

Jason Finch

**E.M. Forster and English Place:
A Literary Topography**





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Back cover image: E.M. Forster working on the libretto for Benjamin Britten's opera *Billy Budd*, Aldeburgh, Suffolk, 15 October 1949 (photo Karl Hutton/Picture Post/Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

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E.M. FORSTER AND ENGLISH PLACE

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List of Abbreviations

1. Manuscripts

MS/KCC/EMF Manuscript forming part of the Papers of Edward Morgan Forster, held in the Modern Archive at King's College, Cambridge

2. Works by E.M. Forster

1898 Diary MS KCC/EMF/12/2, 1898.
1899 Diary MS KCC/EMF/12/3, 1899.
Abinger Harvest '*Abinger Harvest*' and '*England's Pleasant Land*', Elizabeth Heine (ed.), André Deutsch: London, 1996.
"Arctic Summer" "Arctic Summer" [1911-12], in '*Arctic Summer*' and *Other Fiction*, Elizabeth Heine & Oliver Stallybrass (eds), Edward Arnold: London, 1980.
Alexandria '*Alexandria: A History and a Guide*' and '*Pharos and Pharillon*', Miriam Allott (ed.), André Deutsch: London, 2004.
Aspects of the Novel *Aspects of the Novel* [1927], Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Penguin: London, 1976.
BBC Talks *The BBC Talks of E.M. Forster 1929-1960: A Selected Edition*, Mary Lago *et al.* (eds.), University of Missouri Press: Columbia & London, 2008.
Commonplace Book *Commonplace Book* [1925-68], Philip Gardner (ed.), Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1985
Creator as Critic '*The Creator as Critic*' and *Other Writings*, Jeffrey M. Heath (ed.), Dundurn Press: Toronto, 2008.
Dickinson '*Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*' and *Related Writings*, Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Edward Arnold: London, 1973.
Howards End *Howards End* [1910], Paul B. Armstrong (ed.), Norton: New York & London, 1998.
Life to Come '*The Life to Come*' and *Other Stories*, Oliver Stallybrass

- (ed.), Edward Arnold: London, 1972.
- “Locked Journal” MS KCC/EMF/12/8, 1909-67.
- Longest Journey* *The Longest Journey* [1907], Elizabeth Heine (ed.), Penguin: London, 2006.
- Lucy* *The Lucy Novels: Early Sketches for ‘A Room with a View’*, Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), London: Edward Arnold, 1977.
- Machine Stops* ‘*The Machine Stops*’ and *Other Stories* [c.1902-47], Rod Mengham (ed.), André Deutsch: London, 1997.
- Marianne Thornton* *Marianne Thornton* [1956], Evelyne Hanquart-Turner (ed.), André Deutsch: London, 2000.
- Maurice* *Maurice* [c. 1914-60], Philip Gardner (ed.), André Deutsch: London, 1999.
- “Notebook Journal” MS KCC/EMF/12/7, 1903-9.
- “Nottingham Lace” “Nottingham Lace” [1900-1], in ‘*Arctic Summer*’ and *Other Fiction*, Elizabeth Heine & Oliver Stallybrass (eds), Edward Arnold: London, 1980, pp. 1-66.
- Passage to India* *A Passage to India* [1924], Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Penguin: London, 1979.
- Prince’s Tale* ‘*The Prince’s Tale*’ and *Other Uncollected Writings* [1914-60], P.N. Furbank (ed.), André Deutsch: London, 1998.
- Room with a View* *A Room with a View*, Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Penguin: London, 1978.
- Selected Letters I* *Selected Letters of E.M. Forster: Volume One 1879-1920*, Mary Lago & P.N. Furbank (eds.), Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1983.
- Selected Letters II* *Selected Letters of E.M. Forster: Volume Two 1921-1970*, Mary Lago & P.N. Furbank (eds.), Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1985.
- Two Cheers* *Two Cheers for Democracy*, Harcourt, Brace: New York, 1951.
- “West Hackhurst” “West Hackhurst: A Surrey Ramble”, MS KCC/EMF/11/17, (1943-7).
- Where Angels* *Where Angels Fear to Tread* [1905], Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Penguin: London, 1976.

3. Works by Others

- Bibliography* B.J. Kirkpatrick, *A Bibliography of E.M. Forster*, Second Edition, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1985.
- Chronology* J.H. Stape (ed.), *An E.M. Forster Chronology*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 1993.
- Critical Heritage* Philip Gardner (ed.), *E.M. Forster: The Critical Heritage*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1973.
- Furbank I P.N. Furbank, *E.M. Forster: A Life: Volume One, The Growth of the Novelist (1879-1914)*, Secker & Warburg: London, 1977.
- Furbank II P.N. Furbank, *E.M. Forster: A Life: Volume Two, Polycrates' Ring (1914-1970)*, Secker & Warburg: London, 1978.
- ODNB H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com.
- OED2 J.A. Simpson & E.S.G. Weiner (eds), *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1989.
- OED3 J.A. Simpson (ed.), *Oxford English Dictionary*, Third Edition, Oxford University Press: Oxford, [in progress], www.oed.com.
- VCH *The Victoria History of the Counties of England*, 1899-, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/catalogue.aspx?type=1&gid=153> (see also www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk).

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Organisation

1.1.1. English Place in Forster

In reading E.M. Forster, I argue, place ought to receive special attention. Forster critics have typically isolated certain phases and genres within his writing and ascribed primary importance to them. I by contrast assess his whole career, but limiting myself to his writings concerned with English places. Place needs to be understood as something local, regional and real, despite the complexities and difficulties involved in the use of the term, something real. By ‘place’ I mean something distinct from what scholars and literary theorists have often indicated with the word ‘space’, although I do not rule out spatial theory as a source of insights. Examining place in Forster is both a heuristic procedure designed to generate new and worthwhile readings of Forster, and a way of opening up a new, place-led sort of literary criticism. Places themselves could have the sort of centrality in literary studies that has more frequently been given to notions such as author, character, text and historical context.

While readers of Forster have always seen him as a highly place-sensitive writer, they have paid comparatively little attention to the definition of place, and to the types and varieties of place to be found in his work. Discussion has largely been limited to a few broad oppositions and well-known passages such as the vision of all England becoming visible from the Isle of Purbeck in Chapter 19 of *Howards End*.¹ There has been very little attention to the specifics of sub-national English place as they appear in Forster’s writing – as opposed to larger-scale international and global relations of place: English versus foreign, East versus West – as they appear in Forster’s writing. Indeed, criticism has continued to present him as, in essence, a novelist who gave up writing novels in middle age, rather than what he truly was: a writer in numerous fields of fictional prose who was active throughout the first sixty years of the twentieth century.

Emphasising the concept’s “semantic elusiveness”, Noel Castree has argued that for geographers the word ‘place’ has three main senses:

¹ Forster, *Howards End*, ch. 19, pp. 120-7. A recent critical discussion of this passage is by Patrick Parrinder (*Nation and Novel: The English Novel from Its Origins to the Present Day*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006, pp. 300-1).

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1. *Place as location* – a specific point on the earth’s surface.
2. *A sense of place* – the subjective feelings people have about places, including the role of place in their individual and group identity.
3. *Place as locale* – a setting and scale for people’s daily actions and interactions.²

Forster has often been associated with the second of these, and those who dismiss place as a concept in literary studies perhaps do so largely because they are suspicious of the nostalgic or sentimental or traditionalist associations they feel this sense to have. My hypothesis is that literary place is *both* a record of *and* a production or invention of the human experience of place, with all three of Castree’s senses included in this. Accordingly I attempt to harmonise the findings of both empirical and theoretically-oriented scholarship.

Critics have long been aware that Forster had a special interest in place and specifically in the spirit of a place, the *genius loci*. As early as 1910 an unnamed reviewer felt that “[i]n its broadest outline the subject of *Howard’s End* [sic] is the all-pervading influence of Place”.³ In the 1930s, Peter Burra referred to “buildings and places and the names of places – such places as can be appropriately associated with a recurring idea, and thus take on significance as symbols” as “the framework of his books”.⁴ Peter Orr, interviewing Forster for BBC radio at some time between 1955 and 1965, felt that place was naturally something he should ask Forster about, but got quite an elusive response from the elderly writer:

- PO: Do places mean a lot to you, Morgan?
EMF: Enormously, yes, yes. Particular scenes, I think [...] certain things I remember in India, and I long to be back in those scenes and naturally they must have changed, as scenes in England have.
PO: I’d like to talk now a little about *Howards End*.
EMF: Yes, that fits in very much with what we’ve just been saying [...] because [...] the original of that house is close to Stevenage and it’s been part of [...] the Stevenage town planning scheme.⁵

This dialogue introduces several components of Forster’s relationship to place. First, there is the concept of a *scene*, a visual image of a place (capable of being described in writing) which seems to encapsulate it or a version of it at a particular moment. Next, when Orr

² Noel Castree, “Place: Connections and Boundaries in an Interdependent World” in Sarah Holloway (ed.), *Key Concepts in Geography*, SAGE: London, 2003, pp. 165-83, 167.

³ Anonymous review [1910] of Forster’s *Howards End* in *The Standard*, in Philip Gardner (ed.), *E.M. Forster: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge & Kegan Paul: London & Boston, 1973, pp. 128-9.

⁴ Peter Burra, “The Novels of E.M. Forster”, *Nineteenth Century & After* 116 (1934), pp. 581-94, 587.

⁵ E.M. Forster, “The Art of the Novelist [1]” (1961) [Audio recording of interview with Forster by Peter Orr conducted on 9 December 1961 at King’s College, Cambridge, and subsequently released on tape in the British Council’s *The Art of the Novelist* series, nos. 497-498; held by British Library Sound Archive and can be located by searching for C144/497 either in the Sound Archive catalogue or in the British Library beta catalogue].

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expresses a desire to “talk [...] about Howards End”, he surely means the novel, but Forster immediately refers to “that house”, meaning the fictional house within the novel. Then there is extra-literary reference. He assumes that something in a text, such as the house he named “Howards End”, can have a real-life “original” (here a house called “Rooksnest” in the 1880s and 1890s, and later “Rooks Nest House”, still standing in the early twenty-first century). Finally, place is related to time, through the span of a human life: Forster immediately connects his 1880s and 1890s childhood in rural Hertfordshire with his 1910 novel, and with the post-war New Town development of Stevenage.

Many of the most valuable insights into Forsterian place are to be found in the work of critics active in Forster’s own lifetime and shortly afterwards. In the 1940s Lionel Trilling, in a chapter entitled “Sawston and Cambridge”, claimed that the divisions within Forster’s England were the basis for understanding him.⁶ In the 1960s, John Beer considered that differing “attitudes to the spirit of place” were what distinguished the Schlegels and Wilcoxes of *Howards End*, judging that Forster endowed certain places with spiritual qualities in a way influenced by William Wordsworth. London, “formless”, in Beer’s words, lacks the quality of the numinous, while sites which do have it are those which cling on to “the older tradition of England”.⁷ A place, on Beer’s reading, is somewhere occupied and stable, with a positive identity. In the same decade, Wilfred Stone’s psycho-biographic study of Forster included photographs of numerous sites he had fictionalised in Italy, England and India,⁸ seeming to share Trilling and Beer’s certainty that place was a central concern. While Stone’s psychoanalytic reading is occasionally reductionist and unconvincing, non-fictional place has a life and a meaning in his study which it lacks in many subsequent accounts. Critics of the 1970s such as John Alcorn, John Colmer and George H. Thomson continued to assume – like Trilling, Beer and Stone – that non-fictional place and an idea of the spirit of place were important to an understanding of Forster.⁹

At the end of the 1970s, a monograph appeared which was unusually sensitive to distinctions and contrasts within the England of his writings. This was Glen Cavaliero’s *A*

⁶ Lionel Trilling, *E.M. Forster*, New Directions: Norfolk, CT, 1943, pp. 25-37.

⁷ J.B. Beer, *The Achievement of E.M. Forster* [1962], Chatto & Windus: London, 1963, pp. 107, 110.

⁸ Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1966, between pp. 276 & 277.

⁹ John Alcorn, *The Nature Novel from Hardy to Lawrence*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1977, pp. 60-77; John Colmer, *E.M. Forster: The Personal Voice*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1975, pp. 203-4, 241; George H. Thomson, “Where Was the Road from Colonus?” in G.K. Das & John Beer (eds.), *E.M. Forster: A Human Exploration: Centenary Essays*, New York University Press, New York, 1979 (indicating the pitfalls possible in a real-place approach), pp. 28-31. Alcorn (*Nature Novel*, p. 60) says that *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is “about spirit of place; it is a study of the effects of geography upon character; it is built around a dialogue between proper England and pagan Italy; its leading characters are travellers”.

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Reading of E.M. Forster. Cavaliero assumes a high level of literary acculturation on the part of his readers, which will help them to instinctively ‘get’ Forster. As also for Trilling and Beer, one of the givens for Cavaliero is that a sense of place is crucial to Forster’s work, and he begins with two chapters of old-fashioned biographical criticism which are full of astute insights into Forsterian place. The Hertfordshire countryside near Stevenage, for example, is described as follows: “[c]ompared with the Surrey woodlands of Abinger, settled and protected by the villas of Edwardian businessmen, this landscape is open, utilitarian in the true sense, and austere”.¹⁰ Especially valuable is Cavaliero’s distinction between physical place and “moral and intellectual climates”, and his suggestion that “the impact of the physical appears to have been overpoweringly strong only where his childhood home was concerned – Rooksnest, known to us as Howards End”. Vitaly, Cavaliero engages in acts of context-recovery which suggest that by 1979, the hundredth anniversary of Forster’s birth, details of the England of his youth were slipping fast from sight. Attention is paid, for example, to the relationship between the Victorian architecture of Eastbourne in Sussex, a fashionable resort in the late-nineteenth century when Forster went to prep school there, and the minutiae of class and denominational differences within the social world of that same period.¹¹

But Cavaliero assumes that place is inherently secondary within a novel. He sees it as part of the background, a low-level feature of a novel’s content, in sharp contrast with the primary business or foreground of fiction: the characters and themes. After his first two chapters, his focus on character becomes very marked. He asserts that “it is the contact between individuals and the clash of character”, not empire or “the difference between East and West”, which are “the substance of” *A Passage to India*.¹² But in my own view, things which Cavaliero relegates to the background deserve to be put under the spotlight.

Subsequent readers have often oversimplified the variety and complexity of English places in Forster’s writing. Joseph Bristow, for example, cites a passage from *Howards End* in which Forster distinguished geographical zones *within* a single southern English county, Hertfordshire, but does not mention references to other southern English geographical specifics in the same paragraph. Bristow thus misinterprets a discussion of the variations within England as commentary on the nation more generally, on what he calls “the settled, calm, and distinctly ‘Liberal’ middle of England”.¹³ Surrey and “the distant brow of the

¹⁰ Glen Cavaliero, *A Reading of E.M. Forster*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1979, p. 14.

¹¹ Cavaliero, *Reading*, pp. 15-16.

¹² Cavaliero, *Reading*, p. 151.

¹³ Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885*, Columbia University Press: New York, 1995, p. 77.

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Chilterns”, though present in the novel, are missing from Bristow’s account, which misquotes Forster, turning Margaret Schlegel’s reflection that “[l]eft to itself [...] this county would vote Liberal” into “this country would vote Liberal”.¹⁴ Literary history has developed to a high degree of sophistication; literary geography, it seems, has not.

Since Cavaliero, critics have often exaggerated the importance of national and international dimensions of place identity to an understanding of Forster, and failed to realise the importance of sub-national complexities. Readers such as Jeremy Tambling and Patrick Parrinder have viewed the England of his writing as an idealization, in which a vanishing, class-bound rural world becomes the positive term in an opposition to an encroaching city.¹⁵ The endings of *Howards End*, and *Maurice*, which can be read as escapes into a mythologised rural England, are key reference points for such critics, who seem to agree with Raymond Williams that the radical aspects of modernity are linked in place terms to urban zones.¹⁶ To assert the country over the city, as Forster is accused of doing, is on this reading to “retreat from otherness”.¹⁷ Tambling and Parrinder use words such as “retreat” and “shrinkage” in relation to Forster’s view of England.¹⁸ They suggest that he needs to be understood in relation to a particular moment in national history, the moment being that of the beginning of imperial decline. But this, though certainly one context for a place-related reading, is far from the only one.

During the 1990s, many critics of Forster’s writing on place failed to see that it discussed and evaluated real places. For Benita Parry, say, place is merely a symptom of an underlying condition, whether one from which Forster was suffering individually or one that afflicted his age, class or nationality.¹⁹ Daniel Born, in an influential paper, saw the ending of

¹⁴ *Howards End*, XXXIII, p.191. The most widely-used text of *Howards End*, Oliver Stallybrass’s Abinger edition, also has ‘county’ and not ‘country’ (E.M. Forster, *Howards End* [1910], Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Penguin: London, 1975, p. 263). Armstrong’s edition is more conservative, textually speaking, than Stallybrass’s (see Paul B. Armstrong, “Textual Appendix” in *Howards End*, pp. 245-265, p.246) and I have used it throughout my study, but the Roman numeral chapter numbers in my references to *Howards End* and other novels by Forster should make it possible for readers to locate quotes from the novel rapidly.

¹⁵ Jeremy Tambling, “Introduction” in Jeremy Tambling (ed.), *E.M. Forster* [‘New Casebooks’], Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 1995, pp. 1-13, here 2-4; Parrinder, *Nation and Novel*, pp. 291-4, 298-302.

¹⁶ Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, Tony Pinkney (ed.), Verso: London & New York: 1989.

¹⁷ Tambling, “Introduction”, p. 3; see also Penelope Pether, “A Passage to India: A Passage to the Patria” in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 195-212.

¹⁸ Tambling, “Introduction”, p. 3; Parrinder, *Nation and Novel*, p. 292. Other readers in the 2000s imply something similar: see Joshua Esty, “Amnesia in the Fields: Late Modernism, Late Imperialism, and the English Pageant-Play, *English Literary History* 69 (2002), pp. 245-76; Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003, pp. 212-13.

¹⁹ Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: India in the British Imagination 1880-1930* [1972], Verso:

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Howards End as a “final resort to the escape-retreat green world” of a landed country estate, “the typical Edwardian gesture to the urban crisis of its time”, promoting “rural virtues” embodied by “[t]he ideal of the ancient English yeoman [...] as antidote to modernity, imperialism and all the attendant crises that made liberals nervous”. Key words here are “escape”, “retreat”, “typical”, “liberals” and “nervous”: through them, Forster is opposed to what Born seems to consider the exciting and real developments of the period (“the urban crisis”, “modernity”).²⁰ Born’s binaries are reductive: he finds “exact parallels” with George Gissing and C.F.G. Masterman, thus ignoring the facts that Gissing was a generation older than Forster and that Masterman was a politician and journalist, not a fiction-writer.

Alternative ways of understanding place in Forster’s work have survived, however. Biographical accounts by Margaret Ashby and Nicola Beaman, for instance, at times sentimentalise and exaggerate the personal connection between readers and writers, but also display intuitive understandings of him that are lacking in academic studies.²¹ Jane Brown speaks of his “love of the English countryside, with all the foibles and peculiarities of life within it”, saying that “his paradise was firmly set on earth amid farming life”. She talks in terms of “Rooksnest, and the big wych elm which filtered the western sun so that it dappled and danced on the drawing-room windows and carpet, connecting him, the small boy Morgan, to the ancestral glories of the Thorntons”.²²

Yet Brown ignores the latent tensions, the power aspects, of Forster’s relations with the land: he was after all a member of the privileged upper-middle class. And her claim that he desired and believed in “a home as the be-all and end-all of life” is an exaggeration. Forster had a complex history of home-making, often embracing transitory and part-time modes of living. Brown’s account sentimentalises Forster, but any sense of love or affection for place (or people, for that matter) is signally absent from most critical discussions of Forsterian place, and in this respect Brown contributes something valuable. Moreover whereas Born’s reference to “the Howards End estate” is a slight slip, Brown refers to Forster’s great aunt Marianne Thornton as living in the 1880s “in fading Thornton splendour” at Milton Bryan on the edge of the Duke of Bedford’s Woburn estate twenty miles from Rooksnest, so demonstrating an intuitive understanding of the English milieu.²³ Theoretical rigour and local

London, 1998, pp. 225-248.

²⁰ Daniel Born, “Private Gardens, Public Swamps: *Howards End* and the Revaluation of Liberal Guilt”, *Novel* 25 (1992), pp. 141-159.

²¹ Margaret Ashby, *Forster Country*, Flaunden Press: Stevenage, 1991; Nicola Beaman, *Morgan: A Life of E.M. Forster*, Hodder & Stoughton: London, 1993.

²² Jane Brown, *Spirits of Place: Five Famous Lives in Their English Landscape*, Viking: London, 2001, pp. 43-4.

²³ Born, “Private Gardens”, p. 156; Brown, *Spirits of Place*, p. 49. At Rooksnest, Forster and his mother were tenants of landowners who lived nearby, the Hindley-Wilkinsons and Poyntz-Stewarts

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sensitivity both have their value.

1.1.2. Forster's Reputation

In 1999, Stefan Collini wrote that Noel Annan's book *Our Age* "makes better sense than I have come across elsewhere of the high esteem in which Forster was held a generation or more ago". Collini, it seems, could not quite understand why Forster was earlier ranked so highly.²⁴ Criticism in the age of literary theory has not been sure how to handle Forster, and his standing relative to a contemporary such as Virginia Woolf has declined since his death.

Readers of Forster before the Second World War often judged him positively or negatively according to their own opinions about controversies in which he himself was also involved. Those who belonged to the same cultural factions as he did – notably in the 1930s the Bloomsbury Group, and the younger left-wing, homosexual writers connected with W.H. Auden – were outspoken supporters, among them Peter Burra and Rose Macaulay.²⁵ Christians, communists, right-wingers and opponents of the Bloomsbury Group, meanwhile, tended to deride him.²⁶ Interwar academic critics such as I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis – both, like him, associated with Cambridge – had mixed feelings.²⁷ As well as being tied up with personal perceptions, critical assessments of him in this period were hard to separate from relations of social class. The mutual antipathy between him and Leavis grew out of intra-class tensions, while his 1930s exchange of views with Frank Swinnerton, a professional man of letters who left school at fourteen to begin his working life as an office boy in a publishing firm, is also worth mentioning. Swinnerton took the character of Leonard Bast as a snobbish insult to members of the lower-middle classes.²⁸ While Forster appeared

of Chesfield, and Rooksnest should therefore not be seen as an estate (see Ashby, *Forster Country*, pp. 11, 147-148).

²⁴ Stefan Collini, *English Pasts: Essays in History and Culture*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1999, p. 300.

²⁵ Burra, "Novels of E.M. Forster"; Rose Macaulay, *The Writings of E.M. Forster*, Hogarth Press: London, 1938. Forster wrote to Burra in November 1934 stating that "nothing that I have read about myself has ever given me more pleasure" (*Selected Letters II*, p.128). He was less enthusiastic about Macaulay's book, as a 1938 letter to Leonard Woolf indicates (*Selected Letters II*, p. 155).

²⁶ Frederick C. Crews (*E.M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1962, pp. 168, 170) outlines the more hostile aspects of the earlier response. Forster was received unfavourably by a "young and mainly communist audience" at the 1935 International Congress of Writers in Paris (Furbank II, p.194).

²⁷ I.A. Richards, "E.M. Forster" [1927] in J.H. Stape (ed.), *E.M. Forster: Critical Assessments*, four volumes, Croom Helm: Mounfield, East Sussex, 1998, vol. II, pp. 32-7; F.R. Leavis, "E.M. Forster" [1938] in Stape, *E.M. Forster*, vol. II, pp. 109-22. Leavis's personal relationship with Cambridge helps explain his view of Forster: see Ian MacKillop, "Leavis, Frank Raymond (1895-1978)" in ODNB.

²⁸ Frank Swinnerton, *The Georgian Literary Scene 1910-1935: A Panorama* [1935], Hutchinson: London, 1950, p. 318. See also *Selected Letters II* p. 149; Swinnerton 1998: 40.

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as an opponent of Leavis and Swinnerton during the 1930s, he also shared professional contexts with both, as a Cambridge don and a professional, London-based man of letters, and a certain mutual respect – despite degrees of enmity – also characterised both relationships.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Forster became highly regarded throughout the English-speaking world, thanks in part to Lionel Trilling.²⁹ In the USA, where before the Second World War he had been known merely as a fairly successful and well-regarded fiction-writer,³⁰ he became a humanist sage. The Cold War was important in this change: out of step with 1930s political extremism, in the post-war decades Forster's cautious, individualistic yet quasi-socialist views were attractive to educated liberals in Britain, America and newly independent India alike. Critics in this phase, and especially American ones, often glossed over not only less attractive aspects of Forster's attitudes to class and gender but the local historical and geographical specifics of his writing, seeing him as, in one way or another, a universalist thinker. Where Trilling was concerned with an inheritance of socially liberal thought linking Forster with Matthew Arnold, James McConkey offered a New Critical reading whose concentration on the precise wording of his texts was rooted in formalist aesthetics, while Wilfred Stone wrote a Jungian psychobiography.³¹ McConkey and Stone – unlike Trilling, who championed *Howards End* – shared the view of their British contemporaries John Beer and Frank Kermode that *A Passage to India* was by far his most important achievement.³²

By the 1960s, with Forster in his 80s, critics such as Frederick C. Crews were already beginning to treat him as a writer from the past.³³ Samuel Hynes wrote that the “affectionate respect” he enjoyed was of the sort “which one affords the very old, and especially those who have outlived their own era”, implying that harder, more rigorous criticism was still lacking.³⁴ Both Beer and K.W. Gransden share with Crews the (accurate) assumption that Forster would write nothing more of any note.³⁵ Unpublished work written earlier of course played no part in any of these critical accounts.

Still alive and still homosexual, while homosexual activity remained criminalised in the

²⁹ See Crews, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 3, 24.

³⁰ Austin Warren (“The Novels of E.M. Forster” [1937] in Stape, *E.M. Forster*, vol. II, pp. 91-105, 104-5), for instance, was unimpressed by Forster's non-fiction.

³¹ Trilling, *E.M. Forster*; Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* [1948], Viking: New York, 1951; James McConkey, *The Novels of E.M. Forster* [1957], Archon: Hamden, CT, 1971; Stone, *Cave and the Mountain*.

³² Beer, *Achievement of E.M. Forster*, p. 164; Frank Kermode, “The One Orderly Product” [1958] in Malcolm Bradbury (ed.), *E.M. Forster, 'A Passage to India': A Casebook*, Macmillan: London, 1970, pp. 216-223.

³³ Crews, *E.M. Forster*, p. 3.

³⁴ Samuel Hynes, “E.M. Forster” in *Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1972, pp. 104-122, here 104.

³⁵ Beer, *Achievement of E.M. Forster*; K.W. Gransden, *E.M. Forster*, Oliver & Boyd: Edinburgh, 1962.

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UK until 1967, Forster presented critics in the 1950s and 1960s with a dilemma. The existence of his unpublished novel on a homosexual theme seems to have been an open secret in literary circles by the 1950s. When Stone arrived in Cambridge at the end of that decade, Annan, then Provost of King's College, said to him of Forster "you know he's queer",³⁶ and Stone was left with the problem of how to incorporate this knowledge in a critical study which would be published in Forster's lifetime. After the *Lady Chatterley* trial of 1960 (with Forster as an expert witness), the Bloomsbury Group and their friends, known for sexual frankness, became interesting to a new generation of book buyers, many too young to remember the 1920s and 1930s. Michael Holroyd's biography of Lytton Strachey, the autobiographies of Leonard Woolf, the diaries of Harold Nicolson and Quentin Bell's biography of his aunt Virginia Woolf were all publishing successes.³⁷ The Edwardian age, during which most of Forster's novels were published, was itself being revisited both nostalgically, as by J.B. Priestley, and in a more scholarly way, by Hynes.³⁸

With Forster's death in 1970 and the publication soon afterwards of *Maurice* and the short stories collected as *The Life to Come*, freer discussion became possible. Reviewing *Maurice* in the *Guardian*, Julian Mitchell took aim at Trilling and his followers in the US, claiming that "[t]he academics who depend on Forster for 'value'" would "have a terrible time" trying to justify the novel and in particular its happy ending, which has frequently been stigmatised by readers as a piece of over-optimistic wish-fulfilment.³⁹ Between the 1970s and the 1990s, some Forster critics moved towards cultural materialism and post-colonial studies, among them Terry Eagleton and Benita Parry, who began to reappraise the political meaning of his writing,⁴⁰ as did also writers from India concerned with his view of their own country.⁴¹ But while critics of the 1970s were more open about sexual matters, Cavaliero and John Colmer, for instance, continued to apply a liberal humanist approach which assumed that Forster's meaning was transparently available to many different kinds of readers.⁴²

³⁶ Wilfred Stone, "Some Bloomsbury Interviews and Memories", *Twentieth-Century Literature* 43 (1997) 177-195.

³⁷ Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey: A Critical Biography*, two volumes, Heinemann: London, 1967-1968; Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters*, Nigel Nicolson (ed.), three volumes, Collins: London 1966-1968.

³⁸ J.B. Priestley, *The Edwardians*, Heinemann: London, 1970; Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1968; Hynes, "E.M. Forster".

³⁹ Julian Mitchell, "Fairy Tale" [1971] in Gardner, *Critical Heritage*, p. 439.

⁴⁰ Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés: Studies in Modern Literature*, Chatto & Windus: London 1970; Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*. In his study, Eagleton (*Exiles and Émigrés*, p. 9) explicitly aligned himself with members of the British 'New Left' such as Perry Anderson, who detached Marxism from any direct association with Soviet-style communism.

⁴¹ G.K. Das, *E.M. Forster's India*, Macmillan: London, 1977; V.A. Shahane, *E.M. Forster: 'A Passage to India': A Study*, Oxford University Press: Delhi, 1977.

⁴² Cavaliero, *Reading*; Colmer, *E.M. Forster*. As late as 1983, however, a monograph on Forster could

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The early response to *Maurice*, published shortly after the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK, and particularly reviews by British journalists such as Mitchell, reflected a climate of opinion which still retained many pre-1967 prejudices. Readers of the posthumously-published fiction, *Maurice* and *The Life to Come*, seem to have found it difficult to reconcile with their previous view of Forster. Andrew Hodges and David Hutter took a polemically gay stance, branding him a traitor to fellow homosexuals for keeping his sexuality closeted.⁴³ A related view was expressed by Donald Salter, who saw these posthumously published homosexual writings as fundamentally dishonest,⁴⁴ and they also met with a negative response from academic critics. Hynes found *Maurice* “far from liberated”, and of interest only as an Edwardian period piece.⁴⁵ David Lodge judged it far inferior to his earlier fiction, though reckoning him overall a more important writer than Virginia Woolf.⁴⁶ Norman Page also evaluated it negatively, using measures such as depth of characterisation.⁴⁷ But some responses to these works’ sexual content were more receptive to Forster’s own view of them, notably a book by Jeffrey Meyers which has divided opinion among subsequent practitioners of gay and queer studies.⁴⁸

A great deal of Forster scholarship was produced in the two decades following his death. Important examples include the various Abinger editions of his works produced under the general editorship of first Oliver Stallybrass and then Elizabeth Heine, the authorised biography by P.N. Furbank, and the selected letters, which appeared in the mid-1980s under the editorship of Furbank and Mary Lago.⁴⁹ Criticism which had access to the new material

be written (Christopher Gillie, *A Preface to Forster*, Longman: Harlow, 1983) which did not clearly state that he was homosexual and which turned *Maurice* into an impersonal case history.

⁴³ Andrew Hodges & David Hutter, *With Downcast Gays: Aspects of Homosexual Self-Oppression*, Pomegranate Press: London, 1974.

⁴⁴ Donald Salter, “‘That Is My Ticket’: The Homosexual Writings of E.M. Forster” [1975] in Stape, *E.M. Forster*, vol. II, pp. 199-221.

⁴⁵ Hynes, “E.M. Forster”, p. 121.

⁴⁶ David Lodge, “Before the Deluge” [1971] in Gardner, *Critical Heritage*, 473-4.

⁴⁷ Norman Page, *E.M. Forster’s Posthumous Fiction*, University of Victoria: Victoria, BC, 1977, p. 53.

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Meyers, *Homosexuality and Literature, 1890-1930*, Athlone Press, London, 1977. Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (“Introduction” in Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (eds.), *Queer Forster*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1997) condemn Meyers as a homophobe; in his book *Effeminate England*, Bristow points out Meyers’s interesting view that the period in which homosexuality was criminalised in Britain led to better homosexual art than was produced thereafter. 1970s and 1980s work by Robert K. Martin (“Forster’s Greek: From Optative to Present Indicative” [1977] in Stape, *E.M. Forster*, vol. II, pp. 230-5) and Claude J. Summers (*E.M. Forster*, Frederick Ungar: New York, 1983) anticipates subsequent works of queer theory on Forster.

⁴⁹ The first run of volumes in the Abinger edition of Forster’s works, all published in London by Edward Arnold were: *The Life to Come and Other Stories* (1972), *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1972), *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson and Related Writings* (1973), *Howards End* (1973), *Aspects of the Novel* (1974), *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1975), *The Lucy Novels: Two Early Sketches for ‘A Room with a View’* (1977), *A Room with a View* (1977), *A Passage to India* (1978), *The Manuscripts of ‘A Passage to India’* (1978), all under the sole editorship of Oliver Stallybrass;

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proliferated, much of it concerned with explication and, like Trilling but unlike Mitchell, viewing Forster as a writer whose “value” was proven beyond doubt.⁵⁰

Such value has been less clear in the age of literary theory. By 1976, Martin Seymour-Smith was already noting a decline in Forster’s reputation.⁵¹ By 1981 the sense that Forster was passé had crossed the Atlantic, Alan Wilde observing “a devaluation of Forster”.⁵² Today there are no conferences dedicated to him, and publishing decisions suggest that he is viewed as less important than contemporaries such as James Joyce, Woolf or D.H. Lawrence.⁵³ The present study argues that an important reason for this devaluation is that trends in criticism over the past thirty years have been peculiarly unsuited to the task of reading Forster.

David Lean’s 1984 film adaptation of *A Passage to India*, part of what Michael Sprinkler has called a “Raj Revival”, changed Forster’s reputation forever.⁵⁴ Worthwhile scholarship continued to be produced,⁵⁵ but for a decade and a half this was overshadowed by polemics

‘Arctic Summer’ and Other Fiction (1980), edited by Stallybrass and Elizabeth Heine; *The Hill of Devi’ and Other Indian Writings* (1983) and *The Longest Journey* (1984), edited solely by Heine. Six further Abinger volumes appeared between 1996 and 2004 under the general editorship of Frank Kermode: ‘Abinger Harvest’ and ‘England’s Pleasant Land’ (1996), ‘The Machine Stops’ and Other Stories (1997), ‘The Prince’s Tale’ and Other Uncollected Writings (1998), *Maurice* (1999), *Marianne Thornton* (2000), ‘Alexandria: A History and a Guide’ and ‘Pharos and Pharillon’ (2004). Furbank I; Furbank II; *Selected Letters I; Selected Letters II*. Other valuable pieces of scholarship produced at this time include a collection of early responses (Gardner, *Critical Heritage*), bibliographies (Frederick P.W. McDowell, *E.M. Forster: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings About Him*, Northern Illinois University Press: De Kalb, 1976; B.J. Kirkpatrick, *A Bibliography of E.M. Forster*, Second Edition, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1985) and an edition of Forster’s commonplace book (E.M. Forster, *Commonplace Book* [1925-68], Philip Gardner (ed.), Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, 1985).

⁵⁰ Das & Beer, *Human Exploration*; Judith Scherer Herz & Robert K. Martin (eds.), *E.M. Forster: Centenary Revaluations*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto & Buffalo, 1982.

⁵¹ Martin Seymour-Smith, *Who’s Who in Twentieth-Century Literature*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London, 1976, s.v. “Forster, E.M.”.

⁵² Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism and the Ironic Imagination*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.51. Also instructive on Forster’s 1980s reputation among literati, as opposed to cinema-goers, is a review by Peter Robb of his *Selected Letters* (“Glimmerings”, *London Review of Books* 7.11 (1985), pp. 9-10), which echoes Leavis in viewing Forster as a “minor [...] slender” talent.

⁵³ The *Cambridge Companion to Forster* (David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007) was published several years after those on Joyce (Derek Attridge (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990), Hardy (Dale Kramer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1999) and Woolf (Sue Roe & Susan Sellers (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000).

⁵⁴ Michael Sprinkler, “Foreword” in Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, pp. vii-xiii, vii.

⁵⁵ Mary Lago, *E.M. Forster: A Literary Life*, St Martin’s Press: New York, 1995; S.P. Rosenbaum, *Victorian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group Volume 1*, St Martin’s Press: New York; S.P. Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group Volume 2*, St Martin’s Press: New York, 1994; J.H. Stape, *An E.M. Forster Chronology*, Palgrave: Basingstoke & New York, 1993; J.H. Stape, *E.M. Forster: Interviews and Recollections*, Macmillan: Basingstoke & London, 1993.

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and ideological controversy. All of Forster's novels apart from *The Longest Journey* were filmed between 1984 and 1992,⁵⁶ and Margaret Thatcher's simultaneous advocacy of "Victorian values" in the 1980s led some commentators to view these loving portraits of Britain's age of global dominance as reactionary acts of nostalgic reverence for the past.⁵⁷ Reviewers such as Peter J. Hutchings argued that the films "selectively" downplayed the complexities of early-twentieth-century politics and artistic Modernism to be found in Forster's novels themselves,⁵⁸ but some criticism and biographical scholarship produced during the 1980s and 1990s certainly shows the impact of the screen adaptations. Tambling uses the films as evidence that Forster was himself a "nostalgic" writer, while Bristow claims that his novels "celebrate an affluent society"; Beaman's gushy biography seems likely to have been commissioned thanks to the films' success.⁵⁹ Recently, the film adaptations have been described more affectionately,⁶⁰ suggesting that the ideological battles in which they became enmeshed in the 1980s and 1990s have ended.

Ideological criticism, a species of materialism or post-Marxism which replaced the human individual with a culturally-constructed 'subject',⁶¹ was widespread in the 1980s and 1990s, and writers such as Forster and Trilling were viewed with particular suspicion by its practitioners. Forster critics interested in ideology focused on India and the British Empire, or on homosexuality.⁶² Following Michel Foucault, ideology gradually became regarded as, in Bristow's words, "fissured by competing emphases and interests":⁶³ complex and

⁵⁶ David Lean (dir.), *A Passage to India* (film), 1984; James Ivory (dir.), *A Room with a View* (film), 1985; James Ivory (dir.), *Maurice*, 1987; Charles Sturridge (dir.), *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, 1991; James Ivory (dir.), *Howards End* (1992).

⁵⁷ Margaret Thatcher, [Transcript of television interview with Brian Walden, LWT *Weekend World*], 1983; Margaret Thatcher, [Transcript of speech to Glasgow Chamber of Commerce] 1983.

⁵⁸ Peter J. Hutchings, "A Disconnected View: Forster, Modernity and Film" in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, p. 213. See also Christopher Hitchens, "Busted Blue: A Passage to India" in Stape, *E.M. Forster*, vol. IV pp. 183-5; June Perry Levene, "Passage to the Odeon: Too Lean" in Stape, *E.M. Forster*, vol. IV pp. 186-201; Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 225-6.

⁵⁹ Tambling, "Introduction", p. 2; Bristow, *Effeminate England*, p. 56; Beaman, *Morgan*. Beaman's book was reviewed negatively by one of the senior academic Forster critics, Kermodé ("Another Mother", *London Review of Books*, 13 May 1993, pp. 3-5.).

⁶⁰ For example by the TV personality Paul O'Grady and other contributors to a 2007 BBC documentary on costume drama.

⁶¹ See e.g. Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice*, Methuen: London, 1980, p. 58.

⁶² 1990s readings concerned with imperialism include Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1993; Benita Parry, "The Politics of Representation in *A Passage to India*" [1987] in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 133-50; Penelope Pether, "*A Passage to India*: A Passage to the Patria" [1991] in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 195-212; Brenda R. Silver, "Periphrasis, Power and Rape in *A Passage to India*" [1991] in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 171-94; Sara Suleri Goodyear, "Forster's Imperial Erotic" [1992] in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 151-70. Readings concerned with sexuality include Bristow, *Effeminate England*; Christopher Lane, *The Ruling Passion: British Colonial Allegory and the Paradox of Homosexual Desire*, Duke University Press: Durham, NC & London, 1995; Martin & Piggford, *Queer Forster*.

⁶³ Bristow, *Effeminate England*, p. 2.

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ambivalent rather than simple and coherent. Ideological criticism of Forster focused on tensions between different groupings, and on his references to sexualised human bodies, so correcting an earlier bias towards literary form and idealistic views of interpersonal relations. But ideological critique had its own flaws. Bristow and Sara Suleri, for instance, largely reduced the meaning of Forster's writing to particular identities and power-struggles. Curiously, this reductionism aligned them with a contemporary viewpoint at the other end of the political spectrum: V.S. Naipaul's intemperate claim that Forster's interest in India demonstrated an exploitative "nastiness" connected to his homosexuality.⁶⁴

Work on Forster in the 2000s has been more diverse. A modified ideological criticism has continued to flourish,⁶⁵ but other trends can also be detected. There has been more attention to Forster's later writings, in particular to his non-fiction.⁶⁶ Forsterian sexuality, both his own and that to be found in his writings, now seems capable of being viewed analysed more calmly.⁶⁷ Critics such as David Medalie, Dominic Head and Paul B. Armstrong have continued the earlier attempt by Brian May to reappraise the liberal and humanist elements in Forster's writing.⁶⁸ Another strand is ostensibly populist and democratic, chiding Forster for not viewing class distinctions as they are viewed today,⁶⁹ even if he has been put more thoroughly into historical context in the 2000s than in previous decades.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Paul Kelso, "Naipaul Derides Books of Forster, 'a Nasty Homosexual'", *Guardian* (London), 2 August 2001.

⁶⁵ Paul Peppis, "Forster and England" in Bradshaw, *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 47-61; Elizabeth Outka, *Consuming Traditions: Modernity, Modernism, and the Commodified Authentic*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009; Andrea P. Zemplinska, *Modernism and the Locations of Literary Heritage*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2008. Stuart Christie's attempt (*Worlding Forster: The Passage from Pastoral*, Routledge: Abingdon & New York, 2005) to keep 'theory' reading of Forster alive is somewhat shrill in its tone.

⁶⁶ Max Saunders, "Forster's Life and Life-Writing" in Bradshaw, *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 8-31; Paul B. Armstrong, "Two Cheers for Tolerance: E.M. Forster's Ironic Liberalism and the Indirections of Style", *Modernism/modernity* 16 (2009) 280-99. Such work could benefit from Bradbury's point ("Two Passages to India: Forster as Victorian and Modern" in Bradbury, *Forster, 'A Passage to India'*, pp. 224-243, 227) that Forster in his earlier fiction incorporated and ironised many different styles, including those of "the guide-book or essay or sermon. Valentine Cunningham (in "Rather Odd Poets") has usefully placed Forster into a 1930s context rather than an Edwardian one.

⁶⁷ Christopher Lane, "Forsterian Sexuality" in Bradshaw, *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 104-119.

⁶⁸ David Medalie, *E.M. Forster's Modernism*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 2002; Dominic Head, "Forster and the Short Story" in Bradshaw, *Cambridge Companion*, pp.77-91; Armstrong, "Two Cheers for Tolerance"; Brian May, *The Modernist as Pragmatist: E.M. Forster and the Fate of Liberalism*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1997.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Rose (*The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 2001), perhaps influenced by John Carey (*The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939*, Faber: London, 1992); Frank Kermode, *Concerning E.M. Forster*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London, 2009. David Trotter (*The English Novel in History 1895-1920*, Routledge: London & New York, 1993), in a comparable attempt at debunking, argues that Forster's Edwardian writing is largely indistinguishable from the supposedly trashy material produced by now-forgotten contemporaries.

⁷⁰ Bradshaw, *Cambridge Companion*; Valerie Wainwright, *Ethics and the English Novel from Austen*

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Other than by literary critics, Forster has been investigated by an anthropologist and a diplomat, and a number of local historians have offered particularly helpful close-up views of the places described in his writings.⁷¹ Since the 1950s, intellectual historians have mapped Forster's family, publishing and academic connections,⁷² with studies by Annan and Christopher Tolley placing him in the personal context of his ancestors in the Clapham Sect.⁷³ Scattered around in this disparate group of approaches are many insights which are little-known by Forster scholars.

1.1.3. Place in Hardy and Woolf

Forster knew both Thomas Hardy and Virginia Woolf personally, and notions of space and place have often figured in critical accounts of both of them.⁷⁴ Hardy has always been considered a writer of place. For Pam Morris he "immediately comes to mind as a writer whose work is shaped by a geographical imagination".⁷⁵ There is a professional and biographical connection, too: at different times in the 1860s and 1870s, Forster's father and Hardy both worked for the ecclesiastical architect Sir Arthur Blomfield. Woolf and Forster

to *Forster*, Ashgate: Aldershot & Burlington, VT, 2007. Earlier work has connected Forster to debates over evolution (Roger Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self: Hardy, Forster, Lawrence, Harvester*: Brighton, 1982), aesthetics (David Dowling, *Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1985), political Liberalism (Born, "Private Gardens"; May, *Modernist as Pragmatist*), academic and sexual Hellenism (Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca & London, 1994, pp. 152-3) and economics (Paul Delany, "'Islands of Money': Rentier Culture in *Howards End*" [1988] in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 67-80).

⁷¹ Nigel Rapport, *The Prose and the Passion: Anthropology, Literature and the Writing of E.M. Forster*, Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1994; Nigel Rapport, "The Body of the Village Community: Between Reverend Parkington in Wanet and Mr Beebe in *A Room with a View*" in Nigel Rapport (ed.), *British Subjects: An Anthropology of Britain*, Berg: Oxford, 2002, pp. 299-320; Ahmed Ali, "E.M. Forster and India" in Herz & Martin, *E.M. Forster*, pp.278-82; Margaret Ashby, *Forster Country*, Flaunden Press, Stevenage, 1991; Margaret Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, Phillimore: Chichester, 1995; Shirley Corke, *Abinger Hammer, Surrey: A Short History and Guide to the Village*, [privately produced]: Abinger, Surrey, 1993. For criticisms of local history as a "positivistic" discipline unable to understand "the mediating effects of representational conventions", see Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth, "Introduction: Approaches to Space and Place in Woolf" in Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth (eds.), *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 2007, pp. 1-28, 8. Local historians produce more varied work than Snaith and Whitworth assume, however.

⁷² Collini (*Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006, pp. 15-45) defines intellectual history as the history of intellectuals as a class or grouping (rather than as the history of broader, unconscious social mentalities). Noel Annan's *Our Age* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London, 1990) exemplifies this sort of study.

⁷³ Noel Annan, "The Intellectual Aristocracy" in J.H. Plumb (ed.), *Studies in Social History: A Tribute to G.M. Trevelyan*, Longmans Green: London, 1955, pp. 241-87 (critiqued by Collini, *Absent Minds*, p. 140); Christopher Tolley, *Domestic Biography: The Legacy of Evangelicalism in Four Nineteenth-Century Families*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1997.

⁷⁴ He was closest to both during the 1920s. Furbank II, pp. 105-11; Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004, p. 522.

⁷⁵ Pam Morris, *Realism*, Routledge: Abingdon & New York, 2003, p. 142.

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both had family links with the Clapham Sect. Readings of Woolf's work alive to spatial theory, moreover, became popular in the 1990s and 2000s.

Hardy, in part, used place for self-promotion. Wessex, the semi-imaginary region which he developed more systematically in later novels and editions, was initially conceived as a marketing device for his books. The strength of his association in readers' minds with this particular place is recorded in literary guidebooks and atlases aimed at a general audience, as well as in criticism concerned with literary tourism.⁷⁶ Norman Page claims that he reproduced the "physical qualities, both natural and man-made, of a particular region" in more detail than any other English novelist.⁷⁷ As in studies of Forsterian place, Wessex and the other locations of Hardy's novels have often been seen as equivalent to a theatrical backdrop before which the real action takes place in interactions between characters.⁷⁸

Hardy's reputation as a writer of place is bolstered by the maps of Wessex and its districts included in editions of his novels published throughout the twentieth century by Macmillan and Penguin in the UK, images reproduced by biographers such as Michael Millgate and Claire Tomalin.⁷⁹ The evolution of Wessex from a vaguely imagined setting in his earliest novels, written in the 1860s and 1870s, into a coherent if highly problematic fictional 'world' was closely related to its graphic representation in maps.⁸⁰ Hardy's motivation for including maps in his novels seems to have been part-commercial, part-artistic.⁸¹ Chris Baldick points out that Hardy's Wessex, like George Eliot's Loamshire and Arnold Bennett's Five Towns

⁷⁶ Simon Gatrell, "Wessex" in Kramer, *Cambridge Companion to Hardy*, pp. 19-37; Ian Ousby, *Blue Guide: Literary Britain and Ireland*, Second Edition, A. & C. Black: London, 1990; Malcolm Bradbury (ed.), *The Atlas of Literature*, De Agostini: London, 1996; Nicola J. Watson, *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 2006, pp. 169, 176-200.

⁷⁷ Norman Page, "Editor's Preface" in Norman Page (ed.), *Thomas Hardy: The Writer and His Background*, Bell & Hyman, London, 1980, pp. 13-15, 13.

⁷⁸ Page, "Editor's Preface", p. 13; Claire Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy: The Time-Torn Man*, Penguin: London, 2006, pp. 455-6. The bibliography to Tomalin's biography of Hardy includes a section entitled "Topography and Background" listing accounts of Dorset including the appropriate volume in the Pevsner *Buildings of England* series, books on the railways in the region, and accounts of the county in the period of the Napoleonic Wars.

⁷⁹ E.g. Millgate, *Biography Revisited*, pp. 34-5; Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy*, pp. xiv-xv. The map which first appeared in the 1912 Wessex Edition of Hardy's novels, reproduced in subsequent reprints of Hardy's novels (see e.g. Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge: A Story of a Man of Character* [1886], Macmillan: London, 1965, p. ii; Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* [1878], Tony Slade (ed.), Penguin: London, 1999, p. 28), is perhaps the most famous English literary map.

⁸⁰ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist*, Bodley Head: London, 1971, pp. 235-48; Millgate, *Biography Revisited*, p. 292. Some Wessex place-names even appeared on maps before ever being mentioned in a novel: see Millgate, *Biography Revisited*, pp. 232-3. Hardy's maps have also been analysed as texts rather than para-texts (e.g. Watson, *Literary Tourist*, pp. 185, 193-4).

⁸¹ Millgate (*Biography Revisited*, p. 333) emphasises Hardy's "ambitions as a regional historian"; Tomalin (*Biography Revisited*, pp. 279-80) the commercial impetus behind the inclusion of the maps.

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area, was among the forerunners of “a striking assortment of provincial locations offered by the modern ‘regional novel’” between 1910 and 1940.⁸² Forster’s descriptions of the southern counties of England involve less concentration on one particular locality or landscape than the writers Baldick mentions, or their successors, but they do contain some features of the regional or provincial novel.

Hardy’s own map of Wessex raises the thorny issue of the relationship between real and fictional place.⁸³ This beautifully executed map was accompanied by the following text: “It is to be understood that this is an imaginative Wessex only, & that the places described under the names here given are not portraits of any real places, but visionary places which may approximate to the real places more or less”.⁸⁴ The map’s key states that it contains both “Fictitious names” and real ones. “Christminster” (Oxford) and “Aldbrickham” (Reading), for instance, fit into the first of these categories; Bristol and Portsmouth into the second.⁸⁵ Forster was less meticulous about his geography than Hardy, although he too liked drawing maps. Forster’s England is a looser, more casual construction than Hardy’s Wessex, but it could nevertheless be mapped.

Twentieth-century writing on Hardy moved from seeing his novels as a representation of reality towards an interpretation of Wessex as an act of myth-making.⁸⁶ Early on, his collaborator in the creation of Wessex, Herman Lea, asserted its “utter realism”.⁸⁷ Charles Harper, writing a Hardy guidebook based on his own travels through Dorset and neighbouring counties for an Edwardian general audience, tried to prove that the world of Hardy’s novels was still alive, noting “quaint survivals” in the countryside.⁸⁸ Harper also sought out real-world sites which could be presented as originals for places in Hardy’s fiction.⁸⁹ By 1970, however, Millgate was insisting that the world of his novels should not be “confused” with any “actual geographical area”.⁹⁰ In the 1990s, Simon Gatrell argued that as

⁸² Chris Baldick, *The Modern Movement*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004, p. 170.

⁸³ Tony Slade (Hardy, *Return of the Native*, 429-33) accuses Hardy of being deliberately deceptive in the use he makes of space and time in his fiction.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Millgate, *Biography Revisited*, p. 235.

⁸⁵ One piece of proof that Hardy as late as the early 1880s had no complete idea of Wessex such as would afterwards emerge is that Bath appears in *Two in a Tower*, published in 1882, under its real-world name.

⁸⁶ Although as late as 1980 Norman Page (“Editor’s Preface”, p. 13) still took the former view.

⁸⁷ George Wing, “Hardy and Regionalism” in Page, *Thomas Hardy*, pp. 76-101, p. 81.

⁸⁸ Charles G. Harper, *The Hardy Country: Literary Landmarks of the Wessex Novels*, London: A. & C. Black 1904, p. 24. Harper includes documentary photographs, such as one of two traditionally-dressed farmers conversing over a fence with malt shovels hanging on a wall behind them.

⁸⁹ Harper (*Hardy Country*, p. 49) presents the non-fictional “Old Manor-House, Milborne St Andrew” as a model for the Welland House of *Two on a Tower*, for example.

⁹⁰ Millgate, *Career as a Novelist*, p. 248. Writers taking this position (e.g. Millgate, *Career as a Novelist*, p. 248; Wing, “Hardy and Regionalism”, p. 78) frequently invoke Hardy’s description of Wessex in a post-1900 preface to *Far from the Madding Crowd* as “partly real, partly dream-

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the rural Dorset of Hardy's youth retreated into the past he both became more detached from his memories and elaborated his imaginary-cum-real Wessex more completely.⁹¹ Recent accounts of spatiality formulated in literary and cultural theory have not yet made much headway among Hardy scholars.⁹² The rural settings of Hardy's best-known writings make them seem like accounts of landscape – or place – as opposed to urban and depersonalised modern space, perhaps. Hardy's literary place formulations were influential not only on novels concerned with particular English regions by Bennett, John Cooper Powys, Eden Philpotts, D.H. Lawrence and others, but also, it would seem, on the fictional world of J.R.R. Tolkien, which purports to be wholly imaginary.⁹³ Forster's first novels appeared exactly when Wessex was being established as a part-real, part-imaginative zone somehow belonging to Hardy.

Gatrell argues that the singularity of imaginative place in Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, in which Egdon Heath is depicted so strikingly that Lawrence could interpret it as the novel's protagonist,⁹⁴ is artistically superior to the later systematised world of Wessex. Forster's treatment of imaginative place was always unsystematic and perhaps this has concealed the importance to it of varied real-world links. Earlier critical readings often merely asserted Forster's attachment to a spirit of place, while later postcolonial readings tended to reduce Forsterian place to the large-scale opposition between colonial centre and periphery. Beyond both, the comparison with Hardy requires Forster's depictions of southern English places to be viewed as examples of regional fiction. Baldick speaks of the Home Counties around London as "relatively barren" in terms of regional fiction and lacking "a novelist they could call their own".⁹⁵ In fact, though, Forster could be seen as the regional novelist of the Home Counties.

Virginia Woolf's fiction contains numerous passages related to real-life places, for instance the walks through London in *Mrs Dalloway*. But until the 1980s she tended to be understood as a writer of the internal, of perception, rather than of the outside world. In 1977 Hermione Lee noted, but only in passing, that the action of Woolf's *Night and Day* "centres on five places in London": for Lee the novel is really concerned with the conflict between a "moment of vision" and "the forces of chaos".⁹⁶ In the same study Lee uses the word

country".

⁹¹ Gatrell, "Wessex", pp. 31-5.

⁹² Judging from Kramer, *Cambridge Companion to Hardy*, and the overview of subsequent work provided by the MLA International Bibliography.

⁹³ Baldick, *Modern Movement*, pp. 170-3.

⁹⁴ D.H. Lawrence, "The Real Tragedy" in R.P. Draper (ed.), *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1975, 64-72.

⁹⁵ Baldick, *Modern Movement*, p. 171.

⁹⁶ Hermione Lee, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*, Methuen: London, 1977, pp. 59, 70.

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‘Bloomsbury’ for a group of people but not for a real place.⁹⁷ Avram Fleishman, also writing in the 1970s, compared the spatial dimension of *Mrs Dalloway* and that of Joyce’s *Ulysses*. In so doing, he took the cities of these novels as symbols of a new sort of environment rather than of interest because of references to specific districts or other localised details, things that the two novels undoubtedly *do* contain.⁹⁸ In the biographical criticism of Phyllis Rose, real place was present, but treated as non-fictional and unproblematic, its imaginative dimension nowhere to be seen.⁹⁹

Attention to the politics of space has been important in Woolf studies since the 1980s.¹⁰⁰ Woolf herself frequently referred, often in a celebratory tone, to the anonymity, change, and whirling human flow of the city.¹⁰¹ Recent Woolf criticism has explicitly used the Continental spatial theorists Walter Benjamin, Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and Foucault to explain Woolf, literary Modernism, and the city as colonial metropolis.¹⁰² Dimensions of spatiality emphasised have included the metaphoric or virtual, such as the space of the airwaves in the age of radio broadcasting. Insights have been generated in this school of criticism when specific London places seen in processes of historical change have been discussed in relation to Woolf’s textual formulations of the same places. Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth, for example, ask how the cutting of the imperial thoroughfare of Kingsway through what were formerly Dickensian rookeries in Holborn affected *Night and Day*.¹⁰³

1.1.4. Arrangement of Material

The remainder of this introductory chapter is divided into two parts. First, I review several academic fields and non-academic genres of writing in which there have been discussions of space and place. The survey demonstrates why I have chosen to examine Forster and place rather than Forster and space. Then I proposed my own tripartite model for understanding

⁹⁷ This is what she means by “the ease and wit of Bloomsbury” (Lee, *Novels of Virginia Woolf*, p. 11).

⁹⁸ Avrom Fleishman, “A Virgin Forest in Each” [1975] in Morris Beja (ed.), *Critical Essays on Virginia Woolf*, G.K. Hall: Boston, 1985, pp. 107-30.

⁹⁹ Phyllis Rose, “St Ives and Kensington” [1978] in Beja, *Critical Essays on Woolf*, pp. 171-87.

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. Susan Squier, “The Politics of City Space in *The Years*: Street Love, Pillar Boxes and Bridges” [1981] in Beja, *Critical Essays on Woolf*, pp. 212-27; Sarah Blair, “Local Modernity, Global Modernism: Bloomsbury and the Places of the Literary”, *English Literary History* 71 (2004), pp. 813-38; Snaith & Whitworth, “Introduction”.

¹⁰¹ For example early in the second chapter of *A Room of One’s Own* (Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* [1929], Hogarth Press: London, 1978, p. 39).

¹⁰² Snaith & Whitworth, *Locating Woolf*, p. 28. See also Peter Brooker & Andrew Thacker (eds.), *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, Routledge: Abingdon & New York, 2005; Andrew Thacker, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism*, Manchester University Press: Manchester & New York, 2003.

¹⁰³ Snaith & Whitworth, “Introduction”, pp. 4, 9-17.

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literary place

Each of the chapters following the Introduction is concerned with a particular place or imaginative concept of place within Forster's life and writings. The places covered by the chapters vary in size, ranging from the level of individual villages up to the vast capital of England and the British Empire, London, itself a multiplicity of places, and even to an imaginative construction of a portion of England used – chiefly by others, not Forster himself – to give meaning to the nation as a whole, which I call Wild England. Each of these chapters works through Forster's career in chronological order. The overall movement of each is from the historical background to a particular place, through Forster's encounters with and writings on the place concerned and the development of these throughout his long life. In one case, the chronological movement of the chapter continues for as much as thirty years after Forster's death when, in the chapter on Stevenage and Hertfordshire, I assess Forster's impact on the landscape and environment thereabouts through the use of his name and writings by participants in disputes over the use and development of land. Additionally, each chapter reflects on my own activity as a student of particular locales and of Forster by recounting a series of visits to the places of each chapter undertaken in 2006 and 2007.

The order of the chapters following the Introduction is determined by the history of Forster's relations with the place concerned. The first place-focused chapter is on Sawston, an imaginary and imaginative construction of the physical environments associated with the prosperous, narrow-minded late Victorian English upper middle class, the social group in which Forster felt himself to have grown up. He wrote little about this zone after he was thirty, and what he did write was dismissive. Wild England, too, was largely an imaginative place associated with Forster's youth, and it follows Sawston. The subsequent chapters, on Surrey, London, Cambridge and Stevenage in Hertfordshire, concern places with which Forster was involved for most of his life. Stevenage comes last because there I glance at the afterlife of Forster's writings. Elsewhere I stop at the moment when he stopped writing about somewhere.

Peter Robb's statement that in contrast with the "exhilarating" career Forster enjoyed until the 1920s "the second half of his life was a quiet retreat or subsidence" is an extreme statement of a tendency commonplace in biographical accounts.¹⁰⁴ These almost invariably divide him into the novelist and the post-novelist. My geographical arrangement does not present Forster's career as divided into these two phases. Instead, I often uncover continuities between the novel-writing and the post-novel-writing periods, as well as attitudes and opinions of Forster's which seem geographically rather than temporally conditioned.

¹⁰⁴ Robb, "Glimmerings".

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1.2. Theories and Methods

1.2.1. Place as Opposed to Space

I am concerned with place in Forster, not space. I will now explain why. A lot of recent work in the humanities has used the notion of space as a theoretical tool. It has done so as a way of foregrounding power relations in a manner analogous to the way that new historicist criticism has treated history as an arena of conflicts between dominant and repressed groups. There are certainly good grounds for this. I have chosen to work with place precisely because doing so foregrounds the uniqueness of individual experience. I do not dismiss work concerned with spatiality as something contested, an arena for social conflict. I simply say that it is not all there is.

Since the mid-twentieth century, in several different fields, space has become understood as not inert – “a container within which the world proceeds”, to quote the geographer Nigel Thrift – but active.¹⁰⁵ Space, like place, has to do with location, with the answer to the question ‘where?’ Space and place could be seen as two indispensable parts of the same entity: spatiality; location or even placeness; the *where?* field. Alternatively, the one could be seen as a subclass of the other.¹⁰⁶ The nebulousness of space and place as concepts and the difficulty in distinguishing them have been described by the philosopher J.E. Malpas as central to their nature.¹⁰⁷ Space often seems mathematical, hypothetical and universal, place something intuitively experienced, known in practice and inherently localised.

If place is local and individual, potentially infinite in its multiplicity, then understanding it calls for reference to many disparate fields of study. Students of literary place can turn to narratology, to writing on everyday life, to cultural geography, to psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic examinations of people’s ways of talking about location and direction, to local history and topography, and to literary scholarship produced before the advent of ‘theory’, which was unselfconscious about spatial matters. Various ‘bottom-up’ empirical approaches, which start from details then work towards a bigger picture, rather than moving downwards from an overarching theory, have helped the present study. This chapter introduces insights from these various fields of study, leading up to a provisional theoretical

¹⁰⁵ Nigel Thrift, “Space: The Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography” in Holloway, *Key Concepts in Geography*, pp. 95-107, 96.

¹⁰⁶ Thrift (“Space”, pp. 102-4) treats place as one type (among others) of space; J.E. Malpas (*Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1999, p. 158) calls spatiality one of “the elements that constitute the structure of place”.

¹⁰⁷ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, p. 19.

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triad made up of physical-spatial, loco-referential and spatio-textual components, which I use as a rough-and-ready toolkit for the study of literary place, though not as a whole new theory of space.

Modernist art has been said to have treated space in a new way, one which reflected changing conditions in the outside world. A statement such as this requires the boundary between the modern and the pre-modern to be defined, a procedure that risks being grossly reductionist. Claude Lévi-Strauss saw the pre-modern period as outside time, the modern period as dominated by it, with myth as an artistic form representing the pre-modern era and the novel representing the modern.¹⁰⁸ For Mikhail Bakhtin, the novel's characteristic of "becoming" intertwines lack of change and change, a temporal pair, with stasis and movement, a spatial one, the novel representing the second, and historically later, term in each of these binaries.¹⁰⁹ In 1945, when literary and artistic Modernism was being identified as a phenomenon, and when Trilling was championing Forster as a modern liberal thinker, Joseph Frank argued that "spatial form", not temporality, characterised the "modern literature" of writers such as the "cintematographic" Gustave Flaubert and successors such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Marcel Proust and Joyce. Frank presented theirs as an urban, not rural, literature.¹¹⁰ This emphasis on "spatialisation" and a "spatial-logic" working counter to the temporal flow of narrative recalls Henri Bergson, who argued that cinematic images represented a spatialisation of time, a succession of "immobile views" or moments, themselves unchanging.¹¹¹ The space-time relationship has been compared by theorists of modernity from Bakhtin to Doreen Massey with Einsteinian relativity theory.¹¹² An emphasis on place, on the other hand, might question the primacy of any such distinction between the pre-modern and the modern, since although human experiences of place have always been

¹⁰⁸ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Origin of Table Manners: Introduction to a Science of Mythology*: 3 [1968] (translated from French by John and Doreen Weightman), Harper & Row: New York, 1979, p. 129. In the binarism described by Lévi-Strauss "structure deteriorates into seriality" and "reduplication" – a repetition of things that are fundamentally alike which masquerades as actual difference – replaces oppositional relationships.

¹⁰⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel" [1941] in *The Dialogic Imagination* (translated from Russian by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist), University of Texas Press: Austin, 1981, pp. 3-40, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ Frank ("Spatial Form in Modern Literature" [1945] in Michael McKeon (ed.), *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2000, p. 787) wrote: "these writers ideally intend the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence".

¹¹¹ Frank, "Spatial Form", pp. 790, 789; Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* [1934] (translated from French by Mabelle L. Andison), Philosophical Library: New York, 1946, p. 301 n.1. Frank's word "cinematographic" also recalls Bergson: it is one of the chapter titles in *Creative Evolution* [1907] (translated from French by Arthur Mitchell), Henry Holt: New York, 1911, pp. 272-370.

¹¹² Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" [1937-8] in Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 84-258; Massey 1994: 261.

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culturally variable they have nevertheless shared biological constants.¹¹³

The role of urban space in modernity was also foregrounded by Raymond Williams. The modern metropolis described by Williams is filled with alienated individuals who lack any sense of belonging or community: “the crowd of strangers” and the individual “isolated and lonely” within it; the detective who casts light into foggy slums; the bohemian artist as marginal migrant, “gazing down on the unknowable city from his shabby apartment”.¹¹⁴ Alienation and spatial dislocation freed the Modernist artist from bourgeois constraints, Williams argues.¹¹⁵ Paul Fussell, similarly concerned with movement and dislodgement, has highlighted the importance of passports and the crossing of borders in the opening of *Mr Norris Changes Trains*, a 1930s novel by Forster’s friend Christopher Isherwood.¹¹⁶ Also allied to Williams’s view of modernity is a 1970s materialist reading of Forster by Peter Widdowson, who condemns what he sees as the avoidance of “dynamic, if disruptive” sides to Edwardian England in *Howards End*.¹¹⁷

In Frederic Jameson’s reading of *Howards End* Frank’s view of modernity is politicised. Jameson calls Mrs Munt’s journey to Hertfordshire early in Forster’s novel “essentially a spatial representation and a spatial perception”.¹¹⁸ Unlike Frank, Jameson, using a definition of ‘metropolis’ specific to post-colonial theory, claims that accounts of spatiality in a colonial metropolis such as Edwardian England also refer to a colonised peripheral area.¹¹⁹ Jameson defines Colonialism as an act of hiding some of the space of a domain, the exploited part, elsewhere and out of sight. On a Jamesonian reading, space and place in Forster could *only* be primarily divided into the metropolitan and the colonial.¹²⁰ My place reading, while it

¹¹³ For a critique of such binarism by a historian see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995, pp. 2-5.

¹¹⁴ Williams, *Politics of Modernism*, p. 34.

¹¹⁵ Williams, *Politics of Modernism*, p. 45.

¹¹⁶ Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars*, Oxford University Press: New York, 1980, pp. 24, 31; Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Novels* [1935-9], Vintage: London, 1999, p. 9.

¹¹⁷ Peter Widdowson, *E.M. Forster’s ‘Howards End’: Fiction as History*, Sussex University Press: London, 1977, p. 89.

¹¹⁸ Fredric Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism” [1990] in *The Modernist Papers*, Verso: London & New York, 2007, pp. 152-69.

¹¹⁹ The post-colonial view of spatiality is summarised by Elleke Boehmer (*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2005, p. 2): “metropolitan writing” such as “Dickens’s novels [...] participated in organising and reinforcing perceptions of Britain as a dominant world power”.

¹²⁰ A notable reading of Forster which shares this assumption but which concentrates on an account of somewhere far distant from England is Edward W. Said’s discussion of *A Passage to India*. Said (*Culture and Imperialism*, p. 248) views the novel as a false start in a resistance literature of India, accusing Forster of using “the mechanism of the novel to elaborate on the already existing structure of attitude and reference without changing it”. His geographical readings, for example of Albert Camus’s writings on Algeria (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 213-17), are more capable of

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understands English localities as things in themselves and not only as points in a colonial or imperial network, does not deny the significance of colonial and political contexts amongst others.

In the 1990s, Homi Bhabha addressed the relationship between modernity and spatiality using the language of Derridean deconstruction, explaining it, like Frank and Lévi-Strauss, in terms of a binary opposition between the modern and the pre-modern. Bhabha situated this epistemological break around 1800, somewhat earlier than did either Frank or high Modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf.¹²¹ Like Williams and Jameson, Bhabha holds that modern space can only be understood through the twin lenses of the colonial empire and the industrialised city. Bhabha's focus is post-colonial and postmodern: the "tropicalized London" of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, on which "the migrants, the minorities, the diasporic" converge "to change the history of the nation".¹²² Like Jameson, Bhabha is uninterested in sub-national English localities, and like Williams he is polemically pro-urban, identifying the city as the source of radicalism, "the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out". Space is textualised by Bhabha more than by Williams or Jameson, however. The "Third Space" Bhabha seeks, drawing on Foucault, is not physically situated but located in discourse: between, to use the terms of Émile Beneviste, the grammatical subject of a proposition – an "I" in an utterance – and the subject of enunciation, whatever is under discussion in any piece of language, including its implications and context.¹²³ Bhabha's textual focus, like that of Sara Suleri's attempt to read Forsterian global geography in deconstructive fashion,¹²⁴ perhaps conceals similarities with earlier advocates of the view that modern space radically differs from anything preceding it.

The emphasis on Modernism as a movement, and on the status of Modernist writing as centrally involved with spatiality as understood by Williams, Jameson, Bhabha and others,

recognising multiple viewpoints than those of many post-colonial critics, however.

¹²¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge: London & New York, 1994. Virginia Woolf ("Old Bloomsbury", p. 235) placed the epistemological break in her own time, claiming playfully that "on or about December 1910 human character changed". Bhabha follows Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso: London, 1983) in reading national identity as fundamentally something manufactured and modern.

¹²² Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, pp. 169-170.

¹²³ On Beneviste see Daniele Monticelli, "Introduction: The Many Places of Deixis in Language and Theory" in Daniele Monticelli (ed.), *From Utterance to Uttering and Vice Versa: Multidisciplinary Views of Deixis*, Tartu University Press: Tartu, 2005, pp. 9-33.

¹²⁴ Sara Suleri ("Forster's Imperial Erotic", p. 166) treats geography as "a figure for the inefficacy of colonial travel", as something essentially unreal. Elsewhere, the same writer ("The Geography of *A Passage to India*" in Harold Bloom (ed.), *E.M. Forster*, Chelsea House: New York, 1987, pp. 169-75, here 175) has called Forster's India an "unimaginable space", associating space with absence in a Derridean critique of the presence-absence opposition, but her readings of *A Passage to India* lack any sense of India's own landscape or internal political and social divisions, whether in the colonial era or any other. She also ignores the complexities of Forster's non-fictional writings about India (see Forster, *The Hill of Devi' and Other Indian Writings*).

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has become a well-established way of reading early-twentieth century literature in English.¹²⁵ Nico Israel, for example, writing about the geography of Modernism in 2006, continues to identify the colonial empire, and zones of mixture and combinations of disparate groups, notably the city, as the key sites of the early twentieth century.¹²⁶ The notion of Modernism alone is not an adequate way of explaining Forster's intellectual and historical context. In the words of Jay Winter, attention to "representations" in the study of early-twentieth-century avant-garde art need to be supplemented by an understanding of more "matter-of-fact" dimensions. In the case of my study, this is why real people and places figure so prominently.¹²⁷ 'Modernist' art was no complete break with the past except in its own propaganda statements. Accounts such as Israel's continue to privilege large-scale generalisations over small-scale details such as those of particular localities, ignoring the differences within nations between regions, counties, districts and neighbourhoods.¹²⁸

1.2.2. Insights from Literary Studies

There are, however, literary-critical approaches to space and place which – in contrast with the work of Williams, Jameson and Bhabha – give priority neither to the modern city nor to the colonial empire. This section introduces some of them: approaches which develop an aesthetic realism of place, practised fairly widely in the early twentieth century; Bakhtin's account of the space-time relationship in literary history; recent attempts to understand literary place through cartographic visualisation; the emerging field of 'thing theory'; and literary pragmatics.

Shakespeare critics of the mid-twentieth century attacked A.C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*, first published in 1904, for over-estimating the reality of literary character. When L.C. Knights asked how many children Lady Macbeth had, he expected to elicit the answer 'we don't know, of course'.¹²⁹ For Knights, character was a fallacious abstraction, and

¹²⁵ See e.g. Brooker & Thacker, *Geographies of Modernism*; Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*. The same is true of history-writing. Hue-Tam Ho Tai ("Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory", *American Historical Review* 106 (2001) pp. 906-22 (para. 21)) points out that a huge collaborative work on cultural memory assembled in France by Pierre Nora ignored what she calls "[s]ubnationalism": dimensions of identity distinct from the nation-state.

¹²⁶ Israel ("Geography" in David Bradshaw & Kevin J. Dettmar (eds), *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2006, pp. 127-9) traces a line of interest in colonial empire from Rudyard Kipling to Forster, and in the characteristics of the industrial metropolis from Bram Stoker to T.S. Eliot.

¹²⁷ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p. 22. Winter memorably includes the physical bodies of the First-World-War dead among such "matter-of-fact" dimensions.

¹²⁸ For a historian's assertion, after "the various 'turns' — linguistic, cultural, postmodern", of the importance of the sub-national, see Barbara Weinstein, "Developing Inequality", *American Historical Review* 113 (2008), pp. 1-18, 2.

¹²⁹ L.C. Knights, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth? An Essay in the Theory and Practice of

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reflection on the relationship between literary descriptions of places and places in the real world was similarly inadmissible speculation. Bradley's discussion of "locality" in *King Lear* represents a kind of speculation that critics of Leavis's generation rarely if ever indulged in:

Nothing enables us to imagine whereabouts in Britain Lear's palace lies, or where the Duke of Albany lives. In referring to the dividing-lines on the map, Lear tells us of shadowy forests and plenteous rivers, but, unlike Hotspur and his companions, he studiously avoids proper names.¹³⁰

Here, Bradley states the fantastic or no-place aspects of English place in *King Lear*, but his discussion presumes the existence of other sorts of literary relationship to place. The physical map which appears on stage at the beginning of *King Lear* is a symbol of power, a point which new historicist critics have frequently applied to early modern English cartography in general,¹³¹ but it is also, crucially, internally divided. Bradley points out that its divisions *could* be meaningful, even if in the play Shakespeare actually wrote they turn out not to be. Later critics differ from Bradley in that they have tended to neglect exophoric literary reference to sub-national English place, especially after Jacques Derrida's apparent denial that reference beyond textual boundaries even exists.¹³² Bradley could be described as a realist of place, believing that places really are different from one another, and different in one person's experience from in another's.

Bradley's approach to literary place can be compared with that of an imaginative writer who was also writing contemporaneously with Forster's novels and also with personal connections to Forster. In 1915 D.H. Lawrence wrote of Hardy's *The Return of the Native* as

Shakespeare Criticism" [1933] in *Explorations: Essays in Criticism Mainly on the Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1946, pp. 1-39.

¹³⁰ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* [1904], Macmillan: London, 1922, p. 259.

¹³¹ *King Lear* I.1.36, I.1.63-68 (William Shakespeare, *King Lear* ('Arden Shakespeare Third Series'), R.A. Foakes (ed.), Thomson Learning: London, 1997, pp. 160, 162). A classic new historicist reading of the map is that of Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1992. For a discussion of the same passage in *King Lear* from an ecocritical point of view see Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Third Edition, Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2009, pp. 248-50.

¹³² Derrida, however, insisted that his statement "il n'y a pas de hors-texte", translated into English as "there is nothing outside of the text" (Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (translated from French by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1976, p. 158), should not, as it frequently has been read as a claim that reference to the text-external universe is impossible (see John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1997, pp. 16-17). Pam Morris (*Realism*, Routledge: Abingdon & New York, 2003, p. 36) instead takes it to mean that "there is no authority beyond the writing itself", with language understood as an "impersonal creative energy".

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a novel with an imaginative place at its centre,¹³³ Forster's own thinking about place emerged from contexts partly shared with these two, figures rarely mentioned in the same breath as him.

Bradley, influenced by the philosophical Idealism associated with his brother F.H. Bradley, tried to assess the extent to which *King Lear* belongs to "the world of all Shakespeare's tragedies".¹³⁴ The notion of a world here is essentially that of something mental, an individual's view of the universe. Maynard Mack, fifty years later, defined "the world of *Hamlet*" as "the imaginative environment that the play asks us to enter when we read it or go to see it", distinguishing this from the non-fictional places Denmark and Elizabethan England.¹³⁵ Critics of *Hamlet* in the earlier twentieth century – and, indeed, since – have tended to assume that the notion of 'Denmark' in the play is entirely an imaginative or – Kantian – aesthetic concept, not a matter of extra-textual reference. Helen Gardner, writing like Mack in the 1950s, stated that Shakespearean "[t]ragedy is presided over by time", while his "comedies are dominated by a sense of place".¹³⁶ *As You Like It*, she asserted, establishes an imaginative place free of the subjection to time which characterises the everyday world. This vision of place, like Mack's, is an entirely imaginative one, the opposite of that held by Anglo-American geographers in the 1950s, who (unlike successors after the 1980s who were more alert to 'cultural' matters) shut out any dimension of imagination or fiction from their "spatial" world.¹³⁷

Gardner's reading of *As You Like It* as describing a temporarily liberated zone has things in common with Bakhtin's theory of carnival. But where Gardner associates the festive suspension of everyday reality in *As You Like It* with a place elsewhere, the Forest of Arden, Bakhtin concentrates on time, on carnival's position in a religious calendar containing moments when the world is ritually turned upside down before the normal order reasserts itself.¹³⁸ Bakhtin shares with English-language critics of the earlier twentieth century both an almost Hegelian belief in literary history as something with a central tradition and its own will, destiny and impulses, and an almost Kantian detachment of the aesthetic sphere –

¹³³ D.H. Lawrence, "The Real Tragedy" [1914] in R.P. Draper (ed.): *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1975, pp. 64-72.

