
>
> 'Hullo, Miss Honeychurch! Hullo!'
>
> 'Bow, Lucy; better bow. Who ever is it? *I shall bow*.'
>
> Miss Honeychurch bowed. (Forster 2000a, 122-123, my emphases except line 1 and 18)

Here we have Forster setting a comedic scene – domestic in character, albeit out of doors – and staging a performance of normative gender roles. In Eric Haralson's queer reading of the scene, the arrival of the ladies is described as "the amalgamated powers of the maternal, the domestic, the female-amative, and the bourgeois-respectable interven[ing] to terminate this idyl of masculine adhesiveness" (1997, 70). Insightful though this is, it disregards the comic potential of this intervention. I would argue that while the presence of the ladies puts an immediate stop to the raucous, untamed silliness, it does not put a stop to the comedy. Rather, Forster resets his comedic mode from the lyrical impressionism of the bathing scene to the more low-key, gentle domestic humour that characterises the novel as a whole. This emphasises its close association with the female characters; it is *their* natural mode of comedy.

Apart from heralding a shift in comedic mode, the unexpected arrival of the ladies at the Sacred Lake is essentially an ironic anticlimax – a key characteristic of Forster's writing. It turns out that the ladies – these supposed paragons of innocence and propriety – are not actually as shocked as they ought to be or, in Lucy's case, for the *reasons* that she ought to be. However, Lucy and her mother *pretend* to be shocked – for the sake of appearances, but undoubtedly also for the sake of Mr Beebe and Cecil, whose masculine authority is severely undermined by the situation. Hence, Mrs Honeychurch and Lucy "followed [Cecil] up the bank, *attempting* the tense yet nonchalant expression that is *suitable for ladies on such occasions*", playing their submissive parts to save everyone further embarrassment. Mrs Honeychurch, in fact, appears to be more curious and amused than appalled by the event.

Finding it "impossible to remain shocked", she instead reacts with characteristic and unrelenting domestic pragmatism ("Why not have a comfortable bath at home, with hot and cold laid on?" and "be sure you dry yourselves thoroughly first"). She even returns George's unconventional greeting with a polite bow.

Even though both ladies *attempt* to be shocked, it is evident that Lucy has more at stake here than her mother does. Not only is Lucy less experienced than her mother (a widow and a matriarch) but, ironically, there is also pressure on her to visibly appear so. The narrator's comment, "Lucy was all parasol and *evidently* minded", shows that it is the outward manifestation of offended delicacy that matters here; it is more important that she *seems* shocked than that she actually is. Here is also a recurring pattern of behaviour with Lucy: when faced with a confusing situation, she tends to seek refuge in the first and most reliably conventional feminine trope that she can find. In this particular instance, the comedy is heightened by the fact that she hides, quite literally, behind a prim parasol – that ultimate feminine prop – as evidence of her being properly scandalised.

Having begun with a taste of Forster's comedy and what it may reveal in terms of feminine performance, we can now go back to Italy to consider Lucy at the outset of her journey.

Lucy Honeychurch: Learning to Be Ladylike

At its core, *A Room with a View* is a coming-of-age story with a distinctly Forsterian slant.[2] Young Lucy Honeychurch attempts to understand and reconcile countless new influences, expectations and experiences, in relation to her, as yet developing, sense of self. The first and foremost implication of Edwardian womanhood being marriageability and compliance with the norm of domestic femininity, what Lucy paradoxically experiences in Italy is that the boundaries of her existence are closing in, rather than opening up, as she enters into womanhood.

Lucy has been brought up a respectable young lady, in a liberal and affectionate family environment. She seems never to have reflected on her own life in terms of domesticity or femininity until the unfamiliarity of Italy suddenly

2 Herz (2007) describes how *A Room with a View* has long been read as a "cheerful Bildungsroman" or a "social comedy inflected by social satire" - and implies that while valid to a degree, this is an outdated reading that obscures the "darker, more complex, less end-determined narrative" (138). However, I believe that a reading interested in female performance and development cannot help but bring this aspect of the novel to the fore.

throws these things into sharp relief. When her chaperone Charlotte Bartlett and another lady at the Pensione solemnly agree that "one could not be too careful with a young girl", this comes as news to Lucy: "Lucy *tried to look demure*, but could not help feeling a great fool. No one was careful with her at home; or, at all events, she had not noticed it" (10, my emphasis). Now, as a young, marriageable Englishwoman in a foreign country, she faces new rules and boundaries of propriety at every turn; rules and boundaries which will hereafter define and circumscribe her very existence as a woman.

One aspect of this change is Lucy's newfound preoccupation with what is, and what is not, *ladylike*. When for once she ventures out in Florence alone, desiring the adventure of a tram journey, she stops herself, remembering Charlotte's lecture on the subject:

> This she might not attempt. It was *unladylike*. Why? Why were most big things *unladylike*? Charlotte had once explained to her why. It was not that ladies were inferior to men; it was that they were different. Their mission was to inspire others to achievement rather than to achieve themselves. *Indirectly, by means of tact and a spotless name, a lady could accomplish much.* But if she rushed into the fray herself she would first be censured, then despised, and finally ignored. (Forster 2000a, 37, my emphases)

In *Forster's Women: Eternal Differences* (1975), Bonnie Finkelstein remarks that in *A Room with a View*, "Forster shows the demands of being 'ladylike' to be extremely and pointlessly constricting" for women (67). Indeed, this encapsulates Forster's most serious indictment of the idea of normative femininity: Quite simply, that women *as individuals* have little of significance to gain by it, and a world of "big things" – experiences, achievements, possibilities, freedom – to lose.

The very word *ladylike*, of course, indicates acting *like* a lady, rather than *being* one. It implies performing the codes and characteristics of femininity rather than internalising them. In the Italian part of the novel, there are plenty of examples of Lucy trying to "remember" how she "ought to" behave or feel in a given situation. Having been abandoned by Miss Lavish, who has also taken away her Baedeker guidebook, on the steps of Santa Croce, Lucy "*remembered* that a young girl ought not to loiter in public places" (18, my emphasis). This leads her into the church, where she happens to meet the Emersons:

> 'If you've no Baedeker,' said the son, 'you'd better join us.'
>
> […] She *took refuge in her dignity*.
>
> 'Thank you very much, but I could not think of that. I hope you do not suppose that I came to join on to you. I really came […] to thank you for so kindly giving us your rooms last night. I hope that you have not been put to any great inconvenience.'
>
> 'My dear,' said the old man gently, 'I think that you are *repeating what you have heard older people say*. You are *pretending* to be touchy; but you are not really. Stop being tiresome, and tell me instead what part of the church you want to see. To take you to it will be a real pleasure.'
>
> Now this was abominably impertinent, and *she ought* to have been furious. But it is sometimes as difficult to lose one's temper as it is difficult at other times to keep it. Lucy could not get cross. Mr Emerson was an old man, and surely a girl might humour him. On the other hand, his son was a young man, and she felt that *a girl ought to be offended with him*, or at all events be *offended before him*. (Forster 2000a, 21, my emphases)

At this early point in her development, Lucy is trying to grasp the rules and outward manifestations of proper feminine behaviour. We can see that she already associates femininity with artificiality and performance, and that she intuitively understands the importance of *appearing* offended. We see her, tentatively and self-consciously, trying out some of the prescribed positions, attempting to *take refuge* in the chivalric trope of feminine dignity and hiding her insecurity behind affected, empty civilities. There is gentle comedy in Forster's depiction of Lucy's fledgling performance here. Her attempts at maturity and dignity are bluntly undermined by the avuncular Mr Emerson, who catches her in the act, so to speak, and kindly tells her to "stop being tiresome".

Lucy is drawn to the Emersons, but uneasy about the propriety of her situation: "She was sure that she *ought not to* be with these men; but they had cast a spell over her. They were so serious and so strange that *she could not remember how to behave*" (22, my emphases). Again, the word "remember" signals a lack of internalisation: Lucy is not being herself, but trying to memorise and act according to a predetermined, authoritative set of rules. She is beginning to recognise a discrepancy between her own honest, impulsive response to the world and the unspoken norms of proper feminine conduct. Since she cannot trust her

blundering self to *be* the right kind of young lady, she must *act* the part instead.

Here, it is important to note that the performance of femininity is, paradoxically, an *active performance of passivity*. The feminine ideal is inextricably associated with passivity, with a lack of individual agency and with a willingness to be led and instructed by external, patriarchal authorities. While the performance certainly demands observation and application, it does not require any critical consciousness or insight of its participants. In fact, when Lucy is engaged in the performance of femininity, her ability to question, analyse and make independent decisions is severely impaired: On some occasions she literally *does not know her own mind*. When, for example, Charlotte interrogates Lucy about the circumstances of George's kiss, Lucy – tellingly – replies, not once but twice: "I can't think" (Forster 2000a, 69). She, quite literally, cannot think of an appropriate feminine response because acting at all would simply be unladylike. Indeed, we may conclude that the performance of ideal femininity actively discourages self-reflection, and ultimately undermines self-knowledge, in young women.

Rather than depending on her own judgement, Lucy's performance relies heavily on studying and mimicking the behaviour of female role models. In terms of her development, the fact that Lucy has access *only* to those "older people", whose words Mr Emerson accuses her of repeating, is relevant. In fact, there are no *young women* in the novel, with whom Lucy might share and compare her experiences. Arguably, this lack of female peers makes Lucy all the more susceptible to the influence of her two closest models.

Unlike the Schlegel sisters, Lucy has been brought up with the steady presence of female role models: her mother and her cousin and chaperone, Charlotte Bartlett. In the first half of the novel, most of Lucy's attempts at normative feminine behaviour can be traced to one or both of these women. Even in their absence, she defers to their judgement ("She also felt that her mother might not like her talking to that kind of person, and that Charlotte would object most strongly", Forster 2000a, 25) and takes after their mannerisms and speech patterns ("Then she became matronly: 'Oh, but your son wants employment. Has he no particular hobby?[']", Forster 2000a, 26). We have already touched briefly on the good-humoured domesticity of Mrs Honeychurch and the restrictive – or even obstructive – role that Charlotte plays in Lucy's life. Typically, it is Charlotte who appears – "brown against the view" – at the moment when George kisses Lucy in a field of violets, effectively obscuring the possibilities and passions that lie before Lucy, and brusquely recalling her to the narrowness of her ladylike

existence (Forster 2000a, 63). Whether actively monitoring Lucy's behaviour or not, Charlotte has a formative influence on Lucy, who adopts her anxieties, mimics her manners, and incorporates them into her own performance.

Later in the novel, as Lucy begins to truly master her feminine performance, we see her use her feminine strategies to suppress her true feelings and to manage increasingly more complex relationships and situations. She even comes to weaponise her manipulative skills *against* Charlotte, which constitutes an ironic role-reversal. But significantly, it is through Charlotte that Lucy learns that artificiality and performance are not only useful, but *necessary*, means by which the disempowered can hope to influence the little world around them.

Margaret Schlegel: Feminine Performance as Deliberate Diplomacy

While we might expect the young Lucy Honeychurch to play-act femininity as part of her entry into womanhood, Margaret Schlegel's feminine performance in *Howards End* is altogether harder to understand and accept – perhaps especially for those many readers who consider her a feminist heroine or a representative of Forster's own beliefs. Elizabeth Langland argues that in *Howards End*, Forster "exposes the constructed nature of gender and his own ambivalent relationship with traits coded 'masculine' and 'feminine' in his culture" (1990, 252). According to Langland, "Forster's feminist vision […] reinterprets [Margaret] as the principle that will complicate the hierarchical opposition [of masculine and feminine] and provide a new kind of connection" (1990, 256). Importantly, however, Margaret cannot be reduced to a principle or a heroine or somebody else's mouthpiece. Forster clearly writes her as a woman – and an idiosyncratic and imperfect woman at that.

In contrast to Lucy, Margaret is already an adult, and a well-rounded and self-aware individual, at the start of the novel. While her arc cannot be described as a coming-of-age process, it is nonetheless a process that involves performing roles and negotiating ideas of femininity. Indeed, at 29 years old, Margaret is uncommonly experienced for her age and unmarried status: "She had kept house for over ten years; she had entertained, almost with distinction; she had brought up a charming sister, and was bringing up a brother. Surely, if experience is attainable, she had attained it" (Forster 2000b, 63). The conspicuous absence of a 'charming' – or any other adjective for that matter – to describe Tibby Schlegel may be noted as another instance of Forster's comedic subtlety. Despite all her

experience, Margaret has no particular inclination for domestic concerns, but cares deeply about people and relationships. That her home should reflect and foster "the life within" is what matters to her (Forster 2000b, 24); domesticity is a means to this end, and not an end in itself.

The Schlegel sisters have the financial means and the intellectual freedom *not* to be defined by domesticity. Unlike Lucy, they have not had any prominent female role models to guide their development in a more conventional direction. Notably, then, Margaret inhabits a rare position for an Edwardian woman, where neither her family, her financial circumstances nor her own inclination seems to be steering her towards a domestic, married life. Yet, she *does* perform and she *does* marry! However, as with her approach to domestic management, Margaret's performance of femininity serves the greater purpose of enabling personal connection and integration of differences. In fact, this is her stated mission (Forster 2000b, 159).

The difference in their respective circumstances and motives means that Margaret's performance is more self-aware and deliberate than Lucy's. Langland notes that Margaret "remains constantly alert to social expectations of feminine behavior, decoding those expectations", and cites her anticipation of Henry Wilcox's proposal as one example of this (1990, 257). In this scene, Margaret is house-hunting and Henry has invited her to come and view his own house in Ducie Street, which he is thinking of quitting. My addition to Langland's analysis is that Margaret is not only *decoding*, but also *playing up* to a preconceived notion of feminine behaviour here:

> They proceeded to the drawing-room. […] Had Mrs Wilcox's drawing-room looked thus at Howards End? Just as this thought entered Margaret's brain, Mr Wilcox *did ask her* to be his wife, and the knowledge that *she had been right* so overcame her that she nearly fainted.
>
> But the proposal was not to rank among the world's great love scenes.
>
> 'Miss Schlegel' – his voice was firm – 'I have had you up on false pretences. I want to speak about a much more serious matter than a house.'
>
> Margaret *almost answered: 'I know –'*
>
> 'Could you be induced to share my – is it probable –'
>
> 'Oh, Mr Wilcox!' she interrupted, holding the piano and *averting her eyes*. 'I see, I see. I will write to you afterwards if I may.'

> He began to stammer. 'Miss Schlegel – Margaret – *you don't understand*.'
>
> 'Oh yes! Indeed, yes!' said Margaret.
>
> 'I am asking you to be my wife.'
>
> So deep already was her sympathy, that when he said, 'I am asking you to be my wife,' she *made herself give a little start. She must show surprise if he expected it.* (Forster 2000b, 140, my emphases)

Anticipatory in more than one sense, this scene not only previews the gender dynamics of this particular couple, but also stages – and effectively undercuts – the generic expectations of the proposal trope. The scene is typical of Forster's domestic comedy with its understated dialogue and subtle, but piercing, irony. As so often with Forster, the momentous event turns into an ironic anticlimax. The proposal happens mid-sentence, off-hand: Looking round the drawing-room, Margaret is reminded of the late Mrs Wilcox and, in that same moment, she is asked to be the new Mrs Wilcox. Much like Lucy and Cecil's first kiss or, indeed, Margaret and Henry's first kiss (which will follow soon after their engagement, Forster 2000b, 157), this supposedly romantic moment is poorly timed and deeply underwhelming.

Clumsy and incapable of expressing genuine personal affection, Henry Wilcox completely bungles the proposal. His attempt at a masculine initiative is not only anticipated but actually interrupted by Margaret, who spots his incompetence and employs her feminine tactics (e.g. averting her eyes and acting surprised) in order to help him save face. She is aware that she must appear understanding, but not *knowing*, which is unladylike. In fact, so inconceivable is it for him that she should have figured him out that he – performatively, but futilely – says "you don't understand" – as if it to make it so. And yet, ironically, what overwhelms Margaret in this moment is not surprise or emotion, but the fact that "she had been right". As mentioned, this scene is indicative of the parts they will go on to play in married life. As Margaret saves Henry the embarrassment of having to get through this most personal of conversations, she is beginning to spoil him. It anticipates many other instances of her understanding, protecting, helping and spoiling him – without him ever noticing.[3]

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3 Henry's failure to notice things is well established, e.g. in Ch. XXII: "there was one quality in Henry for which she was never prepared, however much she reminded herself of it: his obtuseness. He simply did not notice things, and there was no more to be said" (Forster 2000b, 159).

Although initially described as honest and forthright and, significantly, "not a female of the encouraging kind" (Forster 2000b, 26; 30), Margaret is shown to be a very capable social performer – at least when she chooses to be. On occasion, she downplays her superior understanding and deliberately assumes a more submissive role in order to handle particular people or social situations. At Evie Wilcox's wedding, she joins in the ladies' merriment because it is expected of her:

> Gathering that the wedding-dress was on view, and that a visit would be seemly, she went to Evie's room. All was hilarity here. […] They screamed, they laughed, they sang, and the dog barked. *Margaret screamed a little too, but without conviction*. She could not feel that a wedding was so funny. Perhaps *something was missing in her equipment*. (Forster 2000b, 186-187, my emphases).

Even as a bride-to-be herself, Margaret cannot relate to the conventional feminine enthusiasm at the prospect of a wedding. I believe this is partly because she takes marriage – this sacred act of personal connection – entirely seriously, and partly because she sees through the artificiality and inanity of such femininely coded behaviour. The idea of gender as "equipment" is significant here. It connotes an exterior addendum to the self, a set of tools and tactics that can be used to outwardly project, and inwardly protect, the self. In Margaret's case, it is not the *appearance* of femininity that is "missing", but the ability to *naturalise the performance*, or to accept the feminine *act* as a natural and personal *fact*. Indeed, Margaret knows that "people are far more different than is pretended" and that "[a]ll over the world men and women are worrying because they cannot develop as they are supposed to develop" (Forster 2000b, 288). Her awareness of the constructed and performative nature of gender means that her own performance can never be unconscious or unproblematic.

Margaret gradually learns to manage Henry by the "methods of the harem" (Forster 2000b, 196), that is that sexualised form of informal influence that wives supposedly wield within marriage: "She was ashamed of her own diplomacy. In dealing with a Wilcox, how tempting it was to lapse from comradeship, and to give him the kind of woman that he desired!" (Forster 2000b, 195). During the crisis at Oniton – where Jacky Bast is revealed to be Henry's former mistress – Margaret is required to summon all her social, psychological, and emotional resources in order to respond to her husband-to-be with empathy and love: "She chose her words carefully, and

so saved him from panic. *She played the girl*, until he could rebuild his fortress and hide his soul from the world" (Forster 2000b, 210, my emphasis). Nowhere is the performance of femininity – and its profound and precarious implications for men and women alike – more evident than here. This last, distinctly non-humorous, example reminds us that Margaret's *playing the girl* is no laughing matter to Forster. In fact, as Claude Summers notes, marriage and domesticity represent real dangers to Margaret's individuality; they threaten to "engulf her personality" (1983, 130).

Summers further concludes that *Howards End* is "strongly feminist in outlook, and that Margaret's attempt to mold herself into a conventionally submissive wife is depicted as unnatural and destructive" (1983, 131). Indeed, I would say that Forster *intends us to mind this* – to be provoked by and uneasy with the demeaning aspects of Margaret's feminine performance. In Lucy's case, the dishonesty of her performance leads to the (temporary) loss of her natural openness and intuition and – once she finally rejects the conventional path and marries George Emerson – to severe damage to her family relationships (Forster 2000a, 193-4).

Conclusions

In my view, Forster's affinity with the personal values inherent in domestic life, his keen eye for the nuances of social manners, and his distinct sense of the ironic and the absurd are keys to the depth and ambition of his domestic comedy novels. Forster seems to have instinctively recognised, and deliberately made use of, the possibilities of domestic humour to highlight both the societal conditions and the highly individual motives and manifestations of women's feminine performance. I believe that employing 'feminine' tactics of comedy (as characterised by Gillooly 1999) allows Forster to depict the intricacies of the performance and the ambivalence of the performers with ironic precision as well as affective sympathy. In doing so, he issues a caution against those narrow, impersonal constructions of gender, which will only serve to hold individuals back and apart – and can never lead to true connection.

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"… the very soul of the world is economic": the Liberal Aesthetics of *Howards End* and the Portrayal of Leonard Bast[1]

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Abstract: At a London railway station bookstall in 1903, E. M. Forster purchased a copy of the inaugural issue of *Independent Review* journal. Upon opening it, he felt that a "new age had begun" (Forster 1934, 116). Summing up the *Review*'s political perspective, Forster said that "[i]t was not so much a Liberal review as an appeal to Liberalism from the Left to be its better self" (115). This "Liberalism from the Left", or New Liberalism as it was better known, aimed to be more ethical than its classically Liberal predecessor through the introduction of welfare schemes such as unemployment insurance and better housing for the poor. By analysing the fragments, working notes and manuscripts associated with *Howards End* (1910) alongside the published version of the novel, my paper aims to reveal how Forster's affinity towards New Liberalism influenced his portrayal of the lower-middle-class insurance clerk, Leonard Bast, as he drafted his novel. From initially being rendered as a lothario and opportunist, Bast evolved into a lowly office worker, who is sympathetically depicted as a victim of *laissez-faire* liberal economics and at risk of falling into an abyss of poverty through no fault of his own. This article ultimately reveals that Forster's delineation of Bast is more compassionate than some critics have argued, but it is a compassion which is obscured by what Forster refers to as his "failure of technique" in the published version of the novel (Wilson 1993, 32).

1 My use of "aesthetics" encompasses an appreciation of the differing forms of liberalism. This includes rethinking what Amanda Anderson refers to as "literary engagements with liberal thought" (Anderson 2011, 249)

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Introduction

In his 1934 biography of his friend, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, E.M. Forster reminisced about the *Independent Review* journal. Published between 1903 and 1908 the *Review* was supportive of a collectivist form of liberalism known as New Liberalism. Forster purchased the first issue of this short-lived publication at London's St Pancras railway station bookstall in 1903. With its Roger Fry illustration on the cover, he understood the journal to advocate "sanity in foreign affairs and a constructive policy at home. It was not so much a Liberal review as an appeal to Liberalism from the Left to be its better self" (Forster 1934, 115).[2]

This paper will first examine the rise of New Liberalism in the late-nineteenth century, Forster's response to it, and how it influenced his writing of *Howards End*. New Liberalism aimed to be more responsive than its classically liberal predecessor towards issues such as poverty and deprivation and it sought to achieve this aim through the introduction of welfare schemes such as unemployment insurance. It also wanted to improve access to education. This article argues that in the first decade of the twentieth century Forster reveals a sympathy towards this form of liberalism. After examining the changing landscape of liberalism at the turn of the century, this paper will then analyse the fragments, working notes, and manuscripts associated with *Howards End* to reveal evidence of Forster's affinity towards New Liberalism's social values as he drafted his novel. It is an affinity which impacted on his depiction of the lowly office clerk, Leonard Bast.[3] Forster's process for the writing of *Howards End* reveals a compassionate attitude towards Leonard Bast, which was influenced by a social liberalist philosophy, but it is a compassion which his writing technique obscures in the final version of the novel.

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2 You can see Roger Fry's illustration for the cover of *The Independent Review* via The Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/independentrevi01buxtgoog/page/n10/mode/2up

3 There are no surviving typescripts or proofs for *Howards End*. It is also not possible to know with any certainty when Forster made his edits to Leonard Bast in the manuscript as he did not draft his novel using separate, distinct versions. The *Howards End* manuscripts are therefore unlike the manuscripts for *A Room With a View* where two separate drafts or fragmentary drafts (referred to as *Lucy* and *New Lucy*) are available which differ significantly from the published version. Having these separate versions enables scholars to more easily see the step-by-step changes Forster made

The Rise of New Liberalism in the 1890s

From the mid-to-late Victorian period, Classical Liberalism was the dominant political theory in Britain. It was a capitalist endeavour characterised by a policy of non-intervention which effectively meant minimal state intervention, low public spending, and a lack of social welfare provision (Vincent 1990, 147-48). During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, however, this *laissez-faire* doctrine was increasingly questioned by prominent liberals who saw it as unethical because it took no account of the chronic social problems then prevalent in Britain (e.g. poverty). Theorists such as Leonard Hobhouse argued that what was needed was an organic conception of society in which there existed a nexus between an older form of liberalism, which emphasised individual freedom, and a New Liberalism, which aimed to promote common interests and social liberty.[4]

New Liberalism sought to reconcile liberal notions of competitive commercialism with socialist concepts of collectivism whilst holding firm to traditional liberal ideals of individual freedom and human progress. It wanted to change liberalism so that it adopted a more progressive form of politics whilst endeavouring to distinguish it from Socialism (Collini 1983, 13-50; Freeden 1978, 25-75). On the back of its New Liberal agenda, the Liberal Party won a landslide victory at the 1906 general election. Classical Liberalism, however, did not suddenly disappear after 1906. As Greg Chase has recently highlighted, "by 1910, British society was embroiled in a contentious debate over what form its liberalism should take, as a more socially progressive strand of liberal politics increasingly challenged the principles of the older [Classical] version" (2020, 825).[5] The ongoing

to his Italian novel as he drafted it and to also speculate on why such changes were made. In contrast, the *Howards End* manuscripts held at the Archive Centre at King's College, Cambridge are composed of just the one version which Forster edited as he drafted his novel. It is an almost complete version of the final novel. The manuscript also contains a number of fragments and working notes. Forster must have continued editing any typescript and/or publisher proofs after submitting the manuscript to his publisher (Edward Arnold) because, as Oliver Stallybrass highlights, the manuscript "differs greatly" from the published version (Stallybrass, vii). For example, the memorable opening sentence of the novel – "One may as well begin with Helen's letters to her sister" – does not appear in the manuscript. It only appears in the published version. Without typescripts or proofs it is impossible to know with any certainty when this sentence was added.

4 For Hobhouse the "ideal society is conceived as a whole which lives and flourishes by the harmonious growth of its parts, each of which in developing on its own lines and in accordance with its own nature tends on the whole to further the development of others" (Hobhouse 1911, 136).

5 The continuation of these debates beyond 1910 is indicated in L. T. Hobhouse's decision to publish a tract called *Liberalism* in 1911 - a tract which puts forward arguments in support of New Liber-

debate between an older form of Classical Liberalism on the one hand and a new model of social liberalism on the other therefore continued beyond the Liberals' 1906 election victory, and it is a debate which is evident within *Howards End*.

The Spectre of Classical Liberalism Haunting *Howards End*

Classical Liberalism is represented in *Howards End* by the Wilcox family's colonial enterprise - the Imperial and West African Rubber Company - which will "keep England going" at a time when "the very soul of the world is economic" (Forster, 1973, 271, 58). However, on the flip side, it is a doctrine which is "not concerned with the very poor" (43). Social Darwinism permeates the pages of *Howards End*. Henry Wilcox's classically liberal stance is evidenced by his dismissive comment to the Schlegel sisters that "[t]he poor are poor, and one's sorry for them, but there it is" (188). His rejection of the idea of implementing any type of relief to help poor people like Leonard is indicated when he advises the Schlegel sisters to not get "carried away by absurd schemes of Social Reform" (188).

In contrast to Henry, the Schlegel sisters represent a more progressive form of liberalism, which engages with social problems such as poverty, and they attempt to resolve them altruistically. In a lively, high-spirited debate with her friends on how best to help poor people like Leonard, Margaret wants to maximise his freedom by giving him money because "[t]o do good to one, or, as in this case, to a few, was the utmost she dare hope for" (125). The "idealists" and "political economists" who oppose Margaret in the debate want to instead set up collectivist-style programs, which Leonard and others like him will benefit from (125). Resources such as "a free library" and rental subsidies are mooted (124). These are programmes which Margaret dismisses as "your socialism", an accusation which suggests she is not only opposed to socialism but also to proto-socialist New Liberalism (125).[6] Margaret believes that poverty can be solved at the individual level rather than through state intervention. She

alism. He declares on the opening page of his tract that, "[t]he modern State is the distinctive product of a unique civilization. But it is a product which is still in the making, and a part of the process is a struggle between new and old principles of social order. To understand the new, which is our main purpose, we must first cast a glance at the old." (Hobhouse 1911, 7).

6 In the manuscript, Forster initially has Margaret say "socialism". He then inserted "your" so that Margaret says "your socialism" (Forster 1910, 8/3, 161). The addition of the determiner distances Margaret more forcefully from having any association with either socialism or progressive social liberalism.

occupies a liminal space between Classical Liberalism and New Liberalism.[7] She sees the need for an ethical stance towards the poor within her liberal aesthetics but draws the line at implementing collectivist-style schemes because she sees them as socialism.

By portraying the Schlegels' ultimate failure to help Leonard through their individualist approach, Forster appears to reflect the position put forward in the editorial from the first issue of the *Review* from October 1903. It stated that "all the efforts of our thousand philanthropic agencies, all the devotion of countless individuals to the cause of charity, can scarcely keep the flood in check. We have over a million paupers […] [and] nearly one-third of our town population lies on the border line of poverty" (*The Independent Review* 1903, 3). From the *Review*'s perspective, what was needed was the "direct intervention of the State" which would function "to replace private initiative" (3-4). In their desire to assist Leonard at an individual level, the Schlegels fail to see that state intervention is now required if poverty is to be alleviated. Their individualist philanthropy is no longer effective in early twentieth-century Britain.