¹³⁴ Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p.284.

¹³⁵ Maynard Mack, "The World of Hamlet" in Cleanth Brooks (ed.), *Tragic Themes in Western Literature*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 1955, pp. 30-58, 50.

¹³⁶ Helen Gardner, "Let the Forest Judge" in John Russell Brown (ed.), *Shakespeare: 'Much Ado about Nothing' and 'As You Like It'*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1979, pp. 149-166, 155.

¹³⁷ Derek Gregory, "Space" in R.J. Johnston *et al.* (eds), *Dictionary of Human Geography*, Fourth Edition, Blackwell: Oxford, 2000, pp. 767-73, 768.

¹³⁸ Later notions of holiday combine the two, of course: people get two weeks off work, and they spend them away from home at a resort.

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including the spaces and places of texts – from the real world.¹³⁹ Bakhtin’s claim that an “author-creator, [...] outside the chronotopes of the world he represents in his work [...] can represent the temporal-spatial world and its events only *as if* he had seen and observed them himself, only *as if* he were an omnipresent witness to them” in fact chimes with Mack’s view of Denmark in *Hamlet* as Shakespearean imaginative creation.¹⁴⁰

Bakhtinian notions such as heteroglossia, which have proved useful outside literary studies in, for example, linguistic pragmatics,¹⁴¹ actually work *against* the Kantian approach to aesthetics that Bakhtin began with, in that they connect languages to real-world action. Vitality for all later readings that attempt to harmonise historicist and formalist criticism – including the present study – Bakhtin developed an understanding of voice and genre as always processual rather than static.¹⁴² More practically, Bakhtin’s account of the chronotope (space and time combined) of the road is insightful in showing that certain spaces and certain experiences of time go hand in hand. He describes, for instance, the “love idyll” of pastoral, in which “folkloric time” is combined with a particular spatial territory: “life in the bosom of nature”.¹⁴³ In Forster, comparably, travelling through a certain landscape by car is different from walking through the same landscape. It makes the place different, as Margaret Schlegel finds in *Howards End* when she loses “all sense of space” in a high-speed motorised journey from London to Hertfordshire.¹⁴⁴

Bakhtin sometimes views history in a Hegelian way as progress in the development of a world-consciousness, but he also has his own conception of what Michael Holquist describes as “history as a constant contest between monologue and dialogue, with the possibility of reversions always present”.¹⁴⁵ For Bakhtin, another believer in the reality of a radical break

¹³⁹ Michael McKeon (*Theory of the Novel*, pp. 317-20) describes Bakhtin as an exponent of Hegelian “grand theory”, a label he also applies to the other earlier twentieth-century critics of the novel Georg Lukàcs and Jose Ortega y Gasset: these theorists, McKeon writes, all see history as something with an internal logic. See also Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*, Routledge: London & New York, 1990, pp. 73-8. Bakhtin’s writing is even more allegorical and multi-layered than these favourable critics allow, perhaps because it was created under totalitarianism.

¹⁴⁰ Bakhtin, “Chronotope”, p. 256. In the same essay, Bakhtin (“Chronotope”, p. 84) does assert the reality of historical time and space: he is no extreme Idealist.

¹⁴¹ See e.g. J.M. Weir, “Bakhtin, Mikhail M. (1895-1975)” in Jacob L. Mey (ed.), *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics*, Elsevier: Oxford, 1998, pp. 1052-3. Writing from within the discipline of Slavic studies, conversely, Caryl Emerson (*The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1997, p. 117) has sought to defend Bakhtin from some of his “impetuous, underprepared” followers.

¹⁴² On the development of Bakhtin’s thinking about process from his studies of the Kantian Marburg School, see Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*, Routledge: London & New York, 1990, p. 7. Attention to process aligns Bakhtin with Bergson.

¹⁴³ Bakhtin, “Chronotope”, pp. 224-6.

¹⁴⁴ Bakhtin, “Chronotope”, p. 245; *Howards End*, XXIII.143.

¹⁴⁵ Holquist, *Dialogism*, p. 75.

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between present and past, modernity did not begin in 1910 as for Virginia Woolf, nor around the time of Napoleon as for Bhabha, nor in the early eighteenth century as for Ian Watt, and neither was it a seventeenth-century disassociation of sensibility as for T.S. Eliot in his account of the Metaphysical poets.¹⁴⁶ Instead, Bakhtin places the beginning of modernity in the sixteenth century, with the emergence in high culture of what during the Middle Ages had been underground festive culture (for example in the work of Pieter Brueghel the Elder, François Rabelais and Shakespeare).¹⁴⁷ As with his account of carnival, Bakhtin's widely applied notion of the chronotope, for all that it posits the "intrinsic connectedness" of time and space, subordinates the spatial: time is "the dominant principle in the chronotope".¹⁴⁸

Among recent critics, Franco Moretti finds the notion of the chronotope useful, but feels that Bakhtin exaggerates the liberating potential of the novel as a form.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, Moretti rejects Bakhtin's subordination of space to time. Where Bakhtin states that the Greek novel exists in no-place, that this ancient genre is "governed by an interchangeability of space", Moretti responds that "what happens in the Highlands could *not* 'just as well happen' in the Home Counties or vice versa".¹⁵⁰ Any given literary space, Moretti goes on to argue, "determines, or at least encourages, its own kind of story". Moretti is perhaps being deliberately provocative rather than straightforwardly deterministic here, so as to indicate that his emphasis on spatiality is a heuristic device, not an attempt to make space, in place of time, transcendently significant. While his style may be gimmicky at times and his treatment of maps and statistics can be mannered and even flippant, Moretti's treatment of literary place as neither wholly imagined nor as having a straightforward mimetic relationship to extra-textual reality has influenced the present study.

Moretti is not the only literary scholar to have considered imaginative geography. *The Atlas of Literature*, which appeared under the editorship of Malcolm Bradbury during the 1990s, contains – like the contemporaneous work of both Moretti and Pierre Bourdieu – maps of literary routes and locations. It also repeats basic errors and shallow, clichéd

¹⁴⁶ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1957; T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets" in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, Faber: London, 1975, pp. 59-67.

¹⁴⁷ As well as Rabelais and Shakespeare, Tasso, Scaliger and Calderon are writers of "modern times" for Bakhtin ("Chronotope", p. 86 f.n. a).

¹⁴⁸ Bakhtin, "Chronotope", pp. 84, 85 (making explicit reference to Kant's "Transcendental Aesthetic"), 86.

¹⁴⁹ Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, Verso: London, 1998, pp. 35, 45, 49. Moretti (*Atlas*, p. 164) also questions Bakhtin's historical accuracy, but a later collection edited by him (*The Novel*, two volumes, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press) contains many Bakhtinian contributions.

¹⁵⁰ Bakhtin, "Chronotope", p. 100; Moretti, *Atlas*, p. 70.

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interpretations of literary groupings.¹⁵¹ Peter Davidson, more recently, has ranged ambitiously between literature and the visual arts in search of *The Idea of North*, but fails to incorporate either spatial theory or empirical accounts of place by historians or geographers. Literary and para-literary interest in the notion of psychogeography, with attention often paid to the more uncanny side of urban space past and present, is another aspect of this trend.¹⁵² Writing produced outside the English-language tradition provides fresher perspectives. Maie Kalda, for instance, surveying the representation of urban slums in the literature of a small European country, Estonia, combines closeness to the texture of place with alertness to developments in environmental criticism such as they impact on literary representations of place.¹⁵³

Cultural geographers examine both the physicality of places and people's way of referring to them, but rarely the arrangements of space found within narratives.¹⁵⁴ Literary critics, on the other hand, have so far tended to undervalue the physical, non-textual side of place. A way of revaluing this side of literary place is to be found in literary critical accounts which emphasise things – not characters or plots – in novels as part of what Elaine Freedgood has called a “strong metonymic reading”.¹⁵⁵ Freedgood writes of Dickens's *Great Expectations* that “readers do not habitually or reflexively stop and ponder the meaning of Magwitch's preferred [brand of] tobacco—realism doesn't work that way, or rather, we haven't allowed it to as yet”.¹⁵⁶ Critics have tended to see literary places much as, on Freedgood's account, they have seen Magwitch's choice of smoke: a relatively minor detail, a feature of background. Like things, literary places contain hidden reserves of meaning waiting to be opened up by critics, and the study of literary place could fruitfully defamiliarize well-known texts.

The study of literary pragmatics was pioneered by European scholars in the late 1980s and early 1990s hoping to connect the linguistic and literary sides of English studies.¹⁵⁷ My

¹⁵¹ Arthur Morrison did not grow up in the real-life equivalent of the 'Jago'; Forster's *A Room with a View* was not published in 1907; the Bloomsbury Group should not be introduced via a repetition of their own self-generated myths. (Malcolm Bradbury (ed.), *The Atlas of Literature*, De Agostini: London, 1996, pp. 146, 178). The book ignores Forster's English place connections, moreover.

¹⁵² See e.g. Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography*, Pocket Essentials: Harpenden, 2006 (an introduction to the field aimed at general readers).

¹⁵³ Maie Kalda, “Estonian Literary Slum” in Virve Sarapik *et al.* (eds), *Koht ja Paik / Place and Location II*, Estonian Academy of Arts: Tallinn, 2002, pp. 389-404.

¹⁵⁴ E.g. Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography*, Routledge: London & New York, 1998; David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, Reaktion: London, 1998; Hannes Palang & Piret Paal, “Places Gained and Lost” in Sarapik, *Koht ja Paik*, pp. 93-110.

¹⁵⁵ Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2006, p. 160 n.3.

¹⁵⁶ Freedgood, *Ideas in Things*, p. 107.

¹⁵⁷ See Sell, Roger D. (ed.), *Literary Pragmatics*, Routledge: London, 1991; Roger D. Sell, “Literary

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interest in the relationships between real authors and real readers (as well as the textual positioning of implied authors and implied readers) derives from literary pragmatics. Literary pragmatics led me to discussions by linguistic pragmaticians of deixis and indexicality, and using these tools I now seek to reunite literature with real-world referentiality, something often denied or simply ignored in the age of literary theory, for all that this was founded on the primacy of oppressive real-world power relations. One practitioner of literary pragmatics, Roger D. Sell,¹⁵⁸ denies that what, following Charles Taylor,¹⁵⁹ he calls “positionalities” – the unique locations in time, space and in relation to others which individuals occupy – completely determine what an individual thinks or does, insisting on a dimension of individual agency. We occupy and move through places that are beyond our control and that in some part are constituted by very large-scale power relations, but at the same time we see those places uniquely and are capable of changing them, for example by communicating our own understanding of those places to others for example through writing. Beyond this, Sell’s work suggests that literary criticism and literary biography should be reintegrated and that critics can thereby take on an ethically charged role as mediators between writers and audiences with differing positionalities. I extend Sell’s sociocultural concept of positionality to geographical location. We are all positioned *somewhere* as well as by class, gender, age and ethnicity. Additionally, my own criticism could perform the mediating function of which Sell speaks, especially in its attention to locoallusive aspects of texts, references to places by writers which assume that readers have a certain view of or knowledge about them. In such cases, a critic can interpose to help readers who are positioned differently develop their understanding of these places.

1.2.3. Narratology: Prioritising Time over Space

Narratives, among other things, describe movement in space, be it towards a known object as in quest stories, or apparently random as in the picaresque. Forster himself produced a work

Pragmatics” in Mey, *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics*, pp. 523-36. Literary pragmatics developed from disparate sources, including British stylistics (on which see Barry, *Beginning Theory*, pp. 196-213), linguistic pragmatics, defined more broadly in continental Europe than in the UK, and the text and discourse linguistics formulated in Finland by Nils-Erik Enkvist. Most literary pragmaticians have been English-studies academics working in countries where English is not the main language.

¹⁵⁸ Roger D. Sell, *Literature as Communication: The Foundations of Mediating Criticism*, Benjamins: Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 2000; Roger D. Sell, *Mediating Criticism: Literary Education Humanized*, Benjamins: Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 2001. See Anthony W. Johnson, “Introduction” in Jason Finch *et al.* (eds), *Humane Readings: Essays on Literary Mediation and Communication in Honour of Roger D. Sell*, Benjamins: Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 2009, pp. 1-15, for an overview of Sell’s thinking; Bo Pettersson, “Three Fallacies in Interpreting Literature” in Finch, *Humane Readings*, pp. 145-56, for a more provocative engagement with aspects of it.

¹⁵⁹ Sell, *Literature as Communication*, p. 153.

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concerned with the principles of narrative, *Aspects of the Novel*, but his judgements there, for example that “[s]pace is the lord of [Leo Tolstoy’s] *War and Peace*, not time”, are unsystematic observations.¹⁶⁰ Narratologists, by contrast, seek a general system, convinced “that an infinite number of narrative texts can be described using the finite number of concepts contained within the narrative system”.¹⁶¹ What I myself sought in narratology was a convincing explanation of the internal geographies of literary works. The London presented in Dickens’s *Bleak House*, for instance, is internally complex, with multiple interrelated central districts (yet no outer suburbs that readers see), but is also related within the text of the novel – its world, as Mack would say – to other parts of England, which are principally arranged along a road to its north. Practitioners of narratology, however, a branch of literary structuralism, have repeatedly privileged time over space.

Narratology tends to deny literary referentiality. Gérard Genette claims that a story “can very well” be told “without specifying the place where it happens, and whether this place is more or less distant from the place where I am telling it”, whereas a storyteller is compelled “to locate the story in time” because it must necessarily be told “in a present, past, or future tense”.¹⁶² Even fairy tales, however, originate in some particular folk-cultural context. The setting of such tales would in their original context have automatically been *assumed* to have had certain characteristics – as flat, hilly, forested, beside the sea, or whatever – even though that assumption might well not be shared by audiences far removed in space and time from this original context. From this perspective, it is hard to think of any literary work without a setting. Samuel Beckett deliberately removed *Waiting for Godot* from location, writing it so as to frustrate an audience’s desire to know ‘where we are’, and gave its characters names from various languages. But on the sort of reading I am proposing his play must be connected to the bombed, barren Europe of the early Cold War years, criss-crossed by displaced people. Utopian literature sets itself in an anti-place, a nowhere, but this must presume the existence of the *somewhere* inhabited by readers of such books. Even writers of fantasy fiction are also not able to set their books in a nowhere-land, since they in effect tell their readers ‘this is not here’. This objection to narratology derives from literary pragmatics, with its reassertion of the importance of relationships between real authors and real groups of readers.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 51.

¹⁶¹ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* [1980] (translated from Dutch by Christine van Boheemen), University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 1985, p. 3. See also Barry, *Beginning Theory*, p. 215.

¹⁶² Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (translated from French by Jane Lewin), Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1980, p. 215.

¹⁶³ From literary pragmatics I also take Sell’s point (*Literature as Communication*, p. 45) that

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The narratologist Mieke Bal sees location as part of the raw material out of which a narrative is constructed, rather than part of narrative itself. In itself this is not far removed from the position of a far more empirically-oriented critic, John Mullan, that location and setting are among the elements necessarily found in prose fiction.¹⁶⁴ Narrative itself, for Bal, developing Russian Formalism,¹⁶⁵ consists of three elements: *fabula*, or the events in the order they happen; *story*, the treatment and ordering of the fabula; and *text*, the actual words used to tell the story. “[E]vents always occur somewhere”, she says, “be it a place that actually exists (Amsterdam) or an imaginary place (C.S. Lewis’s Narnia)”; such locations only become “specific place”, according to her, when the process of turning fabula into story gives them “distinct characteristics”.¹⁶⁶ But Bal’s prototypical example of how fabula becomes story is temporal manipulation, notably the technique of flashback.¹⁶⁷ Like Genette before her, she describes temporal, sequential ordering of narrative at length, but she then remarks that “[f]ew concepts deriving from the theory of narrative texts are as self-evident and yet have remained so vague, as the concept of *space*”.¹⁶⁸ Bal’s actual discussion of space in literature has more to do with sensory atmospheres than with narrative organisations of geography.¹⁶⁹ She handles spatial terms inconsistently, first calling place a literary transformation of the raw material of location, but later treating *place* and *location* as synonymous with *space*, her term for the literary reworking of these two. Bal contends that fictional “places do not actually exist, as they do in reality”, but that “our imaginative faculty dictates that they be included in the fabula”. But literary places – St Petersburg in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* or Dublin in *Ulysses*, say – are more than just the illusions required by story-telling Bal thinks: we must assume, unless told otherwise, that the fictional Dublin has a river running through it, and that snow falls on the fictional St Petersburg in winter.¹⁷⁰

Meir Sternberg shares Bal’s belief in the primacy of time in narrative.¹⁷¹ Sternberg defends

narratologists err when they posit a binary sender-receiver model of communication, with literature understood as a one-way message.

¹⁶⁴ John Mullan, *How Novels Work*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006, pp. 195-200.

¹⁶⁵ Barry (*Beginning Theory*, p. 215) discusses the story-plot distinction in different varieties of narratology.

¹⁶⁶ Bal, *Narratology*, p. 7.

¹⁶⁷ Bal, *Narratology*, p. 50.

¹⁶⁸ Bal, *Narratology*, p. 93.

¹⁶⁹ Bal, *Narratology*, p. 96.

¹⁷⁰ A writer could, of course, create a St Petersburg which never got cold or a riverless Dublin, but anyone doing this would probably be playing with, deliberately reversing, (readers’ knowledge of) extra-textual reality. Sometimes, a writer and his or her audience do not know much about a given place and therefore make it more like their own: Shakespeare’s Roman plays and the fairytale *Aladdin* are perhaps examples of this.

¹⁷¹ Meir Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction*, Johns Hopkins University

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the chronological temporal ordering found in the Bible and chronicle history-writing from the attacks of Henry James and others, who accused such tellings of being inartistic and inferior to more complicated ones. Part-way through this defence, he alludes to literary space as not only secondary but also, as in Bal, somehow more troublesome than literary time. As examples, he considers presentations of space by mid-nineteenth century novelists such as Honoré de Balzac and Anthony Trollope in whose work extremely detailed descriptions of place are used to set the scene at the opening of a narrative.¹⁷² James, in a classic critique of literary realism, held that these novelists erroneously try to make art adequate to science, by introducing the detailed appearances of the outside world as they do. In opposition to James, Sternberg argues that “preliminary and concentrated exposition” can in fact be used artistically. Balzac, for instance, opens *Le Père Goriot* with an account of a decaying boarding house in an obscure district of Paris and then, in the rest of the novel, compares the whole city, initially apparently a contrast, to the house of the opening. Sternberg, this is to say, rejects Modernist radical break thinking of the sort I have associated with Lévi-Strauss, Williams, Bhabha and others, suggesting helpfully, for my purposes, that the literature of different periods might in fact mediate places in different but equally valid ways.

The way that space and place are organised *inside* texts – the difference between the sort of movement found in different sorts of narrative, between the quest and the picaresque, for instance – and not only the references to places which exist *outside* texts is indispensable in a study of literary space and place. But narratology fails to grasp the text-external, referential side of literary spatiality, concerned as it is to turn literary works into internally coherent systems. Narratologists are disturbed by notions of space and place but also – unintentionally – suggest ways of approaching them. Sternberg says that narrative must “make chronological sense”;¹⁷³ one might ask whether it must also make spatial or geographic sense and if so what this would mean. Perhaps literary study, in fact, could benefit from a spatial narratology to supplement the temporally-focused one which has so far been developed.

Press: Baltimore, 1978; Meir Sternberg, “Telling in Time (I): Chronology and Narrative Theory” in Mieke Bal (ed.), *Narrative Theory*, four volumes, Routledge: London and New York, 2004, vol. II pp. 93-137. At times, for example in describing how Balzac gets readers to ‘fall’ by thinking the boarding-house at the beginning of *Le Père Goriot* is opposed to the glamorous, fashionable world its inhabitants long to enter when in fact the two are parts of the same place or world, Sternberg recalls the reader-response criticism of Stanley Fish (*Surprised by Sin: The Reader in ‘Paradise Lost’*, Macmillan: London, 1967).

¹⁷² Sternberg, *Expositional Modes*, pp. 203-35.

¹⁷³ Sternberg, “Telling in Time”, p. 95.

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1.2.4. Space in Philosophy: Descartes to Cognitive Research

Over the centuries, philosophers have shown more interest in space than in place.¹⁷⁴ After the Renaissance, an epistemological debate between believers in the reliability of experience derived from the senses and believers in reasoning as an alternative route to knowledge was to some extent resolved by Immanuel Kant. Definitions of space are central to this continuing debate. Since the beginning of the twentieth century two important directions in the philosophical study of space have been the emphasis laid on familiar and useful understandings of concepts such as that of space (as opposed to complex definitions specific to particular philosophers' own systems), and research into cognition inspired by, and in part following, techniques developed in the natural sciences.

In the *Meditations* of René Descartes, our usual beliefs about the outside world are said to be unreliable, potentially an illusion. We think we perceive external things through the senses, but we cannot trust the senses. Descartes practised a dualism which separated mind and body, equating space with body and so making the latter an inferior term in its pairing with time. According to the Second Meditation, the distinction between bodies is not substantial in the way that the difference between mind and body is.¹⁷⁵ Bodies can only be understood as “divisible, while by contrast we cannot understand a mind except as being indivisible”. The starting point Descartes finds for any certainty in reasoning is the existence of mind; space, as body, is less knowable than mind, and mind – specifically the mental faculty which he calls the understanding, as distinct from the imagination – is needed to shore up or defend the body/space term. Having stopped doubt from threatening the human relationship with the world outside, the Sixth Meditation then defines body as that which includes extension in its substance. Descartes expresses confidence in the existence of space, as something “very closely joined to me”, something with which “I [...] form a unit”, but only when governed by mind, the controlling ‘I’, the thing which is whole and not divisible.¹⁷⁶

In Kant’s “Transcendental Aesthetic”, space is classed with time as one of two necessary “forms of sensible intuition”:¹⁷⁷ a concept or perspective that is indispensable to the mind in dealing with the universe. Kant believes space and time to be known a priori or in advance of

¹⁷⁴ This section and the subsequent one have benefited from comments by Olli Lagerspetz.

¹⁷⁵ René Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy” [1641] in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated from Latin by John Cottingham *et al.*, two volumes, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1984, vol. I, here p. 9.

¹⁷⁶ Descartes, “Meditations”, p. 54.

¹⁷⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781-7] (translated from German by Norman Kemp-Smith), Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1933, p. 67 (A 22 / B 36). The “Transcendental Aesthetic” is the first section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

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our experience of the universe, and this is where my own understanding of place differs from his concept of spatiality. Kant, like Descartes, makes the concept of space more fundamental than that of place: both see places as sections of space cut out of it for some purpose. A trait common to both Kant and Descartes is that they are impressed by Euclidean geometry and treat it as a prototype for describing the qualities of extended substance or, in other words, the characteristics of spatial intuition. I, on the other hand, consider place to be something known and recorded through the near-endless variations of human experience. Where Kant considers time “the form of inner sense, [...] of the intuition of ourselves and of our inner state”,¹⁷⁸ he views space as the realm of whatever we know as physically external to us. Kantian space, recalling the Cartesian understanding of space as something fundamentally abstract, is divided into distance and direction. Space, the extended substance, is essentially one for both Descartes and Kant. And both think that space or extended substance can be divided. But the point for both is that all spatial entities exist within the same space. No parallel spatialities or parallel spatial universes can be intuited. The unity of space, for Kant, derives from us: space is one because we only have one experience of it.

Kant is an Idealist, but not a dogmatic one.¹⁷⁹ He holds “that objects in themselves are quite unknown to us, and that what we call outer objects are nothing but mere representations of our sensibility, the form of which is space”.¹⁸⁰ Things in themselves cannot be known, he argues. What we know is their form as presented to us. Kant in fact avoids the Realist/Antirealism question of whether external objects are ‘really’ there whatever our forms of intuition. Insofar as they are objects in space we find out about their existence by our normal methods of investigating spatial objects: empirically, in other words. Insofar as the question is whether space and spatial objects in general ‘exist’ regardless of our forms of intuition, Kant doubts the applicability (either way) of the concept of existence. One viewpoint on this is that his related concepts of the ‘thing in itself’ and of the ‘noumenon’ are presupposed in our thinking but cannot be described by us as ‘there’ in any ‘absolute’ sense.¹⁸¹ Subsequent interpretations and developments gave rise to both absolute Idealism, denying the external world, and Realism, arguing that the external world exists but cannot be known (fully or completely) by us.

In late-nineteenth century Britain the influence of the German Idealism of Kant and G.W.F. Hegel on philosophers such as F.H. Bradley at Oxford and J.M.E. McTaggart at Cambridge arose as a revolt against Positivism, with its belief in the ability of the inductive

¹⁷⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 77 (A33 / B49). See also p. 79 (A37 / B54).

¹⁷⁹ See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 244 (B274).

¹⁸⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 74 (A 30 / B 45).

¹⁸¹ Olli Lagerspetz, personal communication, March 2010.

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processes of the natural sciences to solve all problems.¹⁸² Around 1900, philosophically Realist critiques of Idealism began to be heard, a shift recorded in the opening lines of Forster's *The Longest Journey*, where a group of undergraduates discuss whether or not a cow visible from the rooms in which they are is actually "there".¹⁸³ G.E. Moore, influential on the Bloomsbury Group and perhaps on Forster himself,¹⁸⁴ defended a belief in the existence of external things on the grounds that an Idealist who sees something external (a cow, for example) will claim not to know whether or not the cow is actually *there*, knowing only that it is being perceived. Instead, Moore claims, there is no sounder basis for believing in the perception of an external object than in the existence of the object itself: both the object and the perception of it are external to 'ourselves'.¹⁸⁵ While disclaiming any knowledge of what is actually 'there', Moore is considerably more reassuring about belief in external things than he takes Kant to be, and this reassurance seems to have transmitted itself to, or been reflected in, the writings of Bloomsbury Group members.

In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein demands that philosophers' words such as "'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'proposition', 'name'" be subjected to a question: "Is this word ever used in this way in the language which is its original home?"¹⁸⁶ In relation to space and place he therefore asks for the everyday senses of these words to be taken into account in philosophical thinking about them, arguably a suggestion with which neither the followers of Descartes and Kant nor literary theorists such as Frank, Williams, Jameson and Bhabha would have agreed. Wittgenstein's critical impulse, however, has its roots in Kant's critique of earlier metaphysics. The later Wittgenstein is more interested in what is done in practice than in what should be the case in an ideal world. He therefore thinks that everyday senses of words indicate ways in which people comfortably and naturally use them.¹⁸⁷ On such a reading, space could be taken to be a gap, an absence surrounded by presences – as when we say 'I've saved you a space', or 'she stole my space' – or to have a more general sense of room, scope for expansion, a quality that Australia or Canada might have and Europe not: 'there's a lot of space here'. Place could mean a position which can be comfortably inhabited, as when we feel 'out of place', or as when Renaissance

¹⁸² See R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1946.

¹⁸³ *Longest Journey*, ch. I p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ See S.P. Rosenbaum, "The Longest Journey: E.M. Forster's Refutation of Idealism" in Das & Beer, *Human Exploration*, pp.32-54; P.N. Furbank, "The Philosophy of E.M. Forster" in Herz & Martin, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 37-51.

¹⁸⁵ G.E. Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism", *Mind* New Series 12 (1903), pp. 433-53.

¹⁸⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The German Text with a Revised English Translation* [1963] (translated from German by G.E.M. Anscombe), Blackwell: Oxford, 2001, 41^c, p. 116.

¹⁸⁷ See A.C. Grayling, *Wittgenstein*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1988, pp. 70-1.

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suitors approached their patrons seeking a ‘place’ in government or the church. Like Moore, then, Wittgenstein can help bring philosophical discussion of space and place back down to earth.

An important strand in recent philosophical discussion of spatiality has to do with human cognition. According to the editors of one study, space “is one of the most basic behavioural domains for survival in all species”.¹⁸⁸ Cognitive researchers, who hope that new scientific techniques will be able to end old debates, could be seen as reviving nineteenth-century positivism. The neuroscientists John O’Keefe and Lynn Nadel have argued on the basis of experiments involving rats that human spatial understanding is determined by the structure of the brain.¹⁸⁹ For them, as for Kant, human spatial perception is innate, but unlike Kant they believe that it must be understood through empirical research. John Campbell, a philosopher influenced by cognitive thinking, concentrates on a “distinction between *absolute* and *egocentric* space” which he presents as “not a distinction between different types of regions” but “a difference between ways of representing, or thinking about, a particular region”.¹⁹⁰ This notion of “region” is a further spatial metaphor, although Campbell does not say so. Campbell compares knowledge about human perception with data drawn from experiments into animals’ spatial understandings, concluding that self-consciousness is what distinguishes humans from other animals. Instead of being concerned with whether absolute space is really ‘there’, he asks whether the human neural system has absolute space hard-wired into it.

Cognitive researchers provide real-world material in which philosophical debates over the nature of the human spatial sense can be grounded. Stephen C. Levinson, researching isolated languages, aims to distinguish cultural variation from the biological universals humans share.¹⁹¹ Levinson uses languages once regarded as ‘primitive’, such as those of Native Australians, to argue that many seeming universals of language are in fact specific to certain widely spoken and studied languages. Campbell’s attention to animal views of space

¹⁸⁸ Maya Hickmann & Stéphane Robert, “Introduction: Space, Language, and Cognition” in Maya Hickmann & Stéphane Robert (eds), *Space in Languages: Linguistic Systems and Cognitive Categories*, Benjamins: Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 2006, pp. 1-15, 10.

¹⁸⁹ John O’Keefe & Lynn Nadel, *The Hippocampus as a Cognitive Map*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1978.

¹⁹⁰ John Campbell, *Past, Space, and Self*, MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1994, p. 5. On the use of frames of reference such as the absolute and egocentric in spatial thinking see also Stephen C. Levinson, *Space in Language and Cognition: Explorations in Cognitive Diversity*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003, pp. 2, 26-8; Jérôme Dokic & Elisabeth Pacherie, “On the Very Idea of a Frame of Reference” in Hickmann & Robert, *Space in Languages*, pp. 259-80; Christiane Marcello-Nizia, “From Personal Deixis to Spatial Deixis: The Semantic Evolution of Demonstratives from Latin to French” in Hickmann & Robert, *Space in Languages*, pp. 103-20; Stéphane Robert, “Deictic Space in Wolof: Discourse, Syntax and the Importance of Absence” in Hickman & Robert, *Space in Languages*, pp. 155-74.

¹⁹¹ Stephen C. Levinson, “Language and Space”, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996), pp. 353-82.

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likewise demonstrates that human views of the universe do not provide evidence of what the whole universe is like. Animals – radically unlike humans in this respect – are said by O’Keefe to map their environment two-dimensionally around a “notional point [...], the centroid”, which they then relate to a sense of gradient which seems to have the function of “east-west”.¹⁹² While they have opened up new ways thinking about spatial experience, cognitive researchers have not ended debates such as whether the human experience of space is fundamentally conditioned by or independent of language.

1.2.5. Place Experience in Philosophy: Descartes to Ecological Thinking

Place has been discussed less often than space by philosophers. Philosophy between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries often defined itself in opposition to the richness and eccentricities of art and human experience.¹⁹³ At times, however, the messiness and variegation of the real world can be glimpsed in philosophers’ purified and abstracted accounts.

Descartes’s account of spatiality in the *Meditations* makes no distinction between one place and another. All places, for him, are points in a three-dimensional extension no more significant in themselves than the ‘x’s and ‘y’s of Cartesian coordinates. While place is never explicitly discussed in the *Meditations*, the sensory perception of body, the external field – something Descartes is suspicious of, thinking it needs to be replaced by a perception established through the understanding and in future to be founded on geometry – seems place-like. Body, in Descartes’s formulation, has “a determinable shape and a definable location” and can “occupy a space in such a way as to exclude any other body”. The *Meditations*, in fact, do contain a record of an actual place experience:

If [...] I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I just happen to have done, I normally say that I see the men themselves [...] Yet do I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automatons?¹⁹⁴

It seems, then, that Descartes was looking down from an upstairs window. Perhaps these items of clothing and the square ought to be visualised the way they are portrayed in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, but perhaps to see them this way would be to commit a biographical fallacy. The appeal to experience – “as I just happen to have done” – is direct

¹⁹² John O’Keefe, “The Hippocampal Cognitive Map and Navigational Strategies” in Jacques Paillard (ed.), *Brain and Space*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1991.

¹⁹³ Iris Murdoch (*Existentialism and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, Chatto & Windus: London., 1997, p. 4) defended this separation as late as the 1970s.

¹⁹⁴ Descartes, “Meditations”, p. 21.

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and concrete. Automaton, meanwhile, are machines which operate in space, imitators of human movement, counterfeits, details which register a human relationship to concrete place – a chair, a desk, a window, particular weather outside, the specific fashions and customs of this time and this place – thus become unexpectedly powerful for a little while in the *Meditations*.

Space is more important to Kant than to Descartes. But space for Kant is a human mental quality, not a quality of the universe. Kant was fascinated by the fact that there was an a priori Euclidean geometry that was apparently able to say things about the structure of actual space. Similarly, the apparent existence of a priori elements in the physical world attracted his interest.¹⁹⁵ But in the “Transcendental Aesthetic”, there is no *sense* of place to compare with the image of hats and coats in the square outside of the Second Meditation. Nor is there a link with a physical, albeit abstract science such as Descartes has with geometry. Instead, Kant uses space as a test case for his attempt to establish a science of metaphysics that will be parallel to the physical science established in the seventeenth century.

Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* are organised into remarks, not structured in a quasi-architectural way like Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. Unlike the ordinary language philosophers J.L. Austin and John Searle, who reject figurative uses of language as improper, Wittgenstein embraces them.¹⁹⁶ The analytic philosophical tradition from which the work of Austin and Searle developed was partly Wittgenstein’s own, but this aspect of his work aligns him more with so-called continental philosophy. Early in the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein describes his practice in terms of a spatial metaphor, that of a landscape to be explored. He goes on to say that in preparing the *Investigations*:

[M]y thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in *any single direction* against their natural inclination.—And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to *travel over a wide field* of thought *criss-cross in every direction*.—The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of *sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings*.¹⁹⁷

Freedom of thought, for Wittgenstein, equals freedom to travel. Wittgenstein presents the *Investigations* as a preliminary and provisional picture of somewhere which as such does

¹⁹⁵ Olli Lagerspetz, personal communication, March 2010.

¹⁹⁶ The charge is Derrida’s: Jacques Derrida, “Limited Inc a b c” [1977] (translated from French by Samuel Weber) in *Limited Inc.*, Northwestern University Press: Evanston, 1988, pp. 29-110, 91. Searle denied it.

¹⁹⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. ix^e. My emphases.

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deploy a concept of place.¹⁹⁸ A more recent philosopher concerned with place, Malpas, has followed Wittgenstein's example, using spatial metaphor as a model for his own activity.¹⁹⁹ Malpas envisages philosophical enquiry as an approach to things from different directions, or as a tour of a certain sort of landscape.

The Norwegian Wittgensteinian philosopher Jakob Meløe argues that concepts can be oddly specific to contexts and so derive from use rather than abstract thinking. Meløe aims to locate his audience, outlining two contrary ways of understanding the landscape of northern Norway: that of Sami reindeer herders and that of Norwegian coastal fisherman and traders.²⁰⁰ The former are effectively part of their herds; the latter, or their males at least, have the closest relationship with their boats. It is impossible to understand the Sami notion of *jassa*, defined variously by Meløe's sources as a patch of snow in a certain season and as a thicker, packed area of snow which survives the summer months without melting, without understanding the context it emerges from, which is that of the practice of reindeer herding. *Jassa* is not *jassa* if it is a patch of snow on top of a mountain, because its definition has to do with reindeer needing to cool themselves and avoid mosquitoes in the Arctic summer.²⁰¹ Among the Norwegians of the islands, similarly, the precise physical relationship of certain things, such as the position of a wheelhouse on a fishing boat, is an "intelligible structure" which is known only when its function is understood.²⁰² Meløe does not treat the differing vocabularies of place used by the Sami and the Norwegians as evidence that they occupy different thought worlds as, in different ways, believers in the linguistic Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and Foucauldian literary theorists might do. Instead, he argues that philosophical concepts such as that of space have emerged from practices with specific contexts and are meaningless outside those contexts and away from these practices, so emphasizing the importance of local contexts. I have tried to do something similar in the present study, never losing sight of the extremely crowded nature – both literally and culturally – of southern England (as compared with northern Norway).

Edward Casey has argued that place, until the continental tradition which developed from Nietzsche and Husserl, has tended to be neglected by philosophers.²⁰³ Casey historicises

¹⁹⁸ The actual word place appears in the Investigations in the sense of a defined position within a system (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 13e, 13). In Early Modern English, *place* could among other things mean "square of a chessboard", (OED3: *place* n.1 8.b; see also Malpas, *Place and Experience*, pp. 22-5).

¹⁹⁹ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, pp. 40-1, 194.

²⁰⁰ Jakob Meløe, "The Two Landscapes of Northern Norway", *Inquiry* 31 (1988) pp. 387-401.

²⁰¹ Meløe, "Two Landscapes", pp. 394-400.

²⁰² Meløe, "Two Landscapes", p. 389.

²⁰³ Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1997; Edward Casey, "Smooth Spaces and Rough-Edged Places: The Hidden History of

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place as a notion, but treats space and place as trans-historical categories, factors that can stage a “reappearance”.²⁰⁴ To think that Descartes was really taking part in a long-term debate about space and place contradicts the emphasis Casey places on the actual words the philosophers of the past used to talk about the topic, for example Latin *extensio* in Descartes’s case.²⁰⁵ Indeed there is a clash in Casey between a focus on historically specific vocabularies of the sort also traced, in the history of political thought, by J.G.A. Pocock,²⁰⁶ and the desire to write the story of place based on the continued existence through history of such a concept. Casey asserts the local over the universal, but as Malpas points out, his work “[s]ometimes [...] seems to assume rather than explicate” a distinction between space and place.²⁰⁷ Moreover, the textures of particular places are not something he ever lets his reader feel.

Malpas, in *Place and Experience*, draws on both analytic and continental philosophy, arguing like Casey that place has been wrongly “impoverished” by philosophers since Descartes.²⁰⁸ Describing himself as an ‘externalist’, Malpas believes that human identity or being, which has traditionally been seen as internal to existence, derives from our encounter with the external.²⁰⁹ It is only by moving around things, by an encounter with place, that is to say, that we identify who we ourselves are. Parallels clearly exist between Malpas’s externalism and Meløe’s account of the way that Sami and northern Norwegian identities have been established through the features of their respective environments. Experience, understood as by Wittgenstein “in a quite general and non-technical way”, is said by Malpas to have place as a “frame”, something which defines it.²¹⁰ Malpas argues against a view of place he calls psychological, in which it is constructed by human experience, asserting instead that “place is not founded on subjectivity, but is rather that *on which* subjectivity is founded”.²¹¹ The existence of the external, not the existence of the perceiving consciousness,

Place”, *Review of Metaphysics* 51 (1997), pp. 267-96. For discussions see Thomas Brockelmann, “Lost in Place? On the Virtues and Vices of Edward Casey’s Anti-Modernism”, *Humanitas* 16 (2003), 36-55; Malpas, *Place and Experience*, pp. 9-10.

²⁰⁴ Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 197.

²⁰⁵ Casey, *Fate of Place*, p. 153.

²⁰⁶ Pocock (e.g. *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1975, p. 333) argues that politics has been rethought at certain moments in history through the transmission and modification of concepts understood as words with definitions, showing how Machiavelli’s redefinition of the concept of *virtù* was put to new uses in seventeenth-century England.

²⁰⁷ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, p. 28, f.n. 4.

²⁰⁸ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, p. 29.

²⁰⁹ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, p. 12. He takes this position from Donald Davidson.

²¹⁰ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, p. 16

²¹¹ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, p. 35. Here, Malpas is either intentionally or unintentionally structuring his argument using metaphor in the manner described as near-universal by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago &

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is taken as prior, in what could be seen as an extension of Moore's refutation of Idealism.²¹² Like Lefebvre, Malpas produces an anti-reductionist philosophy: both of them value highly the varying qualities of each individual perception and place encounter. On an argument such as Malpas's, literary and other texts which faithfully record human place experience are especially valuable, and place encounters become an important part of human identity formation. The writers Malpas draws most on, Wordsworth, Proust and Seamus Heaney, undoubtedly share with Forster a peculiarly well-developed 'sense of place'.

Perhaps Malpas, like ecologically-oriented literary critics, is vulnerable to the charge that he mistakes long-lasting human attachments to place and nature for attachment to something unproblematically 'there' and capable of being experienced by humans.²¹³ My own position does not require place to be seen as in any way primary to human experience, or even as old-established; instead, I interpret both literature and place as dimensions of human experience. Malpas's externalism does not acknowledge the fact that it confers an a priori position on place in human thinking, since subjectivity is said to come from the encounter with the outside world. This could be compared to the way that John Dewey, who founds his aesthetic on human experience, argues (in Isobel Armstrong's words) for "a kind of aesthetic a priori" despite disagreeing with Kant.²¹⁴ Experience, and human place sense as an example of experience, are a posteriori things: we do not know how somewhere will seem to us until we go there, and one person's sense of a certain place is not the same as another person's sense of the same place or either of their senses of any other place. Malpas could perhaps be also criticised for using topographic surveying as an excessively neat and straightforward analogy for the shape of place.²¹⁵ But, these caveats aside, Malpas provides an excellent intellectual underpinning for future research into literary place, above all because he is a philosopher who does not ignore or downgrade the dimensions of individuality and uniqueness in human encounters with particular places which readings of literature almost inevitably emphasise.

1.2.6. The Theory and Practice of Geography

Philosophers, with unusual exceptions such as Meløe, tend to be interested in space as a universal concept or dimension rather than in closeness to local experiences of place;²¹⁶

London, 1980).

²¹² But see also Kant's refutation of Idealism (*Critique of Pure Reason* pp. 244-7 (B274-9)): "inner experience is possible only mediately, and only through outer experience".

²¹³ See Barry, *Beginning Theory*, pp. 242-6 on the debate over nature and culture among ecological and materialist critics of Wordsworth.

²¹⁴ Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic*, Blackwell: Oxford & Malden, MA, 2000, p. 164.

²¹⁵ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, pp. 38-42.

²¹⁶ "I shall try to tell you *where we are now*", Meløe begins ("Two Landscapes", p. 387).

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narratologists have text as their primary object of study, viewing space as a disturbing, even threatening, category; literary theorists such as Williams, Jameson and Bhabha, concerned with modern space, finally, are concerned above all with power relations between groups of people. Geography, in contra-distinction to all these fields, puts space and place in a central position. Some geographers work downwards, beginning from social-science reflections on what space is.²¹⁷ Others work in the opposite direction.²¹⁸ Since the 1970s geographers have become more tolerant of qualitative approaches and, in some cases, have utilised cultural theories formulated outside academic geography. Just as influential on the present study as this cultural turn, however, is the traditional activity of geographers: examining particular countries and regions in detail.

Since the 1980s, British cultural geographers have shown much interest in subjective points of view (such as those of literary authors), not attempting to produce an objective view of a certain area which eliminates human bias – positionality, in Sell’s term. Whereas ecocritics in literary studies have reintroduced the concept of nature to a discipline within which it had long been out of favour,²¹⁹ cultural geographers have embraced the cultural constructionism widely used in literary theory since the 1970s. Cultural geographers see the physical environment as something in dialogue with human beings, who themselves exist in time and look at things partially. At the turn of the millennium, writers in this discipline including Mike Crang, Derek Gregory, David Matless and Nigel Thrift developed the insights of 1970s and 1980s writers based in North America including Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph.²²⁰ Tuan and Relph asserted place as a humanising, experience-based dimension to supplement the dominant notion of quantifiable space, which they viewed as excessively abstract. Spatialist theorists such as Edward W. Soja, who draws on Foucault and Lefebvre, have avoided the notion of place, instead making space a dynamic and contested

²¹⁷ E.g. Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994; Gregory, “Space”.

²¹⁸ E.g. (among many possible examples) Alan R.H. Baker & Mark Billinge (eds), *Geographies of England: The North-South Divide*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004; Hannes Palang & Piret Paal, “Places Gained and Lost” in Sarapik, *Koht ja Paik*, pp. 93-110.

²¹⁹ See Barry, *Beginning Theory*, pp. 242-6.

²²⁰ Crang, *Cultural Geography*; Mike Crang & Nigel Thrift (eds), *Thinking Space*, Routledge: London, 2000; Gregory, “Space, Human Geography”; Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*; David Matless, “Topographic Culture: Nikolaus Pevsner and the Buildings of England”, *History Workshop Journal* 54 (2002) pp 73-99; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1977; Edward Relph, *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography*, Croom Helm: London, 1981; Edward Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape*, Croom Helm: London & Sydney, 1987. Relph, like the philosopher Casey, writes a narrative of decline, in his case most strongly influenced by John Ruskin, in which consumerism has enforced placelessness. For a critique, see Thomas Brockelman, “Lost in Place? On the Virtues and Vices of Edward Casey’s Anti-Modernism”, *Humanitas* 16 (2003) pp. 36-55.

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category, and they, too, have been influential on cultural geography.²²¹ Cultural geographers use publicity materials, interviews, literary sources, and accounts of architectural histories, among other materials. They are more sophisticated in their approach to specific regions and sites than in their handling of texts, the opposite problem from that encountered in literary criticism concerned with place and space.²²²

Lefebvre, who used the concept of space to argue against both Leninist Marxism and structuralism, had a great impact on geographical theory in the 1980s. Geographers founded a Western Marxist approach based on his thinking as a way of escaping the behaviourism and positivism which had aimed to turn their subject into an abstract “spatial science”.²²³ Followers of Lefebvre have above all denied that space is something inert or simply and unchangingly ‘there’: for them, it is produced or constructed by people in time.²²⁴ Soja’s explicitly postmodern 1990s work paid attention to cultural and literary aspects of particular places, combining this with close-up local and regional study. He describes the culturally constructed tradition of Los Angeles as a new sort of dystopia visible in both the 1940s novels of Raymond Chandler and the 1980s film *Blade Runner*, but also cartographically delineates the “Cotton Curtain” which formed a precise racial distinction between working-class whites and African-Americans in the city before the 1965 Watts riots.²²⁵

In structuring their subject before the 1980s, Anglophone geographers tended to use a number of oppositions. These included nature versus culture, time versus space, absolute versus relative space, and real versus imagined space. More recent geographers instead recognise the differing ways in which the terms of such oppositions infest one another.²²⁶ Massey, influenced by feminist and poststructuralist theory, replaces the distinction between time and space with a combined notion of “space/time” derived from the vocabulary of

²²¹ See e.g. Edward W. Soja, “Los Angeles 1965-1992: From Crisis-Generated Restructuring to Restructuring-Generated Crisis” in Allen J. Scott & Edward W. Soja (eds), *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1996.

²²² Sometimes, like literary critics venturing into spatiality, cultural geographers use words like *modern* and *space* too freely, as if the words in themselves were a cure-all. See e.g. Peter Merriman, “‘A Power for Good or Evil’: Geographies of the M1 in Late Fifties Britain” in David Gilbert *et al.* (eds), *Geographies of British Modernity: Space and Society in the Twentieth Century*, Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2003, pp. 115-31.

²²³ Gregory, “Space”, p. 768.

²²⁴ Lefebvre did not use the notion of postmodernity to describe his work. His view of produced space as everywhere and primary in human social life, indeed, has some similarities with the Freudian and Marxist grand narratives whose decline was announced by Jean-François Lyotard (*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* [1979] (translated from French by Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi), University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1984) in a famous proclamation that modernity had been succeeded by postmodernity, but Lefebvre always also uses the notion of practice to undercut overarching theories.

²²⁵ Soja, “Los Angeles”, pp. 428-9.

²²⁶ Gregory, “Space”, p. 771.

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physicists, reminiscent of Bakhtin's chronotope, and formed in the belief that social relations are primary, with space forming no separate realm from them.²²⁷ Thrift proposes an action-based contextualism influenced by the actor-network theory of French sociologist of science Bruno Latour.²²⁸ He queries the notion of the social which is central to Lefebvre's conception of space. Geographers now typically assert multiplicity, both the produced nature of spaces *and* the inseparability of human productions from productions and constructions of nature.²²⁹

Geographers frequently express scepticism about place as a concept. Its multiple definitions exasperate Thrift, while Castree insists that "[t]he humanistic desire to disclose people's sense of place will no longer suffice".²³⁰ The very nature of their work inclines geographers towards objectivist approaches, making them as fearful of place as narratologists are of space, while literary scholars must inevitably, because of the material they use, trace human subjectivity. Geographical textbooks on place have been produced in recent years, for example one by Tim Cresswell.²³¹ But while Cresswell's book contains *inter alia* vivid descriptions of particular places as human constructions, it is more oriented towards classroom needs to define and classify than towards actual places in their infinitely varied selves. Indeed, in saying that "the way place works in a world of social hierarchies" is a more worthwhile object of study than the details of "particular places", Cresswell moves towards the isolation of place as an abstract concept. This is very far from my own position. But there are valuable resources for readers concerned with literary place to be found in geographical accounts, with their precision and attention to detail, their status as empirical research.

Geographers from different sub-disciplines and of countless nationalities have produced disparate regional studies: culturally oriented, sociological, historical and economic, for instance. Some have particularly helped me identify certain peculiarities of human interchange with specific physical locations over time.

With human cultural memory of place in mind, Hannes Palang and Piret Paal have described how, in Rakvere, Estonia, a man in 1973 physically rebuilt his mother's house which had previously stood, until he dismantled it, in the town's hinterland.²³² Their study focuses on constructions of landscape before, during and after the Soviet period in Estonian history (1940-91), explaining how, on this specific rural site, historical landscapes overlay

²²⁷ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, pp. 2-3, 249-72.

²²⁸ Thrift, "Space".

²²⁹ Gregory, "Space, Human Geography", p. 772.

²³⁰ Thrift, "Space", pp. 102-3; Castree, "Place", p. 177.

²³¹ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2004.

²³² Palang & Paal, "Places Gained and Lost".

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one another, leading to what they call “the emergence of a cultural landscape”.²³³ This recalls Lefebvre’s account of how different sorts of map – tourist, military – of the same region can be laid over one another to produce a multiple cultural understanding of that place.²³⁴ The cultural landscape of this Estonian region is explained via local people’s narratives of their relationship over time with this specific place, and these inhabitants’ own sketch maps of the farm are also discussed.²³⁵ Palang and Paal use this tale-telling and mapping to argue that places are created by people. Their account of one place in an agricultural area during a period of repeated systemic political change helps reveal the place’s unique character. The wilderness retreats which had typified nature for Romantic writers such as Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau, and which were attended to by ecocritics and philosophers such as Malpas, do not figure here, and neither is change viewed especially angrily or nostalgically. The family home outside Rakvere was taken down and physically moved to the town, while an area once cultivated and beloved has returned to a wilderness state: these things naturally arouse some nostalgia among inhabitants of the area (if not among the geographers who study them) and this need not be condemned.

Work on the internal and regional geography of Britain can be based on empirical data or on textual evidence for the construction of identities. A socio-economic atlas of Britain since 1700, edited in 1989 by Rex Pope, lies in the former category and provides solid historical and geographic contexts for literary study.²³⁶ Pope’s account of the changing geography of religion in Britain after 1850, for example, could help readers of Victorian novels concerned with religious culture such as Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* and George Eliot’s *Adam Bede*. Forster’s *A Room with a View* also contains references to declining rural church attendance and an Anglican clergy whose social significance is in decline which could be understood by means of Pope’s maps. These also visualise a distinction between point and field which potentially enriches discussion of local place in Forster’s England. One map shows the locations of British motor car manufacturers in 1913, three years after the publication of Forster’s anti-car *Howards End*.²³⁷ Cars were produced at certain points, including many in London and Surrey.²³⁸ Another map shows the distribution of coal fields, coal being mined in zones which were typically semi-rural at the surface, as in Lawrence’s

²³³ Palang & Paal, “Places Gained and Lost”, p. 99.

²³⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [1974], translated from French by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1991, pp. 84, 162.

²³⁵ Palang & Paal, “Places Gained and Lost”, p. 100.

²³⁶ Rex Pope (ed.), *Atlas of British Social and Economic History since c. 1700*, Routledge: London, 1989.

²³⁷ Rex Pope, “Metal, Vehicle and Engineering Industries” in Pope, *Atlas*, pp. 45-67, 56.

²³⁸ Autorix manufactured them at Weybridge, then home of the Forsters; Dennis at Guildford, near Abinger Hammer.

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writing on Nottinghamshire.²³⁹ Such information can assist a study of literary place, though perhaps Rex Pope's maps make things appear more certain, underpinned as they are with facts and figures, than was really the case.

Quite different are two 1990s books by Rob Shields, a follower of Lefebvre.²⁴⁰ In place of the empirical data which abounds in Rex Pope's work, Shields offers theory. At one point, he sees theory as having only heuristic usefulness; at another, somewhat confusingly, he relates Bourdieu, Foucault and Lefebvre diagrammatically, seeking a master-theory encompassing them all.²⁴¹ Shields's accounts of Brighton and the English North-South Divide repeat familiar views of their place identities, however: 1930s dirty weekends or 1960s clashes between mods and rockers for Brighton; grim industrial or post-industrial landscapes and blunt manners for the North, as portrayed on screen in black and white movies during the 1950s and 1960s. His conclusion – that Lefebvre is right to say that space is constructed – seems foregone. Yet Shields's work has been useful to geographers because of its emphasis on the imaginative dimension in studies of place, the dimension that literary critics are likely to overplay but that social scientists, armed with empirical data, will more often handle crudely if at all.

To take another example, a collection of articles by historical geographers, edited by Alan R.H. Baker and Mark Billinge and concerned not with Britain, Great Britain or the United Kingdom but specifically with England, combines empirical data-gathering with cultural sensitivity.²⁴² The contributors describe with precision some of the differences and variations to be found in some of the material and imaginative aspects of the English North-South divide. Sometimes, as when Danny Dorling describes the great disparity in mortality rates between neighbouring counties such as Worcestershire and Staffordshire in the twentieth century, this divide can be solidly quantified.²⁴³ Elsewhere, as in Billinge's account of stereotypes and vocabulary around the beginning of the nineteenth century, the north-south divide charted is a matter of discursive or imaginative constructions.²⁴⁴ Among these investigations of the economic, cultural and population geography of countries and regions

²³⁹ Carol Jones, "Coal, Gas, and Electricity" in Pope, *Atlas*, pp. 68-95, 71. The map underlines London's key difference from other British cities in the early twentieth century: no coalfield was nearby. Even the Kent coalfield, the only one in the South East, was at the eastern extremity of that county.

²⁴⁰ Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*, Routledge: London & New York, 1991; Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics*, Routledge: London, 1999.

²⁴¹ Shields, *Places on the Margin*, pp. 31, 58-9.

²⁴² Baker & Billinge, *Geographies of England*.

²⁴³ Danny Dorling, "Distressed Times and Areas: Poverty, Polarisation and Politics in England, 1918-1971" in Baker & Billinge, *Geographies of England*, pp. 44-63.

²⁴⁴ Mark Billinge, "Divided by a Common Language: North and South, 1750-1830" in Baker & Billinge, *Geographies of England*, pp. 88-111.

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within twentieth century Europe, the studies produced by Palang and Paal, Pope, and Baker and Billinge stay closest to the actual specifics of different places and have therefore proved most useful to me.

1.2.7. Insights from Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics

Sociolinguistics, a linguistic sub-field attentive to the messiness of the extra-linguistic world, provides incidental insights into particular places. The pioneering 1960s work of William Labov examined how the status of linguistic variations is determined within human societies. Labov attended in detail to one district within an individual city at a particular historical moment: the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York in the early 1960s. He transcribed the voices of the area's inhabitants in a way that would not be out of place in a great realist novel. As well as notes on the human and narrative dimensions of language, Labov includes a range of descriptions of specific locales and their atmospheres within the city.²⁴⁵ A side-effect of his main, linguistic project is the portrayal of the living detail of a particular society. Not only creative writers but also linguists and philosophers can generate place observations of a literary sort: the specifics of place are more important to Labov than the hats in the square glimpsed through a window are to Descartes, but the two share something. In both, recalling Kenneth Clark's account of the genesis of landscape painting in the Renaissance, details emerge from a background.²⁴⁶

A later sociolinguistic account, by Kara Becker, of the same district of New York also captures its texture as a unique and individual place. Becker uses a theoretical distinction between space and place to structure her account of older residents of the Lower East Side who identify themselves as 'white' in contra-distinction from some of their neighbours. She describes a feature of their English pronunciation, non-rhoticity, as a badge of place identity, "a socially imbued marker of localness – one that speakers access in their attempts to assert local authenticity".²⁴⁷ Other sociolinguists have more explicit ideological goals than Labov but they too are capable of capturing place sensations. In a 1990s account, John Dixon and his collaborators describe Hout Bay, a settlement near Cape Town, evoking the relationship between settlements in a narrow valley there, with the 'black' and 'coloured' population

²⁴⁵ See for example his description of an *ad hoc* street ball game (William Labov, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, Center for Applied Linguistics: Washington, D.C., 1966, pp. 607-10).

²⁴⁶ Kenneth Clark (*Landscape into Art* [1949], Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1961) has described how landscape painting emerged precisely from details in the backgrounds of paintings concerned with other things, above all human figures.

²⁴⁷ Kara Becker, "/r/ and the Construction of Place Identity on New York City's Lower East Side", *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 13 (2009), pp. 634-58, here 654.

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crammed into small bounded zones on one hillside and into shacks by the sea.²⁴⁸ This landscape of produced space – in Lefebvre’s terms – is arguably rendered more powerfully by Dixon than the political meaning he concludes from it: that constructions of place function to reproduce a systematically racist “socio-spatial order”.²⁴⁹

Linguistic pragmatics, concerned with language as a species of real-world action, is more fruitful than sociolinguistics in generating theoretical approaches (as opposed to evocative descriptions of real places) applicable by the student of literary place. Related fields, such as text and discourse linguistics, have helpfully examined locative strategies which are relevant to Forster’s use of the tourist guidebook genre in his writing on place.²⁵⁰ My own interest in spatial deixis as a technique for understanding Forster’s reference to real place derives from pragmatics, notably the work of Levinson.²⁵¹ Examination of literary deictic reference, can consider the difference between a micro-pragmatic level, in which a literary text includes words such as *here* and *there*, and a macro-pragmatic level, in which an author situates readers in relation to a place, defining its distance from them, and in which readers can ‘write back’, be they – among readers of Forster’s *A Passage to India*, say – disgruntled colonial officials or Indian politicians working towards independence.²⁵²

Deixis, synonymous with indexicality, denotes linguistic features which relate utterance to “the circumstances of utterance”.²⁵³ At the opening of Forster’s *The Longest Journey* the character of Ansell refers deictically to something outside the ongoing conversation by insisting that a cow “is there”, so indicating both the existence of the cow and its position in space relative to his.²⁵⁴ Spatial situatedness is fundamental to this aspect of communicative

²⁴⁸ John A. Dixon *et al.*, “Ideology, Geography, Racial Exclusion: The Squatter Camp as ‘Blot on the Landscape’”, *Text* 17 (1997), pp. 317-48.

²⁴⁹ Dixon, “Ideology, Geography, Racial Exclusion”, p. 342.

²⁵⁰ See Tuija Virtanen, *Discourse Functions of Adverbial Placement in English: Clause-Initial Adverbials of Time and Place in Narratives and Procedural Place Descriptions* (Åbo Akademi University Press: Turku, 1992). On text linguistics and its limitations see Robert de Beaugrande, “Text Linguistics at the Millennium: Corpus Data and Missing Links”, *Text* 20 (2000) pp. 153-95; Sell, *Literature as Communication*, p. 45.

²⁵¹ E.g. Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1983; Levinson, “Language and Space”; Stephen C. Levinson, “Deixis” in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds), *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2004. Sell (“Literary Pragmatics”) has reflected on how spatial and other sub-categories of deixis might be used in literary study. Levinson’s work has developed towards large-scale comparisons between the spatial systems of different languages: see Stephen C. Levinson, “Primer for the Field Investigation of Spatial Description and Cognition”, *Pragmatics* 2 (1992), pp. 5-47; Stephen C. Levinson & David P. Wilkins (eds), *Grammars of Space: Explorations in Cognitive Diversity*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006.

²⁵² Jason Finch, “‘Swelling Here, Shrinking There’: Deixis of Place in Chapter I of *A Passage to India*” in Monticelli, *From Utterance to Uttering*, pp. 259-70.

²⁵³ Deixis derives etymologically from “the Greek word for pointing or indicating” (Levinson, *Pragmatics*, p. 54).

²⁵⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. I. p. 3.

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language which considers the relative positions of speaker or deictic centre, audience and thing referred to. Gesture is vital: deixis relates language to human physical practices, rather than treating it as a discrete system, bound by its own internal laws. Levinson describes deixis as a “big black fly in the ointment” for work on language which ignores the extra-linguistic world.²⁵⁵ A critic might consequently ask how much and what, precisely, in the extra-textual world is indispensable when a work of literature is read. *Pace* both New Criticism and deconstruction, with their isolation of text, the fact that there is such a place as India and that it was ruled by the British at the time this novel was written it must surely inform a reading of Forster’s *A Passage to India*, say. Attention to spatial deixis promotes biographical readings: it matters that Forster was British and did in reality visit India, but that he never worked in the colonial service. Literary-critical interest in linguistic pragmatics has generated neo-humanist criticism attentive to literary works as acts of real communication between real people and concerned to mediate between authors and variously positioned audiences.²⁵⁶

Important to pragmaticians’ and philosophers’ accounts of “spatial language” and human reference to space is the question of frames of reference, or “spatial frameworks”: ways of describing individuals’ interaction with the three-dimensional geometry of space.²⁵⁷ Whereas Campbell sees these frameworks as either subjective or objective, pragmaticians tend instead to see them as a triad, including intrinsic – ‘the front of the car’ – relative – ‘John is the man on my father’s left’ – and absolute – ‘the moon goes round the earth’ – frames.²⁵⁸ Linguistic pragmatics is useful to literary study because it directs a critic’s attention to the micro-linguistic level in literature, while at the same time allowing a movement between this level and the communicational strategies of an utterance understood as a whole. Situated between the micro- and macro- linguistic levels are the practices of human reference to place investigated by practitioners of conversation analysis.²⁵⁹ Where Levinson aims to chart the universalities of humans’ spatial sense, Greg Myers, for instance, meticulously tracks people’s habitual ways of talking about their relationships to location and identity. Paraphrasing Emanuel Schegloff, Myers states that “the naming of place is flexible in the form of reference and the scale of referent, and is situated in ongoing interaction”.²⁶⁰ His work is a warning to a student of literary place not to define place too rigidly and – recalling

²⁵⁵ Levinson, “Deixis”, pp. 97-121, 97.

²⁵⁶ See e.g. Sell, *Mediating Criticism*.

²⁵⁷ Levinson, “Language and Space”, pp. 353-4. See also Malpas, *Place and Experience*, pp. 44-71.

²⁵⁸ Campbell, *Past, Space, and Self*, p. 5; Jef Verschueren, *Understanding Pragmatics*, Arnold: London, 1999, pp. 98-100.

²⁵⁹ Greg Myers, “Where Are You From? Identifying Place”, *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 10 (2006), pp. 320-43.

²⁶⁰ Myers, “Where Are You From?”, pp. 321-2.

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Wittgenstein once more – not to remove it from the way it is practically understood.

1.2.8. French Spatial Theory

One of the approaches to spatiality (and place is an aspect of spatiality) which has had most impact on literary studies in recent decades is that developed by cultural theorists active in France during the decades following the Second World War. These writers most often judge space to be something produced by human action and particularly power struggles over time, not passive or unchanging. Additionally, the notion of everyday life has been presented by the same group of theorists as a counter to previous grand narratives. Writers such as Foucault, Certeau and Lefebvre have been used in English-language research as spokespersons for a more generalised ‘spatialism’, in which the very notion of space becomes more important than for example those of time or social class. The very word ‘theory’ seems problematic in this context, since the notion of practice or lived experience – as opposed to theoretical abstraction – is precisely what distinguishes these writers from their predecessors and even their contemporaries.

Michael Sheringham has traced French interest in the quotidian – in “la vie”, “[n]ever theorized”, “plural and unstable” – back to the surrealism of the 1920s and 1930s.²⁶¹ He argues that photographs of apparently banal city scenes taken by J.-A. Boiffard as part of André Breton’s surrealist project engage with the real through both contextual and formal aspects. Instead of providing “additional information”, these “attest the objective, concrete reality of places, people, and objects involved in events notable for a high degree of irrationality.”²⁶² Boiffard provides alternative captions for near-identical images of a gloomy-looking Paris hotel and the street furniture, so giving them radically different meanings. Forster and associates of his such as J.R. Ackerley were active in a sort of industrialised metropolis similar to the Paris of the surrealists. Ackerley, though not a surrealist, often presented himself in his writings as a homosexual *flâneur*, the characteristic wanderer of the modern city identified in nineteenth-century Paris by Charles Baudelaire and famously associated with the same city before the Second World War by Walter Benjamin.²⁶³

By 1961, when Lefebvre wrote the second part of his *Critique de la vie quotidienne* he,

²⁶¹ Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006, pp. 59-94.

²⁶² Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, p. 88.

²⁶³ Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, p. 132; Hannah Arendt, “Introduction” in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (translated from German by Harry Kohn), ed. Hannah Arendt, Cape: London, 1970, p. 27; Benjamin, *Illuminations*, pp. 168-9.

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like contemporaries such as Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser,²⁶⁴ had rejected scientific Leninist Marxism. Instead, in the paraphrase of Sheringham, he felt that “the concrete relationship between individual or group and the global sphere of the everyday” needed to be comprehended.²⁶⁵ He wrote, accordingly, detailed descriptions of many seemingly mundane practices which, taken together, could be seen as making up life in post-war France. French everyday life studies have their roots in pre-war surrealism, but it was during the material prosperity of the 1950s – a time of anxiety internationally for France, with the Suez crisis and conflicts in Algeria and Indochina – that interest in the varied details of lived experience became more widespread. The period showed ordinary people a glittering array of consumer goods, for example the Citroën DS car, celebrated in pop-semiotic terms by Roland Barthes.²⁶⁶

One way of understanding the English places described and constructed in Forster’s writings is as produced spaces in Lefebvre’s sense. Born in 1901, Lefebvre was old enough to have been involved with 1920s surrealism, and lived long enough to engage with the situationists of the early 1960s.²⁶⁷ In the 1960s and 1970s, he began advocating the notion of spatiality instead of that of everyday life.²⁶⁸ Bachelard’s 1958 *Poetics of Space* had attended to the categories of space found within buildings as evidenced in literature but also considered aspects of imaginative space such as people’s ability to conceive of miniature worlds.²⁶⁹ Subsequently, Foucault in “Different Spaces”, like Lefebvre in the later *Production of Space*, offered a history of space which, rather than seeing it as a universal constant in the manner of Descartes and Kant, historicised it.²⁷⁰ Spaces that are in some way differentiated from yet define or confirm an overall system have always existed, Foucault says, but they are especially characteristic of contemporary spatial practice. These fringe sites or sites of transgression – Foucault calls them heterotopias – could be related to Derrida’s notion of the supplement, something which is excluded from yet undoes the rationality and authority of a system.²⁷¹ Foucault’s distinctive achievement in this paper has to do with the problem of the real. A mirror, he argues, is *both* an example of unreal, utopian

²⁶⁴ Annan, *Our Age*, pp. 247-62.

²⁶⁵ Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, p. 144.

²⁶⁶ Roland Barthes, “The New Citroën” [1957] in *Mythologies* (translated from French by Annette Lavers), Cape: London, 1972, pp. 88-90; Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, pp. 150-1.

²⁶⁷ Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, pp. 135, 159; Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics*, Routledge: London, 1999.

²⁶⁸ Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, p. 160.

²⁶⁹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* [1958] (translated from French by Maria Jolas), Beacon: Boston, 1994, pp. 148-51.

²⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, “Different Spaces” [1967] (translated from French by Robert Hurley) in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow, Penguin: London, 1998, pp. 175-85.

²⁷¹ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 144, 281.

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space, in that it frames and shows a world that it creates, *and* a reflection of reality.²⁷²

In *The Production of Space*, first published in 1974, Lefebvre elevates space to a position comparable with that of class for Marxists or the Oedipus complex for Freudians. He makes two distinct and perhaps contradictory points, first that space has always, throughout history been something *produced* (in the manner associated by Marx with commodities that are traded), and second that produced space, as opposed to space which has been occupied and developed more organically, is characteristic of the modern age more than of previous ones. In taking the latter position Lefebvre seems an exponent of the ‘single-break’ position, recalling Virginia Woolf when he claims that “around 1910 a certain space was shattered”.²⁷³ He opposes structuralism, denying that semiotic approaches can make sense of the production of space since their “categories such as message, code and reading/writing could be applied only to spaces already produced”.²⁷⁴ Unlike structuralists, with their fondness for Saussurean binaries, Lefebvre favours triadic patterns. He divides space into three: *spatial practices*, or what is actually done; *representations of space*, or what is planned; and *representational spaces*, or terroristic uses of space, paradigmatically created by artists such as the situationists with the potential to trigger a mental revolution and overthrow capitalistic thinking.²⁷⁵ Lefebvre’s belief in the revolutionary potential of art distinguishes him from for example new historicist literary critics with their belief that, in Jonathan Culler’s words, art involves “the containment of subversive energies”.²⁷⁶ Lefebvre’s approach recalls Bakhtin’s notion of carnival and Certeau’s view that individuals can appropriate things from society, making space theirs, simply through their movements.²⁷⁷ Bakhtin, Certeau and Lefebvre all replace the Marxist view of class conflict with an emphasis on the way individuals and small groups can hijack or manipulate systems ostensibly controlled by a monolithic dominant order.

Pierre Bourdieu’s disparate accounts of human spatial arrangements also began to appear in the 1960s and 1970s. They include his description of the layout of the houses of the Algerian Kabyle people (which he makes into a reversal of the spatial world of the west), his figurative spaces such as the discursive ‘field’ in which he alleges cultural production to take

²⁷² Foucault, “Different Spaces”, pp. 178-9.

²⁷³ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 25. Andrew Thacker (*Moving through Modernity*, p. 18) argues that Lefebvre’s account of space is particularly helpful to critics reading Modernists such as Joyce, T.S. Eliot and Jean Rhys because it is as “multifaceted” as the spatial writing of these authors.

²⁷⁴ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 160.

²⁷⁵ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 31, 38-9.

²⁷⁶ Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997, p. 64.

²⁷⁷ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City” [1974] (translated from French by Steven Rendall) in Graham Ward (ed.), *The Certeau Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford & Malden, MA, 2000, 101-18, here 106-7.

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place, and accounts of fictional spaces such as the Paris of Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*.²⁷⁸ Disagreement with Bourdieu often focuses on his notion of 'habitus', which limits the possibilities of individual agency even as it asserts them.²⁷⁹ The Kabyle house is, like the Foucauldian mirror, a useful and transferable metaphor in that it is both a model of the world and a reversal of the world: structures exist, and they greatly influence social arrangements, but so does the possibility of negotiation. The country house and its social setting as presented in Forster's *The Longest Journey* and his 1930s pageant plays could be explained with Bourdieu's help as models of social order which can themselves be challenged. Bourdieu does sometimes place extreme limitations on the possibilities of human action: in *The Rules of Art* he considers fictional characters such as Flaubert's to be "particles in a magnetic field".²⁸⁰ In the 1990s, Bourdieu moved towards direct activism in the fields of art and social survey.²⁸¹ Among these, *The Weight of the World*, his collaborative study of socially-related suffering in contemporary French society charting, for example, the experiences of unemployed car workers, shares one virtue of Labov's 1960s work on New York. Both give meaning to a place in the manner of a nineteenth century social novel such as George Eliot's *Middlemarch* through transmitting the sense of that place, through conveying it imaginatively. Bourdieu's later writings, versatile, engaged, uncertain and sensitive to space in a way that crosses disciplinary boundaries, deserve greater attention from literary critics than they have so far received.

The Anglo-American reception of Lefebvre, Certeau and Bourdieu's views on space has been mixed.²⁸² Derek Schilling and Michael Sheringham have contextualised the spatialists

²⁷⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Kabyle House or the World Reversed" [1970] (translated from French by Richard Nice) in *The Logic of Practice*, Polity Press: Cambridge, 1990, pp. 271-83; Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed" [1983] in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Randal Johnson (ed.), Polity Press: Cambridge, 1993, 29-73; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* [1992] (translated from French by Susan Emanuel), Polity Press: Cambridge, 1996.

²⁷⁹ E.g. Jon Klancher, "British Periodicals" in Martin Coyle *et al.* (eds), *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*, Routledge: London, 1990, pp. 876-88, here 883; Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*, Second Edition, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1997, p. 220. Bourdieu is not very popular amongst literary critics for precisely this reason, although he has had a great impact on sociolinguistics (see e.g. Celia Roberts & Brian Street, "Spoken and Written Language" in Florian Coulmas (ed.), *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1997, pp. 168-86, here 172, 184).

²⁸⁰ Cited by Moretti, *Atlas*, p. 112.

²⁸¹ Pierre Bourdieu & Hans Haacke, *Free Exchange*, Polity Press: Cambridge, 1995; Pierre Bourdieu *et al.*, *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (translated from French by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson), Polity Press: Cambridge, 1999.

²⁸² Raymond Tallis (*Enemies of Hope: A Critique of Contemporary Pessimism*, St Martin's Press: New York, 1997) offers one of the most wholesale rejections of French 'theory' and its followers that I know.

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and every-day life thinkers in the environment of post-war France.²⁸³ Rita Felski, meanwhile, presents the French everyday-life theorists as over-intellectualising male gurus, while John Frow accuses Bourdieu of seeing the individual as an automaton.²⁸⁴ Dell Upton, assessing Lefebvre from the perspective of architectural theory, accuses his account of space (and Certeau's) of lacking "specificity" in comparison with Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus'. Lefebvre and Certeau's embrace of an everyday which is a "heterogeneous mélange of ideas, sensations, emotions, and physical actions" seemingly troubles Upton.²⁸⁵ Habitus is a structuring concept, an attempt to rescue structuralism from the problem of agency, but it is Lefebvre's radical opposition to structure and system of any sort – not shared by the Bourdieu of the 1960s and 1970s, at least – which, *pace* Upton, makes his thought more fruitful for the student of literary place than structuralism is.

Among the French cultural theorists active in the 1960s and 1970s Bourdieu, Certeau and Lefebvre – unlike Barthes, Derrida and Foucault – did not initially make a big impact in British and American English departments. Even now, these three are unmentioned in widely used introductions to literary theory by Culler and Peter Barry.²⁸⁶ Lefebvre at least was much cited by scholars of modern English literature in the later 2000s.²⁸⁷ Slightly earlier, in 2004, Sara Blair drew on spatial and everyday-life theory in an account of early-twentieth-century Bloomsbury:

Literally central to the townscape of the burgeoning metropolis, the national capital transforming itself as an exemplary global city, it [Bloomsbury] nevertheless floats at the edge of lived space; it remains symbolically marginal to the framing of the urban center's pleasures and opportunities.²⁸⁸

Blair's references to "the townscape", "the burgeoning metropolis" and "the national capital" turn Bloomsbury into an overlapping set of abstractions. Lefebvre and Bourdieu – like writers in other fields such as Meløe and Labov – do just the opposite, however, recognising

²⁸³ Derek Schilling, "Everyday Life and the Challenge to History in Postwar France: Braudel, Lefebvre, Certeau", *Diacritics* 33 (2003), pp. 23-40; Sheringham, *Everyday Life*.

²⁸⁴ Rita Felski, "The Invention of Everyday Life", *New Formations* 39 (2000) pp. 15-31; Rita Felski, Introduction", *New Literary History* 33 (2002) pp. 607-22; (on Frow) Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, p. 220.

²⁸⁵ Dell Upton, "Architecture in Everyday Life", *New Literary History* 33 (2002), pp. 707-23, here 719, 720.

²⁸⁶ Barry, *Beginning Theory*; Culler, *Literary Theory*.

²⁸⁷ See e.g. Freedgood, *Ideas in Things*, p. 165 n.3; Paul Newland, *The Cultural Construction of London's East End: Urban Iconography, Modernity and the Spatialisation of Englishness*, Rodopi: Amsterdam & New York, 2008, pp. 209-12; Snaith & Whitworth, *Locating Woolf*; Julian Wolfreys, *Transgression: Identity, Space, Time*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 2008, pp. 154-6; Andrea P. Zengulys, *Modernism and the Locations of Literary Heritage*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2008, pp. 63, 66.

²⁸⁸ Blair, "Local Modernity", p. 816.

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the irrational colour, difference and particularity of actual places at specific times. Blair, like many other English-language critics in a broadly new historicist tradition, uses maps in her article in a way that lends colour and invites speculation but is not – as in the geographical work of Billinge and Pope – at the heart of her argument. Snaith and Whitworth include maps which seem to have a similar purpose to Blair’s in their spatialist work on Woolf,²⁸⁹ and these writers have more than this in common. They conflate writing on the quotidian with aspects of the Modernist account of space, particularly that of Jameson, which in my view tends towards reductionism rather than the recognition of variety and complexity.

Explicitly concerned with places – *lieux* in French – rather than space – *l’espace* – is the French anthropologist Marc Augé. His concern, based on the notion of kinship developed by Lévi-Strauss but expressed more like Barthes’s *Mythologies*, is with “the anthropology of the near”: he rejects the idea that anthropologists must study societies which are spatially and culturally far distant from themselves.²⁹⁰ Augé seems to understand by ‘place’ something similar to humanistic geographers such as Relph: as a space with human associations. The opposite of a place, for him, is a non-place, a place which has had its uniqueness and locatedness systematically removed by commercially-motivated creators. This is a powerful way of describing sites such as shopping centres and airports, and a student of Forster will wonder whether Augé’s work is only relevant to the post-1960s developed world and not earlier times. Even this temporal aspect enables the context of a writer like Forster to be understood more clearly. Augé is particularly insightful on the imaginative dimension of road travel, moreover, arguing for example that driving through a region of France on a motorway as opposed to the older sort of single-carriageway road which passes through the middles of towns, contains traffic lights, is often flanked by poplars, changes the landscape of the region itself, not just one’s perception of it.

A further French quotidian thinker, Georges Perec, was a creative writer rather than an academic.²⁹¹ This distinction is itself problematic in relation to work on the quotidian, though: Certeau’s description of the view north over New York from the World Trade Centre is scarcely less literary than Perec’s productions, and non-academic writers on place like François Maspero, with his records of journeys through the northern suburbs of Paris,

²⁸⁹ Snaith & Whitworth, *Locating Woolf*.

²⁹⁰ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* [1992] (translated from French by John Howe), Verso: London & New York, 1995, pp. 23, 7, 10. See also Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, pp. 306-13.

²⁹¹ Perec receives less attention from Anglophone literary critics than Bourdieu, Certeau and Lefebvre, but a little from sociologists (e.g. Thomas Osborne & Nikolas Rose, “Spatial Phenomenotechnics: Making Space with Charles Booth and Patrick Geddes”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 22 (2004), pp. 209-28, here 209).