Not all critics agree, however, that *Howards End* hints towards the need for New Liberalist policies to resolve Britain's social problems. Michael Levenson, for example, states that the "liberalism which Forster sees crumbling around him [in *Howards End*] is clearly that New Liberalism which Hobhouse outlines, with its plans for continued legislative reform on a large scale" (Levenson 1985, 304). Similarly, David Medalie argues that the novel "abandons the hopes implied by the New Liberal agenda" (Medalie 2002, 24). However, that Forster remained sympathetic towards the progressive values of New Liberalism beyond 1906, and, in fact, beyond 1910 is suggested by another Roger Fry illustration, this time included in a 1912 reprint of Forster's short story collection, *The Celestial Omnibus*.[8] Fry's illustration of a rainbow for the end-papers of this edition took inspiration from "The Celestial Omnibus" short story which features a rainbow-bridge reaching towards Heaven. In contrast to the rainbow in the story, Fry's rainbow rises above a suburbia

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7 My reading of Margaret Schlegel's liberalism differs from that of Greg Chase who perceives her as possessing a "New Liberal vision" at the conclusion of the novels with her desire to unite the Wilcoxes, the Schlegels, and the Basts. (Chase 2020, 840.)

8 Four of the six stories from this collection were first published in the *Independent Review* between 1904 and 1908. "The Celestial Omnibus" short story was first published in January 1908 after the *Independent Review* became *The Albany Review*. *The Albany Review* did not survive beyond 1908.

of semi-detached and terraced houses and stretches beyond billboards proclaiming the watchwords of Classical Liberalism – "Practical Culture" and "Imperial Culture" – to reach towards a heaven of mountains and sun.[9] Stanford Rosenbaum correctly interprets Fry's rainbow as one which "reflects the critical New Liberal values Forster thought the *Independent Review* and its editors […] stood for" (1993, 45). Hence by 1912, the apolitical rainbow in Forster's 1908 short story was transformed into a symbol of New Liberalism, which evoked positive memories of the by-then defunct *Independent Review*.

'the new age had begun': Forster and the *Independent Review*

Published in monthly instalments between 1903 to 1908, the *Review* aimed to combat the Liberal Party's aggressive imperialism and to promote the need for state intervention to make Britain a fairer society. Upon reading the first issue in 1903, Forster felt that "the new age had begun" (Forster 1934, 116). He contributed numerous essays and short stories to the journal from its second number in 1903 through to 1908.[10] That he submitted material so frequently over the whole period of its short lifespan suggests that he was sympathetic towards the *Review*'s political values. He also had close ties with several members of its editorial committee which included Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862-1932) and Charles Masterman (1873-1927).

The plight of Britain's working poor featured at regular intervals in the *Review*. In the December 1906 issue, for example, the trade unionist and social worker, Gertrude Tuckwell, wrote an article which raised awareness of the "bad conditions of employment, low rates of wages, and endless hours of labour" for many of Britain's workers (1906, 297). It was a piece which continued the theme

9 In *Howards End* we are given a clear indication of how "Practical Culture" and "Imperial Culture" are associated with *laissez-faire* economics when the mouthpiece for Classical Liberalism, Henry Wilcox, proudly refers to himself as a "practical" fellow who oversees the Imperial and West African Rubber Company (Forster 1973, 143). A reproduction of Fry's rainbow is available in Stanford Rosenbaum's *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group*, vol. 2. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 46.

10 The works Forster published in the *Independent Review* were: "The Road from Colonus" (June 1904), "The Story of a Panic" (August 1904); "The Other Side of the Hedge" (November 1904); "The Eternal Moment" (June 1905); and "The Celestial Omnibus" (published in *The Albany Review* in January 1908). The essays he wrote for the journal were "Macolnia Shops" (November 1903); "Cnidus" (March 1904); "Rostock and Wismar" (June 1906); "Cardan" (April 1905); and "Gemistus Pletho" (October 1905). Forster also wrote a review of John Fyvie's book, *Some Literary Eccentrics* (October 1906).

of Charles Masterman's 1904 article for the *Review* in which he shared his understanding of how Britain's unemployment figures continued to increase when there was an economic downturn. In his article, Masterman states:

> And, at every time of depression [the numbers of unemployed are] recruited in dismal fashion by large additions from those who have collapsed from the classes above, as workmen who had hitherto maintained home and a reasonable standard of life are flung over, after greater or less resistance, into the slime and welter of the abyss. (1904, 555)

This perceptive account of the plight of the "classes above" the working class who fall into unemployment echoes Leonard Bast's experiences in *Howards End* after he loses his job at Dempster's Bank. In a conversation with Helen Schlegel, Leonard declares,

> I had my groove, and I've got out of it. I could do one particular branch of insurance in one particular office well enough to command a salary, but that's all […] I mean if a man over twenty once loses his own particular job, it's all over with him. I have seen it happen to others. Their friends give them money for a little, but in the end they fall over the edge (Forster 1973, 224).[11]

Forster's portrait of Leonard's precarious working life and his descent into poverty dramatises Masterman's insight into how the masses of unemployed were recruited from the lower end of the middle class through no fault of their own in a *laissez-faire* capitalist society.

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11 Forster's understanding that Leonard Bast falls victim to a lengthy period of unemployment because he only knows "one particular branch of insurance in one particular office" is particularly perceptive. G. L. Anderson highlights how, if they lost their job, a late-nineteenth century office clerk found it very difficult to find employment elsewhere because their skills were limited to a particular office or trade which could not be transferred to another industry. The feelings of one Victorian clerk Anderson quotes regarding the issue of unemployment mirror those of Leonard: "Clerks are not in the position of tradesmen", the clerk reasons, "who may lose employment but still find work at the same rate of wages in other localities. If clerks lose their situations it may be a long time before they again obtain employment even at less and altogether inadequate remuneration" (Anderson 1977, 125).

Improved access to education was also important to New Liberal theorists and articles supporting its wider access were published in the *Review*.[12] In its editorial from October 1903, for example, the *Review* stated that "all who can do so with profit should be not only permitted, but actively encouraged, to go on to the higher branches of study" (*The Independent Review* 1903, 20). However, what these calls for improved access overlook is the physical exhaustion experienced by the likes of lowly-paid clerks pursuing a 'higher branch' of education in the evening after spending a long day at their offices. It is a situation, however, which Sheila Rowbotham usefully highlights when she reveals the experiences of evening study for one such clerk - Ramsden Balmforth. His monotonous office work exhausted him so much that he found it difficult to focus on his studies. In a letter to his university lecturer from December 1892, Balmforth wrote,

> I am *hors de combat* [out of action] just now feeling quite limp and almost helpless with overwork. It is as much as I can do to scrape through the daily work which brings bread and butter - the feeling of mental weariness is quite maddening (1981, 68).

From his time spent teaching at a London Working Men's College from 1902, Forster was probably aware of the barriers to learning which working-class and lower-middle-class students faced.[13] An understanding of their exhaustion is reflected in passages from the manuscripts of *Howards End* – passages that did not make it to the published version. Although Leonard is an autodidact and not enrolled at an evening college, we witness the

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12 See, for example, liberal theorist J. A. Hobson's article "Millionaire Endowments" (Hobson 1905, 90-100). The New Liberalist Hobson argues in this article "that national efficiency requires (among other things) a very large expenditure of money upon the building and equipment of colleges and other apparatus of higher education" (90).

13 In an interview with *The Paris Review* from 1953, Forster stated that he "knew nothing" of "[t]he home life of Leonard and Jacky in *Howards End*", but that he believed he "brought it off" (Furbank and Haskell 1953, n.p.) Although Forster may not have had personal knowledge of the home life of people like the Basts, he did know and befriend working-class and lower-middle-class students from the Working Men's College. In a diary entry from 8 August 1910, for example, Forster says of his friendship with the printer Alexander Hepburn that "[i]f there was any class barrier between us it has gone." (Forster 2011, 11). It may have been through friendships with students such as Alexander Hepburn (i.e. students working in working-class or lower-middle-class occupations) that Forster came to understand the precarious employment circumstances of clerks in Edwardian London (see footnote 11).

struggles he faces as a poorly-paid clerk attempting to pursue a cultural education after his working day has ended:

> That truth, which so irradiates the Englishman who has had a ~~good~~ hearty dinner, shone also before Leonard with a fainter but perhaps a diviner light. He had had sham meat for breakfast, sham meat for lunch, ~~and~~ with ~~for~~ the addition of two dissolved squares ~~in water~~ at supper […] Yet ~~the~~ he saw the light that lies beyond all culture – the very shadow that is light, that renders the world intelligible. He saw it only ~~a mo~~ for a moment, and ever so faintly, and 'it doesn't do to give in' was all the expression he could find (Forster 1910, 8/2, 64 verso).

> He replaced the book [Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice*], but with a feeling of profound sadness. For this feeling ~~that~~ there were many causes: I will only mention one of them: he had not had enough to eat. The effect of the tongue and the two dissolved squares was passing away (Forster 1910, 8/5, 483).[14]

Leonard's hunger is preventing him from studying. Although in the published version we read about the Basts eating a "soup square" and "tongue", the drafts more clearly link Leonard's inability to continue reading with his poor diet (Forster 1973, 51). There are further differences between how Leonard is depicted in the manuscripts compared to his portrayal in the published version of *Howards End* - the portrait of him we see in the published version of *Howards End* is very different from Forster's initial conception of Leonard when he started writing his novel in 1908.

From cad to cause: the development of Leonard Bast in the drafts of *Howards End*

The manuscript for *Howards End* consists of four large volumes bound in red Morocco. A working note within them contains this outline recording the first appearance of Leonard Bast or "L." In it we read the following:

14 These and further transcriptions from the manuscripts in this article are my own work.

> Mrs Wilcox; her illness & death.
> Rapprochement of M. & Mr W.
> Return of L. to Wickham Place
> M. & Mr W. ~~engaged~~ married. Ructions in the W family Helen's disapproval. Break up of W. Pl.
> The ? of L's separation.
> Mr Wilcox induced to help Kind. Sees for Leonard. meets Jackie & is confronted with [1 illegible word].[15]
> M's life at Howard's End. her child; Mr W. offended that it does not nail her down.
> L. & Helen.
> "She must be rescued."
> Then I think that Charles ~~goes~~ is sent by his father to horse whip Leonard, and is killed by him, and L flings himself out of the window.
> Or it may be that Helen & Leonard die.
> Or perhaps Leonard lives (Forster 1910, 8/5, 483).

With Mr Wilcox's desire to "help" or "see for" him, Leonard appears to be already delineated as a member of the 'lower' classes. Whether this assistance is financial or not is left unsaid. What is also noteworthy is that Leonard and Helen appear to be in a relationship. There is "The ? of L's separation" from Helen and we then read that Helen "must be rescued" from Leonard's clutches by Charles Wilcox. These are indications that Leonard and Helen have been together for some time. His relationship with Helen resembles one that Forster had already depicted in his fiction: that of Gino and Lilia's from Forster's 1905 novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread.* In that novel there is a similar plan by the Herriton family to send out Philip to rescue the upper-middle-class Lilia from her Italian lover, Gino, the humble son of a provincial dentist who is referred to as a "cad" (Forster 1975, 25).

During his writing process, however, Forster made the decision to not portray Leonard in the mould of Gino and to instead depict him as a poor clerk who is struggling to make ends meet. Rather than being a cad Helen needs rescuing from, Leonard is portrayed in the published version as someone who

15 Oliver Stallybrass transcribes this illegible word as "idea" (Stallybrass 1973, 355).

is in danger of "joining the unemployable" and falling into the abyss after losing his job (Forster 1973, 315). At one point in the novel he is described as a "cause" who Helen goes out of her way to call attention to.[16] As Herbert Howarth rightly states, *Howards End* "is a dramatization […] of the social debate that was going on during the first decade of [the twentieth] century" (Howarth 1965, 201). And, as we have seen, it is a social debate which appeared regularly within the pages of the *Review*.

Yet if Forster criticises Classical Liberalism's impact on people like Leonard in *Howards End*, how do we reconcile this with the perception by some critics that Forster is prejudiced towards his insurance clerk? Jonathan Rose, for example, believes Forster's portrait of Leonard exemplifies "the class prejudices of modernist intellectuals" (Rose 2001, 402). Similarly, Frank Kermode claims that "Forster could not bear [Bast] or his wife, and made sure they were pitiable, indeed repulsive" (Kermode 2009, 99). These views are based on the Leonard Bast we see in the published version, but by analysing the novel's manuscripts alongside the published version we see how Forster's editing technique caused a discordance between how Leonard is portrayed in the manuscript to how he is depicted and perceived in the final version of the novel.

In her analysis of the *Howards End* manuscripts, Mary Pinkerton highlights that Forster initially constructed Leonard's character by personalising him with the use of pronouns and interior monologues - pronouns and interior monologues which Forster later discarded or heavily edited (1985, 237). In the manuscript, there are also nearly five pages of text from Chapter 41 which failed to make it into the published version. They contain observations about Leonard and insights into his thoughts in the months after his night spent with Helen at a Shropshire hotel. We get, for example, a graphic description of his descent into poverty after he loses his job: "One day he sat thinking at Trafalgar Square. They [Leonard and Jacky] had got through the winter somehow. They were so poor that they made his relatives uncomfortable" (Forster 1910, 8/5, 491). We also read how a "Mr. Edser" had got Leonard "a place ~~temporarily~~ as a book-keeper in a ~~hotel~~ commercial hotel at ~~Exeter~~ Plymouth" (Forster 1910, 8/5, 491). By deleting passages such as this, Leonard's character becomes less personal. Pinkerton rightly argues that Forster's "strategy of revision" brings into question "[his] class consciousness and points to the problematic role

16 At the beginning of chapter 40 we read, "Leonard seemed not a man, but a cause" (Forster 1973, 309).

of Leonard in the novel" (1985, 245). It is precisely the "problematic role of Leonard in the novel" and Forster's class prejudice that Rose and Kermode criticise.

Such criticisms come into question, however, when we refer to an interview between Forster and Angus Wilson from 1957. In it, Forster told Wilson that he "had no intention of condemning Leonard" and that with regard to his portrayal, "[c]ircumstances were against him. Perhaps it's a failure of technique" (Wilson 1993, 32). Unfortunately, Wilson did not seek to clarify what Forster meant by the "circumstances" which were "against Leonard" and he also did not enquire what the possible shortcomings of Forster's "technique" were. What still remains interesting about this interview, however, is that Forster does not express any class prejudice or repulsiveness towards Leonard. Keeping these comments in mind, the "circumstances" working "against" Leonard are likely the unregulated Classical Liberalism represented by the Wilcoxes; and Forster's "failure of technique" is probably the series of edits he made to his depiction of Leonard - changes which made him more abstract and less personal. These changes cause a dissonance between what Forster was attempting to say in the manuscripts about the effects of a Classical Liberalist ideology on people like Leonard and how his portrayal in the published version has been received by some critics.

Conclusion

From initially depicting Leonard Bast as a cad like Gino Carella from *Where Angels Fear to Tread,* Forster's portrayal of his London insurance clerk becomes one in which the social problems facing the poor are raised – and they are social problems which featured regularly in the *Review*. Whilst Forster was drafting *Howards End*, he remained sympathetic towards New Liberalism's proto-socialist values and through Leonard he critiques *laissez-faire* liberalism's unethical approach to society's poor. That Leonard is not seen in this way by some critics is due to Forster's "failure of technique;" a technique which edited out the "[c]ircumstances [that] were against [Leonard]" in the published version of *Howards End*.

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"The battle against sameness": Hospitality as Romantic Transcendence in *Howards End*

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Abstract: The present article presents a thematic analysis of hospitality in E. M. Forster's novel *Howards End* (1910). The article begins by suggesting the centrality of personal relations in Forster's philosophy and in his reputation as a writer, and then proceeds to consider episodes of hospitality in *Howards End* in a variety of aspects. First, the argument addresses the ideological work performed by non-transformative situations of hospitality in the novel (what the author terms "conservative hospitality"), and details the spiritual discontent that they engender in the novel's protagonists. Second, the article highlights the connection between hospitality and the romantic mode, chiefly as a result of the Schlegels' interactions with Leonard Bast. This personal connection, however, ultimately fails to coalesce into a truly transformative hospitality due to Bast's material circumstances and experiences, preventing him from overcoming the class difference that separates him from the Schlegels; this suggests the inherent difficulties that face those who attempt to engage in hospitality across lines of class. Third, there follows a consideration of the association between hospitality and transcendence in the novel, which appears in connection to the figure of Ruth Wilcox and presents forms of spiritual desire for transcendence that take place in a secular, agnostic context. The article approaches Ruth Wilcox's bequest of Howards End to Margaret Schlegel as a gesture of supreme or divine hospitality, which produces a spiritual inheritance that makes the guest into a permanent hostess of the Howards' house. Finally, the article considers the status of Howards End as a house that inherits and refashions the literary tradition of country house hospitality at the symbolic level, while embracing privacy and isolation at the thematic level.

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Perhaps more than any other of E. M. Forster's fictional works, *Howards End* (1910) has been instrumental in cementing its author's reputation as a liberal intellectual who values culture, intelligence, emotional sensitivity, and personal intercourse among like-minded individuals as the essential tenets of a fulfilling intellectual and emotional life. The creed expounded by Helen Schlegel, stating that, together with culture, "personal relations are the real life, for ever and ever" (Forster 2000, 23) has been considered largely representative of the Forsterian ethos. In relation to *Howards End*, a large number of critics have focused on the limitations of the liberal-humanist political framework to which Forster subscribes and which, by the early 20th century, was undergoing a process of ideological revision that sought to reconcile classic libertarian principles with greater attention to the social aspects of identity, thus envisioning society as an organic whole (Medalie 2002, 4-5). The desire to achieve unity and harmony, both on a personal and a political level, points to a significant ethical preoccupation across Forster's oeuvre, to the degree that one critic has termed Forster as "quite possibly Levinas's most astute literary precursor" (Goodlad 2006, 325).

In light of the central role played by ethics in Forsterian fiction, an analysis of the literary trope of hospitality – a highly codified social practice that implies recognition, mutual obligation, and reciprocity – appears as a privileged site for questioning the possibility of integration that Forster's novels envision at the thematic level. This paper seeks to contribute to existing analyses of hospitality and ethics in *Howards End*, such as Catherine Lanone's (2019) or Benjamin Bateman's (2011), by considering previously neglected aspects that are called into question by the encounter between hosts and guests in the novel. In particular, I intend to argue for the thematic importance of hospitality in connection to the shifts in literary mode in the novel. I focus on episodes of hospitality as a catalyst for the text's transitions from a realist to a romantic mode, and I contend that this modal shift provides a momentary resolution to the spiritual discontent engendered by instances of inconsequential, non-transformative hospitality. I further suggest that the romantic mode is inextricably associated with the novel's articulation of transcendence, which attempts to recapture the intensity of religious feeling in the secular age of Edwardian modernity – where the social power

of the likes of the Wilcoxes, based on materialist accumulation and imperial expansion, is perceived by Forster to overshadow the life of the spirit. Finally, I suggest that the novel presents Howards End as a sanctuary of hospitality, in continuity with the literary tradition of the pastoral mode, and ultimately offers the country house in rural England as a location that plays out a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion on both the thematic and the symbolic level.

The opening chapters of *Howards End* set the tone for the novel as a typical comedy of manners, in which hospitality operates as the privileged means of social connection between middle-class families. In this case, Helen's stay at the country seat of the Wilcox family has the explicit purpose of further weaving the social fabric entertained by the Schlegel sisters, who participate in intellectual circles with a cosmopolitan flair. Helen's letters from Howards End detail an intense fascination for the Wilcoxes' way of life, which suggests to the young woman images of community, closeness to nature, efficiency, and intimacy; this is accompanied, however, by an implied dissatisfaction with Helen's own existence in cultivated society. Soon enough, Helen's romantic view of the hospitality received at Howards End becomes manifest in the form of the romance she entertains with the youngest son of the family, Paul Wilcox. Helen, then, experiences the utter novelty of the Wilcoxes' life in the country as a shock that is translated into sexual attraction for Paul. The narrator later remarks that "the impulse to sneer" at such moments of intense attraction, unsupported by the intimacy of sustained personal relations, "is at root a good one […] We do not admit that by collisions of this trivial sort the doors of heaven may be shaken open" (Forster 2000, 21). Nevertheless, even if it does not lead to a spiritual transcendence of almost religious intensity, the imaginative impression produced by the romance of hospitality endures in Helen's psyche.

Shortly after, Helen recoils at the manifest philistinism and emotional repression of the male Wilcoxes – the "horror latent" (22) in their life devoted to stocks, material accumulation, and imperial expansion. Still, this eventful stay at Howards End forces the two sisters to confront the infamous ethical problem of how to account for, and relate to, different conceptions of "reality," which is chiefly expressed as a difference in values: does reality reside in culture, intellectual activity, and pleasant society, or in the materialistic world of economic pursuit and modern business? Throughout the novel, the Schlegels display a perceived sense of inadequacy in their own way of life, which leads them to seek intellectual and emotional fulfilment through

transformative interpersonal relations. This is a pursuit of reality that envisions a relation to others that is ethical and integrative, and which requires a refashioning of one's social circles (even across lines of social class, as with Leonard Bast). Margaret Schlegel is particularly susceptible to the discontents of a frivolous social life that forecloses authentic, intimate connection and imaginative exercise: in London, she feels overwhelmed by the stimuli of polite society, comprised of "concerts which it would be a sin to miss, and invitations which it would never do to refuse" (128). The novel is replete with frustrating social occasions that attempt to create a sense of connection but lead only to the awareness of the artificiality of the attempt and consequent failure. In *Howards End*, this chiefly translates into the failure to address the impact of "the unseen" on daily life, with the unseen being comprised of a network of associations between personal emotion, alertness to the possibility of spiritual transcendence, and the intimacy that attends to meaningful personal encounters in the novel. The preoccupation with the unseen finds expression in Margaret's complaint to Mrs Wilcox that she and her intellectual friends "lead the lives of gibbering monkeys" (67); as I will discuss below, Ruth Wilcox represents for Margaret the possibility for a more intimate and transformative connection, one that radically alters her worldview and that suggests personal relations as an affirmative ethical force that informs Margaret's desire to "battle against sameness" (288).

These non-transformative encounters, which have virtually no effect on the emotional, spiritual, or intellectual life of participants, are instances of what I term conservative hospitality. Catherine Lanone defines the hospitality of events such as Evie's wedding as "normative" (2019, 410); I suggest the term "conservative" in order to further highlight the ideological import behind these social operations and their effect on the development of narrative. As I envision it, conservative hospitality is not merely a negative and exclusionary effort, but it is actively engaged in the strengthening of human ties within a carefully circumscribed social group. Above all, conservative hospitality functions as an ideology, insofar as it seeks to reproduce existing conditions, social customs and hierarchies, stable relationships of property and economic dependency. Readers of Edwardian fiction will recognise this as a veritable trope of early 20th-century literature, one which was codified in literary criticism by Samuel Hynes's analysis of the garden party as the main iconic image associated with Edwardianism (1968, 3-14). The significance of such episodes of conservative hospitality for Forster in particular is that they allow the novelist to create

a background of spiritual discontent for his characters, so that the text may dramatically unveil epiphanic moments in which "the possibility of connection is suddenly intensified" (Lanone 2019, 405).

The opposition between these epiphanies and what Margaret Schlegel terms "life's daily gray" (Forster 2000, 124) also recalls the difference between the "life in time" and the "life by values" that Forster identifies in *Aspects of the Novel*. Forster suggests that the life in time corresponds to chronological time, and it can be measured accordingly; the life by values, on the other hand, "is measured not by minutes or hours, but by intensity, so that when we look at our past it does not stretch back evenly but piles up into a few notable pinnacles" (1927, 48). *Howards End*, as I will elucidate below, repeatedly associates episodes of transformative hospitality with the intense emotion that attends to the life by values. Instances of conservative hospitality, on the other hand, largely abide by the explicit or unspoken rules of ritualistic sociability, and they fail to rise to the status of significance reserved for transformative, ethical interpersonal relations. In both his compositional method and in his ethical conception, Forster therefore privileges the discovery of great moments that are often connected thematically to hospitality and modally to the romantic imagination.[1] Episodes of conservative hospitality, on the other hand, resonate with Lanone's description of the Wilcoxes' hospitality as "a temporary, selective practice" (2019, 409); in what follows, I seek to integrate this argument by suggesting the extent to which such conservative hospitality functions as a way of maintaining the existing social order.

The most evident instance of conservative hospitality in *Howards End* is Evie Wilcox's wedding at Oniton Grange, which serves the newly engaged Margaret as an opportunity to meet Henry's friends and relations. Most significantly, the wedding also operates as a trial for Margaret: on this occasion she is expected to act as social hostess and to abide by the codes of hospitality expected of a late-Victorian married woman, in accordance with domestic ideology. Leonore Davidoff writes that, in the highly formalised society of the 19th century, "upper- and middle-class women were used to maintain the fabric of Society, as semi-official leaders but also as arbiters of social acceptance or rejection," thus acting as counterpart to men's activity in the public domain of business (1973,

1 A similar thematic pattern recurs in other fictional works by Forster, most notably in *A Passage to India* (1924). In that novel, the moments of intimate personal connection across the colonial border – such as the encounter between Aziz and Mrs Moore in the mosque – contrast with more formal occasions of conservative hospitality, such as the Bridge Party hosted by the Collector Mr Turton.

16). This role, then, invests the domestic woman with the responsibility to demarcate and police social boundaries: the ideal social hostess determines the conditions that underlie the family's hospitality. At Oniton, Margaret attempts to abide by the polite hospitality called for by the occasion, but her social skills as hostess are most notably tested on the day of the wedding, as Helen makes an unexpected appearance with Leonard and Jacky Bast. Claiming responsibility over the Basts' fate, Helen lashes out against "the wretchedness that lies under this luxury" (Forster 2000, 191) and the spiritual inertness of the Wilcoxes' world. Margaret, eager to avoid a scandal, declines personal responsibility and invites the Basts to be her guests not at Oniton Grange but at the nearby hotel; however, she speaks "rather conventionally" (193), and her offer of hospitality sounds a note of hollowness and insincerity. The contradictory requirements of conservative hospitality and ethical commitment thus clash dramatically in this scene.

As always in Forster, however, none of the terms in his binary oppositions are naively idealised or held as obvious solutions to the spiritual problems he considers. To the abstract quality of Helen's pronouncements on justice and duty, the text opposes the pragmatism of Margaret, whose offer to help Leonard find employment attempts a mediation between the material needs of the Basts and the requirements of society. This attempted compromise between conservative hospitality and an ethics of hospitality suggests the ethical quandaries underlying Forster's political liberalism. It is only a prophetic character such as Ruth Wilcox who is able to transcend this ethical impasse: when faced with the complications of fraught hospitality in chapter 3, she does not "pretend that nothing had happened, as a competent society hostess would have done" (19), but instead employs tact and instinctive affection (qualities that Forster famously identified as constitutive of the "aristocracy of the sensitive" [Forster 1972, 70]) to restore harmonious personal intercourse. Thus, Mrs Wilcox embodies an alternative figure of the hostess, who provides access to the transformative hospitality sought by Margaret Schlegel as a result of her existential discontent. Before considering the spiritual salvation offered by Mrs Wilcox's transcendent hospitality, however, I now turn to the intersection of hospitality and romance represented by the interaction between the Schlegel sisters and Leonard Bast.

Bast enters the Schlegels' life by coincidence, as a result of a misplaced umbrella, and his unexpected interaction with the sisters already plays out the dramatic possibilities inherent in a situation of hospitality. The Queen's Hall, the setting of the concert that both Bast and the Schlegels attend, brings together the

sisters with the modest clerk who exists on the edges of the infamous "abyss" represented by urban poverty in Edwardian culture. The awkwardness and uneasiness of the trans-class encounter are shown to be influenced by each person's material circumstances, for Bast's poverty lies behind his instinctive mistrust of the sisters ("[t]his young man had been 'had' in the past […] and now most of his energies went in defending himself against the unknown" [Forster 2000, 31]). Ultimately, Margaret and Helen admit Bast into their house at Wickham Place and thus manage to uphold their deceased father's ideal of unconditional hospitality, according to which "it's better to be fooled than suspicious […] the confidence trick is the work of man, but the want-of-confidence trick is the work of the devil" (Forster 2000, 26). This intimation of openness and trust, however, is simultaneously shadowed by Mrs Munt's comment that "[w]e know nothing about the young man, Margaret, and your drawing-room is full of very tempting little things" (Forster 2000, 26). This scene, therefore, already suggests the potential treachery and dispossession that inhere in the hospitable encounter across lines of class demarcation. The pitfalls of want-of-confidence or usurpation acquire political relevance because, as noted by Stone, "Leonard is a fictional test of Arnold's belief that Culture, if it is to be realized at all, has its best chance among the Philistines" (1966, 248).

The romantic ideal of an organic, harmonious society is thus played out in the repeated interactions between the Schlegels and Bast. Significantly, these interactions depend on instances of hospitality that are invested with a halo of romance. This momentarily overcomes the realistic framework of the text, as the admittance of Bast into the domestic life of the Schlegels briefly realises the ideal of social ascent granted to those who believe in culture and personal relations. Obviously enough, the Schlegels are for Bast "denizens of Romance" (Forster 2000, 104) who are able to relieve the greyness of his daily life. However, he also exerts a powerful fascination on the sisters, as he allows them to experience the romance of hospitality in its full force. His function in the novel thus achieves the modal blend that David Medalie terms "romantic realism" (2002, 64), a typically Edwardian fictional hybrid that combats the representational narrowness of the naturalist tradition with romantic "escape hatches" that make possible the transcendence of one's own circumstances. This is consonant with the shift that occurs in 19th-century literary engagements with romance: according to Gillian Beer, "[f]rom the Romantic period onwards […] romance has become a literary quality rather than a form and it is frequently set against 'reality' in literary

argument" (1970, 66). It is this transition from form to quality that allows Edwardian novelists to accommodate the romantic mode within the framework of a largely realist novel such as *Howards End*.