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comment on academic disciplines such as ethnography.²⁹² Lefebvre himself advocated the blurring of art and life. Perec's novel *Life: A User's Manual* uses the Parisian apartment building in which it is set as a sort of container filled with stories in a way that recalls the pre-novel fictional structures of Giovanni Boccaccio and Geoffrey Chaucer and, in its use of the jigsaw as an image for arbitrarily cut up space, continues the deliberately disruptive and mechanising routines used by post-war French novelists such as Raymond Queneau and Georges Bataille to remake the stale novel genre.²⁹³ But it also records the cultural memory of a twentieth-century Parisian, conveying the timbre of an individual apartment building – including the staircase well, the cellar and other commonly neglected areas – with its different inhabitants, overlapping and independent. Its organisation around the idea of a house with its front removed and a view possible into all its rooms serves multiple purposes.

On three consecutive days in October 1974, Perec spent many hours in one place, the Place Saint-Sulpice in Paris, recording everything he saw.²⁹⁴ This exemplifies the defamiliarising practice of everyday-life studies, which uses a conscious artificiality to gain a new perspective on areas of life more often taken for granted. He practises a form of hyper-realism, exaggerating the details of reality until they become strange. Subjectively, Perec reports how people move through a city space in predictable ways but also in random or individual fashion. Bored, he makes minute observations, for example of the “curved indentations, familiarly known as ‘bateaux’” in urban pavements at points where cars may come out from buildings, or the “small earthenware tiles set into the edge of the pavement” which “indicate that this section of the pavement is reserved for the parking of hire vehicles”.²⁹⁵ No geographer, he seeks no explanation, final or provisional, of the Place Saint-Sulpice. The richness, variety and oddity of place in Perec's hands moves far beyond any simplistic opposition between Modernist artists and their predecessors, the way French spatial theory has so far been applied in Anglophone literary scholarship. His recording of personal observations, moreover, is something I emulate in my own accounts of Forsterian place in the present study, labelling them physical encounters with place.

²⁹² Certeau, “Walking in the City”, p. 103; (on Maspero) Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, pp. 314-20. Maspero's work in turn recalls the journeys through 1980s to 2010s London of Iain Sinclair.

²⁹³ Georges Perec, *Life: A User's Manual* [1978] (translated from French by David Bellos), Collins Harvill: London, 1987: “Preamble” [xv-xvii]. Perec used randomization processes to generate the book's content, developing a mathematical “algorithm” to tell him “which items from each of forty-two lists had to be included in each chapter” (Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, p. 280).

²⁹⁴ Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, p. 261.

²⁹⁵ Georges Perec, “Species of Spaces” [1974] (translated from French by John Sturrock) in *Species of Spaces' and Other Pieces*, Penguin: London, 1997, pp. 1-96, here 48.

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1.2.9. Starting from Place: Topography and Local History

Several approaches which work from the bottom up have already been considered, for example those of Labov, Meløe, Perce and various geographers. Grass-roots work such as theirs gets as close as possible to specific places, providing valuable models for a study of literary place. The ‘universe’ of literary space must indeed include an understanding of internal textual space, the imaginative space created by a book – how a reader stages its geography – and this understanding must itself relate to larger-scale discussions of space such as those of Descartes and Kant. In literary studies, work which begins from assumptions about the meaning of space misses a good deal. Suleri’s account of the “Geography of *A Passage to India*”, for instance, ignores among other things the physical layout of the country, journey times, climates, whether or not the novel faithfully records Forster’s own experience, and whether or not there is an original for the temple Mrs Moore sees on the train back to Bombay.²⁹⁶ Bottom-up approaches are not necessarily untheorised, furthermore: the place accounts of Meløe and Perce develop from specific intellectual traditions, Wittgensteinian philosophy and French everyday life thinking.

In part, my goal is to chart a literary topography. Topography can mean the study of landforms. Alternatively, it can denote the kind of surveying with a theodolite envisaged at one point by Malpas as an analogy for his own theoretical practice in investigating place.²⁹⁷ Another sense of the word is “the accurate and detailed delineation and description of any locality”, including the study of lost landscapes or spatial environments – ancient Rome, for instance – which need reconstruction by later scholars.²⁹⁸ I begin with the aim of getting as close as possible to localities, describing their literary and non-literary characteristics in detail, then fitting them into a larger imaginative-geographical web: Forster’s England. Topographical study of Rome is something Forster himself probably heard about at university. He wrote his own topographical studies, notably of Alexandria, but also of English landscapes, as when he described “the half-mile path from West Hackhurst to Abinger Hall” in a 1940s memoir of Surrey.²⁹⁹ The tourist guidebook is a modern type of topographical writing and Forster made ironic use of such material in his earlier novels with Italian settings, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View*.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ Suleri, “Geography of *A Passage to India*”; *Passage to India*, ch. XXIII p. 213.

²⁹⁷ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, pp. 39-40.

²⁹⁸ OED2: *topography* n. 1.

²⁹⁹ *Alexandria*; “West Hackhurst”, p. 10; *Creator as Critic*, p. 115.

³⁰⁰ *Where Angels*, ch. 1. p. 29; *Room with a View*, ch. 1 p. 33, ch. 2 pp. 35-49. Forster’s relationship with Baedeker is discussed by Miriam Allott (“Editor’s Introduction” in *Alexandria*, pp. xv-lxxvi, here xli). Forster (*Alexandria*, p. 5) praised the guidebooks of Baedeker and Murray, in a 1961 preface to the Alexandria book.

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Topographic classical scholarship such as that on ancient Rome of L. Richardson transmits the specifics of a place which no longer exists: the physical relationship of one building or space or route there to another; how one structure gave way to another over several centuries; the relationship of the ancient city to later pilgrimages, tourism, scholarship and road-building. Richardson draws on many disparate sources, evaluating them in relation to his goal of treating “the city as an entity”.³⁰¹ This procedure could be followed by a student of literary place: move in again and again on a particular place; do not – the weakness of literary-critical work on place such as Snaith and Whitworth’s account of Virginia Woolf’s relationship to Holborn³⁰² – assume that a handful of contemporary sources capture it. Richardson’s images, which map “Remains of Antiquity in Relation to Modern Streets and Buildings”,³⁰³ work meticulously to reconstruct the past using historical documents and evidence from material culture together, whereas Snaith and Whitworth – in poststructuralist fashion – treat the 1898 and 1922 maps they reprint merely as further significations, fundamentally divorced from the non-textual world. Richardson’s practice recalls Lefebvre’s view of social space as the imposition on natural space of “successive stratified and tangled networks”, a build-up or layering of debris in which “‘Something’ always survives or endures of past networks”. Minute detailing of an unfamiliar place can be wearisome, especially when links to broader contexts are not immediately clear, but Richardson succeeds in reconstructing ancient Rome as a living physical environment, not just a library- or museum-bound zone of ruins and texts.

Topographical classical scholarship was a key source for Forster’s own approach to place. Forster’s grandfather Charles, an Anglican clergyman, surveyed modern geography during the 1830s and 1840s, trying to prove that Biblical accounts of the ancient Near-East were literally truthful.³⁰⁴ The younger Forster described these books as “worthless” in his 1956 biography of Marianne Thornton.³⁰⁵ But despite this opinion of his ancestor’s work, a topographical approach was embedded in his understanding of place from an early age: his own first published work consisted of detailed annotations to an English translation of

³⁰¹ L. Richardson, jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore & London, 1992, p. xvii. The sources Richardson uses range from surviving architecture and coins to ancient maps and literary descriptions such as memoirs.

³⁰² E.g. Snaith & Whitworth, “Introduction”, pp. 12-13.

³⁰³ Richardson, *Topographical Dictionary*, p. 69, caption to Figure 19.

³⁰⁴ Charles Forster, *Mahometanism Unveiled: An Inquiry*, two volumes, J. Cochran & J. Duncan, 1829; Charles Forster, *The Historical Geography of Arabia; Or, the Patriarchal Evidences of Revealed Religion*, Duncan & Malcolm, London: 1844; Charles Forster, *Sinai Photographed: Or Contemporary Records of Israel in the Wilderness*, Richard Bentley: London, 1862.

³⁰⁵ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 163: “[Charles Forster] was not in touch with such Oriental scholarship as existed and his method was to accumulate such scraps of erudition as fitted in with his convictions, and to commend them forcefully”.

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Virgil's *Aeneid*, many of them topographical.³⁰⁶

The study of English local history, professionalised by W.G. Hoskins and others in the decades following the Second World War, has strong affinities with topographical research. In a period when historians such as G.R. Elton were insisting that the key materials for historical study were the records left by central government, Hoskins and allied urban historians such as H.J. Dyos were developing place-focused studies of particular counties and city districts.³⁰⁷ Historians, according to Hoskins,

have tended to study the manor rather than the village, the legal concept rather than the physical fact, and to be more interested in tenures and rents than actual farming [...] let us remember all the time that we are dealing with actual men and women who have struggled to get a living off a real piece of country that we can go and walk over today, to keep in mind the facts of soil, climate, and topography, rather than the nice distinctions of copyhold tenures, the workings of the manor courts, the heriots, fines, and amercements.³⁰⁸

Hoskins writes that his work was motivated by an attachment to “one place” – a sense of home, in other words.³⁰⁹ Via his concern with “actual men and women”, Hoskins takes a political stand against landowners which is comparable to Forster's position in his 1938 pageant play *England's Pleasant Land*. Hoskins, however, presents himself as a spokesman for the rural and provincial lower classes who understands them because he is one of them: not, like Forster, a metropolitan liberal.³¹⁰ Hoskins assumes that local historians reading his work will be comfortably rooted in a single provincial English home for which they feel affection. Sentimental as this might seem, he encouraged English local historians, both professional and amateur, and so transformed British historical study. Post-1960s local history can be idiosyncratic,³¹¹ but, perhaps influenced by Hoskins, it is not only more

³⁰⁶The notes contain four maps ranging in extent from Rome to the whole of the central Mediterranean (E.M. Forster, “Introduction and Notes” in Virgil, *Aeneid*, translated from Latin by E. Fairfax Taylor, two volumes, J.M. Dent: London, 1906, vol. I. pp. 341, 352, vol. II pp. 354, 358); many of them relate geographical features found in the *Aeneid* to locations in the modern world (see e.g. Forster, “Introduction and Notes”, pp. 332-7).

³⁰⁷G.R. Elton, *The Practice of History*, Sydney University Press: Sydney, 1967; W.G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* [1959], Third Edition, Longman: Harlow, 1984; H.J. Dyos (ed.), *The Study of Urban History*, Edward Arnold: London, 1968; H.J. Dyos & Michael Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, two volumes, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1973. On Hoskins and his influence see Matthew Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape*, Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2007; Joan Thirsk, “Hoskins, William George (1908-1992)” in ODNB.

³⁰⁸Hoskins, *Local History in England*, pp. 76-7.

³⁰⁹Hoskins, *Local History in England*, p. 1.

³¹⁰*Abinger Harvest*, pp. 353-401.

³¹¹E.g. Margaret Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, Phillimore: Chichester, 1995; Shirley Corke, *Abinger Hammer, Surrey: A Short History and Guide to the Village*, Abinger, Surrey: [privately produced], 1993; Jacqueline Banerjee, *Literary Surrey*, John Owen Smith, Headley Down, Hampshire: 2005; K.P. Witney, *The Jutish Forest: A Study of the Weald of Kent from 450 to 1380 A.D.*, Athlone

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professional but also closer to the lives of ordinary people than much of earlier English topographical writing.³¹²

Political resistance also underlies the most polemical volume in Nikolaus Pevsner's *Buildings of England* series, Ian Nairn's on Surrey.³¹³ Nairn, a combative architectural writer referred to by David McKie as a "great topographer", experienced post-war planning with a sense of pain and outrage.³¹⁴ The Pevsner series describes categories of English building such as the fortified houses of Northumberland or the wool churches of Suffolk not in isolation but as embedded in tangible physical setting.³¹⁵ As such it forms a powerful counter-weight to Elton's somewhat arid government-centred historiography. The Surrey volume is alive with tension between Nairn's personal feelings about the locality – he grew up in suburban western Surrey, an area "that produced a deep hatred of characterless buildings and places" in him, according to Gavin Stamp³¹⁶ – and the systematic place survey imposed by Pevsner's planning and overseeing of the series. This discipline perhaps helped Nairn more than the freedom he was given afterwards: his 1966 *Nairn's London* is impressionistic in comparison.³¹⁷ Social space in the *Buildings of England* series is layered and overlaid in a way that would have been comprehensible for Lefebvre, with his assertion that over time "no space disappears completely, or is utterly abolished in the course of the process of social development",³¹⁸ an example being the "four layers of suburbia cancelling one another out" described at Weybridge, home of Forster and his mother between 1904 and 1925.³¹⁹ The *Buildings of England* series is filled with a particular tension: between personal feelings about place and the drive to survey the country dispassionately.

Press: London, 1976.

³¹² E.g. Robert Furley, *A History of the Weald of Kent, with an Outline of the Early History of the County*, two volumes, Henry Igglesdon & John Russell Smith: Ashford & London, 1871-4; Harper, *Hardy Country*; Edward Thomas, *The Heart of England*, J.M. Dent: London, 1906; Archibald Geikle, *The Weald* [1908], Haslemere Natural History Society: Haslemere, 1923.

³¹³ Ian Nairn and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Surrey* [1962], Second Edition, Bridget Cherry (rev.), Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1971. Like others in the series, the Surrey volume begins with a brief history of the county, then examines towns and villages alphabetically, gazetteer style. On Pevsner's approach to topography, see Matless, "Topographic Culture". The *Buildings of England* volume on Surrey is far more thorough and scholarly than mid-twentieth-century tourist guides to the county (e.g. F.R. Banks, *Surrey*, Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1956). Forster praised Pevsner in "The Lost Guide", a 1956 paper on Alexandria (see Allott, "Introduction", pp. xli-xlii; *Alexandria*, pp. 351-9, here 356).

³¹⁴ David McKie, "The Bruiser of Subtopia", *Guardian* (London), 8 December 2005.

³¹⁵ Peter Ryder, "Fortified Buildings" in John Grundy et al., *The Buildings of England: Northumberland*, Penguin: London, 1992, pp. 58-67; Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Suffolk* [1961], Second Edition, Enid Radcliffe (rev.), Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1974, pp. 33-4.

³¹⁶ Gavin Stamp, "Nairn, Ian Douglas (1930-1983)" in ODNB.

³¹⁷ Ian Nairn & Peter Gasson, *Nairn's London: Revisited by Peter Gasson*, Penguin: London, 1988.

³¹⁸ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 403.

³¹⁹ Ian Nairn & Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Surrey* [1962], Second Edition, Bridget Cherry (rev.), Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1971, p. 516.

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1.2.10. Theoretical Conclusions and Objectives

Writers such as Frank, Williams, Jameson and Bhabha who have theorised 'Modern space' rely on a binarism between modernity and the pre-modern. The changes brought about by Western industrialisation and imperialism, however important, represent only one moment in the history of human encounters with place, and have tended to be discussed more on the level of grand abstractions than that of individual experience. As an alternative to these theories of 'Modern space', A.C. Bradley's belief in the reality of place, its individual and irreducible status, also entails a belief in the reality of individual experiences of place as they vary from one another. Bakhtin's work is frequently cited by 'Modern space' thinkers but contains quite different aspects, particularly his stress on a dialogic contest of voices within and outside texts which are seen in history but not by means of a determinist historicism. However, like the narratologists Genette and Bal, he tends to subordinate place and space to time.

Moretti, like Bradley, emphasises that there are multiple qualitative differences between real places. What happens in the English Home Counties, his theory indicates, is somehow specific or peculiar to them. In an allied way, I hold that the Home Counties and Forster's works cast light on one another reciprocally. Sell's theory of literary communication, meanwhile, tackles the problem of the difference between cultures using the notion of positionality: cultural differences are real but not insurmountable; understanding is possible between different groupings. This theory usefully describes literary communication as two-way interaction between both real and implied authors and both real and envisaged audiences. As with both Foucault's account of the mirror and Malpas's view of experience as a defining frame for understandings of place, literary place is neither just imaginary nor just a representation of reality, but both. Reality transcribed in some way, artistically heightened reality and unreality are all ever-present in literary formulations of place.

Literary texts inevitably refer outside themselves, as linguistic pragmatic work such as Levinson's on deixis demonstrates. Insights such as this clash with the tendency among narratologists to treat texts as inward-looking and self-referential. While cognitive approaches can be reductionist, mind matters: Levinson indicates that reference to space is a basic and fundamental human activity. Narratologists, meanwhile, view person and time as more important to narrative than space and place are. Understanding *A Passage to India* involves the comprehension of facts about the external world: Britain and India existed when it was written; Britain ruled India then. Despite this, narratologists usefully suggest how the internal spatial quality of literary and other texts can be charted.

Place, not space, is the preferred term in the present study, but rather than seeing human

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spatial thinking as a struggle between these two in the manner of Casey, I feel, following Wittgenstein, that place is a more desirable concept because people are comfortable with its use. Place is not an abstraction, like space. Wittgensteinian philosophical trends, notably the externalism of Malpas and Meløe which insists that our understanding of place as a concept develops from our encounter with specific places, are central to my study of Forsterian place and places.

Lefebvre, like Bakhtin, is a 'Modern space' thinker who yet surmounts this binarism and the Hegelian narrative of history as the evolution of human consciousness, of a world-spirit. He maintains a paradoxical view of space as both something that has always been produced and space as something that has only become produced since the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. His hatred of binaries, his belief in the revolutionary potential of art and in the possibility of power-structures being overturned by individual acts of appropriation on the part of users and, above all, his understanding of a location as somewhere containing layer upon layer of traces of the past which can be unearthed in a process of investigation resembling archaeology, are all important to the present study.

Local detail, I hold, enables the larger-scale nature of place to be grasped. At odd moments in the philosophy of Descartes and the sociolinguistics of Labov, light is suddenly thrown on an individual place. Apparently casual observations about individual places, for example Augé's view of the French countryside from an older-style highway and then a motorway, indicate broader practices of reading place and its transmission in texts. Self-consciously artificial place practices such as Perec's, alert to the idiosyncrasies of individual experience and observation, can lead to similar insights. Similarly, 'bottom-up' approaches as diverse as those of classical topographic scholarship, conversation analysis, architectural history, local history, and regional geography may assist discussions of other places than the ones they themselves describe.

The objectives of the present study, in order of importance, are firstly to make a contribution to Forster studies, secondly to understand the places which Forster was connected to and wrote about, and thirdly to develop a new way of understanding the more general relationship between literature and place. To consider the second of these, a place such as London is both a physical, real place, with an identity that is in some respects consistent over time – relationship to a river, for example – in others variable, and an imaginative construction. In his writings, over a sixty-year period, Forster conceptualised the city in varied ways all related to but not straightforwardly determined by his own positionality. Every one of Forster's readers will have his or her own conceptualisations of London, unique but partially socially determined, which may change as a result of the

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encounter with Forster. He can make them see the city differently; their differing views of the city and other places will bring new things to their reading of him and indeed transform the meaning of his texts. This is a triangular situation in which Forster and a reader could be said to “compare notes” about London, to use Sell’s description of the literary-communicative situation.³²⁰ Considering the third objective, let me reiterate that I resist top-down or macro-spatial approaches, instead asserting the force of the local. I use theories as heuristic and provisional tools. Overall, the goal is to get as close as possible to a writer who still connects with readers, to use the verb he himself made famous in the epigraph to *Howards End*, and to the places of his life and writing, using all available means for doing so, as Richardson claims to be the duty of the topographer of ancient Rome.³²¹

1.3. A Tripartite Approach to Literary Place: Physical Encounters, Loco-Reference and Intra-Textual Landscapes

1.3.1. Why Include Accounts of My Journeys?

The accounts of my own experiences of Forsterian English places which appear in each chapter under the rubric of ‘Physical Encounters’ might, in the age of New Criticism, have seemed self-indulgent acts of confession lacking relevance to the actual business of reading Forster’s texts. In mid-twentieth-century literary criticism, famously epitomized by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley’s denunciation of the ‘Affective Fallacy’, academic literary study defined itself by its exclusion of the chattier, more personal and affect-related aspects of reading books.³²² Visit Dove Cottage by all means, one might imagine an old-fashioned literary critic saying, but for goodness’ sake don’t describe your trip in a scholarly article on Wordsworth: that would be an embarrassing faux pas. One of my ambitions in this study is to question this particular long-accepted boundary of literary study. Academic gender studies and the practice of travel-writing provide precedents and justifications of different sorts for my inclusion of these accounts.

An awareness that as a researcher one is inevitably involved in the material one describes

³²⁰ Sell, *Mediating Criticism*, pp. 2, 20.

³²¹ Richardson, *Topographical Dictionary*, p. xvii.

³²² W.K. Wimsatt, jr. and Monroe Beardsley, “The Affective Fallacy” [1954], in W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, Noonday Press: New York, 1958, pp. 21-39. Wimsatt and Beardsley (p. 21) define the “Affective Fallacy” as “a confusion between the poem and its results”, which “ends in impressionism and relativism”: an advancement of the reader over the thing being read which is both egotistical and confused.

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is far from naive, however.³²³ Interest in the bodily and experiential aspects of literature, film and other media has grown enormously since the late 1980s: such work argues that humanities or social sciences researchers will inevitably be personally involved in their material.³²⁴ Practitioners of gender studies, it is true, have themselves sometimes drawn attention to the danger of narcissism and exhibitionism latent in academic accounts of personal experience. Margaretta Jolly, in Katariina Kyrölä's paraphrase, "suggests that the autobiographical 'trend' in social and cultural studies at large" can "lead to confessional demands and gratuitous reveling in 'extraordinary' experiences which echo the wider demand to work endlessly on the self".³²⁵ Jolly would seem to be alluding to phenomena like Internet blogs and television talk shows. Care indeed needs to be taken in incorporating first-person accounts into a study like mine which has at its heart the reading of texts. In response to Jolly's objections, I claim nothing extraordinary or unique about the visits to Cambridge, Stevenage, the Surrey Hills, various parts of London and other places in England which I undertook in 2006 and 2007. Nor do I claim to have an equal level of familiarity with all of these places. Describing my visits, however, demonstrates the way that our experiences of place are individual, situated in time, and subject to chance. The so-called "strategic 'I'" drawn by Kyrölä from the work of Lynne Pearce provides a theorised method which challenges earlier notions of the boundary between the literary text and the world outside it, or the world of a given writer and the worlds (irrelevant, essentially) of his or her later readers.³²⁶

Travel writing provides a further justification for my 'Physical Encounters' sections. Travel writers often follow in the footsteps of adventurous predecessors who have themselves described their travels. To travel with an old book on the place being visited in hand, is often a route towards seeing things differently from the ways in which your contemporaries tend to see them. If you go with the latest *Lonely Planet*, you will undoubtedly meet other travellers also carrying the latest *Lonely Planet*. Instead, consider D.J. Enright sceptically reading Forster in Alexandria; Bruce Chatwin, his copy of Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana* "spineless and floodstained after four journeys to Central

³²³ For a discussion, see Katariina Kyrölä, *The Weight of Images: Affective Engagements with Fat Corporeality in the Media* (University of Turku: Turku, 2010), p. 24. Kyrölä's study of media images of the fat human body draws on Donna Haraway's notion of 'situated knowledges' and Lynne Pearce's strategic use of the first person 'I'.

³²⁴ For a critical account of this explosion of interest, see Sara Ahmed, "Open Forum Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the 'New Materialism'", *European Journal of Women's Studies* 15 (2008), pp. 23-39. I am grateful to Lydia Kokkola for directing me towards recent developments in gender studies which emphasise the personal and the experiential.

³²⁵ Kyrölä, *Weight of Images*, p. 25.

³²⁶ Kyrölä, *Weight of Images*, p. 24.

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Asia”; Tim Moore following the 1850s traveller Lord Dufferin, author of *Letters from High Latitudes*; Rory MacLean on the hippie trail, following a path made famous through the tales told by a whole generation. All relate earlier narrative accounts of places to personal experience of those places in ways more complex than simply telling tales of places they have themselves visited.³²⁷ Sometimes, as in Gavin Young’s study of the places in Asia visited by Joseph Conrad, the pursuit of the writer becomes central in a work of travel writing which comes to resemble a stylish, complicated and reflective version of the literary pilgrimages once undertaken by those belle-lettristic and journalistic literary critics – Herman Lea and Charles Harper, writing on Hardy in the early twentieth century, for instance – often thought to have been slain by the New Criticism and British academic critics such as Leavis.³²⁸ Travel writers do not merely provide more texts for academic analysis, then: they can also provide a model for the incorporation of affective dimensions into academic literary criticism concerned with the relationship between literature and place(s).

My visits, finally, provide the most obvious kind of evidence that the places Forster wrote about are still there, and there to be humanly communicated or developed. I experienced them as a particular kind of person coming to them in the 2000s, after Forster’s interaction with them, which in some cases has changed them.

1.3.2. Loco-Reference and Intra-Textual Landscapes

Literary places – both those of explicitly fictional texts such as novels, and those presented in ostensibly non-fictional ones such as memoirs – combine referential and imaginative aspects: when a real person, a narrator, or a character in a book refers to a place, this is inevitably *both* an extra-textual reference and an imaginative construction. Further aspects of literary loco-referentiality include communicative personae and their positioning at varying distance from author and writer positions encoded in texts (as well as actual groups of writers and readers). There are also different ways of referring to place: places can be described or alluded to, depending on how familiar – spatially speaking, how close – writers assume them to be for envisaged audiences. Forster is loco-allusive about Surrey but more loco-descriptive about Northumberland, for instance.³²⁹

³²⁷ D.J. Enright, *Academic Year: A Novel*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1955; Bruce Chatwin, “Introduction” [1981], in Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* [1937], Vintage: London, 2004, pp. xi-xx, here p. xi; Tim Moore, *Frost on My Moustache: The Arctic Exploits of a Lord and a Loafer*, Abacus: London, 1999, pp. 3-8; Rory Maclean *Magic Bus: On the Hippie Trail from Istanbul to India*, Penguin: London, 2007.

³²⁸ Gavin Young, *In Search of Conrad* [1991], Penguin: London, 1992.

³²⁹ See Jason Finch, “Surrey in *A Room with a View*: A Candidate for Scholarly Mediation”, *NJES: Nordic Journal of English Studies* 6 (2007), pp. 105-27.

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In any piece of imaginative writing, a space is created in the minds of readers: locations are arranged and organised in some particular way. The intra-textual landscape of *Bleak House* has already been discussed. To take another example from a Victorian writer whose literary formulations of place influenced Forster, George Borrow gives London a particular shape in *Lavengro* which could be represented diagrammatically: it keeps passing the semi-autobiographical narrator of the book through the needle of London Bridge and some alleyways in the City of London, occasionally flinging him outwards from there to some squares on the northern fringes of the city, perhaps in Islington, new and fashionable in the 1820s, or to an inn near Charing Cross or to Greenwich, the latter district described with extraordinary topographic precision but named as “——”.³³⁰ This shape has literary antecedents, notably in Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, a book which appears, disappears, and reappears in the plot of the London section of *Lavengro*. It also fits into a larger-scale portrayal in *Lavengro* of England without a physical centre but with a strong centre of identity associated with the Church of England, encountered through nomadic movement and as peopled by a multitude of bizarre ‘tribes’.³³¹

To take another example, the intra-textual landscape of Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* remains confined throughout, claustrophobically, to one city, and within this city it concentrates, equally claustrophobically, on certain indoor spaces. Notable among these are the apartment building where the protagonist, Joseph K., lives. Rooms and corridors relate to one another there and at another building where K. discovers a law court. Loco-referentially, the novel indicates certain real European cities, notably Berlin and Prague, as they were in the first quarter of the twentieth century. *The Trial* makes reference to sites also referred to in other literary works, for example Christopher Isherwood’s 1930s Berlin novels,³³² but the intra-textual landscapes described by Kafka and Isherwood are quite different. Isherwood’s Berlin is documented using the names of streets and districts: it is less imaginary than the city of *The Trial* although both are examples of imaginative place. Isherwood ranges adventurously across northern Europe by train, crossing national borders and taking a trip to Rügen Island on the coast north of Berlin.

One of my main conclusions will be that Forster’s England could be diagrammatically represented as three concentric circles, the innermost being London, the next the Home Counties, and the outer one a wilder zone including old-fashioned agricultural areas,

³³⁰ George Borrow, *Lavengro: The Scholar, the Gypsy, and the Priest* [1851], Oxford University Press: London, 1937, ch. XXXII, ch. LII.

³³¹ On the England of *Lavengro*, see Ian Duncan, “Wild England: George Borrow’s Nomadology”, *Victorian Studies* 41 (1998), pp. 381-403. Duncan’s concern with large-scale historical change, alive to small-scale detail, recalls Moretti.

³³² Isherwood, *Berlin Novels*.

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moorland and industrial regions. There are no compass points in Forster's imaginative England: north could as well be west, and there is no great significance in the fact that Hertfordshire is north of London, Kent south east and Surrey south west. The same would not be true if Forster's imaginative treatment of India were considered. As Edward Said has demonstrated, East and West are imaginative entities as well as geographical ones, and their pairing and opposition is central to the construction or representation of place and space of *A Passage to India*.

A brief comparison between Herman Melville's novella *Billy Budd* and Benjamin Britten's opera of the same name, its libretto co-written by Forster and Eric Crozier,³³³ can demonstrate my tripartite approach once more. To understand the physical space Melville was writing about, one could visit a sailing ship and view the quarters in which men lived. Melville's own voyages and work as a New York customs official would need to be considered: in particular, perhaps, the means by which he had contact with stories of the sea from the past. Turning to the opera, one might consider Britten's upbringing near the sea. Melville lived in the age of sail, while Britten and his librettists did not. Thinking loco-referentially, Liverpool appears on the first page of Melville's story, while Captain Vere dies at Gibraltar.³³⁴ The imaginative and actual place which inspired Forster's libretto, though, is not the Napoleonic-era ship but the English public school of a century later, with its sexual bullying and mindless orthodoxy. In the libretto, furthermore, the notion of a ship at sea as an anti-place, as a world in itself because cut off from all others, an island, is explored. While the intra-textual landscape of the novella includes Liverpool and Marseille, that of the opera is confined to the ship.³³⁵

The present study does not, except in passing, consider Forster as a travel writer, or evaluate his relationship to British imperialism. The survey of critical work on Forster I have carried out makes it plain that there has been far more attention among his readers to spatial constructions at a grand, abstract level – notably, in line with the interests of post-colonial criticism, that of East and West – than to place at a small-scale, tangible level. This study seeks to break fresh ground through a thorough investigation, one by one, of all the English places of Forster's life as they related to him and he to them throughout his life. It thus takes as its focus a specific historical period, that of Forster's career as a writer between the 1890s and the 1950s, allowing the expanse of time connecting Victorian and post-imperial Britain to be encompassed as well. I seek to juxtapose the different historical moments of his life,

³³³ E.M. Forster & Eric Crozier, *Billy Budd*, Boosey & Hawkes: London, 1951.

³³⁴ Herman Melville, *Billy Budd: Foretopman* [1888], John Lehmann: London, 1946, p. 120.

³³⁵ E.g. Melville, *Billy Budd*, p. 15. The action of the novella goes aboard a second ship, but this is only reported in the opera (see e.g. Forster & Crozier, *Billy Budd*, p. 13).

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which were also the different moments of a human life, and the different moments of a career. My work therefore attempts to rebuild the connection between the writing of literary biography and the study of literary texts. Each chapter concerns a place, but this study is focused on the human: it has been written in the belief that a single human life is something relatively stable.

Finally, I will present a list of seven things I have actually done, or rules I have kept to, while writing the chapters that follow, and which could be applied to studies of further literary places. First, I treat places (always) as *both* imaginative and textual constructions *and* physical, non-textual realities. Second, I assume that all places, and all human experiences of all places, have equal value (the literary author is self-conscious and leaves a record and is therefore worth studying, but does not have higher-order experiences than the 'ordinary' person). Third, I use all materials available as far as I know what they are (remembering that time is not limitless), as part of my examination of each of the places I cover. Fourth, I am determined not to prefer urban to rural or vice versa. Fifth, I do not use the material to evaluate Forster as morally or ideologically admirable or otherwise. Sixth, I do not use the material to illustrate the interrelationship of different phases in literary (or any other) history (Victorian to Modernist and so on). Seventh, I give equal weight to material produced during each different stage in Forster's career as a writer.

2. *Sawston and Other Suburbias*

2.1 Views of Forster's Sawston

The suburban zones of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and that of *The Longest Journey* have the same name: Sawston. This is both a place with its own features, associated with a particular set of attitudes. Fictional Sawston, with its main real place antecedents Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells in Kent, somewhat resembles the setting of “The Celestial Omnibus”, title story in Forster’s first published collection of short fiction, as it does the prosperous outer suburb of London which is home to the Hall family in *Maurice*. The force of Forster’s social criticism in its own time is today, in the wake of affectionate, nostalgic screen adaptations, quite likely to be forgotten. Harry Blamires wrote in 1982 of Forster’s “withering contempt” for “the Englishness of the upper middle class” and his devastating assaults on its values, far more extreme and dismissive than those of John Galsworthy.¹ The fact is that Forster’s Sawston was for most of the twentieth century seen as a fiercely satiric creation rather than an affectionate one.

Sawston is not the home of Forster’s showier Edwardian plutocrats, characters such as the Wilcoxes of *Howards End* and Harcourt Worters in “Other Kingdom”. As in their territories, though, over-decorated, pseudo-vernacular new houses are evident. The boarding house at Sawston School run by Herbert Pembroke in *The Longest Journey* has “picturesque gables”;² the house of Harcourt Worters in the story “Other Kingdom” and the Sussex house Henry and Margaret Wilcox plan for themselves in *Howards End* have similar features.³ Sawston and the zone inhabited by the rich Worters and Wilcoxes are similarly peopled by arrogant and brash *nouveaux-riches*, not by people like Rickie Elliot in *The Longest Journey* whose money is inherited. Rickie contrasts his own “dead money [...] come to me through about six dead people—silently”⁴ with the living, trade-derived and therefore less respectable money of the Ansell family.

Forster’s critics have not paid attention to the varied nature of the suburban environments he portrays. The Sawston of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, the somewhat different place given the same name in *The Longest Journey*, and the suburban milieu of *Maurice* and “The

¹ Harry Blamires, *Twentieth Century English Literature*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1982, p. 43.

² *Longest Journey*, ch. 26 p. 216.

³ *Howards End*, ch. XXII, p. 187; *Machine Stops*, p. 53.

⁴ *Longest Journey*, p. 3.31.

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Celestial Omnibus” are related to one another but also distinguishable. Forster’s essay “Notes on the English Character”, moreover, concerns people who can surely be understood as inhabitants of the same region: those prosperous Home Counties philistines who send their sons to public schools. *A Passage to India*, finally, contains in the Club frequented by the British of Chandrapore a transplanted and exaggerated version of the early novels’ Sawston.⁵ In all these writings there is a connection between a place identity – specific to certain points on a map, with architectural characteristics, characteristics of space, furniture, layout and a relationship to transport networks – and a particular outlook on the world. The same connection is itself subject to historical change, and Forster’s Sawston writings at once record this and help to produce it.

In 1960, contrasting Sawston with the “Cambridge” and “Wiltshire” which are the other geographical components of *The Longest Journey*, Forster described Sawston as “the idea, or ideal, of the British Public School” but also dismissed it as unimportant (it “need not detain us”, he said).⁶ Readers have sometimes understood Forster’s suburbia as the negative term in a binary opposition with the southern Europe found in what are sometimes called Forster’s “Italian Novels”,⁷ *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View*. “The charm and naturalness of Monteriano rebuke the ugliness and pretentiousness of Sawston”, Claude J. Summers wrote of the earlier novel.⁸ Summers is alert to the complexity of the contrast between England and Italy, in which “Monteriano is not offered as an ideal”. But he follows what was the accepted view until the 1990s, which saw Forster as using the warmth and positive humanity of Italy to highlight the artificiality and social conventionality of an England embodied by the Home Counties places in which the English portions of these two novels are set.

Forster critics since the 1980s have been most interested in his sexuality and his relationship with the colonial and post-colonial spheres. But they have not looked at the relationship between these topics and suburbia. Contributors to the 1997 collection *Queer Forster* did not consider queerness in the English suburb or indeed the much more well-known case of queerness in the English public school.⁹ Forster criticism has tended after the 1980s to see place in his writing as merely surface, something needing to be got past.

Even the more sensitive pieces of criticism on Forster produced in the 1990s and 2000s tend to downplay the place aspects of his fiction. Nicholas Royle opens a chapter on *Where*

⁵ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 3-13; *Passage to India*, ch. XX pp.187-97.

⁶ *Longest Journey*, pp. xxi-xxii, xxiii.

⁷ Norman Page, *E.M. Forster*, Macmillan Education: Basingstoke & London, 1987, pp. 18-50.

⁸ Claude J. Summers, *E.M. Forster*, Frederick Ungar: New York, 1983, p. 33.

⁹ Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (eds.), *Queer Forster*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1997.

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Angels Fear to Tread by remarking that its setting “is split between two towns”, the English Sawston and the Italian Monteriano.¹⁰ But this place “split” is for Royle not something to dwell on. This novel, he claims, is really about “relations between men”, not “English tourism and Italy”,¹¹ and Royle suggests that following Forster down biographical trails would be a mistake.¹² Other recent Forster critics have also thought of real place as a distraction. For David Medalie, Forster uses place metaphorically, to help his readers understand the complexities of the relationship between “the romantic and unromantic aspects of life”:¹³ a reader of Forster, he suggests, is to look through, not at, the places described in his works. This is part of a long-standing discomfort felt by mid- and late-twentieth century critics with literary realism. Medalie’s ‘romance’ and ‘realism’ seem genres equally unrelated to the extra-textual world. Similarly, S.P. Rosenbaum’s account of Forster’s first two published novels is, like his reading of *Howards End*, far more concerned with Forsterian intertextuality than with the real-world settings of the fiction or with the places that occasioned it.¹⁴ Rosenbaum describes the two settings of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* pithily enough, but is more interested in “the relations of parents and children” in it than in those between different places.¹⁵ Royle, Medalie and Rosenbaum, in their concern for the intra- and inter-textual, all seem to have overlooked the extra-textual references made by Forster’s texts, the part his disparate writings have to play in understanding and constructing real places, and the extent to which an understanding of the places can themselves illuminate Forster.

There are alternative approaches. One of Forster’s earliest readers, writing in 1905, the journalist and Liberal politician C.F.G. Masterman described the relationship between Gino Carella and Lilia Herriton which is at the centre of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* as “a national struggle” which is also a demonstration of artistic detachment from specifics such as nationality.¹⁶ This is to see *Where Angels Fear to Tread* as containing, intermingled, both the portrayal of real places and the delineation of human characteristics. Glen Cavaliero, perhaps

¹⁰ Nicholas Royle, *E.M. Forster*, Northcote House: Plymouth, 1999, p. 7. Monteriano has a more direct real-life original than Sawston, having quite straightforwardly the architecture and layout of San Gimignano in Tuscany.

¹¹ Royle, *E.M. Forster*, p. 9.

¹² Royle, *E.M. Forster*, p. 20.

¹³ David Medalie, *E.M. Forster’s Modernism*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 2002, p. 74.

¹⁴ S.P. Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group Volume 2*, St Martin’s Press: New York, 1994, pp. 80-1, 227.

¹⁵ Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, p. 80.

¹⁶ C.F.G. Masterman, review of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* [1905] in the *Daily News* in Philip Gardner (ed.), *E.M. Forster: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge & Kegan Paul: London & Boston, 1973, pp. 54, 52.

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comparably, considers Sawston a “world”,¹⁷ asserting that its environment is the chief topic of Forster’s first three novels. Cavaliero’s focus is not on sexual or textual matters: his view is that the influences a Forster critic should examine are “not literary but historical”.¹⁸ Mary Lago, like Cavaliero, does not ignore “the suburban environment” of Forster’s first three novels.¹⁹ But she does conflate literary formulations of place that should be distinguished from one another. Lago’s view of Mrs Herriton and Mrs Honeychurch, respectively mothers of the protagonists in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View*, as inhabitants of the same wealthy milieu, ignores Forster’s careful distinctions between different Home Counties environments. Tunbridge Wells, a real place vital in the conception of Sawston, appears in *A Room with a View* as the home of Charlotte Bartlett, where it is carefully distinguished from what Forster in the “West Hackhurst” memoir calls the “soft and wild” atmosphere of rural Surrey,²⁰ home of the Honeychurches. Surrey in *A Room with a View* contains elements of mental freedom and the rural idyll utterly absent from the Sawston of the first two novels Forster published, despite this county’s connections to London money-making. Lago, an American scholar, views English local geography from the outside: perhaps this is why she conflates the two distinct environments. The outsider’s view can also supply perspective, though: a Polish critic, Alina Szala, writing in English in a French journal, made a particularly bold and clear statement of Forster’s Sawston as a negative caricature of “English civilization”.²¹

The few recent attempts to get to grips with the real-world aspects of Forster have emerged from discussions of the history of national identity in comparison with the history of modernism and imperialism, for example Frederic Jameson’s work on *Howards End*.²² Patrick Parrinder reads Forster as a novelist even more “dedicated to investigating the English character” than contemporaries such as D.H. Lawrence, George Orwell, H.G. Wells and Virginia Woolf.²³ The interest shared by these writers in the fortunes of the English nation, Parrinder argues, was in patriotism as a possible substitute for organised religion. In the same vein, Paul Peppis deploys a medical metaphor in interpreting *The Longest Journey*

¹⁷ Glen Cavaliero, *A Reading of E.M. Forster*, Macmillan: Basingstoke & London, 1979, p. 59.

¹⁸ Cavaliero, *Reading*, p. 22.

¹⁹ Mary Lago, *E.M. Forster: A Literary Life*, St Martin’s Press: London, 1995, p. 16.

²⁰ “West Hackhurst”, p. 10; *Creator as Critic*, p. 115.

²¹ Alina Szala, “North and South: Civilization in E.M. Forster’s First Novel” in J.H. Stape (ed.), *E.M. Forster: Critical Assessments*, four volumes, Croom Helm: Mountfield, East Sussex, 1998, pp. 28, 32.

²² Frederic Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism” [1990] in *The Modernist Papers*, Verso: London & New York, 2007.

²³ Patrick Parrinder, *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from Its Origins to the Present Day*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006), p. 291.

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as a pathological study of “the nation’s ailing condition”.²⁴ The identity of the English nation is not as single and easily grasped as Peppis implies, though.

Forster scholars need both to disentangle England and the British Empire and to answer the question of whether Britain really was in decline in 1907 or at the zenith of its power. The timeline of, and the reasons for Britain’s relative decline in the twentieth century have been debated since the 1970s, with Corelli Barnett’s influential attribution of blame to the public schools particularly worth mentioning alongside Forster’s Sawston as it appears in *The Longest Journey*.²⁵ British and English nationhood were inseparable from British-Empire identity at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the strands can also be disentangled, in a way that Peppis does not attempt. He also overlooks matters of regionality and locality. His account of the relations between England and Italy in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* would benefit from the precision about counties and districts within the Home Counties exhibited by Masterman a century earlier.²⁶

2.2. Physical Encounters with Sawston

2.2.1. Where is Sawston? The Suburb and the “Suburb”

I am myself a suburbanite. Walthamstow, where I was born, is an outer London district which filled up with terraces for clerks and manual workers in the late nineteenth century. I was raised a mile or two further from central London, in Woodford Green: leafy but still on the London Underground network; keeping an Essex postal address after 1965 but split in administrative terms between two London boroughs. The Sawston of Forster’s writings distils into a single imaginative location various towns and districts which, like Walthamstow and Woodford Green, became residential zones for commuters in the second half on the nineteenth century thanks to the building of railways, but which differ from them by being further away from urban areas and on the whole wealthier. One feature of the English suburbs is minute levels of social gradation and variation.

What is a suburb? Places varying greatly in status and distance from the metropolitan centre have all been classified together as suburbs. If the prestigious hill-top Hampstead, known for the homes of artists and intellectuals and within walking distance of central

²⁴ Paul Peppis, “Forster and England” in David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007, pp. 47-61, here 51.

²⁵ See Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *The Public School Phenomenon, 1857-1977*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1977, pp. 201-4.

²⁶ Peppis, “Forster and England”, pp. 49-50.

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London, is a suburb, so is Walthamstow, and so is a town such as Tonbridge, 45 minutes from Charing Cross by train.²⁷ In an English context, a suburb could be defined as a district of single-family houses within commuting distance of a city, offering a limited amount of privacy and green space and home to neither the richest nor the poorest members of a given society.²⁸ The definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, by contrast, refers to land “immediately outside and adjacent to” the walls of a city,²⁹ and hence conjures up thoughts of the marginal areas around Elizabethan London where the theatres stood. Suburbs are created when people advance across existing urban boundaries, whether to try and grasp rural life while remaining within commuting distance of the city, to escape the danger and immorality perceived to characterize the inner city, or to escape the taxation of urban local government increasingly dominated by the interests of businesses and socially deprived groups rather than those of ‘respectable’ householders.³⁰

Created as escapes from crowded urban conditions, the London suburbs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were constantly threatened by a decline usually associated with multiple occupancy of houses intended for one family. Their position on the right side of an imagined boundary between the respectable and the unrespectable was rarely secure. In the words of H.J. Dyos and D.J. Reeder, “the compelling pressures of expansion caused ripples of obsolescence, which overtook places once dancing with buttercups and left them stale as cabbage stalks”.³¹ Forster’s Sawston is a world which seems in no danger of becoming as forlorn as the South London flats and lodging houses through which the Basts of *Howards End* move, in their wanderings “no one knew whither”.³² But there are suggestions of the

²⁷ F.M.L Thompson, *Hampstead: Building a Borough 1650-1914*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London & Boston, 1974; F.M.L Thompson, “Introduction: The Rise of Suburbia” in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Rise of Suburbia*, Leicester University Press: Leicester, 1982, pp. 1-25, here 19; *Borough Guide* 1919: 17.

²⁸ In North America, suburbs have tended to be more car-led and spread out than in Britain and most of Europe. See Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, Basic Books: New York, 1987, pp. 103-207; Edward Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape*, Croom Helm: London & Sydney, 1987; Richard Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain, 1780-1914* [1989], Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995, pp. 38-43; Roger Silverstone, *Visions of Suburbia*, Routledge: London, 1987; Thompson, “Introduction”; David C. Thorns, *Suburbia*, MacGibbon & Kee: London, 1972. The cultural geographers David Gilbert and Rebecca Preston (“‘Stop Being so English’: Suburban Modernity and National Identity in the Twentieth Century” in David Gilbert *et al.* (eds), *Geographies of British Modernity: Space and Society in the Twentieth Century*, Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2003, pp. 187-203, here 187-95) offer a useful summary of the debates over suburbia and the varieties of area which have been classified as such.

²⁹ OED2: *suburb* n. 1.

³⁰ The character of Wemmick in Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, created around 1860, provides an early archetype of the suburban Englishman.

³¹ H.J. Dyos & D.A. Reeder, “Slums and Suburbs” in H.J. Dyos & Michael Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, two volumes, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1973, vol. I, pp. 359-86, here 360.

³² *Howards End*, ch. XXX p. 183.

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possibility of decline in the street in Surbiton – unlike Sawston not a fictionalised place but one that appears on maps –, the suburb inhabited by the boy protagonist of Forster’s story “The Celestial Omnibus”:

His parents lived at the right end of it. After No. 39 the quality of the houses dropped very suddenly, and 64 had not even a separate servants’ entrance. But at the present moment the whole road looked rather pretty, for the sun had just set in splendour, and the inequalities of rent were drowned in a saffron afterglow.³³

Here, the subtle grading of houses means that some of the street’s inhabitants must be socially inferior to others. For a writer of a younger generation, Paul Scott, the “rigid class distinctions, the pretensions, aspirations, and ruthlessly enforced social codes” of the cramped and less prosperous London suburbs where he grew up enabled him to grasp colonial society in India the moment he saw it for the first time.³⁴ In parallel with this, it is important to remember the suburban connections of the narrow-minded and vindictive Anglo-Indians in Forster’s *A Passage to India*: places like Tunbridge Wells were filled with retired and on-leave colonials.

Victorian suburbs combined economic and moral considerations. They were chiefly the work of speculative builders seeking a quick profit. Land along main roads was built up in what later came to be seen pejoratively as ‘ribbon development’.³⁵ Such development at first consisted of larger houses and parades of shops. Behind and between such roads grew other suburbs, whose success or failure could be determined by things like their proximity to railways – it was good to have a station nearby but bad to be enclosed by railways – noxious smells, the soil and the air or perceptions of these, and aspects of chance related to the *laissez-faire* Victorian economy. A sudden economic downturn might mean that some newly built streets proved impossible to let as single-family dwellings and therefore acquired the stigma of multiple occupancy early on, so dragging down a whole neighbourhood. There has been much research into such ups and downs in different districts of what is now inner London.³⁶ The moral side is emphasised by the urban historian Richard Rodger, describing places closely resembling Forster’s Sawston. The evangelical Christianity of the Victorian middle classes, Rodger writes, was “a vigorous stimulus to suburbanisation”, leading to a

³³ *Machine Stops*, p. 30.

³⁴ See Hilary Spurling, “Scott, Paul Mark (1920-1978)” in ODNB.

³⁵ See David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, Reaktion: London, 1998, pp. 36-8.

³⁶ See R.J. Morris and Richard Rodger, “An Introduction to British Urban History, 1820-1914” in R.J. Morris and Richard Rodger (eds), *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History, 1820-1914*, Longman: Harlow, 1993 for an overview. Well-researched districts include Camberwell and North Kensington, both of which remained countryside until well into the nineteenth century but later became overcrowded urban zones.

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“cult of privacy” based in “hillside suburbs” where the moral and physical climate were both thought to be healthy.³⁷

There is a village called Sawston just outside Cambridge. Forster took its name as a label for a zone which is largely a composite of the non-fictional towns of Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells in Kent and which stands, throughout his early work, for stifling respectability, philistinism and hypocrisy, combined with numbing prosperity. The fourteen-year-old Forster moved to Tonbridge with his mother in September 1893, attending Tonbridge School as a day boy.³⁸ Five years later, they moved to Earls Road in Tunbridge Wells, three miles away.³⁹ By this time, Forster had completed his first year at King’s College, Cambridge, and his emotional and intellectual life was therefore less restricted by the family home and its immediate surroundings than at Tonbridge. Jeremy Tambling’s equation of Sawston with Surbiton – in Surrey, to the south west of London – seems to result from Forster’s use of Surbiton as a setting in “The Celestial Omnibus”.⁴⁰ The London terminus where trains for Sawston, the “suburb” of *The Longest Journey*, are caught is not mentioned, but in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* Sawston is unambiguously located to the south east of London in Kent by being placed on the Charing Cross line.⁴¹ It is “between Sawston and Charing Cross” on the train to London that Philip Herriton and Caroline Abbott discover that they share a feeling of alienation from their home town.⁴²

The history of Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells is one of a move from isolation in earlier centuries to close connection with London in the nineteenth century. The towns are in West Kent, on the edge of the Weald, the area between the North Downs and the South Downs whose soils were long too thin for cultivation and which were once, in folk memory at least, a “vast” primeval “expanse of oak wood”.⁴³ Royal Tunbridge Wells is today, with Battle, Crowborough and Heathfield, all in East Sussex, and is one of only four towns completely enclosed by the High Weald Area of Outstanding National Beauty, a zone in which

³⁷ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, pp. 40, 41.

³⁸ Furbank I, pp. 40-1; *Chronology*, p. 4.

³⁹ *Chronology*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Jeremy Tambling, Introduction in Jeremy Tambling (ed.), *E.M. Forster* [‘New Casebooks’], Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 1995, pp. 1-13, here 6.

⁴¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 3 p. 32. For information on the quadrant of suburbia to the south east of London, and particularly on the railways which connected it with uneven levels of convenience to central London in the nineteenth century, see J.M. Rawcliffe, “Bromley: Kentish Market Town to London Suburb, 1841-81” in Thompson, *Rise of Suburbia*, pp. 28-91.

⁴² *Where Angels*, p. 76.

⁴³ K.P. Witney, *The Jutish Forest: A Study of the Weald of Kent from 450 to 1380 A.D.*, Athlone Press: London, 1976, p. 1; see also Robert Furley, *A History of the Weald of Kent, with an Outline of the Early History of the County*, two volumes, Henry Iggesdon & John Russell Smith: Ashford & London, 1871-4, vol. I p. 26; Archibald Geikle, *The Weald* [1908], Haslemere Natural History Society: Haslemere, 1923, p. 34.

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development is today restricted, while Tonbridge sits on the northern border of this protected zone.⁴⁴ The greenwood is always elsewhere, it would seem: in the past, if not in a place far away or under threat.

Places selected by the “cult of privacy” identified by Rodger were felt by their inhabitants to be threatened enclosures. The immoral or unhygienic urban world imagined to exist beyond their boundaries could seem to be closing in on them. One way of understanding this is via fictions which imagined the destruction of prosperous, comfortable southern England. Between the late-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries, in precisely the era when Forster was active as a writer, several writers produced what Parrinder calls “apocalyptic fantasies portraying England’s future collapse”.⁴⁵ Parrinder’s description of this genre as “national allegory” is partially accurate but ignores its regional specificity to London and the more suburbanised parts of the South East: *this* part of England, not another, is the one shown returning to a rural or wilderness state.⁴⁶ Among such apocalyptic fantasies, William Morris’s 1891 *News from Nowhere* imagines Trafalgar Square filled with an orchard, Ford Madox Hueffer’s *The Soul of London* speculates that “hills, forests, and marshes” would sometime in the future “resume their sway” over the land now occupied by London, and John Wyndham’s 1950s *The Day of the Triffids* opens in “a southern suburb of London” later taken over by carnivorous plants.⁴⁷ Forster, indeed, placed his own hopeful vision of a return to “the greenwood” outside the Home Counties: the 1914 epilogue to *Maurice* is set in Yorkshire, not far from the districts associated with Robin Hood.⁴⁸

Tonbridge is a town dominated by its public school, while Tunbridge Wells is a spa town, a place of resort. In *Rural Rides*, William Cobbett listed “Tunbridge” among the resort towns inhabited by “tax-eaters”, the social parasites he compares to “body-vermin of different sorts”.⁴⁹ The springs of Tunbridge Wells are traditionally held to have been discovered in the

⁴⁴ East Sussex County Council, County Planning Department, *High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Statement of Intent*, County Councils of East Sussex, West Sussex, Kent & Surrey: [no place], 1988, p. 4. See the map of the region produced by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (“Regional Map of South East AONBs”). The other three towns are Battle, Crowborough and Heathfield, all in East Sussex.

⁴⁵ Parrinder, *Nation and Novel*, pp. 292-3.

⁴⁶ Parrinder, *Nation and Novel*, p. 301.

⁴⁷ William Morris, *News from Nowhere: Or an Epoch of Rest: Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance* [1891], Krishan Kumar (ed.), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995, p. 43; Ford Madox Hueffer, *The Soul of London: A Survey of a Modern City*, Alston Rivers: London, 1905, p. 35; John Wyndham, *The Day of the Triffids* [1951], Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1954, p. 25. On Wyndham, see also Patrick Parrinder, “The Ruined Futures of British Science Fiction” in Zachary Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002, pp. 209-33.

⁴⁸ *Maurice*, pp. 216, 223. One reason for siting the epilogue to *Maurice* here was the fact that Edward Carpenter lived in the neighbourhood: see Chuchichi Tsuzuki, “Carpenter, Edward (1844-1929)” in ODNB.

⁴⁹ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* [1830], G.D. Cole & Margaret Cole (eds), Peter Davies: London,

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early seventeenth century, when Charles I's queen Henrietta Maria camped there and drank the waters. They gradually became more fashionable after the Restoration, culminating in a "[g]reat period of residential expansion" exemplified by Decimus Burton's 1830s Calverley scheme.⁵⁰ Tunbridge Wells was above all a Victorian resort, and the atmosphere associated with it was accordingly less raffish than that of Regency Bath. In the twentieth century the image of Tunbridge Wells was of absurdly exaggerated respectability: the notion of 'disgusted of Tunbridge Wells', the stereotypically outraged conservative inhabitant of Middle England, was popularised by the satirical magazine *Private Eye* from the 1960s onwards.⁵¹

2.2.2. Trip to Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells, July 2006

My only visit to these towns was on a day when the heat built up slowly to become solid and intense. The train from Charing Cross still goes there: Tonbridge is a railway town, on a junction in the line and connected this way to Surrey, London and East Kent. By 1852, Tonbridge was already closer in terms of time to central London than a suburb such as Bromley, although the latter was less than half as far in terms of distance, because Tonbridge had a fast railway connection while Bromley – until 1878 – did not.⁵² Railway connections no doubt contributed to the success of the town's school in the nineteenth century.⁵³ Approaching Tonbridge School from the station involves climbing a hill along a shabby, slightly winding High Street. The social tone rises as you ascend.

An "E.M. Forster Theatre" had been built at the school, but the staff member I spoke to was sceptical about this particular distinguished Old Tonbridgian. He was after all famously dismissive about his schooling at Tonbridge.⁵⁴ In the school library, sifting through papers, I started to appreciate the intensely sporting outlook of the school during Forster's time there in the 1890s. This was the decade in which organised games became, in the words of Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy,⁵⁵ an "obsession" at English public schools which was "universal,

1930, vol. I. p. 30. Today's spelling of Tonbridge's name dates back to the coming of the railway in the mid-nineteenth century. The town on the Medway where the school is located and the spa town were not really yet distinguished from one another in Cobbett's day.

⁵⁰ John Newman, *The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald* [1969], Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1976, pp. 576-7.

⁵¹ See OED3: *Middle England* n. 2.

⁵² Rawcliffe, "Bromley", pp. 31-3, 39-40.

⁵³ The prospectus for Malvern College, which opened in 1865, placed "convenient access by Railway" alongside "bracing air, gravelly soil" and "pure water" among the things making a town "well adapted for an undertaking of this nature" (Brian Gardner, *The Public Schools: An Historical Survey*, Hamish Hamilton: London, 1973, p. 191).

⁵⁴ See e.g. E.M. Forster, "The Old School" in *Longest Journey*, pp. 350-2, here 352.

⁵⁵ Gathorne-Hardy, *Public School Phenomenon*, p. 145.

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all-embracing, and sometimes so violent that it seems a form of madness”. A headmaster at one public school had “to be restrained by force from watching matches because it was bad for his heart”, Gathorne-Hardy writes, a near-suicidal earnestness which recalls the death while rowing of a young man who is undoubtedly of the public-school class in Forster’s story “The Point of It”.⁵⁶ School magazines from the 1890s in the library at Tonbridge described inter-house and inter-school competition in a fervent tone. There were subtle differences of opinion between me and the member of staff I met. I liked the 1962 library building; she wished it could be pulled down. I made the mistake of saying that maybe the boys – “yes they are all boys”, I was told – misbehave in the library. She put me straight. “They are good boys”. She said Forster was precious, spoilt, and as a dayboy should have been looked after at home: what, she wondered, did he have to complain about?

I left with the impression that this place – Tonbridge School and Tonbridge the town – was not especially significant to Forster. He had been formed so much in the fourteen years with his mother before coming here; while attending the school he always lived with his mother rather than boarding; and then he lived 44 more years with his mother after leaving Cambridge. A comment about Tonbridge in the introduction to *The Longest Journey* which Forster wrote in 1960 seemed to sum it up: “I was neither very happy nor very unhappy there—a Varden who never got his ears pulled”.⁵⁷ Perhaps, however, this refusal to be bothered about the public school was itself a pretence. Forster wanted to be neither the man who looks back excessively fondly on his school days, nor the man who violently hates and rejects his school.⁵⁸ One thing remained consistent during the 73 years of Forster’s life after leaving Tonbridge: he was always, and in an English setting unmistakably, a public school man. Sympathy towards other social classes and political radicalism coexisted throughout his life with a view of himself as a gentleman.⁵⁹

I left the library. Behind the school buildings, there were enormous playing fields yellowing in the heat and spattered with children of both sexes. It was some sort of summer school for children of wealthy parents, who were being drilled by an earnest, sporty young man: “c’mon guys!”, he called out. Mothers – slightly less posh than their offspring judging

⁵⁶ *Machine Stops*, p. 120.

⁵⁷ *Longest Journey*, pp. xxiii-xxiv. Varden is the boy character in *The Longest Journey* who is violently bullied until he has a nervous breakdown.

⁵⁸ Illustrating these extremes, the educationalist and one-time headmaster of Shrewsbury School Jack Wolfenden (*The Public Schools Today: A Study in Boarding School Education*, University of London Press: London, 1948, p. 35) wrote of former public-schoolboys who harbour “an almost pathetic nostalgia” for their school chapel. The newspaper publisher Cecil Harmsworth King, on the other hand, claimed that he had known “unhappy days since then”, but “nothing could ever be so bad as Winchester” (quoted in Gardner, *Public Schools*, p. 24).

⁵⁹ A social status twice emphasised, once ironically and once more seriously, in Forster’s 1930 account read to the Bloomsbury Group of a visit to Rooksnest in Hertfordshire.

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from their accents – were arriving in 4x4s. The English still use a school like this to move up in class. There were good resources of course – photocopying, magazines and journals; all the boys had computers – but also the air of an eccentric, privately-owned establishment where the staff are not unionised. A slightly sour smell hung in the corridors. Perhaps it just felt forlorn because term had ended.

Next, I looked round Dry Hill Park, the adjacent district where Forster and his mother lived while he attended the school. Tourist guidebooks embody core understandings – clichés, even – of what a place is. An “official” guide issued by Tonbridge Urban District Council in 1919 referred to Dry Hill Park as containing the town’s “better class of residences”, as well as the school’s boarding houses, and as becoming “a paradise of sight and scent” every spring, thanks to the “bouquets of lilac and hawthorn, chestnut and linden” surrounding them.⁶⁰ In July 2006 they only seemed a wilderness of cooked red brick. The Forsters’ former home is now a private school for small children, and I was able to talk my way past a middle-class painter and decorator who seemed to know what I meant when I described the view from an upstairs window of this house, and my theory that it was the one described in the early attempt at a novel “Nottingham Lace”. As I walked back down the cluttered High Street to the railway station in breathtaking heat, the streets were filled with schoolchildren of different social classes, with different accents, on the penultimate day of school before the holidays.⁶¹ The train at the station for the two-minute ride to Tunbridge Wells waited on the platform for what seemed like an eternity; filled to the brim with children from varied schools, all the while more of them rushing down and throwing themselves on.

At Tunbridge Wells I seemed to be fighting the heat, first slogging up the hill to the town hall with the Union Jack flying, then passing “Trinity”, a nightclub occupying a former church designed by Decimus Burton in the 1820s to serve what the *Buildings of England* calls “suburbia’s beau ideal”, the Calverley Estate.⁶² From there, I crossed a windy dip and the London road, then a ridge-like heath of scorched pale yellow grass. Atop this was a vast Victorian hotel modelled on a French château in red-brick and stucco which resembled some of the buildings flanking Hyde Park in London or on the seafront at Hove.⁶³ This was a structure of a sort never built at Tonbridge. Having passed the hotel I stumbled into shade down a prosperous, nondescript suburban street to Earls Road. The house occupied by the

⁶⁰ *The ‘Borough’ Guide to Tonbridge and Tonbridge School*, Edward J. Burrow: Cheltenham, 1919, p. 26.

⁶¹ See Image 1.

⁶² Newman, *West Kent*, pp. 585, 577.

⁶³ See Image 2.

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Forsters there, number 10,⁶⁴ is semi-detached, closer to the road and smaller than their house in Tonbridge. On the way back, there was a sense of something burned out or wrecked about the place: some old cinema which had become a carpet warehouse; the narrow high street dropping into a valley flanked with chain Italian restaurants. I only discovered two years later that, in my fatigued anxiousness to reach the house Forster and his mother had lived in and then get back to the station again, I had gone in the opposite direction from the “kernel of the town”, its magnet for tourists, the Pantiles.⁶⁵

The places I visited in July 2006 were partially those Forster knew, partially something else. The staid gentility of Forster’s Sawston might be seen as giving way to the ‘octopus’ of unfettered development in a newly motorised South-East England between the two world wars,⁶⁶ then to a brasher world of metallic paint and credit cards today. Another way of viewing things would pay attention to a longer *durée*, to the relationship between pre-modern and modern structures.⁶⁷ In the case of West Kent this would mean thinking about the “peculiar system of land-tenure in Kent”,⁶⁸ gavelkind, which split land between all sons equally rather than keeping it together through primogeniture. This meant that this county had “relatively small lots” of land and a “lack of great parks”: conditions, in other words, which resembled those of suburbia before the railway made travel between Tonbridge and London something less long-winded than a drive by carriage of “half a day through [...] woods and heath”, in the words of Forster’s narrator in *The Longest Journey*, making it instead, like the Sawston of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, “within easy reach of London”.⁶⁹

In Sawston, physical networks such as railways are connected to nodes such as public schools within systems of power relations. Lefebvre’s account of space as something produced through human social relations is relevant here, as is Foucault’s claim that while “crisis heterotopias”, “privileged or sacred and forbidden places” intended for people undergoing terminal, transitional or taboo periods of life such as adolescence, menstruation or old age, have largely disappeared from the modern world, “the private secondary school, in its nineteenth-century form” is one of the “few remnants” of them to live on.⁷⁰ Thinking about the *longue durée* of West Kent is, finally, another way of thinking about the local

⁶⁴ *Chronology*, p. 6.

⁶⁵ See Image 3; Newman, *West Kent*, p. 582.

⁶⁶ Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 37.

⁶⁷ Interest in the *longue durée* is associated with French historians such as Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre and their followers in the Annales School of the 1930s and afterwards.

⁶⁸ Newman, *West Kent*, p. 36.

⁶⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 4 p. 42; *Where Angels*, ch. 1 p. 21.

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, “Different Spaces”, translated from French by Robert Hurley in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, Paul Rabinow (ed.), Penguin: London, 1994, pp. 175-85, here 179.

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particularity of places seen in sub-national – local or locational – context.

2.3. From Prep School to First Attempts at Fiction (1890-1901)

Between 1890 and 1893, Forster was an unhappy boarder at Kent House, a preparatory school in Eastbourne, recalling his years there in the first chapter of *Maurice*, written in October 1913.⁷¹ Here, he describes a walk on “downs” which include a “cliff” – Beachy Head near Eastbourne is famous – near “[t]he little watering-place” where Maurice Hall goes to school,⁷² and sketches a setting resembling the Sussex resort. Among a later generation of public school writers, prep school beginnings at a more prestigious school in the same resort town were described by Cyril Connolly and George Orwell in the 1930s, Orwell recalling a “barrack-like atmosphere” which largely prevented contact with “the town”, but within which occasional chaperoned walks on the downs were permitted.⁷³ Connolly referred to Orwell as the only authentic “intellectual” among the pupils when he was there, a boy who “rejected not only” the school “but the war, the Empire, Sussex, and Character”.⁷⁴ In so saying, Connolly positioned county alongside national and supra-national idols as something provoking rebelliousness in anyone thinking freely.

Eastbourne lies on the south coast of England, due south of Tunbridge Wells, and shares with the inland resort an atmosphere of stuccoed Victorian gentility. Cavaliero describes Eastbourne in some detail, calling it “an architectural illustration of the world in which [...] [Forster] grew up”:

The churches varied between G.E. Street’s lofty red-brick Anglo-Catholic St Saviour’s (where Mr Borenus in *Maurice* might have been a ‘Father’) and the spindly early Gothic of Decimus Burton’s Holy Trinity (Low Church, as was St Peter’s, Tunbridge Wells, attended by Miss Charlotte Bartlett), while All Souls, Italianate in appearance but evangelical by persuasion, was an enactment in brick and stone of the spirit of Philip Herriton.⁷⁵

Here, Cavaliero valuably brings together the architecture of somewhere that can actually be visited, with readings of Forster’s relationship with the same area. But imaginative analogies do not critique the world of Forster’s fiction (as he himself, from the point of view of his

⁷¹ Furbank I, pp. 33-8; Margaret Ashby, *Forster Country*, Flauden Press: Stevenage, 1991, pp. 87-91; *Chronology*, p. 51.

⁷² *Maurice*, pp. 2, 3, 4.

⁷³ Cyril Connolly, *Enemies of Promise*, Routledge: London, 1938, pp. 206-31; George Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys” [1947] in *The Penguin Essays of George Orwell*, Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus (eds), Penguin: London, 1984, pp. 416-52, here 429.

⁷⁴ Connolly, *Enemies of Promise*, pp. 212, 215.

⁷⁵ Cavaliero, *Reading*, pp. 15-16.

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own time, certainly did).⁷⁶ Lefebvre's insistence on the juxtaposition of historicised power struggles and the uniqueness of individual places could provide a means of developing such a critique without losing the sensitivity to individual places and Edwardian social nuances which are offered by Cavaliero.⁷⁷

In the opening chapter of *Maurice* the Eastbourne setting is perhaps merely sketched because, as J.H. Stape suggests,⁷⁸ Forster felt "exuberant" while writing it, perhaps because like Orwell he was largely kept separate from the town while at prep school. The chapter describes one moment in a life, the transition between childhood and adolescence, which is also the transition from one level of school in the English fee-paying system – the prep school – to the next. This is a place transition too because, having boarded there, Forster's Maurice Hall is about to move away from the resort modelled on Eastbourne. Here begins the conveyor-belt sense which recurs throughout *Maurice* of a life as it *should* be led. Orwell claims that one "ambition" of his prep school was "to train up pupils to win scholarships at public schools, above all at Eton", while Forster's Maurice Hall is expected "to do us honour at Sunnington", the fictional public school to which he proceeded.⁷⁹ It is the public school – a social space in Lefebvre's terms or a heterotopia in Foucault's – as heart of the English middle-class, rather than the geographical details of the town, then, which is central to the opening of *Maurice*.⁸⁰

There are mentions of life at Tonbridge in Forster's diary for 1898, the year in which he and his mother moved away from the town, and the mild, even-handed tone of these comments perhaps led his second biographer, Nicola Beauman, to conclude that Forster's time at the school had not been as unhappy as he himself claimed.⁸¹ Her view, however, directly contradicts Forster's own later testimony. In the earlier of these decades Forster stated plainly, referring to the title of a collection of memoirs entitled *The Old School*, that "I did not like mine".⁸² In 1963, turning down an invitation to speak at his old school on the grounds of age, Forster remarked unambiguously that "I certainly didn't like Tonbridge half a century or more ago".⁸³ Forster's 1898 diary entries, in so far as they relate to Tonbridge, tend to do so in a blandly positive way: "garden looked splendid; such a pity we are leaving

⁷⁶ See Blamires, *Twentieth-Century English Literature*, p. 43.

⁷⁷ See among numerous helpful discussions, Lefebvre's account of the planning and building of cities in the New World on grid plans from the sixteenth century onwards (Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [1974], translated from French by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1991, pp. 151-2).

⁷⁸ *Chronology*, p. 51.

⁷⁹ Orwell, "Such, Such", p. 420; *Maurice*, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 27.

⁸¹ Nicola Beauman, "Forster, Edward Morgan (1879-1970)" in ODNB.

⁸² Forster, "Old School", p. 351.

⁸³ E.M. Forster, [Letter to M.W. McCrum], 9 August 1963. Held at Tonbridge School.

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it” and “[w]e watched the O. T. [Old Tonbridgians] match again”.⁸⁴ He records in detail the prizes and exhibitions to universities awarded by the school that summer, indicating that he and his mother were still closely webbed into the Dry Hill Park way of life in which the school seemed the centre of the universe. But the pocket diary in which he recorded these remarks was not private like the later “Locked Journal”, but something semi-public that could easily have been stumbled across by Forster’s mother or another relative.

While Forster may indeed have had a romantic friendship with one or more of his Tonbridge fellow-pupils, and while he certainly records a lot of time spent with a boy called Edgar Nicolas in the summer of 1898, Beauman’s claim that Nicolas was specifically a model for the hero of Forster’s first sustained attempt at fiction – left untitled by him but called “Nottingham Lace” by its editors – written at Cambridge in 1900-1901, seems based on little more than a coincidence of first names.⁸⁵ There is, it is true, an artificiality in the 1898 diary which resembles that of Edgar Carruthers, protagonist of “Nottingham Lace”. Edgar is a sickly aesthete who spends his time not playing cricket but reading Walter Pater and A.C. Swinburne in his room, and so occupies the other side of the late-Victorian coin from the hysterically enthusiastic games-players of 1890s public schools. However, he cannot avoid reproducing the Sawston snobberies of the relatives with whom he lives there. Cornered in a greengrocer’s shop by the schoolmaster Sidney Trent, whose family seem socially suspect to Edgar’s aunt Mrs Manchett, the eighteen-year-old uses “his aunt’s weapons” to issue a social snub, sniffing “[p]ray do not trouble” when Trent offers to help carry some shopping.⁸⁶

“Nottingham Lace” has received virtually no critical attention.⁸⁷ It seems to have been abandoned by Forster in late 1901 during his first trip to Italy, on which he found fresher material.⁸⁸ The title proposed by its 1970s editors, Elizabeth Heine and Oliver Stallybrass, usefully foregrounds aspects of the story itself and of Forster’s Sawston more generally. Forty years after Forster began writing fiction, on the eve of the Second World War, Osbert Lancaster placed “Nottingham lace” among the features of the soon-to-be-extinct “ordinary cottage”:

⁸⁴ 1898 Diary, 14 June, 26 July.

⁸⁵ Beauman, *Morgan*, pp. 63-4. As a title, “Nottingham Lace” derives from the opening words of the story, Mrs Manchett’s appraisal of the curtains of the Trents, who are moving in opposite (“Nottingham Lace”, p. 1). Writing to Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson in December 1901, Forster (*Arctic Summer and Other Fiction*, Elizabeth Heine & Oliver Stallybrass (eds), Edward Arnold: London, 1980, p. viii) called it simply “the novel”.

⁸⁶ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 12.

⁸⁷ The critical discussions by Rosenbaum (S.P. Rosenbaum (ed.), *A Bloomsbury Group Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1993, pp. 76-7) and Furbank (I, pp. 73-5) are, to my knowledge, the only ones so far of “Nottingham Lace” other than by its editors.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Heine, “Editor’s Introduction” in *Arctic Summer*, p. viii.

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Soon, if our left-wing housing experts have their way, such interiors will have vanished for ever. The small tight-shut windows, the light from which is further dimmed by a barrage of Nottingham lace and a Maginot line of potted plants, will be replaced by a wide expanse of hygienic vita glass admitting buckets of light and air.⁸⁹

From the mid-nineteenth century, ‘Nottingham lace’ was a designation for machine-made lace, distinguishing it from hand-made. The label rapidly became pejorative:⁹⁰ factory-made lace was cheaper and, as outlined by Flora Thompson through the story of a village on the Oxfordshire-Northamptonshire border, this led to the decline of rural artisan lace-making.⁹¹ It was part of the flood of consumer goods which suddenly became available to a much broader segment of the population than ever previously in the Victorian period, and which – like cheap books – challenged the exclusivity that a former elite had marked by their possessions. To borrow Elaine Freedgood’s formulation, Nottingham lace is a “thing” of the sort readers of realist fiction commonly ignore because they pass it over thoughtlessly as a feature of detail which is empty of content.⁹² From the point of view of the Sawstonian – comfortably-off, philistine – family with whom Edgar lodges, it is a manufactured commodity with a geographical identity associating it with a manufacturing town situated in an indistinct but socially impossible Midlands or North of England.

The Manchetts of Forster’s “Nottingham Lace” wish to view themselves as members of such an elite, although it is they whom the young Forster chiefly means to satirise. Sidney Trent is found out by Mrs Manchett to be “the son of a draper in Newcastle”, a city whose “society” is “terribly mixed”, according to her, and although he has been to Cambridge this background makes her refuse to believe that he is to be defined socially as a gentleman.⁹³ The relationship of the Manchetts and the Trents in the Sawston of “Nottingham Lace” is ambivalent, though. “Sawstone [sic] existed through and for its school” and as a master there Trent is a member of a “close aristocracy, [...] treating with easy nonchalance those for whom they existed”.⁹⁴ The public school master retains a glamour for the undergraduate Forster which would be entirely gone from his mature account of the English middle-class educational system in *The Longest Journey*, written five or six

⁸⁹ Osbert Lancaster, *Pillar to Post: The Pocket Lamp of Architecture*, John Murray: London, 1939, p. 60.

⁹⁰ See OED3: *Nottingham* n. 1.c., especially the quotations for 1859, 1921 and 1967.

⁹¹ Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* [1939], Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1973, pp. 82-5.

⁹² Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2006, pp. 1-2.

⁹³ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 30.

⁹⁴ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 3.

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years later.

Regional identity is a feature of “Nottingham Lace”. The Trents have come “down south” from Newcastle, attempting “to take us all in”, Mrs Manchett thinks.⁹⁵ Their name and the “Nottingham lace” of the opening sentence, meanwhile, both hint at the industrial Midlands of England.⁹⁶ The Trents arouse hostility in genteel Sawston, the place names suggest, because they seem, as intruders from somewhere further north in England, incursions from the machine age. Trade produces wealth, and wealth produces gentility, but the trade origins of money need paradoxically to be obscured before it can become respectable. Non-fictional Tonbridge School and its fictional equivalent at Sawston in fact benefited from the machine age: it was the coming of the railway which enabled schools situated far apart to compete with one another. Mr Manchett in “Nottingham Lace”, finally, is a proto-Wilcox businessman who, like Philip Herriton in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, works in “town” and commutes up and down by train.⁹⁷

Nicholas Royle has argued that “relations between men” are at the centre of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*,⁹⁸ and while “Nottingham Lace” in a parallel way focuses on Edgar Carruthers and Sidney Trent, a spatial relationship is also important to the early story. This opposes a cloistered, claustrophobic society and a notion of the wild. A “black line of hill” known as “the Ridge” is visible from the back of the Manchetts’ house, which like that of the Forsters in Dry Hill Park looks away from the school. Geographically speaking, this Ridge relates to Sawston as the non-fictional greensand ridge does to Tonbridge. Showing Trent the view from his room Edgar comments that the “road [to the Ridge] is very bad [...] and the streams aren’t properly bridged”. “What’s beyond?”, Trent asks, and Edgar answers:

Oh I don’t know. Pine woods I believe. The other side, they say, slopes gradually. There are several villages beyond, but it’s all drained by another line of railway, and divides the country into two. Sawston people don’t see anything of the people beyond it.⁹⁹

In this world, railways are like rivers, with whole areas draining into them. The wild promise of the Ridge is not fulfilled, however. An outing there by a party of ten, attended by six servants, eventually takes place, an outing which recalls the “want of sprites” and “want of union” of the trip to Box Hill in Jane Austen’s *Emma*.¹⁰⁰ Those who go on these

⁹⁵ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 30.

⁹⁶ The Trent is the river which runs through Nottingham.

⁹⁷ *Where Angels*, ch. 1 p. 26; “Nottingham Lace”, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Royle, *E.M. Forster*, p. 9.

⁹⁹ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 49-53; Jane Austen, *Emma* [1815], Richard Cronin & Dorothy McMillan

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anticlimactic days out in both Forster and Austen do not, in leaving their house and gardens, escape the social boundaries which constrain them.