The most extensive engagement with the romantic mode appears with Leonard's call at Wickham Place, the day after Jacky Bast's unfortunate appearance at the house. The novelty of a rather dishevelled clerk initially perturbs Margaret, as she instinctively recoils before the "odours from the abyss" (Forster 2000, 100) that emanate from him. However, the sense of connection intensifies as Bast recounts his attempt to escape the unwelcoming urban landscape of London and to put into action a vague idea of "return to the land" inspired by his readings. Even the bathetic conclusion to Bast's adventure, that is, his failure to witness a wonderful dawn, does not diminish in the Schlegels' eyes the romantic intimation that drove him into the countryside in the first place. Beer writes that the romance "absorbs the reader into experience which is otherwise unattainable" (1970, 3), and that it crucially depends on "a certain set distance in the relationship between its audience and its subject-matter" (5). The recollection of Bast's modest adventure, more notable for its noble intent than for its result, thus engages the Schlegels' romantic imagination and suggests a physical remove from the city. The romantic sensibility displayed by Bast indicates his belonging to the "aristocracy of the sensitive" with which the Schlegels identify: Margaret envisions a community of intent and emotion as she exclaims, "haven't we all to struggle against life's daily greyness, against pettiness, against mechanical cheerfulness, against suspicion?" (Forster 2000, 122). The admittance of Bast into the Schlegels' home thus presents hospitality as a form of romantic, imaginative liberation, which allows the sisters to break away from the spiritual dullness of domesticity and frivolous society. At the same time, Margaret's recognition that "[m]oney pads the edges of things" (51) suggests that their indulgence into the domain of romance rests upon economic privilege – which reinforces once again the notion of romance as distance, to be experienced vicariously at a safe remove, rather than in the first person.

As the realities of class difference ultimately prevent Bast from accessing the world of leisure and culture – for, unlike the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes, he does not "stand upon money as upon islands" (Forster 2000, 51) – the momentary romance made possible by the Schlegels' hospitality proves to be exceptionally fragile, and finally untenable. If the practices of polite hospitality among social peers entail a degree of reciprocity, Bast is manifestly unable to offer hospitality

to the Schlegels due to the squalor of his domestic arrangement. Furthermore, the misguided goodwill of the Schlegel sisters results in a detached and generally condescending attitude, as in the comic dinner party in Chapter 15. The ethical problem of how exactly to help society's poor without adopting a patronising stance towards the beneficiary proves to be impossible for the Schlegels to solve tactfully, and this engenders in Bast a sense of mistrust and alienation from the world of the cultivated middle class. Bast's failed visit to Wickham Place in Chapter 16 has disastrous consequences, which lead to his eventual downfall into the abyss of urban poverty. The imaginative impression made by Leonard on the Schlegels remains strong, just like Helen's ethical commitment to the Basts' fate, but social class appears in *Howards End* as an undefeatable, even deterministic force shaped by the historical developments of industrial and urban modernity. Finally, Margaret has to look elsewhere if she is to realise her maxim that "either some very dear person or some very dear place [is] necessary to relieve life's daily gray, and to show that it is gray" (124).

The alternative route to salvation, which allows connection to both people and place, is provided by the prophetic character of Ruth Wilcox, a figure who presides over the imagery of the novel even as she occupies a marginal position in much of the plot – with the exception of one crucial gesture of hospitality. Unlike Bast, Mrs Wilcox offers a less fraught vision of hospitality, unmarred by the complications of class difference, even as she appears alien to the world of cosmopolitan, intellectual society frequented by the Schlegels. At the luncheon party hosted by Margaret at Wickham Place – yet another instance of conservative hospitality, in its blend of polite interaction and inconsequential chatter – Mrs Wilcox hardly speaks, as Margaret anxiously dominates the conversation as if possessed by "the demon of vociferation" (63). As Margaret realises the inadequacy of her hospitality towards the guest of honour, Mrs Wilcox's silence functions as an intimation of "a life that may be of greater importance" (65) existing beyond the domains of conservative hospitality and spiritual and imaginative inertness. The romantic impulse to transcend the familiar boundaries of daily life through meaningful personal intercourse is consistent with what Jonathan Rose terms the Edwardian "cult of human relations, which, like so many other movements in Edwardian culture, served as a substitute for a lost religion" (1986, 40). Rose sees it as a particular manifestation of the more general Edwardian tendency to "[infuse] spirituality into worldly things" (3), as a result of the decline in popularity of dogmatic, organised religion – at least in intellectual

circles. Recently, the survival of the longing for transcendence has been at the heart of a bourgeoning critical interest in modernist forms of religious desire. For example, Alexandra Peat contests the "secularisation hypothesis" in studies of modernity and argues that modernist literature "understands the experience of the sacred as one of being connected to something larger than the self and consequently constructs spirituality as an ethical mode of understanding the place of the individual in the universe" (2011, 2). The connection between ethics and the spiritual suggests that a consideration of hospitality as a literary theme may serve as a way of understanding the desire to transcend the social and material circumstances of the self. This also resonates with the romantic role played by the meaningful interpersonal encounter, as romance becomes inextricably tied to hospitality, transcendence, and imagination.

In *Howards End*, the friendship between Margaret and Mrs Wilcox begins via an attempted contact that disregards the complex etiquette of calling and visiting in Edwardian times ("in England the newcomer ought not to call before she is called upon" [Forster 2000, 55]). After an initial misunderstanding, however, Margaret herself calls upon the bed-ridden Ruth Wilcox, and a "curious note" (61) of intimacy is struck as the conversation signals the shift "from mundane, comedic social interaction, to the invisible ethics of hospitality" (Lanone 2019, 405). Mrs Wilcox's act of reaching out to Margaret serves as a test of the young woman's imaginative responsiveness, and her emotion quickens as her hostess muses upon the general significance of connection to place and to Howards End in particular. In this situation of hospitality, it is Margaret Schlegel who needs to be introduced to the life of the spirit, much in the same way as Leonard Bast longs to be introduced to the life of culture. The refinement of her ethical and imaginative sensibility is then intensified in the subsequent scene, in which Margaret and Mrs Wilcox go Christmas shopping together in the city. The overriding materialism and consumerism of metropolitan life make Margaret aware of "the grotesque impact of the unseen upon the seen" (Forster 2000, 69), and her spiritual discontent finds expression in a desire for transcendence that she articulates in secular, agnostic terms: "[s]he was not a Christian in the accepted sense […] [b]ut in public who shall express the unseen adequately? It is private life that holds out the mirror to infinity; personal intercourse […] that ever hints at a personality beyond our daily vision" (69). Significantly, *Howards End*'s critique of the spiritual torpor that affects modern individuals is tied to the extensive critique of modernity articulated by the novel's narrator. The text famously

presents modernity as an age of alienation, disconnection, and spiritual rootlessness, with humanity featuring as a "nomadic horde" (128) that inhabits "the civilization of luggage" (128). The manifest impossibility of returning to an idealised community rooted in an agrarian economy – which the novel only realises in its idyllic, pastoral ending – clashes against the capitalist and imperialist socioeconomic order of the metropolis. The volatility of capital finds its counterpart in the male Wilcoxes' inability to establish a meaningful relation to the houses and lands they inhabit: as Helen comments, they "collect houses like […] tadpoles" (145), and when they move from one house to another they only leave "a little dust and a little money behind" (213). Against this logic of endless accumulation, Ruth Wilcox represents for Margaret a transcendent detachment from materialism that is rooted in the primacy of ethics, giving, and hospitality.

The association of friendship and intimacy with a secular form of transcendence culminates with the informal testament by which Mrs Wilcox bequeaths Howards End to Margaret, following the older woman's death by illness. The unconventionality of this bequest, as Bateman writes, "bypasses tradition, neglects heterosexual modes of inheritance and problematizes her maternal persona" (2011, 187), thus acting as a form of invitation down "a queer path, an alternate subject position visible to 'he who strives to look deeper'" (188). Obviously, the slip of paper left by Mrs Wilcox has no legal value, and the ethical complexity of the decision faced by the male Wilcoxes is mediated by a lengthy narratorial intervention. The narrator finally concludes that, despite the sensible decision of the Wilcoxes to ignore the note and to retain ownership of Howards End, "one hard fact remains. They did neglect a personal appeal" (Forster 2000, 85). The ethical problem generated by this informal will points to the clash of conflicting codes of conduct – one dictated by jurisprudence, the other by ethical consideration of the other's will, however unreasonable it may appear.

Most significantly for my discussion, however, Mrs Wilcox's bequest of Howards End to Margaret Schlegel constitutes the central act of hospitality of the novel, a gesture of supreme or divine hospitality, by virtue of its association with transcendence. Since, throughout the narrative, Ruth Wilcox always figures as inextricably connected to her family farm and acts as a tutelary spirit of the house, the giving away of Howards End constitutes a veritable giving away of the self: it is a gesture that invites Margaret to transition from guest to hostess of the house herself, and thus to become Ruth Wilcox's own uncanny double (as testified by Miss Avery's misrecognition when Margaret first enters

the house [231]). Mrs Wilcox's act of supreme hospitality and uncanny transcendence of death stirs Margaret's romantic imagination, figuring later in the novel as a recurrent suggestion of spectrality as a sanctifying presence at Howards End. The virtual homelessness experienced by Margaret Schlegel since the end of the lease at Wickham Place, which places her in a precarious position until a new, permanent accommodation is found, leads her to Howards End as the final stage of her quest for a home. Only as a recipient of Mrs Wilcox's supreme hospitality will Margaret be able to experience the joys of domesticity in a way that Topolovská likens to the Heideggerian notion of dwelling (2018, 90). The concealing of Ruth Wilcox's will also puts Margaret before yet another trial, the coming into possession of Howards End through her own means and resourcefulness while honouring the former Mrs Wilcox's ethos of hospitality and welcome. By the end of the novel, this effort is described in heroic terms: "[t]here was something uncanny in her triumph. She […] had charged through these Wilcoxes and broken up their lives" (Forster 2000, 291). However, the militaristic undertones of this statement are undercut by the transformation undergone by Howards End itself, from a mere countryside farm to an enduring, integrative literary symbol of community and harmony. Before closing my argument, I now turn to a discussion of Howards End as a house and as a symbol made for, and shaped by, hospitality.

Howards End provides a suitable synthesis for the tradition of hospitality embodied by both the Schlegel and Howard families. The creed of faith in others voiced by Schlegel senior, which I mentioned above, finds an exact correspondence in Miss Avery's recollection of hospitality in her youth at Howards End: "[o]ld Mrs Howard never spoke against anybody, nor let anyone be turned away without food. Then it was never 'Trespassers will be prosecuted' in their land, but would people please not come in? Mrs Howard was never created to run a farm" (234). The demise of the Howard family and the state of disrepair of their house before Mr Wilcox's intervention locates their ethos of openness in a distant golden age of hospitality, an attitude which is currently unsustainable due to the lack of business sense that it entails (Margaret's dwelling at Howards End is ultimately liberated from the requirements of efficiency and productivity, as it is supported by Henry Wilcox's imperial trade). Margaret's spiritual inheritance of Howards End begins as she enters the house alone after the previous tenant, Mr Bryce, has died abroad. Inside, Margaret is astonished to find that the housekeeper, herself a symbolic emissary of the prophetic influence exerted

by Ruth Wilcox, has arranged the Schlegels' own furniture in the empty house. The house comes to life once more, as the personal history of the Schlegels is inscribed into the architecture and natural landscape of Howards End, thus creating a strong affective bond between individual and place. As Rankin Russell notes, "Forster suggests that beloved things, cultural or natural, such as books and trees, along with places, forge and maintain links to our common humanity and to our departed family members" (2016, 204). This imbrication of place and personal history is the first step towards the condition of homeliness that constitutes the prerequisite for any situation of hospitality, and that will allow Margaret to rise to the position of hostess later in the novel.

If Howards End is to represent a house shaped by an ethics of hospitality, its location in the English countryside must be considered as an essential feature of the welcome that the house offers to prospective visitors. As I have suggested above, Howards End famously provides a respite from the "civilization of luggage" (Forster 2000, 128) and the corresponding sense of flux and rootlessness that afflicts Margaret. The reason for this is to be found in its physical remove from the metropolis, and in the generic and thematic lineage that connects it to the tradition of country house hospitality. The tradition of country house literature in English as a genre is generally held to begin with a small corpus of 17th-century "country house poems," the most famous one being Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" (1616). These texts generally confer honour and praise upon the master of the house, who also acts as literary patron and host to the poet. A central element of their celebratory function is represented by the appreciation for the master's generous hospitality, expressed in the image of the lavish feast to which all who contribute to the economy of the estate are admitted. Crucially, the lord's hospitality provides a key image of harmonious and hierarchical class relations: McClung identifies a "moral economy" operative in such social occasions, for "the functioning of the estate depends upon the observing of the proper relationships between the classes of society or between the offices of the estate" (1977, 105). Thus, traditional country house hospitality may be termed an instance of conservative hospitality, consonant with the ideological function performed by country house poems (Spurr 2012, 20). At Howards End, however, such a tradition of country house hospitality is refashioned in a more democratic vein: even as the narrator at one point acknowledges that "the feudal ownership of the land did bring dignity" (Forster 2000, 128), the house is not presided by a patronising medieval lord, but by the female tutelary spirit of Mrs Wilcox; its

style is overall modest and proportionate, as detailed by Helen in her opening letter (3), rather than "built to envious show" (Jonson 1995, 66). Margaret's famous pronouncement about the countryside of Hertfordshire goes, "the appearance of the land was neither aristocratic nor suburban […] left to itself […] this country would vote Liberal" (Forster 2000, 228). Wiener (2004, 13) details how, beginning in the Victorian age, the newly acquired middle-class taste for rural living was part of a larger process of absorption of aristocratic values by the bourgeoisie; among these, in this case, we may count the notion of country house hospitality.

At Howards End, Margaret recognises her duty of hospitality as mistress and hostess of the house. Thus, she rebels against the patriarchal order represented by Henry and Charles Wilcox, and she does not take part in their plan to ensnare the pregnant Helen in the country house by deceptive means. In this way, Margaret honours Ruth Wilcox's notion of Christian hospitality to sinners, which is reinforced by the narrator's claim that "[i]t is those who cannot connect who hasten to cast the first stone" (Forster 2000, 266). As I have discussed, in *Howards End* transcendence of the material world can only be achieved through a romantic, imaginative interaction with place. As Margaret and Helen are reunited at Howards End, there comes the former's recognition of Ruth Wilcox as the possessor of a supra-human, prophetic awareness and sanctifying presence that transcends death and human realities (268). This is what accompanies "the peace of the country" and "of the present" (269) that blesses the sisters as they spend the night at the farm. Commenting on Margaret's position at Howards End, Bateman suggests that "[she] enriches the queerness of a bequeathing intended not to protect and privatize property, but to deterritorialize it and expand its ownership – an ownership defined less by law and custom than by emotional investment" (2011, 192). Following Derrida, he also writes that the house "belongs neither to Ruth nor to Margaret but to the invitation that binds them" (193). Thus, in the romantic mode, this idealisation of hospitality at Howards End makes the house into a secular sanctuary for ethical values, which in Margaret's view centre around the respect for and the coexistence with difference: "[i]t is part of the battle against sameness. Differences – eternal differences […] so that there may always be colour; sorrow perhaps, but colour in the daily gray" (Forster 2000, 288).

The romantic mode that dominates the novel's final chapters, however, is also problematised by several aspects that question the future existence of Howards End as a haven for liberal, ethical values. Leonard Bast is notably excluded from the final idyll of the book, though his child survives and opens up the possibility

for a reformed vision of the nuclear family. Meanwhile, the future of Howards End is threatened by the expansion of the "red rust" (289) of suburbia, which threatens the country house with the prospect of deadening undifferentiation and homogeneity. At the same time, however, Howards End retains a disturbing dependence on the capital acquired by Henry Wilcox through his imperial and commercial enterprise. The farm itself had been rescued from mismanagement and economic decay by Henry's intervention, which provided the material conditions for Margaret's imaginative and romantic dwelling at Howards End; in the novel's final pages, the islands of money upon which Margaret and the Wilcoxes rest ensure their financial security and the continued prosperity of the household. These factors, in addition to the threatening image of looming suburbia, complicate the conception of Howards End as a household devoted to hospitality and reveal its position of besieged insularity. The democratic impulse to openness and equality is problematised by the rejection of the very suburbia that Leonard Bast inhabits, a reaction which Hegglund identifies as emblematic of a tendency of Edwardian intellectuals to distance themselves from perceived agents of mass cultural contamination – for example, the humble clerk (1997, 399-401). In *Of Hospitality*, Jacques Derrida focuses on the "irreducible pervertibility" (2000, 25) of the law of hospitality, insofar as an absolute, ethical, and unconditional hospitality must also be extended to an other who may exert violence, dispossession, or usurpation onto the host. *Howards End* ultimately remains unable to overcome the aporetic state created by its simultaneous embrace of an ethics of hospitality and by the "closing of the gates" (Forster 2000, 223) of Margaret's mind and of the house alike.

In addition to the thematic level, Howards End also serves as a symbolically hospitable house. Michael Levenson argues that the novel functions synecdochically: "[i]t withdraws from a broad canvas; it reduces its scale; its battles are all waged among individuals. But in retreating to the partial view, it asks those parts to stand for the whole" (1991, 91). Levenson focuses on the political import of the synecdochical operation for Forster's liberalism; for the purposes of my discussion, however, it is sufficient to note that in *Howards End* the country house acts not only as a private retreat but as an aggregating and integrative cultural symbol. As Tereza Topolovská writes, in the 20th century the country house acquired "abstract meaning as the embodiment of history" and operated "in the formation of national identity" (2018, 9-10) – a symbolic role that resonates with *Howards End*'s preoccupation with the historical, social, and cultural

condition of Edwardian England. If the country house is to figure as an integrative force in society and culture, then its status as literary symbol implies an ethical openness on the symbolic level. As a literary symbol of harmony and aggregation, one that is persuasive enough to construe a community of meaning built around its ideal of ethical and rural hospitality, Howards End must remain open and available to interpretation, ultimately liberated from the contingencies of the realist mode: only thus can the barriers of the self be transcended through a romantic and imaginative gesture of hospitality. Nevertheless, at the thematic level Howards End remains private, insular, and thus figuratively inhospitable, and the text does not suggest any logical indication that the house may provide a viable way forward for English national life in modernity.

In *Howards End* the mediation between the private (the dimension to which Margaret Schlegel retreats as she goes "from words to things" [Forster 2000, 223]) and the public (to which the novel's symbolic architecture aspires through its use of synecdoche) points to a complicated, even contradictory ethical commitment to hospitality. The hospitable encounter is envisioned throughout the text as a potential "escape hatch" that determines the novel's insistent association between hospitality and the romantic mode, as testified by the sisters' interactions with Leonard Bast. Finally, transcendence of the boundaries of the self and access to the metaphysical reality of place is afforded by Ruth Wilcox's gesture of supreme hospitality towards Margaret, which ends her condition of spiritual homelessness and allows her to rise to the degree of hostess to the reformed, democratic country house. As a result of this spiritual inheritance, Howards End undergoes a symbolic transformation into a home that presents a powerful, if unstable, symbol of hospitality and harmony.

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Emilio Salgari and E. M. Forster: Two Indias, Multiple Imaginaries

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Abstract: My comparative analysis of two major texts dealing with pre-Independence India produced by two European writers at the turn of the past century – *I misteri della jungla nera* (*The Mysteries of the Black Jungle*, 1895) by Emilio Salgari and *A Passage to India* (1924) by E. M. Forster – stems from the basic assumption stated in Lisa Lowe's 1991 seminal study on Forster's novel, namely the "ruling British perspective that traditionally considered India a colorful backdrop to the central British drama, and Indians as peripheral objects to be colonized and scrutinized rather than as possessing a point of view themselves." In Salgari's novel, this perspective will be challenged through the creation of a Hindu hero involved in a passionate love relationship with an English girl gone hybrid, while in Forster's plot, strictly set within the boundaries of Anglo-India, a Muslim co-protagonist ineffectually woos a forbidden object of desire, a young lady traveler from the mother country.

Since the plots of the two novels proceed along divergent lines and in different historical contexts – Salgari's on the eve of the 1857 Great Mutiny and Forster's in the aftermath of the Amritsar massacre of 1919 – both authors conceive and appropriate in a different way the pre-Independence India they want to describe. If we keep in mind that in 1895, when Salgari published his novel, Lord Curzon, viceroy of India, had just passed a code that severely punished any sexual contact between white women and Indian men we can fully appreciate the extent of Salgari's writing strategy as opposed to contemporary Victorian authors like Kipling, Conrad, and Forster, who adopted by comparison the sexually biased interpretation that forbade interaction between individuals who

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were considered racially different, a view that considered all 'natives' anywhere in the empire as "*niggers*", whether they belonged to the Irish whites or to the South African Hottentots.

Two different Indias thus come to life: Salgari's anticipates a postcolonial scenario, while Forster's confirms the existing prejudices and stereotypes contained in Kipling's imperialistic outlook.

Keywodrs: Emilio Salgari, Edward Morgan Forster, Rudyard Kipling, India in literature, Postcolonial studies

It is the "night of 16 May 1855," and Emilio Salgari's opening lines of his Indian novel, *I misteri della jungla nera* (*The Mysteries of the Black Jungle*, 1895), focus readers' attention on the delta of the Ganges spreading over the gulf of Bengal:

> The Gange (Ganges), this famous river celebrated by ancient and modern Indians alike, whose waters are deemed sacred by everyone, after flowing across the snowy peaks of Himalaya and the rich provinces of Sirinagar (Srinagar), of Delhi, of Odhe (Odisha), of Bahare (Bihar), of Bengala (Bengal), divides itself in two branches at the distance of two hundred and twenty miles from the ocean, thus forming a gigantic delta, a marvelous and intricate maze which is probably unique.
>
> The imposing mass of waters divides and subdivides itself in a multitude of rivulets, canals and small channels that give a jagged appearance to the immense spread of lands extending between the Hugly (Hugli), the real Ganges, and the gulf of Bengal. As a result, you can find an infinite number of islands, islets, and river banks that, edging towards the sea, acquire the name of *Sunderbunds* (Sundarbans).
>
> Nothing could be more desolating, strange and frightening than the sight of these *Sunderbunds*. Not a town, not a village, not a hut, not even a shelter; from south to north, from east to west, nothing else than immense extensions of thorny bamboos are to be seen, closely knit together, and whose tall ends move at the blow of a wind which smells horribly from the unbearable exhalations let out by the thousands and thousands of dead human corpses left to rot in the poisonous waters of the canals.

> It is rare if you can spot a *banian* (banyan) towering over those gigantic canes; even rarer it is to find a group of *manghieri* (mango-trees), *giacchieri* (jack-fruit trees) and *nagassi* (cannon-ball trees) surging over the marshland, or that the sweet perfume of jasmine, *sciambaga* (champakas) or *mussenda* (dhobi tree) reaches your nostrils, as they shyly peek through such a chaos of plants.
> During the day, a funereal gigantic silence, that oppresses with fear even the bravest, reigns supreme; during the night, a horrifying din filled with howls, roars, hisses and whistles freezes the blood in your veins. (*MJN*, 279)[1]

Sight and sound – as well as smell – powerfully lead readers towards an overwhelming experience that will change forever their perception of what India *really is*. I would like to set the incipit of *I misteri della jungla nera* against the opening paragraph of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, published almost thirty years later, in 1924:

> Except for the Marabar Caves—and they are twenty miles off—the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely. There are no bathing-steps on the river front, as the Ganges happens not to be holy here; indeed there is no river front, and bazaars shut out the wide and shifting panorama of the stream. The streets are mean, the temples ineffective, and though a few fine houses exist they are hidden away in gardens or down alleys whose filth deters all but the invited guest. Chandrapore was never large or beautiful, but two hundred years ago it lay on the road between Upper India, then imperial, and the sea, and the fine houses date from that period. The zest for decoration stopped in the eighteenth century, nor was it ever democratic. There is no painting and scarcely

1 I have deliberately kept in this paragraph the nouns employed by Salgari to enhance the musical quality of the text, and I have given between parentheses the translation by Vescovi 2019, 8. All translations from Salgari's novel are mine and will be marked in the text with *MJN* followed by page number; all quotations from Forster's novel will be marked in the text with *APTI* followed by page number, and from Kipling's *Kim* with *K*.

> any carving in the bazaars. The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life. (*APTI*, 5-6)

Whereas the Sundarbans form the still existing natural habitat of the coast of Bengal and Bangladesh, Chandrapore is an invented city set on the banks of the Ganges, reproducing Bankipur, a suburb east of Patna, in the state of Bihar, up north from the delta. When I wrote my first postcolonial essay on Salgari (see Galli Mastrodonato, 1996) I wanted to measure the way in which two Western authors had inscribed into their novels "the representation and appropriation of India as Other" (Lowe 1991, 122). Although Salgari's and Forster's Western affiliations were very different, one writing (very little) in a hegemonic language spreading over the imperialistic occupation of foreign lands, the other writing (very much) in what has become economically a minor and 'southern' European idiom, both white writers staged in their Indian narratives a close encounter between a 'native' and a young English woman.

Emilio Salgari was born in Verona in 1862 and died by suicide in Turin in 1911. Italy's great adventure novelist ranks fourth as the most translated author after Umberto Eco, Italo Calvino, and Dante, and is considered among the fifteen celebrities who have distinguished themselves since the reunification of the country in 1861 (see Galli Mastrodonato 2024, Introduction, 1-18). After publishing in 1883 *La Tigre della Malesia* (*The Tiger of Malaysia*), starring Sandokan, the Bornean prince turned pirate, Salgari will devote other fascinating novels to Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent, inaugurating a literary cycle that deeply challenges common ideas and stereotypes held during his time about the Orient and the Other.

Although both narrations set their plots around a precise topography, the river Ganges, the effect that the two authors want to convey to their reading publics is diametrically opposed. While Chandrapore becomes *by reduction* a filthy "excrescence" (*APTI*, 6) devoid of any interest, Salgari's *Sunderbunds* become *by accumulation* a "marvelous" and "unique" (*MJN*, 279) multiplier of signifiers and signified. Where sacredness is taken away ("the Ganges happens not to be holy

here", *APTI*, 5), in the other text an unequivocal marker of a cultural and religious identity is added ("whose waters are deemed sacred by everyone", *MJN*, 279). Where the strange and the different are mimetically represented as a "low but indestructible form of life" (*APTI*, 6) that has to be looked upon with disgust (rubbish, filth), in the other the alien universe ("desolating, strange and frightening", *MJN*, 279) is deconstructed through the luscious semantic explosion of foreign etyma, which plunge readers directly within an all-encompassing sensuous experience (*manghieri, giacchieri, nagassi, sciambaga, mussenda*).

Where Chandrapore acquired some "beauty" only at the time of its colonisation by the British "in the eighteenth century" (*APTI*, 6), the Sundarbans, where the majestic river ends, appeal to "ancient and modern Indians alike" (*MJN*, 279), thus setting a crucially discriminating outlook on the background that will be framed into the different narrations. In Forster's view, we can only expect to encounter "mean" streets and people made of "mud" who worship in "ineffective" temples, while through Salgari's cinematic gaze, readers embrace a wide horizon (immense, gigantic) that proceeds from the "rich" provinces to the peculiar habitat of the delta flowing through the religious immanence of the Ganges. Something is similar, though, and it is the mysterious relationship that seems to exist between life and death carried by the ominous image of "people … drowned and left rotting" (*APTI*, 6) and "the thousands and thousands of dead human corpses left to rot in the poisonous waters of the canals" (*MJN*, 279). There is some dark secret that cannot be named in both texts, well hidden in the labyrinthine depths of the Marabar caves for the English author and in the black "hissing" jungle for our Italian one.

Since the plots of the two novels proceed along divergent lines and in different historical contexts – Salgari's on the eve of the 1857 Great Mutiny and Forster's in the aftermath of the Amritsar massacre of 1919 – both authors conceive and appropriate in a different way the pre-Independence India they want to describe.

If we keep in mind that in 1895, when Salgari published *I misteri della jungla nera* – with the passionate love story between a Bengali snake hunter and the daughter of a British garrison officer – Lord Curzon, viceroy of India, had just passed a code that severely punished any sexual contact between 'natives' and whites, especially sanctioning relations between "white women and Indian men" (Williams 1994, 492), we can fully appreciate the extent of Salgari's writing strategy. Contemporary Victorian authors like Kipling, Conrad, and Forster, as we shall see, adopted by comparison the sexually biased interpretation that

forbade interaction between individuals who were considered racially different, a view that considered all 'natives' anywhere in the empire as "niggers", whether they belonged to the Irish whites or to the South African Hottentots.[2]

Closing in on the subject of their stories, Salgari and Forster adopted opposite writing techniques. While Forster maintains the Western travel narrative convention – white protagonists who meet non-white characters in a foreign setting they have reached by displacing themselves from the mother country to which they will eventually return – Salgari instead places readers directly into the matter of his narration by using the *in medias res* modernist device. As we shall see, the so called natives and the British are equally part of the picture framing the Raj of the mid-nineteenth century, thus giving consistency to an insightful comment by Lisa Lowe, namely that Salgari critically challenged the "ruling British perspective that traditionally considered India a colorful backdrop to the central British drama, and Indians as peripheral objects to be colonized and scrutinized rather than as possessing a point of view themselves" (Lowe 1991, 103).

Let us consider first Salgari's colored hero as he lies asleep next to a "vast and sturdy bamboo hut," dressed only in " a large *dootèe* (dhoti) of printed *chites* (chintz)," which lays bare an "Indian athletically built" whose limbs and muscles are "overdeveloped," a clear sign of "his uncommon strength joined to the suppleness of an ape":

> He was a handsome type of Bengalese, around 30 years of age, of a yellowish hue that was extremely shiny due to the coconut oil which anointed his skin; he had fine traits, his lips were full without being gross and through them you could see that he had admirable teeth; his nose was well formed, his forehead high, and crossed over with ash lines, the specific sign of the worshippers of Shiva. The whole setup expressed a rare energy and an extraordinary bravery, two features that are generally lacking in his compatriots. (*MJN*, 280)

We meet doctor Aziz in the chapter following the first, which was significantly entitled "Mosque": "He was an athletic little man, daintily put together, but

2 Lord Salisbury, in the years between 1885 and 1902, defined as racially inferior all subjects of British dominions, whether referred to the Irish or the Hottentots, and had gone as far as calling "a 'nigger' that black man, a politician from India"; see Henry Wesseling, *La spartizione dell'Africa, 1880-1914* (Milan, 2001), 218, my translation.

really very strong. Nevertheless walking fatigued him, as it fatigues everyone in India except the newcomer. There is something hostile in that soil" (*APTI*, 16).

Although both non-white characters are "athletic" and pleasant looking, Aziz is small-sized and overwhelmed ("fatigued") by the "hostile" background against which he is framed, while the young man asleep in the jungle is transfigured in the living emblem of a signifying habitat that is literally painted on his majestic body. Both are Indian, but, as we shall see, the *emic* difference between them is profound. While Aziz falls victim to the tragic comedy of errors culminating in his trial by an illegitimate colonial court, Tremal-Naik fights against a powerful internal enemy and the British administration at the same time.

So complex is Salgari's deconstruction in the opening paragraphs of his novel of what was perceived as 'India' and 'Indian,' that I shall concentrate again on the protagonist seen lying next to the hut where he lives. His sleep is "not peaceful," his "wide chest" heaves and he perspires, his dhoti becomes "undone," and "his small hands similar to a woman's" tear a turban from the head, which is "perfectly shaved." He mumbles broken sentences with a "passionate tone":

> – There she is,– … Why is she hiding?... What have I done? Is it not the right spot?... Next to the mussenda with blood colored leaves? …
>
> Ahi… Here she comes.., her blue eyes look upon me, her lips are smiling… oh! how divine is that smile! My heavenly vision, why do you remain speechless in front of me? Why are you staring at me?... Don't be afraid: I am Tremal-Naik *the snake hunter of the black jungle* … (*MJN*, 281)

Some estranging elements are placed at the onset of narration: the protagonist is an oriental man wearing a turban, his hair has been shaved, and he carries on his forehead the marks of one of the three sacred gods of Hindu worship, the lord Shiva. As for the *maharatto* that accompanies Tremal-Naik, Kammamuri, he is an exponent of the longest-lasting Hindu kingdom, the Marathi empire, which successfully resisted British colonial expansion for two centuries before being militarily subdued in 1806, with the last leader, Peshwa Baji Rao II, finally defeated in 1819.

Thus, the Hindu identity of the Indian subcontinent is clearly established by Salgari at the onset of narration, an identity that at the time comprised roughly three-quarters of the whole population, "one quarter being Muslim" as a result of invasions dating from the fourteenth century (Torri 2000, 169, my translation).

Strangely enough, Forster capsizes this proportion by making a Muslim, Dr. Aziz, the 'native' co-protagonist of his novel, while the only Hindu character – albeit a marginal one – is represented by Professor Godbole, a diminutive "Minister of Education," who goes "barefoot and in white," wearing a "pale blue turban" and with his "gold pince-nez … caught in a jasmine garland," to attend a meaningless religious ceremony, "a frustration of reason and form," accompanied by "six colleagues" who "clashed their cymbals, hit small drums, droned upon a portable harmonium, and sang" a tedious chant, "Tukaram, Tukaram / Thou art my father and mother and everybody" (*APTI*, 283).

Very recently, a postcolonial critic has defined Professor Godbole as a "good Hindu," a "mystic" who interprets perfectly Said's theory of "tolerance", a "'force' enabling the connections between different races, classes, and nations" (Khan 2021, 115, 107), while heavily omitting with dots whole sections of the passage full of ironic contempt and racist reductionism I have just quoted. Conversely, the eminent critic and writer Nirad C. Chaudhuri was outraged at Forster's depiction of Godbole, represented "not [as] an exponent of Hinduism [but as] a clown" (in Lowe 1991, 132).[3] Chaudhuri also criticized Forster's representation of "Indo-British relations" as a "problem of personal behavior," since he rightly asserts that India is "not predominantly Muslim but Hindu," and a character like Aziz would have displeased "many Muslims [as well who] were fiercely anti-British and would not have accepted a subservient role" (in Lowe 1991, 125).

The same awkward and misleading outlook that discriminates against the beliefs of the majority of the Indian people was expressed by Rudyard Kipling in *Kim* (1901), where it is stated that "at least one-third of the population prays eternally to some group or other of the many million deities, and so reveres every sort of holy man" (*K*, 266) and where a Tibetan lama and a Muslim horse trader become the 'native' adjutants in the white boy's epic search for his origins, although Buddhism "had disappeared completely from the subcontinent in the thirteenth century" (Torri 2000, 63, my translation). A final warning is voiced by the omniscient imperial author: "[Hindu] Gods are many-armed and malignant. Let them alone" (*K*, 71).

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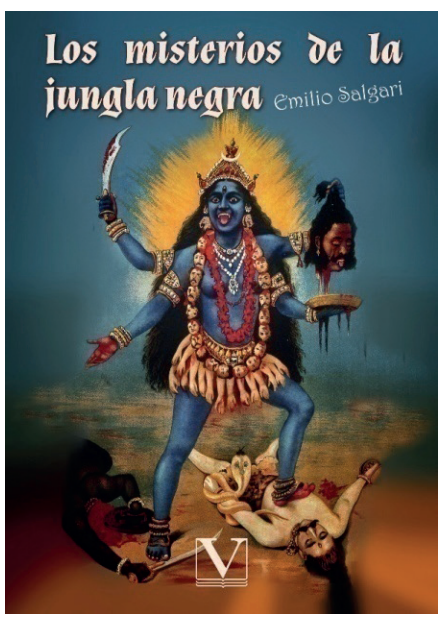
3 In a selection of his letters published in 1953, relating to his stay in India in 1921, Forster described "the religious festival of Holi" as "'the Hindu Dyonisia', a 'ribald Oriental farce' [which amounted] to scenic chaos and musical discordance"; *The Hill of Devi*, in Delmas, *passim*. M. K. Naik argues that "Godbole and the Hindu doctor Panna Lal are drawn from stereotypes [and] the description of the Gokul Ashtami ceremony in the 'Temple' section is a comic parody" (in Lowe 1991, 125).

As a challenge against such reductionist stereotypes, Salgari places the black goddess Kali at the center of the *Mysteries of the Black Jungle*. Bruno Lo Turco has correctly interpreted Emilio Salgari's breakthrough representation of Indian otherness:

> The goddess must have appeared [to the first British missionaries] as the true image of everything they had to fight against. First of all, she displayed the attractive body of a completely naked young woman. At best, a short skirt made of severed arms barely covered her womb. Then, the color of her skin was dark blue or right out black. And, notwithstanding her attractive body, she wore a pair of fangs amidst which hung a long tongue tainted with the blood she had to drink to appease her thirst. Furthermore, she wore a necklace of severed heads. She raised triumphantly with one of her four arms another severed head, much larger. (Lo Turco 2014, 208, my translation)

This is how Kali is represented on the cover of a recent Spanish translation of *I misteri della jungla nera* (Ill. 1):



[Book cover, 2021, by permission of Editorial Verbum, Madrid]

It is highly unlikely that an entity like Kali could make it through Victorian censorship against the worship of statues, naked women albeit black, and the emphasis on blood and death, an explosive anti-Orientalist cocktail that instead shows India as a hybrid, mixed and black world sharply confronting the stereotyped whiteness of the British and the *niggerness* of the so called natives.

The same shocking difference is interpreted by Salgari's unconventional white heroine, the Virgin of the Temple. Whereas Forster has staged a close encounter by constructing Miss Adela Quested at the center of attention between Fielding and Aziz, Miss Ada Corishant is at the heart of the strife between Tremal-Naik and Suyodhana, the ominous leader of the Thugs who had Ada kidnapped as a child, thus deconstructing the basic assumption of a colonial novel, namely that the white woman is a forbidden object of desire for the native/*nigger* and that no durable relationship can unite two racial opposites.

It is useful to recall how Forster envisaged this encounter between his female protagonist and her native counterpart: Miss Quested, betrothed to the British Ronny, "wants to see the real India" and this "desire … lands her in trouble when, during an expedition to the Marabar caves, Adela has an *hallucination*, and she accuses Aziz of sexual assault" (Khan 2021, 114, my emphasis), thus confirming the colonialist assumption that "the Other is always perceived as a potential danger" and that "fear of being raped [by an Oriental] surfaces as a leitmotif in novels of the period" (Renouard 2004, 74, my translation). The "desire" felt for the two Indian men is the same for both English heroines, but Adela represses it as a forbidden imaginary construct (an *hallucination*), while, instead, Ada becomes a *vision* of beauty and sensual attraction for her oriental viewer, a topsy-turvy change of perspective, which is absolutely unique during Salgari's times.

In the same way, by having the Hindu Brahmin Suyodhana kidnap an English girl, Salgari seems to conform to "the classic story of white women being kidnapped and sold into sexual slavery, ending up in the harem of an Eastern prince" (Wagner 2013, 164), while in fact he cleverly deconstructs this engrained stereotype by having Ada become a *devadāsī*, the vestal Virgin of a Hindu goddess, Kali, in a Hindu temple.

Ada and Adela are nevertheless enchanting, each in her own way, two English misses deeply enmeshed in the "great, grey, formless" magma that Kipling thought was India (*K*, 134). Adela goes underground in the Marabar caves in the company of Aziz and wonders about the impending marriage to Ronny, stopping abruptly at a question: "'What about love?'" (*APTI*, 149), while Ada finds

love with Tremal-Naik in the labyrinthine tunnels underneath the sacred banyan on Raimangal island, where she is forced to worship Kali by the Thugs. Adela feels that she should not "succumb" to "Anglo-India" but is unable to go hybrid with the "handsome little Oriental," whom she finally offends (*APTI*, 149-151), while Ada, the cherished daughter of Scottish captain Macpherson/Corishant, wore a sari and played the sitar while singing Auld Lang Syne.

Sankaran Krishna reminds us of the metamorphosis undergone by the Oriental imaginary when it is swept over by colonialism. Those lands that "in 1492 … were lands of such fabled wealth and riches that they could lure Christopher Columbus and his intrepid crew to embark on a dangerous and uncertain voyage to find them, … [have become] synonymous with poverty and squalor" (Krishna 2013, 338). According to this view, Kipling conceives the only Indian woman present in *Kim*, the fortune-teller Huneefa: "The room, with its dirty cushions and half-smoked hookahs, smelt abominably of stale tobacco. In one corner lay a huge and shapeless woman clad in greenish gauzes, and decked, brow, nose, ear, neck, wrist, arm, waist, and ankle with heavy native jewellery. When she turned it was like the clashing of copper pots" (*K*, 253). In sharp contrast, once in the underground pagoda, Tremal-Naik recognizes Ada, "the apparition in the *jungla*," under the "large silk sari" that she lets fall to the ground, in the full light of a sun ray:

> That maiden was literally covered with gold and precious stones of an immense value. A golden cuirass encrusted with the most astounding diamonds of Golconda and Guzerate (Gujarat) and that carried the mysterious serpent with a woman's head enclosed completely her bosom, ending inside a large *cachemire* (cashmere) scarf woven in silver that surrounded her hips; various pearl and diamond necklaces hung on her neck, the gems as large as hazelnuts; large bracelets encrusted with precious stones adorned her bare arms, and a pair of wide pants made of white silk were stopped with coral rings of the prettiest red at the ankles of her tiny and bare feet. (*MJN*, 315)

To Forster, Indians were a "single mess" that exhaled an "indescribable smell," which felt "disquieting" as Adela rambled lost in the "bazaars" (*APTI*, 229), and notwithstanding the authorial sympathy for the group of Muslim native ladies (they speak Urdu) invited to the Bridge Party at the Club who stand "timid" and with "their faces pressed into a bank of shrubs" (*APTI*, 39),

the general feeling that Mrs. Turton wants to convey to Mrs. Moore is that Indian women can at best be "servants," and even the few "ranis" present (the equivalent of queens) are "uncertain, cowering, recovering, giggling, making tiny gestures of atonement or despair at all that was said" (*APTI*, 40-41).

It is clear that Forster and Kipling conceived of India exactly in the same terms; there is nothing regal, noble, wealthy, attractive or even decent and clean in the native characters they imagined for their white supremacist plots, while Salgari has created world-famous colored heroes and heroines (among them, the Indian Rani of Assam, Surama) that convey a sense of unending fascination with their looks, their attire, their beliefs, their ornaments, their jewels, their dances, their music, their warlike spirit and their sophisticated plurimillennial culture, which shines through the eyes of its holy men.[4]

Two distinct views of India that, in turn, bring to life two opposing imaginaries. In a selection of essays published by Forster in 1951, the author admits that, prior to his meeting Masood in the early years of the twentieth century, India "'was a vague jumble of rajahs, sahibs, babus, and elephants, and I was not interested in such a jumble: who could be?'" (*Two Cheers for Democracy*, in Lowe 1991, 133). The Italian Emilio Salgari – almost thirty years before *A Passage to India* – had answered the rhetorical question by producing an interesting *jungle* instead of the indistinct *jumble* mentioned by his British colleague, a view that for the times in which Salgari's novel appeared remains an undisputable anti-Orientalist feat.

Some further examples will clarify my interpretation. In Forster's *A Passage to India* set in the 1920s, is also absent the rising political opposition and "ferment" of a budding nationalist party, resulting in a fake vision of history strongly

4 In the enlarged edition of the *Mysteries* published in 1903, a secondary role is assigned to Vindhya, a *ramanandy*, belonging to one of the several groups of "saintly men" correctly mentioned by Salgari (*MJN*, 566-568), such as "*porom-hungse*, *dondy*, *saniassi*, *nanek-punthy*, *biscnub*, and *abd-hut*" (from Hindi and Sanskrit Paramahansa, Dandi, sannyasins, bišnawī, Nanakpanthi, abdhūt; see Mancini, in Galli Mastrodonato 2024, 341). The festival of *madace-pongol* in honor of Vishnu (from tamil māṭu poṅkal), the "feast of cows," is described in detail,while a "handsome and imposing Brahmin" met by Tremal-Naik inside a pagoda where he had sought shelter, voices the view that "Brahmins hate the English because they are India's oppressors, and they hate as well the sepoys who … have become the allies of the cursed white race" (*MJN*, 535).The *bajadera* Surama, a dancing girl who in reality is a dethroned princess, recovers her kingdom thanks to Sandokan and his Portuguese partner Yanez de Gomera leading their Malaysian fighters, in *Alla conquista di un impero* (*Conquering an Empire*, 1907), while in *Il Bramino dell'Assam* (*The Brahmin of Assam*, 1911) a fakir belonging to a "pariah" sect causes havoc in the Rani's kingdom by subjugating Surama with the "powerful magnetic fluid" emanating from his eyes (see Galli Mastrodonato 2024, 327-328).

censured by the influential critic Kunwar Natwar-Singh, the construction of a "pre-1914" India that had no objective relation to the "real" country in which the novel's plot took place (Lowe 1991, 132). As we have seen, not only the few Hindu characters are diminished and ridiculed, but the essence of India as a country on the verge of an upheaval is reductively minimized in the dramatic refashioning of the struggle between the British occupiers and the inhabitants of the subcontinent as a farcical confrontation in the colonial hall that hosts the trial against Aziz, the native who was accused of attempted rape of a European woman.

While in *Kim* there is almost no echo of the major event that shook nineteenth-century India to its foundations, the Sepoy Mutiny,[5] even more striking is Forster's silencing and guilty omission of what had happened "in Amritsar, in the Punjab province of India, in April 1919." Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, known as "the Butcher of Amritsar," had his troops fire "1,650 bullets" over a period of "ten minutes" on the crowd that had gathered to protest inside an enclosure called Jallianwala Bagh, killing "379 civilians" and wounding "more than twelve hundred." The protest had been organized as a response against the "notorious 'crawling order,' which required Indians to drag themselves on the ground along the street where the British missionary Miss Sherwood had been attacked during the anti-British riots" of a few days before, an act of insubordination that according to Dyer had to be "punished" (Wagner 2016, 194-95 *passim*). Forster thus constructs Mrs. Moore as a sort of double to the occulted Miss Sherwood, an "apostle of love and goodwill," whose "endeavours to establish friendship and connection with the Indians end in failure," and notwithstanding the Amritsar massacre of which there is no trace, the episode in the Marabar caves "shatters her," so that "devastated and defeated … she dies on her way to England" (Khan 2021, 115).

As for Salgari's hero and anti-hero, Tremal-Naik and Suyodhana, they cannot possibly exist in Kipling's and Forster's fictional renderings of India since they counteract the stereotypical and racist statements that defined all Indians as a "mass of incompetent copycats of the English" (Williams 1994, 483). Being the subjects of their enunciations, they subvert what the Italian writer had reproduced ironically from his racist sources, namely that their "compatriots" are "generally lacking"

5 The Mutiny is masterfully inserted by Salgari in the plot of *Le due Tigri* (*The Two Tigers*, 1904); see my *Emilio Salgari*: 296-301. For an in-depth analysis of Salgari's masterpiece, *I misteri della jungla nera*, see also 225-290.

in "rare energy and extraordinary bravery," "two features" that instead will shine through Tremal-Naik and his fierce antagonists in the plot of Salgari's Indian story.

Thus, how did white writers *contemporary* to Salgari, such as Kipling and later Forster, inscribe into their texts real-life Indians or anti-orientalist and anti-racist utterances? Lisa Lowe had already identified in the early 1990s a serious setback in *A Passage to India*, since "what becomes accepted as Indian life is the textual product of British viewing and scrutiny," the practice of "British imperial tradition ruling, and misunderstanding the Indians," a practice, moreover, that was openly subscribed to by 28 Indian literary critics on a total of 30 (Lowe 1991, 110, 129).

On the other hand, when *Kim* came out in 1901, many Indian intellectuals and political activists – from Rabindranath Tagore to Sarath Kumar Ghosh and Mulk Raj Anand – considered it nothing short of an "invective" hurled against them (Lowe 1991, 108). Writing for "a 'garrison' readership" of Anglo-Indians, today's critics consider Kipling and his novel guilty of a "moral blindness" that made him consider other humans in terms of "ethnic stereotypes," an unequivocal value judgment that nevertheless Harish Trivedi transcends in assuming that, before Indians writing about India in English, only "Kipling's depiction of India carried conviction" (Trivedi 2011, 193 *passim*).

I shall therefore review some major points of critical awareness I have so far identified in Salgari's complex although fictive redistribution of signifying categories pertaining to the India of his times, and I shall do so by concentrating on the protagonist of his marvelous oriental tale, Tremal-Naik. Unlike his Bornean counterpart, the Muslim prince Sandokan turned pirate, of our Hindu Indian hero, we will never learn the exact origin or family belonging. He defines himself as the snake hunter of the black jungle, and as such his identity is fluid and deeply referential at the same time. We see him placed by Salgari in a precise habitat that is simultaneously geographically determined and mythically evocative, a jungle hunter living in the metamorphic, aquatic world of the Ganges delta, and a Shiva devotee who, similar to the Hindu god, is "dark" skinned and linked religiously to the "indigenous, tribal beliefs" of the god's cult through the worship for the main totemic attribute of Shiva, the sacred snakes (Mohan 2016, 1596). By comparison, Forster's native protagonist – Dr. Aziz – is almost plastered against an "hostile" environment according to the "Lamarckian notions" that considered India "physically enervating and morally sapping" (Mohan 2016, 1616), a widely held stereotype that is still alive and well in modern and contemporary Western views of tropical climates and locations.

Moreover, the name that Salgari chose for his hero – Tremal-Naik – is taken from a dynasty of rajahs coming from the city of Madurai, in southern India, and conveys a feeling of innate superiority to his character, a princely status that is confirmed by the subordinates that live with him, both servants and followers – including the tiger Darma and the dog Punthy – who regard him as a master and a spiritual leader. He is such an exceptional character for the times that saw his birth – not a "good savage," not an "uncle Tom," as Michelguglielmo Torri, a history of India professor remarks (Torri 2012, 55, my translation), that we can consider our snake hunter of the black jungle the other side of the Indian coin created by Forster, the evidence that Emilio Salgari was the "most honest, the most true," as filmmaker Roberto Rossellini stated in 1959, when he directed the documentary *India Matri Bhumi*, thus linking inextricably the century-long love relationship uniting Italians with Indians.[6]

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6 The passage—"Forse Salgari è il più onesto, il più vero"—is extracted from an interview given by Rossellini in 1959 and related to the making of his documentary film on India; in Dalla Gassa 2016, 340, my translation. Rossellini left Ingrid Bergman for Sonali Dasgupta, whom he had met in India, and Indian actor Kabir Bedi interpreting Salgari's Sandokan in Sergio Sollima's celebrated 1976 movie is a national hero, awarded the Commendatore title by the President of the Republic.

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Forster on the Air: TV and Radio Adaptations of the Works of E. M. Forster

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Abstract: The paper attempts to show how radio and TV adaptations kept E. M. Forster's popularity as a writer alive in a period when he no longer wrote and published fiction. Half a century of the continuous presence of these audio-visual adaptations on the air paved the way for the Academy Awards winning movies in the 1980s and 1990s, and the consequent rediscovery of Forster's fiction, which also resulted, in turn, in further adaptations, such as the most recent Marcy Kahan's two-part BBC radio dramatisation of *A Room With A View* in May 2023. The discussion covers the period from Forster's first broadcasted short story in 1927 to the premiere of David Lean's *A Passage to India* in 1984[1]. It follows Forster's collaboration with the most eminent radio producers and various media outlets. It charts as well the gradual change of the writer's attitude from the initial mistrust in the new medium to the extensive collaboration with the adapters. One of the particular points made in the paper is the multimedial character of these adaptations as they were typically re-adapted to various formats – the same text could be used for stage performance, radio play, and TV film as was the case of Santa Rama Rau stage adaptation of *A Passage to India* (1960). The paper is based on the limited available materials (sadly, most of the early TV films and radio recordings are apparently either lost or hidden in the archives of the BBC), criticism, as well as Forster's own comments on the cinema and adaptations.

1 Consequently, the present paper covers what Claire Monk defined as Phase 1 of Forster/ian adaptation (Monk 2021, 139). Monk's studies concentrate, however, on Phases 2 and 3.

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E. M. Forster continuously and adamantly refused to authorise movie adaptations of his novels. Consequently, the first feature film made of one of them, David Lean's *A Passage to India*, was produced as late as 1984, fourteen years after the writer's death. However, Lean's movie was not only the ninth film adaptation of a Forster work; it was also the second movie the screenplay of which was based (though very loosely) on the play written by Santha Rama Rau in 1960. The eight earlier TV movies (also called TV dramas), six of which were broadcasted in Forster's lifetime, were produced between 1958 and 1977 for the two British TV stations: the BBC and the ITV[2].

These TV adaptations, one of which is now commercially available, were only a small part of Forster's continuous presence "on the air". The writer's involvement with the BBC as a broadcaster is generally known; two selections of his radio talks – one edited by Jeffrey M. Heath and the other by Mary Lago, Linda K. Hughes, and Elizabeth MacLeod Walls - were published concurrently in 2008. The collaboration, however, greatly exceeded the talks as the BBC broadcasted also Forster's literary works, initially mostly short stories but later on also excerpts from the novels which were read either by the author himself or by actors. At a still later stage they were presented as radio plays, individually or in instalments. This part of Forster's presence "on the air" is generally omitted by Forsterian scholars, it is relegated to footnotes at best[3].

Ultimately, Forster did not object to having his works adapted for the stage. The first play adapted from his novel, Stephen Tait and Kenneth Allot's *A Room with a View*, was produced and then published in 1951; three more such plays were written and performed by 1970. The present paper concentrates on the appearances on the radio and TV of three of them: Santha Rama Rau's *A Passage to India: A Play*, Elisabeth Hart's *Where Angels Fear to Tread: A Play in Two Acts*, and *Howards End* by Lance Sieveking and Richard Cotterell.

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2 The most complete presentation of various adaptations of Forster's works is Fordoński 2020. The article includes also a list of radio and TV adaptations.

3 The editors of *The BBC Talks*… summed up the issue in seven words "additionally his fiction was adapted for presentation" (Lago, Mary; Linda K. Hughes and Elizabeth MacLeod Walls (eds.), 2008, 4).

The paper will attempt to show how radio and TV adaptations kept Forster's popularity as a writer alive in a period when he no longer wrote fiction, introducing his works to still larger audiences, paving the way for the Academy Awards winning movies in the 1980s and 1990s. Besides Forster's radio talks they were an important part of the process which "established him as a well-known figure in households across Britain" (Lago – Hughes 2008, 1). We will also try to point out how the various types of adaptations could come together, continuously adapted to different media. The best example here is Rama Rau's play performed on the stage both in London and New York, then first made into a TV drama, then, a radio play, and, finally, used as the basis of Lean's script.

The present paper is based on the limited available material (most of the early TV films and all of the early radio sound materials are apparently lost or hidden away in the archives of the BBC), radio listings of the BBC available online, criticism, as well as relatively few Forster's own comments and recollections. It is based on published sources; consequently, possible further fields of research will also be pointed out[4]. The time frame is between 1927, when the first Forster's short story was read on the air, and 1984 when the first feature movie, *A Passage to India*, was released.

It is good to start by taking stock. The available listings of the BBC are quite probably incomplete (both in number and in more specific details, the details of the broadcasts of the Overseas Service are not available online) so what follows is an account of what we are certain existed. Forster made four readings of his own texts – three short stories and "Entrance to an Unwritten Novel" (broadcast on 23 January 1949 by the Third Programme). Most probably the latter was the first chapter of *Arctic Summer* that he had read at the Aldeburgh Festival. Between 1931 and 1976 eleven shorter texts were read by single actors – six short stories and five excerpts from the novels. In addition to these broadcasts five novels were abridged and presented in instalments, however, still read by a single actor. Ultimately, there were at least twelve radio plays: four novels (some of them in a number of instalments) and seven short stories were adapted. Their number was probably somewhat bigger; Mary Lago claims that in total there were 36 radio adaptations of various kinds between 1932 and 1963 (1990, 134).

4 Possibilities and limitations of archive research are discussed by Monk (2021, 152-153). The research is carried out at the moment by Dr Aasiya Lodhi who presented her findings in the paper "My Selfish Love: Forster, Has India Changed? and Post-War BBC Radio" during the IEMFS Conference in Olsztyn in June 2024.

The TV adaptations started in 1958 with *A Room with a View*, directed and written by Robert Tronson, produced by Granada Television and broadcasted as an ITV Play of the Week. Forster was, apparently, more attractive to the BBC TV and it was this TV station that went on to produce seven more films: five based on Forster's novels (in three instances stage adaptations were used as the source material) and two based on his short stories. The standard development for the four best-known novels was presentation of excerpts in the 1940s and the 1950s, an abridged presentation in instalments from 1952 on, a radio-play (whenever available based on a stage adaptation), and, finally, a TV drama in the Play of the Month series (also with a preference for the available stage adaptations as the basis). *The Longest Journey* was presented only as a radio-play in 1957, while *Maurice* was broadcasted as a radio-play only in the 21st century.

Twelve short stories and one essay – some of them twice – were presented. In two cases as TV adaptations mentioned above, five times read by actors, five times as radio-plays, and in four instances, read by Forster himself. It should be, perhaps, mentioned here that Forster's only opera, *Billy Budd*, was broadcasted live four times in his lifetime, including a performance conducted by Benjamin Britten on 19 January 1969. In some instances Forster's recorded talks were re-broadcasted during the breaks in these performances or other operas which were aired live. With such a variety of the original material and its adaptations a chronological presentation of the most interesting cases seems the most advisable choice.

It all began on May 7th, 1927, mere five months after the establishment of the British Broadcasting Corporation, when "in Mr. E. M. Forster, the list of notable writers who have broadcast from the London Studio gain[ed] a distinguished accession." Forster, presented in *Radio Times* as "one of those self-critical writers who publish very little" (BBC N.D.), read one of his short stories; sadly, the title is unspecified in the available listings. It was a year before Forster's first radio talk, "Railway Bridges", but once Forster joined the company of such eminent broadcasters as H. G. Wells and Desmond McCarthy, the interest of the BBC in his original literary works decreased. Only two more short stories were broadcasted by the London Regional Service in the 1930s[5]. A letter written by Leonard Cottrell (1913-1974) on 9 September 1942

5 On November 3rd 1931 Robert Harris read Forster's short story "The Road from Colonus". Walter Allen read "Mr Andrews" on 9 June 1934. All the BBC listings are quoted after BBC Programme Index available online.

to the Copyright Department suggests that the limited number was at least in part Forster's own decision as "in the past he has not always given permission to be adapted and broadcast" (letter quoted in Lago 1990, 141).