Some features of Sawston in “Nottingham Lace” are also found in Forster’s later depictions of comfortable suburban places like Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Weybridge. One is a piece of shorthand for the taming and socialising of the wild: asphalt. In “Nottingham Lace” Mr Manchett reveals to Trent that his increased wealth means he will “lay an asphalt terrace so that we can walk on it in all weathers”; in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* asphalt is a feature of both the English and Italian settings, the garden of the Herritons in Sawston being filled with asphalt paths while Philip’s feet sink “into the hot asphalt of the platform” as he gets off the train at Monteriano a few pages later; Rickie in *The Longest Journey*, meanwhile, is proved suburban by having taken “taken his first walk on asphalt”.¹⁰¹

These fictional suburban tracts are also alike in their repressed fear of humanity’s rawer or more exuberant side. In this the coarse and lively Trents of “Nottingham Lace” foreshadow the Italians of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and the Ansell of *The Longest Journey*. Sidney Trent points out to Edgar that the genteel Manchetts are constantly visible from the home of the Trents across the road, because “[t]hat drawing-room of yours has windows both ends and you show up more than you think”, and to illustrate this he makes “various contortions through the glass, supposed to be indicative of overwhelming fear”, aimed at his “kid sister watching us” from over the road.¹⁰² Mrs Trent, Sidney’s mother, cries “Oh Sid, what a row” as he bashes out Wagner on the piano “from memory”, he responding that “he was playing the music of the future and he would not give the family away before Mr Carruthers”.¹⁰³ All this anticipates *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, in which the wonder of both Gino and Monteriano is their shameless combination of bad taste and beauty: the towers of the medieval city “fresh papered” at their bases “with the advertisements of quacks”; the opera house “thoroughly done up, in the tints of the beetroot and the tomato”, where Gino wins Philip over.¹⁰⁴ In both “Nottingham Lace” and *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Sawston is defined by a frigid retreat from tastelessness. This very retreat, Forster implies, is in fact the essence of vulgarity. A gloss for such thoughts is provided by a fictional book, the “*Essays*” of Tony Failing in *The Longest Journey*.¹⁰⁵ There, Stewart Ansell, whose own family home has been “given unity” by “resolute ill-taste”, reads approvingly of “coarseness, revealing

(eds), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005, vol. III, ch. 7, p. 399.

¹⁰¹ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 20; *Where Angels*, ch. 1 p. 30, ch. 2 p. 33; *Longest Journey*, ch. 2 p. 21. In “Other Kingdom” (*Machine Stops*, pp. 45-67), there is a plan to lay asphalt paths in a once-wild wood.

¹⁰² “Nottingham Lace”, p. 13.

¹⁰³ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 29.

¹⁰⁴ *Where Angels*, ch. 8 p. 139, ch. 6 p. 107.

¹⁰⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 24 p. 195.

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something; vulgarity, concealing something”, while he sits in the epitome of vulgarity, a “side lawn” separated by a “thuya hedge” from the “small front garden” of Dunwood House, just before being confronted with the personification of coarseness, Stephen Wonham.¹⁰⁶ The vulgarity of Forsterian Sawston, it perhaps needs to be stated, does not consist in bad taste, but rather in excessive restraint and self-satisfaction.

Forster situates Sawston just below himself in terms of social class, and satirises it by showing its vulnerability to apparent trespasses by those from a still lower class. Forster’s narrative recognises the true value of the men from the sub-Sawston environments – the iconoclastic Sidney, with whom Edgar sets out “to build the sorry scheme of things anew”, and Gino, who underneath his “unpresentable” exterior has powerful feelings and a near-uncanny “knack of friendship”.¹⁰⁷ As a result, it is implied, trespasses such as theirs do not threaten Forster or his narrative persona.

2.4. “I and My Real Life Must Be Where I Live”: Sawston in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*

Sawston in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* exists in a bipolar relationship with Monteriano. This bipolarity is an example of what I have called the ‘spatio-textual’: it has to do with the internal, narratological arrangement of the book rather than with loco-referential, text-external aspects. Forster’s wish, not accepted by his publisher, was to entitle the novel simply *Monteriano*, suggesting the nature of the binarism; such a title would highlight what is other, what is travelled to, not what is already known and familiar.¹⁰⁸ This is a textual bipolarity, but exophoric reference to Italy *as real place* is at the heart of the novel. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is Forster’s most Italian novel. *A Room with a View* is much more a novel about England, and specifically Surrey: Italy merely occasions events. In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Sawston is a jumping-off point, and something secondary. Only two of this brief novel’s ten chapters – the first and the fifth – are actually set in Sawston, while the rest of the book is all set in Italy.

A reading of the place aspects of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* could be helped by

¹⁰⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch 17 p. 155, ch. 26 p. 213. Noel Annan (*The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics and Geniuses*, HarperCollins: London, 1999, pp. 188-9) attributes the distinction between coarseness and vulgarity to George “Dadie” Rylands, but Rylands did not become an undergraduate at King’s until after the First World War, suggesting instead that the observation was a King’s commonplace for a generation.

¹⁰⁷ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 34; *Where Angels*, ch. 2 p. 40, ch. 10 p. 153.

¹⁰⁸ The publisher, William Blackwood, vetoed Forster’s preferred title, and he chose *Where Angels Fear to Tread* from a list which Blackwood supplied. See Stallybrass, “Editor’s Introduction” in *Where Angels*, pp. 9-19, here 11-12.

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reference to the spatial triad proposed by Lefebvre.¹⁰⁹ On such a reading the Spatial Practices characteristic of Sawston in the novel might be fêtes, “bicycle gymkhanas”, ‘calling’ on one another and ‘visiting’ the poor; those characteristic of Monteriano might be vermouth in the “caffè”, and women not going out after dark.¹¹⁰ Guidebooks such as Baedeker are significant among the novel’s plans or Representations of Space, but so is Philip’s own idea of Italy, the one he has acquired on a trip there before the novel opens and embellished in his head thereafter, and which is challenged after his arrival in Monteriano to ‘rescue’ Lilia Herriton from her marriage to an Italian. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is itself a Representational Space in Lefebvre’s terms, an artistic remaking of space, as Masterman recognised in his review.¹¹¹

Three trips to Italy structure the book: first, that of Lilia and Caroline Abbott with, later, Philip in pursuit, a trip which continues for Lilia until her death at the end of the fourth chapter; second, that of the “rescue-party”, Philip, Harriet and Caroline, who return to Italy once the decision to bring Lilia and Gino’s baby back to England has been taken in Sawston by Mrs Herriton; and thirdly a trip in the past, Philip’s trip two years before the novel opens, during which “he absorbed into one æsthetic whole olive-trees, blue sky, frescoes, country inns, saints, peasants, mosaics, statues, beggars”.¹¹² Also structuring the novel are two railway journeys during which Philip and Caroline speak to one another more openly than usual, that between Sawston and Charing Cross half-way through the novel, and that with which it ends, as the train out of Italy approaches “the St Gotthard tunnel”, the symbolic boundary between northern and southern Europe.¹¹³ In a railway carriage, while Sawstonians such as Philip’s sister Harriet get struck in the eye with soot,¹¹⁴ Philip and Caroline have the chance to grow beyond their Sawston roots through encounters with members of other classes and thanks to a mobility which fosters franker, less circumscribed discussion. At the dénouement of the novel Philip explains to himself Caroline’s insistence that they leave the baby with Gino in Monteriano by thinking of “[t]hat conversation he had had with her last Christmas in the train to Charing Cross”.¹¹⁵ Another transgressive train in the novel is one across the Apennines. On it, Philip and Harriet share a carriage with “a hot lady, who told them that never, never before had she sweated so profusely”, thus violating Sawston proprieties and filling Harriet with disgust, but who then turns out to be the soprano coming

¹⁰⁹ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 31.

¹¹⁰ *Where Angels*, ch. 4 p. 65, ch. 3 p. 53. See also OED3: *caffè* n., which includes *Where Angels Fear to Tread* among its illustrative quotations.

¹¹¹ Masterman, [review of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*], pp. 52-5.

¹¹² *Where Angels*, ch. 4 p. 69, ch. 6 p.101, ch. 5 p. 70.

¹¹³ *Where Angels*, ch. 5. pp. 73-8, ch. 10 p. 153, ch. 10 p. 160.

¹¹⁴ *Where Angels*, ch. 6 p. 90, ch. 10 p. 160.

¹¹⁵ *Where Angels*, ch. 8 p. 130.

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to Monteriano to sing the main part in *Lucia di Lammermoor*.¹¹⁶

Forster was drawn to spaces that seemed liminal or “mixed”, to use the adjective applied to Newcastle by Mrs Manchett in “Nottingham Lace”.¹¹⁷ In *Maurice*, the title character contemplates suicide in front of his fellow commuters in a railway carriage and later has a “hideous experience” in another, when a fellow-traveller, “stout and greasy-faced, made a lascivious sign” at him.¹¹⁸ Railway carriages also feature in Forster’s “Notebook Journal”, kept during his novel-writing years, for example in an encounter with a working-class woman who told him on a train from Hunstanton to Manchester shortly after the publication of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* that her baby had died suddenly in a cold cottage.¹¹⁹

Speaking loco-referentially, the Sawston of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* seems more like Tunbridge Wells than Tonbridge. It is not built around an institution such as the school of “Nottingham Lace” or *The Longest Journey*. Instead, it is characterised by a society that is leisured and slow-paced. Caroline’s father could be a retired colonial of the sort frequently associated with Tunbridge Wells; she herself spends her time doing charity work – “good, oh, most undoubtedly good, but most appallingly dull”, in Philip’s eyes – and what seems unofficial social work as a “district visitor”.¹²⁰ The residential streets of this novel’s Sawston have “asphalt paths” and “turnings”, seeming to have been recently laid out: two such turnings separate Caroline and her father from the Herritons.¹²¹ The original for this fictional setting could be in either town, but the right-angles of the more extensive suburb surrounding Earls Road in Tunbridge Wells are perhaps what are suggested, not the ellipses near Dry Hill Park Road in Tonbridge. The environment of the Dry Hill Park district is described with minute enough accuracy in “Nottingham Lace” for the house of the Manchetts to be equated with that in Tonbridge occupied by the Forsters between 1893 and 1898, and for the clandestine meeting of Jack Manchett and Greta “Piggy” Trent to have its every footstep traced on a map of the neighbourhood as it exists today.¹²² The turnings and asphalt of Sawston in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* relate less transparently to real place than do the streets of “Nottingham Lace”, then.

The atmosphere, too, of this Sawston is subtly different from that of either “Nottingham Lace” or *The Longest Journey*. Although a seed-bed of hypocrisy, the Sawston of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is less threatening than that of either of the two in which the corporate

¹¹⁶ *Where Angels*, ch. 6 p. 90, ch. 6 p. 109.

¹¹⁷ “Nottingham Lace”, p. 30.

¹¹⁸ *Maurice*, ch. XVI p. 115, ch. XXXI p. 131.

¹¹⁹ “Notebook Journal”, 3 December 1905.

¹²⁰ *Where Angels*, ch. 6 p. 105, ch. 6 p. 102.

¹²¹ *Where Angels*, ch. 1 p. 30, ch. 1 p. 24.

¹²² “Nottingham Lace”, pp. 57-60.

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morality of a public school dominates. Caroline's father is not explicitly a silly and self-centred character such as Mr Woodhouse in *Emma*, but instead is drawn with only a couple of bare and suggestive strokes. He thinks that one "will get nothing out of Italy without paying", but while this could mean he is a materialistic philistine, it could also mean that he is astute, or could be simply a Sawstonian commonplace; Caroline finds that his "tricks and habits, after twenty-five years spent in their company, were beginning to get on her nerves", but readers cannot know if she is being fair to him here.¹²³

The Sawston of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is characterised by a suffocating domesticity which is hard to escape because of its cosseting comfort. It is not hateful in refusing to tolerate individuality, like the world of the public school as presented by Forster. Both Philip and Caroline are dominated by a parent of the opposite sex and the power of Philip's mother is the strongest characteristic of this Sawston. Philip's first trip to Italy leads him to believe that from this time on he will "either remodel Sawston or reject it".¹²⁴ Mrs Herriton, by contrast, believes neither "in romance, nor in transfiguration, nor in parallels from history, or in anything else that may disturb domestic life".¹²⁵ Although it lacks romantic appeal, Mrs Herriton's Sawston contains pleasure and familial warmth. Lilia finds herself missing the easy socialising she formerly enjoyed there.¹²⁶ Between his second and his third Italian trips Philip starts "to enjoy his mother's diplomacy": he is being seduced by his native environment.¹²⁷ Policy, diplomacy and negotiation, indeed, are another key set of words in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*.¹²⁸

Readers of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* have commonly recognized its place polarity, but sometimes failed to see what is specific to Sawston and what the two towns – perhaps surprisingly – share. Summers sees Sawston as epitomizing "the limitations of the English upper middle class": "[r]ich, clean, efficient, charitable, it is also narrow-minded, conventional, dull, and pretentious",¹²⁹ but while the adjectives in the first half of his contrast certainly distinguish Sawston from its Italian counterpart, the negative ones in the second could apply equally well to Monteriano. Gino and his friends take a narrow-minded view of

¹²³ *Where Angels*, ch. 5 p. 86, ch. 7 p. 119.

¹²⁴ *Where Angels*, ch. 5 p. 70.

¹²⁵ *Where Angels*, ch. 1 p. 23.

¹²⁶ *Where Angels*, ch. 4 p. 65.

¹²⁷ *Where Angels*, ch. 5 p. 80. The verbal similarity to "Nottingham Lace" (p. 12), in which Edgar uses "his aunt's weapons", is clear.

¹²⁸ This is perhaps appropriate in a novel set in a fictionalised version of a town considered the natural home of self-righteous empire builders as late as the 1960s. British films from that decade, *Lawrence of Arabia* and *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, mention the resort town as the natural or retirement home of intelligence officers. The plot and some of the themes of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* have much in common with that of Henry James's *The Ambassadors* (although the treatment is quite different).

¹²⁹ Claude J. Summers, *E.M. Forster*, Frederick Ungar: New York, p. 30.

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a wife's role in a marriage. Their conventionality consists in going to the Caffé Garibaldi and deriding nearby rival towns. The opera house at Monteriano is pretentious and Lilia is bored without Sawston's "bazaars" and "bicycle gymkhanas".¹³⁰

According to Lilia, the Herritons "lead Sawston society". The poor of Sawston appear in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* only indirectly: descriptions of Caroline as "district visitor" imply that there are poor for her to visit. It is because Caroline understands "little babies from long experience in a district" that she can handle Gino's.¹³¹ Mrs Herriton has a quasi-monarchic role both in relation to Sawston society, and as an agent in the narrative. She sends her representatives abroad with instructions, much like the off-stage Mrs Newsome of Henry James's *The Ambassadors*. Within this monarchic analogy, Lilia is a rebellious aristocrat and so, in thought at least, is Philip. Sawston, however, is not a world in itself as Monteriano is. The Italian town is comically, even mockingly, presented as its own little universe. The "three great attractions" of its piazza, "the Palazzo Pubblico, the Collegiate Church, and the Caffè Garibaldi" stand in a microcosm and macrocosm relationship for "the intellect, the soul, and the body".¹³² Musing on these three, Philip finds himself wishing he belonged "to a city, however mean". Here, then, is a difference. Monteriano, although small-minded and obscure, is itself a centre; Sawston relies on London. The poor are not to be seen at Sawston because they are hidden elsewhere in urban slums and agricultural labourers' cottages, yet they are part of the same system as the prosperous, a fact that Sawston half-knows but hides from itself. To this day, crimes associated with poverty such as robbery are far less frequent in Tunbridge Wells than elsewhere in the UK.¹³³ At Monteriano, by contrast, the poverty of all the inhabitants relative to the visiting Sawstonians is unashamedly revealed. Monteriano is a place of public display, if only the showing-off of Gino and his friends over "vermouth and little cakes" at the Caffè Garibaldi.¹³⁴ In the eyes of Philip and Caroline the Sawston against which they rebel equals "[s]ociety", and a society that seems "invincible" to Philip until his third Italian trip.¹³⁵ Bloomsbury Group associates such as Forster's friend William Plomer would, by contrast, see the comfortable life enjoyed by middle-class pensioners and legatees before 1914 in places like Tunbridge Wells as very far from invincible.¹³⁶

There is no absolute rejection of Sawston at the end of the novel: Caroline will stay there

¹³⁰ *Where Angels*, ch. 1 p. 27, ch. 4 p. 65.

¹³¹ *Where Angels*, ch. 7 p. 125.

¹³² *Where Angels*, ch. 8 p. 30.

¹³³ Anonymous, "Royal Tunbridge Wells", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Tunbridge_Wells (accessed 12 March 2009).

¹³⁴ *Where Angels*, ch. 3 p. 56.

¹³⁵ *Where Angels*, ch. 5 p. 77.

¹³⁶ William Plomer, *Double Lives: An Autobiography*, Cape: London, 1943, pp. 123-4, 158-9.

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and Philip will leave, if they keep to the plans they express while on the train out of Italy. As such, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* represents an intermediate point between *Emma*, in which the right marriage can put things straight in the Sawston-like society of Highbury, and the full-scale rejection of Sawstonian values to be found in Forster's later fiction. "A View Without a Room", the epilogue to *A Room with a View* which Forster penned in 1958, fifty years after that novel's appearance, saw the typical fate of the *rentier* middle classes as a departure from Sawston-like comfort. This epilogue imagines a married Lucy and George Emerson "becoming comfortable capitalists when World War I exploded [...] and spoiled everything".¹³⁷ I disagree with R.C. Trevelyan's view that Forster "should have contrasted Philip and Miss Abbott more with Sawston from the very beginning". But the late-1905 exchange of letters between Trevelyan and Forster contains suggestions about *Where Angels Fear to Tread* which do harmonise with my own place-led approach to it.¹³⁸ In fact, vital to Monteriano is its mundane side. Trevelyan observes, for instance, that Forster's novel is constructed from a range of "atmospheres". This is epitomized by the fact that Gino is neither a nobleman nor a picturesque peasant but the son of a dentist – "[f]alse teeth and laughing gas and the tilting chair at a place which knew the Etruscan League, and the Pax Romana, and Alaric himself, and the Countess Matilda, and the Middle Ages, all fighting and holiness, and the Renaissance, all fighting and beauty!", as Philip despairingly reflects on finding out.¹³⁹ The "terrible and mysterious" countryside around Monteriano disturbs Lilia despite being "not as wild as Sawston Park": not, this is to say, visually picturesque in a way she understands.¹⁴⁰ Monteriano, then, is in some respects surprisingly close to English suburbia.

Attributive uses of the place-name "Sawston" in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* such as "Sawston streets", "Sawston society" and "Sawston psychology" turn it into something like an adjective.¹⁴¹ The word "Sawston" is repeated often enough in the novel – 41 times – to become a sort of incantation. This comfortable world of "turnings" is both a representation of a particular place at a particular time – Tunbridge Wells around 1900 – and of a state of mind, the inertia which drags intelligent young people back to the comfortable world that nurtured them.

¹³⁷ *Room with a View*, p. 231.

¹³⁸ See *Where Angels*, p. 162.

¹³⁹ *Where Angels*, ch. 2 p. 37.

¹⁴⁰ *Where Angels*, ch. 4 p. 60.

¹⁴¹ *Where Angels*, ch. 2 p. 34, ch. 3 p. 50, ch. 5 p. 76.

2.5. Bogus Corporate Morality: Sawston in *The Longest Journey*

Forster and his mother left Tunbridge Wells in 1901, first for a somewhat nomadic life in which extended trips to Italy were interspersed with periods in temporary accommodation in London, then, in September 1904, for a house in Weybridge, Surrey, where they would stay for twenty years.¹⁴² Some aspects of the Forsters' life at Weybridge resembled that of the genteel Sawston Herritons of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, modelled on the inhabitants of Tunbridge Wells. Harriet Herriton sees "everything" at Sawston as including "the Book Club" and "the Debating Society"; at Weybridge, similarly, there was a literary society which Forster from time to time addressed.¹⁴³ But at Weybridge Forster and his mother were closer than before to London. Gradually, he became more famous and, by the early 1920s, younger writers such as Siegfried Sassoon were calling on him there.¹⁴⁴ Forster gradually came to use Sawston as a frozen shorthand for a negative sort of middle-class Englishness associated with his youth and increasingly left behind. By the mid-1920s, the focal points of his life had become London, rural Surrey and Cambridge. Tunbridge Wells seemed far away.

The Sawston of *The Longest Journey* is essentially an extended refinement of that in "Nottingham Lace". It is centred on the town's public school, which has a belief in corporate notions of duty and a suspicion of personal feelings. These attitudes are embodied in hymns and inter-house competition, recalling the Tonbridge of the 1890s. The housemaster Herbert Pembroke describes Sawston School as "the world in miniature"; the outsider Stephen Wonham eventually throws the phrase back at him as a demonstration of Sawston's hypocrisy.¹⁴⁵ Like the Sawston of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, that of *The Longest Journey* is prosperous – Rickie sees "plenty of money about," there – and close to London, but the Sawston of the later novel is harsher and more unambiguously an imposture.¹⁴⁶ Unlike Edgar

¹⁴² *Chronology*, p. 19.

¹⁴³ *Where Angels*, ch. 1 p. 27; Furbank I, p. 181.

¹⁴⁴ Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries 1923-1925*, Rupert Hart-Davis (ed.), Faber: London & Boston, 1985, pp. 48-9.

¹⁴⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 17 p. 157, ch. 19 p. 176, ch. 22 p. 186, ch. 35 p. 286. F.R. Leavis (*The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1948, pp. 62-3) argued that Herbert's emotional life showed him to be essentially a copy of Casaubon in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. In fact, he is considerably less of a caricature than this judgement would suggest.

¹⁴⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 31 p. 251.

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in “Nottingham Lace” and Philip and Caroline in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* who are themselves denizens of Sawston, Rickie in *The Longest Journey* only comes to Sawston as an adult and ultimately leaves it in disgust, never to return: Sawston is seen from the outside in Forster’s second novel. Rickie’s final contemplation of a return to it can only be seen as the possibility of a catastrophic failure in life, a possibility averted by his death on the railway line during his rescue of Stephen Wonham.¹⁴⁷

Criticism of *The Longest Journey* has been disproportionately concerned with its Cambridge aspects,¹⁴⁸ in concentrating on the earlier chapters which are set there while Rickie is a student, and in attempting to explain the novel in terms of the thought of G.E. Moore and Forster’s Cambridge friendships. The second half of *The Longest Journey* contains a great many passages and episodes which have received little or no critical attention in the past but which are illuminating on the topic of sub-national place.

The Sawston of *The Longest Journey* is on the fringes of suburbia, cushioned by its prosperity from a neighbouring world of rootlessness prefiguring the one inhabited by Leonard Bast in *Howards End*. Forster introduces the location of this Sawston by making its relationship to the suburbs unclear or ambiguous: “The Pembrokes lived in an adjacent suburb, or rather ‘suburb’—the tract called Sawston, celebrated for its public school. Their style of life, however, was not particularly suburban”.¹⁴⁹ Suburbia can be both geographic and to do with manners: it is possible to live in a suburb without being ‘suburban’ (the Pembrokes are richer or have better manners than the stereotypical suburbanite of upper-middle-class jeers, Forster means: it is the upper middle class that he means to attack, as Blamires recognised). As a “tract”, Sawston is a portion divided from what was once a larger expanse of land. Research by urban historians into the growth of Victorian suburbs has cast light on the “intricate mosaic” which appeared as private landowners developed parcels of land which were close together but intended for people from different social strata.¹⁵⁰ These tracts had a complex social status both unique to a particular locality and part of a bigger picture. Other suburbs are “adjacent” to the Sawston of *The Longest Journey*. The “needy” Silts, Rickie’s cousins with whom he stays during vacations while at Cambridge, occupy a subtly different position to that of the Pembrokes or the independently wealthy Rickie, while also being part of the same “mosaic”. One “style of life” which might have been considered

¹⁴⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 34 p. 282.

¹⁴⁸ Joseph Bristow, “*Fratrum Societati*: Forster’s Apostolic Dedications” in Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (eds), *Queer Forster*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1997, pp. 113-36, here 120-5; Elizabeth Heine, “Afterword” in *Longest Journey*, pp. 291-349; Rosenbaum, *Bloomsbury Group Reader*, pp. 226-58.

¹⁴⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 3 p. 32.

¹⁵⁰ Thompson, “Introduction”, p. 3.

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suburban by Forster or his narrator is a dislocated and nomadic existence associated by Forster in both *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End* with the word *modern*. This style can be detected in the claim of *The Longest Journey*'s narrator that the "ugly cataracts of brick" which "some commercial need" has caused to exist beyond the hill-tops surrounding Salisbury, and which ignore "the poise of nature" by looking outwards rather than at the cathedral, are "the modern spirit".¹⁵¹

During the Edwardian years, Forster believed that the "modern spirit" was characterised by spatial dislocation. In *The Longest Journey*, this can be detected in the dislodgement of both Stephen Wonham and the Thompson family of agricultural labourers from the environment of Cadover and in the move both make towards the metropolis.¹⁵² The suburban "style of life" can also be seen in the wanderings through social gradations "from one suburb to another, till he was among people more villainous than himself" of a hungry Stephen after Agnes tries to buy him off. From a down-at-heel district he passes into a more socially elevated one where "families, instead of sitting on their doorsteps, would sit behind muslin curtains".¹⁵³ Passages such as these indicate a type of movement – on foot, as a tramp – which is itself a type of use of a place.¹⁵⁴ They contain key Forsterian statements about real place, yet have not often been discussed.

Sawston in *The Longest Journey* is physically distanced from London but not outside the orbit of the metropolis. In *Howards End*, "the City's trail" reaches the coast at Bournemouth,¹⁵⁵ and the Sawston of *The Longest Journey* is in a similar way touched by London. When Gerald Dawes is dying in the football pavilion, Agnes sees beyond him out of the door that "[t]owards London the sky was yellow". This yellowness must be light pollution.¹⁵⁶ Sawston at times is foggy.¹⁵⁷ The fog of early-twentieth century Britain, before the Clean Air Acts of 1956 and 1968, was closely connected to industry and proximity to cities which contained tens or hundreds of thousands of coal fires. Fog sits in depressions, too, making them more physically distinct, quite literally murkier, than the positions atop

¹⁵¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 33 p. 270. My view is that statements made by a third-person narrator within a fictional frame are never straightforwardly the statements of the author in the same way that diary entries or letters, say, by the same author are. I further discuss the treatment of Salisbury of *The Longest Journey* in Chapter 7 below.

¹⁵² *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 246, ch. 34 p. 279.

¹⁵³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 245.

¹⁵⁴ The interest of literary intellectuals and the public in W.H. Davies's 1908 *Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* demonstrates that tramping, or at least reading about it, became an Edwardian fashion. See W.H. Davies, *Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* [1908], Cape: London, 1927; Frederick Page, "Davies, William Henry (1871-1940)" in ODNB. Forster himself went on several walking holidays in rural England during the first decade of the twentieth century.

¹⁵⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XIX p. 121.

¹⁵⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 5 p. 51.

¹⁵⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 16 p. 151.

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hills which were favoured by the wealthy and those attempting to sell more spacious houses on larger plots to them. Such a fact is further graphically illustrated by Charles Booth's maps of London in 1889 and J.M. Rawcliffe's of Bromley in 1960.¹⁵⁸ This position just beyond the edge of an expanding city is in Rickie's mind when he reflects, while becoming enmeshed in Sawston, that "[t]omorrow the fog might be here, but today one said, 'It is like the country'".¹⁵⁹ Finally, Rickie has to plunge into an "impalpable cloud" which has to be distinguished from urban fog – "[t]he suburb was now wrapped in a cloud, not of its own making" – in order to escape Sawston.¹⁶⁰

Clear social gradations are among the features of Sawston. One of its spiritual inhabitants – although actually resident in Wiltshire until turned out by the Silts when they eventually inherit Cadover – is Wilbraham.¹⁶¹ He, like Miss Carr-Davies in "Nottingham Lace", is intensely conscious of social distinctions: "all society seemed spread before him like a map",¹⁶² and he handles others accordingly, with "carefully graduated civility towards his superiors, towards his inferiors carefully graduated incivility". Late in the novel, Rickie situates Wilbraham alongside the Pembrokes among those "who try to rule our world".¹⁶³

Wilbraham's "map", with its conscious placement of everyone and its lack of a place for Stephen,¹⁶⁴ is related to the way possessions are treated at Dunwood, the second and larger home of Herbert and Agnes at Sawston, to which they move after Herbert stops taking care of the day-boys and gets a boarding house of his own. Everything at Dunwood, as Rickie recognises when he arrives at Sawston to become a member of its community rather than an "amateur", is characterized by "a certain decision of arrangement" very unlike the "jumble" of Rickie's rooms at Cambridge.¹⁶⁵ When he himself becomes a master at the school, Rickie also becomes able to map Sawston,¹⁶⁶ a change in his relationship to place which brings him closer to Wilbraham and Herbert. Under Rickie's new "official gaze" Sawston itself changes: "The school, a bland Gothic building, now showed as a fortress of learning, whose outworks were the boarding-houses. Those straggling roads were full of the houses of the parents of

¹⁵⁸ Charles Booth, *Descriptive Map of London Poverty* [1889], London Topographical Society: London, 1984; Rawcliffe, "Bromley", p. 63. An example from Booth's *Descriptive Map* is within his grid reference 10E: some streets to the south west of Vauxhall Bridge, enclosed by a gas works and the Goods Depot of the South Western Railway, which are indicated as markedly poorer than other streets nearby.

¹⁵⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 18 p. 168.

¹⁶⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 31 p. 257.

¹⁶¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 25 p. 285.

¹⁶² *Longest Journey*, ch. 11 p. 97.

¹⁶³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 34 p. 279.

¹⁶⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 12 p. 107.

¹⁶⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 17 p. 154, ch. 17 p.155.

¹⁶⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 17 p. 156.

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the day-boys. These shops were in bounds, those out”.¹⁶⁷ Rickie is a Sawston insider now, whereas Stephen’s wanderings through suburbs of different social levels, and his personal manners and relationships, combining gentlemanly and ungentlemanly elements, strongly contrast with mappings and distinctions such as those associated with Wilbraham and Sawston School.

A further aspect of the gradation and deliberateness of Sawston in *The Longest Journey* is that it compels people to wait rather than have what they want immediately. Delay of gratification has often been seen as a characteristic of bourgeois rather than working-class life: Max Weber argued that Protestantism encouraged immediate self-denial leading to long-term financial gain and that this, in essence, is the way that a bourgeoisie is created.¹⁶⁸ The religion of Forster’s Sawston, with its hymn-singing in *The Longest Journey* and the devotional practices of Harriet Herriton in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, is Low-Church, more Protestant, Anglicanism.¹⁶⁹ In *The Longest Journey*, when Agnes becomes engaged to Gerald, Herbert remarks that “[i]t will be a very long engagement, for he must make his way first”.¹⁷⁰ For Rickie, the pairing of Agnes and Gerald is by contrast “transfigured” in an instant when he sees them physically embracing. This transfiguration – also the name of the Biblical event in which Christ’s divinity became apparent to his followers – leads Rickie to believe that the fulfilment of physical desires as they are experienced is almost sacred. Here, Forster anticipates Lawrence. What can strengthen such connections is an understanding of the relationship between literature and real place, in this case between Sawston and Tonbridge.

Herbert, embodiment of Sawston, may advocate delays, but in so doing maims his own emotional life. Once, he had “been in love, violently in love, but had laid the passion aside [...] the proper thing to do, and prudence should have been rewarded”.¹⁷¹ When he comes to propose, however, needing a housemaster’s wife, he finds passion absent, perhaps “eaten by the rats”.¹⁷² Herbert cannot admit this to himself because of his creed of self-improvement. It seems impossible to him that he has “deteriorated” in any way since youth, but his tragedy, Forster means, is that he has done just this, by failing to seize the day. Again, the anti-

¹⁶⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 17 p. 155.

¹⁶⁸ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1905], translated from German by Talcott Parsons, Dover: Mineola, NY, 2003.

¹⁶⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 26 p. 207, ch. 26 p. 210, ch. 26 p. 222; *Where Angels*, ch. 5 p. 84.

¹⁷⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 9 p. 84.

¹⁷¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 16 p. 149.

¹⁷² The claim by Leavis (*The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1948, pp. 62-3) that Herbert’s emotional life effectively plagiarises that of Casaubon in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* seems unfair: Forster knew enough about the Anglican clerical class to reach his own conclusions about its members’ mentalities.

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Sawstonian Stephen offers the contrast. His drinking habits are seen ambivalently by the authorial narrator, who sometimes seems a “milk-sop” like Rickie or is condemnatory like Agnes.¹⁷³ Drunkenness involves a seizure of the moment, though. It is the powerful and genuine feelings Stephen experiences near the end of the novel hearing that the Thompsons have been turned out which drive him to break the pledge of abstinence he has taken in Rickie’s presence.

The “impalpable” cloud through which Rickie eventually escapes from Sawston is associated with a notion of “civilization”.¹⁷⁴ Rickie comes to see Sawston as a “civilization” characterized by several “watchwords”: “‘Organize’, ‘Systematize’, ‘Fill up every moment’, ‘Induce *esprit de corps*’”.¹⁷⁵ These are words which ignore “personal contest, personal truces, personal love” and so, in the view of both Rickie and Forster himself, degrade Sawston. It is possible to imagine Herbert using the same words in instructing Rickie how to deal with the boys. Forster does not claim that Sawston is barbaric, though, and in this respect he is moving away from nineteenth-century Hellenism both of an Arnoldian and a more aesthetic sort towards the notion that humanity can be saved by a rejection of civilization, by an embrace of the earth or the body. Rickie’s father represents the Aesthetic Movement of the 1870s and 1880s, the other side of late-Victorian England from that of Sawston. He has friends who think that “‘seeing life’” is encapsulated in “tales of naughty London and naughtier Paris”,¹⁷⁶ and he is presented less sympathetically than any other character in *The Longest Journey*.

The Longest Journey is divided into three sections, which bear the titles of its three symbolic places, “Cambridge”, “Sawston” and “Wiltshire”. All three, crucially, both relate to real place and represent components of the human spirit, or snares with the potential to trap it. In this latter, symbolic dimension, the three sites of *The Longest Journey* resemble the places of an earlier Protestant literature which, though originating in southern England, lacked the specific reference to real place that abounds in Forster’s work: the places found in Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* and John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. As words, the

¹⁷³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 243, ch. 34 p. 280. This view of Stephen is not straightforwardly Forster’s own, although expressed by a third-person narrator rather than a character. Speaking as himself, Forster would never have pontificated on someone’s drinking habits in precisely *the way* that the narrator of *The Longest Journey* does on Stephen’s, for fear of sounding pompous – of, as he might have put it, seeming to be a prig. The allusion in *Howards End* to Meredith’s *Modern Love* in connection with Leonard Bast’s avoidance of alcoholic oblivion demonstrates that the narrative voice of that novel is a more exaggerated version of the one found in *The Longest Journey* (*Howards End*, ch. XLI, p. 226). Readers who see either as Forster ‘himself’ are mistaken, in my view. He never wrote essays, lectures or letters in the tone of voice these narrators use.

¹⁷⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 31 p. 257.

¹⁷⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 33 p. 270.

¹⁷⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 29 p. 234.

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three title places of *The Longest Journey* can function like a musical chord or theme. Rickie reflects at one point, for example, that six months earlier “he was at Cambridge, idling in the parsley meadows, and weaving perishable garlands” whereas “[n]ow he was at Sawston preparing to work a beneficent machine”.¹⁷⁷ At another, we hear that Agnes “had turned Stephen out of Wiltshire, and he fell like a thunderbolt on Sawston and herself”.¹⁷⁸

The three places of the book could, it is true, be read as projections of Rickie’s own world-view. In a passage closely related to one by Lytton Strachey in his memoir “Lancaster Gate” announcing that a belief in the significance of “the proportions of a bedroom, for instance,” is one of the characteristics of Strachey’s own generation,¹⁷⁹ Rickie is said to have been:

extremely sensitive to the inside of the house, holding it an organism that expressed the thoughts, conscious and subconscious, of its inmates. He was equally sensitive to places. He would compare Cambridge with Sawston, and either with a third type of existence, to which, for want of a better name, he gave the name of ‘Wiltshire’.¹⁸⁰

Strachey’s whole memoir is a sensing of its author’s London childhood home comparable to the sense of place which Rickie has developed from feelings associated with particular buildings. But the three symbolic places of *The Longest Journey* are more than just representations of Rickie’s thoughts. Each section contains scenes set in one or more of the other two symbolic places, but each section also has a specific atmosphere of its own, evoked, respectively, in the dell of “Cambridge”, in the fog and the lobelias of “Sawston”, which Stephen rips from the earth of a “pie-shaped” flowerbed and flings at Ansell, and in the motif of Stephen sleeping out of doors which is part of “Wiltshire”.¹⁸¹

Each section also has a representative man. “Cambridge” has Ansell, “Sawston” Herbert and “Wiltshire” Stephen. When these men move out of the place they represent they take something of it with them. Ansell, for instance, brings some of the Cambridge independence of spirit to the “ugly little town” in which his father’s draper’s shop is situated and to which he retreats after he failing to win a Cambridge fellowship.¹⁸² Women are not representative of place in the same way. Rickie’s mother is left stranded in a “remote suburb” by his hedonistic, selfish father before the main action of the book begins, yet she is not suburban in spirit.¹⁸³ Harder, more materialistic, and less deluded, Agnes is – in a subtly different way –

¹⁷⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 16 p. 153.

¹⁷⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 32 p. 260.

¹⁷⁹ Lytton Strachey, “Lancaster Gate” in S.P. Rosenbaum (ed.), *A Bloomsbury Group Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1993, pp. 344-54, here 345.

¹⁸⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 17 p. 155.

¹⁸¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 2 p. 18, ch. 7 pp. 70-4, ch. 26 p. 208, ch. 30 p. 241, ch. 35 pp. 287-9.

¹⁸² *Longest Journey*, ch. 33 p. 263.

¹⁸³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 29 p. 234.

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as Sawstonian as her brother Herbert. But she also has a spiritual connection with Mrs Failing of Cadover in Wiltshire, who begins by appearing unconventional yet later decides that “[w]e are conventional people, and conventions—if you will but see it—are majestic in their way, and will claim us in the end”.¹⁸⁴ So it is the male association with place that seems most direct. A man becomes what he is through his connections with a certain place or his departure from one place for another. The “gulf” between the foreman under whom Stephen works at the London removals firm and Rickie’s father is “social, not spiritual”, Forster emphasises. The two share a “pert and shallow” intellect which is doomed to die out, as indeed Mr Elliot’s line does with Rickie; “both spent their lives in trying to be clever”.¹⁸⁵ In place terms, both are representatives of London. Indeed, this novel suggests that social class is not real, but something imposed by the likes of Mr Wilbraham, or of Miss Carr-Davies in “Nottingham Lace”.

Other features of the Sawston of *The Longest Journey* become more clear when reference to real place in the novel is compared with the records and histories of Tonbridge School. The urban historians Dyos and Reeder list among the key reasons for the growth of suburbs in the nineteenth century, “transport developments, emulation of upper-class living, the emergence of privacy and domesticity as values reinforcing segregation, architectural fashion, and minimum threshold size of towns beyond which specialized zones develop”.¹⁸⁶ Dyos and Reeder demonstrate that Victorian slums and affluent suburbs, far from being opposed to one another, were actually close relatives, so close that the suburb relied on the slum for its very existence. The existence of slums, they claim, supported an “argument for the economy of low wages, and one of their practical functions was therefore to underpin Victorian prosperity”.¹⁸⁷ There are parallels between this view of nineteenth-century England and that found in Dickens’s *Bleak House*. The slum of Tom All-Along’s, based on real London slums known as “fever nests” in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane,¹⁸⁸ is there demonstrated to be connected to the highest levels of society. The view of nineteenth-century urban and suburban development taken by Dyos and Reeder as something relative and in

¹⁸⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 34 pp. 275-6.

¹⁸⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 246.

¹⁸⁶ Dyos & Reeder, “Slums and Suburbs”. Although dating from the 1970s, this analysis had “not been surpassed” by the 1990s, according to Morris & Rodger (“Introduction to British Urban History”, p. 23).

¹⁸⁷ Dyos & Reeder, “Slums and Suburbs”, p. 361.

¹⁸⁸ On typhus in the slums of Victorian London see Anne Hardy, “Urban Famine or Urban Crisis? Typhus in the Victorian City” in Morris & Rodger, *Victorian City*, pp. 209-40, here 221. A powerful insight into the Victorian – or more generally modern – relationship between an apparently genteel surface and a “sordid, hidden reality beneath” is Lionel Trilling’s remark (*The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* [1948], Viking: New York, 1951, p. 211) that what matters in Dickens’s *Great Expectations* is “the hulks and the murder and the rats and decay in the cellarge of the novel”.

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constant change is persuasive. “[L]anded wealth” in nineteenth century England, they write, was “drawn [...] increasingly [...] from urban revenues”.¹⁸⁹ As Rodger writes, the financial clout of middle-class Victorians “itself contributed to precisely those living conditions from which they fled by deriving a rentier income from slums, by reinvesting business profits to the exclusion of environmental improvement, and crucially, by diverting housing investment to the suburbs.”¹⁹⁰

Sawston in *The Longest Journey* needs to be understood in Rodger’s terms as parasitical on unseen poorer areas. Tonbridge School was a beneficiary of the spectacular rise in income experienced in the nineteenth century by owners of land on what was then the edge of London. Since the sixteenth century the school had owned property in rural Middlesex. This was on land to the east of the land owned by the Dukes of Bedford which in time became Bloomsbury, and to the south of what is now the Euston Road, built in the eighteenth century to connect newer residential suburbs further west with the City of London.¹⁹¹ In the 1780s, it was still fields, but the value of this land rose with London’s expansion and streets were built on it, among them Tonbridge Street and Judd Street.¹⁹²

In 1891, Booth recorded that the locality of Kings Cross had the fifth highest proportion among all London districts of its inhabitants, over 55 per cent, living in what he defined as poverty, and was the seventh most densely populated locality in the capital.¹⁹³ By 1898, although “vicious spots” remained, Booth reported “sweeping changes” resulting from “the clearance of bad property; but with the usual result that while part of the old residents have left, others cling to the neighbourhood, and, by moving, have blackened some of the adjoining streets”.¹⁹⁴ It was from this impoverished neighbourhood that Tonbridge School drew most of its endowment at the time Forster was a pupil there.¹⁹⁵ The school tried to help improve the district as well as profiting from it: in the 1880s it established a Mission in the Judd Street district, later known as a boys’ club.¹⁹⁶ But the School historian D.C. Somervell in 1947 wrote of its poverty in the present tense and with some embarrassment. The area was

¹⁸⁹ Dyos & Reeder, “Slums and Suburbs”, p. 370.

¹⁹⁰ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p. 42.

¹⁹¹ Septimus Rivington, *The History of Tonbridge School from its Foundations in 1553 to the Present Date*, Rivingtons: London, 1898, p. 70.

¹⁹² Judd Street was named after Tonbridge School’s Founder, the Tudor Russia merchant and Lord Mayor of London Sir Andrew Judde (see Paul Slack, “Judde, Sir Andrew (c.1492-1558)” in ODNB).

¹⁹³ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London: First Series: Poverty. 2. Streets and Population Classified*, Macmillan: London, pp. 36-7.

¹⁹⁴ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London. Third Series: Religious Influences. 2. London North of the Thames*, Macmillan: London, 1902, p. 169.

¹⁹⁵ D.C. Somervell, *A History of Tonbridge School*, Faber: London, 1947, p. 95. Somervell himself taught at Tonbridge for over thirty years.

¹⁹⁶ Somervell, *History of Tonbridge School*, p. 95.

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partially slum almost until the end of Forster's writing career.¹⁹⁷

Part of Forster's enrichment and complication of his fictional public school's history in *The Longest Journey* is an oblique reference to this district of London. Two things, readers are told, led to the transformation of Sawston School in the nineteenth century, one its emission of "a quantity of bishops", the other the fact that "the school's property rose in value, and it became rich".¹⁹⁸ The wealth of Sawston, and the hardness of its representatives Herbert and Agnes over matters of money, is significant in the novel. The slums of Judd Street, in other words, implicitly shadow the Sawston of *The Longest Journey*.

Forster, Peter Burra asserted in the 1930s, never "deliberately" wrote a "novel with a 'purpose'" in the Dickensian manner.¹⁹⁹ This may be, but *Howards End* can be read as a direct descendant of Victorian fiction, a 'condition of England' novel, one "with a programme, just as Disraeli's had been", to quote Parrinder.²⁰⁰ *The Longest Journey*, too, like the work of Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Samuel Butler and George Gissing, examined and critiqued social problems specific to the society in which it was written. Rickie's earlier education was at a "great public school". Stephen, Mrs Failing tells Agnes, has been "expelled from a public school"; the narrator then intercedes to point out that Stephen's school "was not a public one".²⁰¹ English schools for the middle-classes in the late-nineteenth century are thus ranged in a manner comparable with the account of them given by historians, in which the Clarendon and Taunton Commissions of the 1860s defined major and minor public schools, and grammar schools became establishments for the rich by taking paying boarders.²⁰²

Forster, however, avoids the bold clarity of his Victorian predecessors in depicting these social distinctions.²⁰³ Rickie, unlike his creator and unlike Edgar and the Manchett boys in "Nottingham Lace", was a boarder: "I don't like being branded as the 'day-boy's foe' when I think how much I would have given to be a day-boy myself. My father found me a nuisance,

¹⁹⁷ Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner (*London 4: North* ['The Buildings of England'], Penguin: London, 1998, pp. 331, 330) document the area's change between the late-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries from one of "run-down and overcrowded terraces" to one characterised by "planned working-class housing".

¹⁹⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 4 p. 42.

¹⁹⁹ Peter Burra, "The Novels of E.M. Forster", *Nineteenth Century & After* 116 (1934), p. 583.

²⁰⁰ Parrinder, *Nation and Novel*, p. 300.

²⁰¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 1 p. 5, ch. 11 p. 104.

²⁰² Gillian Sutherland, "Education" in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, three volumes, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990, vol. III, pp. 119-69, here 134-5, 146-7.

²⁰³ Forster also drew on his experiences at Tonbridge in making the Sawston of *The Longest Journey* a place of *arriviste* sporting philistinism. The fictional school, for example, aspires to compete with more famous schools at the expensive sport of rackets; 1890s Tonbridge, like Sawston School, built itself a rackets court (*Longest Journey*, ch. 4 p. 45; see Barry Orchard, *A Look at the Head and Fifty: A History of Tonbridge School*, James & James: [n.p.], [n.d.], p. 53).

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and put me through the mill, and I can never forget it, particularly the evenings”.²⁰⁴ Rickie’s becomes Herbert’s accomplice in, as Stephen puts it, foisting “[s]ham food, sham religion, sham straight talks” on the boys of the boarding house, and this happens because he was himself mistreated at a boarding school.²⁰⁵ Forster in *The Longest Journey* hesitates to recommend public, corporate action like that of Royal Commissions led by aristocrats: reform of the sort Victorian radicals wanted, that is. Throughout his life he would waver between a belief in governmental measures aimed at removing poverty, a belief which later led him to join the Labour Party, and a more non-interventionist liberalism.

Forster’s statement that Sawston School “aimed at producing the average Englishman” refers to an average within the pre-First-World-War upper-middle class, an average within an elite.²⁰⁶ Sawston School is not a place for peers’ sons nor, any longer, is it a place for “the poore” of its founder’s home town.²⁰⁷ Examining the subsequent careers of boys entering Tonbridge in the same term as Forster, Michaelmas 1893, and for the terms on either side – Summer Term 1893 and Lent Term 1894 – enables comparisons to be drawn between it and Sawston. Among the 54 who entered with Forster only one became an Anglican clergyman, one an academic, one a schoolmaster, and there were no future barristers.²⁰⁸ This is in contrast with the products of King’s at the same time, among whom careers at the bar and in the higher-status branches of education were those most commonly followed in around 1900.²⁰⁹ Careers which were fairly common for both Tonbridgians and Kingsmen of the 1890s were medical doctor and work in India of one sort or another: the survey of Tonbridgians conducted by H.D. Furley in the late 1940s indicates six of the former and eight of the latter, including military, civil servants, and businessmen. There were ten regular army officers from the Michaelmas 1893 Tonbridge intake, while as many as seventeen appear to have made their careers outside Britain, usually emigrating to farm or following a colonial career in public service. The picture is confirmed by the lists for the previous and following terms, on which one barrister and one ordained schoolmaster feature, but 22 out of 55 are recorded as being in business of one sort another, including accountants, stockbrokers and partners in family firms.

Forster’s classmates, then, turned into stolid suburban Englishmen such as Maurice Hall

²⁰⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 18 p. 169.

²⁰⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 35 p. 286.

²⁰⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 4 p. 43.

²⁰⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 4 p. 42. Brian Gardner (*Public Schools*, p. 81) concludes that Tonbridge School was “intended for the sons of gentry, both local and from London” from the sixteenth century onwards, and never really catered for the poorer local boys.

²⁰⁸ H.D. Furley (ed.), *The Register of Tonbridge School from 1861 to 1954 with a List of Head Masters and Second Masters from the Foundation of the School*, Rivingtons: London, 1951, pp. 226-35.

²⁰⁹ L.P. Wilkinson, *A Century of King’s: 1873-1972*, King’s College: Cambridge, 1980, p. 161.

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appears to be in *Maurice*, and into the people described as denizens of the Club at Chandrapore in *A Passage to India*. They seemed average to him, because they did the ordinary or ‘normal’ things Tonbridgians did. At the same time, in *The Longest Journey*, Forster – like Ansell in his relationship with Agnes – refuses to admit the reality of this “average” world. At Sawston, Rickie finds himself in “a cloud of unreality”; the world Agnes has “created for him there” is said by the narrator to have been “unreal”.²¹⁰ Accordingly, Ansell seems quite literally unable to see Agnes, an inability which might at first seem an undergraduate pose but which gains in force as the novel progresses. Ultimately, the world of Sawston is made to bow down before Ansell, Stephen and the earth. Some might condemn the ending of *The Longest Journey* as a fantasy. But the First World War, a few years afterwards, made Forster and many of his fellow intellectuals feel that it was not corporeality or personal relations which had been destroyed, but the ideological world of the public school with its fantasies of corporate perfection, which had been destroyed.

2.6. Later Edwardian Suburbias: “The Celestial Omnibus” and *A Room with a View*

Depictions of specific parts of the suburbia of the Home Counties appear in a short story and a novel which were published shortly after *The Longest Journey*. In these two items, “The Celestial Omnibus” and *A Room with a View*, Forster hymns a lush, bittersweet Edwardian England, perhaps with the sun setting behind it. The story and the novel were both first published in 1908.²¹¹ Their world has its setting at Tunbridge Wells and is one in which “iced coffee and meringues” are in plentiful supply.²¹² Writing in the 1940s Orwell described the Edwardian era as one that emitted “a smell of the more vulgar, un-grown-up kind of luxury, a smell of brilliantine and crème de menthe and soft-centred chocolates – an atmosphere, as it were, of eating everlasting strawberry ices on green lawns to the tune of the Eton Boating Song”.²¹³ This view of the past, remembered from childhood and reconstructed by Orwell, echoes the atmosphere of *A Room with a View*.

A related atmosphere, very Edwardian as well, is that of Forster’s earlier short stories, described by Cavaliero as attempts to transcend through sharpened writing a “feeble literary

²¹⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 19 p. 176, ch. 23 p. 188.

²¹¹ E.M. Forster, “The Celestial Omnibus”, *Albany Review* 2 (1908), pp. 459-75; see also *Bibliography*, p. 125 (C27).

²¹² *Room with a View*, ch. 3 p. 52.

²¹³ Orwell, “Such, Such”, p. 441.

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tradition” of “whimsy, full of shimmering pink and white”, which yet contain an “evasively erotic” element.²¹⁴ As Cavaliero points out, this tradition is best known to subsequent decades from J.M. Barrie’s character Peter Pan. But whereas Barrie’s fictional Darling family live in Kensington, the family of “The Celestial Omnibus” live in Surbiton. This particular setting seems to have been chosen by Forster to epitomise the suburban ordinariness perhaps suggested by its very name. The boy’s home is “Agathox, 28 Buckingham Park Road, Surbiton”:²¹⁵ subtly socially inferior, Forster implies to a snobbish 1908 magazine audience, in that it contains both a number and a name and so indicates a pretentious villa in a street of other such houses. This identification of the setting informs readers, at the opening of the story, that they are in the middle of mid-level suburbia, so as to intensify the contrast between this and the extraordinary fantasy of “a rainbow [...] compounded not of sunlight or storm but of moonlight and the spray of the river” over which the omnibus of the title later rides.²¹⁶

In these portraits of Surbiton and Tunbridge Wells as a slightly more absurd, slightly more relaxed relation of Sawston, music and the arts are significant. Mr Bons in “The Celestial Omnibus” presides over a literary society at Surbiton which resembles the one Forster himself addressed at Weybridge, and boasts of his collection of editions of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poems.²¹⁷ Lucy is first spotted by Mr Beebe in *A Room with a View* as a performer in “one of those entertainments where the upper classes entertain the lower”, in which “the ladies and gentlemen of the parish, under the auspices of their vicar, sang, or recited, or imitated the drawing of a champagne cork”. These suburban echoes or unintentional parodies of the worlds of letters, music and drama themselves anticipate the “amateur orchestra” which epitomises the English to Aziz, hearing it alone in the mosque before the arrival of Mrs Moore in *A Passage to India*.²¹⁸ They contain signs of cultural degeneration, perhaps, but these 1908 visions of suburbia also contain an appreciation of delightful absurdities.

A study of literary place needs to be able to distinguish Surbiton from Kensington. Six miles apart, the two have distinct histories. Kensington was the epitome of the respectable inner London suburb throughout the period between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century. Next to the Park, it contained an earlier royal palace and occupied the road between Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. Among earlier inhabitants, Leslie Stephen was raised there when one “could stroll through country lanes and [...] deer nibbled the grass

²¹⁴ Cavaliero, *Reading*, p. 38.

²¹⁵ *Machine Stops*, p. 29.

²¹⁶ *Machine Stops*, p. 42.

²¹⁷ *Machine Stops*, pp. 29, 30.

²¹⁸ *Passage to India*, ch. II p. 41.

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in Kensington Gardens”.²¹⁹ He lived there all his life and his death was followed by his daughters’ move eastwards to Bloomsbury. Barrie’s *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*,²²⁰ is a work on the Pan theme with a topographic emphasis. The Kensington setting – and the importance to Kensington of royalty and of the park – is emphasised from the outset. The first plate, by Arthur Rackham, shows Edward VII strolling in a stately way through the park, hailing an acquaintance who is out of sight, and being watched by some grotesque yet non-threatening tree spirits. The picture has the caption “The Kensington Gardens are in London, where the King lives”. This story by Barrie seems purposely to avoid the many residential streets to both north and south of the Gardens, but in so doing reveals how the identity of these zones filled with houses was established by their proximity to the gardens. “The Celestial Omnibus” shares with *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* an interest in the conjunction of childhood and magical fantasy, although Forster, to quote Rod Mengham, situates the “launching pad” for the fantastic journeys it describes in a “perfectly ordinary suburban street”²²¹ rather than, like Barrie, in a royal oasis surrounded by unseen urban expanse. Virginia Woolf, Stephen’s daughter, called early twentieth-century Kensington “dreary”,²²² but unlike ‘North of the Park’ areas such as Bayswater and Notting Hill, it held on to respectability.

Surbiton, on the other hand, came later in the twentieth-century to epitomise middle-income London suburbia. An example is its appearance as the setting of the 1970s BBC TV sitcom *The Good Life*. The exterior shots for this series were taken in another outer London suburb, Northwood in Middlesex, one whose name lacked the echoes of the word *suburb* to be found in ‘Surbiton’. Not only was Surbiton the setting of this “suburban comedy”,²²³ but its characteristics were central to the situation of a married couple occupying a quintessentially “leafy” and “conservative” street in the suburbs, and leaving the rat race to keep pigs and chickens on a smallholding in their former back garden.²²⁴

In 1908, Surbiton cannot have been the quintessential mid-level London suburb for long. Forster, indeed, probably helped create such a perception. His short stories are not widely read now, but when *The Times* profiled Forster in 1922, he was introduced as the author of “Howards End [*sic*] and the short stories”.²²⁵ Perhaps his earlier readers, more than those

²¹⁹ Noel Annan, *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London, 1984, p. 15.

²²⁰ J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens from ‘The Little White Bird’* [1906?], Hodder & Stoughton: London, 1912.

²²¹ Rod Mengham, “Editor’s Introduction” in *Machine Stops*, pp. vii-xii, here x.

²²² Virginia Woolf, *Night and Day* [1919], Hogarth Press: London, 1950, p. 28.

²²³ Graham Rinaldi, “Briers, Richard (1934-)” in *BFI Screenonline: The Definitive Guide to Britain’s Film and TV Heritage*.

²²⁴ Mark Duguid, “Good Life, The (1975-77)” in *BFI Screenonline*, accessed 18 November 2008.

²²⁵ Cited by Mengham, “Editor’s Introduction”, p. viii. A second edition of Forster’s then only

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today, saw him as a short-story writer. The loco-referentiality of “The Celestial Omnibus”, in indicating a generic suburb, derives from a metropolitan perspective on Britain shared, perhaps, by Forster. From 1904 to 1925 he would have passed through Surbiton, perhaps never alighting, every time he travelled between Weybridge and London by train, something he did several times a week for most of this period.

One aspect of the ordinariness of the boy’s family home in “The Celestial Omnibus” is the gradation of status and wealth within a fairly narrow band which can be detected in the “inequalities of rent [...] drowned in a saffron afterglow” of Buckingham Park Road.²²⁶ Whereas the story’s Mr Bons is, in Mengham’s words, “superciliously cultivated”, the boy’s father, mocking and disbelieving his son’s account of the fantastic omnibus journey, seems one of the ill-educated “Philistines” with whom the boy’s mother fears identification.²²⁷ The boy’s family look to Bons as a cultural guide. A “church-warden” who “had Members of Parliament to stop with him”,²²⁸ Bons seems to occupy the same kind of elevated position in this fictionalised Surbiton as do the Herritons do in the Sawston of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. Bons, though, is a representative of Arnoldian Hellenism who is exposed and violently punished as a fraud. He promotes a notion of Culture with which he cannot empathise because he is, readers can surmise, a hypocrite with dirty secrets of his own.²²⁹

Ordinariness is also present in the mere fact that the boy lives at home with his parents. The growth of suburbs, Rodger suggests, was partially stimulated by “a cult of privacy” based on the family and designed to protect its members, above all women and children, from unsupervised, “promiscuous” contacts across class lines.²³⁰ The parent-child relationship central to the privatised family of the nineteenth century remained central to Forster’s own life, after all, until the death of his mother in 1945, when Forster himself was 66 years old. In this sense, he was a suburban figure. The “caning and the poetry at the end of” the day when the boy first travels in the Celestial Omnibus do not seem very awful.²³¹ The boy is still at home rather than away in an institution which – unwarrantedly – demands corporate allegiance to replace the familial. This is something the boy shares with Edgar in “Nottingham Lace” and Philip in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. All of them inhabit a world

collection of short stories, *The Celestial Omnibus and Other Stories*, had appeared in 1920 (*Bibliography*, p. 22 (A5b)).

²²⁶ *Machine Stops*, p. 30.

²²⁷ Mengham 1997: x; *Machine Stops*, p. 36. In the context of taste and literary culture, the word Philistine recalls Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*.

²²⁸ *Machine Stops*, p. 29.

²²⁹ Mengham (“Editor’s Introduction”, p. x) emphasises the “uncontaminated” nature of the boy in the story.

²³⁰ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p. 40.

²³¹ *Machine Stops*, p. 37.

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that, although narrow-minded, is not without personal affection. A contrast is found in *The Longest Journey*, in which the mother of the viciously-bullied public schoolboy Varden has been pressured into letting him leave home and become a boarder.²³² Varden's character seems permanently damaged by his experiences, which turn him into "a sanctimonious prig".²³³ There is no indication that the same will happen to the boy protagonist of either "Nottingham Lace" or "The Celestial Omnibus".

Transport networks and modes of travel are an aspect of real place. Among them, railways and walking are both central to *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*. In "The Celestial Omnibus", horse-drawn public transport by road appears. A historian of London notes that "from about 1905 motor buses were beginning to replace the old horse-drawn vehicles".²³⁴ The story seems to have an Edwardian setting but is also a recreation of a very recent past, a technique Forster seems to have been using in 1907, since *A Room with a View* abounds with similar examples. To my knowledge no previous Forster critic has pointed out that this technique might provide the key to an elusive but central aspect of Forster's Edwardian writing: the sense of his being nostalgic for things still of the present.

In "The Celestial Omnibus" a bus journey has none of the bracing out-door atmosphere, and none of the buzz of being in central London that it has for Katherine Hilbery and Ralph Denham in Woolf's *Night and Day*. These characters ride motor buses on Charing Cross Road and the Embankment, at the metropolitan core, the core of the British Empire, even. Instead, the protagonist of "The Celestial Omnibus" travels to a multicultural heaven enclosed inside a vehicle. Outside, there is fog. In an echo of the relationship between the capital and Sawston in *The Longest Journey*, this has "come down from London in the night", leaving "all Surbiton [...] wrapped in its embraces".²³⁵ In both the novel and the short story the suburb – or "suburb", a dormitory town connected to London by the railway – is outside but not beyond the reach of the metropolis.²³⁶ The fog of "The Celestial Omnibus" is by the authorial narrator's implication a London fog extending out to the periphery of the city, rather than something distinct, like the "impalpable" cloud into which Rickie escapes.²³⁷ At first, the boy assumes that hidden in the fog outside is either "Putney Heath or Wimbledon Common", there being "no houses by the road", but later concludes that his location in the omnibus seems windier and more elevated than "Richmond Hill [...] Epsom,

²³² *Longest Journey*, ch. 18 pp. 168-9.

²³³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 22 p. 187.

²³⁴ Francis Shepherd, *London: A History*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998, p. 270.

²³⁵ *Machine Stops*, p. 32; see *Longest Journey*, ch. 31 p. 257.

²³⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 3 p. 32.

²³⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 31 p. 257. Sir Thomas Browne and Dante act as the boy's cab-drivers (*Machine Stops*, pp. 34, 40). Readers are invited to deduce a literary canon from this.

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or even the North Downs”.²³⁸ Specificity about the places of South-West London and Surrey beyond it here balances the thunder, caves, castles and figures from literature and mythology encountered by the boy as his trip progresses. Real suburban place gives the story a bite and acidity which redeems it from charges of whimsy.

Seemingly-concrete detail enters into “The Celestial Omnibus” in the notice from the operating company which the boy reads inside the omnibus. Apparently reproduced in full and signed “For the Direction”, this is a careful spoof, written in a sturdy and officious tone.²³⁹ The notice displays alertness to material detail, something also apparent in the coolly enumerated details of bank cheques and security measures in the scene of *The Longest Journey* in which Agnes attempts to bribe Stephen.²⁴⁰ Another concrete detail, and another parody of the kind of writing encountered in suburbia, perhaps suggesting Forster’s own identity as a semi-reluctant semi-suburbanite, rounds the story off. This is a notice from “the Kingston Gazette, Surbiton Times, and Raynes Park Observer” announcing the discovery of Mr Bons’s corpse “in a shockingly mutilated condition in the vicinity of the Bermondsey gas-works”.²⁴¹ Flung from the polytheistic heaven of the story, Bons lands in a sub-region of London south of the river that is quite different from Surbiton. Since at least the time of Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, Bermondsey had had an unsavoury reputation. Within the world of Edwardian London, a gasworks in Bermondsey was far removed from the genteel streets of Surbiton.

In *A Room with a View*, Forster’s third novel, the main focus in terms of English place is the countryside of “soft and wild” rural southern Surrey.²⁴² Tunbridge Wells appears in a flashback, though. The contrast this novel develops between the “well-appointed flat” of Cecil Vyse and his mother in London S.W. – Kensington or Chelsea, presumably –, and Windy Corner, the house of the Honeychurches in the Surrey Hills, highlights the closeness of Windy Corner to landscape and the seasons.²⁴³ Similarly, the contrast with Tunbridge Wells enables Windy Corner and its environs to be understood as a zone in the Home Counties that is more liberal-minded and less stuffy than some others. The constrained Charlotte Bartlett comes from Tunbridge Wells, and it is there, too, that Mr Beebe has glimpsed Lucy before the novel begins.

Forster’s feelings about Tunbridge Wells became more negative in the years after he and his mother left it for good in 1901. The town came to represent for him a Home Counties

²³⁸ *Machine Stops*, p. 35.

²³⁹ *Machine Stops*, p. 31.

²⁴⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 27, p. 220.

²⁴¹ *Machine Stops*, p. 44. As far as I can determine, none of these newspapers has ever existed.

²⁴² “West Hackhurst”, p. 10; *Creator as Critic*, p. 115.

²⁴³ *Room with a View*, ch. 11 p. 38.

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narrow-mindedness he worked up to an extreme form in portraying the Anglo-Indians of *A Passage to India*. In 1910, in *Howards End*, Tunbridge Wells appears alongside Cheltenham, several resorts which developed during the nineteenth century, and Surbiton, the quintessential London suburb, on a list of places to which Margaret will not move.²⁴⁴

In 1912, Forster reported in his journal a three-day stay in Tunbridge Wells, calling it a “Filthy self righteous place”.²⁴⁵ He also started to link it habitually with lower or more ludicrous human functions. In a 1922 letter to his mother, he compares a walk he has taken to “that awful walk near Tunbridge Wells” with its smell of sewage.²⁴⁶ The piece of plot machinery used in the later chapters of *A Room with a View* to reintroduce Charlotte to the action is the fact that she has plumbers in her house repairing her boiler. When Lucy is planning a long trip somewhere, Charlotte innocently asks her “why Greece [...] Why not Tunbridge Wells?”²⁴⁷ Both Tunbridge Wells and Greece, it is true, were possible destinations for holiday-makers of Forster’s class in the first decade of the twentieth century. Here they are ranged as the sublime and the ridiculous. But Forster was himself able to show, for example in an essay called “Cnidus” which first appeared in the *Independent Review* for March 1904,²⁴⁸ that the activities of English middle-class tourists poking around Greek antiquities could be no less ridiculous than a rainy picnic on the North Downs such as the trip to the Ridge in “Nottingham Lace”.

The note of comic deflation in the words *Tunbridge Wells* is sounded intermittently throughout *A Room with a View*, first of all in Charlotte’s partly despairing, partly sarcastic comment that whereas Windy Corner is “the fashionable world”, she is “used to Tunbridge Wells, where we are all hopelessly behind the times”.²⁴⁹ The key word Forster uses for Charlotte in the same passage is *blunder*, redolent of clumsy Victorian good intentions of the sort which led to the debacles of the Crimean War: in Tennyson’s words, “someone had blundered”.²⁵⁰ Yet the suggestion of the book’s final pages is that Charlotte in fact engineered the coming together of George Emerson and Lucy, that she was neither malicious nor muddled.²⁵¹ Perhaps Tunbridge Wells, according to Forster, is not to be dismissed so easily.

²⁴⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XIII p. 83. As early as 1822, William Cobbett (*Rural Rides*, vol. I, p. 30) had derided Cheltenham as a place inhabited by economic parasites.

²⁴⁵ “Locked Journal”, 19 July 1912.

²⁴⁶ *Selected Letters II*, p. 29.

²⁴⁷ *Room with a View*, ch. 18 p. 205.

²⁴⁸ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 166-70.

²⁴⁹ *Room with a View*, ch. 1 p. 30.

²⁵⁰ Alfred Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, Second Edition, three volumes, Christopher Ricks (ed.), Harlow: Longman, 1987.

²⁵¹ *Room with a View*, ch. 20 pp. 229-30.

2.7. Sunnington and the Railway Commute: *Maurice*

The protagonist of *Maurice* is a suburban man, a “bourgeois” in the words of his Cambridge lover Clive Durham.²⁵² Clive himself is a member of the decaying country gentry, and the suburbs of *Maurice* have a vigour which the novel’s country gentry lack. Clive’s mother believes that “one ought to cross breeds a bit” and, scouting potential wives for her son, spots Maurice Hall’s sister Ada who “though suburban, was healthy”.²⁵³ Maurice himself goes to a school called Sunnington, a name which recalls Forster’s two more direct fictionalisations of his own public school experiences, the Sawston of “Nottingham Lace” and *The Longest Journey*, and “Snobston”, a moniker used in a 1925 essay as a more transparent reference to Tonbridge itself.²⁵⁴ Perhaps, though, Sunnington contains more sunshine and less of the physical and emotional violence implied by the word ‘saw’ or the simpler mockery of the word ‘snob’. Maurice himself, perhaps, belongs to the world of the boys in “Nottingham Lace” and “The Celestial Omnibus” rather than the Sawston of either *Where Angels Fear to Tread* or *The Longest Journey*.

The heavy atmosphere of evangelical religion satirised through the character of Harriet Herriton in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, and underlying all the hymn-singing injunctions to corporate loyalty and patriotism in *The Longest Journey*’s Sawston, is almost wholly absent from *Maurice*. Maurice’s loss of faith while at Cambridge does not shock his family because “the suburbs no longer exact Christianity”.²⁵⁵ Rather than narrow-minded indignation or shock and exclusion, what Maurice chiefly encounters throughout his struggles with his identity is a desperate attempt on the part of those around him – his mother and sisters, Clive, his fellow commuters in the railway carriage – to assimilate him to their norms. A “society” which “while professing to be so moral and sensitive” does not “really mind anything” is hypocritical, of course, but hypocritical in a different way to that of the Pembroke of *The Longest Journey*, who underneath a preachy, platitudinous surface conceal avarice. Standing for the suburbs of *Maurice* is Dr Barry, the retired local general practitioner. Maurice draws Dr Barry from a game of bridge, hoping for advice on his sexuality. The physician, however, pours scorn on Maurice’s declaration that he is “an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort”, then calls out for “whisky”.²⁵⁶ Cards and alcohol would not feature in this way at the

²⁵² *Maurice*, ch. XII p. 57.

²⁵³ *Maurice*, ch. XIX p. 83. Bradshaw (“Howards End” in David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007, pp. 151-72, here 160-3) uses Edwardian discussions of eugenics to illuminate passages in Forster such as this one.

²⁵⁴ *Prince’s Tale*, p. 89.

²⁵⁵ *Maurice*, ch. VIII p. 40.

²⁵⁶ *Maurice*, ch. XXXI pp. 132-4.

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Sawston home of the Herritons.

Physically, Maurice himself is quite different from Forster's earlier suburban protagonists. Edgar Carruthers is confined to home, too sickly for school, Rickie Elliot limps because of a congenital defect, while Philip Herriton, though perfectly healthy, is "weakly built".²⁵⁷ Maurice Hall's physique is "superb".²⁵⁸ He is depicted as a hearty rather than an aesthete, preferring drinking to the appreciation of high culture.²⁵⁹ Clive, instead, is the aesthete of the pair, a successor to Philip and Rickie. No intellectual, Maurice follows his father into business as a stockbroker in the City. Philip in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, as a barrister, and Rickie in *The Longest Journey*, as a schoolmaster, follow – like the college head Fielding in *A Passage to India* and even the administrator George in *A Room with a View* – careers typically chosen by Kingsmen in Forster's youth. Maurice, as a sporty capitalist commuter, is a far more representative suburbanite than any of these characters, and perhaps as such resembles Forster's notion of an Old Tonbridgian. At the same time that Maurice begins catching "the 8.36 to town" and reading "the Daily Telegraph" en route, he becomes "a promising suburban tyrant" of 23 years. His father, like those of Philip Herriton, Rickie Elliot, Lucy Honeychurch and the Schlegels, is dead, and so Maurice is the man of the house.²⁶⁰

In a reading of literary place, it is important to pay attention to types of movement, or the sorts of path and route linking particular places. Railway travel can be liminal. For Philip and Caroline in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, the railway carriage is an in-between zone in which they can momentarily escape their Sawstonian identities. It is "in the train" that Maurice has the "hideous experience" which drives him to Dr Barry: after a fellow passenger propositions him, Maurice punches the man in the face, drawing blood.²⁶¹ The train, too, is where Maurice faces the judgement of "[t]he world": "He gave up Saturday golf in order to play football with the youths of the College Settlement in South London, and his Wednesday evenings in order to teach arithmetic and boxing to them. The railway carriage felt a little suspicious. Hall had turned serious, what!"²⁶² The "College Settlement" recalls Tonbridge School's efforts in the Judd Street area to redeem itself from the guilt of its slum-based wealth. Maurice Hall preserves a little Sawstonian morality, then. After Cambridge but before developing a full understanding of his sexual identity, Maurice looks in a mirror and sees a deception: the image of "a solid young citizen [...] – prosperous without vulgarity. On such

²⁵⁷ *Where Angels*, ch. 5 p. 70.

²⁵⁸ *Maurice*, ch. XXXI p. 134

²⁵⁹ *Maurice*, ch. XX p. 93.

²⁶⁰ *Maurice*, ch. XIX p. 83.

²⁶¹ *Maurice*, ch. XXXI p. 131.

²⁶² *Maurice*, ch. XXVIII p. 122.

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does England rely”.²⁶³ Having just sexually propositioned a young house-guest, Maurice does not feel solid or respectable. In fact, at this stage, Maurice resembles the Englishman with the “undeveloped heart” of Forster’s “Notes on the English Character”, a piece usually associated with the early 1920s when it was published, but actually written in 1913, around the same time as the completion of *Maurice* and on the eve of the First World War. In both pieces of writing the prosperous suburban public-school man becomes the representative Englishman.

In loco-referential terms, the environment Maurice inhabits with his mother and sisters is related to the wealthier, showier suburbs to the south west of London, places that Forster and his literary associate J.R. Ackerley knew intimately. The Weybridge visited by Sassoon in the early 1920s was a place in which Forster could turn up at the station to meet his visitor in a flamboyantly arty broad-brimmed black hat, and the two could walk beside the river at dusk on a summer evening in a manner resembling the walks in Proust’s *Swann’s Way* or the scenes represented by impressionist painters.²⁶⁴ Maurice’s home, moreover, with its tolerance of alcohol and faint suggestions of impropriety, anticipates the Richmond milieu described in Ackerley’s autobiography *My Father and Myself*. There, Ackerley’s banana magnate father is described as telling dirty jokes and displaying “unbuttoned mellowness and ease” after a heavy dinner accompanied by various wines: intensifications, it almost seems, of Dr Barry’s milder loucheness in *Maurice*.²⁶⁵ The chapters of *Maurice* concerning the crisis following Maurice’s near-assault of his house-guest Dickie Barry were not substantially altered by Forster when he reworked the novel in 1932 and 1959,²⁶⁶ so that any textual influence must have been Forster’s on Ackerley rather than vice versa. The suburban worlds of both Ackerley’s upbringing – in his own account of it – and *Maurice* are alike in that the shared rules and moral certainties of Sawston have disappeared from them. Temporally speaking, this change can be associated with the 1910s and 1920s, the decades in which *Maurice* and *My Father and Myself* both originated.

Maurice’s suburb is largely depicted as a place of interiors: the railway carriage; the rooms

²⁶³ *Maurice*, ch. XXX p. 130.

²⁶⁴ Sassoon, *Diaries 1923-1925*, pp. 48-9; Marcel Proust, *Swann’s Way* [1913] (translated from French by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin), New Library: New York, 2004.

²⁶⁵ J.R. Ackerley, *My Father and Myself*, Bodley Head: London, 1968, p. 23. Ackerley himself had read *Maurice* in manuscript by 1926 (Philip Gardner, “Editor’s Introduction” in *Maurice*, pp. vii-liv, here xxxii-xxxiii), long before completing the candid autobiographical account of his own youth which would appear posthumously in *My Father and Myself*. He also performed secretarial services related to those writings of Forster which the latter considered unpublishable in his lifetime, for example “Kanaya”, Forster’s account (*The Hill of Devi’ and Other Indian Writings*, Elizabeth Heine (ed.), Edward Arnold: London, 1983, pp. 310-24) of his sexual relations with an Indian palace servant in 1921.

²⁶⁶ See Philip Gardner, “Textual Notes” in *Maurice*, pp. 225-322, here 242-3.

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inside houses. Instead of direct loco-description, there is allusion to the concept of suburbia, beginning with the announcement that Maurice had grown up the son of a commuter “in a comfortable villa among some pines”.²⁶⁷ In 1960, writing introductory notes on *Maurice*, Forster equated Maurice Hall with suburbia, and claimed that he had specifically planned this protagonist to be “completely unlike myself”: sporty, unintellectual, physically attractive when Forster considered himself the opposite.²⁶⁸ Maurice cannot, however, be regarded as entirely unlike his creator, since Forster asserts in the same passage that Maurice’s background in prosperous upper suburbia was intended to be one of “normality”. Even when, unusually, we seen Maurice out of doors between home and the station, it is emphasised that the site where “the owls hooted, the mist enveloped him” and “the lamps had been extinguished”, it being “so late”, is that of “suburban roads”.²⁶⁹ In place terms, this may seem a crudely simplifying shorthand in comparison with the depictions in Forster’s first four novels, but it could also be seen as a way of rapidly sketching the relationship between places and states of mind.²⁷⁰

2.8. Moving Away from Sawston: “The English Character” and Interwar Reviewing

In 1913, Forster read an essay entitled “The English Character” to some Indian students at Cambridge.²⁷¹ The text was published with revisions in the *Atlantic Monthly* of Boston in 1926, and chosen by Forster as the opening piece for inclusion in his first collection of essays, *Abinger Harvest*, when it came out in 1936.²⁷² The paper presented the English to some of their others: first Indian acquaintances of Forster’s, later the American readers who had eagerly bought *A Passage to India* in the two years following its publication, and eventually the broader audience Forster spoke to in the 1930s. The essay’s pre-First-World-War origins have not always been clear to its readers.²⁷³ It contains one of Forster’s most

²⁶⁷ *Maurice*, ch. II p. 7.

²⁶⁸ *Maurice*, p. 216.

²⁶⁹ *Maurice*, ch. XXV, p. 110.

²⁷⁰ Paralleling my use of shorthand or the sketch as analogies for the technique of writing used by Forster in *Maurice*, Nicholas Royle (*E.M. Forster*, p. 66) emphasises “the sense of terseness and urgency” he finds in this novel and, above all, its telegraphic qualities.

²⁷¹ To distinguish the 1913 paper from the 1936 essay, I refer to the former as “The English Character” and the latter as “Notes on the English Character”. See Elizabeth Heine, “Sources and Textual Notes” in *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 403-44, here 404.

²⁷² *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 3-18.

²⁷³ In an editorial column, the *Atlantic Monthly* introduced the essay to its readers as follows: “In his *Passage to India*, E.M. Forster set about making the Indian understandable to the Englishman. Now he has thought fit to return the compliment with some characteristic notes on John Bull”

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frequently-quoted opinions: that Englishmen “go forth into” the world “with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds and undeveloped hearts”.²⁷⁴

In “The English Character” Forster specifically identifies the Englishman as the public-school Englishman: “the heart of England”, he says, is “the middle classes”, and “the heart of the middle classes is the public-school system”.²⁷⁵ In the terms of post-colonial criticism, Forster here addressed visitors from the colonial periphery, associating himself with this supposed metropolitan centre.²⁷⁶ When Forster wrote it, in late 1913, he was simultaneously at work on *Maurice*.²⁷⁷ Both, in fact, are concerned with “undeveloped hearts”. But the tendency to see the paper on the English character in the later context of *Abinger Harvest*, rather than the context of its original composition over twenty years earlier has obscured this.

Twice during the interwar decades, having to write a book review made Forster look back to school days at the Sawston of “Nottingham Lace” and *The Longest Journey*. In 1925, reviewing a volume of the memoirs of the public-school-educated social activist and journalist Henry W. Nevinson, he recalled singing the school song at what he here calls “Snobston”.²⁷⁸ Writing in the immediate aftermath of *A Passage to India*, he draws parallels between Nevinson and himself, quoting “a Bombay paper” as saying that Nevinson “outwardly [...] has the appearance of a gentleman, but at heart [...] is no better than a Socialist”.²⁷⁹ Both Forster and Nevinson moved away from the Liberal party to become supporters of the parliamentary socialist Labour Party in the years following the First World War.²⁸⁰ Forster draws a further parallel, indicating here that, like Nevinson, he could himself be considered “a Bi who never stuck”,²⁸¹ a “Bi” in this context being slang for someone undecided, who is neither one thing nor the other. The reference is to an address from the head master of Tonbridge, here renamed “Snobston”, in Forster’s day enjoining the boys to choose a single profession then “stick” to it. Uncertainties of identity in terms of class, party politics and perhaps sexuality combine to create a picture of the impure, improper public

(Anonymous, “The Contributors’ Column”, *Atlantic Monthly* 137 (1926), pp. 140-4, here 140). Readers would naturally assume from this that the “Notes” Forster offered had been taken recently.

²⁷⁴ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 4-5; see also Heine, “Sources and Textual Notes”, p. 405.

²⁷⁵ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 3.

²⁷⁶ See Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* [1995], Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2005, p. 2; on the notions of centre and periphery in post-colonial studies see Fredric Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism” in *The Modernist Papers*, Verso: London & New York, 2007.

²⁷⁷ Elizabeth Heine, “Editor’s Introduction” in *Abinger Harvest*, vii-liv, here xii.

²⁷⁸ *Prince’s Tale*, p. 89.

²⁷⁹ *Prince’s Tale*, p. 91.

²⁸⁰ Nevinson did so because he found hypocrisies in the high-mindedness of Liberal Quaker businessmen who did not want their eyes opened to the realities of labour conditions on colonial cocoa plantations (H.N. Brailsford, “Nevinson, Henry Woodd (1856-1941)”, Sinéad Agnew (rev.) in ODNB.

²⁸¹ *Prince’s Tale*, pp. 91, 92.

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schoolboy of the 1890s who now is actually, Forster suggests, the right sort of person for the changed, post-war atmosphere of the 1920s.

Ten years later, Forster reviewed a collection of essays which included contributions from members of a younger generation of writers to whom he was sympathetic. Among them were Plomer, Auden, and Graham Greene, all three public-school-educated and Greene the son of a public school headmaster.²⁸² As in the 1925 review, Forster mocked public-school notions of impropriety. The collection includes contributions from not only a woman but also a Roman Catholic Irishman, and Forster imagines the Pembrokes, Herbert and Agnes, reading it and getting annoyed while fretting about the laundry for their boarding house. This review repeated in more detail the mockery of the Tonbridge School song, three couplets from which structure it as a piece of writing, the – fictional – word “Sawston” interpolated into the song:

Lo the flag of Sawston lifted high appears.
Bravely hath it waved for twice two hundred years.²⁸³

The conclusion of this review was that “the flag is getting torn, and according to Mr Greene, the entire system is doomed for economic reasons”. In the aftermath of the Great Depression, such reasons were very pressing. There is also, to quote the 1950s view of public-school life of Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle, a “[y]ar boo sucks” aspect to Forster’s sneers at “Snobston” and “Sawston” in the 1920s and 1930s.²⁸⁴

The overall trajectory in terms of place which can be followed in a study of Forster’s Sawston is that of a move away from this particular imaginary location. This shift began during Forster’s undergraduate years and was completed by the time of his second visit to India in 1921. After 1921, Forster related to Sawston as an outsider. But Forster and associates of his such as Plomer seem to have felt that Sawston itself – dutiful, smug, prosperous, seemingly invulnerable – was wiped out during the First World War.²⁸⁵

2.9. Conclusion

Whereas Edgar in “Nottingham Lace” and Philip in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* are

²⁸² Forster, “Old School”.

²⁸³ Forster, “Old School”, p. 352.

²⁸⁴ Geoffrey Willans & Ronald Searle, *How to Be Topp: A Guide to Success for Tiny Pupils, Including All There is to know about SPACE*, Max Parrish: London, 1954, p. 43.

²⁸⁵ Taking as evidence for Plomer’s view of things his references to a “lost civilization” which seems Sawstonian, built on inherited and so hidden wealth in, for example, *Double Lives* and his novel *The Case Is Altered* (Hogarth Press: London, 1932).

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Sawstonians, dwellers in this region and – in part at least – sharers in its spirit, three later protagonists reject it: Rickie Elliot in *The Longest Journey*, the boy protagonist of “The Celestial Omnibus”, and Lucy Honeychurch in *A Room with a View*. Herbert in *The Longest Journey* and Charlotte in *A Room with a View* have a more complex relationship with the place zone of Sawston and Tunbridge Wells. Herbert is a representative of Sawston whose ethical decline is explored in sympathetic detail. Charlotte is for much of the book a figure of ridicule, a caricature of the Low-Church Anglican do-gooder. To use Vladimir Propp’s terminology, however, Charlotte eventually emerges as the character who fulfils the helper function in the narrative.²⁸⁶

Maurice dramatises a different sort of relationship to a different sort of Suburbia, one of golf and cocktails rather than charitable work and religious disputes. It charts historical change. This novel is the third – after *Howards End* and “Arctic Summer” – of Forster’s attempts in his early thirties to “connect the prose in us and the passion”,²⁸⁷ to reach out across the gap which separated him from other sorts of Englishman, a gap he had been aware of since his childhood with the landowners of Chesfield Park on one side and the Franklins of Rooks Nest Farm on the other. Whereas Edgar, Philip, Rickie and Lucy are all projections of Forster’s own selfhood, the lower middle-class Leonard of *Howards End*, the religious and militaristic county gentry member Clesant March in “Arctic Summer”, and the numerate, physically powerful suburbanite Maurice Hall are alike deliberately placed at distances of class and outlook from their creator. Leonard’s distance from Forster has often been emphasised;²⁸⁸ that of Maurice – concealed perhaps by their common sexual identity – has not.

The writings of the period between the outbreak of the First World War and that of the Second which I have identified as in some way connected to Sawston belong to a further group. The revisions Forster made in the early 1920s to “The English Character” chart a loss of belief in the invulnerability of Sawston and the public school; the members of the Club in *A Passage to India* shrilly and desperately try to recreate the solid, assured Sawston of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, but the sound of Indians’ voices outside, and the other noises of the rest of the living world, are always audible over their amateur dramatics and concert-

²⁸⁶ V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* [1928], translated from Russian by Laurence Scott, University of Texas Press: Austin & London, 1968, p. 21. According to Propp (*Morphology of Folktale*, p. 79), the “sphere of action of the helper” includes “the solution of difficult tasks” and this is just what Charlotte does. Charlotte seems not to know what she is doing, furthermore, and this perhaps fits with Propp’s presentation (e.g. *Morphology of Folktale*, pp. 39; 82-3) of the helper function in Russian fairy-tale narrative as something “magical”.

²⁸⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XXII p. 134.

²⁸⁸ For example by Jonathan Rose (*The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 2001).

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parties. In his mockery of it as “Snobston”, Forster mocks a Sawston which is frozen in the past and in his youth, and whose survivals after the First World War seem to him not deliciously camp as to his younger associate Plomer, but deserving of jeers and raspberries.²⁸⁹

The coda is a visit to East Molesey, on the Thames in Surrey, not far east of Weybridge, which was made by Forster just after the Second World War. Not long previously, he had received notice to quit his rural Surrey home at Abinger Hammer. The visit is recorded in the last part of his memoir of “West Hackhurst”, written in 1947.²⁹⁰ He had heard about a semi-detached house for sale in this suburb. To think visually about different types of mid-century suburbia, East Molesey was perhaps “Bypass Variegated” to Weybridge’s “Stockbrokers Tudor”, in the humorous pre-war categories of Osbert Lancaster.²⁹¹ On arrival, Forster found in effect the sort of reduced Sawston, with “kitchenette” and “lozenge of a garden”, to which, in 1958, he would somewhat cruelly condemn George and Lucy Emerson in 1958’s “A View without a Room”, after their “squalid move from Highgate to Carshalton”.²⁹² In the memoir, he calls the visit to East Molesey “the nadir of my fortunes”.

Sawston is wealthy, respectable, emotionally stifling, and convinced of its own goodness. These qualities are not precisely those which Forster gave to either England as a whole or to other regions of the Home Counties, for example that around Rooks Nest House in Hertfordshire or rural southern Surrey. Over time, he became a more and more infrequent visitor to Sawston. Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells became fossilised for him and he mocked them increasingly casually. Maybe this was unfair, but maybe Sawston *was* something that died with the First World War. Tunbridge Wells can be viewed in the twenty-first century, as it was by me in 2006, but in some it sense seems now like a cemetery of the Victorian era which has been repeopled and turned into a town of a different, less distinctive, sort. Orwell and Plomer’s view of the Edwardian past and the wreckage of Victoriana still recoverable in the interwar period in such works as *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and *Double Lives* would certainly support such a view. Forster anyway was never guilty of sentimentalising his youth and the tastes of the past, as Plomer was in talking about the Forsters at Abinger.²⁹³ Instead, after the completion of his last novel, Forster concerned himself with places that for him at least were still in existence: the West End of London with

²⁸⁹ *Prince’s Tale*, p. 90; Plomer, *Double Lives*, *passim*.

²⁹⁰ “West Hackhurst”, p. 46B.

²⁹¹ Lancaster, *Pillar to Post*, pp. 62-3, 68-9. A visit by me to Weybridge and East Molesey in August 2008 did not, however, entirely support this contrast. At East Molesey I saw calm and graceful-looking inter-war houses along tree-lined streets, while Weybridge seemed an ill-assorted collection of Victoriana.

²⁹² *Room with a View*, p. 232.

²⁹³ William Plomer, *At Home: Memoirs*, Cape: London, 1958: 143-5.

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its zones of both high culture and sexual licence; the inner suburbs of west London with their oasis-like cross-class meeting points; King's, with its encounters between youth and age and its continuing, albeit fading possibilities of brotherhood.

3. Wild England

3.1. Introduction

In 1851, for the first time ever, the population of England became predominantly urban rather than rural.¹ Many writers active in England during the second half of the nineteenth century – among them John Ruskin and William Morris – evoked a threatened Wild England.² In the early twentieth century, writers such as Edward Thomas, Forster and D.H. Lawrence developed the same tradition, tending by then to accept that Wild England was already of the past. Forster was familiar with the notion of Wild England. In essence, it denotes an imaginative place developed by writers of the industrial era from the raw material of the non-fictional England. Thomas Hardy's Wessex is a comparable creation of the same era, although Wild England is constructed in this period as a threatened wilderness containing mystical or folk elements, something composite, established by many writers as well as by those interested in disappearing rural customs. Hardy comes close to Wild England in his description in *The Return of the Native* of Egdon Heath and, especially, its disappearing folk customs.³ The activities from 1899 onwards of Cecil Sharp in collecting and popularising English folk-music “in the context of the debate on the need for an English national music” are another key reference point.⁴

Some English sites outside the Home Counties appear in Forster's writings as extensions of the metropolis and its environs. Examples include a number of seaside resorts. Ilfracombe in *The Longest Journey* seems to be a kind of Sawston-on-Sea; Swanage in *Howards End* has much in common with the rural Surrey environment of Summer Street in *A Room with a View* (both are distinct from London yet menaced by it, offering a wild landscape yet within easy reach of the capital by train).⁵ In *Maurice* we find the port of Southampton, just outside

¹ F.M.L. Thompson, “Towns and Cities” in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, three volumes, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990, vol. I, pp. 1-86, here 2-3.

² See on this tradition David Gervais, *Literary Englands: Versions of 'Englishness' in Modern Writing*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993, pp. 11-23. Gervais demonstrates that George Eliot, Ruskin, Hardy, Morris, Jefferies, James and Housman all used a concept of Wild England in their writing. Forster, as well, knew a book with the phrase ‘Wild England’ in its title: C.J. Cornish, *Wild England of To-Day and the Wild Life in It*, Thomas Nelson: London, 1895.

³ Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* [1878], Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1974 (for example Chapter 3, entitled “The Custom of the Country”, pp. 43-62).

⁴ Heaney, Michael, “Sharp, Cecil James (1859-1924)” in ODNB.

⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 19 pp. 173-6; *Howards End*, ch. XVIII p. 114 – ch. XX.133, ch. XXII p. 134 – ch. XXIII p. 140. Forster's treatment of seaside resorts merits more extended treatment. They have

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the Home Counties in Hampshire,⁶ and, in Hardy's terms, on the eastern side of Wessex. It is not at all wild, instead resembling the London railway termini which figure in the early chapters of both *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *Howards End*.

But throughout his career Forster was much concerned with an idea of an older, wilder England, and fragments of this enter into his writing. His attitude towards it contains contradictions: optimism about its possibilities of survival sometimes, at others resignation to the inevitability of change which will eventually obliterate this older countryside.

Forster wrote nothing about the regions of rural Britain most often regarded as sublime – the Lake District and the Highlands of Scotland – and little on the North of England. Peter Davidson has read Auden as a writer whose “trajectory through the 1930s was a continuous movement northwards”,⁷ but Forster was never such a writer, his dominant trajectory being from southern England towards the Mediterranean, with Egypt and India beyond. He does describe some forays north in his early writings, but these imagine the location very differently from the “dearth, authenticity and pastness” which Davidson sees as invariably characterising accounts of the English North.⁸ Whereas Davidson dwells on prehistoric or early-industrial environments, Forster's accounts of northern England, most of them of Northumberland, instead suggest the Middle Ages. There, Forster describes no dearth, but rather a carnivorous, blood-letting sort of plenty. He does emphasise the North's penetration by a consumerist South, but his writing on it does not support Davidson's claim that “traces of the rural and gentry past [...] are little remembered in received ideas of northern England”.⁹ In eighteenth and nineteenth-century England, Mark Billinge writes, the North was frequently understood as industrial, hilly, politically Whig or Liberal and nonconformist, in contradistinction to the rural, metropolis-centred, lowland, Tory and Anglican South.¹⁰ As a compass point, north is also frequently associated with polar regions, with those “landscapes of the Arctic” which Davidson describes as “an inevitable and insistent element in anyone's idea of north”. But Forster tends to ignore the industrial, Liberal North, and

a certain wildness as spaces of sexual licence comparable to the ‘transpontine’ world of West London, yet are more like suburbs or extensions of the metropolis – as places of resort for urbanites – than the places discussed in the present chapter which are distinguished by having been left behind temporally speaking. See the 1930s story “The Obelisk” (*The Life to Come*, pp. 113-29) and photographs of Forster and friends taken at Dover in 1937 (Furbank II, between pp. 176 and 177).

⁶ *Maurice*, ch. XLV pp. 203-9.

⁷ Peter Davidson, *The Idea of North*, Reaktion: London, 2005, p. 84.

⁸ Davidson, *Idea of North*, p. 199.

⁹ Davidson, *Idea of North*, p. 212.

¹⁰ Mark Billinge, “Divided by a Common Language: North and South, 1750-1830” in Alan R.H. Baker & Mark Billinge (eds), *Geographies of England: The North-South Divide, Imagined and Material*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004, pp. 88-111, here 106.

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never mentions anywhere so climatically extreme as the arctic.¹¹ Instead, in some lesser-known works, mostly written in youth, he sketches an English North which is bloody, linked to the past, and part of the wilds, yet also ‘county’: a gentry world still exists there.

In the 1930s, Forster became personally connected to another side of the English Midlands and North: the industrial. Through his friend the philosopher and sociologist W.J.H. Sprott he got to know Charles Lovett and other working-class men from Nottingham, where Sprott held an academic post.¹² Unemployment and mortality rates presented by Alan R.H. Baker and Mark Billinge indicate that the North-South divide was stark and very tangible in the inter-war decades, but that the hardship experienced by people in the North was little-known in the more comfortable South.¹³ The North and Midlands of the Depression era were part of Forster’s own life, but they received no attention whatsoever in his 1930s and 1940s writings.

In recent decades literary critics, historians and geographers working on many different types of source material have developed a more sophisticated understanding of the multiply interconnected relationship between the English regions. Baker and Billinge use empirical data as their chief tool in examining notions of northern England; Davidson uses his interpretations of literature and painting to establish his own understanding of the same idea. But while Baker, Billinge and their colleagues remain too rooted in factual detail to explain the less rational sides of England’s imaginative geography, Davidson frequently blurs factual distinctions, at one moment equating the north with Spitsbergen, at another with Keighley in Yorkshire.¹⁴ The work of the psycholinguist Stephen C. Levinson supplies a missing perspective: he emphasises the relativity of human spatial point of view in a way which draws on notions of deixis and indexicality: north, inescapably, is what is north *of me*.¹⁵

Forster’s idea of an older, wilder England centres not on the North but on the county of Wiltshire and other sites in southern England which seemed to contain survivals from the past. In *Maurice*, Wild England can be detected in the lives of characters from different social classes who live in a land-based economy, but also in an England seen as originally forested, with a return to a forest state in principle possible when, as perhaps could happen in the future, industrial and urban modernity itself decays. This second Wild England has been of interest to critics such as Stuart Christie for whom rural England in Forster’s writings is

¹¹ Davidson, *Idea of North*, p. 18.

¹² See Patrick Belshaw, *A Kind of Private Magic*, André Deutsch: London, 1994.

¹³ Baker & Billinge, *Geographies of England*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Davidson, *Idea of North*, pp. 83-4, 211.

¹⁵ Stephen C. Levinson, “Language and Space”, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996), pp. 353-82; Stephen C. Levinson, “Deixis” in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds), *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2004.

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best understood as ‘greenwood’.¹⁶ Forster also detected fragments of the older, wilder England under the modern surface of London and south-east England, though in later life he finally sought Wild England at Aldeburgh in Suffolk.

3.2. Physical Encounters with Forster’s Wild England

3.2.1. Four Counties

Apart from Northumberland and Wiltshire, the two counties important to Forster’s view of Wild England are Shropshire and Suffolk. In his twenties, he went on walking holidays inspired by the imaginary Shropshire of A.E. Housman, and he set part of *Howards End* there as a result. His association with Suffolk began in his sixties, after the Second World War, through connections with the composer Benjamin Britten. The present section introduces this varied and far-flung group of sites, and details my visits to three of them – all except Shropshire – in 2006 and 2007.

Northumberland, Wiltshire, Suffolk and Shropshire differ in terms of landscape, geology and history, as outlined in the introductions to the relevant volumes of the *Buildings of England* series. Northumberland is “wild and empty on the Cheviots and the Pennines, wild and windswept on the coast” but has other, hidden aspects including “pories embedded fairy-fashion in greenery at Brinkburn and at Hulne” and “deeply-cut denes and valleys, almost invisible until you are upon them”.¹⁷ Wiltshire, its prehistoric remains long investigated by antiquarians and archaeologists, is divided between “a few deep valleys” containing all its post-Roman towns, and chalk downs which, having been centres of human activity in prehistoric times, have retained a “peculiar character and atmosphere” ever since.¹⁸ Economically, Wiltshire underwent a long period of stagnation between about 1800 and 1940, making it suit Forster’s purposes as a peculiarly empty zone filled mainly with survivals of the past.¹⁹ Clayey Suffolk contains flint and brick buildings, and has been a comparatively sleepy county since the end of the cloth-exporting boom of the fifteenth and

¹⁶ Stuart Christie, *Worlding Forster: The Passage from Pastoral*, Routledge: New York & Abingdon, 2005.

¹⁷ John Grundy *et al.*, *The Buildings of England: Northumberland* [1957], Second Edition, Penguin: London, 1992, p. 23.

¹⁸ Derek Simpson, “Introduction to the Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon Remains” [1963] in Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* [1963], Bridget Cherry (rev.), Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1975, p. 62; Terence Miller, “Introduction to the Geology” in Pevsner, *Wiltshire*, pp. 77-9.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Crittall, “Economic History” in *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 4* [VCH], 1959.

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sixteenth centuries, which had resulted in its wealth of late medieval churches.²⁰ Pevsner calls Shropshire a county of landscape rather than buildings or people, and draws attention to the geological distinction within it between a lowland north and an upland South. Clun, the Shropshire village fictionalised as Oniton in *Howards End*, is in the south-western corner of the county, a zone of “green and well-wooded hills” close to the Welsh border.²¹

These counties differ in terms of atmosphere and regional identity. Wiltshire and Suffolk lie south and east of a diagonal line between the Severn and the Wash seen by historical geographers as the border between a lowland, Anglican and richly agricultural South and an upland, earlier Catholic and later Dissenting North, once largely poorer agricultural land, later transformed by the nineteenth-century success and twentieth-century decline of manufacturing industry.²² Baker and Billinge consider this distinction a “metaphor” and “rhetorical device” which nevertheless explains English regional relations in a historical perspective. As for Northumberland, seen from the perspective of the South-East it is of course northern: tough, distant; a border region where repeated clashes with the Scots took place. It is also industrial: the earliest English centre of coal-mining, later known for ship-building. Suffolk, again, oriented towards London and the Netherlands and a natural bolt-hole for Londoners, with a rolling but unspectacular countryside, is thoroughly southern, even if it shares a bleak North Sea aspect with Northumberland. Wiltshire is southern, too, but distinct in atmosphere from most of the South; lonely and spooky. Shropshire, like Northumberland, is a former conflict zone: on the English frontier with Wales and, Pevsner says, “of necessity a castle county”.²³ Several times between the late 1890s and about 1905 Forster visited the home of William Howley Forster, his father’s youngest brother. Acton House, near Felton in Northumberland, lies off the former Great North Road (now the A1) which connects London and Edinburgh,²⁴ and not far from the East Coast mainline railway. In his youth, Forster used Felton as a base for tours of the North which included Sunderland, York and Hadrian’s Wall. Around the same time, when he was starting his writing career, he encountered another part of northern England on two visits to Manchester. A version of Northumberland originating from his visits to Felton is to be found in diary entries, a short story, two novels (one finished, the other abandoned) and a memoir read to the Bloomsbury Group. The young Forster viewed the North of England very much as an outsider, a

²⁰ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Suffolk* [1961], Second Edition, Enid Radcliffe (rev.), Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1974, pp. 15, 43, 61.

²¹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Shropshire*, Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1958, p. 11.

²² Baker & Billinge, *Geographies of England*, p. 181.

²³ Pevsner, *Shropshire*, p. 20.

²⁴ The same road features in *Howards End*: Stevenage, Hilton in the novel, is a town strung out along it (*Howards End*, ch. III p. 13, ch. III p. 15, ch. XXIII p. 142, ch. XLIII p. 246).

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cultivated and prosperous southerner, and he made no secret of this relationship to it.

Each of my trips to Forster's Wild England began from a different point, and varied modes of transport were involved. In Wiltshire I walked; in Suffolk I cycled; in Northumberland I travelled by car. Parts of all the journeys were by train, Forster's own preferred mode of transport. One place I visited was Figsbury Ring, outside Salisbury in Wiltshire, presented by Forster as central in his formation as a writer and as an individual. Acton House, transposed to Wiltshire, he used for one published and one unfinished novel. Aldeburgh in Suffolk was a place he never lived in and only fleetingly experienced, but his writing about it inspired Britten to reacquaint himself with the setting in which he was raised, and led to an artistic collaboration between the two of them. These were brief visits, and I know none of these places intimately, but they were places that Forster himself knew relatively superficially in comparison with most of those detailed elsewhere in this study. Their importance to him was above all as sites in which evidence of the survival of an England untainted by contact with London, commerce and consumerism could be sought.

3.2.2. Trips to Wiltshire, Northumberland and Suffolk, July 2006-August 2007

In "My Books and I", a paper written in the 1920s for the Bloomsbury Group's Memoir Club, Forster claimed that when he "walked out to Figsbury Rings" in September 1904 "[a] relation sprang up" between himself and the county of Wiltshire which he expected to last for life.²⁵ He had known Wiltshire before 1904 as the home of a relative, Maimie Synnot.²⁶ Like Forster's mother, Maimie was a widowed poor relation of the Thornton banking dynasty, and the two became close friends early in Forster's childhood. Maimie settled at Salisbury after marrying a local man, a Mr Aylward, who had taught her music there: he was regarded as a social climber by Wiltshire county society and the Thorntons, and the couple were shunned despite his having been the city's mayor. Forster and his mother were devoted to Maimie, and despite the childish snobbery Forster on his own account showed towards her husband, this anticipates his later and more radical transgressions of class boundaries.²⁷ Often accompanied by his mother, he stayed with Maimie at her home on Milford Hill, east of central Salisbury, at least nine times between 1899 and 1915.²⁸ In his twenties, he took

²⁵ E.M. Forster, "My Books and I" [c. 1922] in *Longest Journey*, pp. 360-6, here 364, 365.

²⁶ *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 276-80; *Furbank I*, pp. 10-11. Maimie was the widow of Forster's father's first cousin Inglis Synnot. The mothers of Inglis Synnot and Forster senior were sisters and born as Thorntons.

²⁷ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 279.

²⁸ *Chronology*, pp. 7, 10, 17, 19, 27, 35, 36, 57, 66. Maimie died during Forster's time in Egypt between 1915 and 1919.

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many walking holidays in Wiltshire, staying sometimes with Maimie, and sometimes at the cottage of his university contemporary Edward Hilton Young, afterwards a Liberal politician. These were some of Forster's most adventurous wanderings within England. In a letter to another old college friend, Malcolm Darling, written during one such trip, in October 1909, he describes how he and Young "broke into Stone Henge at midnight, and ate on the altar stone".²⁹

My trip to Wiltshire on a Saturday in late July 2006 had Figsbury Ring as its primary destination, but I also imagined emulating Forster by tramping right across the county. I thought of walking on and on, beyond the Iron Age hill fort, onto Salisbury Plain and beyond to the Marlborough Downs. In fact I took a train from London Waterloo to Salisbury then walked for four hours. First I went through the scrappy inner suburbs of a southern English city resembling Worcester, Oxford and Northampton, with a model-making shop, a newsagents and an ecological food vendor flanking the narrow main road into the messy centre.³⁰ There was a wedding car, a 1950s Bentley, outside the cathedral, but this looked like a chance for a photo in the cathedral close rather than a cathedral wedding. In the cloisters there was a model of medieval Salisbury inside a clear plastic box. On the walls of the nave a bronze plaque honoured the fallen of the First World War, while another recorded a 1906 rail crash which killed 28 people. An express from Plymouth to London took a bend too fast at Salisbury in the depths of the night; five of the 28 had the same surname and were presumably a couple with their three children. The deaths of children on the line are a feature of the railway near Salisbury in *The Longest Journey*.³¹

Next I tried to find the "tall sun-drenched house balanced high above Salisbury" where the Aylwards lived.³² I found a possible candidate, narrow and on a corner like an arrowhead pointing westwards towards the city below.³³ The former home of the Aylwards, I had read, was now one of the boarding houses of the Godolphin School,³⁴ a girls' private school, and this perhaps was one such. Beyond the house, the outer suburbs of Salisbury, derided as "ugly cataracts" in *The Longest Journey*, dropped away to a roundabout.³⁵ The road onwards, after clumps of 1960s and 1970s private and local authority housing, led under a dark

²⁹ *Selected Letters I*, p. 97; see also Jane Brown, *Spirits of Place: Five Famous Lives in Their English Landscape*, Viking: London, 2001, p. 64.

³⁰ See Image 4.

³¹ The "leit-motif" in *The Longest Journey* of children dying on the railway line is observed by Peter Burra ("The Novels of E.M. Forster" [1934] in J.H. Stape (ed.), *E.M. Forster: Critical Assessments*, four volumes, Croom Helm: Mountfield, East Sussex, 1998, vol. II, pp. 48-60, here 52-3).

³² *Marianne Thornton*, p. 279.

³³ See Image 5.

³⁴ Elizabeth Heine, "Notes" in *Longest Journey*, pp. 367-95, here 395.

³⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 33 p. 270.

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railway bridge. This particular bridge was on the Southampton line, which would join the London line a little further north. Again I felt the threat of the railway apparent in *The Longest Journey*, as well as the economic connection between the West Country and London which surfaces in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* when the milk churns from the Valley of the Great Dairies are loaded in the dead of night onto trains bound for the capital.³⁶ Beyond the railway, on the road out of town, the pavement became intermittent, and then disappeared; there were animal-feed shops and convenience marts.

Looking for an apple, I stopped in a shop attached to a petrol station on the fringes of the built up area, perhaps the replacement for a shop whose operator lived upstairs and dealt in whatever sold. The shop was stocked with a streamlined range of fast-moving, high mark-up packaged goods. I emerged with a Snickers bar. After this I turned off the road and got lost on a rough ridge, seeing back from there to the city with its spire. Where was Old Sarum? Beneath me were islands of red and grey in the sea of green and brown: local-authority housing and a 1960s comprehensive school, a bird of prey hovering between me and them. Next, heading towards Figsbury Ring but with no knowledge of the terrain, I strayed through a hedgerow, surprisingly broad and thorny with a ditch running in its centre, into a real field of wheat, something I had previously experienced only in pictures or through the windows of cars and trains. It seemed inhuman, harsh and far from nature, with its soft earth, geometric shape and hard pale yellow colour, and I felt afraid as I crossed of a dog or a shotgun. It felt like a world of its own, as if I had left the other green one with its views and paths behind. But I did escape, and felt relieved to be marching away down a path between hedges to a farm-turned-used-tractor-emporium, closed on this Saturday afternoon. Passing along the verges of an A-Road, I leapt up onto grass banks as phalanxes of Metros and Mazdas bashed past. This was the A30 running in a north-easterly direction towards London, with the railway running parallel to it. I was greeted by an elderly couple – baffled by my appearance on foot there? – gardening outside a house surrounded by gnomes.

Finally, past another business, “London Road Car Sales”, an amateurish yet well-established sign reading “4 SALE RABBITS”, and a bus stop with the flag of England attached to it, the Cross of St George faded to orange and the background tattered and greying, a path led off left to Figsbury Ring.³⁷ The ring, technically “a univallate hillfort covering 15.5 acres with entrances on E and W”,³⁸ contained cows, cowpats and thistles. No-

³⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* [1891], Tim Dolin (ed.), Penguin: London, 1998, pp. 186-7.

³⁷ See Image 6; Image 7.

³⁸ Wiltshire County Council, “Figsbury Ring” in *Wiltshire and Swindon Sites and Monuments Record*, <http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/smr/getsmr.php?id=10726> (accessed 8 November 2008).

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one else was around when I arrived, so I was able to drop unseen into the bowl of the Ring, but afterwards weekend walkers in red and pink outdoor gear appeared, a grey-haired couple then a young family. No powerful emotions overtook me on the Ring. For Forster the site did trigger powerful emotions, but the relationship of these to the place itself now seemed to me merely accidental: they came out of *him*, not *it*. From the Ring I marched downwards to the north-west, under the railway line again, unnerved by barking dogs, to the village of Winterborne Dauntsey. There, set back from another main road, this one the north-south A338 connecting Oxford and Bournemouth, I passed a grey stone house perhaps from the seventeenth or eighteenth century, overgrown by creeper and sitting behind a low wall of flints with cows grazing the rough lawn and drive in front.³⁹ I ran for one of the infrequent rural buses, which whizzed me back to Salisbury, riding alone, having abandoned the idea of walking into the unknown and instead happy to escape the country for the town. After a brief stop in drizzle outside a pub in the market square as stall-holders finished for the day, I caught the train from Salisbury back to London, hearing the belligerent talk of middle-aged men coming from pre-season football matches with their lads, then finally struck by the multi-ethnic concourse at Waterloo after the staleness of Salisbury and environs.

In Lefebvre's terms, it could be said that I moved through a series of produced spaces:⁴⁰ from the remains of a medieval city, now reconstituted as a regional shopping centre and place of tourism (a street flanked with souvenir shops led to the cathedral close, but it seemed less central to this city's economy than its equivalents in Oxford, Bath, Canterbury or York, if more so than in Worcester or Northampton), to its outskirts, first Victorian genteel then a twentieth-century overspill beyond the crest of Milford Hill, then through the spaces of the footpath (a public right of way protected by law), of industrialised agriculture, of the A-road, of the Ring itself – a National Trust space,⁴¹ a monument enclosed by commercial and residential countryside – then the partly gentrified commuter village. In 2006, Salisbury felt adjacent to the London conurbation, hardly more rural than Oxford or Swindon. Its surroundings were criss-crossed by fast traffic; its houses seemed homes for commuters and pensioners rather than gentry, tenant farmers, cottagers and villagers. Some of the sites visited became places for me: the railway station, the cathedral, Figsbury Ring; countless other points and zones I passed through were the unrecognised places of others' lives. It is tempting to use Marc Augé's term 'non-place' for the shop where I bought my

³⁹ See Image 8.

⁴⁰ See for example Lefebvre's account (*The Production of Space* [1974], translated from French by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1991, p. 152) of Latin America after 1500 as a produced space.

⁴¹ See Image 7.

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chocolate bar.

Forster claimed in “My Books and I” that “I couldn’t tell you what Northumberland is”.⁴² More powerful than impressions of the county itself for him were the negative experiences he had with genteel locals there such as “Uncle Willie and George Hodgkin and the Rev. Howard MacMunn and Lady Low and Lady Morison”. Whereas he saw Wiltshire in the company of university friends and Bloomsbury Group members such as Lytton Strachey and Sydney Waterlow, he referred to the people he associated with Northumberland by titles which highlighted their status as local gentry. His accounts of rural England outside the Home Counties are particularly concerned with areas still dominated by a long-established alliance between landowners and the Anglican clergy, in an age of rapid change for rural England : throughout rural England in the early twentieth century the old landowning order was in fact disappearing.⁴³

My visit to Acton House, the key Forster site in Northumberland, 25 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne, was a secondary part of another trip, a diversion even. I reached the house on the last day of a long weekend in April 2007. The only way to get there and back to Morpeth in time for a train I needed to catch was to take an expensive taxi ride up the A1 from Cramlington, just north of Newcastle. Through the glass, speeding by, I saw rolling landscapes of greenery and fields and the walls of country-house parks. At Acton House it was only possible to take a few photographs – this was evidently a private house; I had to be trespassing – then dash round a corner to look into a little wood presumably leading to the River Coquet which appears in Forster’s memoir of the house, then back to the car.⁴⁴ The driver was waiting a few yards from the gate to the house, the engine running. At first he thought I was an estate agent. No, writing a book, I said. “He might have a shotgun”, the driver smirked, gesturing at the big house out of the car window.

Acton is a bare and sharp-edged Palladian house described in the *Buildings of England* volume on Northumberland:

ACTON HOUSE. Quite a grand house of c. 1781, attributed to William Newton for Robert Lisle. The design here is very close to that of Shawdon Hall (q.v.). Two-story seven-bay ashlar front with a three-bay centrepiece, where panelled giant Ionic pilasters carry a fluted frieze and a pediment. The interior is largely contemporary, with many good features, including an imperial stair with a Roman Doric screen at the

⁴² Forster, “My Books and I”, p. 365.

⁴³ According to W.A. Armstrong (“The Countryside” in Thompson, *Social History of Britain*, vol. I pp. 87-153, here 130, 147), excessive “moral earnestness” caused the Anglican church to lose many adherents between 1850 and 1900, while only a third of the landed gentry families of 1871 occupied the same country seats in 1951.

⁴⁴ See Image 9.

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foot and an Ionic screen at the top. In the entrance hall is a fireplace with a cast-iron radial hearth, similar to two at Newton Hall (Newton-on-the-Moor). An earlier C18 house was incorporated as a NE wing, but this was largely remodelled c. 1920.⁴⁵

Forster's fictional Cadover in *The Longest Journey*, based on Acton House but transplanted to Wiltshire, looks from a distance like "a gray box, huddled against evergreens", but the non-fictional Northumberland house is built of yellowish sandstone.⁴⁶ While Forster, in a 1960 foreword to *The Longest Journey*, described Acton House as the origin of "the architecture and the atmosphere" of Cadover, he changed the colouring of the house to suit a Wiltshire norm rather than a Northumberland one.⁴⁷ He was capable of magnifying differences of locality into county-specific differences of world in a way comparable with an exchange between Marianne Thornton and Forster's mother Lily Forster on the differences in the winds experienced in Marylebone from those of Clapham.⁴⁸ In a 1920s memoir, "My Books and I", he compares his experience at Figsbury Ring, suggesting pastoral poetry, with Matthew Arnold's description in his poem "Thyrsis" of an "orange and pale violet evening-sky" in Oxfordshire, but claims that "the sky in Wiltshire cannot be those colours".⁴⁹ In Northumberland I glimpsed a landscape and started to grasp the relationship that houses and estates in the county had to one another: the *Buildings of England* description of Acton clarifies this. Forster's view of Northumberland was, if less fleeting than mine, not much more so: an impression he gathered on a few brief visits and later sketched in the unfinished novel "Arctic Summer".

In 1941 Forster gave a radio talk on the poet George Crabbe, born in Aldeburgh in 1754. Britten, in California, came across this talk later the same year as an article in the *Listener*.⁵⁰ Inspired by Forster, Britten returned from exile in America and started reacquainting himself with the Suffolk coast where he had himself been raised. Forster and Britten began communicating in late 1944, and their correspondence became more intimate in the second half of 1946 and the first half of 1947, the period in which Forster moved from Surrey to Cambridge.⁵¹ The artistic consequences of the Forster-Britten encounter were twofold. First, in 1945, Britten wrote the opera *Peter Grimes*, based on a monstrous Aldeburgh character in

⁴⁵ Grundy, *Northumberland*, p. 124.

⁴⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 11 p. 96. Elizabeth Heine ("Notes" in *Longest Journey*, pp. 367-95, here 381) gets the colour of Acton House wrong. See Image 40.

⁴⁷ *Longest Journey*, p. xxv; see also *Bibliography*, pp. 9, 168 (A2f; C503.1).

⁴⁸ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 260.

⁴⁹ *Longest Journey*, p. 365.

⁵⁰ Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography*, Faber: London, 1992, pp. 155-7; Donald Mitchell, "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin (1913-1976)" in ODNB.

⁵¹ Letters from Forster to Britten dated 12 December 1944 and 30 September 1948 illustrate the change of tone. See *Selected Letters II*, pp. 207-9, 233.

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a poem by Crabbe guilty of working the orphan boys in his service to death who, reviled by his fellow-townspeople, “[c]urs’d the whole place and wished to be alone”.⁵² Secondly, Forster wrote with Eric Crozier the libretto for Britten’s opera *Billy Budd*, based on the novella by Herman Melville.⁵³ *Peter Grimes* and *Billy Budd* both describe male-on-male violence with sexual undertones taking place in a setting linked to the sea. The Aldeburgh festivals, inaugurated by Britten and the tenor Peter Pears in 1948, became a key outlet for Forster to talk about his own work after his return to Cambridge. It was in preparing a reading for the Aldeburgh Festival, for example, that Forster revisited his unfinished pre-1914 novel “Arctic Summer”, itself one of his major accounts of Wild England.

Aldeburgh was not central to either Forster’s life or his writing, but it was the site of a late attempt to reconnect with Wild England. This was after he had abandoned any search for the ideal Wild England which, in his commonplace book, he would refer to as “Wessex”. From youth onwards, Forster’s general place trajectory within England was, as he outlined in the commonplace book in 1928, away from a notion of Wild England of the sort symbolised by “a grass-grown track” in the final chapter of *The Longest Journey*.⁵⁴ Before the Second World War Forster, Ackerley and Plomer had found somewhere where sexual adventuring could be carried out more discreetly than in London: in Dover, the Kentish port that is closer than anywhere else in England to France.⁵⁵ Forster’s attempts of the late 1940s to develop liaisons with Aldeburgh men such as the fisherman Bill Burrell could be seen as continuations of this pre-war pursuit.⁵⁶

My only visit to Aldeburgh was on a week-day in August 2007. I took a bicycle with me on a train to Ipswich, arriving with an hour to spare before my connection onwards, as people were reaching work and shops were about to open. This was a few months after a spate of murders in the town’s red-light district. Ipswich is a regional centre not entirely within the orbit of London, a place to which people drift from its region, East Anglia. The town centre’s pedestrianised streets and timbered buildings, some nineteenth-century but some older, were an island in a sea of concrete and asphalt, surrounded by an inner ring-road and too much empty space, space crossed by any visitor walking from the railway station to

⁵² George Crabbe, *The Borough: A Poem in Twenty-Four Letters*, Third Edition, J. Hatchard: London, 1810, p. 168.

⁵³ On the comparison between the handling of place in Melville’s novella and Britten’s opera, see in Chapter 1 above. In 1946, Forster’s friend William Plomer wrote an introduction to a reprint of the story published by the Bloomsbury associate John Lehmann (Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Foretopman* [1888], John Lehmann: London, 1946, pp. 7-10). On relations between Forster and Britten while the opera was produced (they fell out), see Carpenter, Britten, p. 291.

⁵⁴ *Commonplace Book*, pp. 36-7; *Longest Journey*, ch. 35 p. 283.

⁵⁵ Furbank II, pp. 212-13; Peter Parker, *Ackerley: A Life of J.R. Ackerley*, Constable: London, 1989, pp. 211-15.

⁵⁶ Furbank II, p. 285.

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the centre. Killing time, I sat in an elegant Victorian park surrounded by needles and the butt-ends of joints. From Ipswich I took another train to Saxmundham, a small, cohesive market town filled with locally-owned shops selling everyday products. Perhaps I had finally reached some sort of genuine or authentic rural England. Or perhaps it was simply that Tesco had not yet arrived. Cycling beyond the town, I found myself on lethal winding roads reminiscent of those outside Salisbury. The cycle ride from Saxmundham to the Britten-Pears Library skirted dull middle-class cul-de-sacs on the edge of Aldeburgh, and a windy golf-course studded with flattened conifers.

After a morning in the Britten-Pears Library, in the house bought by Britten in 1957 and shared with Pears until 1976 when Britten died, I had lunch a mile away in the centre of Aldeburgh, among English people holidaying in England. In a strong wind, I took a walk up and down the stony front spotting things:⁵⁷ Crag House, the rambling pink building occupied by Britten when Forster knew him, the composer now commemorated by a plaque; the old market weighing house, cut off from other buildings and towards the sea from the promenade; the southern end of the town, where there was a lagoon and a marsh filled with tall grasses; the longish high street parallel with the sea, but screened from it by buildings and, its pavement raised above the level of the road, recalling the drabber sort of Cotswold market town. It contrasted with the promenade along the front itself, where there were cottages interspersed with seaside follies perhaps built for retired naval officers and artists during Forster's youth. Nothing was heavily or crassly redolent of that era in the manner of Hove or Eastbourne or Tunbridge Wells. Everything was higgledy-piggledy, variegated, pink or grey or china blue. I spent a couple more fruitless hours in the library, wrestling with a microfiche projector, then went back to Cambridge.

Human journeys confront one with human lives. However wild, bare or peripheral some zone may look on maps consulted before travelling, on arriving one gets glimpses of the manner in which people live there. In Wiltshire, Northumberland and Suffolk, Forster became embroiled in the everyday lives of people: Maimie Synnot, his Uncle Willie, Benjamin Britten. My trips into Wiltshire, Northumberland and Suffolk could be compared to the journeys of anthropologists into regions occupied by people with cultures far different from their own: Lévi-Strauss in Brazil; E.E. Evans-Pritchard in the Sudan. Of course, my trips were fleeting: I had none of the deep immersion of the anthropologist, even the deliberately estranging immersion into one's own culture as something other of anthropologists of the near such as the French writers of the 1970s and 1980s Augé, François Maspero and Georges Perec. But human place relations are as often superficial as deep:

⁵⁷ See Image 10.

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perhaps the deep is more unusual, less everyday or commonly experienced, than the superficial place experience. An important part of Forster's character as a writer on place, moreover, is that, as for example in his scattered writings on Nassenheide in Pomerania, he often records and repeats a snapshot image of somewhere: his is not the approach to place of a Wordsworth or Thoreau.

3.3. "Ansell" and Diaries (1903-7)

"Ansell" is a story Forster wrote in his early twenties but did not publish in his lifetime.⁵⁸ In it, he imagines how his friendship with a Hertfordshire garden boy might have developed had he not left Rooksnest in 1894, shifting the setting to the wilder area he got to know when young through his Northumberland relatives.⁵⁹ The title character of the story is a young servant at the house of the narrator's cousin, while the narrator shares a Christian name with Forster's father and with Forster himself, who never used it, preferring 'Morgan'. The boys, master and servant, are childhood playmates until "whoops and shrieks" produced by them "penetrate [...] into the smoking room", annoying their elders, who prohibit their games and banish Edward to boarding school.⁶⁰ While the title character of "Ansell" carries the name of a real garden boy at Rooksnest,⁶¹ the Hertfordshire original for *Howards End*, the story's setting is a more rugged and isolated part of England,⁶² a landscape resembling the Northumberland countryside around Acton House.

Robert K. Martin has called the story an "abbreviated version" (albeit one written a decade earlier) of *Maurice*, and it is true that, like Maurice Hall, the narrator of "Ansell" abandons his supposedly civilised career for a life in the wilderness with a working-class companion.⁶³ Carola M. Kaplan has claimed, similarly, that the themes of Forster's later writing are

⁵⁸ *Life to Come*, pp. 1-9.

⁵⁹ See Oliver Stallybrass, "Introduction" in *Life to Come*, pp. vii-xxi, here viii.

⁶⁰ *Life to Come*, p. 2.

⁶¹ E.M. Forster, "Rooksnest", MS KCC/EMF/11/14, [1894-1947], f.9r; E.M. Forster, "Rooksnest" [1894-1947] in *Howards End*, Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Edward Arnold: London, 1973, pp. 341-51. Forster wrote about the non-fictional Ansell in the memoir of Rooksnest he began aged fifteen immediately after moving away and enlarged in 1901 and 1947. He describes this real Ansell as the only other boy he knew, but says that a tutor, thinking the pair's games in the straw "childish and undignified", helped get him, like Edward in the story, banished to school.

⁶² Forster would later give the name Ansell to Rickie Elliot's lower-middle-class philosopher friend in *The Longest Journey*.

⁶³ Robert K. Martin, "Edward Carpenter and the Double Structure of *Maurice*" in Jeremy Tambling (ed.), *E.M. Forster* ['New Casebooks'], Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 1995, pp. 100-114, here 101. See also Robert K. Martin, "Forster's Greek: From Optative to Present Indicative" [1977] in Stape, *Critical Assessments*, vol. II pp. 230-5.

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“prefigured” in “Ansell”.⁶⁴ Both recommend that it be read as an encapsulation of lifelong interests of Forster’s, with their later presentation in *The Longest Journey* and *Maurice* being understood as richer, more skilful reworkings of unchanged themes.

As well as fictional devices which Forster would re-use, “Ansell” also describes a specific place. It begins with Edward, now in his early twenties and trying for a fellowship after graduating from Cambridge, being met in a cart by Ansell, now brawny and laconic, at the railway station some miles from the cousin’s house. On the way to the house the horse shies beside a steep river bank and Edward’s books are tipped into fast-flowing water. This is another anticipation of Forster’s later fiction: a terrifying and life-changing “shower” of books causes the death of Leonard Bast at the climax of *Howards End*.⁶⁵ As for regional characteristics: “Far below us, almost shrouded in trees, ran the river. An open wooden fence guarded us from the precipice”; “There were plenty of grouse there, and black game. The air was so pure that you felt like a different person and so clear that you could see the sea. The valleys were [...] thick with rabbits”.⁶⁶

So real-place elements certainly can be detected in “Ansell”, but Forster’s deployment of setting here is comparatively crude. He had not visited the area around Felton for three or four years when he wrote the story, and he seems to remember it only in outline.⁶⁷ The abyss-like river and the neighbourhood’s blood-sports are not features of the gentle Home Counties where Forster set much of his writing on England, of course. The servant Ansell’s physical strength and phlegmatic temper seem associated with this northern landscape, but Edward seems softened or weakened – intellectually as well as bodily – by the world of education and culture he has entered during adolescence. The cart ride of “Ansell” faintly recalls the Box Hill excursion in Jane Austen’s *Emma* in describing society taken into the wilds,⁶⁸ and in so doing anticipates the trip to the Marabar Caves in *A Passage to India*, but only sketchily. In using the wild countryside of Northumberland, popular with blood sports enthusiasts to intensify underlying suggestions of homosexual passion, “Ansell” parallels the use of a semi-wild Italian landscape for similar purposes in “The Story of a Panic”, a published story Forster wrote around the same time. In “Ansell”, then, Forster uses landscape

⁶⁴ Carola M. Kaplan, “Absent Father, Passive Son: The Dilemma of Rickie Elliot in *The Longest Journey*” in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 51-66, here 66.

⁶⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XLI p. 230.

⁶⁶ *Life to Come*, pp. 5, 7.

⁶⁷ Stallybrass (“Introduction” in *Life to Come*, p. viii) uses both internal and external evidence to arrive at a date for “Ansell” of 1903. Forster did not visit Northumberland between 1899 and 1904 (*Chronology*, p. 17).

⁶⁸ Jane Austen, *Emma* [1815], Richard Cronin & Dorothy McMillan (eds), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005, part III ch. 7 p. 399.

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as a device, something on which to hang a theme.⁶⁹

Several recurring themes in Forster's writing emerge here for the first time: cross-class same-sex love; the link between water and physical passion – Ansell refers to “a deep bathing-pool, always full to the brim with clear brown water, always shaded from the sun, always sheltered from the wind” as a way of arguing passionately that “there's other things than books”⁷⁰; the search for quasi-sacred locales.⁷¹ The story invites biographical speculation: perhaps Forster wrote it during a crisis of confidence after realising that he would not do well enough in university examinations to become a college Fellow at Cambridge; perhaps it reflects his nascent understanding of his sexual orientation. But its landscape – the hoped-for and idealised English wilderness – was somewhere which strongly affected him for many years afterwards. Place seems dependent on symbol in this story, whereas in many of his subsequent works the two are inseparably woven together. In this sense “Ansell” is an apprentice piece, not an encapsulation of his ideas as Martin and Kaplan have argued.

As a Cambridge undergraduate, Forster recorded in his diary a visit to the most far-flung edge of England, the Scottish border near Berwick-upon-Tweed. During the summer vacation of 1898 he travelled to Northumberland as a break from working on an essay about English literature for a college prize. Before leaving, he described himself as “[s]till going on with *Paradise Lost*”, and in Northumberland he was taken to consult a scholarly neighbour about the same piece of work.⁷² He also did more strenuous things:

Rode on Aunt E's bicycle to Yetholm, over the border. It is, or was, a gipsy village; one half is in England, one <in> Scotland. Blacksmith put up saddle of bicycle, & refused payment. Found out afterwards that he was the archbishop, who crowned the king. Already it seemed Scotland; all the children had bare feet. Coming back caught up Miss Chipman who was riding.⁷³

There undeniably *are* features of the village sketched in these lines which, for better or worse, did disappear from rural England – and perhaps from Scotland slightly later – not long after Forster wrote them: the blacksmith; the barefoot children. The refusal of payment

⁶⁹ *Machine Stops*, pp. 1-22.

⁷⁰ *Life to Come*, p. 7.

⁷¹ The pool is a Pennine or Cheviot cousin of the “Sacred Lake” of *A Room with a View* (ch. 9 p. 126) and the “old chalk pit full of young trees” (1898 Diary, 9 May) outside Cambridge which Forster discovered on a bicycle ride in May 1898 and fictionalised in Chapter 2 of *The Longest Journey*.

⁷² 1898 Diary, 9 August, 22 August. This 1898 visit to Northumberland is not recorded by Stape (see *Chronology*, pp. 5-6).

⁷³ 1898 Diary, 24 August.

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described here is a feature of Forster's later Wild England encounters too.⁷⁴ His subsequent cross-class homosexual relationships drew on a related tendency to see nobility in lower-class men.

Like a band concert in a London park which he attended around the same time, Forster saw the visit he made to Northumberland in the spring of 1904 as part of a literary apprenticeship,⁷⁵ using the northern county as a testing ground for his ability to describe natural beauty. On 14 April, he lyrically described a bicycle ride, during which staring at the sky led him to reflect that "my supreme ignorance of the constellations is a comment on the march of knowledge". He worked on descriptions of coloured skies and plants, for instance detailing the differently coloured buds of trees: "I ate the bud of a horse chestnut, and it was overpowering; like animal tissue [...] the horse chestnut was brown & glutinous". Having escaped the Home Counties, he sought contact with the wilds in remote Northumberland, anticipating Leonard in *Howards End*, who bookishly tries to "get back to the Earth" on the Surrey Hills, inspired by the hero of a George Meredith novel.⁷⁶

In October 1905, after five months in rural Pomerania, Forster returned to Northumberland and looked once more at the colours of nature. Rural beauty left him feeling powerless: "[t]here is no hope of writing down Nature", he thought.⁷⁷ A crux in his work is revealed here: in his fiction he would master social comedy yet continue to frustrate readers such as Roger Fry and F.R. Leavis by keeping a mystical, irrational side to his work, clearly descended from literary Romanticism; he would attempt to replace what in the 1920s he identified as "the worship of vegetation" with something else – a cross-class sexual bond of brotherhood, perhaps – but never entirely succeeded.⁷⁸

Forster's diary for 1904 and 1905, like "Ansell", contains accounts of blood-sports and of urbanites holidaying in the moors of Northumberland. Writing at Felton in 1905, he describes himself watching a dentist and a banker "fishing with prawns for salmon". He connects blood sports with a countryside which, in Lefebvre's terms, has been produced in the interests of commodified leisure, depicting professional men on holiday: "The salmon was killed by being banged on the head with a soda water bottle. I went twice, but I shall not fish myself, partly because getting the tackle is a bother and I should vex people if I didn't like it: partly because I don't like the black water".⁷⁹ The "soda-water bottle", recalling pre-

⁷⁴ See Furbank I, p. 117.

⁷⁵ "Notebook Journal", 8-12 April 1904.

⁷⁶ *Howards End*, ch. XIV p. 86.

⁷⁷ "Notebook Journal", 22 October 1905.

⁷⁸ *Critical Heritage*, p. 296 (Fry); F.R. Leavis, "E.M. Forster" [1938] in Stape, *Critical Assessments*, vol. II pp. 109-22, here 109; *Commonplace Book*, p.37.

⁷⁹ "Notebook Journal", October 1905.

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dinner drinks in country houses, fills the death of the salmon with bathos. This river, with its “black water”, is threatening and alien, lacking the sexual connotations Forster would afterwards give flowing water in *Howards End*. Like the precipice in “Ansell”, it exemplifies something different: what Christopher Tolley has called Forster’s belief that “there was something that escaped his reasoning”,⁸⁰ a dark, pre-human incomprehensibility.

The industrial side of the North of England receives fleeting glances in Forster’s diary for 1904-1907. After his 1904 stay at Acton, he travelled through the North, giving most of his attention to its medieval heritage: the Gothic of York Minster – from which the young agnostic classicist recoils – and the castle on Holy Island, “rising up like Mont S. Michel out of brilliant green grass”.⁸¹ Later, he twice visited Manchester to see his Cambridge friend H.O. Meredith, but did not describe industry or commerce there. On the first visit, he ignores the city itself, describing only the time he spent with Meredith at his home in the southern suburb of Withington.⁸² On the second, two months later, there is again no sense of the North as somewhere distinct from other parts of England, only a description of another city, perhaps less noteworthy than London or Cambridge. He was shown some rather dour tourist sights on this trip: an “exhibition of bibles” including a “few initials illuminated”, and a “Library of Puritan theology”.⁸³

In observing a “curious effect of men & machinery [...] chasing each other as if they were all human” at Sunderland in 1904, Forster perhaps anticipated artistic futurism. But, such fleeting glimpses apart, machines, factories and the industrial working class never enter the diary. He might, consequently, be thought to have ignored the primary reality of the North of England since 1800 or so, but he could alternatively be praised for rendering truthfully his own position in relation to the English North. With some of the immaturity of the young classicist of “Ansell”, he sees the North through the eyes of the past or as a place containing traces of the past, yet without losing an imaginative sense of its far-flung wildness: “The insolence with which [Rome] says ‘I will come so far, & because I will not go farther beyond me will be Barbaria, and I will build a wall between us.’ The wall goes over the hill tops & crags, & north is utter desolation: there is no such boundary in the world”.⁸⁴ From this perspective Hadrian’s Wall seems the “End of the world” and Rome “immense”. Here, too, the North becomes the absolute edge of civilisation, as traced by Davidson in his accounts of

⁸⁰ Christopher Tolley, *Domestic Biography: The Legacy of Evangelicalism in Four Nineteenth-Century Families*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1997, p. 234.

⁸¹ “Notebook Journal”, 20 April 1904.

⁸² “Notebook Journal”, 3 December 1905.

⁸³ “Notebook Journal”, February 1907.

⁸⁴ “Notebook Journal”, 20 April 1904.

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journeys to northern Canada.⁸⁵ The young Forster saw northern England from the point of view of a university classicist; later in life his view broadened, encompassing working-class lives.

After 1904, Forster still found the external characteristics of wildness – the scenery, the distance from London, the sense of being on the edge and the presence of blood sports – in Northumberland, but sought a primeval spirit of Wild England elsewhere. For a while, he focused on Wiltshire. His readers since the days of Fry and Leavis have often found the mystical aspects of his writing, to quote David Dowling, “vague”.⁸⁶ His hopes of finding spiritual salvation in rural England might recall Dave Haslam’s mockery, in a 1990s book about Manchester, of “the idea that real England is rural, peaceful moors, fields and streams” and “cities are a defacement”. Haslam instead asserts “the value of urban industrial life”.⁸⁷ Forster has often been read, mistakenly, as if throughout his life he had been an advocate of the rural over the urban in England. Instead, the “moors [...] and streams” of his Northumberland are anything but reassuring, and city life is as much a liberation as a “defacement”.

Forster, especially in his youth, did imbue the wilder regions of rural England with age-old, mystical significance. Vital to this was his encounter with a “shepherd boy” at Figsbury Ring on 9 September 1904.⁸⁸ He often referred to this encounter in later decades, using it as a way of understanding – and projecting – himself as a writer. But critics have sometimes taken his own construction of this place as a sacred site crucial to his artistic formation too literally. Wilfred Stone compares the meaning of Figsbury for Forster with that of the Marabar Caves in *A Passage to India*: “no history connects with them; their purpose is but dimly known; they seem a silent testimony of an existence before time and place”.⁸⁹ Furbank’s description of the 1904 encounter is characteristically sensitive, concentrating on relations between people, notably Forster’s intuition that the boy possessed “enormous wisdom”, but the county location of the encounter is left in the background.⁹⁰ But as Wilfred Stone points out, after 1904 “the Wiltshire countryside generally”, and not only Figsbury

⁸⁵ Davidson, *Idea of North*, pp. 192-3.

⁸⁶ David Dowling, *Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1985, p. 60.

⁸⁷ Dave Haslam, *Manchester, England: The Story of the Pop Cult City*, Fourth Estate: London, 1999, p. 256.

⁸⁸ Forster, “My Books and I”, p. 364. A crux in the name of this place is comparable to that involved in choosing between Rooksnest and Rooks Nest House as ways of referring to Forster’s boyhood home. Forster always used the plural form “Figsbury Rings”, but official reference sources (e.g. Wiltshire County Council 2008) prefer the singular “Figsbury Ring”.

⁸⁹ Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966, p. 206.

⁹⁰ Furbank I, p. 117.

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Ring, became a quasi-sacred place for Forster filled with a sense of the numinous. His endowment of Figsbury Ring with significance was always undercut for him by a sense that the place *in itself* did not merit this treatment, that it was in fact he who mattered as an artist, not the place, that some other location could have inspired him just as well.

In addition to the encounter with the boy, Forster's diary for September 1904 pays attention to the details of the Wiltshire landscape. On 16 September, a day after meeting the boy's father, Forster wrote: "Today train to Amesbury, and walk back through country which was sometimes fairy land, sometimes the Campagna [...] but not often the real Wiltshire—except a great bare skull of fields half way, surrounded by an edge of distant view."⁹¹ Wiltshire is "bare", even disturbing, suggesting death. Forster took no warm or sentimentalised view of a disappearing rural England. Furbank is almost uncannily empathetic with Forster at times, but in reading "the incident on Figsbury Rings" as a symbol combining "so many events with meaning for him: the ideal English landscape, heroic human quality in a working-class guise, and an inherited handicap (as it might be, homosexuality) courageously overcome" he ignores the multifaceted nature of Forster's encounter with Wiltshire. To understand this, one must turn to *The Longest Journey*.

3.4. Wiltshire in *The Longest Journey*

3.4.1. Symbol

Critics concerned with Forster's treatments of Englishness have found most of their material in *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*.⁹² Within these books, they have emphasised passages of national panegyric, reading these as statements in his own, authorial voice. But Forster never used the tone of these passages – spoken, in effect, by fictional narrators – in other writings, and within these novels the voice of the narrator is questioned or ironised by the presence of other competing voices. The three section titles of *The Longest Journey* are three place names ("Cambridge", "Sawston" and "Wiltshire"), and Stone suggests that triads of various sorts – among them the thesis, antithesis and synthesis posited by G.W.F. Hegel, popular at Cambridge while Forster was an undergraduate – were characteristic of Forster's

⁹¹ Heine, "Afterword" in *Longest Journey*, pp. 291-349, here 334.

⁹² Daniel Born, "Private Gardens, Public Swamps: *Howards End* and the Revaluation of Liberal Guilt", *Novel* 25 (1992): 141-59; Gervais, *Literary Englands*, p. 69; Paul Peppis, "Forster and England" in David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007, pp. 47-61, here 51-3.

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thought.⁹³ Rosenbaum rejects the link between the three place names and the Hegelian triad,⁹⁴ and Dowling, too, finds only “vague symbolism” in the Wiltshire of *The Longest Journey*, which he contrasts with the “real people and real countryside” of rural England in *Maurice*.⁹⁵ Dowling implies that Forster does not make clear what is nationalist and what is quasi-religious about the symbolism of Wiltshire in *The Longest Journey*. According to Paul Peppis, this novel offers Wiltshire “as a cure” for a sick England which is part of “a national allegory”, a remedy involving “a return to the values of brotherhood, honest labour, and national morality that characterise [...] yeoman culture”.⁹⁶ Yet, as Rosenbaum observes, Wiltshire does not resolve or transcend the novel’s other two place terms, and it has as many negative aspects as positive ones.

Wiltshire in *The Longest Journey* is itself made up of three different imaginative strands. As critics have long recognised, the county, and specifically the chalk which underlies it, stands in this novel for the whole of England seen as physical land but also as a metaphysical idea of the native country. Secondly, Wiltshire stands for one of the mental states of the protagonist, Rickie Elliot. Rickie is as “sensitive to places” as to the insides of houses, and consequently starts comparing “Cambridge with Sawston, and either with a third type of existence, to which, for want of a better name, he gave the name of ‘Wiltshire’”.⁹⁷ Starting the novel with a Cambridge mentality, Rickie develops a Sawston one through his marriage to Agnes Pembroke and his job at Sawston School, before finally reaching a Wiltshire outlook close to the moment of his death there. Thirdly, Forster never turns Wiltshire entirely into a symbol or a mental attitude here, but includes in it competing and contradictory facets which refer extra-textually to the complicated non-fictional reality of this county.

The transformation of non-textual place into artistic symbol is less complete in *The Longest Journey* than in *Howards End*. Writing in the early 1920s Virginia Woolf argued that an interior narrative position alert to symbolism was artistically superior to combinatory renderings of non-fictional people and places of the sort produced by, for instance, Arnold Bennett.⁹⁸ Peppis, recently, seems to agree, treating *The Longest Journey* as a trial run for

⁹³ Stone, *Cave and the Mountain*, pp. 189-90. J.M.E. McTaggart of Trinity was the leading Cambridge Hegelian of the era (C.D. Broad, “McTaggart, John McTaggart Ellis (1866-1925)” in ODNB); see also Stone, *Cave and the Mountain*, pp. 60-63). Stewart Ansell in *The Longest Journey* is represented as a Hegelian.

⁹⁴ Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca & London, 1994: 246.

⁹⁵ Dowling, *Bloomsbury Aesthetics*, p. 60.

⁹⁶ Peppis, “Forster and England”, p. 52.

⁹⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 17 p. 155. See above in my chapter on Sawston and suburbia.

⁹⁸ Virginia Woolf, “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” [1924] in S.P. Rosenbaum (ed.), *A Bloomsbury Group Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1993, pp. 233-49.

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Howards End.⁹⁹ But nationalistic symbolism in *The Longest Journey* coexists with and is even undermined by a complex loco-referentiality based on the specifics of Wiltshire. This has many components: the hierarchical social relations of landowner, servant and tenant at Cadover; the landscape of the county, typified by the appearance of a “little valley of elms and cottages” after Rickie and Stephen Wonham have traversed “a great bald skull, half grass, half stubble” as they ride from Cadover towards Salisbury;¹⁰⁰ the roads and railway lines which cross the county, connecting south-western England with London; the city of Salisbury itself; the idealistic social experimentation at Cadover of Tony Failing, continued variously by his widow Emily and by Stephen; and the family home of Rickie’s friend Stewart Ansell in an unnamed town which perhaps could be identified with Andover or Trowbridge or Devizes: the exact direction in which it lies is not stated, though it is clearly on the other side of Salisbury Plain from Cadover.

Wiltshire’s symbolic association in *The Longest Journey* with England as a whole relates to the chalk geology of the county. Chalk is first heard about close to Cambridge, in the dell visited by Rickie and his friends, to which he later returns with Agnes. This dell has grown up inside “a scar of chalk”; there, for the couple, it is “neither June nor January”, since the “chalk walls barred out the seasons”.¹⁰¹ At Cadbury Rings, the novel’s fictionalised version of Figsbury Ring, Rickie is “reminded for a moment of that chalk pit near Madingley, whose ramparts excluded the familiar world”.¹⁰² The spot outside Cambridge is a small-scale predecessor of the wild land of Wiltshire which in certain passages of *The Longest Journey* underpins a wild and ancient England, but also seems to shut out and so deny the reality of the world outside. In parallel to this, Rickie’s own short stories are inspired by a moment of nature worship on the chalk Gog Magog Downs, within strolling distance of Cambridge.¹⁰³ These stories, like the dell, are small-scale, socially restricted shadows of authentic wildness – Stephen, reading Agnes’s summary of the stories on the roof of Cadover, thinks of them as “cant”¹⁰⁴ – but they are also genuine attempts to grasp primitive truths which Agnes and her Sawston ilk cannot comprehend.

The central portrait of chalky Wiltshire as symbolic heart of England is to be found in Chapters 11 to 13 of *The Longest Journey*, towards the end of the first part of the novel, entitled “Cambridge”. It seems that Forster always intended this section to carry considerable

⁹⁹ Peppis, “Forster and England”, pp. 51-3. On *Howards End* as a development from *The Longest Journey* see also Leavis 1998: 114; Dowling, *Bloomsbury Aesthetics*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 12 p. 111, ch. 12 p. 110.

¹⁰¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 2 p. 18, ch. 7 p. 73.

¹⁰² *Longest Journey*, ch. 13 p. 128.

¹⁰³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 7 p. 71. In non-textual reality, these hills are close to the Cambridgeshire village of Sawston.

¹⁰⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 12 p. 120.

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symbolic meaning, but was not initially sure quite how.¹⁰⁵ As elsewhere in the novel, the symbolic dimension is surrounded by a complex array of place-related detail. Chapter 11 opens with a description of Cadover the house – essentially Acton House transposed into Wiltshire – and of its immediate surroundings. As with Hertfordshire in both *Howards End* and “The Challenge of Our Time”, what Forster emphasises about this particular rural English setting is its non-picturesque quality. The view out through the windows of Cadover, “though extensive, would not have been accepted by the Royal Academy”.¹⁰⁶ Its ordinariness is expressed in terms of the differences between English counties. Cadover’s hillside setting lacks “the beetling romance of Devonshire” or “the subtle contours that prelude a cottage in Kent”, instead presenting itself “crudely, on a huge, bare palm”. Awareness of the differences between counties was something shared by members of the pre-First-World War upper-middle-class, accustomed to spending summers with different friends in various counties. A book Forster was given while an undergraduate, C.J. Cornish’s *Wild England*, may have reminded him of such differences. Forster, whose thoughts about relationships between different social classes were to become so important in his general outlook, perhaps already in writing *The Longest Journey* hoped that allusions to differences between English counties would make a less privileged audience feel included in such circles.¹⁰⁷

Relevant to the treatment of southern English counties in *The Longest Journey* is a short story, “The Curate’s Friend”, published by Forster in the same year. The narrator of this story introduces its setting as Wiltshire, a locality in which he feels uncomfortable: “In those days I liked my country snug and pretty, full of gentlemen’s residences and shady bowers and people who touch their hats. The great sombre expanses on which one may walk for miles and hardly shift a landmark or meet a genteel person were still intolerable to me”.¹⁰⁸ The “snug and pretty” place contrasted with Wiltshire could, as in *The Longest Journey*, be Devon or Kent. Between 1894 and 1901, Forster’s family home had been in Kent, at Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. As for Devon, *The Longest Journey* contains a brief episode set there, recounting an unenjoyable short break Rickie, Agnes and Ansell spend at Ilfracombe, a North Devon seaside resort where Forster had lectured in January and February

¹⁰⁵ In early 1906, Heine (“Afterword” pp. 334-41, 334) writes, Forster “very heavily revised” the manuscript of Chapters 10 to 14 of *The Longest Journey*, deleting what he would later call a “long fantasy-chapter” about an earlier version of Stephen. In the earlier draft, this character is knocked unconscious by a tree after losing his clothes and disturbing a genteel party of picnickers. He becomes “no longer himself but [...] daft, fey, part of the woods”, until, emerging from the forest, he meets Rickie, carrying clothes for him (*Longest Journey*, p. xxiv).

¹⁰⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 11 p. 96.

¹⁰⁷ Cornish, in *Wild England*, attempts to evoke the atmospheres of different English counties, concentrating on their flora and fauna rather than on people or geology.

¹⁰⁸ *Machine Stops*, p. 70.

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1906.¹⁰⁹ Rickie's glimpse of "fangs of slate, piercing an oily sea" on the Devon coast during a solo walk from Ilfracombe is an encounter with the sublime in rural England which is closely comparable to the regionally-specific environments hymned by Cornish.¹¹⁰ Afterwards, Rickie and Agnes travel by train back to Sawston through "the Virgilian counties": Wiltshire and neighbours such as Berkshire.¹¹¹ The discomfort of the narrator of "The Curate's Friend" with Wiltshire has a parallel in *The Longest Journey*, in the attitude to her surroundings of Mrs Failing. She regrets Stephen's desire to spend his time in "country like that" and, looking from her arbour through the rain towards Cadbury Rings, sees only a "grave sullen down".¹¹²

As well in terms of its landscape, Forster locates Cadover socially. His narrating voice surveys the locality, beginning with the architecture and situation of the house itself, moving on to the nearby Cadbury Rings, then ending with "the church and the farm" which, "[b]etween them [...] ruled the village": "if a man desired other religion or other employment he must leave".¹¹³ Forster regarded this arrangement as the classic social form of a rural England dominated by an alliance between a landowner and the Church of England; it is the order which the 1930s "Abinger Pageant" would present as having existed since the Norman Conquest.

In Chapter 12 of *The Longest Journey*, Rickie and Stephen move through the Wiltshire landscape on horseback. A contrast is developed is between the "skull" of bare land above, with no views because none of the slopes are steep enough (this is not somewhere scenic like the Lake District), with only one landmark, the spire of Salisbury Cathedral moving "very slightly, rising and falling like the mercury in a thermometer", and the narrow tree-lined valley filled with "elms and cottages" that they drop down into from there. In the same chapter, Forster's narrating voice describes the Wiltshire countryside in terms of its colours, suggesting an image that is painterly but not at all cosy: it has "enormous" fields like those "on the Continent", with "[t]he green of the turnips, the gold of the harvest, and the brown of the newly turned clods [...] each contrasted with morsels of grey down" to give a "pale, or rather silvery" "general effect [...] for Wiltshire is not a county of heavy tints".¹¹⁴

After this, Rickie has a vision of England on Cadbury Rings. The land is described as underpinned by "unconquerable chalk", the primal whiteness of England which emerges

¹⁰⁹ *Chronology*, p. 24.

¹¹⁰ Cornish, *Wild England*, pp. 15-61, 101-16, 340-60; *Longest Journey*, ch. 19 p. 176.

¹¹¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 19 p. 176.

¹¹² *Longest Journey*, ch. 10 p. 89.

¹¹³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 11 p. 97.

¹¹⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 12 p. 109. The landscape of the county is viewed similarly in a poem written by Forster in 1909 ending with the lines "And Wiltshire will be mine at last". See Furbank I pp. 177-8.

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wherever grass is worn, and then Rickie has “the whole system of the country” spread before him:

Chalk made the dust white, chalk made the water clear, chalk made the clean rolling outlines of the land, and favoured the grass and the distant coronals of trees. Here is the heart of our island: the Chilterns, the North Downs, the South Downs radiate hence. The fibres of England unite in Wiltshire.¹¹⁵

As a symbol of England, chalk links regional specifics with the totality of the nation. It is a characteristic rock of southern England between Dorset in the west and Kent in the east.¹¹⁶ Forster thus ignores northern and western regions of England (let alone Scotland, Wales and Ireland) in his view of what, both here and in “The Curate’s Friend”,¹¹⁷ he calls “our island”. Critics have disagreed about this passage, George H. Thomson describing it as “splendid”, but Dowling seeing it as an embodiment of vagueness, deeply suspect.¹¹⁸ Certainly it has an air of slightly strident and gushy patriotism. A key crux in studies of Forster’s earlier fiction is the question of how such passages ought to be read: the fiction Forster wrote as a young man communicates outside its own time and place but his “narrative feats quite often relate intimately” as Frank Kermode has recognised “to his historical period”.¹¹⁹

In addition to chalk as a geological basis, in *The Longest Journey* Forster uses rivers in his symbolic account of England. Rivers are the story-tellers and characters in Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*, the “incomparable” Jacobean poem alluded to by Forster in *Howards End* when epitomising the place specifics of Hertfordshire.¹²⁰ On the Rings, Rickie sees “how all the waters converge at Salisbury”. Similarly, when Stephen is shunted off-stage in Chapter 14 by being sent “to the sea”, he will walk through the night along the Avon; leaving, he follows “the river into darkness”.¹²¹

In moments such as these, England is seen as a mystically unified whole, the chalk downs like a crown with rivers flowing in all directions. Yet however memorable they are, Forster’s characteristic treatment of Wiltshire’s relationship to the rest of England has instead to do with its specificity and the variety of England as a whole.

¹¹⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 13 p. 126.

¹¹⁶ ‘Albion’, an alternative name for England, comes from the White Cliffs of Dover as viewed by new arrivals from across the channel such as Romans and Saxons (OED2: *Albion* n).

¹¹⁷ *Machine Stops*, p. 69.

¹¹⁸ George H. Thomson, “The Italian Romances” [1967] in Harold Bloom (ed.), *E.M. Forster*, Chelsea House: New York, 1987, pp. 27-45, here 44; See also Frederick C. Crews, “*The Longest Journey* and the Perils of Humanism” in Stape, *Critical Assessments*, vol. III pp. 57-73, here 65-6. Dowling, *Bloomsbury Aesthetics*, p. 60.

¹¹⁹ Frank Kermode, “Here She Is”, *London Review of Books*, 6 October 2005, pp. 13-14.

¹²⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XXIII p. 142.

¹²¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 14 pp. 137, 138.

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Rickie's first impression of the rings is that they are "curious rather than impressive". This anticipates a seemingly casual remark by a character very different from Rickie, Henry Wilcox in *Howards End*, who calls the Six Hills in the novel's fictional Hertfordshire village of Hilton "curious mounds".¹²² The Six Hills, like Cadbury Rings and the earthworks of "The Curate's Friend", relate in a mysterious way to an underlying English national spirit:

British? Roman? Danish? Saxon? The competent reader will decide. The Thompson family knew it to be far older than the Franco-Prussian war.¹²³

Opposite the village, across the stream, was a small chalk down, crowned by a beech copse and a few Roman earthworks. (I lectured very vividly on those earthworks: they have since proved to be Saxon.)¹²⁴

The Six Hills in *Howards End* are explained by the narrator as "Danish tumuli" (Margaret later conjectures that they are "tombs of warriors").¹²⁵ All three, the Wiltshire sites in "The Curate's Friend" and *The Longest Journey*, and the Hertfordshire one in *Howards End*, are prehistoric sites whose builders and original function are unknown.

Rickie's place encounters in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of *The Longest Journey* involve different modes of travel: first horseback, then walking. "Like all Cambridge-bred liberals of his period", Furbank writes, Forster "was an inveterate country-walker", particularly indulging this passion in rural England during his twenties.¹²⁶ Member of this group used walking as a way of escaping the stuffy indoor world in which most of their lives had been spent and of sharing the place experiences of less privileged people who had until the coming of the railways necessarily moved around on foot.

Then there is riding. A suburbanite rather than a countryman – as a child he walked "on asphalt" before anything else¹²⁷ – and a lame one at that, Rickie is no horseman. Riding, moreover, removes a traveller from reflection on people and places observed in a way that anticipates the car journeys of *Howards End*: arriving at the Rings on foot in Chapter 13, Rickie gets "an idea of" the "whole system of the country [...] that he never got during his elaborate ride".¹²⁸ Recent criticism on Forster concerned to emphasise spatiality has paid attention to the attacks on the motor car in his writings, notably the ones in *Howards End*.¹²⁹

¹²² *Howards End*, ch. XXIV p. 147. The Six Hills are a feature of the non-fictional Stevenage as well.

¹²³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 12 p. 97.

¹²⁴ *Machine Stops*, p. 69.

¹²⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XXIII p. 143, ch. XXXVIII p. 219.

¹²⁶ Furbank I, p. 116. See also Furbank I pp.116-19, 152-6.

¹²⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 2 p. 21.

¹²⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 13 p. 126.

¹²⁹ See e.g. Frederic Jameson, "Modernism and Imperialism" in *The Modernist Papers*, Verso: London

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Such readings assume that what Forster is condemning is modernity in the shape of technology and the urban: “fast, unconnected urban time [...] speeding into the country”, as Elizabeth Outka puts it.¹³⁰ But to understand that in *The Longest Journey* riding a horse is the precise equivalent of car travel in *Howards End* is to reclassify these descriptions as parts of a critique of divisive social privilege. Both riding and motoring are in Forster’s early writings modes of movement that distort spatial relations and obscure the realities of place. Fear of modernity is not, in other words, the key factor.