The collaboration with the BBC moved on to a new stage in 1942 when the first radio play, *The Celestial Omnibus*, adapted by Cottrell, was broadcasted on September 1st. Forster's involvement in the production included a trip to "the refugee studio in Manchester to advise during rehearsals". When the BBC tried to refuse reimbursement "for rail fare and an overnight hotel bill, Cottrell urged the Copyright Department to pay because Forster's help had been valuable" (Lago 1990, 141). Cottrell went on to prepare two more such radio plays in 1947[6] when he returned from the Mediterranean, where he was a war correspondent, and he joined the BBC again. Cottrell left the BBC in 1960 to become a writer and later on he gained fame for his books popularising archaeology of ancient Egypt. The BBC Written Archive Centre includes only one Forster's letter addressed to Cottrell dated 15 May 1948 (Lago 1985, 68), probably one of many as Cottrell was in charge of the department responsible for radio-plays.

During the war years when Forster was quite busy broadcasting, mainly through the India Service, only three excerpts of his novels were read on the air. The third of these instances was certainly the most interesting – Rosamond Lehmann, the well-known novelist (somewhat notorious as the author of *Dusty Answer*), read "the kind of passages she chose when reading to her family and friends" in the series of programmes called "Family Reading" (BBC N.D.). Her choice on 2 November 1943 was a passage from *Where Angels Fear to Tread*[7].

Philip Gardner (2011, 246) mentions in a footnote radio versions of *Howards End* and *A Room with a View* prepared by Lancelot de Giberne (Lance) Sieveking in 1942 which Sieveking finally produced in the 1960s. It is probable that such radio-plays were written as in the 1940s Sieveking was drama script editor. It is quite doubtful, however, that they were actually produced in Bedford or Manchester, where the offices and studios of the BBC were evacuated during the war. It is also quite telling that Sieveking's lively correspondence with Forster (41 letters bequeathed to the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana) starts only in May 1946. Gardner probably mixed up Sieveking's adaptations with those of Cottrell mentioned above.

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6 "Two Fantasies" ("Co-ordination" and "Other Kingdom") and "The Story of the Siren".

7 The other two were "Chandrapore" (the opening chapter of *A Passage to India*) read by James Langham (Home Service, 29 September 1942) and "The Fifth Symphony" (extracts from *Howards End*) read by Pamela Kelly (Home Service, 27 August 1943).

Lago comments that "Forster kept an even sharper watch, if that were possible over his copyrights and particularly over permission for dramatic versions of his work. He was extremely cautious about the choice of adapters ... he seems to have trusted particularly Leonard Cottrell and Lance Sieveking" (1990, 141). His patience was soon put to a test. The BBC prepared a more elaborate radio-play, "The Eternal Moment" adapted by Alex Macdonald and broadcasted it on 25 February 1945. Forster was rather angry when he read in the *Radio Times* about the adaptation he had not been told about before and which was to be broadcasted that very evening. He wrote to the producer Howard Rose, mentioning the collaboration with Cottrell three years earlier. In a letter dated 16 March 1945 and addressed to Val Henry Gielgud, the elder brother of Sir John and the Head of Productions at the BBC at the time, who had personally apologized for the blunder, Forster wrote:

> What puzzles me … is not the official slip-up but the aesthetic obtuseness. It seems so strange that educated people should handle a writer's work without constructively wanting to communicate with him, in case he could help them. Why did none of you *want* to do this? (Lago -- Furbank 1985, 210).

As it soon turned out the BBC had "legally behaved correctly", as Forster wrote in a letter to Elizabeth Trevelyan (Lago 1990, 142), securing the copyright from the publisher who gave their permission without consulting Forster's contract. Lago adds that "Forster soon relented with respect to future adaptations. Obviously, it was the apparent lack of courtesy and sensitivity to writers that troubled him more than himself being slighted" (1990, 142).

On Sunday, 28 July 1946 the Home Service broadcasted a radio-play entitled "Mr. and Mrs. Abbey's Difficulties". According to the listing in the *Radio Times* it "concerned the conflict of principle between Mr. Abbey, tea-broker in Cheapside, and his four ungrateful wards, John, George, Thomas, and Fanny, during the years 1814 to 1821" (BBC N.D.). The description itself is quite clever, as it manages to obfuscate the fact that the essay and the radio-play were, actually, about the poet John Keats, his siblings, and their guardians. It was adapted by Douglas Cleverdon (1903-1987), later on the producer of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* (1953). It was for Cleverdon that Sylvia Plath wrote *Three Women: A Poem for Three Voices* in 1962.

The Third Programme of the BBC, "the youngest and maybe the trickiest cherub of the air" as Forster called it in the fifth anniversary talk (Lago et al. 2008, 410), addressed to a more elite ("highbrow") audience, the "alert and receptive listener who is willing ... to make an effort" (Haley 1946 quoted in Lago et al. 2008, 30) debuted on September 25th, 1946. Forster had some reservations as to his place in this new arrangement as the "high standards for the Third meant that, ironically, he thought he was unfit to broadcast for it" (Lago et al. 2008, 31). Despite his initial doubts he gave twenty-two talks on the Third between August 1947 and December 1958.

The first adaption prepared by the Third took place earlier than the first talk written for this service. "The Story of the Siren" read by Laidman Browne and adapted by Cottrell was broadcasted on 29 January 1947. On 29 May 1947, the Third presented "Two Fantasies" – short stories "Co-ordination" and "Other Kingdom" - adapted jointly as radio plays and produced by Cottrell – with original music composed and conducted by the young Antony Hopkins (1921-2014), composer, pianist and conductor, later on also a well-known radio broadcaster. The Third also rebroadcasted the radio-play "Mr. and Mrs. Abbey's Difficulties" on 19 January 1948.

At this point the adaptations for the Third ended. Forster read only his own short story "Mr Andrews" (10 August 1948) and "Entrance to an Unwritten Novel" (23 January 1949) (most probably *Arctic Summer*). Peter Fifield's comments on Forster's position in the Third shed a light on this turn of events:

> Although his prestige was growing as a speaker, Forster's standing as an author appears to have been far less secure at the BBC. For example, [he was] invited to give the Third Programme's Fifth Anniversary talk in 1951 – which he delivered on 29 September – [while] his short story 'The Machine Stops' had passed through the hands of a reader in the Drama Scripts Department earlier that year (16 March). The very story that engages so perceptively with technology within domestic and public spheres was dubbed 'rather Wells in barley water'. In 1953, a similarly stark contrast can be seen. [He was] asked to deliver that year's Reith Lectures – which he turned down – [while] 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 situation remained the same through the 1950s – Forster wrote and recorded his talks but the Third was not interested in his literary work except when, on 29 July 1964 the Third Programme presented Forster reading his short story "The Road from Colonus" "on a gramophone record" which suggests an earlier recording. Ironically, Forster outlived the Third Programme which was closed down in 1967.

Forster moved back with his literary work to the Home Service. The cooperation restarted with an adaptation in a new bigger format – abridgments of novels broadcasted in instalments. The first novel to be treated in this way was *A Room with a View* abridged by Arthur Calder-Marshall (1908-1992) and read by Gladys Young in fifteen weekly instalments from 20 February 1952. The adaptation proved so successful that it was recorded once more and broadcasted in September 1972 on BBC Radio 4, this time read by Gabriel Woolf as "A Book at Bedtime" at 11:00 p.m.

The task was then taken over by Lance Sieveking (1896-1972) who adapted further Forster's novels as multi-episode radio-plays. The surviving correspondence proves that all these adaptations were prepared under Forster's supervision. The radio-play "Between Two Worlds *A Passage to India*", dramatized by Sieveking and presented on the Home Service on 24 October 1955, was preceded by an exchange of at least eight letters[8] including one dated 14 Sept. 1955 beginning with the following words "Many thanks for the script of the dramatization…" (Lago 1985, 158). Sieveking is the only adapter mentioned in the *Locked Diary*. On 8 October 1963 Forster wrote: "But now to my own unwelcome job which only I can do. It is to go through Lance Sieveking's meritorious radio-script of *Howards End*" (Gardner 2011, 151).

Sieveking continued the cooperation with *The Longest Journey* (4 March 1957) which was followed by a break of seven years after which he prepared *Howards End* adapted in thirteen episodes (broadcasts starting from 14 June 1964), read

8 The whole correspondence with Sieveking has been preserved in the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana.

through by Forster in April that year, apparently once more. The 1967 adaptation of *A Room with a View* was a more modest affair in a single episode. The correspondence continued until April 1969 while the final stage of the co-operation was the TV drama *Howards End* (BBC Play of the Month Season 5 Episode 7) directed by Donald McWhinnie (1920-1987, known for the series *Love in Cold Climate* from 1980) with the screenplay written by Sieveking and the director and translator Richard Cotterell (1936-) and based on the play they had staged in 1967. It was broadcast on 19 April 1970, two months before Forster's death. Claire Monk commented on the continuous recurrence of the same people involved in these adaptations:

> This practice reflected the culture of the mid-twentieth-century BBC and its ways of working – but it particularly reflected Forster's close relationship with the BBC, and the control he exerted over adaptations of his work (2021, 151).

Howards End directed by McWhinnie was actually the fifth TV drama made of Forster's work. Oddly enough, it was not the BBC that produced the first of them, *A Room with a View*, written and directed by Robert Tronson (1924-2008, later known as the director of the series *All Creatures Great and Small*), and broadcasted on 2 July 1958. The movie was produced by the Granada Television in Manchester and presented as the ITV Play of the Week (Season 3 Episode 43). Granada was the regional ITV company most renowned for its quality TV drama (Monk 2021, 151).

The BBC "reacted" by sending their TV crew to Cambridge where Forster was (as he put it) "televised" in early December 1958. The programme (available on YouTube) was "administered to the viewers" on 4 January 1959, three days after Forster's 80th birthday. He did not find the experience pleasant: "Five men were in my room for two and half hours, taking shots which will be over in two and half minutes. I came. I sat. I wrote. I looked up to indicate inspiration. I took a book out of a book case. I read" (Forster's letter dated 6 December 1958 quoted in Leggatt 2012, 34). Some months later Forster was "televised" again, this time for the American CBS series Camera Three (Season 4 Episode 38). The 45 minute long episode entitled *E. M. Forster and The Longest Journey* consisted of a dramatised scene from the eponymous novel and an interview with Forster. It was broadcasted on 24 May 1959.

The successful stage adaptation of *A Passage to India* by Santha Rama Rau was first produced in 1960. Forster was satisfied with the result, he called the play an "excellent and sensitive dramatic version" (Stape 1993, 138). The play brought a sizeable income – on 30 April 1961 Forster wrote to 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). Frank Hauser, the first director of the play, recollected in 1984, however, that "only on the subject of [a movie adaptation] was [Forster] heated. Later, Santha Rama Rau was to receive a slew of offers from film companies. One of them, Paramount, ignored her repeated 'Mr Forster has the film rights and he will not allow the work to be filmed', and spent two hours talking its offer up from $50,000 to $250,000 without any success" (Stape 1993, 131). Forster was adamant - he rejected even the offer of a film directed by Satyajit Ray (Stape 1993, 149).

Forster did not object, however, to yet another TV adaptation. *A Passage to India* was broadcast on 16 November 1965 (as the BBC Play of the Month Season 1 Episode 2) directed by the Indian-British Waris Hussein, the play was adapted for TV by John Maynard[9]. The cast included Zia Mohyeddin (who had played the part of Dr Aziz both in the London and the Broadway premieres of the play) and Dame Sybil Thorndike. Santha Rama Rau wrote in 1986:

> Strangely enough he did not have the same aversion to television. 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 … one of her last [parts]" (Stape 1993, 149).

9 Although the movie has never been commercially released it is available on YouTube. It "was screened and discussed at BFI Southbank in 2018 as part of a season of Hussein's work" (Monk 2021, 152), and broadcasted in 2024 to commemorate the centenary of the publication of the novel.

Three years later the same play (and in the same adaptation by Maynard) was broadcast again, this time as a radio-play, also with Sybil Thorndike as Mrs Moore on 30 December 1968 BBC Radio 4.

Forster participated also in the adaptation of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* for the stage prepared by Elizabeth Hart (Berg Collection holds over 60 letters from Forster to the American playwright). Leggatt (2012, 88) quotes a letter in which Forster mentions an "American, Mrs Elizabeth Hart [who] made a good dramatization of *Where Angels*…" (letter dated 15 December 1961). The play, which premiered in 1963 and was published in the same year, was immediately picked up by the BBC Television. The first movie was directed by Glen Byam Shaw (1904-1986) and it was broadcasted on 29 October 1963, it was only 45 minutes long. Ultimately, a much more complete (120 minutes) and lavish TV version 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 (Season 1 Episode 5) on 15 February 1966. It was, apparently, successful enough to justify a further radio adaptation which was first broadcasted on 29 August 1968 on the Home Service in the series "Saturday Night Theatre" (and repeated by the BBC Radio 4 on 9 November 1969 as The Sunday Play).

The year 1966 saw two TV adaptations of Forster's works. The second, after *Where Angels Fear to Tread* mentioned before, was *The Machine Stops* broadcasted as the opening episode in the 2nd season of the TV series *Out of the Unknown* on 6 October. It was directed by Philip Saville (1930-2016) 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 and it is now the only pre-1984 movie adaptation of Forster commercially available in a 7-disc collection of the TV series released in 2014.

Woman's Hour, the brain-child of Janet Quigley, whom Forster met in the late 1930s[10], and Norman Collins, a programme which has been broadcasted continuously since 1946, originally on the BBC Light Programme and now on BBC Radio 4, has included a literary section since the 1950s (currently called "Woman's Hour Drama"). Forster's work first appeared on *Woman's Hour* in October 1955, it was a rebroadcast of the 1952 adaptation of *A Room with a View* in fifteen instalments by Arthur Calder-Marshall. *Woman's Hour* "rediscovered" Forster in 1969 when *Where Angels Fear to Tread* abridged by Quigley herself and read by Gabriel Woolf was broadcasted in 11 instalments in November and December.

10 There are six letters to Quigley in BBC Archives written between 1938 and 1945 (Lago 1985, 147).

It was followed by *Howards End* abridged by Virginia Browne-Wilkinson and read by Rosalie Crutchley in October 1971 (15 instalments), "Ansell" abridged by Myra Beaton, read by John Moffat (remembered for his performance as Hercules Poirot in a BBC TV series) on 30 August 1976, and, finally, *A Room with a View* abridged by Ann Rees Jones and read by Helen Ryan (11 parts) in December 1984[11]. The show, which still attracts up to 4 million listeners (in 2016), gave Forster's works a radio audience incomparable to any other before.

The BBC Television remained committed to adaptations of Forster's works in the 1970s although their number gradually decreased. There were two more TV film adaptations, both with the teleplay written by Pauline Macaulay: *A Room with a View*, directed once again by Donald McWhinnie (BBC Play of the Month Season 8 Episode 7) in 1973 (the movie was partly shot on location in Florence), and *The Obelisk*, directed by Giles Forster (BBC Premiere Season 1 Episode 4) in 1977.

Forster's presence on the BBC radio was limited in the 1970s and early 1980s to the Radio 4 which broadcasted one short story "The Curate's Friend" read once more by Gabriel Woolf on 4 April 1975 the BBC Radio 4 (in the programme Morning Story), and another short story "The Eternal Moment", dramatized by Penny Leicester on 2 June 1983 (Afternoon Theatre). Finally, a new serialized adaptation of *A Passage to India* abridged by Elizabeth Bradbury in 15 20-minute long instalments was read by the Bombay-born British Indian actor Sam Dastor (1941-) from 31 October 1983 (Story Time).

Between 1927 and 1984 Forster and his works were available to the British listeners and viewers on a fairly regular basis. The numbers – 145 radio talks, at least 32 radio and 8 TV adaptations – do not give us a complete picture as many of these programmes were broadcasted several times over a longer period on various programmes of the BBC at a time when the number of available channels on TV and the radio was still very limited. The variety reached different groups of listeners and viewers, attracting even science-fiction fans. It is quite safe to say that when David Lean presented his vision of *A Passage to India* the name, works, and even the voice of Forster were perfectly familiar to a large part of the British public. The Merchant and Ivory movies which followed also capitalised on the popularity which had been built over the years by the efforts of Forster himself and the BBC (with a little help from ITV).

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11 The adaptation was originally prepared for the BBC Radio 4 "For Schools" programme and broadcasted in November/December 1984.

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An Operatic Scene Based on E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*

Claudia Stevens, College of William and Mary, United States of America

E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* was among the first literary works I contemplated adapting as an opera. I loved the novel for its scenes that seemed to invite dramatic staging and vocal performance: Mrs. Moore meeting Aziz in the mosque; the trial of Aziz, with his supporters chanting outside the courtroom; and above all, the panic of Adela Quested in the Marabar Cave, which can best be described as a "nervous breakdown." It brought to mind operatic treatments, or "mad scenes," famously including those in Verdi's *Macbeth* or Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor***.** Accordingly, in 2014, prior to creating the Forster-adapted opera *Howards End, America* with composer Allen Shearer (which premiered in San Francisco in 2019--c.f. my article about it in PJES, 2017), I had sketched a short scene for solo soprano, depicting Adela in the cave. This scene was to be the jumping-off point for a full opera on *A Passage to India*. Both Shearer and I were fascinated by, and deeply immersed in, the culture and literature of India, including authors Anita and Kiran Desai, Rohinton Mistry and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Shearer's first major opera, *The Goddess* (1992), based on the film by Satyajit Ray, had been supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. But twenty years later, when envisioning an opera on *A Passage to India*, we confronted a new reality. The opera's likely forces--large orchestra, chorus and at least eight soloists, as in *The Goddess*--would prove prohibitively costly at a time when grants for developing and producing major operas were dwindling. Opera companies were under financial stress, and few were taking on productions of new works.

Other factors also worked to dissuade us. Although Forster's novel is harshly critical of British colonial rule in India, it relies on depictions that now could give rise to criticism of stereotyping or exoticizing Indian culture. This might attach to an adaptation of ours. And, for Shearer, incorporation of Indian classical music now might present issues of "appropriation" of indigenous music by a Western composer.

As a result, the scene I had sketched of Adela in the cave lay dormant for some years. Recently, however, we revisited the possibility of creating a standalone scene, with much reduced forces, that might be programmed on a concert

series as a short "monodrama" with a contemporary musical idiom. It would require only one solo singer (as in Schoenberg's *Erwartung*), with the echo in the cave realized either by electronics or an acoustical instrument, and the possible addition of one performer. Shearer's main concern was that an audience unfamiliar with the novel would have difficulty understanding the fragmented and disjointed text I had created to depict Adela's hysteria, its sexual undertones and the background for her breakdown, if isolated from the novel's larger narrative. We decided finally that the scene best would be performed with introductory remarks; and that a symposium on *A Passage to India*, such as California's "Dickens Universe" at the University of California, Santa Cruz (which focused on George Eliot's *Middlemarch* in 2017 and included excerpts from our opera *Middlemarch in Spring*) might be the most auspicious setting for the performance of "Adela in the Cave." –Claudia Stevens

Adela in the Cave

Claudia Stevens, College of William and Mary, United States

A monodrama, ca. 12-15 minutes, for soprano, echo and small chamber orchestra, based on a scene in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India.*

Brief synopsis: Adela Quested, on an expedition to the Marabar Hills, finds herself alone in a cave and has a panic attack. She realizes with terror the emptiness of her life, her unfulfilled sexual desires, and the greater appeal and spiritual power of India than that of her own society--that of India's British colonial rulers.

A note on performance: at the composer's discretion, words of Echo (shown in upper case) may mingle freely with Adela's sung material. They need not follow her text but may also precede it.

Instrumental prologue precedes entrance of Adela Quested

Adela (*to audience, spoken, pleasant and confidential at first but with increasing passion and angst*): How's one to see the *real* India?

(*Arioso*)

The Marabar Hills, not to be missed, the guidebooks say, and so we came.
The hills are dimmer in daylight, not what we thought. . .
But the cave, to see the cave, mysterious dark and cool,
that's the thing, to see the cave, that's why we came and so we came
To see the real India!

We cannot only see people just like ourselves.
We want to see Indians!
Give us Indians to see, like that Dr. Aziz.
So nice, so polite. So eager to please, that Dr. Aziz.

That Dr. Aziz! His hand, as it just held mine,
climbing,

Climbing up, raising me up from the flat dry land,
from the flat dry life. Beautiful, I suppose.

"Do I take you too fast?" he asked . . . "Do I take you too fast?"

Beautiful, I suppose. Beautiful.
No doubt his wife and children are also beautiful.
One usually gets what one already owns.

Oh, blast! Why did I ask him if he has many wives?

Stupid me, English mem! The English in India,
Insulting and bungling,
with our silly topees and swagger sticks . . .

He said, 'Only one in my case.' In my case.

Surely he thinks, "Why be insulted,
she's just a skinny old maid.
Stupid like the rest.
And she has no breasts."

There! I did not offend after all, I was not in the wrong.
No offense after all, I was not in the wrong.
I am all right, thanks. Quite all right.

"Do I take you too fast?"
I am all right, thanks, quite all right . . .

(*Short instrumental interlude, Adela moving towards entrance of the cave*)

So, I will have Ronny.
Ronny, so English! So pale and cool.
Am I really to marry? But why else did I come.
And there need not be love . . .
No need for love!

Why should I care! But perhaps I care . . .
Can I still break it off? What would they say?
Think of the shame!

"Do I take you too fast?"
He said that, that Dr. Aziz. Beautiful, I suppose.
"Take you too fast?"
No, I'm all right, thanks. Quite all right, thanks.

(*spoken*)
Why make a fuss!

(*Arioso*)
Marry Ronny, forget about love,
why make a fuss, and why else did I come!
The invitations are sent. A fine English wedding,
the chapel by the cemetery. Alongside the dead,
the honeymoon. Agra in October.
A marriage like others . . .
the club every evening, every evening the club.
Occasionally speak, nothing too deep,
touch in the twilight before we sleep . . .

(*Adela enters the cave, words of echo mingling with and overlaying her arietta*)
brief and cool, enough, quite enough . . .
of course without love . . . why make a fuss . . .
Of course it's enough, and why else did I come . . .

Echo (*softly at first*): ENOUGH . . . LOVE . . . COME . . . FUSS . . . TOUCH . . .
ENOUGH . . .

Adela (*advancing further into cave, looking around*):
But it does not end here, see it goes on,
it goes on, it is not what we thought!
No ceiling, no floor, am I lost?
Can it be that I'm no more, there's no more me?

Where is Adela, what is she? A mirror held up to . . . what?
But why else did I come . . . so empty, is there no one there . . .

(*shouting*)
Adela! What is Adela! Where is she?
No me, no there? No there, no me, is there, Mrs. Moore!

Echo (*louder, repeated, more insistent*): IS WHERE IS SHE, IS ME, IS THERE, ESMISS ESMOORE . . .

Adela (*wildly agitated, falling to the cave floor*):
It is not what we thought, not at all what we thought,
all what we thought, thought we all what?
Do I take you too fast? Do I take you too fast?

Echo (*more pervasive and rapid*): TAKE, TAKE, TAKE YOU, TAKE YOU TOO, YOU TOO, YOU. . .

Adela (*molto espressivo*):
Dr. Aziz! Do I take you,
take you here like a whore, fast, too fast,
take you, do I, do I, do I take you . . . take you, take you . . .

Adela with Echo: NO! YES! NO! (*Adela screams several times, echoed by instruments*)

Adela: Not mine, his! His fault, his thought,
Not mine, his, not what we thought,
I was not in the wrong . . .
(shrieki*ng*): Not my thought, not my fault!
Help, help, assault!
His not mine, not my mistake!
Help! Help! *Rape!* (*running blindly off stage*).

END

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Ladislav Vít, 2022. *The Landscapes of W. H. Auden's Interwar Poetry: Roots and Routes* (New York and London: Routledge)

Ladislav Vít's *The Landscapes of W. H. Auden's Interwar Poetry: Roots and Routes* is a slim volume. Yet, in this case, the size is inversely proportional to its content—and solid content it is. In his monograph, Vít addresses Auden's interest in geography and landscape as a type of derivate of the poet's boyish fascination: "Auden was so bedazzled by rocks, the land and its texture that he had intended to embark on a career in the natural sciences before pursuing his poetic vocation. Alston, its adjoining area of former lead-mines, along with Iceland and its rural, Nordic, insular culture, elicited from Auden strong topophilic sentiments. These two regions in particular embodied his idea of sacred landscapes and represented the major constituents of his personal mythical geography" (1). This sentiment and connection with specific regions (England, the North Pennines, Iceland) provided inspiration that would eventually elevate them to what Auden would consider a 'good place.'

Vít picks up from there and structures his argument around Auden's reflecting on place and landscape while correcting the misconception of the poet's alleged lack of interest in the subject matter. In doing so, the critic reaches for a handy concept of *landguage* that he borrows from Sten Pultz Moslund and applies the term to "the nature of Auden's imaginative dynamic which drives his production of these places and their *land*scapes in lan*guage*" (4). Vít's scrutiny of Auden's literary topography "and their landscapes from the perspective of human geography in relation to the notions of borders, local uniqueness and spatial experience" brings new insights into the poet's literary imagination.

Ladislav Vít's competence in this area is well documented. He received his PhD from Charles University Prague. The title of his thesis, *Topophilia and Escapism: W. H. Auden's Interwar Poetics of Place (1927-1938)*, already indicates Vít's scope of interest which materialized in the volume dedicated to the topic

of landscape in Auden's poetry. Ladislav Vít works at the University of Pardubice in Czechia where he teaches a few literary courses (Introduction to Literature, History of British Literature, etc.); yet, his main focus firmly remains on the work of W. H. Auden and the Interwar period.

The book is divided into five chapters—the final one works rather as a summary of the previous four, though. Chapter one ("The Map of Auden's Mythical Geography Affinities") explores several issues, one of them being Auden's understanding of the notion of 'topophilia.' The poet emphasized the fact that it is less about the love of nature and more about a particular space, or landscape and the way it evokes past events, the way it gives a sense of history associated with this landscape. Certainly, there is a direct link between Auden's reasoning in this matter and two other poets, Thomas Hardy and John Betjeman, who were his source of inspiration in that respect. This section of the book concentrates on Auden's particular interest in (if not attachment to) the landscape of such diverse places as England and Iceland. The area of the North Pennines also draws the poet's attention. The regional diversity inspires him to ponder the issues related to border(s) or boundedness, and to an inherent quality of any island—its insularity. By extension, such ruminations influence Auden's views on England in the broader context of "cultural diversity and international hybridisation" (20).

The title of chapter two, "My 'Great Good Place' in the Pennines," clearly suggests its focus: the mountains in Northern England where Auden found his source of poetic inspiration. This section revolves around the writings that Auden produced at the turn of the decades (late 1920s and early 1930s). Ladislav Vít provides an in-depth analysis of the Pennines region, outlining a particular dichotomy between the natural aspects of the landscape and the man-made artefacts. Such an (un)natural clash gives rise to deliberations on, if not negative, certainly contradictory consequences of human behavior, painting a less-than-perfect image of the landscape. Vít opens the chapter with a close reading of "The Watershed" (1927), which subsequently serves as a point of departure for the running themes that pop up in other poems—themes tied to other (more specific) landscapes and (more general) places. The author develops his argument to demonstrate "how Auden works with topographical details from the perspective of place conceptualized as a unique, bounded, static and internally defined locality" (20). Having this in mind, the critic extends his discussion to the investigation of the mutual relationship between the human figure and the landscape, and how this relationship operates within a broader context of Auden's philosophy.

The following chapter ("'My Tutrix': England in Auden's Poetry") zooms out in its perspective and tries to offer a more general outlook at the importance of England in Auden's poetry. Vít analyzes a selection of poems from the 1930s and argues that the poet's engagement in public matters was reflected in his attitude towards the exceptionality of England. On the one hand, he was aware of (his) certain social commitments and responsibilities, while, on the other hand, it had a somewhat destabilizing effect on Auden's approach to, for example, the idea of his social standing as a poet and a member of the elite. Vít focuses on Auden's perception of England's identity understood in terms of its geographical ('geography of rejection') as well as cultural aspects. The author provides an insightful interpretation of Auden's poem "Letter to Byron" (1937) that contains critical remarks on William Wordsworth.

In chapter four ("My Dream Exile on an Island with a Halo"), Vít critically evaluates Auden's travel book written in verse and in prose. *Letters from Iceland* was published in 1937 and reflects Auden's memories of his journey to the titular island in the summer of 1936. The volume is important for several reasons and Vít should take full credit for his refreshing take on a book that, when published, was met with a fair share of controversy, mainly because of Auden's unorthodox formal approach to a more traditional format of this type of literature. The poet's version of a travel book is a mix of sometimes serious, sometimes lighthearted tones and narrative styles. Also, its epistolary format creates a platform that enables Auden to elaborate on his topophilia in a foreign, that is non-English, context. Vít uses this opportunity to not only evaluate a poet's ability to promote his ideas but also acquaint the reader with an additional context of Auden's literary topography. Yet, if one moves beyond the form, what becomes quite apparent is Auden's introspective look into his *landguage*. One may safely assume that it resulted from Auden's experience of having worked with documentary filmmakers associated with the General Post Office Film Units. The collaboration provided the poet with inspiration and appreciation for a new form of the visual recording of reality. As a result, the writer translated his cinematic experience into a novel form of a travel book containing photographs embedded in various literary forms and styles.

The concluding (and the shortest) chapter entitled "Roots, Routes and Landscape" sums up the analyses included in the previous book sections. The critic emphasizes Auden's spatial imagination that enabled the poet to approach individual places as manifestations of human existence and, by extension, places the poet's output in a broader context of writings on topography and spatial

representation. Vít rightly concludes that "Auden's poetic *landguage* also flows into the long tradition of English topographical poetry as well as recent theorising about landscape" (139). This, in turn, provides the "vantage point, wide horizons and a presence of subjective brooding in topographical poetry [that] is echoed in contemporary perspectives on the idea of landscape and its experience" (140).

Vít's book comes as a volume in the series ("Perspectives on the Non-Human in Literature and Culture") the aim of which is to reinvigorate the interest of researchers in familiar and well-explored themes. However, as the Series Editor acknowledges, there is a need to take a novel approach and "take note of new or neglected ones. A vast array of non-human creatures, things, and forces are now emerging as important agents in their own right. Inspired by human concern for an ailing planet, ecocriticism has grappled with the question of how important works of art can be to the preservation of something we have traditionally called 'nature'" (2). *The Landscapes of W. H. Auden's Interwar Poetry* fits this context very well. Ladislav Vít offers a scholarly, yet accessible account of Auden's work (and life), at the same time revisiting the poet's interwar works from a new, refreshing perspective. Although the volume is primarily aimed at academic readers, its lucid style makes it readable for anyone interested in Auden's poetry and all things related to space and landscape.

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Cedric Van Dijck, 2023. *Modernism, Material Culture and the First World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

Chapter 2 of this study in the current literary critical materialism, 'E.M. Forster in the Street', will clearly interest Forsterians, as will its coverage of Forster associates Virginia Woolf and Mulk Raj Anand. The other two writers in focus, French poet Guillaume Apollinaire and English poet-cum-novelist Hope Mirrlees, whose *Paris: A Poem* (1920) published by Woolf and her husband Leonard at the Hogarth Press, are put into the same orbit, with rewarding outcomes.

Readers of Forster will find in Cedric Van Dijck's monograph a thorough contextualization of his Egyptian writings as part of an argument about the cultural history of the First World War. Forster's texts of Alexandria are placed in the environment of the liminal city where they were written, filled with a mass of images and items, many of them displaced by war, and often strange multilingual utterances. Equally, they appear in a new light when put alongside what Apollinaire, Woolf, Mirrlees, and Anand did with the objects of war.

The book appears as part of the series *Edinburgh Critical Studies in Modernist Culture*. Accordingly, its goals develop from those laid out by the series editors: to offer: "a breadth of scope and an expanded sense of the canon of modernism" as opposed to "focusing on individual authors" (p. ix). The area of operation is the twenty-first-century Anglophone "new modernist studies", associated with the journal *Modernism/modernity* and names such as Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz. The structure of an author per article or chapter seems the one preferred by critics in this tradition. Three of Van Dijck's four main chapters focus on a single author (Apollinaire, Forster, and Anand), the other connecting two authors, Virginia Woolf and Hope Mirrlees.

Van Dijck's key argument in the book is that "modernist encounters with the things of war – equipment, museum pieces, souvenirs, paraphernalia, commodities, curiosities served as a way to make sense of an extraordinary historical moment" (p. 1). His approach is quite strongly biographical, taking understanding of the authors' lives as keys to the textual productions under consideration; war is made sense of, above all, through personal groupings. In common with the

habits of the new modernist studies, Van Dijck does indeed pursue modernisms and modernist elements across a broader range of writing than the modernist studies of the twentieth century, focused on a relatively small vanguard of innovators and their immediate followers, did.

He does so with the further theoretical aid of the "textual materialism" or "thing theory" of American literary critics Bill Brown and Elaine Freedgood, a critical development of the new historicism dating from the late 1990s and 2000s which recalls Roland Barthes's 1968 essay "The Reality Effect", published in English translation in 1986. There, the details of the realist text connote rather than denote the real: they announce to readers that we are in the presence of the real[1]. Thing theorists pursue the seemingly random objects, brands, and substances which recur in and even clog the realist text, arguing that what seem background textures in fact point towards a sort of political unconscious, recalling Fredric Jameson, of the text.

Van Dijck uses thing theory sparingly but well as a tool for pursuing the scattered objects of the First World War through literary texts and careers. For example, he argues that attention to "trauma" and "endurance" have dominated cultural studies of World War One, underplaying the importance of "tangible objects such as helmets, shop signs, monuments and mud stained bodies" on the experience of the war (p. 2). A case in point would be examples of the printed, physical media, such as the *Palestine News*, produced in Cairo by British soldiers, a do-it-yourself newspaper which, Van Dijck speculates, Forster "must have read […] at one point or another while living out his war years in Alexandria" (p. 7).

Chapter 1, "Guillaume Apollinaire's Curiosities", covers "the French poet's experiments with the material culture of the trenches" in which he served as a soldier (p. 9). A noteworthy example of these experiments is Apollinaire's habit of sending "curiosities" from the Western Front to a correspondent, Madeleine Pagés, who worked as a teacher in French-ruled Algeria, very far from the fighting. Van Dijck's biographical orientation emerges in the account of the relationship between Apollinaire and Pagés. But it contributes to a larger-scale argument, since Apollinaire's "experiments", Van Dijck memorably claims, "disarmed the deadly products of an industrial conflict, turning them into peculiar products of everyday life at the front, which was at times precarious, at times dull". The emphasis is not on sorrow or commemoration, then, but on coping.

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1 "Flaubert's barometer, Michelet's little door finally say nothing but this: *we are the real*"(Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect", in *The Rustle of Language*, tr. Richard Howard (Hill and Wang, 1986), 141).

In his collection *Alcools*, Apollinaire exemplified this treatment of war by acting as a sort of poetic cubist, "repurposing objects so as to see their true nature" (p. 23). The war zones themselves, Van Dijck shows, were places that people situated elsewhere were intensely curious about, instilling value in objects such as the *Palestine News* or the kepi hat that Apollinaire posted to Pagés from the front. Van Dijck makes a convincing case for the importance of cataloguing, or "fragmentary enumeration" (p. 26), in the processing of war experience. In the chapter's attention to "the military press", much of it like the *Palestine News* soldier-produced and "ephemeral" (p. 33), and the multiple uses and symbolism of the helmet designed by Louis Adrian and taken into use by the French army during 1915, Van Dijck sees literary texts not as isolated artefacts but as outcomes of literary *activity*, with the author in focus, here Apollinaire, one component of a messy cultural scene.

Chapter 2's account of Forster in Alexandria presents its urban environment as "a colonial front saturated with a babble of different tongues" (p. 9). In place of the wartime 'curiosities' central to Van Dijck's chapter on Apollinaire is a vision of urban sites as characterized by this linguistic babel which will not surprise readers of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* – or even Forster's *A Passage to India* with its "God si Love", discussed by Van Dijck in his chapter conclusion (p. 78), and "Esmiss Esmoor". The perspective on World War One here moves beyond "the familiar terrain of the Western Front" to zones in which "military personnel abroad found themselves surrounded by non-European languages and scripts, as many of them travelled for the first time in their lives" (p. 51), forging slang terms as they went.

Such a statement does not apply to Forster, who had two years before taking ship for Alexandria in late 1915 finished his first extended trip to India, and who had been a classicist familiar with Ancient Greek script since early in childhood. As in the Apollinaire chapter, biography figures strongly, Van Dijck inviting readers to "follow E.M. Forster through wartime Egypt" (p. 52). It was the materiality of script or, put another way, "words as "dead" and "mute" things" (p. 52) which intrigued Forster there, Van Dijck argues, somewhat clashing with another biographical reading referenced by him in which Forster's relationship with the English-speaking Egyptian tram conductor Mohammed El Adl was the most important happening during the Alexandria years for the writer.

A well-informed, scholarly, and deft account of Forster's relationship with "found" words in Alexandria follows. This includes those of the local English-language press (Forster wrote for the *Egyptian Mail* while he was there) and

shop signs on which local shopkeepers attempted to attract custom from the many foreigners the war had brought to Egypt. Van Dijck proves himself well-versed in Forster scholarship as well as in accounts of modernism and the media, developing a lively account of the ("incredibly rich") "media landscape" (p. 55) of wartime Egypt, which included numerous publications in Arabic, French, and Italian alongside the Anglophone *Egyptian Mail*, its rival newspaper the *Gazette*, and many "small-scale, short-lived ventures" in English (p. 55).

The physicality of print and the complex realities of multilingualism both come to the fore as rarely before in Forster studies, *inter alia* casting light on Forster's repeated forays into the guidebook genre which culminated in *Alexandria: A History and a Guide* as well as a textual site not mentioned by Van Dijck, the first chapter of *A Passage to India*. Forster's view of Alexandrian street signs is explained via an essay whose title, Van Dijck rightly points out, has "clear racist undertones" (p. 62): "Gippo English". Not least, this must be because it seems to seek a colonial picturesque in Alexandria. In his chapter conclusion (p. 77), Van Dijck considers that in fact the greatest legacy of Forster's stay in Egypt could be the nuanced portrait of "East" and "West" as not entirely constructed opposing poles which appears in *A Passage to India*.

Forster's alertness to different registers of English emerges clearly in Van Dijck's account of another article he wrote, "Army English", highlighting the alienation effect of the wartime Egyptian streets on Forster. A second case study starts with visuality in the shape of photographs and moves to a view of "Ancient Inscriptions" in the perception of wartime travellers to Egypt as demonstrating the quality of writing as visual object. While implicitly deconstructionist, this section of Van Dijck's argument remains closer to the implicitly critical but detached historicism of Fredric Jameson than to Jacques Derrida's unpacking of hierarchical binaries, with Edward W. Said's politically engaged account of Europeans' construction of the Middle East even further away. An interest in visuality, including textuality as a sort of visuality, is one of the hallmark interests of new modernist studies, reflected here in Van Dijck's eagerness to claim that "faced with the material remains of Ancient Egypt, the soldier's imperative was to look rather than to read" (p. 75).

Chapter 3 turns from streets to monuments. Van Dijck moves here deftly between Woolf's canonical fiction, specifically *Jacob's Room* (1922) – often read as marking her transition to fully modernist status – and the Woolfs' activities as proprietors of a hand press, recalling the soldiers' publications of Chapters 1

and 2. At the Hogarth Press, for instance, in the living room of their home on the edge of London, they printed Mirrlees's *Paris: A Poem* (1920). Temporally speaking, we here move beyond the war years themselves to the immediate postwar period, the era when, according to Paul Fussell in the title of his classic 1978 study, the "Great War" dominated "modern memory".

The chapter's monuments include literal war memorials such as that in Cookham, Berkshire, the opening of which was itself memorialised in a painting by Stanley Spencer, whose brother had been killed in the war, reproduced by Van Dijck (p. 89). In *Jacob's Room* and *Paris*, Van Dijck argues, Woolf and Mirrlees "probed scenes of tactile contact with memorial objects – monuments, gravestones, statues *and* books – as a way of mediating loss" (p. 92). It is a point that is elegantly and convincingly made. At the Hogarth Press, the Woolf's established enduring memorials to the war and those lost in it through Mirrlees's poem and others, authored by the war dead: Rupert Brooke; Leonard Woolf's brother Cecil.

Woolf's Jacob Flanders, Van Dijck shows, is a ghostly figure in the novel which includes his first name in its title. Through memorializing him, she memorialized dead contemporaries such as Brooke, Cecil Woolf, and (lost to illness a decade before the war), her brother Thoby Stephen. The ghostliness is meaningful. "At the time of writing the book, in 1921", Van Dijck points out, "300,000 British and Imperial servicemen were still missing in action" (p. 95). Overall, Van Dijck skilfully recounts the balance of spectral and enduringly monumental in *Jacob's Room*, drawing on noteworthy critics in new modernist studies such as Paul K. Saint-Amour and Elaine Scarry. The gendered ambivalence of monumentality is central: physical monuments aestheticize the bodies of young men killed in battle as a result of other men's decisions.

Mirrlees's *Paris*, like the city of its title in 1919, the year in which it is set, is haunted by the vast numbers of French soldiers killed during the war. The Woolfs' action in publishing the poem, Van Dijck claims, is that of executing a "*material turn* to the book – as an object that lasts and outlasts us" (p. 104), as a contribution to World War One remembrance culture. The "physicality of memorial objects such as gravestones and plaques" (p. 108) is conveyed in the Hogarth Press *Paris* through typographical distinctions which Virginia Woolf's hand typesetting personally established. Van Dijck gives a powerful sense of the hand-printed Hogarth Press books, including Paris and Woolf's own *Kew Gardens* (1918) as "curiously affective objects" (p. 110). The chapter closes with

a sensitive account of how printing *Poems by C.N. Sidney Woolf* at the Hogarth Press worked as "a therapy" (p. 113) for the dead man's brother, Philip, inseparable from him in life and with him when he was killed. Overall, the chapter gives a touching sense of how books could function as a form of consolation, humanising the horrors of war and honouring by recalling and preserving the memory (as people of culture) of those who senselessly died in World War One.

Chapter 4 uses Mulk Raj Anand's 1930s–40s First World War trilogy of novels to grasp "affective moments of contact with the soil" in relation to the "power imbalances" (p. 128) involved when Britain brought hundreds of thousands of Indians to fight in the war on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918. Van Dijck reads Anand's "encounter with the land, and with the documents that determined its ownership" (p. 128) as an implicitly anti-imperial critique, in which the materiality of the soil as tilled by agricultural workers tallies, paradoxically perhaps, with the modernist turn towards "the *mind within* rather than the *world without*" (p. 130), considering how Woolf rejected the Victorian-Edwardian novel as something filled with mere externalities.

Anand came from a postwar generation in that he was still a child when World War One ended. But, as Van Dijck puts it, the war "gave" him "his subject" (p. 132), specifically that of poor peasants from the Punjab who go to Europe in the effort to pay off debts which British colonists insisted they had incurred on the land they worked. Anand's modernist turn "*within*" is exemplified by an account of his protagonist Lalu's experience of manual labour breaking the earth of a field, a sense of the moment and of the muscular activity of the human body rather than, say, a reflection on the past as many of Woolf's essays in internality are.

Van Dijck's skilful reading of Anand's trilogy connects it with the interests of his monograph overall, linking the mud of the trenches with the earth that the bodies of the killed, abandoned on the battlefield, will become. In the process, Forster's perspectives on the earth and rolling landscape of the part of central India where he spent most time often come into view. After an interlude considering the burials of soldiers who dies far from home which connects Brooke and Thomas Hardy with Anand, the latter's treatment in various writings of the materiality of wartime paperwork comes into focus. The section also rounds up clerical activities of the other writers covered in the monograph, to make one of Van Dijck's overall arguments, namely that "the war prompted a more material understanding of the text" (p. 146). Anand's postwar anticolonial politics then come to the fore in a chapter conclusion.

Van Dijck ends the book with a "Coda" focused on the War Reserve Collection of political ephemera established at Cambridge University Library early in the First World War, comparing it with efforts to memorialise the war in other countries that it touched. Personal aspects of Van Dijck's research quest enter this epilogue. The use of objects "to make sense of the war's defining experiences" (p. 167) is the mantra. Objects mediate: this is the claim.

Overall, Van Dijck offers numerous strong arguments in this admirable and thorough study: on Forster "that language itself might be material" (p. 70), for instance. The quarry is cultural history, with literary biography and thing theory methods used in the pursuit. Throughout, his footnotes provide an excellent guide to scholarship, both on the writers covered and the question of war in relation to modernism more broadly. His chapters on Woolf, Mirrlees, and Anand in particular contain much that will benefit Forsterians – as much as the chapter which directly addresses Forster, in fact – and these include their insights into diverse connections of Forster's such as J.R. Ackerley, Malcolm Darling, and Mohammed El Adl.

As Van Dijck subtly shows, literature's contribution to handling the effects of war is often dislocated and indirect, certainly compared to what nurses, surgeons, and psychologists do for those affected. It allows contradictions to emerge, like Apollinaire's "curiosities" and the uses of English which Forster saw in Alexandria. Still, at times, thinking of how the suffering inflicted by those who initiated and directed World War One are revealed by the anger of a Siegfried Sassoon or the heard-rending grief of a Wilfred Own, I found myself willing Van Dijck to move beyond critical detachment towards public engagement.

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David Greven, 2023. *Maurice*. (Montreal & Kingston, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press)

Maurice by David Greven was published in the new series Queer Film Classics of McGill-Queen's University Press. The series, which at the moment includes twelve volumes, according to its editors Matthew Hays and Thomas Waugh "emphasizes good writing, rigorous but accessible scholarship, and personal, reflective thinking about the significance of each film - writing that is true to the film, original, and enlightening and enjoyable for film buffs, scholars, and students alike." The description of the series is important as the book is expressly directed to film scholars, literary scholars may find themselves a bit out of depth here although it is a challenge worth accepting.

Greven starts with a very personal introduction, "*Maurice*, C'est Moi", recalling the first time he saw *Maurice* in a New York movie theatre as a young student. The introduction sets the tone of the whole volume, as Greven confesses "almost thirty-five years later, I remain enthralled by *Maurice*." The book sets out to give justice to the movie, defend it against ungenerous reactions of movie critics as well as queer theorists, although it ultimately achieves much more than this.

The book opens with acknowledgements and a concise synopsis. Sufficient as the latter is, I would strongly suggest that any prospective reader should watch (or perhaps rewatch) the movie before reading the book. Greven's meticulous analysis is convincing and coherent, and yet perhaps it is better to judge the movie on one's own before. The Blu-ray 2017 30th Anniversary edition is particularly recommended as Greven refers to various bonus features which are available only there.

The first chapter is dedicated to the creators of the movie – the director James Ivory and the producer Ismail Merchant. It follows their respective and then joint careers from their individual debuts, through their early cooperation (*The Householder*, 1963) which included for the first time their third lifetime artistic partner, Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, to the end of their collaboration brought about by the deaths of Jhabvala and Merchant. Greven pays special attention to their role in the development of the so called heritage cinema, particularly

to the queer undertones it introduced.

The presence of these undertones in British and American cinema of the 1980s is discussed against the broader context of the situation of gay people on both sides of the Atlantic during the governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Greven shows how subversive gay film-makers opposed their policies through their work. The chapter draws a picture of the period, discussing briefly the most important queer-themed movies which preceded *Maurice* such as *Another Country* (1984) or *My Beautiful Launderette* (1985), which made it possible for such an openly gay movie to be produced.

The second chapter of the book concentrates on the literary source of the movie: E. M. Forster's novel *Maurice* (1971). Greven starts with the history of the creation of the novel, and then moves on to a detailed presentation of its plot. Its successful transition onto the big screen is the subject of the third chapter. Greven recalls the circuitous way and several rather unsuccessful attempts at handling the literary material, starting with the replacement of Jhabvala with a much younger and far less experienced screenwriter Kit Hesketh-Harvey. Greven moves on to praise Merchant and Ivory's "genius for casting". Even though some of the original candidates (such as Julian Sands, the star of their *A Room with a View*) ultimately bowed out of the project, the movie features an impressive cast consisting both of young actors at the beginning of their careers (this applies to Hugh Grant and Rupert Graves, for both of whom it was the second movie in their respective careers) as well as of experienced thespians such as Ben Kingsley and Denholm Elliott.

The second part of the chapter, the longest section of the book, offers an extensive and detailed personal analysis of the movie. Greven meticulously dissects every scene of the film, pointing out various aspects which might be missed by a distracted or unprepared viewer such as the use of music as a commentary to the depicted events, or the deliberately leisurely pace at which the events are presented. The numerous illustrations help keep track of the analysis, although, as I have already mentioned, access to the movie is highly recommended; particularly to the edition including deleted scenes which are discussed in the final part of the chapter. Even if some of the proposed readings might not be fully convincing, there is no doubt that Greven's analysis allows the viewer to experience the movie in a more complete way.

Greven closes his book with a brief account of the reception of the movie. He offers only a general presentation of the contemporaneous reactions

including a review written by Alan Hollinghurst, who, rather ironically, complained that two scenes from the original novel were missing. As it turned out thirty years later, they were both shot but did not make it to the final cut. The reactions apparently can be summed up in the words of James Ivory: "when *Maurice* came out there wasn't a single English critic who praised it wholeheartedly". Greven concentrates instead on two later essays, one by D. A. Miller and the other by the novelist David Leavitt, defending the movie quite successfully from their criticism.

If the book can be described with a single word, in this case the word would be "appreciation". Greven was, as he confesses in the preface, enthralled by *Maurice* and it is quite apparent from his book that the charm has never worn off. It was rather further confirmed by the analyses. Consequently, the study is very personal and, perhaps, not critical enough, but exactly as the editors of the series promised "original, and enlightening and enjoyable". It is quite certain to attract the attention of film scholars as well as film lovers, it should not be missed by literary scholars and fans of E. M. Forster's novel either.

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Paola Irene Galli Mastrodonato, 2024. *Emilio Salgari. The Tiger Is Still Alive!* (Lanham, MD: Farleigh Dickinson University Press)

This extraordinarily captivating monograph is dedicated to Italy's great adventure novelist, Emilio Salgari (born in Verona in 1862 and who died by suicide in Turin in 1911). As its author, Paola Irene Galli Mastrodonato reminds her readers that Salgari, since the beginning of his literary career in the 1880s, "was overwhelmingly present in the publishing market and in an exceptionally large sector of the reading public but incredibly absent in cultural traditional institutions, like schools and universities" (19). In fact, during the period spanning from the late 1800s to the end of the 1950s and beyond, Salgari's name was accompanied by a negative (pre) judice on the part of the academia and the right-thinking conservative, mostly overwhelmingly Catholic, Italian public opinion. At the same time, Salgari continued to have a massive readership, being without any doubt the most read author in Italy, besides being the most translated Italian author world-wide. Salgari's Italian readers, nonetheless, were trapped in a social context where the idea that their favourite author was somebody who wrote works of dubious literary, cultural and ethical merit continued to be hegemonic in the Gramscian sense of the world.

As pointed out by Galli Mastrodonato, this was a situation which started to be challenged only in the 1960s – when, paradoxically, Salgari's readership had already started to decline. Beginning in those years, a band of intellectuals deeply influenced by Salgari, and sometimes not belonging to the literary profession, in a very Garibaldi-like style – or, maybe more correctly, in a Salgari-like style – led an uphill battle to restore their favourite author's work to the dignity that it rightly deserves. Tired of being told by the official academia that Salgari was a writer of no value, suitable at most for adolescents and certainly far inferior to Jules Verne, they authored a series of articles and monographs on Emilio Salgari's 88 novels and 120 short stories and novelettes, along with some important biographies of their favourite author.[1]

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1 A list of these works is included in the bibliography which closes Galli Mastrodonato's monograph. Although the list is detailed and on the whole exhaustive, an important work not listed there is Giovanni Arpino &

This new approach aimed at re-evaluating Salgari's work, while also giving a realistic picture of his short and unhappy, but very industrious, life. It was a re-evaluation that also successfully pursued the goal of making a selection between the many works he had written and those – fewer in number but still quite numerous – that were apocryphal. Eventually, in 1980, academic Salgarian studies were officially inaugurated with a conference in Turin, *Scrivere l'avventura* ("Writing Adventure"), and went on to flourish "like a jungle in expansion", to quote Galli Mastrodonato's words.

Interestingly enough, however, this flourishing of Salgarian studies was far from completely removing the preconceived negative judgement fostered by a considerable part of the academia. And it is against this backdrop, a still contested revaluation of Salgari's work, that the relevance of Galli Mastrodonato's monograph becomes visible.

In her study, Galli Mastrodonato pursues the re-evaluation of Salgari's works by following two main strategies: highlighting Salgari's "unique writing method" and stressing the modernity and anti-Orientalist dimension of Salgari's stories. Galli Mastrodonato pursues her strategies through the examination of a wide selection of the eighty-eight novels authored by Salgari. In the first chapter she puts together "a sort of reasoned atlas of his works according to the geographical settings he has chosen for his plots and characters" (27) as well as the time settings of his novels. Hence she examines no less than fourteen novels set in so diverse and faraway areas as Southeast Asia, the Far East, the Americas, the Mediterranean, Africa, the poles, Australia, Oceania and the Czarist Empire, and in so diverse and faraway time settings as ancient Egypt, the 16th century, the mid-19th century, Salgari's own lifetime and the future (as Salgari is not only an extraordinary adventure writer but also, as stressed by Galli Mastrodonato, the first Italian science-fiction writer, although a too often forgotten one).

After designing this first general map, Mastrodonato goes on, in chapters 2 and 3, to dwell on Salgari's longest and most famous series, the 10 novel-long Indo-Malayan cycle. Set in the mid-19th century, the cycle has as its main characters three of Salgari's most charismatic and most beloved heroes: the Bornean prince-turned pirate, Sandokan; the Portuguese adventurer (although with a Spanish name)

Roberto Antonetto, *Vita, tempeste, sciagure di Salgari, il padre degli eroi* (Life, storms, misfortunes of Salgari, the father of the heroes), Milano: Rizzoli, 1982. It is a biography which Galli Mastrodonato certainly knows, as shown by the fact that in her work she repeatedly makes use of the moniker "father of the heroes and heroines" when mentioning Salgari.

Yanez de Gomera; the Indian hunter Tremal-Naik. Then, Galli Mastrodonato puts under her lens, in chapter 4, the second most famous and longest of Salgari's cycles, the one dealing with the corsairs of the Caribbean, set in the 17th century. There, she focuses her attention on another most charismatic and beloved Salgarian hero, the elegant and brave, but sombre and troubled, Italian nobleman Emilio di Roccabruna, who has become a privateer to avenge his family and is known as the Black Corsair because of the colour of his clothes. Finally, Mastrodonato concludes her work with a chapter on Salgari's legacy, where she nevertheless finds the space to still dwell on an additional number of Salgarian novels, in particular those set in the American Far West. And, in so doing, she throws light on one of Salgari's most fascinating female "villains", the American Indian warrior-chief Minnehaha.

It is through the detailed and empathic comment of these novels that Galli Mastrodonato highlights Salgari's expertise as a writer. She shows how, through his writing techniques and tight formal control of his narrative procedures, Salgari unerringly aims at keeping foremost in the reader's mind the interest for the plot, stressing the basic elements of the story's construction. As argued by Galli Mastrodonato, Salgari reaches his goal by distancing himself from the pattern of adventure novels which was traditional in his times, squarely based on the hero's departure from home, his travels and adventures in a faraway land and his triumphal return to his country of origin. Rather, Salgari makes use of the "modernist device" of beginning his stories in medias res, "directly involving the reader in the matter of his narration" (23).

Galli Mastrodonato's interest in highlighting Salgari's "unique writing method" (24) is foremost in her discussion. She convincingly argues, by using many examples in support of her thesis culled from the novels she comments upon, that two still occasionally resurfacing adverse claims of some critics can be definitely disproved. The first is that Salgari is a "children's author"; the second is that his characters and plots have all the superficiality and inconsistence of characters and plots derived from melodrama.

As already remarked, the other main theme of Mastrodonato's work is the importance that is rightly assigned to the disconcerting modernity of Salgari's stories. It is a modernity that is disconcerting, because of the explicit and unambiguous ways in which Salgari challenges the *idées reçues* of his time – namely the age of triumphant imperialism – on race, colonialism and sex. Which is something that no other author of his and the following generation was ever willing and/or capable to do. In fact, Salgari's heroes and heroines were, according to the morals of his time, predominantly "bad" people and, even worse, they

were people who did decidedly improper things. But today, in a somewhat more enlightened age – though not much more so, in this writer's opinion– those same people turn out to be good people, who acted praiseworthily and courageously.

To be convinced of what has just been said, it is sufficient to reflect on three issues. The first is that, up at least to the Second World War, the fact that Westerners had a legitimate right to keep non-Westerners under their domination and that this domination was also beneficial to the subjugated peoples was a widely shared opinion; nowadays, however, the fairness of anti-colonial struggles is generally accepted – provided, of course, that the Palestinians' struggle for their own independent state is not included.

Also, nowadays, the question of interracial marriages, which remained a taboo until well after the Second World War, is something that is largely admitted in most Western countries, Italy included. But to fully understand how disruptive and shocking these issues appeared in Salgari's times, it is enough to remember – as Galli Mastrodonato does – that in 1895 when Salgari published *I misteri della jungla nera* – whose plot is centred on "the passionate love story between a Bengali snake hunter and the daughter of a British garrison officer"– in India a code had just been passed that severely punished any sexual contact between "natives" and "whites", especially sanctioning relations between "white women" and "Indian men" (25).

The third issue, the question of gender, remains still today a much more contested field. Nonetheless, Salgari's "border crossings" in this field – exemplified by novels like *Capitan Tempesta* and *Le Pantere d'Algeri*, expertly analysed by Mastrodonato – are far from provoking an automatic adverse reaction.

A way to highlight the modernity and the anti-Orientalist dimension of Salgari's work is the simple technique of comparing his characters and stories to those written by well-known and usually highly regarded Victorian authors, who were Salgari's contemporaries or who belonged to the generation following Salgari. This is a technique constantly pursued by Galli Mastrodonato while discussing Salgari's novels. The references to the works of Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, Edward Morgan Forster, Robert Louis Stevenson, A. E. W. Mason and others, and the comparison of their works with Salgari's novels are disseminated in Galli Mastrodonato's monograph. These comparisons make clear that the non-European characters and spaces portrayed by Salgari and those portrayed by his well-regarded Victorian colleagues are so radically different that the question might arise whether the reader is in front of different descriptions of the same spaces and the

human beings that inhabit them, or rather if we are confronted by two worlds apparently having nothing in common with each other.

An example among many of these radically different descriptions is the comparison between Conrad's *Lord Jim* and Salgari's *Le Tigri di Mompracem*, two novels which, interestingly enough, were both published in 1900.