Almost all commentators on Forster in recent decades have emphasised the mystical leap towards an idea of national identity. This can be appreciative, as among writers such as Jane Brown and Glen Cavaliero who praise his sense of place or his quasi-religious sensitivity to the spirit of place. It can also be critical, as with the Marxist or materialist tradition represented by Daniel Born, Frederic Jameson and Andrew Thacker.¹³¹ A rhapsodic view of the geographical body of the nation appears in Chapter 19 of *Howards End*, in which “system after system of our island” is laid out visually in relation to the Schlegel sisters and their German cousin, who occupy a vantage point on the south coast.¹³² In fact, however, this famous account in *Howards End* of England viewed from the Isle of Purbeck is considerably more ironic than commentators have often thought: national eulogy was something Forster rarely produced. Attention to the spirit of place was something that he knew he had inherited from Laura Forster and earlier Thorntons.¹³³ His writing always embeds symbolic or mystical place in details and contradictions of real place that qualify and ironise it. *Howards End* is the closest thing he produced to a wholly symbolic and mystical view of place, although even there ambiguities and contraries can be found, notably in the treatment of water at Swanage and on Chelsea Embankment.

Rickie himself defines a symbol as something that is “nothing in itself, yet for the moment it stands for some eternal principle”; Mrs Failing afterwards mocks “what you call the ‘symbolic moment’”.¹³⁴ The momentary nature is worth observing: the vision of England

& New York, 2007, pp. 152-69; Andrew Thacker, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism*, Manchester University Press: Manchester & New York, 2003.

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Outka, *Consuming Traditions: Modernity, Modernism, and the Commodified Authentic*, Oxford University Press: New York, 2009, p. 75.

¹³¹ Janes Brown, *Spirits of Place: Five Famous Lives in Their English Landscape*, Viking: London, 2001; Glen Cavaliero, *A Reading of E.M. Forster*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1979; Born, “Private Gardens, Public Swamps”; Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism”; Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*.

¹³² *Howards End*, ch. 19, p. 121. See the discussion of this passage in relation to British national identity in the Edwardian period in Patrick Parrinder, *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from Its Origins to the Present Day*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006, pp. 300-1.

¹³³ “West Hackhurst”, p. 6; *Creator as Critic* p. 112; *Marianne Thornton*, p. 197. See further discussion below in the chapters on Surrey and London.

¹³⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 14 p. 136, ch. 14 p. 137.

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Rickie achieves on the Rings is like one of the fleeting glimpses of eternity that are famously found in the seventeenth-century poems of Henry Vaughan. Place in Forster as a whole is sometimes like this, but more often it is better detected in literal reference – what linguists such as Stephen C. Levinson call indexicality¹³⁵ – than in symbol. In the course of Forster’s career as a writer the symbolic component in place fades until it is almost – but never entirely – nothing. It remains as a breath, a suggestion, an echo, as late as the essay “The Last of Abinger”, constructed in the 1940s from notes taken in the 1920s and 1930s.¹³⁶ For Dowling, the second half of *The Longest Journey* is “cluttered with novelistic fabrications in the form of imagery and symbolic plot”.¹³⁷ Forster, he suggests, tried to make the Rings carry more, symbolically speaking, than they could take. An answer to this, though, is that it is sometimes realism that undoes Modernism – loco-referentiality that undoes place as symbol – and not, as writers since Woolf have often thought, the other way around. The tension in *The Longest Journey* derives from the fact that Cadbury Rings are both a symbol and a minor feature of non-fictional reality, the latter counting for as much as the former.

Concerned as it is with abnormalities of psychological (and physical) development, *The Longest Journey* possesses a characteristically Edwardian creepiness reminiscent of Barrie’s Peter Pan writings, and this, too, works against a symbol-based reading of the novel. Sexual urges and the shadow of death are the dark side of a prosperous, hypocritical world. Rickie’s is a feverish vision and perhaps an unreliable one: it comes to him when he is close to emotional collapse. His physical lameness is often noted, but his mental health is extremely fragile too. His first transcendent moment in the Wiltshire countryside, on horseback with Stephen, turns out to have come to him after falling asleep on horseback; immediately after the revelation that England has the Wiltshire Downs as its spine, Rickie’s momentary happiness is interrupted by Agnes and his aunt; shortly afterwards he faints, losing consciousness again. Back at Cadover Agnes, unimaginative and desperate to be normal, feels herself “menaced by the abnormal” afterwards: “[a]ll had seemed so fair and so simple, so in accordance with her ideas, and then, like a corpse, this horror rose up to the surface”.¹³⁸ In *The Longest Journey*, in a way that critics heretofore have not observed, Forster records a particular moment in European cultural history, also evident in case histories of Sigmund Freud’s such as that of 1909 concerning the child patient he called “Little Hans”, and short stories by Thomas Mann including the 1897 “Little Herr Friedemann”: the moment when a

¹³⁵ Levinson, “Deixis”.

¹³⁶ *Two Cheers*, pp. 358-63.

¹³⁷ Dowling, *Bloomsbury Aesthetics*, p. 56.

¹³⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 14 p. 132.

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leisured bourgeoisie becomes effete and unable to cope with its surroundings.¹³⁹ Forster's novel describes a society with symbols on the brain.

3.4.2. Extra-Textual Reference

As important as its well-known symbolic or metaphoric components in *The Longest Journey* are Wiltshire's multiple metonymic aspects. The landowning society of the county, first of all, is decadent and collusive in the destruction of rural continuity. Mrs Failing, its representative, is a dilettante toying with the memoir she is writing of her late husband, who yet plays the *grand dame* when she goes to church in dishabille, rendering the villagers "shocked, but at the same time a little proud".¹⁴⁰ She is surrounded by modern comforts, such as the "electric bell" she has in her writing arbour and the "pagoda of sandwiches and little cakes" which Rickie brings into the drawing room for tea shortly afterwards.¹⁴¹

A second extra-textual reference is to the transport network of Edwardian England. The road to London from Wiltshire, it is true, seems something out of romanticised historical myth as it passes into "the great wood" separating the two, sprinkling the bushes that flank it with chalk dust. But the Wiltshire chalk is also entered by the railway on Rickie's later return to the county.¹⁴² In Wiltshire, as I learned at Salisbury Cathedral, the railway kills. It is first heard of in the news that "[a]nother child" has been "run over at the Roman crossing"; having fainted at the Rings, Rickie pauses at the level crossing, making Agnes, who hears "the rumble of the train", worry that they will be hit by it; leaping into the railway carriage in sidings at the home town of the Ansell, Stephen is warned by Rickie "[y]ou'll be run over next"; these suggestions foreshadow the eventual death of Rickie himself who dies on the line, saving his half-brother.¹⁴³ Like Hertfordshire, Wiltshire is a county of transit: the routes from London to Wales and western and south-western England pass through it as those northward do the county eulogised in *Howards End*.

Salisbury in *The Longest Journey* is a complex amalgam of old and new. When Stephen reaches it after a horse-ride with Rickie and brawling with a soldier in Chapter 12, the city seems straight out of Hardy, the Cadford villagers using the cart that will later take them home "as a club", just as those from Trantridge do in *Tess*.¹⁴⁴ The house Forster stayed in

¹³⁹ Sigmund Freud, *The 'Wolfman' and Other Cases*, translated from German by Louise Adey Huish, Penguin: London, 2002; Thomas Mann, *'Death in Venice' and Other Stories*, translated from German by David Luke, Vintage: London, 1998, pp. 7-27.

¹⁴⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 13 p. 122.

¹⁴¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 10 p. 85, ch. 10 p. 92.

¹⁴² *Longest Journey*, ch. 13 p. 126, ch. 33 p. 266.

¹⁴³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 10 p. 90, ch. 14 p. 132, ch. 33 p. 263, ch. 34 p. 282.

¹⁴⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 12 p. 116. Salisbury itself features under its own name in Hardy's 1882 novel

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there was located in Salisbury's Victorian sprawl – as opposed to the Cathedral Close, with its sense of ecclesiastical antiquity and grace – and so, like many of the homes Forster passed through in his life, it was essentially suburban. According to the narrator of *The Longest Journey*, the same district was an example of modernity's shortcomings:

[T]he city has strayed out of her own plain, climbed up her slopes, and tumbled over them in ugly cataracts of brick. The cataracts are still short, and doubtless they meet or create some commercial need. But instead of looking towards the cathedral, as all the city should, they look outwards at a pagan entrenchment, as the city should not. They neglect the poise of the earth, and the sentiments she has decreed. They are the modern spirit.¹⁴⁵

The position taken in these lines was never Forster's own, except perhaps in early youth before he went to Cambridge. Their tone echoes the Victorian medievalism of Ruskin and A.W.N. Pugin, and bearing in mind that the novel, especially through the characters of Ansell and Stephen, tends to embrace modern or progressive trends, they might be best seen as a parody of Victorianism, so anticipating the later writings of Bloomsbury Group members such as Lytton Strachey.

The same passage, with its moralistic use of the word "should", briefly anticipates the presentation of urban growth as merciless flux in *Howards End*, a view Forster would in turn abandon after the First World War. Not long before writing *The Longest Journey*, he described the Gothic cathedrals of the North of England in his diary. While accepting that "situation and sentiment" help "Norman Durham", he considered York Minster "a great cow", all the "trickiness and beauties" of which "move me no more than do the muscles and limbs of a dull animal or man".¹⁴⁶ Forster's response to the Minster is that of a classicist Hellenist agnostic; in adulthood he never felt that cities ought to be centred on symbols of Christian worship. The opinion expressed in *The Longest Journey*, that cities ought to be centred on cathedrals, is thus not his own: distance begins to open up between author and narrator. In both *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*, the irony of the passages of reflection in a narrating voice can easily be lost on a reader who takes them as statements by the author himself. The invocation of the earth and the denunciation of "the modern spirit" are no more Forster's own than are the Christian world-view of the remark on Salisbury.

Among the other non-symbolic aspects of Wiltshire is the presence of the army. Stephen drinks with, and then fights a soldier who could resemble one of Hardy's Napoleonic-War

Two on a Tower.

¹⁴⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 33 p. 270.

¹⁴⁶ "Notebook Journal", April 1904.

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era characters.¹⁴⁷ For much of the twentieth century Wiltshire was associated with army manoeuvres, but this link was fairly new when *The Longest Journey* was written, estates on Salisbury Plain beginning to be bought for this purpose by the government only in the 1890s.¹⁴⁸ On Cadbury Rings Mrs Failing contrasts the “decent-seeming” soldiers of the past, believed to be buried under their feet, with “Tommyes from Bulford Camp, who rob the chickens”.¹⁴⁹ Soldiers of the early twentieth-century, in khaki and peaked caps, are evoked here, anticipating Sassoon and T.E. Lawrence. Margaret Schlegel in *Howards End*, unlike Mrs Failing, feels affection for soldiers despite hating war;¹⁵⁰ and in each novel, the imagined soldiers are connected to a key mystical site, the Six Hills of *Howards End* and Cadbury Rings in *The Longest Journey*.

The petit-bourgeois family of Rickie’s philosopher friend Stewart Ansell live close to, but not in Wiltshire. Ansell senior is “a provincial draper of moderate prosperity” in a town to the north or east of Salisbury Plain (while Cadover lies south).¹⁵¹ Staying with the Ansell during a Cambridge Christmas vacation, Rickie visits his aunt at Cadover for the first time in the novel. As noted earlier, Forster does not identify this town with any on the real map – what matters is its provincial status and nothing in the town is described except the Ansell’s shop front with its “curly gold letters that seemed to float in tanks of glazed chocolate”.¹⁵² Reaching Cadover from here involves either being driven across the Plain or going “round by the trains”, and Rickie opts for the latter, which involves changing at Salisbury. Rickie’s last visit to Wiltshire, which ends in his death, also begins at the Ansell’s home town, and here the place from which he starts his journey is identified as being outside the county. After he has been in the train for a while the countryside changes:

He observed that the country was smoother and more plastic. The woods had gone, and under a pale-blue sky long contours of earth were flowing, and merging, rising a little to bear some coronal of beeches, parting a little to disclose some green valley, where cottages stood under elms or beside translucent waters. It was Wiltshire at last. The train had entered the chalk.¹⁵³

The non-fictional Wiltshire is not all chalk. In a reading of this particular county as place in *The Longest Journey*, this passage belongs on the symbolic rather than the metonymic side.

¹⁴⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 12. p. 111-17. Hardy’s novel *The Trumpet Major* is set during the Napoleonic wars and contains soldiers.

¹⁴⁸ D.A. Crowley, “Introduction” in *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 4* [VCH].

¹⁴⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 13 p. 129.

¹⁵⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XXIII p. 143, ch. XXXVIII p. 219.

¹⁵¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 3 p. 29.

¹⁵² *Longest Journey*, ch. 3 p. 30.

¹⁵³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 33 p. 266.

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Finally, there is politics and the threat of revolution. Tony Failing, Rickie's dead uncle, is described as having been a theoretical socialist who attempted agricultural experiments in a vaguely Tolstoyan benevolent landowner fashion.¹⁵⁴ Stephen, before his expulsion from Cadover, develops into a practitioner of more direct action. According to David Gervais, he does "nothing more than behave like Just William",¹⁵⁵ or in other words like a naughty schoolboy, but Forster himself took Stephen's revolutionary potential seriously. Early on, Stephen's response to the death of a child on the railway had been the blunt "[t]here wants a bridge [...] instead of all this rotten talk and the level crossing".¹⁵⁶ Later, to Mrs Failing, the "worst days" of her husband's former "rule" seem "to be returning":

And Stephen had a practical experience, and also a taste for battle, that her husband had never possessed. He drew up a list of grievances, some absurd, others fundamental. No newspapers in the reading-room, you could put a plate under the Thompsons' door, no level cricket-pitch, no allotments and no time to work in them, Mrs. Wilbraham's knife-boy underpaid.¹⁵⁷

The later entries of chalk into *The Longest Journey* are those of Stephen's revolutionary action: after his insistence that the conditions of the poor need changing he picks up "a lump of the chalk" during a conversation with Mrs Failing; then, a few days later, a "lump of chalk" breaks "her drawing-room window". The instrument of landowners' exploitation by landowners in *The Longest Journey* is Mr Wilbraham, the land agent before whom "all society" seems "spread [...] like a map".¹⁵⁸ Wilbraham blames Stephen for the labourers' failure to "settle down", seeing their association as "the germ of a Trades Union".¹⁵⁹ Stephen's "sixpenny books", popularisations of evolutionary theory, are mocked by Mrs Failing, but they are evidence that he, in his way, is as much of a philosopher as Ansell: one, moreover, who is prepared to act in the interests of humanity and not just talk about doing so.¹⁶⁰ The books he reads have emerged from the urban industrialised environment which developed in the nineteenth century, the environment also occupied by another positive Forster character, the elder Mr Emerson in *A Room with a View*.

No relationship of good and bad or true and false between the rural and the urban is

¹⁵⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 10 pp. 97-8.

¹⁵⁵ Gervais, *Literary Englands*, p. 68.

¹⁵⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 10 p. 95.

¹⁵⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 244. In 1905, in a railway carriage between Hunstanton in Norfolk and Manchester, a poor woman told Forster about a child of hers who had died soon after her family had been forced to change lodgings at very short notice in the middle of winter and move into a house where you could "put a plate under the door" ("Notebook Journal", 3 December 1905).

¹⁵⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 11 p. 97.

¹⁵⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 243.

¹⁶⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 11 p. 103, ch. 10 p. 89.

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evident in Forster's writing, not even in that of his twenties, when he sought symbols of the true England in aspects of the countryside. Stephen may use rural examples in his final exchange with Herbert Pembroke, indicating "up behind where the Plain begins and you get on the solid chalk", but his point is that there is "one world", not the supposed world in miniature that Sawston School claims to be, and that it must include urbanites and suburbanites as well as dwellers in the countryside.¹⁶¹ In what is now the world of Mrs Failing and Mr Wilbraham, the Thompson family are perhaps fortunate to be ejected from the land they have occupied for centuries, ending up dispersed to "various parts of London".¹⁶²

Forster's walking trips in Wiltshire continued in the years following the publication of *The Longest Journey*. They are chronicled in letters to friends from undergraduate days such as Malcolm Darling and R.C. Trevelyan. Writing to Darling in October 1909, he reports a walk with Hilton Young through "black night and torrential rains" to Young's cottage on the downs of northern Wiltshire by way of Stonehenge. En route, Forster observed "the glare of Salisbury, which could be seen for nearly fifteen miles upon the southern sky".¹⁶³ Energetically though he might have tried to escape within counties like Wiltshire, then, he was becoming aware that the southern England he inhabited was inescapably structured by cities and modern technology. Attempts to make contact with the county continued in 1909 and 1910. In 1909 he wrote a poem – something he did rarely – hymning the "tints" of the countryside near Salisbury, "[p]ale green, pale salmon, ochre pale" and declaring that having seen this landscape he will possess the county in his "blood and ticking brain".¹⁶⁴ In August of that year he stayed at Young's cottage once more, writing to Trevelyan of a walk "in furious guise along the Icknield Way", and calling the tour "wild" in a letter to his friend Syed Ross Masood, in which he also claimed that it was "healthy mysticism" to be "alone [...] in country so deserted that all day I never passed through a village".¹⁶⁵ Yet communing with nature seems gradually to have lost its attractions, and he had few holidays afterwards in which he roughed it as in the years between 1904 and 1910. The "grass-grown track" visible through the window behind Stephen Wonham, and the hillside where he will sleep out of doors with his child at the end of the novel, lost their symbolic potency for Forster surprisingly rapidly after *The Longest Journey*.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 35 p. 286.

¹⁶² *Longest Journey*, ch. 34 p. 279.

¹⁶³ *Selected Letters I*, p. 97.

¹⁶⁴ *Furbank I*, pp. 178-9.

¹⁶⁵ *Selected Letters I*, pp. 112, 113.

¹⁶⁶ *Longest Journey*, pp. 283, 288-9.

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3.5. Oniton in *Howards End*; Northumberland in “Arctic Summer” (1910-12)

As well as in Wiltshire, Forster took country walking holidays in Shropshire before the First World War. Here, in the far west of the English Midlands on the border with Wales, he sought the country described by Housman in *A Shropshire Lad*. These trips had an impact on the portion of *Howards End* which takes place at Oniton, modelled on the non-fictional village of Clun in south-western Shropshire. Oniton is the site where Helen Schlegel and Leonard Bast have their single night together; she gets pregnant: it is a site associated with freedom from social constraints and with fertility.¹⁶⁷

Oniton’s precise location within England has usually seemed unimportant. Outka writes that in *Howards End* Forster provides a “scathing critique” on Edwardian “commodified authenticity”, of “neo-nostalgic homes”, and negotiates, partly collusively, with the packaging and sale of what purports to be an authentically idyllic rural England.¹⁶⁸ She reproduces early-twentieth-century advertisements by house-builders to support her argument that *Howards End* illustrates the transformation into commercially-sold commodities of the whole of England, even the remote bits. Henry Wilcox wants to purchase a country estate ready-made, rather than put down authentic roots, and this desire contrasts, in the novel’s Shropshire chapters, with the view seemingly shared by Forster’s narrating voice and the character of Margaret that Oniton survives from a time “when architecture was still an expression of the national character”.¹⁶⁹

But writing to Plomer in 1963, Forster suggested an altogether different view of things from Outka’s, one in which the question of locality becomes much more important. Oniton is “some where” Forster wrote then, answering Plomer’s question about whether it has a real-life original by saying that Oniton “is *Clun*”.¹⁷⁰ The name “Oniton”, I would suggest, is a combination of “*Clunton*”, the opening word of the epigraph to Poem 50 of *A Shropshire Lad*, with the name of the first of the local “valleys of streams of rivers” (“Ony and Teme and Clun”) mentioned in the poem.¹⁷¹ The flow of a river appears in both the poem and the Shropshire chapters of *Howards End*. Forster, though, seems more convinced than Housman that rivers could have a symbolic value. Although Housman alludes to human displacement

¹⁶⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XXV p. 149 – XXIX p. 178. On Clun see Pevsner, *Shropshire*, pp. 107-9.

¹⁶⁸ Outka, *Consuming Traditions*, p. 71. Outka conceives nostalgia broadly, including in it not just longing for the past but also fondness for survivals of the past into the present.

¹⁶⁹ *Howards End*, ch. XXV p. 152.

¹⁷⁰ *Selected Letters II*, p. 287. Plomer had himself produced work on the same borderland region, editing the diaries of the Victorian clergyman Francis Kilvert,

¹⁷¹ A.E. Housman, *Collected Poems*, John Carter (ed.), Cape: London, 1967, p. 53.

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in the phrase “luggage I’d lief set down”,¹⁷² which anticipates the rootless lives of Tibby Schlegel, Henry and Leonard in *Howards End*, as well as Stephen’s job of moving the displaced around London as a removal man in *The Longest Journey*, the sense in Poem 50 of *A Shropshire Lad* is that the specifics of place do not matter, that whether “Thames” or “Teme is the river” and “London” or “Knighton the town”, the only true way to settle in one place is to die. Death, for Housman, is “a quieter place than Clun”, perhaps indicating to Forster that there he would find somewhere especially quiet, somewhere particularly safe from the changes of the modern world. Place specifics mattered to Forster, and Oniton’s location is as close as England gets to the authentically wild; this needs to be distinguished from what Outka is interested in: the effect that, given the chance, businessmen like Henry will have on such places.

This relationship with the work of another writer is extra-textual as well as intertextual: reading Housman prompted Forster to take walking tours on the Welsh border of England in Shropshire, in the springs of 1907 and 1909.¹⁷³ The 1963 letter to Plomer indicates that it was during the second of these tours, a walk from west to east from over the Welsh border and ending in Ludlow, that the inspiration for Oniton came to him. Housman was not a Shropshireman, but Forster did not know this in 1909. If his later memoir of Housman is to be believed, he knew little of Housman personally, despite having responded powerfully to his verse, until the poet was appointed Professor of Latin at Cambridge in 1911.¹⁷⁴ In a sense, then, the Oniton chapters of *Howards End* recall a literary pilgrimage; in a sense, too, they are an attempt to reconstruct the world of *A Shropshire Lad*.

Henry introduces Oniton by describing its geographical location, “up towards Wales”:¹⁷⁵ it is this very remoteness that makes him first revel in it – it is authentically rural and it could never be mistaken for a suburban villa – and then swiftly tire of it as he realises that it will cut him off from his business and social lives. The episode actually set at Oniton, is approached topographically across England, rather than by a change of scene, suggesting that its location on the map matters. Margaret, accompanying friends of the Wilcoxes and Helen, together with the Bastis, both set out thither from the London railway terminus of Paddington.¹⁷⁶ Margaret’s party travel on “a Great Western express” and go past Oxford, whose colleges are misidentified by her philistine companions. On the border of England and

¹⁷² Housman, *Collected Poems*, p. 54.

¹⁷³ Furbank I, p. 153; *Chronology*, pp. 27, 34 Forster also took a walking tour in Wales with H.O. Meredith in April 1910 as “a break from writing *Howards End*” (*Chronology*, p. 37), but he had already had the inspiration for the Oniton chapters by then.

¹⁷⁴ See *Creator as Critic*, p. 126.

¹⁷⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XV p. 99.

¹⁷⁶ *Howards End*, ch. XXV p. 150, ch. XXVI p. 162.

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Wales, Oniton occupies the boundary “between the Anglo-Saxon and the Kelt” which, for Forster’s ironised narrating voice, is the boundary “between things as they are and as they ought to be”,¹⁷⁷ or, put another way, between Henry and Helen, which is where Margaret stands. Once again, geographic positioning is inseparable from the central ethical dilemmas of the book: place is not mere background.

Although Shropshire in Margaret’s eyes lacks “the reticence of Hertfordshire”, it is not presented as wilderness but as a place where older social hierarchies – the relations of landlords, clergy, servants and tenants; the “genuine country-house”, even if it is “clumsy and a little inconvenient”¹⁷⁸ – survive. During the nineteenth century, many of the wilder parts of Britain – most notably the Highlands of Scotland – were cleared of people and turned into playgrounds for the rich.¹⁷⁹ In their country walks, Forster’s contemporaries turned away from the hunting, shooting and fishing tastes of an earlier generation, tastes recorded in the paintings of Sir Edwin Landseer. Shropshire in *Howards End* shares things socially with Wiltshire in *The Longest Journey*. The clergy and the landed gentry, ostensibly the traditional order in rural England, are present, but many of the landowners are not what they seem: the Failings of *The Longest Journey* are transplanted metropolitan intellectuals, while the closest Margaret gets to the local squirearchy at Oniton is sitting next to a knighted “Garden Seeds” magnate.¹⁸⁰

The landscape around Oniton, meanwhile, is neither conventionally beautiful nor teeming with game:

The Motor carried them deep into the hills. Curious these were rather than impressive, for their outlines lacked beauty, and the pink fields on their summits suggested the handkerchiefs of a giant spread out to dry. An occasional outcrop of rock, an occasional wood, an occasional ‘forest,’ treeless and brown, all hinted at wildness to follow, but the main colour was an agricultural green. The air grew cooler; they had surmounted the last gradient, and Oniton lay below them with its church, its radiating houses, its castle, its river-girt peninsula.¹⁸¹

Expected but never quite present, “wildness”, as elsewhere in Forster, seems always to be in retreat. Oniton Grange, a “grey mansion, unintellectual but kindly”, stands next to the ruined castle in the centre of the tiny market town, with the river winding round it on “three

¹⁷⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XXVI p. 165.

¹⁷⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XXVI p. 158, ch. XXV p. 151.

¹⁷⁹ For example on the extensive Sutherland estate in the far north-west of Scotland in the 1810s and 1820s. See Rosalind Mitchison, “Scotland 1750-1850” in Thompson, *Social History of Britain*, vol. 1 pp. 155-207, here 191-2.

¹⁸⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XXVI p. 156.

¹⁸¹ *Howards End*, ch. XXV p. 152.

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sides”.¹⁸² The Wilcoxes and their attendants rush in and out of this locality so quickly that the reader can barely get sight of any local people: Margaret’s neighbour at dinner is simply a plutocrat, while the servants do not even know one another’s names,¹⁸³ all of them having recently been hired from elsewhere. The closest any of Oniton’s temporary denizens get to local people is when a cottager’s daughter screams in anger at them after the car bringing Margaret and the others from the railway station at Shrewsbury runs over her cat.¹⁸⁴

Henry’s next scheduled activity after leaving Oniton is grouse-shooting in Scotland.¹⁸⁵ Places where the rich enjoyed blood sports, like the Highlands and like Northumberland with its salmon-fishing and otter-hunting, did not contain the sort of rural wildness which attracted Forster.¹⁸⁶ To some extent he shared Cornish’s desire to find the unknown corners of rural England and introduce them to a largely urban audience. Cornish sometimes relishes inaccessibility, beginning his account of Wild England by asserting that “[t]here are still a few patches of the earth’s surface left in England to which no ‘Access to Mountains Bill’ or funicular railway will give admission”.¹⁸⁷ Forster differs from Cornish in seeking his Wild England not so much in places that are uncultivated and visually spectacular as in old-fashioned, seemingly unpicturesque rural areas not attractive to the eyes of visitors such as the clergyman narrator of “The Curate’s Friend”. These were places which through stagnation such as that affecting Wiltshire preserved social features swept away elsewhere, notably an old-established, non-deferential tenantry as exemplified by the Thompsons of *The Longest Journey*.

Oniton is a paradox: as wild as England gets, as far as possible from anywhere else in England – “much, much too far away”, in Henry’s words¹⁸⁸ – yet still a place where “wildness” is only “hinted at”, not unambiguously present. It has its mystical side, contained in the age-old flow of waters down from the Welsh hills which subtly parallel the tryst there between Helen and Leonard and the revelation of Henry’s past with Jacky Bast.¹⁸⁹ Clun today is an established beauty spot, at the heart of the protected Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding National Beauty, less famous than the Lake District but associated with a poet nevertheless, albeit one who only imagined and holidayed in the place rather than ever living

¹⁸² *Howards End*, ch. XXV p. 154.

¹⁸³ *Howards End*, ch. XXVI p. 158.

¹⁸⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XXV p. 152.

¹⁸⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XXVI p. 158, ch. XXVI p. 161.

¹⁸⁶ At the end of an otter hunt the March brothers in *Arctic Summer* are described as “lucky enough” to witness “the kill” (“Arctic Summer”, p. 173).

¹⁸⁷ Cornish, *Wild England*, p. 15.

¹⁸⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XX p. 120.

¹⁸⁹ *Howards End*, ch. XXVII p. 172. I discuss the river at Oniton in considering the flows and flux of water throughout *Howards End*, in my chapter on Forster’s London.

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there. Forster often denied or mocked beauty-spot status, as when he hymned the undramatic Hertfordshire countryside around Rooksnest or struggled with pretty Surrey. Yet the very fact that he was drawn to places which were somehow – chiefly socio-economically – survivals means that many of the sites in his Wild England have since become officially protected. The plot of *Howards End* leaves Oniton as rapidly as does Henry Wilcox, Forster himself seeming to have left little more in Shropshire than Henry, raising “a little dust” with his walking boots as the Wilcoxes do with their motor-cars.¹⁹⁰

“Arctic Summer” is an unfinished novel Forster planned as a follow-up to his success with *Howards End* but abandoned by 1912, writing *Maurice* instead. It has attracted little attention from critics,¹⁹¹ Forster resurrected the first five chapters for a reading at Aldeburgh in 1951, claiming then that ““Arctic Summer”” had suffered from his not having “settled what was going to happen, and that is why the novel remains a fragment”.¹⁹² The story opens at the railway station in Basel, junction of northern and southern Europe,¹⁹³ where a young British army officer, Clesant March, saves an intellectual, Martin Whitby, from falling under the wheels of a train. March, in the portion of “Arctic Summer” which Forster did not read out at Aldeburgh and which he there called unsuccessful, is described as coming from a Northumberland family who live near the Pennine uplands, and whose conservatism and fondness for prayer sit alongside imagery of them as retro-medieval, as modern equivalents of knights and abbesses. From Basel the plot takes Clesant and the Cambridge-educated civil servant Whitby further south, to Lombardy. In “Arctic Summer”, dramatised relations between North and South, especially the journey south into continental Europe from a point in northern England, anticipate Lawrence’s *Women in Love*. There, the character of Gerald Crich is “pure as an arctic thing” and “full of northern energy”: he stands for an idea of North.¹⁹⁴ It so happens that Forster and Lawrence’s only period of regular contact was during a few years after “Arctic Summer”.

“Arctic Summer”, like *Howards End*, is based on a spiritual antithesis within the English

¹⁹⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XXIX p. 178.

¹⁹¹ Exceptions are S.P. Rosenbaum, *Georgian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group Volume 3*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 2003, pp. 62-93; Christopher Lane, “Forsterian Sexuality” in Bradshaw, *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 104-19, here 108-10.

¹⁹² Cited in Heine “Editor’s Introduction” in E.M. Forster, *‘Arctic Summer’ and Other Fiction*, Elizabeth Heine and Oliver Stallybrass (eds), Edward Arnold: London, 1980, pp. vii-liv, here xi.

¹⁹³ Forster had earlier written about this continental north-south frontier Forster in the short story “The Eternal Moment” (*Machine Stops*, pp. 155-83), its setting based on Cortina d’Ampezzo in the Alps at the frontier between Italian and German culture.

¹⁹⁴ D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* [1920], David Farmer et al. (eds), Penguin: London, 2007, ch. I p. 14; ch. XVI p. 201. Rupert Birkin in *Women in Love*, both a partner and an opponent of Crich’s, is once compared to “an Egyptian Pharaoh”. (Lawrence, *Women in Love*, ch. XXIII p. 318), suggesting a deeper North-South opposition between the two men.

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upper-middle class. In 1951, Forster claimed that it juxtaposed “the civilized man who hopes for an Arctic Summer, and the heroic man who rides into the sea”.¹⁹⁵ The unfinished novel, attentive to fighting, warfare and heroism, connects an idea of the northern to a hardness or bloodiness within England that is alien to the rational, forward-looking and very southern Treasury official Martin. The book’s title, too, refers to extreme northern zones of the earth, even if the novel’s action goes no further north than Northumberland, itself admittedly the furthest north point in England and containing the compass point in its own name. Martin outlines his striving for an Arctic summer in the first chapter of the main version:

My new era is to have no dawn. It is to be a kind of Arctic Summer, in which there will be time to get something really <great> \important/ done [...] Dawn implies twilight, and we have decided to abolish them both. Several societies exist for the purpose, to none of which you have yet subscribed.¹⁹⁶

Martin, like Forster’s friend and mentor Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson – associated with the founding of the League of Nations – dreams of a lasting peace, a time for thought. The fictional character’s northern ideal derives from metropolitan discussion, like, in *Howards End*, the Schlegel sisters’ ideal of a perfected world. It is an abstract, theoretical removal of the barriers to pure thought which exist in the world, barriers such as war and greed.

Forster was himself caught between the notion of a perfectible world driven by the planning of intellectuals, a Cambridge world perhaps, and a ‘real’ world in which human striving, the material, could not be abolished, needing to be accommodated by thinkers such as Martin and himself. This pairing relates to the “Anglo-Saxon” and “Kelt” relationship on the border between England and Wales in the Oniton chapters of *Howards End*.¹⁹⁷ Martin’s Arctic summer must be an illusion because, while near the pole the summer day seems endless, the northern summer is brief and rapidly gives way to the seemingly endless darkness of the northern winter.

Opposed to Martin and his wife are Clesant and his brother Lance. The March boys hunt, are rough, shed blood; their family is portrayed as medieval in a way that recalls the attention to Gothic and medieval romance in Forster’s diary for 1904: their mother has “something of the Abbess about her”; Clesant and Lance are “the knights”.¹⁹⁸

Presently they heard the beautiful cry of otter hounds, and saw the hunt in the bend of the river below them. Down they went. They were lucky enough to come in for a kill,

¹⁹⁵ Cited in Heine, “Editor’s Introduction” in Forster, *Arctic Summer’ and Other Fiction*, p. xi.

¹⁹⁶ “Arctic Summer”, p. 125.

¹⁹⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XXVI p. 165.

¹⁹⁸ “Arctic Summer”, p 162.

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which seemed to them a pleasant spectacle. When the corpse had been torn to pieces, and they had helped to blood the rector's little boy [...] they proceeded on their ride.¹⁹⁹

Forster himself, indifferent to fishing and hopeless with a gun, preferred killing otters to other animals.²⁰⁰ Otter-hunting is the only blood sport he allows Stephen, primal man of *The Longest Journey*, to take part in.²⁰¹ Blood sports recur but, perhaps ironically, a phrase like “lucky enough to come in for a kill” views them with callousness, as a necessary part of existence.

“Arctic Summer”, perhaps developing the sense of Rome as far away yet powerful which Forster had once felt on Hadrian's Wall, contains multiple north-south divides: that of Europe and that of England sitting alongside the hoped-for endless summer day. Perhaps Forster abandoned it because he sensed that it shared with apprentice pieces such as “Ralph and Tony” and “Nottingham Lace” an anxiety about the values of the public school and about the sexual morality panic which was widespread in the public school and the Cambridge of the 1890s,²⁰² In all of these works, Forster can neither be polite about the values of the public school as he was in his 1898 diary nor securely beyond them as he became in the 1930s and afterwards.

3.6. Penge, Scudder and the Greenwood in *Maurice*

Maurice is concerned with Wild England in that it is a rejection of conventional society: the class system, politics, commerce and money. In a hostile yet perceptive 1971 review, Julian Mitchell argued that Forster was wrong to end it as he did because “[s]ocial acceptance has always been and still is the only possible serious objective for homosexuals”.²⁰³ Homosexuality, for Forster, was attractive in part as an escape from society: its outlaw status was something he did not only regret but also enjoyed. Post-Wolfenden, homosexuals in Britain gradually became incorporated into society rather than being outsiders to it; ultimately they became perceived as just another variety of normal person. The diverse post-1970 readings of Forster which concentrate on his sexuality have tended – mistakenly, I think – to position him as privately tortured or struggling and have therefore implied that if

¹⁹⁹ “Arctic Summer”, p. 173.

²⁰⁰ E.M. Forster, “Uncle Willie” [c. 1922] in *Longest Journey*, pp. 354-60, here 357.

²⁰¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 22 p. 187.

²⁰² Forster, *‘Arctic Summer’ and Other Fiction*, 1980, pp. 67-92, 1-66. On this panic see e.g. Ian Anstruther, *Oscar Browning: A Biography*, John Murray: London, 1983, p. 7.

²⁰³ Julian Mitchell, “Fairy Tale” [1971] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 437-8.

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he had been born in a more tolerant age he might have been happier.²⁰⁴ Mitchell argues that Forster retards the homosexual heroes of *Maurice* in a sort of childhood by allowing them to escape together at the novel's conclusion. But Mitchell overlooks here an important tradition that *Maurice* fits into: the tradition – also profoundly concerned with the threatened wilds of England – represented by George Borrow's *Lavengro* in the 1850s and Richard Jefferies's *Bevis* in the 1880s. Rather than making him reform society, Forster has the homosexual hero leave it. This means a rejection of the whole complex of places with which the present study has so far been concerned: the prosperous suburbs; London; Cambridge; the country house world represented in *The Longest Journey* by Cadover. Forster himself never left society, and has even been closely associated with the British Establishment. In many ways, though, this novel is a logical development of the formulations of place found in his earlier novels.

Two of the settings of *Maurice* have to do with Wild England, although one of them is arguably not part of the finished novel. The first is the 'county' world of the Durham family, and the second the "haggard country" where Maurice and Clive are encountered working as woodcutters by Maurice's sister Kitty in the original epilogue.²⁰⁵ The Durhams, Clive's family, are members of the landed gentry who play the part of country landowners in a more orthodox way than do the eccentric Failings of *The Longest Journey*. Penge, the home of the Durhams, is not placed in a detailed setting drawn from non-fictional place experience: Cadover in *The Longest Journey* can be understood as Acton House transported from Northumberland to a valley just north-west of Figsbury Ring and there dumped down on a hillside. Penge, in keeping with the sketch-like quality of *Maurice* as a whole, is more briefly described, in two short paragraphs which nonetheless make the house and the family represent a strand in England as a whole: they allegorise the nation, even. *Maurice*, in fact, offers more support than most of Forster's other writings for the spatio-political readings emphasising English national identity as an ideology which have been particularly popular since the early 1990s.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ In this respect writers hostile to homosexuality (e.g. Donald Salter, "That Is My Ticket: The Homosexual Writings of E.M. Forster" [1975] in Stape, *Critical Assessments*, vol. II pp. 199-221) and writers supportive of it (e.g. Christopher Lane, "Betrayal and Its Consolations in *Maurice*, 'Arthur Snatchfold' and 'What Does It Matter: A Morality'" in Robert K. Martin & George Piggford (eds), *Queer Forster*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1997, pp. 167-91; Lane, "Forsterian Sexualities") are surprisingly alike. Shortly after Forster's death George Steiner ("Under the Greenwood Tree" [1971] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 475-82, here 481, 482) called him an "embittered" homosexual, using this assessment as a way of reclassifying him as a "minor master". Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (*Queer Forster*, pp. 18-22) survey later criticism concerned with Forster's sexuality more even-handedly. Forster himself in 1960 had predicted that the Wolfenden Report would not become law (*Maurice*, p. 220), suggesting ambiguously that he hoped it would.

²⁰⁵ *Maurice*, p. 221.

²⁰⁶ E.g. Born, "Private Gardens, Public Swamps"; Parrinder, *Nation and Novel*., pp. 291-302; Peppis,

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Penge is situated “in a remote part of England on the Wilts and Somerset border”.²⁰⁷ The Durhams’ property, readers are told, can be traced back to a “Lord Chief Justice in the reign of George IV” who made a fortune, but subsequent Durhams failed to make or marry money and so “both the house and estate” are by the time of the novel “marked, not indeed with decay, but with the immobility that precedes it”. The setting in landscape of the house itself is detailed plainly and even wearily:

The house lay among woods. A park, still ridged with the lines of vanished hedges, stretched around, giving light and air and pasture to horses and Alderney cows. Beyond it the trees began, most planted by old Sir Edwin, who had annexed the common lands. There were two entrances to the park, one up by the village, the other on the clayey road that went to the station. There had been no station in the old days, and the approach from it, which was undignified and led by the back premises, typified an afterthought of England’s.²⁰⁸

Penge seems bogged down in the clay. Rural England as a historic battle-ground – old Sir Edwin “annexed the common lands” – between landowners and those they have exploited emerges here, as in the outbursts against complacency and inaction on the part of the landed classes which Stephen makes in *The Longest Journey*. The tone anticipates that of Forster’s 1938 pageant play “England’s Pleasant Land”.

In the chapter which introduces Penge, the contrast between two sorts of England is also emphasised. Maurice travels there by train “from his grandfather’s in Birmingham”, a house identified as “Alfriston Gardens, with its cousins and meat teas”. He has, in other words, just left a prosperous bourgeois environment like the Halls’ own. He feels the contrast between the home of his relatives and that of a “[c]ounty” family to be “immense”,²⁰⁹ being confronted with the deference of villagers and political chit-chat, which both make him feel awkward. His decision “to work through all his clothes” while staying there – “[t]hey shouldn’t suppose he was unfashionable” – is a demonstration of class anxiety.²¹⁰ From Maurice’s suburban bourgeois viewpoint “[c]ounty families, even when intelligent” are “alarming”, explaining why he “approached any seat with awe”. ‘County’ is a term for landed gentry families who would be listed in accounts of local property owners: what, in fact, local history until the mid-twentieth century tended to be. Stephen and Flea Thompsons in *The Longest Journey* are neither of them rate-payers, subject to property tax, in Wiltshire, and as such are aligned, even though Stephen has a private-school accent and vocabulary.

“Forster and England”.

²⁰⁷ *Maurice*, ch. XVI p. 69.

²⁰⁸ *Maurice*, ch. XVI p. 69.

²⁰⁹ ‘County’ in its sense “having the social status of county gentry”: OED2: *county* n.1 5.b.

²¹⁰ *Maurice*, ch. XVI p. 170.

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Wilbraham, who works for the ‘county’ in this sense of land as property and money, cannot situate Stephen on the mental map of local society he carries in his head.²¹¹

Clive’s mother links his identity to the county rather than other sub-fields of English place: he “should take his place in the countryside” because “the county” wants him, she claims.²¹² He, however, suspects that “[i]f the county wants anyone it wants a Radical”. In both *A Room with a View* and “West Hackhurst”, Forster alluded during his youth to party political conflicts in the Surrey Hills,²¹³ an area he placed on the frontier dividing Home Counties from Wild England.

Penge is decaying. Maurice, the prosperous Home Counties man at first impressed by Penge, is afterwards disappointed: “the gateposts, the roads [...] were in bad repair, and the timber wasn’t kept properly, the windows stuck, the boards creaked”.²¹⁴ Returning to Penge for “the Park v. Village cricket match” after Clive’s marriage to Anne, Maurice notices that the “sense of dilapidation” there “had increased”: “he had noticed gate posts crooked, trees stifling, and indoors some bright wedding presents showed as patches on a threadbare garment”.²¹⁵ In the decay of Penge, Forster suggests the decline of the landed gentry within England. While readers might find here a reference to the decline of Britain in the world, Forster’s accounts of Penge in the 1932 and 1959 manuscripts of *Maurice* were largely unchanged from those in the 1914 text,²¹⁶ written when Britain still seemed to lead the world. Cricket as a sport is commonly associated with class relations and British imperialism, but the cricket match in *Maurice*, like the one in Meredith’s *Evan Harrington*, instead causes class tensions and anxieties to intensify. It does not support but challenges the supposedly ingrained and harmonious rule of the landed gentry.²¹⁷ Another comparison with the Wiltshire of *The Longest Journey* can be drawn here: there, a village cricket match ends with “the mad plumber shouting ‘Rights of Man!’”, and afterwards Stephen smashes the windows of Cadover.²¹⁸

In *Maurice*, the decline of Penge and the end of a world in which the landed gentry have an easy belief in their own superiority are cheered. Penge, with its pallid inhabitants, creepy atmosphere, is subjected to “pouring rain”. Water comes in through the drawing-room

²¹¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 12 p. 107.

²¹² *Maurice*, ch. XVII p. 77, ch. XX p. 85.

²¹³ “West Hackhurst”, p. 12; *Creator as Critic*, p. 116; *Room with a View*, ch. 2, pp. 37-8. See below, in the chapter on Surrey.

²¹⁴ *Maurice*, ch. XVI p. 72.

²¹⁵ *Maurice*, ch. XXIV p. 142

²¹⁶ See e.g. Philip Gardner, “Textual Notes” in *Maurice*, pp. 225-322, here 236. The first draft of *Maurice* was written between September 1913 and July 1914 (*Chronology*, pp. 50-2).

²¹⁷ *Maurice*, ch. XXXIX.172-6; George Meredith, *Evan Harrington* [1860], Constable: London, 1914, 151-73.

²¹⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 26 p. 215.

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ceiling. “I ring the bell and the servant brings nothing”, Clive says.²¹⁹ This becomes a plot device to bring Alec Scudder indoors. Again, on his final visit to Penge, Maurice is “struck [...] once more” by “how derelict it was, how unfit to set standards or control the future”.²²⁰ The gentry in twentieth-century Britain? Britain’s diminishing international role? Philip Gardner’s Abinger Edition of *Maurice*, which compares the 1914, 1932 and 1959 manuscripts of the novel, shows that Forster’s awareness of such decline precedes the First World War, and so should be compared to the below-the-stairs account of the landed gentry offered in H.G. Wells’s *Tono-Bungay*.²²¹

Maurice finds the “air of settling something” over dinner at Penge the only thing to separate the event from “a suburban evening”.²²² In *The Longest Journey* the severing of the Thompsons from the Cadover estate is ambivalent: they are now free from the world of Wilbraham and Mrs Failing which in effect enslaves them, but are also exiled from the physicality of the land which the novel holds to be a more real England than the “modern spirit” of the outskirts of Salisbury.²²³ Penge contrasts with both the suburban environment of the Halls, unintellectual but spirited, and the more challenging milieu of the book’s urban intellectuals Risley and Miss Tonks. Commentators on *Maurice*, however, have rarely looked beyond its sexual theme and the apparent problem posed by its happy ending.

Alec Scudder, Maurice’s lover, meanwhile, is not a picturesque yokel like Flea Thompson but – like both Ansell in *The Longest Journey* and Leonard in *Howards End*, – comes from a petit-bourgeois family. At Penge, Alec is “an importation – part of the larger life that had come into Penge [...]; he was smarter than old Mr. Ayres the head keeper, and knew it”.²²⁴ Alec has been brought in from outside, rather than coming from a family whose connection with the Durhams stretches back generations. He is Clive’s servant for only five months.²²⁵ Alec’s modernity – his mobility, his mental sharpness, his lack of deference – is a gust of air blowing through Penge from outside. According to Clive, Alec’s father was formerly “the butcher at Osmington”; he comes from a family “publicans, small tradesmen” and Forster’s narrating voice calls Maurice’s initial perception of him as “an untamed son of the woods” erroneous.²²⁶

²¹⁹ *Maurice*, ch. XXIV p. 146.

²²⁰ *Maurice*, ch. XLV p. 208.

²²¹ Gardner, “Textual Notes”, pp. 236, 240; Richard Holmes (*In the Footsteps of Churchill*, BBC Books: London, 2005, p. 126) sees 1914 as the moment when “the squirearchy” lost control of English public life.

²²² *Maurice*, ch. XVI p. 72.

²²³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 33 p. 270.

²²⁴ *Maurice*, ch. XXXVII p. 160.

²²⁵ *Maurice*, ch. XLIII p. 190.

²²⁶ *Maurice*, ch. XL p. 178, ch. XLIII p. 190.

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As Stuart Christie says, Maurice and Alec disappear into the “greenwood” at the end of the novel, but Christie’s interpretation of the Forsterian greenwood as a “‘second world’ of pastoral” cuts it off from real place connections.²²⁷ The greenwood of *Maurice*, it is true, has to be connected with notions of a primeval forest which once covered England and into which it might just be possible for a pair like Maurice and Alec to disappear. Christie is not the only writer on the notion of greenwood in Forster who has viewed it solely as an aspect of the writer’s own mental growth,²²⁸ ignoring the fact that it is also a reference to specific parts of England. This primeval woodland, once covering the whole country, appears in the “great wood” which Rickie in his epiphany of England centred on Wiltshire in *The Longest Journey* sees beginning “unobtrusively” not far from the chalk down on which he is standing.²²⁹ Like other Forsterian places, the greenwood of *Maurice* has had its local and regional specificity underplayed by critics. In fact there is a regional, real place aspect to the greenwood of *Maurice*: it relates to the landscape on the frontier between the East Midlands and Yorkshire, the landscape Forster associated not only with the legendary Robin Hood but also with Edward Carpenter.

The actual word “greenwood” is only used once in *Maurice*. After hypnosis, despairing of a ‘cure’ for his homosexuality, Maurice doubts the suggestion of the advanced doctor, Mr Lasker Jones, that “your type was once put to death in England”:

‘Was it really? On the other hand, they could get away. England wasn’t all built over and policed. Men of my sort could take to the greenwood.’

‘Is that so? I was not aware.’

‘Oh, it’s only my own notion,’ said Maurice, laying the fee down. ‘It strikes me there may have been more in that Robin Hood business than meets the eye. One knows about the Greeks – Theban Band – and the rest of it. Well, this wasn’t unlike. I don’t see how they could have kept together otherwise – especially when they came from such different classes.’²³⁰

Lasker Jones does not alter Maurice’s identity any more than does the ignorant Dr Barry. Still, it is in London – the novel’s environment of modernity – and not at Penge, that Maurice reaches his awareness that the “greenwood” is where he could go to escape from the society’s condemnation.

Penge is encircled by woods. Leaving the house for the station involves “[d]escending into woods” filled with “dragged” and “cankered” dog roses from which Alec appears to startle

²²⁷ Christie, *Worlding Forster*, pp. 14, 42.

²²⁸ E.g. Elizabeth Wood Ellem, “E.M. Forster’s Greenwood” [1976] in Stape, *Critical Assessments*, vol. I pp. 349-57.

²²⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 13 p. 126.

²³⁰ *Maurice*, ch. XLI p. 183.

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Maurice as he sits enclosed in a carriage.²³¹ The remoteness of the house, stressed at its first mention,²³² makes the woodland surroundings appropriate: this, after all, is one sort of Wild England. Both the cricket pitch, “skirted” by the drive before it enters “the woods”,²³³ and the gardens, are borderlands between the house and the woods. The gardens are the source of the “evening primrose pollen” which makes Maurice appear “quite bacchanalian” to old Mrs Durham.²³⁴ The petals Maurice brings into the house for his last conversation with Clive are also from the “evening primrose”.²³⁵ But while Forster locates Penge on the Wiltshire-Somerset border, its encirclement by forest, unlike the landscapes described in Chapters 11 to 13 of *The Longest Journey*, involves few specifics of a particular non-fictional English regional setting: the point is that this is somewhere remote but still southern English, no more.

Penge and its surroundings, and Maurice’s activities there, involve like the novel’s claustrophobic Cambridge scenes a frequent crossing of thresholds.²³⁶ At Penge, Maurice leans out of his room towards rain, woods and Alec himself, who ultimately climbs in from outside.²³⁷ Eventually, in Lasker Jones’s consulting room, Maurice contrasts his indoor life so far with the escape into the greenwood he now imagines. Faced with Alec’s departure for the colonies and the intense, frightening religious conviction of Mr Borenium, he reflects that “[i]ndoors was his place and there he’d moulder”,²³⁸ imagining himself “prisoned” with a wife in a “brown cube” of a room, matching the colour of the room he stays in at Penge and contrasting this with “big spaces [...] full of woods some of them, and arched with majestic sky and a friend”.²³⁹

Woods are also referred to while Alec’s petit-bourgeois relatives and Mr Borenium scurry around the quays of a seaport waiting for him; “the shallows of Southampton Water stretched around them, edged by the New Forest”.²⁴⁰ This reference to a forest is again an allusion to a semi-mythical past when such woodland covered vast stretches of southern England. It could be compared with the way the Weald of Sussex and Kent was described by Victorian and Edwardian writers, who referred to its former wilderness status and far greater extent.²⁴¹ The

²³¹ *Maurice*, ch. XXVI p. 154.

²³² *Maurice*, ch. XVI p. 69.

²³³ *Maurice*, ch. XL p. 177.

²³⁴ *Maurice*, ch. XXXVII p. 162.

²³⁵ *Maurice*, ch. XLVI p. 214.

²³⁶ *Maurice*, ch. XII p. 59.

²³⁷ *Maurice*, ch. XXXV pp.151-2, ch. XXXVII pp. 165-6.

²³⁸ *Maurice*, ch. XXXVII p. 162.

²³⁹ *Maurice*, ch. XXXVII p. 165.

²⁴⁰ *Maurice*, ch. XLV p. 204.

²⁴¹ E.g. Robert Furley, *A History of the Weald of Kent, with an Outline of the Early History of the County*, two volumes, Henry Igglesdon & John Russell Smith: Ashford & London, 1871-4;

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“rush to the pine woods” by villa builders that Cornish details reflects the economic side of a process by which changes in taste and perceptions of healthy living had a real impact in suburbanising areas that were formerly “outlying and detached wastes”.²⁴² As we shall see in the case of the Hertfordshire ‘Forster Country’, Forster, albeit unwittingly, helped to spoil land which he himself romanticised through his writing, driving up property values and so reserving fashionable rural districts for the formerly-urban rich. A reading of the original “Epilogue” to *Maurice* complicates such a conclusion, however.

This 1913 postscript, in which the woods of England appear not in lush green but “haggard” brown, was disowned by Forster in 1960.²⁴³ The woods surrounding Penge and lurking outside Southampton symbolise a mythic national past, but those of the “Epilogue” are place-specific and unromantic, then. Maurice’s sister Kitty here finds him and Alec working as woodcutters, and there are no bedraggled yet aesthetic primroses of the sort found at Penge. Recognising her brother, Kitty thinks he has been “driven [...] into the wilderness”. This England is wild at a further level, bleak and tonally harsh, from its predecessors: Rickie Elliot’s stories, conceived in a momentary thrill on the Gog Magog Downs; the chalk skeleton hymned in *The Longest Journey*; the hilly Celtic frontier of Oniton; the overgrown, decaying apology for a civilisation that is Penge.

The “Epilogue” describes a specifically North-of-England wood, in “Yorkshire”.²⁴⁴ In 1960 Forster called *Maurice* “the direct result of a visit to Edward Carpenter at Millthorpe” which took place in September 1913.²⁴⁵ Millthorpe lies on the Derbyshire-Yorkshire border between Sheffield and Chesterfield, with moorland reachable on foot. A smallholding there was occupied by Carpenter and his working-class companion George Merrill between 1882 and 1922.²⁴⁶ This bleak countryside is the original for the setting of the “Epilogue” to *Maurice*.

When he is with Lasker Jones, Maurice’s thoughts stray to Robin Hood, and this might be relevant to the “Epilogue”: earlier traditional stories about the outlaw as often take him northwards into Yorkshire as southwards towards Nottingham, the city with which he is usually associated.²⁴⁷ Sherwood Forest in the past actually stretched well to the north of Nottingham in the direction of Sheffield, furthermore. It therefore makes sense to think of the countryside of the “Epilogue” as a raw, real version of Robin Hood country, a

Archibald Geikie, *The Weald* [1908], Haslemere Natural History Society: Haslemere, 1923.

²⁴² Cornish, *Wild England*, pp. 101, 102.

²⁴³ *Maurice*, pp. 219, 221.

²⁴⁴ *Maurice*, p. 223.

²⁴⁵ *Maurice*, p. 215; *Chronology*, p. 50.

²⁴⁶ Chushichi Tszuzuki, “Carpenter, Edward (1844-1929)” in ODNB; *Maurice*, p. 215.

²⁴⁷ See J.C. Holt, “Hood, Robin (*supp. fl.* late 12th-13th cent.)” in ODNB.

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specifically North Midlands or Pennine forest.

While Forster specifically excluded the “Epilogue” from the novel, no edition of *Maurice* would be complete without it.²⁴⁸ Few readers of the novel, surely, will refrain from reading it. Forster may have rejected it in 1960, but he did not suppress it. In fact, it gives *Maurice* two alternative endings, like Dickens’s *Great Expectations* and John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*. The tension between gold-tinged – lovely but a bit smug – woods in Hampshire and the raw but self-reliant and realistic ones in the northern Midlands of the “Epilogue” with their “dreary” atmosphere imparts meaningful complexity to the way sub-national English place manifests itself in *Maurice*.²⁴⁹

Maurice, finally, was substantially written in the North of England, albeit at a genteel resort: after visiting Milthorpe, Forster returned to Harrogate, where his mother was taking a cure, and “in a state of exaltation [...] sat down to work at once”, according to Furbank.²⁵⁰ His other novels were all written in Weybridge, but *Maurice* was a product of the North of England, or more precisely the northern Midlands. Among its literary relatives is one with a closely related place setting: Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.²⁵¹

3.7. “Uncle Willie” (c. 1922)

Forster’s writing in genres other than the novel has continued to be marginalised by critics. The memoir “Uncle Willie”, for example, written for the Bloomsbury Group’s Memoir Club in the early 1920s, has been published as an appendix to *The Longest Journey* because of Forster’s claim in it and in the essay “My Books and I” that the novel’s Cadover was based on Acton House, and Emily Failing on William Howley Forster, but critics have never discussed it as an independent text.²⁵² Cadover may resemble Acton architecturally, but its setting in a particularised Wiltshire landscape is unlike the bloody moors of Northumberland, and Aunt Emily, Rickie Elliot’s “father’s sister, gifted and vivacious”, has as much in common with Forster’s paternal aunt Laura as she does with the bitter and facetious Uncle Willie of the memoir.²⁵³

²⁴⁸ Even if it is tucked away as an appendix as in Gardner’s Abinger Edition (*Maurice*, pp. 221-4).

²⁴⁹ *Maurice*, p. 222.

²⁵⁰ Furbank I, p. 257.

²⁵¹ Forster and Lawrence were in touch when *Maurice* was first circulating among Forster’s friends in 1914-15, but Gardner (“Editor’s Introduction”, p. xxi) concludes in his edition that the younger writer probably did not read the manuscript.

²⁵² Forster, “Uncle Willie”; Forster, “My Books and I”, p. 364. Elizabeth Heine (“Afterword”, pp. 327-8) speculates that these real-world links caused Forster to be disinherited by the Northumberland branch of the family, as well as not being invited back after 1905.

²⁵³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 2 p. 27.

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“Uncle Willie” – the title is Heine’s, not Forster’s – is a waspish account written for a small audience of urban, chiefly Cambridge-educated friends: the Bloomsbury Group. Underneath its witty surface, however, is the same sense of the dark, primal and pre-human in the English North that pulses in “Ansell” and the diary for 1904-1905, and which can also be detected in “Arctic Summer”:

About a mile along the river Coquet curved through overhanging woods. It was a black and sombre water and fell over a weir into a pool where drowning was said to be inevitable, because when you cast you could feel the depths plucking at your line with the strength of a great fish.²⁵⁴

The echo of the river of “Ansell”, “shrouded in trees” and approached by the “abyss” into which Edward’s books fall, is unmistakable.²⁵⁵ Here too is a sense of the vagina dentata which might perhaps recall the “dreadful hollow” where Tennyson’s *Maud* begins.²⁵⁶ The unknowable “depths” recall other instances of Forsterian mysticism such as the Marabar Caves, and the “black water” Forster recoiled from in his 1905 diary reappears.

There is no medievalism in “Uncle Willie”, but its Northumberland seems to be a border zone, where gentry values of the sort associated with the word ‘county’ still hold sway in the early twentieth century. Forster’s Northumberland relatives were not natives of the area, however: William Howley Forster was raised in an Essex rectory alongside the novelist’s father and aunt Laura, and his wife was from Cambridgeshire.²⁵⁷ They couple settled in the North after an extended honeymoon, Forster asserts, involving blood sports in the Rocky Mountains. William’s “remote valley of the Cheviots” closely resembles the “narrow chasm” which is home to the Marches of “Arctic Summer”.²⁵⁸ But despite William’s attachment to this wild northern English place, he ended up buried in the south, near Cambridge, in his wife’s beloved place of origin: he was still no northerner.²⁵⁹

The northerly position of William Forster’s home is explicit in the memoir when Forster wonders “[h]ow or why I stopped going north”.²⁶⁰ As in Forster’s other writings on Northumberland, bloodshed is present. As in “Ansell” there is fishing and rabbit-shooting, and Forster presents himself, like the narrator of “Ansell”, as cowardly and clumsy in this environment. The Northumberland gentry are close-knit and bitchy: there is constant prurient

²⁵⁴ Forster, “Uncle Willie”, pp. 356-7.

²⁵⁵ *Life to Come*, p. 5.

²⁵⁶ Alfred Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson* [1969], Christopher Ricks (ed.), Second Edition, three volumes, 1987, vol. II p. 519.

²⁵⁷ Forster, “Uncle Willie”, p. 354.

²⁵⁸ “Arctic Summer”, p. 163.

²⁵⁹ Forster, “Uncle Willie”, p. 360.

²⁶⁰ Forster, “Uncle Willie”, p. 359.

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gossip about the inhabitants of ‘county’ neighbours. As in Jane Austen, ‘county’ life seems a stifling, narrow world. Yet there is no sense in Forster that these people are attached to their soil in the manner of Austen’s Mr Knightley. Instead, like the dentist and the banker of his 1905 diary, they derive from the urban world of railway shares and fast steam ships, and are here for the sport: they are interlopers and, in a sense, imposters.

3.8. Wild or Not? Aldeburgh and East Anglia

Forster’s writings of the 1920s and 1930s contain little on Wild England. During the 1940s, though, he wrote several pieces of prose related to Aldeburgh and its surroundings in Suffolk. In early 1941, he stayed with Hilton Young up the coast of East Anglia from Aldeburgh at Great Yarmouth.²⁶¹ Later the same year he delivered a radio broadcast about the poet George Crabbe and his connection to Aldeburgh which was published in the *Listener*.²⁶² This was the article which, which, read in the USA, is said to have triggered Britten’s return to his native country and county. One result of Britten’s success with his opera *Peter Grimes*, based on a poem by Crabbe, and his subsequent collaboration with Forster, both on the opera of *Billy Budd* and on the first Aldeburgh Festival, was that Forster wrote several more short pieces about the Suffolk coastal town. In 1950, speaking at Aldeburgh, Forster gave an account of the early Tudor poet John Skelton which read him in a geographic, even topographic way, as having produced East Anglian and London works, and connecting his writings to the physical spaces he knew as rector of Diss in Suffolk: “Diss church is well suited to a sporting purpose, since its nave and choir are unusually lofty, and the rood-loft was convenient for the birds to perch on between the statues of the Virgin and St. John”, Forster quipped, irreverently.²⁶³

The 1941 broadcast, published as “George Crabbe: The Poet and the Man”, includes descriptions of Aldeburgh and the coast thereabouts near its opening.²⁶⁴ So do two pieces written in 1948, “George Crabbe and Peter Grimes” and “The Aldeburgh Festival of Music and the Arts”.²⁶⁵ All tie Crabbe’s identity as a writer to his native place, and his national identity to his bond with a locality. In the 1940s, Forster seems to have understood a writer as primarily someone who grew from one or more places. Differences between these pieces need to be noted. “George Crabbe: The Poet and the Man” begins with an appeal to

²⁶¹ *Chronology*, p. 132. Young, as already discussed, was the owner of the Wiltshire cottage where Forster stayed during tramping holidays as a young man.

²⁶² *Prince’s Tale*, pp. 127-32.

²⁶³ *Two Cheers*, p. 141.

²⁶⁴ *Prince’s Tale*, pp. 127-8.

²⁶⁵ *Two Cheers*, pp. 171-3; *Creator as Critic*, pp. 306-9.

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nationality which needs connecting with the fact that it was broadcast at a time when it Britain seemed very likely to be defeated in the Second World War; the later essays are not explicitly patriotic or nationalistic. Among other differences, “George Crabbe and Peter Grimes” is considerably longer than the other Aldeburgh pieces and, like the Skelton talk but unlike the other Aldeburgh pieces, was collected by Forster into *Two Cheers for Democracy*. Its envisaged audience seems educated and familiar with the names at least of G.E. Moore and the Bloomsbury Group. They could have been listeners to the BBC Radio Third Programme on which Forster frequently broadcast in the 1940s and 1950s. In it, Forster assumes his readers are familiar with Britten’s music. The 1941 piece, by contrast, addressed a much broader audience, as did a third piece to be concerned with Crabbe and Aldeburgh written by Forster in 1948, a broadcast on 13 April, in the radio series “It’s Good English”.²⁶⁶

In the 1941 *Listener* piece, “George Crabbe: The Poet and the Man”, Crabbe is rooted in local place, and this quality in Forster’s talk seems to have been precisely what attracted Britten back to his native place.²⁶⁷ Forster in 1948 uses this link to place as the reason why cultivated London highbrows should come to Aldeburgh (via the newly nationalised and, he says, “majestic British Railways”).²⁶⁸ In 1941, Forster had claimed that Crabbe remained spiritually connected to Aldeburgh after physically leaving in 1782:²⁶⁹

He escaped from Aldeburgh as soon as he could [...] Yet he never escaped from Aldeburgh in the spirit, and it was the making of him as a poet. Even when he is writing of other things, there steals again and again into his verse the sea, the estuary, the flat Suffolk coast, and local meannesses, and an odour of brine and dirt – tempered occasionally with the scent of flowers. So remember Aldeburgh when you read this rather odd poet, for he belongs to the grim little place, and through it to England.²⁷⁰

Locality underpinned by and connected to nationality, then, is key in the 1941 talk which, Britten claimed, brought him back to Britain. Forster recommends Crabbe’s feeling for “certain English types and certain kinds of English scenery” to, it would seem, fellow English people listening or reading.²⁷¹ He quotes Crabbe’s “vivid” description of the “estuary near Aldeburgh”, including in his quote the line “[h]e missed the feelings these dull scenes

²⁶⁶ E.M. Forster, “Broadcast Talks”, MS KCC/EMF/7/9, ff. 443-8, [1944-60]; *BBC Talks*, pp. 396-400..

²⁶⁷ Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography*, Faber: London, 1992, pp. 155-7.

²⁶⁸ *Creator as Critic*, p. 307. This talk is a jocular speech of welcome addressed to Aldeburgh festival-goers in which Forster also ironically suggests that it is practitioners of modern and expensive leisure activities such as golf and yachting, who truly know the twentieth-century Aldeburgh (*Creator as Critic*, pp. 306-9).

²⁶⁹ On his appointment, with the help of Edmund Burke, to the position of domestic chaplain to the fourth Duke of Rutland (Thomas C. Faulkner, “Crabbe, George (1754-1832)” in ODNB).

²⁷⁰ *Prince’s Tale*, p. 128.

²⁷¹ *Prince’s Tale*, p. 129.

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produced”. It was aspects of dullness and bareness, failures to be picturesque, that had earlier touched Forster in Hertfordshire, Shropshire and Wiltshire alike, after all. In the same broadcast, Forster read two extracts from Crabbe, one describing the setting at Aldeburgh, the other the local clergyman, “one about scenery, the other about character”:²⁷² the reality of place, once again, is as important in Forster’s writing as that of person.

The relationship between locality and nationality is essayed once more in “George Crabbe and Peter Grimes”. Forceful, low-key paragraphs describe the physical setting at Aldeburgh, attacked by “huge glassy waves coming in regularly and quietly [...] each exploding when it hit the shore with the sound of a gun”; the “swirl of many-coloured waters” at Slaughden Quay, now flooded and to the south of the town centre but the zone Crabbe knew as a child, where his father was a customs officer. Forster then turns to Crabbe’s biography: “[o]ne grim day in the winter of 1779, he walked to the bleak and cheerless Marsh Hill, gazed at a muddy stretch of water called the Leech Pond, and decided to clear out”,²⁷³ arguing that the poet’s national identity was built on locality: “[t]he Borough [Aldeburgh] made him a poet, through it he understood Suffolk, and through East Anglia he approached England”.²⁷⁴ The four-part place formulation here – locality, county, region, country – in which each relies on the others and none is dominant or subservient, helps in understanding the relationship to English place inherited by Forster from his upper-middle-class Home Counties family background, and partly transformed by him, partly held on to.

“George Crabbe and Peter Grimes” ends by meditating on the origins of Britten’s *Peter Grimes*, describing the “young musician out in America” who is inspired “to create an opera” by reading the radio script – not identified by Forster as his own – printed in the *Listener*. Throughout his life, Forster believed in the power of art, and believed that it began in the conjunction of place and person. In the Peter Grimes story, this means the physical layout and environment of Aldeburgh itself and the murderous local man who inspired Crabbe’s Grimes character. Out of step with New Criticism, which detached literary art from the environment in which it was produced, Forster was no Marxist believer that works of art entirely resulted from such conditions of production either.²⁷⁵ Nor does he use the concept of place in a politically conservative way, equating it with enduring hierarchical human relations ideally found in a rural setting, in a way opposed to radical treatments of space

²⁷² *Prince’s Tale*, p. 132.

²⁷³ Faulkner, “Crabbe”; *Two Cheers*, pp. 172, 173.

²⁷⁴ *Two Cheers*, p. 174.

²⁷⁵ For a discussion of 1940s “Vulgar Marxism” in the Soviet Union – see Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*, Routledge: London & New York, 1990, p. 140.

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found in travel and the modern city, as critics of a materialist persuasion have suspected.²⁷⁶ Place and person were for Forster the “genesis”, not the totality of art.²⁷⁷

In the talk on Crabbe broadcast by Forster on the BBC Far Eastern Service in April 1948,²⁷⁸ which appeared as part of a series entitled “It’s Good English”, there is a different place setting: inland Suffolk. Crabbe returned there as a successful, pluralist clergyman in 1792, taking possession of his mother’s childhood house at Parham. Forster’s interest in the imaginative and personal qualities of the interiors of houses, elsewhere apparent from accounts by him of rooms at Rooksnest and West Hackhurst, leads him in this broadcast to highlight a passage in the biography of Crabbe written by his son, also George, in which the “slippery black staircase” of this worn, graceful farmhouse is conjured up.²⁷⁹ Parham Forster describes as not wild in the sense of having picturesque views, or sublimely scary like the seashore at Aldeburgh, but as “a very quiet place lost in the heart of Suffolk”.²⁸⁰ The blend of nostalgia and aestheticism involved recalls Lytton Strachey’s comment about sensitivity to domestic interiors being a key characteristic of his own generation.²⁸¹

In the 1940s, these various East Anglian places were for Forster in the 1940s a last chance to make contact with Wild England, the chimera pursued by Borrow, Cornish and other Victorian predecessors.²⁸² The past, like tramping on the hilltops or disappearing into the greenwood with a comrade, could potentially have been where an authentic Wild England was to be found. Crabbe, thought by the Lord Chancellor of England “as like [Henry Fielding’s character] Parson Adams as twelve to a dozen”, might seem a representative of unspoiled old England,²⁸³ but Forster, with his references to golfers and the nationalised railways, knew that past was past. In the 1940s he appreciated these semi-wild places on the

²⁷⁶ Robert Hampson (“Spatial Stories: Joseph Conrad and James Joyce”, in Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, Routledge: Abingdon & London, 2005 pp. 54-64), for example, reads literary modernism from Conrad and Pound to the architect Rem Koolhaas via concepts of space that are exclusively concerned with urban conditions, never mentioning rural or suburban areas and, while fond of notions of geography and the map, never using the word ‘place’.

²⁷⁷ *Two Cheers*, p. 187.

²⁷⁸ Forster, “Broadcast Talks”, ff. 443-8. Stallybrass (*Life to Come*, p. 368) erroneously dates this talk 1960: in fact evidence on the typescript demonstrates that it was broadcast in the spring of 1948, precisely the season and year in which Forster, newly resident in Cambridge, and working on the libretto for Billy Budd, was most connected to Aldeburgh.

²⁷⁹ Forster, “Broadcast Talks”, f. 447; *BBC Talks* pp. 397, 299, 400.

²⁸⁰ Forster, “Broadcast Talks”, f. 444; *BBC Talks*, p. 397.

²⁸¹ Lytton Strachey, “Lancaster Gate” in S.P. Rosenbaum (ed.), *A Bloomsbury Group Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1993, pp. 344-54, here 345.

²⁸² On Borrow’s relations with Wild England see Ian Duncan, “Wild England: George Borrow’s Nomadology”, *Victorian Studies* 41 (1998), pp. 381-403; W.J. Keith, *The Rural Tradition: William Cobbett, Gilbert White, and Other Non-Fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside*, Harvester: Brighton, 1975, pp. 105-25..

²⁸³ Faulkner, “Crabbe”.

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edge of England but was happy to escape from them to Cambridge and London afterwards. The tension and complexity of his contemporaneous feelings about rural Surrey, evidenced by “West Hackhurst”, contrast with the more public expressions of feeling about place that he offered different publics in his 1940s discussions of Suffolk. In his unpublished talk on the biography of Crabbe written by his son he expresses the concern with the nature of dwelling and a home familiar from *Howards End*: “Title deeds and legacies cannot confer what the spirit withholds. He really owned his visit to Parham, not the house itself”.²⁸⁴ No such clarity appears in his pained, self-examining account of the house he referred to in the 1940s, having been forced to leave it, as his “enigmatic legacy”: West Hackhurst.²⁸⁵

Dying embers of the wild were all that was left to Forster after the 1940s. These can be seen flickering in his 1959 talk “Recollections of Nassenheide”,²⁸⁶ in which he thinks back to the Pomeranian countryside of 1905. They are present, too, in his journal account of a 1964 trip back to Figsbury Ring, this time in the company of William Golding. On this visit the two novelists, one in his fifties, the other well into his eighties, “discussed the near-extinction of Chalk Blue butterflies, through pesticides, when one flew between them and settled on a tall grass stem, in the very entrance to the Rings”.²⁸⁷ Forster never found the wild in England, but to the end, as during the approach to Oniton in *Howards End*, he felt its presence behind things somewhere.

Forster’s later trips to zones where he had earlier sought Wild England, for example visits to Somerset and Herefordshire recorded in his diary for 1952, involved no great experience of the wild. By the 1950s he had lost any belief in a concept of Wild England. In “Recollections of Nassenheide”, he stresses the isolated setting of the Prussian house where he worked as a tutor of English, “supposed to be a Schloss, but really a charming low grey country house, in the depths of Pomerania”,²⁸⁸ connecting rural Germany to the wild English settings of Wiltshire and Northumberland as they appear in the younger Forster’s writing. But as an old man he thought “vastness and openness” as well as “freedom from industrialism” to be characteristics of rural Germany which have endured through the twentieth century – in the same piece he reports a similar experience to that of 1905 Pomerania elsewhere in rural Germany half a century later – and they remind him “of what our own countryside used to be before it was ruined”. England is too small and crowded to be wild now.

²⁸⁴ Forster, “Broadcast Talks”, f. 448.

²⁸⁵ “West Hackhurst”, p. 19.

²⁸⁶ *Prince’s Tale*, pp. 302-9.

²⁸⁷ Furbank II, p. 318.

²⁸⁸ *Prince’s Tale*, p. 302.

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3.9. Conclusion

As a rugged place of blood sports, the Northumberland of Forster's earlier writings stands in contrast to the bleak agricultural milieus of Wiltshire in *The Longest Journey* and Oniton in *Howards End*, sites which between them contain the closest to a wild spirit Forster ever found in England. Possibilities of wildness, though, are scattered through Forster's writings, from liberating yet ancient London to the raw Pennine setting of the original epilogue to *Maurice*. Yet going in search of English wildness is as frustrating today as it was in Forster's lifetime, perhaps more so: it always seems to be another step away. Forster's views of the definition of Wild England find echoes or continuations in government policy of the twenty-first century. The UK government body Natural England, for instance, refers to the Surrey Hills in somewhat Forsterian terms as a "front line" Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, holding back the expansion of London.²⁸⁹ The Surrey Hills, a location – unlike Wild England – capable of being found on a map, is somewhere I now move on to examine.

²⁸⁹ Natural England, "Surrey Hills" (accessed 19 October 2010).

4. Surrey: West Hackhurst, Abinger Hammer; Harnham, Weybridge

4.1. Introduction

The county of Surrey was Forster's main home between September 1904, when he was 25, and November 1946, when he was 67.¹ With his mother, he first lived in Weybridge near the banks of the Thames, and later just north of Abinger Hammer. This village lies between the county town of Guildford, and Dorking, just south of the North Downs, hills which bisect the county from east to west. While Forster spent time abroad in this 42-year-period, notably in Egypt and India, such trips were never intended to be permanent; and nor were the rooms in Bloomsbury he rented. Forster is rarely regarded as a Surrey writer in the way that Thomas Hardy is associated with Dorset or the Brontë sisters with Yorkshire.² Indeed, I argue that Forster should be regarded as a Home Counties writer, rather than a writer of one particular county, since Kent and Hertfordshire as much as Surrey, in their relationships to London and Cambridge and to a notion of a wilder England beyond, are what define him in English place terms. He did not delineate a located fictional 'world' in the way that Hardy did. But there was more of Surrey than anywhere else in him, a fact which illuminates many of his writings.

Forster's time living in Surrey was spent in two distinctly different places. Weybridge, his home between 1904 and 1925, hardly features in his writing, although all of his novels with the exception of some earlier sketches were written there in what Furbank calls "a commonplace, three-storey suburban villa".³ The more rural Surrey Hills – the district in the south of the county where Forster lived between 1925 and 1946 – often figure in his writing, and it is this district which is the main subject of the present chapter. The area is today defined by the UK government body Natural England as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and described on the Natural England website as "a beleaguered green expanse

¹ *Chronology*, pp. 19, 146.

² A case has, however, been made, by Jacqueline Banerjee (*Literary Surrey*, John Owen Smith: Headley Down, Hampshire, 2005, pp. 157-73), for treating Forster as a Surrey literary personality. Banerjee's includes photographs and personal narratives, but her account of Forster is concerned with anecdote rather than text, not directly engaging with any of his literary productions other than the letters.

³ Furbank I, p. 119.

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which, together with the Green Belt, hold back London's advancing commuter sprawl".⁴ Writing of Forster's which concerns the Surrey Hills area includes a novel, a short story, several essays, two pageant plays, and a long memoir, and spans the period between the reign of Edward VII and the end of the Second World War.

The world of the Surrey Hills area in Forster's writing is rooted in his own recent – late-Victorian – past, and is particularly related to one house, West Hackhurst near Abinger Hammer. In Forster's 1940s memoir "West Hackhurst", he situates the genesis of *A Room with a View* not in the trip to Italy he made with his mother after graduating from Cambridge in 1901, but several years earlier. As a teenager in the 1890s, Forster sometimes represented his aunt Laura Forster at Surrey social gatherings. He often felt slighted and ignored on these occasions but once he was made to feel welcome by a woman locally looked down upon as a "misalliance" for her husband the ophthalmic surgeon Sir William Bowman.⁵ Lady Bowman said she was glad he had come to visit, and did not care who he represented. "I have lost the figure and the face of Lady Bowman and the sound of her voice [...]", Forster writes in "West Hackhurst", "[b]ut hers is the behaviour I admire, and there was not much of it in Surrey at the turn of the century – the Surrey I have tried to indicate in *A Room with a View*".⁶ West Hackhurst had been designed by Forster's father E.M.L. Forster in the late 1870s, and was the only substantial architectural commission he completed before his death from tuberculosis in 1880 when the future novelist was still a baby.⁷ The evidence of the memoir means that Lady Bowman, as much as Samuel Butler or Edward Carpenter, could be the original for *A Room with a View*'s admirable elder Mr Emerson.

Critical discussion of Forster's relationship with Surrey is above all to be found in readings of *A Room with a View*. Some of the viewpoints expressed in the earliest reviews of the novel now seem absurd, yet others provide more help in terms of local and regional English place than later studies by academics.⁸ *A Room with a View* maintains a reputation as, John Colmer's words, "Forster's sunniest novel", something bolstered by the success of

⁴ Natural England, "Surrey Hills"; see also Surrey Hills Partnership, "Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty".

⁵ See D.A. Power, "Bowman, Sir William, first baronet (1816-1892)" in ODNB.

⁶ *Creator as Critic*, pp. 112-13; "West Hackhurst", p.7.

⁷ Furbank I, pp. 8, 11.

⁸ [Anonymous], [untitled review of *A Room with a View*] [1908] in *Critical Heritage*, p.116; [Anonymous], "A Clever Novel" [1908] [review of *A Room with a View* in the *Morning Post*] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 110-11; [C.F.G. Masterman], "The Half-Hidden Life" [1908] [unsigned review of *A Room with a View* in the *Nation*] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 111-15; R.A. Scott-James, "A Novel of Character" [review of *A Room with a View*] [1908] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 101-4; [Virginia Stephen], [unsigned, untitled review of *A Room with a View* in the *Times Literary Supplement*] [1908] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 104-5.

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the 1985 film adaptation.⁹ It is often understood as a novel which praises Italy and denigrates England.

Among the early comments, the more sensitive to place include those of C.F.G. Masterman, R.A. Scott-James, and Virginia Stephen, later Woolf.¹⁰ At the time his review of Forster's novel appeared in the *Nation*, Masterman was a Liberal MP representing a working-class district of east London.¹¹ Masterman's advocacy of Forster's earlier fiction suggests a connection to party politics which is not often made by critics:¹² the young Forster was, among other things, an unofficial spokesman for the romantic, reforming left wing of the Liberal party. In his review, Masterman argues that the title of Forster's third novel could also serve as a title for his previous two: all three contain contrasts between a constricted and social 'room' and a wild, elemental 'view'. He recognises what some subsequent commentators do not:¹³ that *A Room with a View* does not dramatize an opposition between England and Italy. Instead, the novel's 'room' can alike encompass "the English pension at Florence [...] [and] the spreading suburbs of Surrey, in those regions where the new rich and the emigrant clerk are making desolate the hills which look southward to the sea".¹⁴ The view, opening into the eternal, can take in both Tuscany and Forster's fictional Summer Street, described with precision by Masterman as a "the little semi-urban village of the Surrey hillside [...] linked firmly to the city by the South Eastern railway" Masterman then imagines that the latter view goes through the Surrey and Sussex pines and to offers a "grey glimpse of sea" to the south and, in so doing, anticipates Forster's vision of "system after system of our island" viewed from the Isle of Purbeck in *Howards End*.¹⁵ In the *Daily News*, also a pro-Liberal publication, Scott-James was ambivalent about Forster, calling him "irritating" but his novel "brilliant"; his description of both the Pension Bertolini and

⁹ John Colmer, *E.M. Forster: The Personal Voice*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1975, p. 43.

¹⁰ Masterman wrote favourable reviews of Forster's other early novels which are equally illuminating for a student of Forsterian place. Educated at Cambridge and a postgraduate researcher and Fellow of Christ's while Forster was an undergraduate at King's (1897-1900), Masterman came from an intellectual milieu related to Forster's own. He was a member of the Victorian Liberal intellectual elite on his mother's side: they were the Gurney family of Norwich, a Quaker banking and political dynasty, while on Forster's father's side were the Thorntons, bankers and Evangelical Anglicans of Clapham.

¹¹ H.C.G. Matthew, "Masterman, Charles Frederick Gurney (1874-1927)" in ODNB. The *Nation* has been described by a biographer of its editor H.W. Massingham (H.W. Nevinnson, "Massingham, Henry William (1860-1924)" in ODNB) as the "authoritative organ of the Liberal party".

¹² An exception is Brian May (*The Modernist as Pragmatist: E.M. Forster and the Fate of Liberalism*, University of Missouri Press: Columbia, 1997, pp. 17-32).

¹³ E.g. Norman Page, *E.M. Forster*, Macmillan Education: Basingstoke & London, 1987, p. 39.

¹⁴ Masterman, "Half-Hidden Life", p.112.

¹⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XIX, p. 120. Forster in that passage, unlike Masterman, carefully delineates what is actually visible from the South Coast and what only in imagination.

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Summer Street as “semi-suburban” is acute.¹⁶ Reviewing the novel anonymously in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Stephen specified the Honeychurch house Windy Corner as Lucy’s “ugly home in Surrey”.¹⁷

These early reviewers understood aspects of Forster’s context that later readers often have not. They several times mention the specific place setting of the novel’s second, longer part: Stephen that it is in Surrey; the *Morning Post* reviewer that “the bourgeois home” of the Honeychurches overlooks the Sussex Weald.¹⁸ Unlike later academics who have become increasingly distanced in time and place from the novel, the journalists who gave *A Room with a View* its first reception clearly felt that their audience would understand such references to specific English places.

In the hands of the first reviewers geographical setting becomes part of the foreground of the novel, just as historicist critics make the historically situated nature of a work of literature into a central aspect of its content. As such, the early reviewers of *A Room with a View* can be aligned with the critical argument advanced by Franco Moretti that in novels “each space determines, or at least encourages, its own kind of story”.¹⁹ Among academic literary critics writing on *A Room with a View* between the 1940s and the 1990s, Lionel Trilling, John Beer, John Colmer, Glen Cavaliero, Norman Page and Jeffrey Heath all emphasised writer and text, not place (or other contexts), and most of them tried to evaluate the novel.²⁰ They shared the assumption that Forster was a major writer whose novels contain significant meditations on ideas and deserve to have time spent interpreting them. Other critics, among them Wilfred Stone, George H. Thomson, David Dowling, James Buzard and Eric Haralson looked at *A Room with a View* from specific theoretical perspectives: Jungian, formalist, based on aesthetics, discursive-Foucauldian and queer, respectively.²¹

But these critics, both the evaluative and those more interested in different overarching

¹⁶ Scott-James, “Novel of Character”, pp. 101, 102; see also I.A. Williams, “Cadbury, George (1839-1922)”, Robert Fitzgerald (rev.) in ODNB.

¹⁷ [Stephen], [review of *A Room with a View*], p. 105.

¹⁸ [Anonymous], “A Clever Novel”, p. 110.

¹⁹ Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, Verso: London, 1998, p. 70.

²⁰ Lionel Trilling, *E.M. Forster*, New Directions: Norfolk, CT, 1943; J.B. Beer, *The Achievement of E.M. Forster* [1962], Chatto & Windus: London, 1963; Colmer, *E.M. Forster*; Glen Cavaliero, *A Reading of E.M. Forster*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1979; Page, *E.M. Forster*; Jeffrey Heath, “Kissing and Telling: Turning Round in *A Room with a View*”, *Twentieth Century Literature* 40 (1994) pp. 393-433.

²¹ Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, 1966; George H. Thomson, *The Fiction of E.M. Forster*, Wayne State University Press: Detroit, 1967; David Dowling, *Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1985; James Buzard, “Forster’s Trespasses: Tourism and Cultural Politics” [1993] in Jeremy Tambling (ed.), *E.M. Forster* [‘New Casebooks’], Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 1995, pp. 14-29; Eric Haralson, “Thinking about Homosex’ in Forster and James in Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (eds.), *Queer Forster*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1997, pp. 59-73.

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theories of literature, all ignored the local geographical contexts of the novel. Trilling's used England and Italy as place terms, not mentioning Surrey or any other sub-national divisions. Beer briefly noted that in the second part of the novel "the scene changes to Surrey", but no more.²² And Cavaliero's observation that after the Italian trip ends "the main parties are then reassembled in Surrey" is never developed.²³ Thomson, Colmer and Buzard – despite the latter's ostensible concern with place – do not mention the county once. Colmer and Page, furthermore, both class *A Room with a View* among Forster's Italian novels.²⁴ A few critics get closer to the truth. Stone places the "second half" – actually 130 pages compared to 80 in the most recent Penguin edition – of the book "in England", offering in passing a good phrase for the setting which is the subject of the present chapter: "a fancy country suburb in Surrey".²⁵ This is more satisfactory than Mary Lago's classification of *A Room with a View* alongside its two predecessors among Forster's published novels as his "Suburban Novels":²⁶ the milieu of the Honeychurches is wealthy and rural as well as, in some sense, suburban. Cavaliero is wrong to say that the second part of the novel describes "[t]he Tunbridge Wells World", moreover.²⁷ Tunbridge Wells means something distinct from the Surrey Hills for Forster: a place in the Home Counties to be sure, but a place that is in the clayey Weald rather than on the chalky Surrey Hills, a place which feels stuffy rather than "soft and wild". Mr Beebe's error in *A Room with a View* when he first sees Lucy in Tunbridge Wells is to mistake her for a denizen of the repressed resort town rather than the airy hillsides.²⁸

More recent readers of *A Room with a View* do little more on its place aspects. Alexandra Peat, in an article concerned with "the authority of space", refers like others before her to the international dimension of the novel, finding in its Sacred Lake "a point of continuity between Italy and England", but has nothing to say about the Surrey Hills, where the Sacred Lake is quite explicitly located by Forster.²⁹ Judith Scherer Herz similarly asserts that the "Italy of Forster's first published novel and the green and expansive English landscape of his second are" the "two staging grounds" of *A Room with a View*.³⁰ Herz is attentive to the spatial relationships staged in the novel, drawing attention to the curtains separating the 'room' inside Windy Corner from the 'view' outside. But her view that the setting of the

²² Beer, *Achievement*, p. 54.

²³ Cavaliero, *Reading*, p. 94.

²⁴ Colmer, *E.M. Forster*, p. 42; Page, *E.M. Forster*, p. 18.

²⁵ Stone, *Cave and the Mountain*, p. 226.

²⁶ Mary Lago, *E.M. Forster: A Literary Life*, St Martin's Press: New York, 1995, p. 8.

²⁷ Cavaliero, *Reading*, p. 94.

²⁸ *Room with a View*, ch. 3 pp. 51-2.

²⁹ Alexandra Peat, "Modern Pilgrimage and the Authority of Space in Forster's *A Room with a View* and Woolf's *The Voyage Out*", *Mosaic* 36 (2003), pp. 139-53, here 148-9.

³⁰ Judith Scherer Herz, "A Room with a View" in David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007, pp. 138-50, here 139.

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novel is an international dichotomy is another example of the way that Forster critics since Trilling have tended to roll together the variations and complexities of the English landscape, in change and with its different ideological colourings, into one unified and supposedly national lump.

Forster's two 1930s pageant plays, "The Abinger Pageant" and "England's Pleasant Land", have attracted recent attention.³¹ Joshua D. Esty argues that with little sensitivity to the internal shifts of Forster's literary career that his two pageant plays "offer a rather weak synthesis of the ideological and libidinal elements that come alive in [...] [his] fiction", but gives them a "participatory" ritual function as refashionings of English patriotism in the post-imperial 1930s context.³² Esty is more comfortable with Woolf's novel *Between the Acts*, which has a plot built round a pageant play production but is clearly a high-literary text by a single author and readily separable from particular localities unlike Forster's plays, written and performed in collaboration with local gentry and villagers, not free from the taint of amateurism. Stuart Christie and Julia Briggs also compare Forster and Woolf's 1930s pageant writing.³³ Christie uses the terminology of literary theory while Briggs seems plain-speaking, but both connect the plays of the two to national identity, ignoring local or regional place. Both mention the village of Abinger, treating it as a symbol of the nation rather than as a place with any unique individuality; neither mentions the county of Surrey.³⁴

Among Forster's writings on rural Surrey, his 1940s memoir of West Hackhurst has been neglected by critics. Furbank's chapter on Forster's relations with his Surrey landlords the Farrers is the only noteworthy discussion of it.³⁵ Furbank treats Forster's idiosyncratic view of events in the memoir as biographical evidence, not interpreting it as a literary text in its own right. Certainly the memoir is important in any understanding of Forster's relations with his unmarried aunt Laura, who lived at the house between 1877 and 1924, and for Forster's own life there between 1925 and 1946. J.H. Stape considers it "libellous" and therefore better avoided, but all the people Forster insults in it have now died.³⁶ On the very few occasions

³¹ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 333-9, 353-401.

³² Joshua D. Esty, "Amnesia in the Fields: Late Modernism, Late Imperialism, and the English Pageant-Play", *English Literary History* 69 (2002), pp. 245-76, here 256.

³³ Stuart Christie, *Worlding Forster: The Passage from Pastoral*, Routledge: New York & Abingdon, 2005, pp. 91-117; Julia Briggs, *Reading Virginia Woolf*, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2006, pp. 190-207.

³⁴ Both mention the village of Abinger; neither the county of Surrey (Briggs, *Reading Woolf*, p. 200; Christie, *Worlding Forster*, p. 94).

³⁵ Furbank II, pp. 197-204. An incomplete transcription of the first section of "West Hackhurst" has now appeared in print (*Creator as Critic*, pp. 108-120). In the opinion of Jeffrey Heath, who published it, the memoir is a rambling piece of writing which needs passages deleting "to sharpen the focus" (*Creator as Critic*, p. 469). I disagree. Philip Gardner's 2011 edition of Forster's memoirs and journals will print the entire text.

³⁶ *Chronology*, p. 179.

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when critics do use it, the evidence it provides is actually attributed to Furbank: Penelope Pether, for example, states that “Furbank records” Laura Forster’s “fetishizing of tradition in place” by naming rooms at West Hackhurst after places with associations for and her relatives.³⁷ It was of course Forster himself who found this habit noteworthy and recorded it in “West Hackhurst”, so guiding Furbank towards a similar understanding.

Forster’s other writings on rural Surrey are essays scattered around his two non-fiction collections, *Abinger Harvest* and *Two Cheers for Democracy*. To view pieces like “My Wood”, “Captain Edward Gibbon” and “The Last of Abinger” together in relation to the county that they all, in different ways, discuss, is to give them a new coherence and prominence.

4.2. Physical Encounters with Surrey

4.2.1. Local Historians and Topographers on Surrey

Immediately to the south west of London, Surrey is contradictory in a way expressed by Ian Nairn and Nikolaus Pevsner in their historical account of its buildings: “[i]t was so remote in the Middle Ages that it does not possess a large medieval parish church; yet today there is hardly anywhere in the county where one can feel free of London”.³⁸ Until the mid-eighteenth century, much of Surrey was cut off from the capital to the north by marshes flanking the Thames. The construction of Westminster and Blackfriars Bridges in 1750 and 1769 enabled the rapid growth of metropolitan suburbs on the Surrey side of the river.³⁹ A hundred years later, the railways opened up what Forster called the “soft and wild” countryside to the south.⁴⁰ In the Victorian period the southern and western portions of the county became associated with an artistic ideal of the sublime that was gentler, cosier and closer to London than that of the Lake District. Writers and artists such as Alfred Tennyson, Meredith and G.F. Watts lived there and attracted others. Surrey became fashionable and, gradually, the heart of London’s commuter belt. Nairn and Pevsner chart the types of suburbia which have spread through the county since, from the country seats of bankers and

³⁷ Penelope Pether, “A Passage to India: A Passage to the Patria” [1991] in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 195-212, here 203. As Jeremy Tambling (*E.M. Forster*, p. 210) suggests, Pether’s use of the word “fetishizing”, suggests that she interprets attachment to place as suspect, perhaps as politically reactionary.

³⁸ Ian Nairn and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Surrey* [1962], Second Edition, Bridget Cherry (rev.), Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1971, p. 17.

³⁹ Francis Shepherd, *London: A History*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998, p. 207.

⁴⁰ “West Hackhurst”, p. 10. Page references to “West Hackhurst” are to Forster’s own foliation of the manuscript (reproduced in an Appendix below).

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merchants in the nineteenth century to the “bypass variegated” style bemoaned by Osbert Lancaster in the 1930s.⁴¹ Among the English today Surrey is associated with cosiness and conservatism and, more negatively, with conformity and small-mindedness.

Despite the existence of many histories of Surrey and its districts, W.G. Hoskins does not once mention this county in his study of *Local History in England*. Hoskins’s objections to the historical accounts of rural England which dominated until the middle of the twentieth century, concerned as they were with “the manor rather than the village, the legal concept rather than the physical fact, and [...] more interested in tenures and rents than actual farming” should nevertheless inform a study of Forster’s Surrey.⁴² The 1911 account of the Parish of Abinger given in the *Victoria County History* volume on Surrey partially supports Hoskins’s view of how things had been before him in English local historical studies. It begins with a wide-ranging account of the parish’s landscape and features of interest, but has a long list of local lords of the manor at its heart.⁴³ Hoskins viewed research into London as a different topic from local history,⁴⁴ and perhaps did not discuss Surrey because for him it was entirely in London’s orbit. His emphasis on tradition and deep-rooted personal connections to provincial localities contrasts with another influential post-war view of English local history, the pro-Modern Movement architectural one found in Pevsner’s *Buildings of England* series.

Whereas Hoskins loved his native county, Devon, and felt rooted in it, the *Buildings of England* volume on Surrey had a co-author raised in that county who was ready to criticise it mercilessly. This writer, Ian Nairn, particularly loathed the area of suburbanised western Surrey in which he was brought up. The opposed views of Hoskins and Nairn both derive from personal connections with a locality. Nairn feels a sense in eastern Surrey “of tantalizingly better buildings, vernacular and otherwise, just over the county boundary in Sussex”.⁴⁵ It is the *Sussex Weald* – not the portion of the Weald in Surrey – of which Windy

⁴¹ Nairn & Pevsner, *Surrey*, pp. 67-74; Lancaster 1938: 68-69.

⁴² W.G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* [1959], Third Edition, Longman: Harlow, 1984, pp. 76-7. Hoskins advises local historians to “remember all the time that we are dealing with actual men and women who have struggled to get a living off a real piece of country that we can go and walk over today” and “keep in mind the facts of soil, climate and topography, rather than [...] copyhold tenures, the workings of the manor courts, the heriots, fines and amerancements”. A critical but appreciative recent account of Hoskins is to be found in Matthew Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape*, Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2007.

⁴³ Henry Elliot Malden, “Parishes: Abinger” in *A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 3* [VCH].

⁴⁴ Hoskins, *Local History*, p. xi. According to a colleague (Joan Thirsk, “Hoskins, William George (1908-1992)” in ODNB), Hoskins personally “detested” London. The metropolis was for him the territory of urban historians such as H.J. Dyos, his colleague at the University of Leicester in the 1950s and 1960s (see Brian Harrison, “Dyos, Harold James [Jim] (1921-1978)” in ODNB).

⁴⁵ Nairn & Pevsner, *Surrey*, pp. 19-20.

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Corner in *A Room with a View* has a view, after all.⁴⁶ Nairn finds architectural incompetence and “artificially warmed-up” tradition in the county’s inter-war domestic architecture, but also has more appreciative responses, feeling that the “high-class suburb” found in Surrey at Virginia Water, Weybridge and other places can be not merely “a luxurious environment” but a “completely delightful” one.⁴⁷ Appreciating the variety within Surrey, not only its identity as a whole, Nairn writes that Thornton Heath on the edge of London, with its “desperate kind of mid-nineteenth century artisan character”, and “high-class” Dorking are at once both suburbs of London and very different from one another, an urban district and a rural town.⁴⁸

More so than literary academics, local enthusiasts have grasped the Surrey identity of writers who inhabited and wrote on the county. W.R. Trotter and Jacqueline Banerjee, for instance, seem to address themselves to Surrey residents affectionate about the place in which they live.⁴⁹ Sometimes the writing of such enthusiasts seems immoderate or excessively subjective, as when Banerjee announces that “some of our best-loved literary figures” have lived among the “views and vistas” of “this lovely landscape”.⁵⁰ But the emphasis she places on “the interaction of mind and place” found in literary works when they are considered in relation to the locations they describe and in which they were written is a valuable supplement to more academic studies such as those of Esty and Christie on Forster’s Surrey pageant writings. Banerjee’s study of *Literary Surrey* is more topographical than analytical, perhaps intended to inform local residents about an aspect of their own neighbourhoods.⁵¹ Trotter’s account of the hills of south-western Surrey, where writers began congregating in the mid-nineteenth century, is – like Nairn’s writing on Surrey but less unforgiving – more engaged with smaller-scale locality than is Banerjee’s whole-county survey. The involvement with socio-economic change of the hills near Haslemere, and literary treatments of them, is revealed by Trotter: this particular district was opened up by rail to visitors from London,⁵² and then became popular with commuters, who suburbanised the area; in the twentieth century certain “packaged [...] enclaves” there remained

⁴⁶ *Room with a View*, ch. 5 p. 77, ch. 8 p. 105.

⁴⁷ Nairn & Pevsner, *Surrey*, pp. 61, 73.

⁴⁸ Nairn & Pevsner, *Surrey*, p. 22.

⁴⁹ W.R. Trotter, *The Hilltop Writers: A Victorian Colony Among the Surrey Hills*, Book Guild: Lewes, 1996; Banerjee, *Literary Surrey*.

⁵⁰ Banerjee, *Literary Surrey*, p. 13.

⁵¹ It also has something in common with county guides aimed at motorists which appeared in the mid-twentieth century. See e.g. F.R. Banks, *Surrey* [‘The Penguin Guides: New Series’] Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1956.

⁵² Like the Emersons of *A Room with a View*.

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“rigorously protected from ambitious builders”.⁵³ Trotter demonstrates that it was the very colonisation of wilder areas of South-East England by post-Romantic writers which led to what, from a later conservationist point of view, would be seen as the despoliation of such areas.

Socio-economic contexts matter, then, and given Surrey’s association with the domestic and the picturesque, it is important to remember that the county has an industrial side. It is perhaps surprising to learn that while Forster was writing *Howards End* in Weybridge, cars were also being produced there. This demonstrates the complex and multiple nature of suburbs and country places, which often seem to exclude change and the present.⁵⁴ As early as the 1820s, William Cobbett had described the area around the valley of the Tillingbourne, immediately south of Forster’s home between the 1920s and the 1940s, as a place “fixed on” by the devil “as one of the seats of his grand manufactory”.⁵⁵ Although Abinger seems to Cobbett a “tranquil spot, where the nightingales are to be heard earlier and later in the year than in any other part of England”, he also describes it as the site of the manufacture of both gunpowder and bank notes. Combined here are the literary trope of the earthly paradise which must have contributed to the later suburbanisation of Surrey – here, “no rigour of the seasons can ever be felt”, according to Cobbett – and satire. Forster himself would make the Woodman of his “Abinger Pageant” note “the hammers at Abinger” as characteristic of the area in the sixteenth century;⁵⁶ Cobbett provides evidence that it retained this proto-industrial character until much later.

A locality or neighbourhood does not have the defined borders that counties and nation-states do but exists as something perceived by individuals. Indeed, one’s perception of the place one inhabits will differ from that of those who also live there or nearby because one’s own geographical positionality differs, however minutely, from theirs. An individual’s sense of locatedness may depend on the routes he or she typically takes, for example. As Lefebvre writes:

Traversed now by pathways and patterned by networks, natural space changed: one

⁵³ Trotter, *Hilltop Writers*.

⁵⁴ Rex Pope, “Metal, Vehicle, and Engineering Industries” in Rex Pope (ed.), *Atlas of British Social and Economic History since c. 1700*, Routledge: London, 1989, pp. 45-67, here 56. Pre-Henry Ford, car manufacture was relatively small-scale craftsmanship similar to the carriage-building and cycle workshops which had preceded it: William Morris, later Lord Nuffield, first built motorcycles in 1902, in a converted stables on Holywell Street, Oxford, round the corner from the “comfortable lodgings in Long Wall” of Tibby Schlegel (R.J. Overy, “Morris, William Richard, Viscount Nuffield (1877-1963)” in ODNB; *Howards End*, XXX.179).

⁵⁵ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* [1830], three volumes, G.D.H. Cole & Margaret Cole (eds), Peter Davies: London, 1930, vol. I p. 140.

⁵⁶ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 342.

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might say that practical activity writes on nature, albeit in a scrawling hand, and that this writing implies a particular representation of space. Places are marked, noted, named. Between them, within the ‘holes in the net’, are blank or marginal spaces. Besides Holzwege or woodland paths, there are paths through fields and pastures. Paths are more important than the traffic they bear, because they are what endures in the form of the reticular patterns left by animals, both wild and domestic, and by people.⁵⁷

The “spider’s web” of paths so produced has something organic about it: it is not explicitly planned. Yet it is also no pristine nature capable of being preserved.

Following Lefebvre, Forster’s Surrey locality between 1925 and 1946 could be defined in various ways: as that of the village of Abinger Hammer; as that between the chalk of the North Downs to the north and the clay of the Weald to the south; as that of the parish of Abinger; as that of the Tillingbourne valley; as that between Dorking and Guildford; as that of the A25; as that in the historical orbit of the landowning Evelyn family; as that of prosperous semi-rural and semi-suburban villages which became fashionable in the mid-nineteenth century. A survey of visitors and local residents would surely generate many more overlapping alternatives. Local historians, too, have their own minutely varied foci. Considering Forster’s part of rural Surrey, F.R. Fairbank is interested in the churches of the neighbourhood, Terence O’Kelly in the villages south-east of Abinger Hammer, Shirley Corke in the village of Abinger Hammer itself, and Peter Brandon in the River Tillingbourne, which flows through the area from west to east, and more particularly with its water mills.⁵⁸

Real place is illuminated by disparate local histories, then, even though some local historians write from a position too close to the areas they describe and even perpetuate myth. Fairbank’s, published privately in 1911, is dedicated to the head of a local landed gentry family, the Evelyns of Wotton, and, in the age of railways, mass literacy and cheap print, he clings to the notion that local history is the territory of gentlemanly amateurs. The work is centrally concerned with rank, and with establishing the seniority of the Evelyns among the local gentry. This, in other words, is a ‘county’ production.⁵⁹ O’Kelly demonstrates the relative isolation of the southern part of the parish of Abinger until the

⁵⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [1974], translated from French by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1991, pp. 117-18.

⁵⁸ F.R. Fairbank, *The Churches of Wotton, Abinger and Oakwood in the County of Surrey*, [privately produced]: Guildford, 1911; Terence O’Kelly, *The Villages of Abinger Common and Wotton, Surrey*, Horsham Press: Horsham, 1988; Shirley Corke, *Abinger Hammer, Surrey: A Short History and Guide to the Village*, [privately produced]: Abinger, Surrey, 1993; Peter Brandon, *A History of Surrey*, Phillimore: London & Chichester, 2003.

⁵⁹ The word *county* in its adjectival sense is first attested in 1920, meaning “characteristic of county gentry” or, in a more recent British English sense, ‘posh’ (see OED2: *county* n.1 5.b.).

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interwar period, with outlying villages lacking electricity until after the Second World War:⁶⁰ they contained both suburban and more fully rural aspects during the period in which Forster lived there.

Some of Abinger's inhabitants, like Forster and the Farrer family of Abinger Hall, his ground landlords, regularly shuttled to and from London. Others, many of them agricultural labourers, lived a life not much changed since the time of Cobbett.⁶¹ Brandon writes that "Thanks largely to the crucial protection against despoliation by building in the 1930s afforded by its leading landowners, the valley of the Tillingbourne is neither Metroland or suburbia but still a recognizable part of the Surrey scene which has descended to us from John Aubrey [...] and William Cobbett".⁶² It is true that the area around Abinger Hammer retains a rural air that is lacking from most districts so close to London. Geographical position – the village lies immediately south of a key barrier, the North Downs – plays a part. But Brandon is wrong to contrast it with "suburbia", since it has itself been commuter-dominated since the nineteenth century. Cobbett himself certainly did not view rural Surrey as a changeless world. Concerned satirically with the neighbourhood's role in "spreading misery over a whole nation [...] under the base and hypocritical pretence of promoting its *credit* and maintaining its *honour* and *faith*" through its manufacture of bank notes, he grasped the centrality of commerce to this county's identity.⁶³

It is, however, possible for local historians to combine local history concerned with landholding with the more archaeological and topographical variety advocated by Hoskins. Corke, for instance, observes that while "[t]enurial history can be tedious [...] its social effects are important".⁶⁴ What she shows is that the area of Abinger Hammer was between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries one of relatively small plots of land crammed between two large estates to east and west, and part of a long narrow parish in which the northern parts were cut off from the southern. This isolation of the northern villagers from the parish church may have contributed to the district's reputation as a centre for religious Nonconformism. As early as the 1820s, Cobbett found "more meeting-houses than churches" hereabouts and reported locals "gone crazy on account of religion".⁶⁵ The smaller plots of the

⁶⁰ O'Kelly, *Villages of Abinger and Wotton*, p. 27.

⁶¹ In the early twentieth century increased mobility and literacy were leading to a decline of folk beliefs and a growth of political consciousness among the rural poor of southern England (see W.A. Armstrong, "The Countryside" in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, three volumes, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990, vol. I pp. 87-153, e.g. pp. 127-30, 139-48).

⁶² Brandon, *History of Surrey*, p. 3.

⁶³ Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, vol. I p. 141.

⁶⁴ Corke, *Abinger Hammer*, p. 2.

⁶⁵ Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, vol. I p. 287.

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Surrey Hills area “attracted London businessmen from a surprisingly early date”, Corke writes, since affordable mini-estates were available hereabouts. Like other historians of the neighbourhood, she also emphasises the industrial heritage around Abinger, which was the most northerly site of the Wealden iron industry, and a place where deforestation for charcoal was happening as early as the sixteenth century:

The most prominent feature of the forge, which gave the village its distinctive name, was the great WATER-DRIVEN TAP HAMMER, which must have made the whole valley resound [...] The cast iron hammer head, weighing up to 8cwt (400 kilograms) struck the iron in the anvil around 30 times a minute.⁶⁶

Corke therefore demonstrates that this was both a very early commuter village and a very early industrial area.

Thinking about Forster’s Surrey, Weybridge is easy to forget. He rarely mentioned it, even in private writings: his journals and diaries for the years when he lived there, 1904-1925, tend to start when he travels away from it and stop when he gets back. The character of this Surrey place was neither urban nor rural. Sassoon, after *A Passage to India* appeared and just before Forster left for Abinger, expressed this in mock journalistic language: “we found the famous fiction-fabricator entirely accessible in his unassuming semi-detached red-brick residence on Monument Green”.⁶⁷ Wilfred Stone left Weybridge out of his list of the writer’s homes, although Forster dwelt there for over twenty years and wrote every single one of his novels during this time.⁶⁸ More recently Banerjee reports that she experienced a “revelation” when she discovered from her plumber that *A Passage to India* was written “just down the road to us”. Her study of *Literary Surrey* begins with this surprise, contrasting the county with the settings associated with Shakespeare, the Brontës, Hardy and Wordsworth.⁶⁹ Weybridge is perhaps the invisible centre of Forster’s work, or perhaps the place whose tranquillity – dullness, even – made his work possible. Literary place is not only that which provides positive inspiration or material for a writer.

Clapham, finally, was in Surrey when Forster’s rich Thornton ancestors lived there in the earlier nineteenth century. It became officially part of London in 1889, its change of status reflecting the way it had been engulfed by London. The fact that it was in London throughout Forster’s adult life means that in this study it will be treated in the chapter on London.

⁶⁶ Corke, *Abinger Hammer*, p. 4.

⁶⁷ Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries 1923-1925*, Rupert Hart-Davis (ed.), Faber: London & Boston, 1985, p. 170.

⁶⁸ Stone, *Cave and the Mountain*, p. 16.

⁶⁹ Banerjee, *Literary Surrey*, p. 13. The same writer (*Literary Surrey*, p. 161) reproduces a photograph of the Forsters’ house at Monument Green, Weybridge, as it looks in the early twenty-first century.

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4.2.2. Trips to Abinger Hammer and Weybridge, July 2006-August 2008

I visited Abinger Hammer three times during 2006 and 2007. The first time, I took a train to Gomshall, the nearest station, then walked along the fast, winding A25 road – with no pavement – the mile or so towards the village. Before that, on the train from London Bridge via Redhill, I had noticed white interwar semis scattered through the valleys around Purley and Old Coulsdon, and felt the freezing cold air-conditioning on a colourful brand-new train plying a route which, until a few years earlier, had been the territory of filthy chugging dark blue rolling stock with lethal slam doors. Redhill had seemed the railway hub of suburbia, with ugly redbrick nestling among the dark trees and a dense tangle of track. Rural Surrey was a place connected to London by train, then, yet in which getting to the station involves a life-threatening walk. The village contained picture-postcard greenery and tile-hanging combined with metallic-painted cars and Saturday motocross bikers.⁷⁰ The rest of the day was an outsider's walk around the neighbourhood, as I asked in the post office how to find West Hackhurst, got hostile stares as I photographed the village green (there were children playing on it), wandered alone on the forested land of the Abinger Roughs and the North Downs, said hello to ramblers dressed for the Himalayas, and peered round the gate of West Hackhurst at the extensions, double doors and concrete balls – post-Forster and post-Farrer additions – beyond.⁷¹ Then I had an inconsequential stroll in Piney Copse, “My Wood” for Forster, now National Trust land. As I went on with my walk, I wondered about the locations described in “West Hackhurst”, passed picnickers in a car park, and felt affronted by warning signs put up by landowners. I become a townie in such a place, reminded of how little contact I have had in my life with really rural parts of England.

On my second and third trips I was hosted by descendents of the Farrer family, still landowners in the area. I had written describing my interest in “West Hackhurst” and I knew that hostility towards the Farrers was at the centre of this text. My second visit to the neighbourhood was in dense fog and midwinter, by car, and involved a walk to Blind Oak Gate, the highest point of the North Downs nearby, deep in a wood, where Forster sensed “something vaguely sinister, which would do harm if it could but which cannot, this being Surrey [...] something muffled up and recalcitrant”,⁷² where now a photocopied sheet indicating the way along some orienteering trail was sharing space with a wooden signpost marking the top point of the Downs and the east-west path.⁷³ On the way up it was suggested to me that perhaps the Farrer family were against Forster because he had not been a

⁷⁰ See Image 11.

⁷¹ See Image 12.

⁷² *Two Cheers*, p. 360.

⁷³ See Image 13.

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combatant in the First World War.⁷⁴ It was also suggested that the Farrers' hostility towards Forster was something he imagined.

The third visit was in blazing August heat, again by train, but this time to Dorking and accompanied by a bicycle, which had a tyre slashed as I slogged on it through thorn bushes up the long slow hill somewhere after Wotton, approaching Abinger from the east. Later, my hosts took me to a Dorking repair shop, my weighty Raleigh bike with its Sturmey-Archer three-speed gearbox, like something out of the 1950s, jammed into the back of their old Volkswagen estate. The first shop we stopped at only catered for mountain bikers, a class of weekend visitors from London who infuriated my hosts by churning up the mud of the Weald. Was there also a residual proprietorial sense – did the Surrey Hills need protecting from intruders? I could not be sure. Again I felt uncertain about my own position, as an outsider with an invitation, yet someone who does not believe that townies need to be invited in to the countryside. A long walk northwards from Leith Hill back to Abinger Hammer followed, through villages including Holmbury St Mary, often seen as the original of the Summer Street of *A Room with a View*, through Abinger churchyard where Forster's mother – he made pilgrimages to the sundial which was moved there from West Hackhurst in the 1950s in commemoration of her, or sent others to do so at least – and Aunt Laura are buried, although we could not find a trace of them, then past Crossways Farm.⁷⁵ This is a place made famous as a literary setting by Meredith, the Surrey literary giant slain by Forster in the 1920s. Finally, we reached the trout pond on the Tillingbourne where Forster in "The Last of Abinger" recorded a talk with "old Empson", a local fisherman, shortly before his "expulsion" in late 1946, a conversation which closes his last volume of essays, *Two Cheers for Democracy*.⁷⁶

The side of the Abinger neighbourhood which can be met in physical encounters is encompassed in a series of lines, occupying both elevated points and valleys, running approximately east-west – the North Downs, the Redhill-Reading railway operated pre-nationalisation by the South Eastern Railway, the A25 road between Guildford and Dorking, and the Tillingbourne. These intersect with less prominent tracks, paths and roads taking a north-south route, whether across the Downs to the north (such as the one to Blind Oak Gate and beyond), or into the clay towards Holmbury Hill and Leith Hill to the south. In terms of

⁷⁴Forster's volunteer war work as a Red Cross worker in Alexandria began in 1915, before conscription was introduced; at one point in Egypt he faced the possibility that the Red Cross might release fit men of his age to fight. Although the idea of fighting caused him "extreme physical and mental distress", Forster, in the words of Miriam Allott, "could not conscientiously call himself a conscientious objector" (Miriam Allott, "Editor's Introduction" in *Alexandria*, pp. xv-lxxi, p. xxv).

⁷⁵An illustration of this adorns the Victoria County History of Surrey's pages on Abinger (Malden, "Parishes: Abinger", p. 129).

⁷⁶*Two Cheers*, p. 363.

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what Lefebvre calls social space – space as a product of society, with this production something that, crucially, passes unnoticed⁷⁷ – the identity of the Surrey Hills area in Forster’s writing combines a commuter aspect and a (preserved) rural one. Influential people have long lived here and this is one reason why it has kept rural features such as relatively large estates with many tenants living on them and a branch line railway.⁷⁸

Weybridge, not rural but wealthy outer suburbia, has already been considered in the representation of the zone inhabited by the Hall family of *Maurice*.⁷⁹ I visited Weybridge on a cool, cloudy day in August 2008. As with my third trip to Abinger I arrived by train from Waterloo, a reminder that as well as a continuity of county, Forster’s homes between 1904 and 1925, and then between 1925 and 1946 shared a London railway terminus. Weybridge station was set among trees, in a cutting; from there I walked through dappled woods to the edge of the town, which itself curved around a road. A parade of shops from the tail end of the nineteenth century and recalling H.G. Wells’s accounts of life as a draper’s apprentice then swung into view. This opened out into Monument Green, on the far side of which was the house where Forster completed all six of his novels. Curiously, in one of those conjunctions which connect literature and real place, and which might seem either peripheral or centrally important, the monument on the green turned out to have been the very column which stood in Seven Dials, near Covent Garden in the West End of London between 1694 and 1773, when the deterioration of the neighbourhood led to its removal.⁸⁰ The slums of London – as at Lisson Grove near Forster’s birthplace, as with the streets south of Kings Cross owned by Tonbridge School, slightly east of his *pied-à-terre* at Brunswick Square – seemed a haunting presence.

The house on Monument Green bore a plaque commemorating Forster. I rang the doorbell. The owner, who did not let me past the door, emphasised that his, not his next-door neighbour’s, was the house where Forster actually lived. Forster called it a “little builder’s house”, contrasting it with his “enigmatic legacy” at Abinger.⁸¹ A lane leads from here past millionaires’ houses extended over small plots down to the low-lying islands and meanders of the point where the River Wey meets the Thames. Here Sassoon walked with Forster on a

⁷⁷ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 26-7.

⁷⁸ The desirability of rural outer Surrey in the late nineteenth-century related both to its preservation of wilderness features through having been relatively undeveloped before the Victorian period, and to its geological situation: according to C.J. Cornish (*Wild England of To-Day and the Wild Life in It*, Thomas Nelson: London, 1895, p. 102), in a book the young Forster knew, it was specifically the sort of sandy soils on which pine trees grew which attracted wealthy immigrants from London and elsewhere: “[t]he villas follow the line of the sand as closely as collieries follow the line of the coal”.

⁷⁹ Above, pp. 113-16.

⁸⁰ See Image 14; Nairn & Pevsner, *Surrey*, pp. 516-17.

⁸¹ “West Hackhurst”, p. 19.

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summer evening in 1923.⁸² Across the river at this point – in Middlesex until 1965, then joined to Surrey – is Shepperton, where Meredith once had a cottage,⁸³ and the site in the twentieth century of film studios and the home of J.G. Ballard. Weybridge has a harder-edged glamour and a feel closer to that of London suburbs further in than to the more rural zone surrounding Abinger. As a London suburbanite, my own positionality is closer to Weybridge than to the Surrey Hills; the Abinger area is somewhere I feel less at home but which as a prosperous rural zone has a touch of the exotic for me.

4.3. The Surrey Specifics of *Lucy* and *A Room with a View*

Gently satirical comparisons between English people and Italians, such a well-known aspect of *A Room with a View*, are also to be found in the text scholars have named “Old Lucy”, Forster’s first sustained attempt at writing a novel.⁸⁴ Entirely set in Italy, “Old Lucy” relies on observations Forster began making during his travels there with his mother in the autumn of 1901. A 1903 attempt to revive the story, “New Lucy”, introduced the characters of the Emersons and the Reverend Mr Beebe.⁸⁵ Like the novel which finally emerged, it was based on a plan which divided it into two parts. What survives of “New Lucy” is from the second part, entirely set in England somewhere between London and Brighton, but with no county names and only fictional names for the villages mentioned. In one of the fragments placed by Oliver Stallybrass near the beginning of his reconstruction of “New Lucy”, a character lets a “book lie shut on his lap while he watched the great clouds trundle idly over the sky and cast black patches <over> \upon/ the coloured Weald”.⁸⁶ But, other than in this one line, there is little emphasis on the locality.

Instead, a larger-scale imaginative geography figures here, as the characters who would evolve in *A Room with a View* into Lucy, George and Cecil – they have the same first names here – debate the associations of the birch and the olive as northern and southern European trees. After a lacuna later in the narrative, one of the surviving sheets begins in the middle of a description of the road from London to Brighton.⁸⁷ There *is* a village called Summer Street in this attempt at a novel, but there is nothing to suggest it stands for Holmbury St Mary in Surrey, as the village of the same name in *A Room with a View* seems to.⁸⁸

⁸² Sassoon, *Diaries 1923-1925*, pp. 48-9.

⁸³ Banerjee, *Literary Surrey*; see Image 15.

⁸⁴ *Lucy*, pp. 3-85.

⁸⁵ *Lucy*, pp. 89-131, here 89-90.

⁸⁶ *Lucy*, p. 97.

⁸⁷ *Lucy*, pp. 114-115.

⁸⁸ Stallybrass’s observation (*Lucy*, p. 119) that “the topography of Summer Street (i.e. Holmbury St

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Forster put the “Lucy” fragments aside while he wrote *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *The Longest Journey*, returning to them in 1907 and developing them into *A Room with a View*. Much of what he added, turning the early scenes and sketches into the complete, bitter-sweet comic romance of *A Room with a View*, was the detail of Surrey. The earlier drafts’ scattered and generalised view of a prosperous southern England which could as well have been in Sussex or Kent develops into a portrait of a one corner of a particular county which, in *A Room with a View*, is identified as Surrey.

At least as much as with Italy, *A Room with a View* is concerned with a very specific part of England in southern Surrey near the border with Sussex, between the North Downs and the Weald. Like “New Lucy”, *A Room with a View* is divided into two, first an Italian part and then an English one. Part Two of the novel – almost entirely set in southern England – is considerably longer than the – Italian – Part One. When the novel appeared in 1908, reviewers knew that this Surrey setting mattered, even if later images – film adaptations, dust jackets – and interpretations have repeatedly presented the novel as one about Italy.⁸⁹ *A Room with a View* has a history hidden by these Mediterranean images: it emerges from a solidly English context as a descendent of Surrey literary works such as Meredith’s *The Egoist* and G.T. Chesney’s book *The Battle of Dorking*.⁹⁰ Forster gathered most of his material for its English section before leaving Cambridge in 1901. He then wrote it up chiefly from memory: he was abroad for much of the subsequent few years, although there were further visits to the area from Weybridge, for example in August 1906.⁹¹ According to a note in his diary, it was at West Hackhurst in late 1907 that he completed *A Room with a View*.⁹²

Mary), and the situation, and the situation of Windy Corner to the south, are somewhat different” in “New Lucy” and *A Room with a View* is misleading, since without the later novel, there would be no grounds for equating the Summer Street of the earlier with Holmbury St Mary.

⁸⁹ John Colmer (“*Howards End Revisited*” [1969] in J.H. Stape (ed.), *E.M. Forster: Critical Assessments*, four volumes, Croom Helm: Mounfield, East Sussex, 1998 vol. III pp. 240-9, here 240) refers to it as “the Italian novel”. The cover of the Penguin Classics paperback printed in 2000 and the dustjacket and endpapers of the standard hardback in the Abinger Edition both feature photographs of Florence. Translations follow suit: in Finnish the book becomes *Hotelli Firenzessä* (E.M. Forster, *Hotelli Firenzessä* [1908], translated from English by Hanna-Liisa Timonen, Jyväskylä & Helsinki: Gummerus, 1986): ‘Hotel in Florence’. The poster for the 1985 Merchant-Ivory film adaptation shows Julian Sands as George Emerson and Helena Bonham-Carter as Lucy, with the duomo and the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio visible out of the window behind them.

⁹⁰ Chesney’s book inaugurated a tradition of ‘invasion-scare’ stories that generated best-sellers until the First World War ([George Tomkyns Chesney], *The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer*, Blackwood: Edinburgh & London, 1871; on Chesney see Roger T. Stearn, “Chesney, Sir George Tomkyns (1830-1895)” in ODNB; on invasion literature see I.F. Clarke, “Introduction” in George Chesney, *The Battle of Dorking* [1871] and Saki, *When William Came* [1913], Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1970, pp. ix-xxii; Moretti, *Atlas*, p. 139).

⁹¹ “Notebook Journal”, 17 August 1906.

⁹² *Chronology*, p. 29.

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Forster was early on in his career influenced by Meredith, whose literary constructions of Surrey influenced the portrayal of the county in *A Room with a View*. After the First World War, Forster criticised Meredith's view of rural England on the grounds that it contained "too much Surrey", and this persuaded both Virginia Woolf and F.R. Leavis – who rarely saw eye to eye – that Meredith had dated badly.⁹³ In the same passage from *Aspects of the Novel* Forster recalled a time when "all Cambridge trembled" in response to Meredith, and in 1929 it seemed to him looking back that the youth of 1900 were no less "inside George Meredith's idiom" "than the young of the 1920s were inside T.S. Eliot's".⁹⁴ Meredith spent the last 42 years of his life living in a cottage on Box Hill, north of Dorking and just east of Abinger Hammer, living there throughout his period of popular and critical success.⁹⁵ His public image – as crystallised by his 1885 novel *Diana of the Crossways*, set in Abinger Hammer – is connected to Surrey and specifically to the Surrey Hills area, in a way that Forster's ordinarily is not. *A Room with a View* is only partially about Surrey: instead, it uses as its symbol of home a real place within the county of Surrey. Like Meredith in *Diana of the Crossways* and *The Egoist*, Forster here represents just one specific side of the county – the more rural and more prosperous.

In *A Room with a View*, Surrey is a place of sandy pine woods and deep lanes running up hillsides, hills occupied by people made wealthy through activities in London, and served by railway lines connecting them to the metropolis, a pleasant place, but one in which there are suggestions of political conflict. During the book's second chapter, during chit-chat among English tourists in Florence, the political colouring of the neighbourhood is what leads the novelist Miss Lavish to guess that Lucy comes from an industrial area, perhaps in the Midlands or North of England:

"Indeed, I'm not!" exclaimed Lucy. "We are Radicals, too, out and out. My father always voted for Mr Gladstone, until he was so dreadful about Ireland."

"I see, I see. And now you have gone over to the enemy."

"Oh, please – ! If my father was alive, I am sure he would vote Radical again now that Ireland is all right. And as it is, the glass over our front door was broken last election, and Freddy is sure it was the Tories; but mother says nonsense, a tramp."

"Shameful! A manufacturing district, I suppose?"

"No – in the Surrey Hills. About five miles from Dorking, overlooking the

⁹³ *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 89. Virginia Woolf ("The Novels of George Meredith" [1928] in *Collected Essays*, four volumes, Leonard Woolf (ed.), Chatto & Windus: London, 1966-1967, pp. 224-32, here 224-5), in an essay which argues that Meredith ought not to be forgotten, takes Forster's view as the definitive modern opinion on Meredith. According to F.R. Leavis (*The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1948, p. 35), Forster had, in *Aspects of the Novel*, carried out "the necessary demolition work" on Meredith.

⁹⁴ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 87.

⁹⁵ Margaret Harris, "Meredith, George (1828-1909)" in ODNB.

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Weald.”⁹⁶

Abinger Hammer is approximately five miles west of Dorking: the place setting of *A Room with a View* is therefore highly specific. Politics connects this conversation in Florence to the Abinger Hammer Forster knew. Lucy’s father is identified as having been a Liberal Unionist, one of the Liberal Party supporters who broke with the party after Gladstone’s support for Irish Home Rule became public in 1886.⁹⁷ Writing “West Hackhurst”, forty years after *A Room with a View*, Forster similarly contrasts his Aunt Laura’s political views with those of her friend Lady Farrer: “They did not agree politically – and politics in those idyllic days meant Ireland. The Farrers were Radicals and followed Mr Gladstone, my aunt was a Liberal Unionist. In fact I think she founded the Surrey branch of that forgotten party. She cared passionately about Ireland”.⁹⁸ In both passages Forster makes a careful attempt to situate the telling and the audience in relation to the matter being narrated, as can be illuminated by using the concepts of spatial and temporal deixis.⁹⁹ The two texts handle time and space rather differently, though. The passage from *A Room with a View*, temporally speaking, relates past to present (“My father always voted for Mr Gladstone”, “if my father was alive”, “now that Ireland is alright”), whereas the irony of “West Hackhurst” views the late-Victorian years as utterly divided from the present specifics of locality (“those idyllic days”, “that forgotten party”). Spatially, whereas the 1908 novel invites a reader, sitting comfortably yet at a distance from Forster himself or the setting of his narration, to turn to an atlas or an encyclopaedia and look up “the Surrey Hills”, “Dorking” and “the Weald”, the 1943 memoir treats Surrey allusively, as a place its auditors already know.

The political tension of the exchange between Lucy and Miss Lavish is something that Masterman and Liberal-voting readers of *The Nation* would have understood easily in 1908. Party-political conflicts became more acrimonious in the first decade of the twentieth century. A million more votes were cast in the 1906 general election than in that of 1900, and

⁹⁶ *Room with a View*, ch. 2 pp. 37-8.

⁹⁷ See Donald Read, *England 1868-1914: The Age of Urban Democracy*, Longman: London, 1979, pp. 350-3. According to Read (p. 350), Gladstone’s failure to keep the Liberal Party united “did much to ensure that Home Rule had no chance of enactment for a generation”. The character of Jack in Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* answers a question about his political views by saying “I am afraid I have none. I am a Liberal Unionist”.

⁹⁸ “West Hackhurst”, p. 12; *Creator as Critic*, p. 116. Heath removes the capital letter from “Radical” in his transcription, but it ought to be maintained because the word is not a descriptive adjective for the Farrers but a proper noun denoting the wing of the Liberal party supported by them. See e.g. E.J. Feuchtwanger, *Democracy and Empire: Britain 1865-1914*, Edward Arnold: London, 1985, pp. 184-91.

⁹⁹ Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1983, pp. 73-85; Roger D. Sell, “Literary Pragmatics” in Jacob L. Mey (ed.), *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics*, Elsevier: Oxford, 1998, pp. 523-36 (an application of the concept of deixis to literary study).

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they were overwhelmingly those of working-class men. The Honeychurches and their neighbour, the local squire Sir Harry Otway – “a Radical if ever there was”, according to Miss Lavish – are representatives of a politically Liberal and religiously Anglican country gentry that had pockets in the Home Counties, even if Liberal politics were more stereotypically associated with Nonconformism, towns and industry.¹⁰⁰ These connections between Nonconformism, evangelical Anglicanism, and the Liberal elite provide another link between *A Room with a View* and “West Hackhurst”.¹⁰¹

Late in the novel, the name of Surrey is twice used in a way that draws attention to the reputation and particular atmosphere of the county. First comes a view of landscape from Beebe’s perspective which turns, almost imperceptibly, into a richly visual description in Forster’s narrating voice:

The sky had grown wilder since he stood there last hour, giving to the land a tragic greatness that is rare in Surrey. Gray clouds were charging across tissues of white, which stretched and shredded and tore slowly, until through their final layers there gleamed a hint of the disappearing blue.¹⁰²

Surrey’s lack of “tragic greatness” is part of its image, its stereotypical identity. This is not a place on the fringes of civilisation, but the most suburbanised county of all.¹⁰³ At this moment, though, it seems sublime. Secondly, near the end of the novel, a dank, enclosed, yet picturesque Surrey confronts Lucy and her mother as they return from a day in London:

She and her mother shopped in silence, spoke little in the train, little again in the carriage, which met them at Dorking Station. It had poured all day and as they ascended through the deep Surrey lanes showers of water fell from the overhanging beech trees and rattled on the hood.¹⁰⁴

This county, specifically, is the setting for Lucy’s story, with its possible tragic outcome at the time of Beebe’s vision. Here, Lucy risks losing George and being confined to a life of

¹⁰⁰ *Room with a View*, ch. 2 p. 38. Radicals in Parliament were the pro-reform element who joined the Whigs to form the Liberal Party in the 1850s. Birmingham, a great manufacturing city, was a centre of Liberal Nonconformism in the late Victorian period (see Read, *England 1868-1914*, pp. 155-7).

¹⁰¹ Laura Forster was descended from the Thorntons of Clapham with their connections to Abolitionism and other reforming causes, while Lady Farrer, who married into a family Forster identified as Radicals, was born a Wedgwood, into the distinguished family of Staffordshire potters, whose politics had been whig and later Liberal since Josiah in the eighteenth century. See “West Hackhurst”, p. 17; Robin Reilly, “Wedgwood, Josiah (1730-1795)” in ODNB.

¹⁰² *Room with a View*, ch. 18 p. 204.

¹⁰³ According to Nairn and Pevsner (*Surrey*, p. 23), “Surrey is entirely devoted to serving urban man, while although “[a] history of English medieval architecture could be written without mentioning a single surviving Surrey building”, “a history of the suburb or the folly could almost be written without going outside the county”.

¹⁰⁴ *Room with a View*, ch. 19 p. 215.

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chilly virginity as Charlotte (in Kent) and Beebe (here in Surrey) both are.¹⁰⁵ The landscape intimates this risk thanks to numerous references by both characters and narrator to “darkness” in the book’s later chapters, as summer gives way to autumn and winter.¹⁰⁶

The nature of county identity requires explication. Lucy Honeychurch is a native of Surrey by birth, and the county’s society is the one “out of which” the London aesthete Cecil Vyse plans “to rescue” her.¹⁰⁷ The Honeychurches arrived in the area only shortly before her birth, though, having built their house before the arrival of wealthy incomers from London, who then mistook the family “for the remnants of an indigenous aristocracy”. Southern Surrey is not countryside in the sense of being a place where people have been rooted in unchanging life for centuries, this is to say: the Summer Street of the novel is a new place, a creation of the railway age. So too was Holmbury St Mary, its original, formed from an agglomeration of old hamlets in the 1870s, and this is also close to Forster’s impressions of the second Baron Farrer in “West Hackhurst”: “I have the feeling that he doesn’t belong to Surrey at all. Who indeed does?”¹⁰⁸ A county has place identity at a level above the local and below the national. In county histories, from those of antiquarians such as William Lambarde in the sixteenth century down to Pevsner’s *Buildings of England* in the twentieth, each county gains a unique character.¹⁰⁹ The significance of county identities has perhaps lessened since industrialisation, and an emphasis on the county as a unit can thus be nostalgic.¹¹⁰ The word ‘county’ also typically alludes to a perception of rural English society which has as its centre the landed gentry. The significance of county identity for Forster, then, means that discussions such as those by Daniel Born, Frederic Jameson and Patrick Parrinder of the relationship between his writing and modernity, nationalism or imperialism need to be questioned.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Beebe has been situated spatially by Nigel Rapport (“The Body of the Village Community: Between Revered Parkington in Wanet and Mr Beebe in *A Room with a View*” in Nigel Rapport (ed.), *British Subjects: An Anthropology of Britain*, Berg: Oxford, 2002, pp. 299-320, here 299-300, 309) as a figure “outwith the boundaries of community” who is unable to “move into” the “world of completeness of his parishioners”, something that according to Rapport he shares with the Anglican church in 1990s rural Cumbria.

¹⁰⁶ *Room with a View*, ch. 11 p. 142, ch. 15 p. 178. There are twelve uses of the word *darkness* in the last four chapters of the novel.

¹⁰⁷ *Room with a View*, ch. 10 p. 129.

¹⁰⁸ “West Hackhurst”, p. 15; *Creator as Critic*, p. 118.

¹⁰⁹ On antiquarian local history in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century England see Hoskins (*Local History*, pp. 18-30) and the discussion below of William Lambarde’s *Perambulation of Kent*.

¹¹⁰ On which point, in relation to Surrey, see F.J.C. Hearnshaw, *The Place of Surrey in the History of England*, S.R.: Wakefield, 1971, p. 185).

¹¹¹ Daniel Born, “Private Gardens, Public Swamps: *Howards End* and the Revaluation of Liberal Guilt”, *Novel* 25 (1992), pp. 141-59; Frederic Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism” [1990] in *The Modernist Papers*, Verso: London & New York, 2007, pp. 152-69; Patrick Parrinder, *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from Its Origins to the Present Day*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006, pp. 291-302.

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Alongside the county, specificity of place is established by reference to features of physical geography – local soils, the North Downs and the Weald – and to the local market town, Dorking. The Weald, a wilder area which lies beyond the Surrey Hills (in eastern Sussex and western Kent) for a traveller coming from London, is inseparable from the notion of ‘view’ in *A Room with a View*, while Dorking represents a small part of the novel’s notion of ‘room’. The “Surrey lanes”, “worn down deep into the greensand”, are a feature of the Surrey Hills area in the belt of sandy soil immediately south of the chalky North Downs, and are sometimes seen as a “quintessential” aspect of the county.¹¹² Forster later looked back to these lanes with ironised nostalgia. In “West Hackhurst” he recalls 1890s carriage rides during which he, a teenage visitor, would “thread the Surrey lanes” in company with his aunt Laura, Lady Farrer, and minor local celebrities such as a daughter of the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell;¹¹³ in the 1930s “Abinger Pageant”, smugglers using the woods and lanes for cover become an important feature of the area’s past.¹¹⁴

The Weald, heavily forested land on clay soils was for much of the Middle Ages “primeval forest” while the rest of South-East England was becoming cultivated.¹¹⁵ A geological and formerly a legal entity, it has been described as “the last frontier” of South-East England, as an area that long resisted “colonisation”.¹¹⁶ The Weald first enters *A Room with a View* as Lucy in Florence thinks fondly of home: “[t]he road up through the pine-woods, the clean drawing-room, the view over the Sussex Weald – all hung before her bright and distinct, but pathetic as the pictures in a gallery to which, after much experience, a traveller returns”.¹¹⁷ Later, the Weald stands for landscape, outlook, breadth of perspective, and for the lovable uniqueness of Lucy’s own place at Windy Corner.

This specific meaning of the Weald as place is apparent at moments when Forster exaggerates the magnitude and grandeur of English landscape in a way which seems influenced by Hardy. Windy Corner is “transfigured” by the view from it, built as it is “on the range that overlooks the Sussex Weald” so that Lucy “seemed on the edge of a green magic carpet which hovered in the air above the tremulous world”; sitting “on a promontory”, she sees “the pine-clad promontories descending one beyond another into the

¹¹² *Abinger Harvest*, p. 346; Nairn & Pevsner, *Surrey*, p. 19. “Greensand” is the local name for the band between the chalk Downs and the clays of the Weald further south (see Henry Elliot Malden, *A History of Surrey*, Elliot Stock: London, 1900, p. 5).

¹¹³ “West Hackhurst”, p. 11; *Creator as Critic*, p. 116.

¹¹⁴ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 346.

¹¹⁵ K.P. Witney, *The Jutish Forest: A Study of the Weald of Kent from 450 to 1380 A.D.*, Athlone Press: London, 1976, p. 1. Isolated pockets of woodland survived on poor soils elsewhere in the South East, for example at what is now Epping Forest in Essex.

¹¹⁶ John Talbot White, *The South-East, Down and Weald: Kent, Surrey and Sussex*, Eyre Methuen: London, 1977, pp. 99-100.

¹¹⁷ *Room with a View*, ch. 5 p. 77.

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Weald”, the view becoming more “glorious” with every one; she later feels that “her mother and Windy Corner and the Weald in the declining sun were perfect”.¹¹⁸ There is a breathlessness here, a gushiness even, which distinguishes these views of landscape from those of Hardy, a tone which can be associated with Lucy’s youth and class, but the use of words like “range” and “promontory” implies something more spectacular than southern English landscape, a magnification reminiscent of Egdon Heath at the opening of Hardy’s *The Return of the Native*, or “the cliff-like dwellings of Shaston” in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*.¹¹⁹ While Hardy certainly amplifies the scenery of Wessex in these novels, Forster, while doing something similar with the Weald in *A Room with a View*, always seems to feel that the landscape of Surrey and Sussex does not quite merit such a treatment.

The novel’s perspective is always that of a view *over* the Weald. Forster never ventures down into the Weald, but it has genuine force in Chapter 15, as Lucy realises the mistake she has made in becoming engaged to Cecil. The geographical zone she is in is here divided into two, each called a “country”:

In the Weald, autumn approached, breaking up the green monotony of summer, touching the peaks with the grey bloom of mist, the beech trees with russet, the oak trees with gold. Up on the heights, battalions of black pines witnessed the change, themselves unchangeable. Either country was spanned by a cloudless sky, and in either arose the tinkle of church bells.¹²⁰

There is a division in terms of landscape, then, while these two portions of Surrey are united in terms of human practices by Anglican church bells. Confused and upset without knowing why, Lucy then looks at the Weald, reflecting that “[i]n all that expanse no human eye is looking at her, and she may frown unrebuked and measure the spaces that yet survive between Apollo and the western hills”.¹²¹ Her imaginative perception of a place, the Weald, suggests to Lucy that a broader, greater world exists beyond the stuffy confines of her home,¹²² and in “the western hills” there are suggestions of the quasi-mystical notion of wild England which lurks in the background of all Forster’s pre-First-World-War writings. Views of this sort, glimpses and touches of a world beyond suburbia, are what separate Lucy’s world at Windy Corner around from the stuffiness and hypocrisy of Sawston. In *A Room with a View*, Forster presents the world through Lucy, with her strong emotional pull towards

¹¹⁸ *Room with a View*, ch. 8 p. 105, ch. 10 p. 133, ch. 13 157.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* [1891], Tim Dolin (ed.), Penguin: London, 1998, p. 51.

¹²⁰ *Room with a View*, ch.15 p. 167.

¹²¹ *Room with a View*, ch. 15, pp. 167-8.

¹²² The western hills echo Hardy, and elsewhere in Forster’s writing on Surrey there is another such echo in the “West Hackhurst” memoir (p.14), when Lord Farrer tells Forster that “the western hedge of West Hackhurst had once been the eastern hedge of the Kingdom of Wessex”.

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landscape, and the novel as a whole thus moves – albeit in an ironised way – closer to the Romantic view of place associated with Wordsworth and Thoreau than any of Forster’s other writings.¹²³ Closer to Windy Corner than the Weald but also experienced in an ocular way by Lucy is the “Sacred Lake” where Lucy spies Freddie, George and Mr Beebe bathing, always a sexualised act in Forster.¹²⁴ The Weald and the Sacred Lake are further demonstrations that England and Italy are not opposed in *A Room with a View*: both room and view exist in both countries, and this opposition, not the international one, is at the heart of the novel.

The town of Dorking,¹²⁵ by contrast, means commerce, railways, the spread of London, and is associated with the book’s negative concept: “muddle”: confusion, disharmony and the effects of unkind behaviour:

Albert was inhabited. His tortured garden was bright with geraniums and lobelias and polished shells. His little windows were chastely swathed in Nottingham lace. Cissie was to let. Three noticeboards, belonging to Dorking agents, lolled on her fence and announced the not surprising fact.¹²⁶

This description is of a pair of cottages in Summer Street, not in Dorking but touched by it through the real estate business. Named for people, they have a camp or kitsch value quite opposed to the Weald in Lucy’s perception of it. Charlotte’s personal muddle is later exemplified by the fact that when she is “due at the South-Eastern station” she instead arrives “at the London and Brighton station” (stations in the town having been built by rival railways).¹²⁷

Speaking of Dorking, the part of Surrey in which *A Room with a View* is set was also the setting for Chesney’s *The Battle of Dorking*, published in 1871. In this wildly successful specimen of invasion-scare literature the location of the fighting, “the ridge which runs from Guildford to Dorking”, is described as “one of the most beautiful scenes in England”, geologically speaking “part of the great chalk-range which extends from beyond Aldershot east to the Medway” with “a gap in the ridge just here where the little stream that runs past

¹²³ David Dowling (*Bloomsbury Aesthetics*, p. 52) accurately claims that the general thrust of *A Room with a View* is anti-aesthetic (the aesthete Cecil is satirised in it, after all), but also claims that “[l]andscape painting, that art most in touch with the real world” is “the one art to escape censure in the novel”.

¹²⁴ *Room with a View*, ch. 12.

¹²⁵ Dorking (population 8,000 in 1901) had had a direct railway connection with London since 1867 and was developing as a commuter town in the Edwardian decade (Brandon, *History of Surrey*, p. 89; Hugh Chisholm (ed.), *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, 29 volumes, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1910, s.v. ‘Dorking’).

¹²⁶ *Room with a View*, ch. 9 p. 120.

¹²⁷ *Room with a View*, ch. 14 p. 162.

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Dorking turns suddenly to the north, to find its way to the Thames”.¹²⁸ The tone is matter-of-fact, in comparison to that of Forster looking through Lucy’s eyes, but desirability the area to the Victorians and Edwardians – wild-looking but unthreatening; far enough from London but not too far – no less apparent than in *A Room with a View*. Chesney’s perspective, contrasting with Forster’s, was militaristic and, in party-political terms, Conservative,¹²⁹ but there are significant points of comparison between them. Chesney conveys a sense of southern England’s geographic expanse not unlike Forster’s famous view northwards from Purbeck in *Howards End*.¹³⁰

Surrey has long had a close relationship with London itself, as the county’s architectural history demonstrates.¹³¹ London’s impact on this part-urban county, whose outer parts radically changed after the arrival of the railway, can be detected throughout *A Room with a View* and related writings by Forster which, like the architecture of Surrey, themselves use pastiche as they seek to create images of a domesticated rural world. The Emersons of the novel are part of the increasing pressure of London on the county. George, the son, is “a clerk in the General Manager’s office at one of the big railways”.¹³² Precise details of railway travel – think of Charlotte mixing up the two stations in Dorking, operated by different companies¹³³ – recur in Forster’s writings. Old Mr Emerson is a retired journalist, something likely to have kept him in a London orbit. Cissie Villa is eventually said to have been abandoned by the Emersons as “too far out of town for the young gentleman”.¹³⁴ The Emersons belong to specific sites and zones within London: the City, Fleet Street and the railway termini, not, say, the fashionable south-western residential districts inhabited by Cecil Vyse and his mother.¹³⁵ George remembers a childhood trip into rural Surrey with his mother and on that trip “seeing as far as Hindhead”,¹³⁶ site of the literary colony associated with Tennyson, the “late Poet Laureate” who is mentioned on the first page of *A Room with a View* (the novel abounds in references to the recent, late-Victorian, past). In 1958, Forster wrote a coda to the novel entitled “A View without a Room”. In it, George becomes a Whitehall civil servant and, after the First World War, he and his wife Lucy move through

¹²⁸ [Chesney], *Battle of Dorking*, pp. 28-9.

¹²⁹ See Stearn, “Chesney”.

¹³⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XIX, pp. 120-1.

¹³¹ Nairn & Pevsner, *Surrey*, p. 17.

¹³² *Room with a View*, ch. 14 p. 166.

¹³³ *Room with a View*, ch. 14 p. 162.

¹³⁴ *Room with a View*, ch. 19 p. 216.

¹³⁵ The Vyses live at “Beauchamp Mansions, S.W.” (*Room with a View*, ch.11 p. 140).

¹³⁶ *Room with a View*, ch. 15 p. 178. The Emersons undoubtedly approached Hindhead by rail, the London to Portsmouth line stopping at nearby Haslemere having opened in 1859.

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various London suburbs, declining from Highgate to Carshalton.¹³⁷

Overall, the Surrey bourgeoisie of *A Room with a View* feel threatened by London. When “the London fog tries to enter the pine-woods pouring through the gaps in the northern hills”, a sense of the Surrey world as a paradise under siege is very strong.¹³⁸ Forster does not allow his readers to interpret this invasion as a worthwhile penetration of reality into an artificial paradise, or as something that the residents of Summer Street are entitled to resist. He believed that human beings in different times and places are fundamentally alike, but his references to specific place – the county, the town, and the geographical view – are not a mere backdrop comparable to scenery in a stage-play. His initial audience would have known the meaning of these real geographical places in the Edwardian and politically Liberal context of *A Room with a View*'s publication, as attention to Masterman's reviews and other contemporary responses, combined with an awareness of more recent spatial theory such as that of Lefebvre, clearly suggest. The contribution made by these formulations of place to Forster's achievement as a communicator is that other audiences can understand their meaning without knowing the places themselves. In other words, a reading of his novel a century after its publication can be enriched by a return to the neglected original context.

4.4. Leonard's Pebbles

Chapter XIV of *Howards End* begins with suggestions of impropriety. Jacky Bast assumes, on finding Margaret Schlegel's card in her husband Leonard's jacket, that the two have been having an affair. Had such a relationship happened, it would not only have represented sexual infidelity on Leonard's part, but also crossed class barriers.

In the same chapter are reflections on the modern urban social class of clerks to which Leonard belongs, a class said to have “lost the life of the body and failed to reach the life of the spirit”.¹³⁹ Margaret sees Leonard's “type” as those who are characterised by “mental dishonesty” and “familiarity with the outsides of books”. Recent critics have chastised Forster for this sort of statement.¹⁴⁰ But although statements such as those just quoted contain class prejudice of a sort that in later decades has come to seem repellent, Forster's own view of Leonard is defensible. For one thing, the references to “mental dishonesty” and “the outsides of books” are made in an ironic narrating voice partly representing Margaret's

¹³⁷ *Room with a View*, p. 232.

¹³⁸ *Room with a View*, ch. 10 p. 130.

¹³⁹ *Howards End* ch. XIV p. 84.

¹⁴⁰ John Carey *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939*, Faber: London, 1992, pp. 18-19; Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 2001, pp. 402, 421.

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thoughts, and are not straightforwardly Forster's own views. The apparent sneers at Leonard could also be justified by remembering that the culture of the Apostles at Cambridge encouraged an austere, free-thinking and hard-reading approach which was not shy of criticising others, whatever their social standing, so that for Forster himself the descriptions of Leonard in *Howards End* would have exemplified a harsh fairness rather than a vague and patronising charity.¹⁴¹ The attitudes and judgements related to social class expressed by Forster in his "Locked Journal" in the years immediately preceding the First World War support such a reading of it: he was frequently scathing and could, to our ears, sound snobbish, but was always ready to reassess an individual.¹⁴² Finally, although for those outside elite establishments such as Cambridge at the beginning of the twentieth century – those who had left school at fourteen, for instance – high culture really was extremely prestigious and its acquisition socially advantageous,¹⁴³ Forster did not think that such establishments should exclude clerks such as Leonard. In his teaching at the Working Men's College and the friendship he developed there with the former clerk E.K. Bennett, who later became a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, there were no signs of a belief that members of the lower classes ought not to attempt to improve themselves.¹⁴⁴

In line with Leonard's "familiarity with the outsides of books", the trip to Surrey he recounts is very much a literary trip.¹⁴⁵ He does not attempt a pilgrimage to the home of a writer, but does try to recreate the escapes into the wild of characters in books by Meredith and others.¹⁴⁶ Despite his bookishness, Leonard aims at the union with the wild with which Forster associates Stephen Wonham in *The Longest Journey*. Yet Leonard's account ends in "a swamp of books" which, as a tired auto-didact reading at nights, he has failed to comprehend properly, according to Forster's narrating voice. He is said to have taken them

¹⁴¹ On the Apostles, see W.C. Lubenow, *The Cambridge Apostles, 1820-1914: Liberalism, Imagination and Friendship in British Intellectual and Professional Life*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998.

¹⁴² See for example his comments on a young Wiltshire man he observed in a railway carriage, and on an impoverished cousin's (apparently lower-class) wife (Locked Journal, 14 March and 29 July 1912).

¹⁴³ As Rose (*Intellectual Life*), while he criticises Forster's portrayal of Leonard, indicates.

¹⁴⁴ On Bennett see *Selected Letters I*, pp. 312-13.

¹⁴⁵ Literary tourism boomed between 1870 and 1918 (see Philip Waller, *Writers, Readers and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain 1870-1918*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006; Nicola J. Watson, *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 2006), but has not disappeared since. Banerjee, for example, sees Surrey as the domain of certain writers because of their residence there, ending each chapter (e.g. on Forster, *Literary Surrey*, p. 173) with suggestions of "Places to Visit" on author-based literary tours.

¹⁴⁶ Leonard claims that he "wanted to get back to the earth [...] like Richard [Feverel] does in the end" (*Howards End*, ch. XIV p. 86).

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for “the destination” instead of what they really are, “signposts”:¹⁴⁷

And Leonard had reached the destination. He had visited the county of Surrey when darkness covered its amenities, and its cosy villas had re-entered ancient night. Every twelve hours this miracle happens, but he had troubled to go and see for himself. Within his cramped little mind dwelt something that was greater than Jefferies’s books – the spirit that led Jefferies to write them; and his dawn, though revealing nothing but monotonous, was part of the eternal sunrise that shows George Borrow Stonehenge.¹⁴⁸

Despite the reference to Leonard’s “cramped little mind”, this passage praises him. The wild is everywhere, even in the most domesticated of counties, Surrey, and getting in touch with it is a matter of freeing oneself.

Over time, Forster came to dismiss the belief that genuine wildness could be found in south-east England. In “New Lucy” he has Mr Beebe encounter George Emerson doing something he would in *The Longest Journey* attribute to Stephen: sleeping out of doors, and doing so in a Surrey or Sussex setting. When he came to write *The Longest Journey*, he moved the wilderness further away from London: to Wiltshire. By the time he wrote the lectures which became *Aspects of the Novel* in 1927, “the home counties posing as the universe” was one of the charges he could level at Meredith in dismissing him from the canon of major English novelists.¹⁴⁹ Leonard’s attempt to become cultured, taken together with his Meredithian walk, indicates that Surrey gradually became for Forster a slightly absurd place, a toytown wilderness. Throughout the period 1904-1946 when he was a semi-permanent resident there, his view of Surrey was rather a wry one. It is not simply that Leonard is disparaged from a socially superior point of view for attempting the sort of thing only appropriate to the hero of a novel or a character who has reached “the life of the spirit”. The anti-romantic “pebble” dropped by Leonard when he announces that he has taken a real walk into the woods and onto the hills – as opposed to merely reading about such walks – and which he drops a second time when he answers simply “No” – “The word again flew like a pebble from a sling” – on being asked by Helen whether the dawn was “wonderful”, is something whose force Forster himself felt.

¹⁴⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XIV p. 88.

¹⁴⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XIV p. 88. On Jefferies and Borrow see W.J. Keith, *The Rural Tradition: William Cobbett, Gilbert White, and Other Non-Fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside*, Harvester: Brighton, 1975, pp. 105-47; for discussion of Jefferies’s urban audience, which clearly encompassed people of Leonard’s class, p. 134.

¹⁴⁹ *Aspects of the Novel*, pp. 89-92.

4.5. Property-Owning and the Wider World in the 1920s: “My Wood”

A short essay that might seem whimsical when encountered in the context of Forster’s 1936 collection *Abinger Harvest*,¹⁵⁰ “My Wood” actually forms part of a coherent development when set alongside his other writings on outer Surrey. The piece first appeared in the *New Leader* on 15th October 1926 as “My Wood, or the Effects of Property upon Character”.¹⁵¹ The *New Leader* was the official journal of the Independent Labour Party,¹⁵² and its pages that year were filled with denunciations of Stanley Baldwin’s government, and with support for the coalminers who led the unsuccessful General Strike. In the aftermath of the First World War Forster, like many English intellectuals, moved from a position on the reforming wing of the Liberal party towards the socialist left. His eleven contributions to *The New Leader* between 1922 and 1926 reflect this move.¹⁵³ As well as Forster’s contribution, the 15 October 1926 issue included a leading article concerned with the nature and objectives of “The Class Struggle”, and an article by G.B. Shaw entitled “Socialism and the Living Wage: Labour’s Twofold Task”.

Possession and property were themes which increasingly haunted Forster as he aged. “My Wood” is about Piney Copse, a tiny piece of land next to West Hackhurst, Forster’s permanent home after the death of his aunt Laura in 1925. Forster bought the land with the profits from *A Passage to India*, he writes in the essay, speculating on how ownership affects personality: he semi-seriously imagines himself becoming a fat, greedy, restless, selfish proprietor here. Piney Copse, according to Forster’s later account of it in “West Hackhurst”, was his “nearest approach to feudalism”; given a different welcome by “the land” in Surrey, he claims in the memoir, “the Tory side of my character would have developed, and my liberalism been atrophied”.¹⁵⁴

Proprietorial attachment to “the land” is thus for Forster inseparable from Tory values: politically Conservative, Anglican in religion, landowning, based on notions of communities

¹⁵⁰ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 21-25.

¹⁵¹ Its title recalls a schoolboy essay of Forster’s, “The Influence of Climate and Physical Conditions Upon National Character”, which was awarded the English essay prize at Tonbridge School in 1897 (Furbank I, pp. 47-8).

¹⁵² See David Howell, “Brockway, (Archibald) Fenner, Baron Brockway (1888-1988)” in ODNB. Under the editorship of H.N. Brailsford, this periodical was in the mid-1920s “balancing ideological exhortation with cultural enrichment” (F.M. Leventhal, “Brailsford, Henry Noel (1873-1958)” in ODNB).

¹⁵³ *Bibliography*, pp. 137-140.

¹⁵⁴ “West Hackhurst”, p. 2 (Forster accidentally numbered two pages “24”; this is the second); see also Furbank II, p. 204.

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in which distinctions of rank are known and respected. Forster presents himself as struggling in a small way with the dilemma of *A Room with a View*'s Sir Harry Otway: how to be politically progressive and also a landowner. In the essay, he casts himself as a rural landlord resentfully eyeing the coarse tourists come by train or charabanc to despoil his Meredithian paradise: "Other ladies, less educated, roll down the bracken in the arms of their gentlemen friends. There is paper, there are tins. Pray, does my wood belong to me or doesn't it?"¹⁵⁵ This perspective on them recalls the Summer Street residents of *A Room with a View*. There, Lucy's neighbours are characterised not merely by "kindly affluence" and inexplorable religion", but by a "dislike of paper bags, orange peel, and broken bottles",¹⁵⁶ something they seem to share with the proprietorial persona, itself a dramatic role, donned by Forster in "My Wood".