In the opening lines of *Lord Jim* – Galli Mastrodonato points out – the natives are defined as black and tiny; they appear to be physically weak; they live in hovels in a "miserable" fishing village next to a calm sea with "pale water"; they are headed by an insignificant old tribal chief and protected by a "white lord", who, as Galli Mastrodonato underlines, "is the hero of the story that is related" (138).

In the incipit of *Le Tigri di Mompracem* – extensively quoted and translated by Galli Mastrodonato (135–36) – we are at night, in a "wild island with a sinister fame", battered by "a tremendous hurricane", where, at the far end there are huts lining a bay, surrounded by defences, while "numerous vessels" are "anchored beyond the cliffs" (135). Near the bay rises a high rock, where a house is situated. In this house, the only one with windows lit in that stormy night, we find a man "sitting on a limping armchair", in a room "strangely decorated". He is a native, who, quite differently from the natives portrayed by Conrad, is "tall, slim, with a body perfectly built", and whose features are "mighty, manly, proud, and strangely handsome". He has long hair which "falls on his shoulders", and a very black beard which frames "his lightly tanned face". And this man, Sandokan, the dethroned prince turned pirate, is, like Conrad's "white lord", the hero "of the story that is related".

Under the guidance of Galli Mastrodonato, the reader soon discovers that Sandokan is the leader of a band of men who belong to all the ethnic groups living in South-East Asia. They are characterized by the most diverse physical features, but fight under a common flag, oblivious to any racial division, and appear eager to wage battle "like a legion of demons" (148).

The natives described at the beginning of *Lord Jim* and *Le Tigri di Mompracem* refer to the same geographical area and time, but – as pointed out by Galli Mastrodonato – no difference could be greater than the one which divides Conrad's black, weak and tiny Bornean natives, led by an old and ineffective headman, and the manly, handsome, slightly coloured character based in an island "with a sinister fame", and followed by redoubtable men similar to a "legion of demons", springing from Salgari's pen.

Galli Mastrodonato, nonetheless, with a touch of malice, notes that there is something that unites these two seemingly irreconcilable worlds. In fact, she notes that

"Conrad's Jim, who defeated the rajah of Patusan with the aid of the Bugis tribes he had befriended, becoming their new sovereign" (204), is "very similar" to the anonymous English adventurer – described in Salgari's *Sandokan alla riscossa* (1907) – who had exterminated Sandokan's family and usurped his throne. She also notes that both Salgari and Conrad, in describing their respective characters, based themselves on the life and exploits of the English adventurer William Lingard (ca. 1830-1888), as argued by Felice Pozzo (one of the band of Salgari's scholars not belonging to the literary profession). However, whereas Conrad's Lord Jim is portrayed as a "liberator" of "childish" natives, Salgari's anonymous English adventurer is described as "a ruthless and cunning white-skinned enemy bent on murder and the violent occupation of a foreign land through treachery and bribery" (204). Hence, Salgari's view of a fictional character exemplifying the many British adventurers – like James Brooke, Sandokan's celebrated antagonist in *I pirati della Malesia* (1902) – who gave such a powerful contribution to the building of the widest colonial empire in history is deeply anti-Orientalist and consonant with that of today's most advanced historical research. On the contrary, Conrad's perspective is exemplary of the Eurocentric, imperialist and Orientalist Weltanschauung, which was hegemonic in Salgari's time, but that the Italian master of adventure fiction did not share.

The same differences are highlighted by Galli Mastrodonato when she compares Salgari to other Victorian novelists, in particular Rudyard Kipling and E.M. Forster. To give the gist of these comparisons it suffices to quote what she writes, summing up her analysis of the Indias described by Forster and Kipling on one side and the one described by Salgari on the other:

> … there is nothing regal, noble, wealthy, attractive, or even decent and clean in the native characters they (Forster and Kipling) imagined for their white supremacist plots, while Emilio [Salgari] has created unforgettable colored heroes and heroines who convey a sense of unending fascination with their looks, their attire, their beliefs, their ornaments, their jewels, their dances, their music, their warlike spirit, and their sophisticated plurimillennial culture that literally shines through the eyes of its holy men. (326)

But, of course, the differences between Salgari and his highly regarded Victorian colleagues do not end here. Another impressive distinguishing feature is the way in which women and their personal stories are dealt with.

Exemplary of how Salgari portrays his female heroines is Fathma, the protagonist of *La favorita del Mahdi* (1887), a novel set during the revolt of Muhammad Ahmad, the Sudanese religious and political leader, against the Egyptians supported by the British. As Galli Mastrodonato points out:

> Fathma […] is a living contradiction, dismantling the basic stereotype of the "exotic" as the "myth of the languorous, passive sexual availability" of "an Orient … constructed as feminine": she is physically and psychologically strong and determinate, she decides who to love and she masters her subjectivity by saying " – I'm an Arab!", by proclaiming her religious faith and her allegiance to the Mahdi, and by being a battling woman (she is "fearless" […]) (46).

Fathma is the blueprint of Salgari's heroines, both European and non-European, either as positive characters or as fascinating "villains". In fact, as Galli Mastrodonato points out, the vast majority of Salgari's fictional female characters are strong and independent heroines, they fight for their ideals (which are not necessarily limited to the choice of the man with whom they want to live), they are ready to run any kind of physical and psychological risks to reach their objectives, and in doing so they often take up arms and fight.

Summing up, characters such as Tremal-Naik and Suyodhana – respectively the hero of *I misteri della jungla nera* and his antagonist (a complex and interesting 'villain') – "cannot possibly exist in Kipling's or Forster's fictional rendering of India" (249). Likewise, no female heroine such as Ada Corishant, the young English woman whom the Indian Tremal-Naik loves, being loved back, "is present in coeval works of fiction written by white authors" (277).

As noted by Galli Mastrodonato, the absence of this kind of character in the Victorian fiction of his time – the European woman who loves a non-European man –is quite striking if one remembers that notwithstanding official prohibitions against interracial sexual relations, in India these relations had been frequent enough to generate a well-defined ethnic group, the "racially mixed" Anglo-Indians. However, this was a group that was looked down upon by white public opinion, "a prejudice – notes the author– that was still at the heart of Hollywood's 1956 version of John Master's 1954 novel *Bhowani Junction*" (277).

In carrying out her re-evaluation of Salgari's work, Galli Mastrodonato competently draws on her in-depth knowledge not only of Salgari's work, but of Western

literature at large. She has the ability to make use not only of her extensive knowledge of literature, but also of wide-ranging historical sources, which she correctly deploys. Furthermore, Galli Mastrodonato, in discussing some controversial points in Salgari's work, sometimes falls back on her own personal experiences, as an Italian born in Somalia, who has spent her childhood in Kenya during the Mau Mau revolt and her early teens in the Shah's Iran. In so doing she is able to throw additional light on Salgari's work, showing that non-European events or customs which the Italian master of adventure fiction describes, and which have been decried as fantastic constructs by some critics, did in fact exist and were witnessed by her. Finally, there is no doubt that Galli Mastrodonato is emotionally involved with the subject she studies, which sometimes leads her to make use of rather harsh a language, when passing her judgments on some of Salgari's critics. Nonetheless, it is an emotional involvement which undoubtedly helps her to achieve – and therefore to transmit to her readers – a profound understanding of the subject of her work.

Of course, together with the evident strengths of Galli Mastrodonato's work there are its weaknesses. A main one is the contention that the two leaders of the Tigers of Mompracem, Sandokan and Yanez, are tied by a homosexual relationship.

On the basis of his own experience, this author can point out that the passages cobbled together by Galli Mastrodonato in order to prove her point simply highlight a deep and extremely important personal relationship, without implying any kind of homoerotic attraction. Also, the denial of Galli Mastrodonato's thesis is contained in the very plot of *Le Tigri di Mompracem*. In that novel, we see Yanez going so far as to risk his own life in order to favour the relationship between Sandokan and Marianna, the woman whom Sandokan is in love with. Yanez does this because he deeply loves Sandokan *as a friend*; he certainly would not have done so if he had loved him *as a lover*.

When all the above is said, the fact remains that Galli Mastrodonato's monograph is an extraordinary work, written with extraordinary passion and no less extraordinary competence, destined to remain a reference text for anyone dealing with Emilio Salgari and his role in Italian modern letters. It is also a work which conclusively proves that Emilio Salgari has not only been the major Italian author of adventure fiction, worth to be included in the Pantheon of "high literature", but also an absolutely unique example of a counter-Orientalist fiction-writer in the age of triumphant imperialism.

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Harish Trivedi (ed.), 2024. *100 Years of A Passage to India* (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan)

This well-produced paperback is a sparkling update on the critical evaluations of *A Passage to India,* E M Forster's best-known, if not the best, novel. Edited by Harish Trivedi, a familiar name in the field of Forster studies from India, the anthology of fifteen essays is a fresh intervention in unpacking a protean text which has attracted a plethora of scholarly assessments since its publication in 1924. Forster's swan song among his five novels became an instant bestseller on both sides of the Atlantic soon after its appearance and has remained a set text in English studies in the Indian subcontinent—perhaps in the rest of the Anglophone world too—over the years because of its wide reach and appeal as one of the most popular books of fiction on India written by a Western writer. Although the author's thematic concerns and ideological predilections instantiated by the centenarian novel have been analyzed in a flourishing body of professional explorations, the volume under review offers some arresting perspectives on the novel's signifying narrative transactions.

The essays focus on the filming and stage adaptations of the novel, its translation and international reception, philosophic and religious and political issues germane to the text as well as its ontology and aesthetic underpinnings. Three essays deal with the translation of *Passage* in various languages since its publication. Krzysztof Fordonski tracks down the versions of this novel in the languages of Central-Eastern Europe, formerly part of the Soviet Bloc. Forster gained global fame with the commercial success and critical acclaim of this novel and so it became a tantalizing text for translation even though its subject and characters were not immediately interesting to the readers of this region. According to Fordonski, it was first rendered into Swedish in 1925—only a year after its emergence—and subsequently in Czech and Russian (1926), Finnish (1928), German (1932), Danish (1935), Polish (1938) and Hungarian (1941). Even during the totalitarian dispensation nine editions of the novel in different languages of the area were published. It could have been a case of innocuous response to the book because of Forster's anticolonial slant in his creed of liberal humanism.

However, with the ideological hardening during the time of Stalin, the second translation (1937) of *Passage* lay in literary limbo. The revival of Russian interest in Forster's masterpiece had to wait until a new edition was published in 2017.

The decline of interest in Forster's novel also brought acute hardship and privation to its translator, Lidiya Ivanovna Nekrasova. She was found guilty under censorship and made to suffer for five years from 1937. Eventually, she succumbed to her suffering in 1942. In the climate of regimented and hidebound critical opinion, Forster was found lacking in "the necessary historical-materialistic Marxist perspective" and thus choosing "a mystical religious vision, escaping the social tensions in a period of transition" (49). In Poland too, Forster's novel evoked mixed response in a string of reviews that followed its successive translations. For instance, while Adam Bar, a noted literary scholar and bibliographer, made a positive appraisal of *Passage* for its author's "psychological incisiveness" in drawing "a perfect image of the attitude of the English towards the Indians" (53), despite its problematic plot, Zbigniew Grabowski, influenced by the literary trends and fashions of his time, found it insipid and pedestrian. Others, including Andrzej Tretiak, a pioneering Polish academic in English studies, faulted the poor quality of translation, particularly Helena Myslakowska's – indeed a disservice to the fine style of a "serious literary work" (54). Equally, the 1979 translation of *Passage* as *Droga do Indii* (A Road to India) went largely unnoticed, with the exception of a stray review by Adam Kaska praising Forster's indictment of the imperial hegemony. In Fordonski's cogent analysis in this essay, Forster's masterpiece had a tinted and truncated reception in Poland for over fifty years. It has now come into its own, backed by its cinematic adaptation, proliferation of publishing houses in the milieu of literary glasnost, as evidenced by the publication of its another translation by Tarnowska and Konarek in 1993.

Unlike the sporadic curiosity of its readers in Russia, Poland and around, the French translation of *Passage* in 1927 came into circulation and gained traction in the academic circles of Paris. Charles Mauron's translation, *Route des Indes*, had Forster's full approval, notwithstanding the editor's demand for alterations and revision of the draft. Forster knew some French and so he put his foot down in support of the unrelenting translator. It was not a commercial success but it aroused nonetheless the interest of French readers with the increasing dissemination of information about India and its prolonged colonial control by the British. In her contribution to this collection, Evelyne Hanquart-Turner notes that David Lean's film version (1984) of *A Passage to India* boosted the French reader's

appetite for the text. An edited and annotated French version with a preface and supplementary material was put together and published in 2013 to make it more accessible to the readers. The novel's theme of friendship attracted the peripatetic readers of the increasingly inter-connected world aligned with global solidarity. More significantly, the author and the translator forged close bonds of mutual amity, living out the message of the novel, as it were. This intimate trust is vindicated by the dedication of Forster's book, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), to his friend and the French translator of *Passage*, Charles Mauron. In their convivial get-togethers under the sunny sky of Provence in Charles' Garden, Forster and his friend experienced "real international friendship" which Aziz and Fielding in the novel had been denied in the early years of twentieth century India (41).

Crucially indeed, amid this pervasive translation traffic, the eponymous novel of Indian provenance has not been rendered into the primary language of its characters, namely Hindi. While this novel's two Bengali translations, *E paysej to Indiya* (1960) by Rabishekhar Sengupta and *Bharatpathe* (1995) by Hirankumar Sanyal, were published from Calcutta and Dhaka respectively, a Hindi version is still awaited. Interestingly enough, Rupert Snell's essay in this anthology assesses the resonance of the six samples of the unpublished Hindi translation of the opening paragraph of *Passage*, and points to the challenges of catching and matching up to Forster's language. The translation excerpts closely collated with the source are by eminent two-way hands, including Harish Trivedi, Gopalkrishan Gandhi, Kunwar Narain, Rohini Chowdhury, Sara Rai and Rakesh Pande. The spectrum of transfers in these Hindi renderings shows some of these draft translators using the original text as the conduit for their own independent and foregrounded creativity and others seeking to capture the sense components with tentative textual engineering. Snell argues how the bilingual execution of these specimen versions adds to, or subtracts from, the source into the host language. The Hindi versions have some sufficiently expressive equivalents of the compressive, allusive and "brilliantly ominous" (14) poetic prose of the original. By suggesting a measure of competent translation through varied nuances of the Hindi equivalents of a stylistically well-crafted original passage organically related to the novel, Snell's essay looks forward to a compelling carry-over of Forster's masterpiece in Hindi.

Snell rightly points out that an opportunity for a Hindi translation of the dialogues in *Passage* was missed when the iconic Indian film maker Satyajit Ray desired to film it in the 1960s but he could not get the screen adaptation

rights. As it happens, the novel has gained global fame following the screening of David Lean's film version of *A Passage to India* (1984), fourteen years after Forster's death. Some deviations are inevitable for rendering a verbal text into a visual medium in order to tighten and improve the narrative. Madhu Singh's essay in this compilation, "Visualizing *A Passage to India*: Re-imagining Forster's Classic on Stage and Screen", is focused on the fidelity of these adaptations. She is of the view that, though some aspects of the source had to be altered because of the change in perspective due to the time lag between the published story and its filmed version, Foster might have resisted the changes, given his firm reluctance to release the rights to film the novel. Of course, this classic had been adapted for the stage during the author's lifetime by Santha Rama Rau in 1960, and was modified for television in 1965, but John Brabourne and Richard Goodwin could buy the film rights only in 1981 and then select David Lean as director. The film's tidy narrative trajectory wedded to the centrality of the Marabar Caves and Adela Quested's prominence in the adaptation is a faithful rendition of the novel's theme, successfully catching the imperial landscape. As in the case of Santha Rama Rao's stage adaptation, Forster, who died in 1970, might be equally pleased by David Lean's screen version, which cites as its source the play as well as the original text of the novel.

Madhu declares in her estimation of the cinematic narrative that, on balance, there is no "inevitable disparity between literature and film" (69) here. The essay includes another adaptation of the novel for analysis: Martin Sherman's *A Passage to India* produced by *Shared Experience* in 2003. By making Narayan Godbole, the Hindu mystic "a central character and 'linking narrator' in the Hindu state of Mao" (70), Sherman wanted to highlight what had not been covered in earlier adaptations. According to him, the "Temple" section had been reduced and downplayed, and so the novel had not been well-served in the past adaptations, in that it is not just about the mystery of the caves of Marabar. Thus "most visual adaptations of *A Passage to India*," Madhu concludes, "were successful and brought Forster closer to the public" (73). It would seem that by resisting the appropriation of his novels for screen, Forster denied himself "a full theatrical meal."

The novel's genesis, its long gestation and the seminal role of its dedicatee, Syed Ross Masood, in begetting the book have been recounted in several biographical accounts of Forster. The details are now well-known to his readers. What is then the justification for David Lelyveld's essay "Syed Ross Masood, Author of *A Passage to India*" in this florilegium on Forster's final opus? As one reads the

cogent piece between the lines, its significance becomes notable for two reasons: first, it dispels the facile likeness between Aziz and Masood—suggested casually by the author—in light of a posthumous tribute to his friend that Forster wrote, as well as the letters published after Forster's death; second, for a tantalizing nugget of information about the friendship between Masood's father Syed Mahmood and G E A Ross, with whom he lived for many years, before the latter left India. He married at last in 1888 and named his son Ross, who was born in 1889. The friendship between Masood's father and Mr Ross was cited "as symbol of British-Indian friendship" (82) – a salient thematic concern of the novel.

Although Lelyveld has not shied away from intimate biographical questions, frowning on what Joyce Carol Oates labeled "pathography," a fuller discussion on the homoerotic origins of the novel would have enriched his essay. In this context, a little-known book published by the Gay Men's Press—Arthur Martland's *E M Forster*: *Passion and Prose* (1997)—is very informative on Forster's private life, apart from Wendy Moffat's *E M Forster*: *A New Life* (2010).

The well-crafted drama in Forster's subtle and sensitive novel has been analyzed from disparate points of view by the contributors to this well-culled critical collection, especially by Rukmini Bhaya Nair in her incisive essay engaging with the tension between Forster's critical formulations in his 1927 book, *Aspects of the Novel*, and his own art of fiction displayed in *Passage*; by Howard J Booth's exploration of Forster's views on Kipling; and Ipsita Chanda's reading of the novel as Forster's message for risking connections with alterity despite their negative possibilities. Bhaya Nair argues that "*Passage* and *Aspects* are themselves a 'pair' embodying a sometimes tense but always thoughtful conversation between Forster the novelist and Forster the literary critic" (207). More persuasively, Bhaya Nair underlines Forster's masterly prescience in anticipating "the Age of the Anthropocene so imbued with prognostications of planetary doom and internecine hate" (213). However, Ruth Vanita's point, in her discussion of "*A Passage to India* as a Vedantic Novel," that Forster "critiques liberal humanism and moves beyond it" (96) is less than compelling. In fact, liberal values are firmly at the novel's centre and the story moves in the liberal direction, though impeded by its inner tension and about-faces represented by the character of Cyril Fielding. Liberal sentiments are thick on the ground in the novel with its examination of the bonds of transcultural friendship. In fact, Forster's insistence on the value of friendship between individuals is an extreme modification of the old liberal order that he found crumbling

around him in the larger world. Impelled by the pervasive disorder he imagines the possibility of constructing smaller spheres of liberal order within a chaotic world. His liberalism does not stem from a concise body of doctrine. It is rather a capacious predilection receptive to various social and political pressures.

In his essay, Trivedi attributes Adela's fantasy or hallucination about Aziz's unfair sexual advances towards her to Forster's "overheated imagination" (226) following his Indian friend and host Masood's rejection of his homosexual expectations on the night before he visited the Barabar Caves on "29 January 1913 [sic]"—in other words, he projected his own distractions onto her. This speculation adds another layer of uncertainty to what actually happened in the caves simply because there is "no obvious original" for this event. The author, as the omniscient narrator, never divulged it. The point thus made in the essay is moot because Forster was not writing the novel on the fly or in a flurry. He planned and put his hands to the plough many months after visiting these caves. The writing got stalled and the fragments hung fire until he revivified the novel after his second visit to India in 1921–22. As he said in several interviews, a novelist should be a meticulous planner and always settle "what is going to happen in the novel and what his major event is to be." Trivedi concludes his argument by stating that the novel ends up in a "non-poetic and utterly political impasse" (230). The impasse is not just political, but also spiritual, in that the drifting and bewildered human beings are uncomprehending of the mystery and marvels of the universe that seem to be amenable to Hinduism, as suggested in the novel's crowning climax. Trivedi also gives short shrift to the novel's multiple perspectives on its principal problem of forging friendship across socio-cultural divides and under political conditions of oppression that unleash the pressures of social and political forces on human relations with troubling alternatives.

A creative reworking of Forster's novel as a wellspring for parodic adaptations is evident in Anamika's innovative take-off from the given plot in her essay titled "Adela Adrift in India." It is an ingenious and intriguing send-up on the Englishwoman's post-trial hang-out in India in contrast with her return to England in the novel. Forster's high-minded, 'priggish' and awkward character reduced to a catatonic figure in the court and her reflective and articulate doppelganger envisioned by Anamika crossmatch in their courage and conscience. The title of this paper harks back to Forster's non-fiction piece "Adrift in India: The Nine Gems of Ujjain", first published in *New Weekly*, 21 March 1914, and later reprinted in *Abinger Harvest*, 1936. During "ten good years" of her surplus

stay in India, as she is saved from "a shattered state on a ship sailing back to London" (138) and given an extratextual frame, Adela mutates into a liberated and mature observer of the world around her. Her epistolary accounts of Forster in King's College, Cambridge, as well as Fielding and Aziz are leavened with satiric modulations. The feminization of King's College, Cambridge, however, is slightly misdated— "17 August 1974"—here (138). In fact, the proposal to admit women put forward to the College's Governing Body in May 1969 by the Provost Edmund Leach was voted overwhelmingly and it got going with the admission of 47 female students in 1972. King's was thus, alongside Clare and Churchill, the first of the Cambridge all-male Colleges to admit women in 1972.

Finally, , this centennial offering is an eminently useful contribution to the revaluation of one of the best-known and widely read novels of our time. The editor has cast his net wide and put together pretty interesting stuff in this volume of substantial value and real virtues. Yet some inadvertent slips are there: Forster's mother died in 1945, not "in 1944" (xiii) and he visited the Barabar Caves on 28 January 1913, not "29 January 1913" (226). The other spotted typos include "fly-invested" (78), "ICS office" (80), "Surry" (84), "Forster's *A Passage to India* (1926) "(177), "an demonstrable" and "deitic" (207), "prophetia" (211), "a short shrift" (229). These typing errors will need to be weeded out in the next print.

All in all, this critical anthology has extended the frontiers of engagement with Forster's richly multilayered novel from diverse points of view and enriched our understanding of his portrait of Indian society in the grip of imperialism. The contributing essayists have revealed the extraordinary depth and complexity, and most of the enduring qualities of this classic which make Forster harder to pigeonhole and harder to define.

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Allan Hepburn, ed., 2024. *Friendship and the Novel* (Montreal & Kingston, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press)

In the Introduction to *Friendship and the Novel*, the volume's editor Allan Hepburn observes that, while "philosophy has a rich tradition of discussing friendship" (6), "[l]iterary criticism about friendship is surprisingly thin" (5). I decided to check if this is (still) the case by entering the search term "friendship" into my university library online database, and looking at the first one hundred results, favouring monographs and excluding works of fiction. The overall scholarship on friendship is substantial, covering multiple disciplines, whose representation at times ranges from more general to very narrow and specific areas of interest (for instance, from *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Friendship* edited by Diane Jeske [New York, London: Routledge, 2023] to *Nietzsche and Friendship* by Willow Verkerk [London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019] or *Male Friendship in Ming China* by Martin Huang [Leiden, Boston: Brill; 2007]). It is true that so far friendship has been most extensively examined in philosophy, followed by anthropology, sociology, history, psychology, and education sciences. However, in the last three decades, there have also been more studies on cultural representations of friendship in fiction in various media, including film and television (e.g. the TV series *Friends*), but most importantly literature, that could be added to the short list provided by Hepburn showcasing a few literary scholars' analyses of female and male friendships. Perhaps literary criticism about friendship will appear a little less "thin" if the provided list is expanded by the following additions: *The Arts of Friendship: The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* by Reginald Hyatte (Leiden, New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), *Narrating Friendship and the British Novel, 1760-1830* by Katrin Berndt (London, New York: Routledge: 2017), three larger volumes including chapters on literature: *Dialectics of Friendship* edited by Roy Porter and Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: Routledge, 2021; first published in 1989), *Friendship* by A. C. Grayling (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2013), and *A Tremendous Thing: Friendship from the Iliad to the Internet* by Gregory Jusdanis

(Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2014), as well as, finally, *The Politics and Poetics of Friendship* co-edited by Robert Kusek and myself (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2017), containing twenty-two essays, eighteen of which are written from the perspective of literary studies.

Friendship and the Novel, published in 2024, resulted from a colloquium organised in May 2022 in Montreal by its author (Allan Hepburn is James McGill Professor of Twentieth-Century Literature at McGill University). The volume opens with the abovementioned Introduction titled "Friendship and the Novel: Plot, Feeling, Form," where Hepburn asks, "Is the novel even conceivable without the familiar figure of the friend?" (3) and closes with Afterword: "Friendship: A Coda" by Maria DiBattista. The collection offers eleven essays divided into four thematic parts. The texts differ greatly and require a brief individual commentary.

Part one, "Patterns," consists of three chapters. "Between Women and Men: George Eliot's Friendships" by Deborah Epstein Nord examines male-female friendly relationships across Eliot's novels as the author's model for all human relations. This catalogue-like study focuses entirely on describing the plot and characters. "Faux Amis in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*" by Lisa Sternlieb is a more interesting analysis of "a novel about profound and desperate friendlessness" (50) that includes biographical aspects, contemporaneous reception of Brontë's writing, and reader-response theory, i.e. Brontë's designs of her virtual readers. Sternlieb proposes that Brontë worked through the pain caused by a scathing review of *Jane Eyre* by creating her new narrator, Lucy, who refers to an unfriendly reader (50), and is very much unlike Jane, who speaks to the imaginary ideal reader of her narrative. Jonathan Greenberg's "Friendship, Liberalism, and the Novel: *A Passage to India*" is another more ambitious chapter. It demonstrates how E. M. Forster addressed transcultural friendship across socio-political divides as well as political issues that are still very relevant today—largely thanks to the genre of the novel, which can accommodate difference unlike "more monological kinds of discourse" (88).

Part two, "American Examples," comprises two essays. "Henry James's *Ficelles* as Friends" by Brian Gingrich highlights the role of supporting actors, the main heroes' friends, and reads them as "functional partners" (99), a device serving as "the reader's friend" and helper in constructing narratives. In "Willa Cather and the Posterity of Friendship," Allan Hepburn discusses friendship as an alternative to marriage and kinship in Cather's output—including beyond the grave, after a friend's death, as the analysis additionally concerns itself with the temporality of friendship, while providing a catalogue of characters across Cather's oeuvre.

Part three, "Modern Instances," with its four essays is the longest in the book. "The Friendship of Joseph Conrad and André Gide: From Admiration to Disillusion and Back" by Emily O. Wittman stands out as the only fully biographical chapter in the volume, devoted to "one of the great literary friendships of the 20th century" (145), which played itself out mainly through letters. "The Elusive Figure of Friendship in Virginia Woolf's Novels" by Erwin Rosinberg is yet another catalogue with detailed characterisations proposing that friendship "is conveyed primarily through figurative language," i.e. elusive or mutable symbols (169) in Woolf's modernist fiction. In "Charles Ryder's Sentimental Education: The Lessons of Friendship in *Brideshead Revisited*," Jay Dickson examines Evelyn Waugh's best-known novel and concludes that "Waugh renders Charles's friendship with Sebastian in educational terms" (193), while the queer aspect of the relationship is curiously reduced to an endnote (204). In "Muriel Spark's Ensembles," Jacqueline Shin analyses "relationships that *look* like friendships but really are not" (208; original emphasis) in Spark's novels about groups of girls or women—specifically constructed environments that become "microcosms of division" (ibid.). Intriguingly, this highly, perhaps the most, interesting chapter in the collection, is *not* about friendship.

Part four, "Contemporary Friendships," offers two essays. Robert L. Caserio's "Critical Distance, Reparative Proximity: Changing Representation of Queer Friendship" centres on Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life* (2015) and Matthew Lopez's *The Inheritance* (2019)—two novels about "post-homosexual friendship" marked by "the turn against eros" (235). This text provides a particularly valuable analysis of Yanagihara's writing as a "gothic melodrama" (249). Finally, in "The European Generation X Novel," Barry McCrea turns to non-English speaking Western European novelists: especially Karl Ove Knausgaard and Elena Ferrante, among a few others, to compare "the vastly different structural role of friendship" (262) in their writing. All the selected Gen X authors are inconsistently put in one category with (Irish and Anglophone) Sally Rooney and (French) Édouard Louis, who are at the same time recognised as millennials. The chapter appears to be less a study of literary friendships (addressed in most detail in Ferrante), and more an attempt at a classification of the European Gen X novel or "Euro Gen X Style" (274) based on a handful of writers mainly from Italy and Norway.

Friendship and the Novel, not unlike the collection I myself co-edited, perforce could never be a monograph in a traditional sense but instead is characterised by a certain randomness of an accidental collage of authors and their interests that—due to some configuration of fate—met in one place and time. I believe

this is all one can accomplish when undertaking a subject as broad as "Friendship and the Novel" (and indeed "The Politics and Poetics of Friendship"). Attempts at a synthesis or a theory of friendship—without imposing on oneself very narrow specifications—would be as productive as trying to generalise and essentialise why various people act variously in various situations. People vary and so do friendships—greatly, across time, the globe, and each individual friendship's duration. A variety of selected examples is something that can certainly be hoped for, and what *Friendship and the Novel* does deliver.

The variety aspect of the volume also applies to the quality of the provided analyses. As mentioned before, several chapters do little more than catalogue characters and portray the workings of their particular types of friendships. In fact, methodologically, the whole collection often appears old-fashioned: there is very little use of contemporary theories that have creatively proliferated in the 21st century (the only exception being Caserio's penultimate essay, which refers to queer and trauma theory). What further contributes to the book's distinctly 20th-century feel is that most of the analysed authors are from the 19th and 20th centuries (which in itself by no means excludes the possibility of applying to them 21st-century research methodologies). If it were not for the last two chapters, addressing 21st-century literature and going beyond the Anglosphere (together with André Gide from Part Three), the book's title would be far too broad, and a different one would seem more accurate: e.g. *Friendship in 19th- and 20th-Century Selected American and British Novels*. Similarly broad and vague are the titles of the book's four parts. "Patterns" is vague and arbitrary—there are always some "patterns" in such compositional divisions. Why are "American Examples" preceded by "Patterns" rather than "British Examples," which would better reflect the clear pattern? "Modern Instances" and "Contemporary Friendships" are also rather unimaginative, while creating a temporal mini-pattern, albeit inconsistent with the earlier two parts.

Undoubtedly, the essays in *Friendship and the Novel* will be relevant to all readers interested in literary friendships and the novel, as well as to scholars of each author, adding yet another layer to the totality of their work. As stated in the collection's "Overview" for marketing purposes: friendship remains "an abiding mystery in fiction as in life." More books should and will be written about it, also in the field of literary criticism, which has now been enriched by Hepburn's edited collection.

A Passage to India – Centenary Revaluations Conference Report

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The conference "*A Passage to India* – Centenary Revaluations" was a hybrid event which took place in Olsztyn, Poland, on June 24-26, 2024. It was organized by the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, the University of Warsaw, and the International E. M. Forster Society.

The conference was mainly devoted to *A Passage to India*, the last novel of E. M. Forster published in his lifetime and which appeared on the market in June 1924. It confirmed Forster's position as one of the most eminent novelists of his time and started his international career with a Swedish translation in 1925, and then Czech and Russian translations both in 1926. The novel has since been adapted four times forradio, three times for the stage, once for TV, and, most memorably, once for the big screen by David Lean. It has been the subject of academic scrutiny for almost a century, various scholars applying a variety of theoretical approaches to the text. The purpose of our meeting, thus, was to reassess the century which has passed since the publication – looking at *A Passage to India* from all possible angles, within all possible context, debating over its past importance and influence, and trying to foresee the role it may play in the future. However, despite the fact that *A Passage to India* was central to our meeting, the presentations and papers on other aspects of Forster's life and work were also welcome. The conference was intended as a celebration of Forster and an opportunity for all Forsterians to come together.

The event, despite technical and time-zone challenges, was a great success. It was the second conference organized by the International E. M. Forster Society that gave an on-line access to those who could not join us in Olsztyn. The event was streamed which enabled Forsterian scholars and fans from all over the world to join the event and be a part of the Forsterian community. Additionally, it was the fifth conference under the auspices of the Society devoted entirely to Forster.

The scholars and researchers explored Forster's cultural, literary, and historical significance in eight thematic sessions and fifteen pre-recorded talks, the conference fostered rich discussions on the text's translations, colonial undertones, literary influences, and enduring relevance. The papers and presentations

prepared for the conference were followed by the compelling and engaging discussions which reflected a variety of approaches and perspectives when it comes to Forster's seminal novel as well as a rich response to his other works. The findings were especially fascinating as the participants were from different parts of the world, representing different cultures and, what follows, world views.

Day 1 of the conference. The meeting was opened by the head of the Society, Prof. Krzysztof Fordoński. The first plenary lecture was delivered by Prof. Harish Trivedi, who spoke (via the Internet from Delhi) about "India" and "Indias" in *A Passage to India*. The further proceedings were divided into three sessions. The first session, entitled "*A Passage to India* – Anniversary Considerations", was inaugurated by Ratna Raman, who revisited *A Passage to India*'s depiction of cultural and religious pluralism, highlighting how it remains a valuable text for addressing identity in a fragmented modern world. She also explored Forster's nuanced portrayal of gender and religion, noting the text's ability to evoke meaningful debates about cultural geographies. Then Tsung-Han Tsai analysed the politics of a new Taiwanese translation of the novel, arguing that its adaptations reveal Taiwan's broader cultural aspirations and struggles for global recognition. He suggested that the act of reinterpreting Forster's work is intertwined with Taiwan's search for self-definition. Further on, Krzysztof Fordoński offered an overview of the novel's translation history. Fordoński traced its 99-year journey through at least 50 languages and pointed out how each translation reflects distinct cultural priorities and historical moments. The session was closed with the presentation of the new critical edition of Forster's novels by David Scourfield and Howard J. Booth.

Session 2, focusing on literary India and its various perspectives, was opened by Howard J. Booth who argued that Forster's deep engagement with Anglo-Indian literature, including Rudyard Kipling, influenced *A Passage to India* by reversing colonial motifs and power dynamics. He emphasized that Forster's subtle approach to the understanding of Anglo-Indian stereotypes added layers of irony to the narrative. Further on, Jana M. Giles examined Forster's engagement with the sublime, focusing on the dismantling of Western aesthetic traditions observable in the text in favour of a more complex, mediated understanding of transcendence. Her paper also tied Forster's comments on aesthetics to the larger colonial discourse in *A Passage to India*.

Session 3 was dedicated to "India – Expectations and Experience." First, David Scourfield explored how Forster uses personal names and labels to judge

colonialist categorization, showing the fluidity and ambiguity of identity in colonial contexts. He argued that the novel's recurring theme of "unidentifiable" reality underlines the failure of imperial control. This talk was followed by Nawal Kechida's evaluation of Forster's ambivalence toward anti-imperialism. She indicated that his mundane depiction of India contrasts sharply with the romanticized exoticism often found in colonial literature. Her analysis revealed a tension between Forster's humanism and the implicit colonial biases of his time. Closing the panel, Xinyi Xu focused on the illnesses of Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore as expressions of colonial anxiety and suggested that their conditions expose vulnerabilities within the imperialist framework. Her paper also drew connections to contemporary discourses on psychosomatic illness and cultural displacement.

Day 2 of the conference. The second day was inaugurated with a plenary lecture by Prof. Claire Monk of De Montfort University, UK. Prof. Monk's presentation was entitled "Reconsidering 'The Other Boat' (1913–1947–1957): Forster's Other Passage to India". It revisited Forster's queer short story "The Other Boat". In her lecture, Monk examined the story's reception since its posthumous publication in *The Life to Come and Other Stories* in 1972, when it was praised as one of Forster's finest works. Monk explored the story's themes of eroticism, violence, and colonial hierarchies, focusing on the spatial and racial dynamics aboard the SS *Normannia*. Additionally, she analysed the way the narrative talks about the West-to-East movement and imperial power structures. Her paper also touched on Simon Dormandy's 2019 experimental stage adaptation and the way the story continues to be reimagined and interpreted.

The plenary lecture was followed by a general discussion which was joined by the online participants of the event. This was also the time for Q&A session dedicated to the pre-recorded presentations submitted at an earlier stage by those who could not take part in our Forsterian on-site meeting. The topics were highly engaging and of diversified nature. Vinita Dhondiyal Bhatnagar explored Forster's vision of bridging divides between the East and West through spiritual connection, paralleling the poet Whitman's ideas in *Passage to India* and stressing Forster's longing to harmonize the spiritual and cultural disparities between the two worlds. Next, Izumi Dryden investigated the role of music in Forster's novel, focusing on its use to bridge the human and divine. She was particularly interested in the way sound, rather than sight, creates a metaphysical dialogue, enhancing the novel's spiritual themes.

As for Shradha Kochhar's presentation, it examined Forster's usage of ambiguous spaces, particularly the Marabar Caves, to reflect uncertainties in identity, colonial tensions, and the elusiveness of truth. Another online participant, Chris Mourant, discussed the challenges of editing *A Passage to India* for the authoritative Cambridge Edition, underlining the importance of textual revisions that enhance understanding of its historical and cultural nuances. A centennial reflection on Forster's seminal novel was offered by Laëtitia Nebot-Deneuville who addressed its continued resonance in modern literary and cultural studies, and its ability to engage new generations of readers with its layered themes. Next, Francesca Pierini shared her thoughts on the way Forster constructs "national otherness" by contrasting East and West in these two novels. According to her, these depictions serve both as criticism and reinforcement of cultural binaries.

Lilian Rácz, on the other hand, explored music and rhythm structure in Forster's narrative, arguing that these elements mirror the novel's thematic tensions between harmony and discord, and its oscillation between the personal and universal. Then, in her paper, Laura Chiara Spinelli drew our attention to Forster's essays, showing how his reflections on culture illuminate his fictional works. As for Ashima Shrawan's presentation, it illustrated the application of Bharata's ancient Indian aesthetic theory of *rasa* to Forster's novel in question and thus revealed new dimensions of emotional and sensory engagement within its narrative. John D. Attridge, another online participant, using the lens of colonial "poverty tourism", looked closely at the novel's portrayal of India to find out how the narrative reflects and interrogates British perceptions of Indian poverty under the Raj.

Another pre-recorded paper, by Paola Irene Galli Mastrodonato, compared the pictures of India in Salgari's adventure novels and Forster's *A Passage to India*. She examined the two approaches to constructing divergent imaginative geographies of the subcontinent. Eliza Gładkowska, on the other hand, investigated the adaptation and legacy of Forster's *Howards End* in film, television, and other cultural texts. She studied various reinterpretations of the novel to measure the extent to which they preserve or transform the novel's central themes. Next, the aim of Kaberi Chatterjee's paper was to compare *A Passage to India* with two other narratives of colonial India. Chatterjee analysed their shared themes of cultural encounters and the lingering impact of imperialism. As for Murari Prasad, the scholar's presentation emphasized the universal scope of *A Passage to India*, arguing that its themes transcend geography to explore the questions of human connection and understanding in general. And finally, the paper by Ritashree Pal positioned

A Passage to India in modern debates on identity, exploring how its themes of race, religion, and nationalism resonate in contemporary global contexts.

The Q&A session was further followed by three sessions. The first one explored Forster's works beyond *A Passage to India*. Mykyta Isagulov examined Forster's intermedial references to art and mythology in his Italian novels, showing how these elements serve as a critique of English rigidity and social prejudice. He argued that Forster's allusions to Greek and Italian cultural heritage create a counter-narrative to England's declining imperial identity. Next, Nikolai Endres explored homoeroticism in *Maurice*, contrasting Martial's Roman vice with Vergil's idealized homoerotic relationships. He suggested that Forster uses Roman literary tropes to assess contemporary understandings of homosexuality. Yet another paper, by Maxime Petit, offered an analysis of the historical and sexual themes of "The Torque". Petit showed how Forster uses the past as a utopian space free from modern social constraints. The paper highlighted the humor and critical stance toward Christianity in Forster's historical narratives. Closing the session, Arpana and Deetimali Nath discussed homoerotic desire in two short stories, "The Other Boat" and "The Life to Come", revealing Forster's exploration of racial and imperialist power dynamics within intimate spaces. They argued that these narratives show the controversy related to colonialism while acknowledging the psychological toll of imperial ideology.

The next session looked at "Forster in Contexts". Aasiya Lodhi discussed Forster's 1946 BBC radio broadcasts, emphasizing their role in shaping British perceptions of India's independence while reinforcing colonial paternalism. She particularly stressed Forster's sentimental tone in *Has India Changed?* and how it reflects lingering asymmetries in British-Indian relations. Following, Paulina Pająk analysed the reception of Bloomsbury Group works in interwar Poland, focusing on the Polish translation of *A Passage to India*. She argued that the interwar publishing networks and periodicals played a key role in popularizing Forster's works, embedding them within broader transnational literary trends. Finally, Lawrence Jones examined the New Liberalist ethos in *Howards End.* He reasoned that Leonard Bast's evolving portrayal reflects Forster's critique of *laissez-faire* economics. His genetic analysis of the manuscript revealed a more compassionate representation of Bast than previously recognized.

The third session, closing the day, was devoted to Forster's influences and legacies. It was opened by Stuart Christie who claimed that Forster's immersive narrative style reflects an "aesthetics of accident," thus capturing

the immediacy and contingency of experience. Christie pondered over the question whether this immersive approach resists theoretical interpretations or aligns with neoliberal discourses on global connectivity. The next paper was presented by Artur Piskorz. He commented on the nostalgia in heritage cinema adaptations of *Howards End* and demonstrated how visual elements like architecture and landscape generate romanticized, yet often problematic, visions of the past. Emma Karin Brandin's discussion on Forster's use of domestic comedy to criticize rigid Edwardian gender norms closed the panel. The paper pointed out the way Forsterian humour is capable of exposing the contradictions within societal expectations of femininity.

Day 3 of the conference. The last day of the event included two sessions. Their discussions revolved around Forster's relevance to contemporary issues and literary intertextuality. The first session, entitled "Reading Forster in the 21st Century", began with Tarik Ziyad Gulcu's comparison of *The Machine Stops* and the COVID-19 lockdown situation. The speaker focused on the narrative's prophetic vision of technological dependence and social disconnection. His paper suggested that the novella offers a cautionary vision of dehumanization through isolation. During the same session Randi Saloman analysed gender and consent in *A Room with a View*, connecting Lucy Honeychurch's experiences to modern #MeToo narratives. She argued that Forster's portrayal of conflicting desires reflects broader societal tensions around gender roles and autonomy. The exploration of the nonnormative kinships in *Howards End* and *The Longest Journey* by Simon Turner closed the session. Turner explained how Forster reimagines inheritance and friendship as alternatives to traditional family structures.

The final session of the conference, "Forster and Other Writers / in Other Approaches", was opened with Rosie Blacher's analysis of sensory experiences in *A Passage to India*. Blacher argued that the novel's focus on sensory engagement challenges colonial ideologies and anticipates ecocritical thought. Then, Julia Szołtysek discussed Damon Galgut's *Arctic Summer* as a creative reimagining of Forster's life and works. She drew the attention to the text's portrayal of Forster's maturation as a writer and individual.

At the close of the conference, the event was discussed and concluded. The conference succeeded in revealing the multi-layered legacy of *A Passage to India* and E.M. Forster's broader oeuvre. By addressing topics such as colonialism, translation, queer identity, and ecological thought, the discussions emphasized the novel's ongoing relevance to contemporary debates in literature and cultural

studies. Consequently, the meeting confirmed that *A Passage to India* and other works by E. M. Forster are still very much present in the world of culture. Moreover, the rich response from the participants clearly showed that the issues the writer was interested in are regularly stirring emotions among both the researchers and fans of Forster.

Elżbieta Foltyńska
(1957-2024)

On 10 November 2024, our colleague and long-time Secretary of PASE, mgr Elżbieta Foltyńska, a lecturer at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw, who for many years served as the Deputy Head of the Institute for Student Affairs, passed away. Ela was buried on 21 November at the Parish Cemetery in Wrzos (near Przytyk).

Although I knew that others had known her longer and were closer to her, I really wanted to speak at Ela's funeral to thank her for everything she had done for the community of Polish Anglicists, for the staff and students of the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw, for all of us. I just didn't anticipate that words would get stuck in my throat as if against my will; my mind and body rebelled against the need to say goodbye. Because, as we said to each other, "this is not how it was supposed to be"; this was not the kind of goodbye we had been preparing for. In February 2025, Ela was meant to finish her work at the Institute after almost twenty years of managing student affairs (she took the position of Deputy Head for Student Affairs in October 2005). There were supposed to be gifts, bouquets and wishes for the joyful use of retirement privileges, not mourning speeches, wreaths and ribbons. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the semester, an inexorable illness, which she had been fighting bravely for a long time, forced her to cede administrative duties to a younger colleague. Still, even during her stay in hospital, she provided her successor with advice and helped solve the most difficult problems.

Ela will be remembered as an excellent teacher. Since her employment at the Institute in 1980, she taught cultural studies, discussing with students the secrets of political life, media and religion in the USA. She taught them how to ask questions and solve problems, and encouraged independent scientific research. She did not teach but guided students, sharing her knowledge and wisdom. She devoted her time and attention to them with a generosity that would put many to shame. She never accepted mediocrity; she demanded a lot from others and even more from herself. She knew how to point out a mistake without offending anyone. Always impeccably prepared, she valued clarity and precision of expression. When she began her battle with a terminal illness, her main priority was to plan her classes so that her students would not suffer.

When in 2014 I took over the management of the Institute from Professor Emma Harris, I knew that I would not be able to cope with the challenges of this position if I did not receive the support of more experienced colleagues: Ela and Dominika Oramus, who was responsible for financial and academic matters. Ela not only agreed to continue to manage student affairs, which she had been dealing with for almost a decade but also patiently and long-sufferingly guided me through the intricate administrative issues. Every change in the study programme had to be thoroughly thought through and discussed with a wider group. I remember our early morning phone calls (because on-site, she was completely absorbed in conducting classes, organizing teaching, office hours and considering applications), during which, without pathos but with seriousness, in addition to referring to current problems, she often returned to fundamental issues: the mission of the University, the quality and content of education and, finally, the responsibility of academic teachers for the work they do. On her lips, these were not empty phrases but insightful comments on the reality surrounding us. She was a passionate supporter of the pioneering course system implemented at the Institute of English Studies in the 1990s, which gave students the opportunity to broaden their interests and prepared them to formulate research problems independently. In the name of these values, she was ready to bear the hardships of a much more complicated system of designing workloads, planning classes and settling student accounts.

Ela taught us to respect the law, but she knew that following the rules must first and foremost serve the individual and the community. Students have repeatedly emphasized her kindness and generosity. She was the last to leave her office, located during our joint term on the fourth floor of the former Faculty of Physics building at 69 Hoża Street, right next to the student affairs office, when the building was empty. She did not allow herself to leave unprocessed applications, unread letters, or unfinished projects on her desk. Every letter she wrote was persuasively argued and impeccably edited. She was always composed, discreet and balanced. She listened to different arguments and was open to others. Most decisions concerning the Institute were made by the three of us, together with Dominika. Today, we can say that the foundation and good spirit of this "triumvirate" was Ela. We could always refer to her experience and rely on her prudent advice.

Thanks to her, we have hosted the authorities of the Polish Association for the Study of English, whose activities Ela had been involved in from the moment

it was founded. She spared no effort when it came to integrating the academic community and community-building. She was a person of the University, whose mission was to create a community striving for truth, goodness and beauty. Her intelligence, integrity, wisdom and open heart helped us all to face the most difficult challenges. Ela, I would like to remain always faithful to what you have so selflessly given us.

Małgorzata Grzegorzewska

♦

I had been seeing Ela Foltyńska for a long time, but we got to know each other a bit more closely when Professor Jan Rusiecki was the President of PASE and when, with the advent of the new millennium, a generational change was slowly taking place in our organization and its Board. A certain recurring image has stuck in my mind… The impeccably polite Professor and, one step behind him, the elegant Ela Foltyńska, who moved freely between two slightly different, receding linguistic and moral realities. Conditional moods, disappearing forms of politeness, "*państwo pozwolą*" versus "*państwo pozwolicie*"… It was hard not to smile, noticing a hint of innocent irony in this combination of light verbal juggling with the perfect skill of a person who has control over documents and reports, as well as over the foibles and nonchalance of some of the less disciplined participants of the meetings.

During my two terms, she was my bedrock, someone I could absolutely rely on and who, with her innate tact, helped me resolve often difficult interpersonal issues. I appreciated and still appreciate her tact, discretion, diplomatic skills and modesty. In private, during long conversations, Ela would also ascetically comment on the state of affairs and fight the inevitable. As the disease progressed, she preferred to remain in the shadows more and more often, postponing conversations until "later." She did not withdraw easily, and, as we know, she was with us almost to the end… with the inseparable cigarette. Thank you, Ela! We shall miss you.

Ewa Kębłowska-Ławniczak

♦

I remember Ela as a person who always smiled. Talking to her was a great pleasure because she could make an accurate and witty comment about any topic

under discussion. I will miss this, although in recent years there were few opportunities – once a year, briefly, during a meeting of the PASE Board in Warsaw, which Ela helped us organize. She was warm and open, although she did not hesitate to openly say what was on her mind. She was also a great organizer and a genuine expert on English-language teaching. She was a real support for PASE for many years, which helped us survive various crises.

Jacek Fabiszak

♦

Until 2018, Ela held the very demanding position of PASE secretary. I remember her telling me about her skirmishes with the courts, which were always very reluctant to register any changes in the makeup of our Board. She had a lot of patience and often took on thankless tasks, such as taking minutes of meetings. Although Ela did not get involved in the activities of our Association after she stepped down, every year she reserved a room for us at the Institute of English Studies in Warsaw so that we could hold our autumn Board meeting. She always dropped by, and we chatted for a while. The last time she reserved a room for us was three weeks before her death. I wrote that I hoped she was in good health, and she replied: "on the contrary, I am ill, on sick leave this semester." Factual, precise, task-oriented, but always warm – that is how I will remember her.

Wojciech Drąg

♦

I met Ela personally when I joined the PASE Board. She was an extremely efficient and friendly person with a sense of humour. I received emails from her, similar to the ones I send myself now: reminders about membership fees, conference announcements, ESSE initiatives – the earliest such message in my rarely cleaned mailbox dates back to over a decade ago. When Ela was handing me over her role after the conference in Łódź, she put a pile of meticulously kept catalogues with the Association's data on the table, as well as an "all-important pen drive" with templates for various applications and letters to various offices. I must have looked very uncertain, which provoked Ela to offer the following advice: "And remember: you are the Secretary. Don't

let yourself be reduced to the role of a secretarial assistant." We laughed, and I felt better. During my first years as a Secretary, I often called Ela for help. The pen drive still works – it's such a pity that the hotline does not.

Izabela Curyłło-Klag

♦

Although my interactions with Ms. Elżbieta Foltyńska never went beyond standard pleasantries, such as greetings, I will remember her anyway, first and foremost as a competent Secretary of PASE for many years and a de facto co-organizer of our recent Board meetings, which took place at the Institute of English Studies in Warsaw. It is thanks to her efforts that a comfortable room always waited for us, also during our last meeting, in mid-November. Her passing is a great loss for the community of Polish Anglicists.

Tomasz Fisiak

Biodata

Emma Karin Brandin is a PhD candidate at Mid Sweden University and holds a licentiate degree (PhL) in English Literature from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Her doctoral thesis is on domestic comedy and the performance of femininity in the novels of Elizabeth Gaskell and E. M. Forster – a project that expands on her licentiate thesis, entitled "Elizabeth Gaskell's Domestic Comedy: Chafing at the Limits of Domesticity in *Cranford* and *Wives and Daughters*". She currently works as an academic language advisor and writing retreat facilitator at the University of Gothenburg.

Krzysztof Fordonski, born in 1970, studied at Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań and University College Galway. He gained his MA in English studies in 1994, PhD in 2002, and D.Litt. in 2013. Associate Professor at the Faculty of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw. Main fields of interest are English literature at the turn of the 20th century, history and sociology of literary translation, and history of Great Britain. The author of monographs of the American novelist William Wharton (2004) and E. M. Forster (2005), co-edited the English language translations of the poetry of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (2008 and 2010), and wrote numerous scholarly articles. Active literary translator, author of translations of over thirty books, both fiction and non-fiction, as well as over fifty audiovisual translations.

Mykyta Isagulov is a PhD Candidate in English at the Department of English and Creative Writing at the University of Exeter, United Kingdom. His thesis focuses on the recycling and adaptation of Hellenic myths and Biblical fables by British modernist writers. His research interests include the morphology of the arts, philosophy of literature, poetics of intermediality, adaptation, and media studies. He has published in Ukrainian and international academic journals on intermediality and British modernists.

Lawrence Jones is a part-time PhD student at the University of Reading. His thesis examines the representation of the lower middle class in a selection of novels by E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf. Lawrence also works part-time for the Centre for Book Cultures and Publishing (CBCP) at the University of Reading. CBCP undertakes research in book cultures and publishing with a distinctive global,

multilingual and multidisciplinary focus. Lawrence's article for the PJES is based on one of his (unpublished) thesis chapters which examines the liberal aesthetics within Howards End and the portrayal of Leonard Bast. He presented a version of this article at the International E. M. Forster Society Conference hosted by the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland from 24-26 June 2024.

Dr. Seungho Lee received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Tulsa in December 2022, specializing in 20th-century British and Irish literature with a focus on ecocriticism. He is currently a Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellow at Georgia Tech, where he teaches and conducts research on transatlantic modernism, ecocriticism, global Anglophone literature, and postcolonial studies. His doctoral research examines the cultural and ecological implications of peripatetic walking through the works of E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf, with his forthcoming publication in *European Joyce Studies* expanding this study to the context of semi-colonial Ireland. Dr. Lee has forthcoming book review publications in *James Joyce Literary Supplement* and *James Joyce Quarterly*. He has presented conference papers on key modernist authors including Forster and Joyce, but also on global Anglophone writers like Jean Rhys and Ama Ata Aidoo, exploring questions of home, displacement, and postcolonial travel writing.

Paola Irene Galli Mastrodonato, retired faculty member of Tuscia University, Viterbo, Italy, obtained a Ph D in Comparative Literature from McGill University. She has published several books, articles, and essays on eighteenth-century studies and the novel of the Revolutionary period (*La rivolta della ragione*, 1991; *Storia della vita e tragica morte di Bianca Capello: Genesi di un racconto di successo del Settecento*, 2009; "Romans gothiques anglais et traductions françaises: L'année 1797 et la migration des récits," *Neohelicon* 1986, has been quoted in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic*,2020,1: n 96). She has translated from English to Italian the works of Anglo-Québécois playwright David Fennario (*Balconville/La morte di René Lévesque*, 2005; *Bolsheviki: Una commedia mortalmente seria*, 2014); she is the author of *Il teatro politico di David Fennario* (2002). She has edited volumes on emerging literatures (*Ai confini dell'Impero: Le Letterature emergenti*, 1996) and geographical inscriptions of the imaginary (*Geo-Grafie: Percorsi di frontiera attraverso le letterature*, 1999). She has dedicated a volume to the revaluation of a glorious woman of the Italian Renaissance, *Bianca Cappello: Dalla* damnatio memoriae *alla verità*, 2020. She has inscribed the adventure novels of Emilio

Salgari into the wider web of postcolonial and contemporary culture studies, as author of several articles and of the first full length study in English, *Emilio Salgari The Tiger is Still Alive!* (2024), and editor of two collective volumes (*Il tesoro di Emilio: Omaggio a Salgari*, 2008; *Riletture Salgariane*, 2012).

Claudia Stevens, born in rural Northern California to Czech and Austrian refugee parents, has received many honors over a varied career. As a pianist, she performed with major orchestras and was awarded the Alfred Hertz prize from UC, Berkeley, as well as sponsored residencies at Tanglewood. Her recitals of contemporary piano music at Carnegie Recital Hall and Washington's National Gallery included dozens of world premieres. Claudia also was the featured soloist on Public Television affiliates and on several National Public Radio "Performance Today" broadcasts. Later, as a multidisciplinary solo artist, she performed her original works at hundreds of universities and colleges and in theaters from Toronto to Budapest to Burma. Claudia received numerous grants: from the Virginia Commission for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts ("New Forms"), the International Theater Institute and New Music USA, as well as many artist residencies. In recent years, Claudia has conceived, and created libretti for, a dozen chamber operas in collaboration with the Bay Area composer Allen Shearer, most of them produced at leading venues in San Francisco, as well as on the East Coast. Their newest work, "What Aaron Copland Said," will be produced in spring, 2026 by San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. As an author, Claudia has written on varied subjects. Several of her original monologue plays appear in the avant-garde poetry journal *Exquisite Corpse,* edited by Andrei Codrescu. Her scholarly writings appear in the journals *Musical Quarterly* and *Perspectives of New Music*, with recent articles about adapting the novel for opera in the journals *George Eliot/George Henry Lewes Studies* (about her libretto on *Middlemarch*) and *Polish Journal of English Studies* (on adapting E. M. Forster›s *Howards End*). A Visiting Scholar at the College of William and Mary, Claudia holds degrees in music from Vassar College (*summa cum laude*); from UC, Berkeley (in musicology), and the Doctor of Musical Arts (in piano) from Boston University. She lives in Oakland, California.

Simon Turner is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English Language and Literature at Carleton University, Canada. Their research interrogates the ethics of empathy within and between narratives of nonnormative kinship. Breaking

down traditional disciplinary silos, his dissertation brings a variety of novels and films into conversation with one another to see how ostensibly disparate texts address similar themes of subjectivity, identity, community, belonging, and hope for the future. This project is funded in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship. Turner has previously contributed scholarship with Prof. Stuart J. Murray (Carleton University) to the Routledge COVID-19 Pandemic Series ("Becoming *Host*: Zooming in on the Pandemic Horror Film" in *Creative Resilience and COVID-19: Figuring the Everyday in a Pandemic*; 2022). Turner is a poet and an affiliated scholar with the Transgender Media Lab at Carleton University.

Alessandro Valenti is a PhD candidate at the Universities of Udine and Trieste, Italy. His research focuses on representations of hospitality in the Edwardian novel, with particular focus on the works of E. M. Forster and Joseph Conrad. He has published contributions on the reception of the Anglophone Gothic in Italian literature, on the depiction of country house hospitality in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*, and on the intersection of space, time, and desire in the short stories of Vernon Lee.

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