In "My Wood", Forster is concerned with a particular place but also with the universal nature of owning things. He supports his account with the New Testament view that "the Kingdom of Heaven" is no place for the rich.¹⁵⁷ There are references to geographical place in the opening sentences of the essay, but rather than to locality these are to large entities, abstractions even: "the English", "India", "America". Such references contrast with the extremely local quality of Piney Copse itself: small, unspectacular, next to Forster's own house. Despite the reference, later on, to the specifically English location of Lyme Regis,¹⁵⁸ place is chiefly understood in "My Wood" through the interchange between countries or even continents. This contrasts with the perspective on place most often found in Forster's later writing, for example in the 1940s pieces which became "The Last of Abinger",¹⁵⁹ in which localities around Abinger Hammer are all that can be trusted in a time of terrible abstractions. In the 1920s, when the League of Nations – often associated with his friend and mentor Dickinson – was active and not yet discredited, and when Forster wrote *A Passage to India* and was active as a journalist, he perhaps saw the world in terms of international relations more than at any other time.

This kind of connection between the small and the large is an ironic technique that *A Room with a View* and "My Wood" share. The essay has to do with dominion, be it that of an individual over a tiny piece of ground or that of the British Empire or Bolshevik revolutionaries – in 1926 – or – in the 1936 context of *Abinger Harvest* – Nazi Germany. What concerns him are universal aspects of a property as a place:

¹⁵⁵ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁶ *Room with a View*, ch. 10 p. 129.

¹⁵⁷ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 21.

¹⁵⁸ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁹ *Two Cheers*, pp. 358-63.

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A boundary protects. But—poor little thing—the boundary ought in its turn to be protected. Noises on the edge of it. Children throw stones. A little more, and then a little more, until we reach the sea.¹⁶⁰

And perhaps I shall come to this in time. I shall wall in and fence out until I really taste the sweets of property. Enormously stout, endlessly avaricious, pseudo-creative, intensely selfish, I shall weave upon my forehead the quadruple crown of possession until those nasty Bolshies come and take it off again and thrust me aside into the outer darkness.¹⁶¹

In both the novel and the essay the small – Piney Copse; the matter of a bourgeois girl's holiday and her choice between two bourgeois suitors – is connected to matters of right and wrong in human conduct: to serious ethical questions.

Surrey occasions “My Wood” but is not the subject of it as it is of “West Hackhurst”, nor even one of several subjects as in *A Room with a View*. The essay foreshadows the anxieties about identity that would grow into the painful feelings of a ratty, resentful old man in the later memoir. The Biblical Ahab, we hear, “did not want that vineyard—he only needed it to round off his property”.¹⁶² Forster is torn between the commitments that led him to write for a socialist newspaper, and the desire to cling on to gentry status in an English county setting. The essay anticipates precisely the conflicts he would have with the Farrers in the 1930s and 1940s, which came to seem symbolic for him of conflicts across England.

A Room with a View and “My Wood”, then, show marked differences in their ways of communicating the same place: the south face of the North Downs. The emphasis is on county specificity in the novel, but on the universals of property in the essay. The difference has to do with Forster's address to different audiences, a broadly middle-class Edwardian novel-reading public spoken to by the novel; the audience of committed left-wingers in the aftermath of the First World War envisaged as reading the essay. In these original contexts, in expanded contexts in Forster's lifetime – such as that represented by the inclusion of “My Wood” in *Abinger Harvest* – and in the contexts of the twenty first century, however, the two texts share an approach to place which could be described as allusive rather than descriptive. When Forster refers to the Weald or Dorking in *A Room with a View*, just as when he refers to larger entities such as India and Russia in “My Wood”, he assumes that a perception of these places already exists in the minds of members of his envisaged audience. The same is not true of, for instance, the Indian city described in the opening chapter of *A Passage to*

¹⁶⁰ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 22.

¹⁶¹ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 23-4.

¹⁶² *Abinger Harvest*, p. 22.

India.¹⁶³

4.6. Topography and Rural Politics: “Captain Edward Gibbon” and the Two Pageant Plays (1931-40)

There is an intensely topographic aspect to Forster’s neglected 1930s and 1940s writings on rural Surrey and particularly on the area around Abinger. A 1931 essay, “Captain Edward Gibbon”,¹⁶⁴ pictures Gibbon as a young man riding “[w]estward” through Surrey past a small valley, to his left, and a slope to his right atop which West Hackhurst would be built 116 years later. Gibbon was later to become “the greatest historian England ever produced”, according to Forster in this essay,¹⁶⁵ being temporally and spatially precise: Gibbon passed through on “June the 8th, 1761”;¹⁶⁶ Dorking, where he spent the previous night, and the Tillingbourne, the stream on his left, are both named. Forster imagines himself sitting and watching this “young officer with a rather large head” pass by, opening the essay by recording that as he writes he is sitting in a garden which in 1931 slopes down towards that same road between Dorking and Guildford. The compass point, the local precision, the attachment to a tradition of thought which is anti-authority, radical even: all these anticipate the 1940s essays collected in his later *Two Cheers for Democracy* as “The Last of Abinger”. Above all, such anticipation is to be found in the view which closes the essay:

The lane that passes under this garden reminds me at moments of the enormous stretches of road he was later to traverse—the roads that led all over Europe and back through the centuries into Rome, then all over Europe again until they frayed out in the forests of Germany and the sands of Syria. As he jogged away through Surrey and Hampshire, he had already in his mind premonitions of a larger route, though its direction remained obscure[.]¹⁶⁷

Here, a life and a physical movement – a route, a ramble – become parallels. The route of Gibbon’s life is the one he physically took in life, but also the one taken in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Direction can be metaphoric as well as literal, of course, and here Forster plays on the comparison between Gibbon’s physical movement in space and the shifts in the historian’s intellectual development.

¹⁶³ See Jason Finch, “‘Swelling Here, Shrinking There’: Deixis of Place in Chapter I of *A Passage to India*” in Daniele Monticelli et al. (eds), *From Utterance to Uttering and Vice Versa: Multidisciplinary Views of Deixis*, Tartu University Press: Tartu, 2005, pp. 259-70.

¹⁶⁴ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 208-14.

¹⁶⁵ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 209. Gibbon’s anti-Christian views influenced the Bloomsbury Group.

¹⁶⁶ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 208.

¹⁶⁷ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 214.

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As well as essays and memoirs, Forster's writing in the 1930s and 1940s included two forays into the semi-fictional, festive and public genre of the pageant play, "The Abinger Pageant" (performed 1934) and "England's Pleasant Land" (performed 1938).¹⁶⁸ Reading these plays, Joshua D. Esty, Stuart Christie and Patrick Parrinder have concentrated on the similarities between them, but equally worthy of note are differences of emphasis and outlook. These critics largely ignore the specifics of the neighbourhood in which both plays were first performed, even though the pageant play as a genre is closely intertwined with the details of particular localities. "The Abinger Pageant" is a work which relates more harmoniously to local hierarchies than its successor, and also one which entered the Forster canon early, being collected into *Abinger Harvest* only two years after its first performance.¹⁶⁹ The Pageant was performed twice in July 1934, on a Saturday and the following Wednesday, at a site a quarter of a mile east of Abinger Church.¹⁷⁰ Profits from the pageant went towards restoration of the church building, indicating its connection with the interests of the local Anglican gentry.

Both the contents and the publishing contexts of the two plays differ radically from one another. "The Abinger Pageant", after its inclusion in *Abinger Harvest*, has remained in print ever since. "England's Pleasant Land", by contrast, was printed in 1940 but not included in any collections of Forster's prose before the 1996 Abinger Edition of '*Abinger Harvest*' and '*England's Pleasant Land*'.¹⁷¹ This later pageant play contains considerably more dialogue than "The Abinger Pageant", and is laid out on the page like a play, rather than as an essay combined with some rather rough stage directions, as is "The Abinger Pageant". "England's Pleasant Land" is spikier and more subversive than its predecessor. The Hogarth Press published "England's Pleasant Land" in 1940 as a pamphlet, a fact calls into question Christie's attempts to erect a division between Forster and Virginia Woolf by polarising the "domesticating" male writer and the "occult disturbances [...] within the national text" of the female.¹⁷² Far from domesticating its setting, "England's Pleasant Land" concentrates on the exploitation of the landless by the landed and, in quasi-Marxist fashion, posits the long-term importance of rural class conflict.

¹⁶⁸ Esty ("Amnesia in the Fields", p. 255) argues that contain "pastoral elements" which "come from an archive of 'scept'red isle' rhetoric, uncut by the ironies of Forster's earlier metropolitan vision"; Christie (*Worlding Forster*, pp. 91-117) misses out "England's Pleasant Land" from a chapter comparing the pageant plays of Woolf and Forster. Parrinder (*Nation and Novel*, p. 298) sees both of the plays as "much more stridently" expressed statements of the ruralism Parrinder and others have seen as the chief place characteristic of Forster's Edwardian novels.

¹⁶⁹ E.M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, Edward Arnold: London, 1936, pp. 337-51; *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 335-49 (the same piece in Elizabeth Heine's edition of *Abinger Harvest*).

¹⁷⁰ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 335.

¹⁷¹ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 353-401.

¹⁷² Christie, *Worlding Forster*, pp. 117, 108.

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The place-related distinction between Forster's two pageant plays hinges on their differing relationships to a dichotomy between locality and broader views of national history. This is signalled by Forster in the "Introductory Note" to "England's Pleasant Land", in which he claims that the play "has no especial local significance, and could be performed anywhere" – anywhere in England, presumably.¹⁷³ It lacks a specifically local meaning, in other words, and strives towards broader statements, in the manner of Forster's famous broadcast, also of 1938, later known as "What I Believe".¹⁷⁴ In the same "Introductory Note", Forster does emphasise the physical setting of the play's first performance: a meadow containing "a semicircle of enormous trees" and the "entrance to the Elizabethan manor house [...] high up on the left".¹⁷⁵ But he says nothing about the region or district in which this venue lies. The "Foreword to Visitors" which prefaces "The Abinger Pageant", in contrast, precisely situates the audience in one locality. Abinger, they are told, "is a country parish, still largely covered with woodland". The shape of the parish, a long thin strip running north-south, is traced, as is its internal character: the Downs and the Tillingbourne valley northwards to the audience's left; on their right, to the south, the "larger and wilder part of the parish" where "the strip of land rises over Leith Hill and Abinger Commons, then [...] falls steeply into the Weald".¹⁷⁶ Those addressed throughout the earlier pageant play are situated as outsiders, coming into a rural community which hopes to preserve its identity. This audience is spoken to accusingly in his Epilogue by the Woodman who serves as the narrator of "The Abinger Pageant": "Houses, houses, houses! You came from them and you must go back to them!" The tone, in fact, is that of an increasingly shrill countryside lobby.

Rather than lumping the two pageant plays together as nostalgic attempts to assert "the continuities of country life", as Esty does,¹⁷⁷ or simply ignoring the later play, "The Abinger Pageant" and "England's Pleasant Land" should be seen as products and representations of related but opposed aspects of English place. They reverse and negate but also parallel one another. Esty's reference to "scept'red isle" rhetoric" in "The Abinger Pageant" ignores the fact that John of Gaunt's famous lines in *Richard II* are repeated in "England's Pleasant Land" by a dying Squire George of the year 1899, a man whose ancestors have colluded with the forces of law and greed to strip the people of their land, and are therefore ironised.¹⁷⁸

The first of these contrasts is that, unlike "England's Pleasant Land", "The Abinger

¹⁷³ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 353.

¹⁷⁴ *Two Cheers*, pp. 67-76; see *Bibliography*, p. 105 (C316).

¹⁷⁵ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 353.

¹⁷⁶ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 335.

¹⁷⁷ Esty, "Amnesia in the Fields", p. 255.

¹⁷⁸ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 390. The struggles over enclosure and common land in the social history of rural England are well-documented. For an overview, and for the role in these struggles of topographic surveying, see Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape*, pp. 10-15.

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Pageant” views the English countryside as governed by old-established tradition which is largely beneficial to everyone who lives there. In picturesque detail, it covers the centuries between the Domesday Book and the Georgian period: its first five episodes take it as far as 1760, while its sixth, set in the nineteenth century, hardly touches the most intrusive aspects of change of the Victorian period, dramatising a rural scene set in Abinger from a novel by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. “England’s Pleasant Land” by contrast is about modernity. Its three moments are 1760, 1830 and 1899. Perhaps because “England’s Pleasant Land”, in printed form, opens with the statement that its “action covers a period of nearly one thousand years”, critics have failed to notice this difference.¹⁷⁹ The Prologue spoken by the Recorder is set in 1066, but after introducing the arrival of the Normans, the speaker – seeming to believe like Marx in an enduring feudalism lasting until the Industrial Revolution – announces that the action will now “pass over seven hundred years, during which the order established at Domesday holds firm”.¹⁸⁰

This statement connects to the second contrast: where “England’s Pleasant Land” is explicitly political in a left-wing way, “The Abinger Pageant” avoids any direct reference to politics, and in particular avoids any reference to class conflict. This contrast can be found in extra-textual matters, too. Tom Farrer, the second Baron, refused to act as Patron of the later pageant, while the Farrers had themselves been instrumental in the organisation of the first. Indeed, it could be said that “The Abinger Pageant” records an event which was essentially theirs rather than Forster’s, and that “England’s Pageant Land” was Forster’s response, his “own” pageant play. He reinforces this impression by writing in his “Introductory Note” – from “Abinger Hammer. March 1940” – for the Hogarth Press publication that “I had never before [...] heard my own words spoken to me”:¹⁸¹ those of “The Abinger Pageant”, this implies, were not his own. Perhaps Lord Farrer refused to be patron, Forster speculates in “West Hackhurst”, because “he had been told that the Pageant was Bolshevik”.¹⁸² And a related point is that the two events reached a wider audience. The pageant held at Abinger in 1934 was first announced and then very favourably reviewed in the establishment newspaper, *The Times*.¹⁸³ “England’s Pleasant Land” was also announced in the same newspaper four years later,¹⁸⁴ and the praise it received in a *Times* editorial column of July 1938 for giving “an admirable picture of the spoiling of the countryside” overlooks its more

¹⁷⁹ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 357.

¹⁸⁰ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 358.

¹⁸¹ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 353-4.

¹⁸² “West Hackhurst”, p. 32.

¹⁸³ [Anonymous], “Local History Revived”, *The Times* (London), 7 July 1934, p. 10; [Anonymous], “Pageant of Trees: Village Players at Abinger” *The Times* (London), 15 July 1934, p. 10.

¹⁸⁴ [Anonymous], “‘England’s Pleasant Land’: Mr E.M. Forster’s Pageant Play”, *The Times* (London), 11 May 1938, p. 14.

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radical aspects.¹⁸⁵ The appearance of “England’s Pleasant Land” under the Hogarth Press imprint in 1940, by contrast, connects it to the views of elite left-wing intellectuals, including the Bloomsbury Group themselves, and the political positions adopted by the younger ‘Auden generation’ earlier in the 1930s.

Thirdly, there is the contrast between Forster’s assertion in “The Abinger Pageant” of the unique local position of the district it describes in an English countryside now under threat, and the claim he makes in “England’s Pleasant Land” that the events described are part of a general national story. “The Abinger Pageant” is concerned with topography, with the shape of the landscape in this particular locality of England on the southern edge of Surrey. Such a concern comes across in the “Foreword to Visitors”, which describes the physical shape and vegetation characteristics of the Parish.¹⁸⁶ Here, the English parish is presented as a natural and enduring subdivision of each English county, putting the Anglican Church at the centre of rural English society. According to Furbank, moreover, the thing that “caught Forster’s imagination” in his task of writing “The Abinger Pageant” was the idea or ideal of English woodlands.¹⁸⁷ The play presents the area it describes as ancestrally wooded, and its surviving patches of forest – like Piney Copse – as therefore in need of special protection. Such nature worship recalls an old Victorian lady who moved to the district, the Aunt Etty of Gwen Raverat’s *Period Piece*, of whom her niece wrote that “Wordsworth was her religion”.¹⁸⁸ Aunt Etty, daughter of Charles Darwin, was socially related to the complex of Farrers, Forsters and others, including the composer Ralph Vaughan-Williams, all Surrey gentry, but unable to see eye to eye over these pageant plays.¹⁸⁹

Quite differently from “The Abinger Pageant”, “England’s Pleasant Land” presents the English countryside as something man-made. The later play introduces two lady guests from London at the manor house in 1760 then produces their equivalents or descendants in 1899, the time of Forster’s youth, when rural Surrey first made an impression on him through his stays with Laura Forster. The suggestion is that individuals in rural England play recurring roles in different historical moments: squire, house guests from London, agent, villagers. This playful yet satirical manipulation of the pageant tradition, in which characters are representatives of a time or a social group, recalls Woolf’s *Orlando*. On their first appearance, the two guests are revolted by the world of nature, finding the countryside

¹⁸⁵ [Anonymous], “The Pageant Season”, *The Times* (London), 13 July 1938, p. 17.

¹⁸⁶ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 335-6.

¹⁸⁷ Furbank II, p. 198.

¹⁸⁸ Gwen Raverat, *Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood* [1951], Faber: London, 1987, p. 132.

¹⁸⁹ The second wife of the first Baron Farrer was a Wedgwood by birth; the Wedgwoods and Darwins intermarried to a great extent. As “Mrs Litchfield” Raverat’s Aunt Etty has a walk-on part in “West Hackhurst” (pp. 16-17, 21), where she figures as a loyal friend of Laura Forster.

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“odious” and woodland “gloomy [...] the abode of savage beasts, I doubt not”, but they are delighted by it on their second, thus mirroring a change in fashion between the neo-classical urbanity of the eighteenth century and the nature mysticism of Victorian writers such as Meredith and Richard Jefferies: for the two guests in the 1890s the wood becomes a place where “fairies might be hidden”.¹⁹⁰ Towards the end of “England’s Pleasant Land” Miss George, the squire’s progressive and sympathetic daughter, who like the guests from London reappears in different eras, laments that “it’s the end of the countryside”.¹⁹¹ This end has been brought about by human action: firstly the Acts of Parliament of the late eighteenth century which enclosed formerly common land, and then the death duties which a century later broke up many of the estates of the landed gentry.¹⁹²

Another contrast is that “England’s Pleasant Land”, although it had music by Vaughan-Williams like its predecessor, contains no songs (“The Abinger Pageant” included seven). It is not festive as the first pageant was, but instead instructive and even challenging.¹⁹³ In “West Hackhurst”, Forster stressed that “England’s Pleasant Land” was “my idea”.¹⁹⁴ By contrast, he was unenthusiastic about the earlier pageant, seeing that a prominent writer living in the neighbourhood needed to be involved or else risk becoming isolated locally as an eccentric or subversive.¹⁹⁵ “England’s Pleasant Land” is an attempt to write a pageant that is not an account of the locality, even though the rapid suburbanisation of formerly wild woodland and the proximity to London, enabling guests to pop down, are clearly derived from the realities of the Surrey Hills area. The rupture between “The Abinger Pageant” and “England’s Pleasant Land” is partly mended in Forster’s last major Surrey work, the “West Hackhurst” memoir, which combines the spikiness and political commitment of the later pageant play, with the local-topographic air and faith in ongoing human life of the earlier.

4.7. Nature Notes (1928-51)

Should his periodic interest in rural topography, drawing on this reading of the two pageant plays, be seen as evidence of a politically conservative strand in Forster’s thinking? The

¹⁹⁰ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 361, 383.

¹⁹¹ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 396.

¹⁹² On enclosure see Jeremy Black, *Historical Atlas of Britain: The End of the Middle Ages to the Georgian Era*, Sutton: Stroud, 2000, pp. 155-6. On death duties see Read, *England 1868-1914*, pp. 302-4.

¹⁹³ Forster records that at its first performance there was rain, while “aeroplanes messed about overhead and anticipated the final desolation” (*Abinger Harvest*, p. 353).

¹⁹⁴ “West Hackhurst”, p. 31. Forster ascribed “the general conception” of the Pageant “entirely” to its producer, Tom Harrison (*Abinger Harvest*, p. 355).

¹⁹⁵ *Furbank II*, pp. 198-9.

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answer, I believe, is no. In his commonplace book, among literary notes taken in preparation for two series of lectures at Cambridge,¹⁹⁶ Forster jotted down observations of the natural environment around West Hackhurst. These notes engage in local debates on the politics of rural development between about 1925 and 1950, but also form part of a longer-term historical dialogue with earlier literary views of nature, notably those of Wordsworth and Ruskin. One source for their form and manner may be a book Forster was given as an undergraduate, *Wild England* by C.J. Cornish, a relative of Mary Warr-Cornish, wife of Desmond MacCarthy and patron of the Bloomsbury Group's Memoir Club.¹⁹⁷ Cornish's view of rural England anticipates Forster's later notes in its patient observation of detail and its attempt to grasp the atmospheres of specific types of countryside founded on specific soils. Cornish surveys the fauna of a number of rural locales in – chiefly southern – England, hoping to answer the question of how “their wild character and the wild life in them has been so generally preserved”.¹⁹⁸ Forster in his notes is sceptical about such preservation, describing a setting which while rural is not wild in the sense of having dramatic scenery or of being far from human dwellings, and which ranks among its fauna the domestic cat.

Forster's notes were collected together in an article he published in the local literary periodical, the *Abinger Chronicle*, in 1944, and then joined together with another 1940 article entitled “Blind Oak Gate”, and with a 1946 commonplace book entry written when he knew he was about to leave the area forever, to form the essay “The Last of Abinger”, which closes his 1951 collection *Two Cheers for Democracy*.¹⁹⁹ “Blind Oak Gate”, as incorporated in “The Last of Abinger”, was trimmed and made more incisive, with references to the *Abinger Chronicle* removed and what would seem a deliberate toning down of its rhetorical style. One of the sentences Forster removed, for example, was: “Here is nothing cosmic, basic, mantic, maieutic, materially dialectic, cataclysmic, seismic”.²⁰⁰ This is a good example of the way he used judicious editing to make his writing more powerful: a few strategic deletions of this sort change the slightly garrulous *Abinger Chronicle* into an essay which imbues Forster's seemingly trivial experiences on the Downs with primal, or even archetypal, meaning. “The Last of Abinger”, the laconic piece in *Two Cheers for Democracy*, for instance, omits all dates other than a terminal one at the opening: – “Final

¹⁹⁶ *Commonplace Book*, pp. 2-21, 65-72; *Creator as Critic*, pp. 64-98.

¹⁹⁷ Cornish, *Wild England*; 1898 Diary, 1 January, 6 January. Vaughan Cornish, “Cornish, Charles John (1858-1906)” in ODNB; Henry Broadbent, “Cornish, Francis Warre Warre- (1839-1916)” in ODNB).

¹⁹⁸ Cornish, *Wild England*, p. vii.

¹⁹⁹ E.M. Forster, “Blind Oak Gate”, *Abinger Chronicle* 1 (1940), pp. 63-5; E.M. Forster, “Abinger Notes”, *Abinger Chronicle* 5 (1944), pp. 2-5; *Commonplace Book*, p. 168; *Two Cheers*, pp. 358-63.

²⁰⁰ Forster, “Blind Oak Gate”, p. 63.

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entry, July 27th, 1946”.²⁰¹ Senses or atmospheres of local place are enabled to move, to communicate, beyond their own locality. The very title used in *Two Cheers for Democracy*, “The Last of Abinger”, transforms occasional observations into an elegy for the place Forster felt he himself had been expelled from in 1946, while the placement of this essay at the close of *Two Cheers for Democracy* mirrors and perhaps ironises the placement of “The Abinger Pageant” at the end of *Abinger Harvest*.

Like “England’s Pleasant Land” and unlike “The Abinger Pageant”, these notes challenge and question the ideals of the countryside and its preservation which were popular among the rural gentry of southern England at the time Forster was writing. Such ideals are those identified by David Matless as “organicist” in contrast with another trend in British interwar discourse on the urban and the rural, and on development, called by Matless the “planner-preservationist”.²⁰² When the attitudes of Forster and the Farrers in rural Surrey between the 1920s and the 1940s are considered, however, a firm opposition between two such ideologies seems misleading. Organicist landowners such as the Farrers were in fact also using their influence to have portions of the landscape preserved, as the *Times* articles on the pageant held at Abinger in 1934 demonstrate. Such landowners were not only mounting ad hoc defences of particular beauty spots, but also establishing the principle of rural preservation through the formation of bodies such as the National Trust, on the board of which the second Baron Farrer served.²⁰³ Forster’s presentation of rural Surrey went through three stages, corresponding to before, during and after his spell of residence there between 1925 and 1946. The Second World War shadows some of the notes which became “The Last of Abinger”. In the note entitled “BLIND OAK GATE”, Forster feels an alien “sense of something vaguely sinister” entering Surrey, which could be related to its appearance in the *Abinger Chronicle* during the month in which the German army entered Paris.²⁰⁴ During 1940, Forster noted in his diary the entry of violence and mutual suspicion into the Surrey Hills area. On 31 May 1940, the day after the British Cabinet had debated whether to surrender to the Axis powers, and halfway through the Dunkirk evacuation, he reported an “orgy of spying” around Abinger, and the constant awareness of war brought on by troop trains rattling through between West Hackhurst and the Downs, “bringing back our defeated army”.²⁰⁵ Seeming to confirm the doom-laden predictions of writers such as Orwell and Auden in the 1930s,

²⁰¹ *Two Cheers*, p. 358.

²⁰² David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, Reaktion: London, 1998, p. 103.

²⁰³ “West Hackhurst”, pp. 14, 27.

²⁰⁴ *Two Cheers*, p. 360. I use small capitals to reproduce the way that the revised notes are headed in “The last of Abinger”, the essay in *Two Cheers for Democracy* containing them, and to distinguish them both from this piece as a whole and from the original commonplace book entries they developed from (which had no such headings).

²⁰⁵ “Locked Journal”, 31 May 1940.

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“[c]onstant aeroplanes, operating to France” passed overhead. In early September, Canadian forces stationed on the North Downs mutilated the corpse of a German airman who had parachuted into their camp, cutting off one of his hands and nailing it to a tree.²⁰⁶ Notes written before the war do not contain explicit violence but do refer to ideological conflicts over rural England in the 1930s. In the note entitled “THE OLD CRAB TREE”, Forster questions the whole project of preserving an idealised nature, a theme harking back to an entry in the commonplace book made in 1928.²⁰⁷ “THE OLD CRAB TREE” expresses a fondness for rural sights but at the same time a tolerance of the fact that they are disappearing and times changing: Forster feels “[n]either sad nor glad” to see the fallen, still-flowering crab-apple tree. Then he turns to the debate over nature preservation in his own time, criticising those contemporaries who “take refuge in the ‘Nature Reserve’ argument, so drearily and tastelessly championed by H.G. Wells”.²⁰⁸ There is class-related tension here: Wells was, like Forster, a Home Counties writer – born in Kent and later a resident of Woking in Surrey²⁰⁹ – but descended from servants rather than gentry. Despite the efforts of rural landowners such as the children’s writer Beatrix Potter to promote open access to the countryside,²¹⁰ the idea of reserving bits of greenery for the people tended to be less popular in the early twentieth century with those who lived permanently in rural England, than with those who came to it from cities as weekend visitors.

Several aspects of the urban-rural relationship echo in the 1928 reference to Wells. Day-trippers from the city offended not only Forster’s satirical landowner persona in “My Wood” but also a body such as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) – dominated by landowners – which issued a 1928 cartoon postcard showing a party of Cockneys poking around among their litter before leaving a picnic site to “see we haven’t left anything be’ind”.²¹¹ Landed and leisured country-dwellers, Forster included, were liable in this period to think that those without land and leisure were incapable of perceiving the beauty of the countryside. “They see one or two selected objects vividly, like birds’ nests”, Forster claims of the rural poor in “West Hackhurst”, but everything else in the countryside is for them “a blur, which habit thickens”.²¹² Instead of a nature reserve with a fence round it,

²⁰⁶ “Locked Journal”, 4 September 1940.

²⁰⁷ *Two Cheers*, p. 361; *Commonplace Book*, pp. 36-7.

²⁰⁸ *Commonplace Book*, p. 37.

²⁰⁹ On Wells’s Surrey connections, see Banerjee, *Literary Surrey*, pp. 141-56.

²¹⁰ See Judy Taylor “Potter, (Helen) Beatrix (1866-1943)” in ODNB.

²¹¹ Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 69. Matless (*Landscape and Englishness*, p. 68) also discusses the notion of the “Cockney”, whether or not actually from the East End of London, as an urban “anti-citizen” penetrating into the countryside, in the ruralist imagination of the interwar period.

²¹² “West Hackhurst”, p. 8; *Creator as Critic*, p. 113.

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in “THE OLD CRAB TREE” he seeks “poetry” in the surviving remnants of England’s ancient “grass network of lanes” to be found in places such as the paths and woods of the North Downs near West Hackhurst.²¹³ He concludes, following Gerald Heard, that “those who do follow will abandon literature, which has committed itself too deeply to the worship of vegetation”. Writers concerned with the countryside, Forster thinks, should move beyond the influence of Wordsworth and find a new mode.

When he published it in the 1940s, Forster deleted from “THE OLD CRAB TREE” the statement that, “today”, “only Lord Farrer” stops “Man” from destroying the “grass network” of English lanes.²¹⁴ Using the terms provided by Matless, Lord Farrer could be called an organicist landowner, although, as Forster knew, he was the son of an ennobled civil servant rather than someone who had been attached to this part of England for centuries. Tom Farrer died in 1940, half-way in time between the private commonplace book entry and its inclusion in an essay addressing a broad international audience. Between these two textual moments, Forster’s relationship with the Farrers had deteriorated disastrously. The view of Tom Farrer taken by Forster in 1928 is on the positive side of ambivalence; by 1951, Forster could barely think of his family without becoming angry. In removing Tom from the note, Forster distanced himself from this personal conflict, even though the placement of “The Last of Abinger” as the last essay in *Two Cheers for Democracy* could also be seen as a semi-concealed rude gesture in the Farrers’ direction.

There is a revealing passage in the commonplace book which was omitted from published versions of the essay: “Re-reading my old short stories have [*sic*] forced the above into my mind. It was much easier to write when I believed that Wessex was waiting to return, and for the new belief I haven’t been properly trained.”²¹⁵ In some ways this statement is a key to Forster’s whole writing career, described aptly by Stuart Christie as a “Passage from Pastoral”, and to his attitudes on place.²¹⁶ Wessex, the middle-aged Forster claims, had stood for a once-and-future English countryside in his youthful mind and writings, “waiting”, like King Arthur, to return. The statement recalls a remark Forster in “West Hackhurst” attributes to Lord Farrer, the claim “that the western hedge of West Hackhurst had once been the eastern hedge of the Kingdom of Wessex”.²¹⁷ Within Forsterian imaginative geography, the

²¹³ *Two Cheers*, p. 361; *Commonplace Book*, p. 37.

²¹⁴ John Davis, “Farrer, Thomas Henry, first Baron Farrer (1819-1899)” in ODNB. Forster (“West Hackhurst”, p. 14) remarks of Tom Farrer that “this quaint fellow [...] was also a Yorkshire business-man” (the Farrers originated in the North of England).

²¹⁵ *Commonplace Book*, p. 37. The passage immediately follows the references to Wells, Farrer and Heard discussed above.

²¹⁶ Christie, *Worlding Forster*.

²¹⁷ “West Hackhurst”, p. 14; *Creator as Critic*, p. 118.

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house in which he felt himself an eternal “sojourner”²¹⁸ straddled the boundary between a tamed Home Counties and a potential Wild England, a boundary with parallels to that between the middle-class homosexual – tame – and the men of other classes and races he was drawn to – wild. Forster’s personal position on the imaginative border with Wessex recalls his description of rural Surrey as “soft and wild”,²¹⁹ although Surrey is for him too pretty and too close to London to be truly wild and ultimately a place which only plays away occupying the same boundary. Forster’s cessation of novel-writing is frequently blamed on his inability to incorporate his sexual orientation in publishable fiction, but it could, on the basis of this 1928 statement from the commonplace book, instead be seen as the result of changing relations to English place.

Forster loved music, and the nature notes, I would say, are tonally harsh in a way analogous to the discords of modern compositions. A further reference to Lord Farrer in the 1928 commonplace book entry indicates Forster’s deeply ambivalent relationship to the view of the countryside associated with literary Romanticism:

Peace of Countryside too artificial to give me rest now. I used to think a grass grown lane more real than a high road, but it is an economic anachronism, kept up by people like Lord Farrer who have spare cash. Something in me still responds to it, and without indulging in that response I should be shallow, wretched, yet oh that I could hitch my wagon on to something less foolish.²²⁰

Forster here expresses an anti-Romanticism growing among younger writers in the 1920s. He had grown up with a Wordsworthian or Ruskinian view of the countryside, but in the 1920s Forster’s theoretical socialism and broader experience of life combined to make feel it a thing of the past. Then there are the incursions, sometimes violent, of the outside world into the precarious rural environment portrayed in “The Last of Abinger”. The district’s domesticated character is found in the note “CAT IN WOOD” in which Forster encounters a “cat I knew slightly but not in that place”. Cats contain violence and savagery in their meaning – their claws, their teeth – yet are also the most cosy of domestic animals. A “small tabby cat” belonging to Forster and his mother appears at tea-time in the account of West Hackhurst given by William Plomer.²²¹ Encountered in a forest, a domestic cat proves that place not to be “Wessex”. The farewell talk Forster has with a villager identified as “old

²¹⁸ “West Hackhurst”, p. 4; *Creator as Critic*, p. 110.

²¹⁹ “West Hackhurst”, p. 10; *Creator as Critic*, p. 115.

²²⁰ *Commonplace Book*, pp. 36-7. Here, this paragraph immediately precedes the description of the “old crab tree” as blown over by a storm but still flowering. Forster removed it from the published reworkings of the commonplace book entry.

²²¹ William Plomer, *At Home: Memoirs*, Cape: London, 1958, p. 146.

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Empson”²²² unfolds on a gentle summer evening, beside the mill pond where the man is fishing, but includes more violence: “There was a woman once nearly drowned bathing—she had been making a film of the Clock House, and bathed. The ropes flayed her arms. The fish moved, the trees regrouped, the lovely summer night came on”.²²³ The woman is an outsider, perhaps a cultured Londoner, and there is an odd fellowship both as men and as *countrymen* between Forster and the villager implied at this moment.

For all their uncertainty about what the countryside should be in the future, the notes collected as “The Last of Abinger” are efforts to memorialise fleeting points and moments in the area around West Hackhurst during the decades when Forster was there. This is nature writing of place descended from Wordsworth, but expressing scepticism about attempts to endow rural sites with special significance. Meredith, identified by Forster in the note “EVENING WALK” as “my predecessor on these downs”,²²⁴ fits in here as so often in Forster’s Surrey writing, as a shadowy forefather, the beneficence or malevolence of whose influence is unclear.²²⁵ “BLIND OAK GATE”, the longest of the notes in “The Last of Abinger”, imbues the area with a faint, half-supernatural feeling of threat, yet also claims that “[l]eft to itself, there is not a safer place in England than Abinger”.²²⁶ The locality is here evoked as a “ten-mile ribbon of fluffy Surrey”, echoing references to the county and this specific part of it in “West Hackhurst” – as “soft and wild” – and “The Abinger Pageant”, where its long thin shape on the map is emphasised in the “Foreword to Visitors”.²²⁷ Such threat could come from the Nazis, in the invasion scare tradition, but it could equally be something primeval, and therefore be a cousin to the pig’s teeth and other survivals of folk tradition to be found in some of Forster’s writing on Hertfordshire.

4.8. The Surrey Ramble: “West Hackhurst”

Forster’s memoir of “West Hackhurst” is an even less-read piece vitally important to an understanding of his later career. Place lies at its heart. Its title contains the name of a house, West Hackhurst, the name of an English county, Surrey, and a description of a type of movement through space or in a place, a ramble. He wrote most of it in late 1943 and early 1944, in preparation for a reading to the Bloomsbury Group Memoir Club. He then

²²² In the *Commonplace Book* (p. 168), he is named “Edwards”, so this was probably his name in reality.

²²³ *Two Cheers*, 363. This talk took place in 1946 and therefore does not appear in the *Abinger Chronicle* piece.

²²⁴ *Two Cheers*, p. 358; *Commonplace Book*, p. 40.

²²⁵ Meredith’s Surrey connections are detailed by Banerjee (*Literary Surrey*, pp. 117-19).

²²⁶ *Two Cheers*, p. 359.

²²⁷ “West Hackhurst”, p. 10; *Creator as Critic*, p. 115; *Abinger Harvest*, p. 335.

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completed it after his departure from West Hackhurst a few years later, reading further extracts from it to the Memoir Club on 6th January 1948.²²⁸ “West Hackhurst” complicates a view of Forster’s later career as creatively null. A widespread view of him is as a gifted novelist in youth whose powers then faded. Forster himself contributed to this view. As early as 1921 he wrote of “the feeling that 3 years ago I was better than I am now” which came over him reading the long-delayed proofs of his Alexandria book as “a feeling that accompanies me through life like an inverted rainbow”.²²⁹ “West Hackhurst”, though, is a well-structured, memorable and painfully honest piece of writing. Its tone is peevish, yet in it Forster shows that he had not lost a great novelist’s powers of observation.

“West Hackhurst” has immediate contexts in the Bloomsbury Group Memoir Club and Plomer’s 1943 autobiography *Double Lives*.²³⁰ Writing to Christopher Isherwood in February 1944, Forster claimed to have written it “partly as a social document, partly to read to the Memoir Society”.²³¹ The memoir opens with a spiky account of the Memoir Club, portrayed by Forster as having, by the 1940s, fallen prey to nepotism. While the children of original members were welcome in the Club, Forster claims, the only person he himself introduced, his friend W.J.H. Sprott, was not accepted. The Club’s tradition of plain speaking perhaps did not stop the memoir’s original audience from being offended by it. Forster himself claimed that he was inspired to write “West Hackhurst” by *Double Lives*.²³² Plomer’s tone in this book is that of a connoisseur of Victoriana; in the 1940s the Victorian period was starting to be viewed with nostalgia rather than the hostility and contempt intellectuals seem to have felt for it during the 1920s.²³³ Plomer revels in the “caste system” of 1870s Bayswater, and in the “heavy splendour of the bourgeois evening *en famille*” in that milieu.²³⁴

While “West Hackhurst” was inspired by the reflections on the passage of time which Forster found in *Double Lives*, it developed into a text far more rooted than Plomer’s in the

²²⁸ *Chronology*, pp. 140, 148. The memoir, written longhand in a lined foolscap notebook, is among the papers Forster kept until death then bequeathed to King’s College, Cambridge.

²²⁹ Cited by Miriam Allott (“Editor’s Introduction”, p. lix).

²³⁰ William Plomer, *Double Lives: An Autobiography*, Cape: London, 1943.

²³¹ *Selected Letters II*, p. 206.

²³² *Selected Letters II*, p. 203; *Chronology*, p. 140. Forster’s (unpublished) letters to Plomer of early 1943, especially those of 29 March and 5 April, record his enthusiastic response to *Double Lives*, which he read in MS before its publication.

²³³ The work of the historian G.M. Young (*Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*, Oxford University Press: London, 1936) and the literary critic Humphry House (*The Dickens World* [1941], Oxford University Press: London, 1960) provide examples of this changing status for the Victorian period. On this phase of Plomer’s career, see Jason Finch, “The Other Time: Use of the Victorian Past in William Plomer’s *Double Lives*” in Jason Finch & Peter Nynäs (eds.), *Transforming Otherness*, Transaction: New Brunswick, NJ, 2010.

²³⁴ Plomer, *Double Lives*, pp. 18, 22.

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details of a single place, a place which remains in focus throughout the narrative. Forster himself and his relatives come into and leave the story as and when they are at Abinger; it is as if a camera were pointing to one spot, with characters moving into and out of view, while Plomer's camera follows his own family members around.

Time is handled quite differently by the two. In a later volume of memoirs, Plomer described West Hackhurst as Forster's "home", commenting that "this word has special potency for the nomad guest".²³⁵ In saying this, Plomer was sensitive to the fact that the exclusion of change from the house Forster shared with his mother and the "parlourmaid" Agnes was "seeming" rather than actual. Forster, after all, had left West Hackhurst twelve years before this book of Plomer's was published in 1958. Plomer's memoirs were largely concerned with capturing the atmosphere of a lost recent past, and savouring such remnants of it as had survived into the mid-twentieth century.²³⁶ *Double Lives* begins well before Plomer's birth, with the early years of his parents, and stops when its author is 25, whereas Forster in "West Hackhurst" attempts a complex account of the ageing process, describing his own experiences up until the moment of writing when he was nearing 70. Plomer's unashamedly nostalgic concern with "the vanished age from which I had derived"²³⁷ also differs markedly from the approach Forster took to the past in "West Hackhurst", which is acerbic, quite comfortable with the fact that what is gone is gone, and more concerned with the idiosyncratic universalities of human behaviour than with quaint details of dress and furniture. Forster in "West Hackhurst" is more self-conscious and uncertain about the nature of the memoir as a form, and with memoir-writing as an activity than Plomer in *Double Lives*. "Memory is very odd", the elderly Forster reflects, so odd that at times he does not trust his own, and the "past is maddening to handle", particularly in terms of its "large and slow changes of atmosphere", which are misrepresented when certain events are turned into the decisive factors as in a stage play.²³⁸

"West Hackhurst" has various qualities which make it, far more than *Double Lives*, resemble a novel: a main plot woven together with various sub-plots; and the use of various words and concepts (notably that of feudalism and property, recalling "My Wood") as recurring themes. Simultaneously, "West Hackhurst" is about real people and describes them, sometimes viciously, under their real names. Kathleen Bucknell has traced a move

²³⁵ Plomer, *At Home*, pp. 144-5.

²³⁶ Exemplified by a passage in *At Home* describing the combination of raffishness and the frigid respectability of retired Victorian professionals to be found in inter-war Maida Vale (Plomer, *At Home*, pp. 125-6)

²³⁷ Plomer, *At Home*, pp. 126-7. This phrase appears in *At Home*, but the Plomer's two volumes of memoirs take a broadly similar view of the past.

²³⁸ "West Hackhurst", pp. 5, 16; *Creator as Critic*, pp. 111, 118.

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from fiction to writing on the border between fiction and non-fiction which was made during the 1930s by Isherwood, a close literary confidant of Forster's, and since the 1970s critics have paid much attention to life-writing by Virginia Woolf.²³⁹ Forster's memoirs and autobiographical writings have largely continued to be neglected.²⁴⁰

Historically speaking, Forster is concerned in "West Hackhurst" with the transition from a lost past to an age of modernity, and revels in the change, happy to slay the past, like Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians*. In "West Hackhurst", the death of Laura Forster in 1924 is followed by the decision made by Forster and his mother to move into his "enigmatic legacy", with the two maids and one cat of their "undistinguished and suburban" Weybridge home being replaced by three maids, a gardener, a donkey, seven chickens and three horse-drawn carriages.²⁴¹ This shift is used by Forster as a way of indicating that they stepped into a different "mode of life", socially and historically, one "that meant equal social intercourse with" grand local families. This mode, that of Laura Forster in the same place between the 1870s and the 1920s, has become an anachronism by the time her nephew moves in, something indicated by the shooting of the donkey – "to Virginia Woolf's immense delight"²⁴² – and by Tom Farrer's daughter Fanny – who in 1946 would move into West Hackhurst – trying to requisition their now empty coach house for her car.

Ownership and occupation – aspects of the relationships between one human being and another in space – are central to the memoir. "West Hackhurst" thus develops interests earlier apparent in "My Wood" and "England's Pleasant Land". In "West Hackhurst" the word "feudal" can, rather than to the specifics of medieval land tenure or the long-lived system of power-relations envisaged by Marx, refer to a link between life in the country and what the *Oxford English Dictionary* calls "homage and service to a superior lord".²⁴³ Perhaps the Farrers at Abinger Hall *did* expect the Forsters at West Hackhurst to offer a certain amount of "homage and service" through friendship and loyalty – perhaps Fanny Farrer expected this when she approached Forster's mother about the carriage house – while the villagers positioned below, both topographically and socially, looked up at both households as gentry.

²³⁹ Kathleen Bucknell, "Why Christopher Isherwood Stopped Writing Fiction" in Zachary Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002. Both Woolf's own biographical writings and the massive upsurge of writings on her since the 1970s are chronicled well by Julia Briggs (*Reading Woolf*).

²⁴⁰ A survey of Forster's "Life Writing" (2007) by Max Saunders does not mention "West Hackhurst".

²⁴¹ "West Hackhurst", p. 19.

²⁴² "West Hackhurst", p. 20.

²⁴³ The word 'feudal' derives from a sense of the noun 'fee' only in historical use today, defined as "An estate in land (in England always a heritable estate), held on condition of homage and service to a superior lord, by whom it is granted and in whom the ownership remains; a fief, feudal benefice" (OED2: *fee* n.2).

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Throughout the memoir Forster is ambivalent about “feudalism” as a notion. In relation to Rooksnest, he imagined an alternative history for himself in which he might have become a proprietor of this transferred sort, called by him feudal. “My Wood” and Piney Copse were both part of the mental battle he fought for decades with the Farrers, in which he played this proprietorial role tactically and somewhat ironically. In “West Hackhurst”, he narrates the history of his involvement with Piney Copse immediately before giving an account of the two pageant plays.²⁴⁴ A nearer “approach to feudalism” than his boyhood at Rooksnest, according to Forster in the memoir, was “a meeting of landowners trying to obstruct rural development” at Dorking which he attended some time after buying Piney Copse. At this meeting, he claims to have felt initially pleased to be “among my own sort at last”, yet Tom Farrer, “beamed at” by Forster, snubbed him, and Forster seems put out by an “arrogant old hag” who “came tottering in on the arm of her cockaded chauffeur”.²⁴⁵ Forster, if “West Hackhurst” is to be believed, felt both desire to be accepted as a member of the landowner class and revulsion for the very same group.

The word *feudal* and its derivatives are used several times in the third chapter of the memoir, written in 1947, to describe the behaviour of members of the Farrer family towards Forster in the 1940s. During the Second World War, he claims to have written to Lady Farrer, widow of Tom, about a field between West Hackhurst and the village to the south over which they were arguing. Her reply, according to him, had a tone of “feudal graciousness” which he contrasts sarcastically with the “county neighbourliness” of her asking the Forsters “to get her dirty linen collected one week”;²⁴⁶ Forster says his own first reaction to the eviction notice he received on his return from India at the end of 1945 was to think “feudally” and simply accept things – to take the position, in other words, that landowners know best and act in everyone’s interests, not just their own –, before concluding that this view was mere “muddle headedness”.²⁴⁷ Eventually, he replaced the phrase “the landlords” with the word “feudalism” as an explanation of what “had driven me out” of West Hackhurst.²⁴⁸

In opposition to feudalism, with its assumptions of permanence and of a hierarchy which is also a moral order, there is a complex of notions in “West Hackhurst” related to trespassing and transience. This strand recalls Leslie Stephen, described by his daughter

²⁴⁴ “West Hackhurst”, pp. 23-5. See also Furbank II, p. 199. The wood remained Forster’s freehold property after he left Abinger in 1946, and he exchanged letters with the Farrers over it in 1948.

²⁴⁵ “West Hackhurst”, p. 24 (Forster accidentally numbered two pages of the manuscript ‘24’: the reference here is to the second of these).

²⁴⁶ “West Hackhurst”, p. 37.

²⁴⁷ “West Hackhurst”, pp. 42, 43.

²⁴⁸ “West Hackhurst”, p. 46 (second page numbered 46 by Forster).

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Virginia Woolf as “an eminent Victorian who was also an eminent pedestrian”: he advised both walkers and writers: “Whenever you see a board up with ‘Trespassers will be prosecuted’, trespass at once”.²⁴⁹ “West Hackhurst” itself can be seen as one of “Forster’s Trespasses”, to borrow a title used by James Buzard to emphasise the ambivalence of Forster’s accounts of tourism.²⁵⁰ In it, Forster reflects that “Perhaps my social trespasses have been remembered at the Hall and have done me no good there”.²⁵¹ Forster initially wrote “lapses from class” here, then replaced this with “social trespasses”. In so doing, he added nuances of meaning to the description of his relations with the Farrers, introducing the politics of landowning and a place dimension. Here, to trespass is to cross the boundary separating social classes, something Forster connects with his adventures beyond the topographical boundary of the North Downs – in London, in other words – after he took a *piéd-à-terre* in Bloomsbury in 1925, the same year he moved from Weybridge to Abinger with his mother. The phrase “social trespasses” alludes to Forster’s friendships with members of lower social classes. It appears after an account of “the sister of a friend of mine [Bob Buckingham] who is a policeman” – with this phrase then struck out and replaced with “a working class girl of my London acquaintance” – who went for an interview as a nursemaid for a member of the Farrer family.²⁵² Being “no fool”, Forster says, she saw through the family and rejected the job offer. It is unclear whether Buckingham’s sister applied for the job at Forster’s behest, as a sly prank at the expense of the Farrers. Whether she did or not, Forster’s sexual relationship with Buckingham was both cross-class and same-sex and therefore doubly an act of trespassing.

Temporal variation and instability is a typical feature of Modernist narrative, and in this respect “West Hackhurst” deserves consideration by students of Forster’s Modernism.²⁵³ Forster emphasises at the very outset of the memoir that he has never been more than a “sojourner” at West Hackhurst. While Plomer presented Forster at home in Surrey as a calming counterweight to the frenzy of the modern age,²⁵⁴ Forster in “West Hackhurst” denies himself any such status. Important to the memoir is the fact that Forster feels cut off from true connection to the neighbourhood, and the connection claimed – and perhaps truly

²⁴⁹ Virginia Woolf, from “The Leaning Tower” [1940], in *Collected Essays*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1967, vol. 4 p. 81; S.P. Rosenbaum, *Victorian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group Volume I*, St Martin’s Press: New York, 1987, p. 53.

²⁵⁰ Buzard, “Forster’s Trespasses”.

²⁵¹ “West Hackhurst”, p. 29.

²⁵² “West Hackhurst”, p. 28. See also p. 26, where Forster at first thought to introduce this anecdote but then, having changed his mind, deleted the reference to Buckingham’s sister.

²⁵³ David Medalie (*E.M. Forster’s Modernism*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 2002) does not mention “West Hackhurst” in his study of the topic.

²⁵⁴ Plomer, *At Home*, p. 146.

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felt – by the Farrers is in his view also an illusion. In the memoir he presents himself as, though an outsider, more popular than the Farrers with the ordinary villagers. He describes this using a metaphoric comparison to the financial markets, claiming that when he was given notice to quit West Hackhurst after his mother's death the Farrers' "stock, for a long time doubtful, crashed and mine rose".²⁵⁵ The insistence on transience relates to his statement in his commonplace book that a belief in the impending return of Wessex was an illusion,²⁵⁶ and also to the differences between Forster's pageant play of 1934, "The Abinger Pageant", and that of 1938, "England's Pleasant Land".

In the memoir, transience and trespassing are two potential sources of liberation. A third is London:

[West Hackhurst] was too female a house, I had always had to fit in there, and now I felt trapped in its ovary, and would climb to the top of the downs, and look longingly towards industrialism and London. There, by a rare inversion, was romance, there energy and initiative were possible. Bloomsbury and more than Bloomsbury opened their gates.²⁵⁷

This contrasts with the view of London as the source of vulgar and messy urban intruders into the paradise of the Surrey Hills expressed in both *A Room with a View* and "My Wood". Forster's look towards London in "West Hackhurst" is also a development of and a response to Ruskin, who wrote of being "above London smoke" as he looked northwards at the city from "the top garret of my father's house at Herne Hill".²⁵⁸ Forster was deeply influenced by Ruskin, but looks at the smoky city as a site of adventure and escape, while it had horrified Ruskin.²⁵⁹

Starting with its title, the "West Hackhurst" memoir enacts movement in space. Like that of *Howards End*, the title – "West Hackhurst: A Surrey Ramble" – contains the name of a house, here a real house. The name "West Hackhurst" is combined with a subtitle which – like the titles of *The Longest Journey* and *A Passage to India* – refers to a sort of movement. Here, it is a ramble, a sort of movement perhaps especially appropriate to Surrey, since it suggests a leisured, even aimless, progress on foot through the countryside.²⁶⁰ In the 1930s

²⁵⁵ "West Hackhurst", p. 49.

²⁵⁶ *Commonplace Book*, p. 37.

²⁵⁷ "West Hackhurst", p. 23.

²⁵⁸ John Ruskin, "The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century" [1884] in M.H. Abrams & Stephen Greenblatt (eds), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Seventh Edition, two volumes, Norton: New York & London, 2000, vol. II. p. 1450.

²⁵⁹ Ruskin's idealisation of landscape is discussed from a human geographer's point of view by Edward Relph (*Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography*, Croom Helm: London, 1981, pp. 38-41).

²⁶⁰ Furbank (I, p. 45) once gets the name wrong, calling it "West Hackhurst: A Country Ramble", in so doing indicating something of the connotations of the word 'ramble'. In Heath's view (*Creator as*

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and 1940s, the notion of rambling had a specific political context: attempts led by socialists to gain access for all to areas of the English countryside which landowners perhaps would rather have denied to urban visitors, a context explained well by the career of Tom Stephenson, leader from 1943 of the Ramblers' Association.²⁶¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* is unsure of the word's etymology,²⁶² comparing it to words such as 'scramble', but one could conjecture that it is cognate with 'amble', which comes directly from the Latin verb *ambulare*, 'to walk'. Applied to a person's movement rather than to that of a horse, 'amble' is first recorded in the late sixteenth century as is 'scramble', while 'ramble' appears shortly afterwards. The word 'perambulation', though, familiar from William Lambarde's 1576 antiquarian work on Kent, has a longer history in English, entering from Anglo-Norman in the later Middle Ages. Initially, it carried the technical sense the "action or ceremony of officially walking round a territory (as a forest, manor, parish, etc.) to determine and record its boundaries, to preserve rights of possession, etc., or to confer a blessing";²⁶³ it was also applied early on to "the ceremony of beating the bounds of a parish".²⁶⁴

In line with this, Forster's ramble at times seems less a post-Romantic nature walk than a ceremonial sort of statement of local administrative or political identity of the sort marked by boundaries as represented on maps. Mention of parish boundaries recalls the shape of the parish of Abinger, "one of the largest parishes in England", stretching "like a thin green ribbon from the ridge of the North Downs right away to the Sussex border in the South", as described in the opening lines of the "Foreword to Visitors" of "The Abinger Pageant", itself written as part of a ceremony of sorts.²⁶⁵ Forster half-wished he could have had some semi-official local historian's role: in "West Hackhurst" he claims that with "\moderate/encouragement \and the run of" Tom Farrer's library he could "have added one more book to my credit, and a very good one: the history of Abinger parish".²⁶⁶ Instead, he writes the unofficial anti-history which is "West Hackhurst".

Critic, p. 469), "A Surrey Ramble" does indeed ramble.

²⁶¹ Stephenson, formerly a journalist with the Labour-supporting *Daily Herald*, joined the Ministry of Town and Country Planning as a press officer in 1943, working under Lewis Silkin, the Labour minister afterwards associated with Stevenage New Town. At the Ministry, Stephenson "found his belief in access to the countryside for all a minority view" (Anne Holt, "Stephenson, Tom Criddle (1893-1987)" in ODNB).

²⁶² OED2: *ramble* v.

²⁶³ OED3: *perambulation* n.

²⁶⁴ A more general sense of *perambulation* is one which emerged in the sixteenth century: a "survey of a territory, region, etc.; a journey or tour of inspection" (OED3: *perambulation* n. 2.a.), with the related sense of a "survey or detailed description of a place; a written account of a walk or tour; a traveller's guide". Ignoring an unconvincing quotation from the beginning of the century, the earliest example of this sense is in the title of Lambarde's 1576 book.

²⁶⁵ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 335.

²⁶⁶ "West Hackhurst", p. 14; *Creator as Critic*, p. 118.

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A sense of the boundaries of different private estates, and of their intersection with public areas such as roads and with areas now owned by the National Trust such as Piney Copse – once Forster’s – is still to be had in the neighbourhood around West Hackhurst and Abinger Hall. Signs distinguishing areas and routes of these sorts make clear the extent to which notions of trespass and authority, or of permission in relation to particular paths, matter in this particular place as distinct, for example, from urban places, where barriers of parallel sorts are typically marked by walls and locked doors. Rural boundaries are made apparent, too, on the sort of maps of houses and their environs which always interested Forster. One example is the sketch-map of Rooksnest in Hertfordshire he produced as a youth shortly after leaving it.²⁶⁷ Others include a “*Plan of Kitchen Garden, West Hackhurst, the year I was driven out and after it had been cultivated for 70 years*” which he made in his *Commonplace Book* in the summer of 1946, a few months before his departure from Abinger,²⁶⁸ and a list he made of the fields around Abinger Hammer which he keyed to a map of the neighbourhood dating from around 1880, inherited from his Aunt Laura.²⁶⁹

Within the text of “West Hackhurst” there are various references to paths and routes which contain intertwined elements of literal description and metaphor. Some of the most explicitly place-related writing in “West Hackhurst” is to be found in the description of the path between West Hackhurst and Abinger Hall as – in Forster’s 1940s memory at least – it was around 1900.²⁷⁰ While “West Hackhurst” as a whole is a narrative organised around the passing of time, in this particular section Forster mimics a topographic account of place such as was found in a guidebook of the Baedeker sort. Forster loved guidebooks, not only alluding to them in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View*, but also writing his own, on Alexandria. The passage begins with the statement that the path’s character – “soft and wild” – is a quintessentially Surrey one. A list of Roman numerals follows, each standing for a point on a walk. This mimics the sort of guidebook which tells tourists precisely where to walk and where to stop when visiting a noteworthy place: “(ii) Continuation of same, past High Hackhurst Cottages on to Hackhurst lane. Here the downs are well seen to the north, and at their feet by the railway crossing, pleasant Hackhurst Farm, the Farrer Home Farm. For a few years, Hackhurst Farm touched my heart”.²⁷¹ Expressions like “continuation of same” – not ‘the same’, note –, “here the downs are well seen to the north”, and “pleasant Hackhurst Farm” all exhibit the compression characteristic of

²⁶⁷ Reproduced in Armstrong’s edition (*Howards End*, p. 285).

²⁶⁸ *Commonplace Book*, p. 169.

²⁶⁹ Laura Mary Forster, [Map of Abinger Hammer and surroundings, with E.M. Forster’s autograph manuscript list of fields keyed to it] 1880.

²⁷⁰ “West Hackhurst”, pp. 10-11; *Creator as Critic*, p. 115.

²⁷¹ “West Hackhurst”, p. 10; *Creator as Critic*, p. 115.

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guidebooks. But Forster also brings his emotional life into the picture in the phrase “touched my heart”, referring to Hughie Waterston, a young farmer with whom he fell in love during the 1930s.²⁷² The passage about the path also raises the issue of “common land” versus “private property”, and of signs, however “unobtrusive”, put up by the Farrers, who are said to have “become scared” of the public. The path eventually reaches the doors of the Hall. In fact Forster closes the passage with an image of “two paths blaming each other” which, as with some of his writing on Hertfordshire, recalls the squabbling rivers of Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* but also Lefebvre’s view of paths as “scrawled” human writing upon nature that endures over historical time.²⁷³ Yet these are not two separate paths distinguishable on a map, like the roads and rivers in Drayton’s epic of English locality, but are the same path at different historical moments, in the time of friendship, now past, and the present, “when the two houses are diseased, and the larger waits for the smaller’s death”.²⁷⁴

Lefebvre’s discussion of the relationship between use value and exchange value could be used to explain Forster’s feelings and writings about property, and his complex and painful relationship with the Farrers.²⁷⁵ The land for West Hackhurst was carved out of the Abinger Hall estate, and a 60-year lease on it sold to Laura Forster in 1877. This was the seed of all the subsequent difficulties between the two families. When the Abinger Hall Estate was offered for sale by the London auctioneers Driver & Co. in 1868 the particulars suggested that “[a] portion of” its 200 acres “could (if thought requisite) be judiciously Sold or Letoff [sic] for the Erection of one or more good residences”,²⁷⁶ and this was precisely what happened when the land West Hackhurst would occupy was let to Laura Forster and the house built. T.H. Farrer, father of Tom Farrer and later the First Baron, bought the estate in 1868, demolished the old Abinger Hall, and had a successor built for him by the architect Alfred Waterhouse, a family connection.²⁷⁷ On 22 March 1877 Laura wrote to T.H. Farrer, after 1893 the first Baron Farrer, agreeing without consulting her solicitor to a sixty-year lease. She leased the land and paid for the construction of the house, with her brother as the architect, with the property became due to revert to the Farrers in 1937. The Farrers would therefore receive back a developed piece of land with a value as real estate. Laura’s solicitor, meanwhile, thought the lease disadvantageous to her and recommended its extension to 99

²⁷² See “West Hackhurst”, p. 25.

²⁷³ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 117-18.

²⁷⁴ “West Hackhurst”, p. 11; *Creator as Critic*, p. 115.

²⁷⁵ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 339.

²⁷⁶ *Plan of the Abinger Hall Estate, Surrey. For Sale [...]*, MS British Library Maps 137.b.3.(1.) Abinger Hall 1868.

²⁷⁷ The Victorian Abinger Hall has been described as “just plain ugly, not interesting” (Nairn & Pevsner, *Surrey*, p. 86).

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years. But by the time he gave this advice it was too late for Laura to pull out.²⁷⁸

The mistake Laura Forster made, it could be argued, and the mistake her nephew made in turn, was to see the position of the Forsters at West Hackhurst, on the westernmost edge of the Abinger Hall estate, as guaranteed or reinforced by a bond of friendship with the family at the Hall. The Farrers, by contrast, seem on the evidence of their own correspondence in the 1930s to have been more astute than the Forsters, and also to have acted in a belief that a firm boundary existed between their family and the rest of the world, sticking together to protect their own interests. They were certainly familiar with a language of obligation as a way of describing what a relationship between landlords and tenants should be, and the older members of the family worked hard to keep their descendants around them in outlying estate houses such as West Hackhurst and its neighbour High Hackhurst. Using Lefebvre's application of Marx, we could see both Forster and the Farrers as players of an outdated game in seeing land in terms of use value, when the reality, as the Farrers perhaps knew better, had shifted towards exchange value.²⁷⁹ It had shifted, this is to say, from being measurable in terms of what could be done with it, to being measurable in terms of what could be got for it. Adding to a sense that both families were acting anachronistically is the fact that exchange value was nothing new in Surrey: by the mid-twentieth century, estates in the counties had already for hundreds of years been bought and sold by auctioneers on behalf of courtiers, financiers and other arrivistes. The way the Forsters and Farrers played this game, almost as if counterfeiting characters in a novel by Thackeray or George Eliot, seems slightly tragic and slightly farcical. Both families were apparently trapped inside the game, perhaps as a consequence of both being three or four generations away from the actual making of money in London and therefore almost forced into an effete sort of behaviour acceptable among gentry.

4.9. Conclusion

The key to an understanding of Forster's relationship with rural Surrey is the detachment from "Wessex". For more than half his life, he wrote in his commonplace book in 1928, he had thought a "grass grown land more real than a high road". What he came to understand was not only the inescapability but also, on some level, the desirability of a world of asphalt.

²⁷⁸ This narrative is made clear by a private letter of 25 April 1877 to T.H Farrer from the family solicitor William Farrer, shown me in 2007 by descendants of the Farrer family.

²⁷⁹ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 100, 339. Lefebvre (*Production of Space*, p. 339) speculates that use value "rooted in production and in production costs" may in the future entirely be replaced by an exchange value "defined by the signs of prestige or 'status'".

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The world of asphalt is present in the “West Hackhurst” memoir in different ways: in Hughie Waterston’s motorised tractor, “dribbling oil and quivering”; in Con, the working-class woman from London who comes down across the North Downs to pass judgement on the Farrers; in the lorries and cars which remove Forster’s possessions, and his ancient housemaid Agnes, from West Hackhurst at the end of 1946.²⁸⁰ The detachment from “Wessex” is chronicled in the portraits of the county of *A Room with a View*, “My Wood”, the two pageant plays, the commonplace book entries and their reformulation as essays, and in the “West Hackhurst” memoir. It was something that fed into Forster’s response to the debate over Stevenage New Town in the broadcast which became “The Challenge of Our Time” and which, as with his writing on other English places, speaks for a view of his career as a complicated process of change rather than one which never moved beyond Edwardiana.

²⁸⁰ “West Hackhurst”, pp. 26, 28, 55.

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5.1. Views of Forster's London

Forster was born in 1879 in a central London house afterwards demolished and replaced by a railway terminus. He lived in and wrote about the city and its suburbs on and off throughout his long life – *Howards End* contains his best-known London writing – but he is rarely thought of as a London writer. In terms of local English place, critics are more likely to associate Forster with Cambridge or the Home Counties than with London, and often see him as opposed to the metropolis. In contrast, several recent discussions of Virginia Woolf relate the geography of London directly to her writings.¹

Recent discussions of London's imaginative spatiality have often made use of the term 'psycho geography'. This specifies an esoteric link between the movements of people through the city and phenomena such as maps, connecting British writers on London such as Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair with Guy Debord's notion of the spectacle.² As a vast, old-established metropolis, London may seem peculiarly to blend the familiar and the mysterious, and such a view of London certainly finds parallels and echoes in Forster's writing on it. I view the city in a more down-to-earth way, which nevertheless aims to maintain a grasp of the city as something imagined and experienced, as a contested idea as well as a thing of bricks and mortar.

This chapter begins with Forster's biographical connections to London, moving on to an account of my own physical encounters with London, then surveying reference to London across the range of Forster's writing between the 1890s and the 1960s. Human place experiences overlap countless times and in many permutations, yet also qualitatively differ, are all unique. Nowhere is there more evidence for this phenomenon than in writing on a great city. Among Forster's pre-First-World-War novels, there is some reference to London in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *The Longest Journey*, *A Room with a View*, and *Maurice*, but

¹ See e.g. Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth (eds), *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York; Andrea P. Zengulys, "Night and Day is Dead: Virginia Woolf in London Literary and Historic", *Twentieth Century Literature* 46 (2000), pp. 56-77.

² Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, Chatto & Windus: London, 2000; Iain Sinclair, *Lights Out for the Territory: 9 Excursions in the Secret History of London*, Granta: London, 1997. See Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography*, Pocket Essentials: Harpenden, 2006; on Lefebvre relationship with Debord and the situationists see Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006, pp. 158-9.

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considerably more in *Howards End*. Significant on London among Forster's inter-war writing is an essay first published in 1937 as "E.M. Forster Looks at London" and reprinted in the collection *Two Cheers for Democracy* as "London Is a Muddle".³ 'Muddle', a confusion sometimes understood negatively and sometimes positively, is a concept Forster returned to again and again.⁴ The muddle and the city parallel one another, both of them in Forster capable of being undesirable, but also of being seen as messy yet innately human. In the 1930s and 1940s he wrote extensively on London: in published essays, memoirs and biographies, as well as in his private journal. As well as having a flat in London during these years, he had among his literary associates two younger London-based writers: J.R. Ackerley and William Plomer. At the end of the chapter, I shall examine Forster's writing between the 1930s and the 1950s on the Clapham Common area. This was somewhere which in the decades immediately before and after his birth was transformed from a semi-rural place on the fringes of London, the home of wealthy commuters, into an urban one, home to richer and poorer Londoners alike. Clapham is now inner London, but was once a prosperous Home Counties village. Critical accounts of Forster's London have focused on *Howards End* and have, in consequence, exaggerated his opposition to the city and his search for an idealised community situated outside it.

Forster's artistic identity as a partial Modernist needs to be understood through the 'semi-detached' or quasi-commuter relationship to the city he maintained throughout life. His career supports the argument of critics such as Chris Baldick, Lynne Hapgood and Nancy L. Paxton that the term 'Modernism' should not dominate discussions of early-twentieth-century British literature.⁵ Forster wrote one of the great Modernist English novels, *A Passage to India*, and was a lifelong champion of experimental and 'difficult' art, yet wrote his novels in a commuter-belt villa rather than a cosmopolitan metropolis and saw himself as a Victorian relic. A younger member of the Bloomsbury Group, David Garnett, looking back from the 1960s to the first decades of the twentieth century, claimed that "for many years,

³ See *Bibliography*, 149.

⁴ As early as 1903, in "New Lucy", Forster has Cecil view George Emerson's concept of life as a "muddle" (Lucy, p. 96). Leonard Bast in *Howards End* is regarded by Helen Schlegel as "a muddle of a man, and yet so worth pulling through"; when Leonard is at his most despairing, Forster's narrating voice praises him for avoiding drunkenness, "the anodyne of muddledom"; Henry Wilcox and Helen, strongly opposed in the book, are both seen by Margaret Schlegel as "muddled" or given to "muddling" (*Howards End*, ch. XVI p. 108, ch. XLI p. 226, ch. XXXVIII p. 219, ch. XL p. 223). In Forster's other novels Charlotte Bartlett in *A Room with a View* and Dr Aziz in *A Passage to India* are characters Forster associates with his notion of muddle.

⁵ Chris Baldick, *The Modern Movement*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004; Lynne Hapgood & Nancy L. Paxton (eds), *Outside Modernism: In Pursuit of the English Novel, 1900-30*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 2000.

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just as the party was warming up, [...] [Forster] had to catch a train back to Weybridge”.⁶ In Forster’s lifetime London stopped being an imperial metropolis, the largest city in the world, becoming instead the capital of a post-imperial semi-socialist European state.⁷ From the 1920s until the 1950s he shuttled repeatedly between the city and places beyond its boundaries, especially Abinger and Cambridge. In March 1946, for instance, precisely a year after the death of his mother, he describes in his diary a mundane day on which he awoke in his Chiswick flat with an upset stomach, breakfasted there on “fried bread and damson jam” and, after taking a “luke warm” bath and washing his underpants, made his way via Waterloo station to Abinger.⁸ An understanding of Forster’s career as positioned *between* London and elsewhere – the environs or hinterland of the city – is one which puts place at the centre of literary interpretation.

5.2. Physical Encounters with London

5.2.1. Forster’s London Roots and Connections: Clapham Common, Marylebone and Bloomsbury

Before he was eight, Forster knew two grand houses, now long-since demolished, which occupied sites now in South London: Battersea Rise and East Side. Both, until 1889, were situated in Clapham, Surrey, then afterwards in the part of the S.W. postal district of London which in 1917 became SW4. Battersea Rise was the home of the Thorntons, at the south-western corner of Clapham Common. By the time Forster was in his twenties, this area had been thoroughly engulfed by London. “Clapham, once infested by highwaymen, turned first into a pleasant and then into an unpleasant suburb”, Forster wrote in the mid-1930s.⁹ His mother Lily spent her childhood and youth in the same area, growing up in an artistic family on the fringes of gentility, the Whichelos.¹⁰ Forster, like many of the Thorntons, was

⁶ David Garnett, “Forster and Bloomsbury” in Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), *Aspects of E.M. Forster: Essays and Recollections Written for His Ninetieth Birthday January 1, 1969*, Harcourt, Brace & World: New York, 1969, pp. 29-35, here 32. The house of the Forsters at Weybridge was, strictly speaking, a detached one, but one separated its next-door neighbour only by a tiny gap: to a country gentleman like Siegfried Sassoon it appeared “semi-detached” (Furbank I, pp. 144-5; Jacqueline Banerjee, *Literary Surrey*, John Owen Smith: Headley Down, Hampshire, 2005, p. 161; see Image 14).

⁷ See Francis Shepherd, *London: A History*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998, pp. 261-361.

⁸ “Locked Journal”, 15 March 1946.

⁹ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 242.

¹⁰ Photographs of Forster’s mother when a girl exist which were taken in studios in and around Clapham, some in the more “unpleasant” regions to the north near Stockwell near where, arguably, Forster would later situate the Bast home at Camelia Road in *Howards End* (Alice Clara (‘Lily’)

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christened at Holy Trinity church, Clapham Common.¹¹ East Side, the home of Forster's great-aunt Marianne Thornton in adulthood, was smaller than Battersea Rise, and situated at the north-eastern corner of Clapham Common rather than on the western side as the main Thornton house was.¹² It was also part of a terrace, and although Marianne was still close to Battersea Rise – and even closer to Holy Trinity church, which faced her across the road – lower-grade suburbs sprouted around her during her later life at East Side.

Because of Marianne, who lived until 1887, Forster's earliest memories of London were of Clapham. His paternal grandmother Laura, Marianne's sister, was born a Thornton, descended from several generations of rich City of London merchants and bankers who were also evangelical Anglicans.¹³ An 1844 article by James Stephen dubbed the Thorntons and their associates the "Clapham Sect", their villas being situated around Clapham Common. Battersea Rise was demolished in 1907; Forster blamed this on London, later writing that in that year "London knocked and everything vanished".¹⁴ Still Battersea Rise had not been built independently of London: as City financiers, the Thorntons made their money there. As Forster well knew, he was able to travel and become a writer without the pressure of having to make money thanks to some of this money, his inheritance of £8,000 from Marianne in 1887. He remained aware of the complexities of inherited wealth and of investments on the financial markets: think of Margaret's statement in *Howards End* that she, her siblings and the Wilcoxes alike "stand upon money as upon islands".¹⁵ By the mid-twentieth century Clapham had become synonymous with a vaguely genteel and old-fashioned type of suburban ordinariness.¹⁶ Today the site of Battersea Rise is occupied by several streets of Edwardian terraces, nondescript for most of the twentieth century but gentrified from the 1980s onwards.¹⁷ But Forster never forgot his Thornton ancestry. His major work written in old age, *Marianne Thornton: A Domestic Biography*,¹⁸ was an act of family piety.

Forster critics have paid little attention to the specifics of the Clapham area. Wilfred Stone, in a monograph written before Forster's death applying a psychoanalytical perspective,

Forster, [studio photographs of Alice Clara Forster née Whichelo as a girl and as a young woman], MS KCC/EMF/27/13, 17, 33-4, 41-3 [c.1860-1880]).

¹¹ On 15 February 1879 (*Chronology*, p. 1).

¹² *Marianne Thornton*, p. 201.

¹³ Michael Reed, "Thornton, Samuel (1754-1838)" in ODNB; Christopher Tolley, "Thornton, Henry (1760-1815)" in ODNB; Edwin Welch, "Thornton, John (1720-1790)" in ODNB.

¹⁴ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 242.

¹⁵ *Howards End*, ch. VII p. 46. The title character of *Maurice* is a stockbroker in the City.

¹⁶ This is the part it plays in the Ealing Studios film *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer (dir.), 1949).

¹⁷ See Image 16.

¹⁸ E.M. Forster, *Marianne Thornton: A Domestic Biography*, Edward Arnold: London, 1956.

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devoted a chapter to “Clapham”, interpreting Battersea Rise as “the father’s house”.¹⁹ Subsequent critics have occasionally referred to Forster’s Clapham Sect ancestors, but have never examined his relationship with these houses. The origins Forster’s mother had in the small houses of the expanding metropolis which surrounded the Victorian Common are less well-known than her son’s descent from the Sect. Clapham meant different things at different times, the urban district being something different from the village which preceded it. Traces of the previous Clapham remained in the house, the obsolete nineteenth-century “organism” which according to Forster “seems to have functioned to the very end”, and he himself left behind a further trace in the shape of his writings on the place.²⁰

Forster was not born in Clapham but at 6 Melcombe Place, off Dorset Square, in the London N.W. postal district between 1857 and 1917, after that in NW1. Forster had no connection with this house or district after babyhood. The house was demolished to make way for Marylebone railway station, which opened in 1897 when Forster was eighteen.²¹ Forster left there with his mother before he was two years old after his father’s death from tuberculosis. From then onwards the mother and son stayed at East Side until their 1883 move to Rooksnest, near Stevenage in Hertfordshire. The Melcombe Place house sat between the unshakeable gentility of Marylebone and beyond it Mayfair to the south, and areas whose status at the close of the nineteenth century was much more doubtful. Beyond Regent’s Park to the East lay Camden Town, blighted by railway development, childhood home of Charles Dickens, and setting by the first decade of the twentieth century of the grim interior scenes painted by W.R. Sickert. Much closer, immediately to the West, was Lisson Grove, a notorious slum by the early twentieth century.

Forster’s birthplace and the site of his mother’s upbringing situate him surprisingly close to deprived parts of London, a fact which can be connected to a literary phenomenon of his youth. Between about 1875 and 1910, middle-class readers had a seemingly insatiable appetite for journalism and fiction related to the central London slums which lay within easy walking distance of wealthy streets.²² In the first decade of the twentieth century,

¹⁹ Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966, pp. 21-39.

²⁰ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 242.

²¹ The before and after is well illustrated by a comparison between sheets VI.50 and VI.60 of the 1868 first edition of the Ordnance Survey five feet to one mile map, and the same sheets on the 1922 second edition. See also Bridget Cherry & Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 3: North West* [‘The Buildings of England’] [1991], Penguin: London, 1999, p. 614.

²² Surveys of this writing, which began in the mid-nineteenth century with Dickens and Mayhew but was produced in increasing quantities after the 1870s, include Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, Princeton University Press: Princeton & London, 2004 and Anthony S. Wohl, *The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London* [1977], Transaction: New Brunswick, NJ & London, 2002; Sarah Wise (*The Blackest Streets: The Life and*

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campaigning writers such as Masterman and Jack London saw these zones as a spiritual abyss as well as sites of merely economic deprivation, threatening by their existence to undermine middle-class comfort.²³ Jack London wrote sensationally of horrific slums including “Devonshire Place, Lisson Grove”, just round the corner from Forster’s birthplace.²⁴

The impression Jack London gives of the streets west of Lisson Grove is confirmed by the map produced by social reformer Charles Booth, which colours London streets differently according to an assessment of their inhabitants’ wealth and respectability.²⁵ On this map, Melcombe Place and its neighbour Dorset Square are both gold, the highest social colouring Booth awarded. But this far north-west of Marylebone contains far more patches of working class housing, coloured light and dark blue, than for example the chiefly solidly red Bloomsbury.²⁶ The latter was later experienced by a refugee from Belgravia, Virginia Woolf, as a place of working-class street culture: all such categorisations are relative.²⁷ Beyond Lisson Grove to the west, in the late 1890s there were streets Booth coloured black, thus identifying them as home to “[v]icious, semi-criminal” inhabitants of the “[l]owest class”. Such areas on his map were typically small in terms of geographical extent but could contain vast numbers of people crammed into a single street. Booth had his own agenda as a social reformer. His street-by-street surveys,²⁸ far less well-known today than his map, say little about comfortably-off streets such as Melcombe Place, concentrating only on those he

Death of a Victorian Slum, Bodley Head: London, 2008) has examined the discursive network surrounding a particular slum, the ‘Old Nichol’ in Shoreditch.

²³ Samuel Hynes (*The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, pp. 59-68) describes Masterman as a reformer who was ultimately a failure. Mark Freeman (“‘Journeys into Poverty Kingdom’: Complete Participation and the British Vagrant, 1866-1914”, *History Workshop Journal* 52 (2001), pp. 99-121, here 113) observes that the findings of writers on urban poverty between 1880 and 1914 “were presented in such a way as to emphasize the alien nature of the ‘abyss’: prostitution, incest, filth, squalor, violence and ignorance seem to have been the norm among those they investigated”.

²⁴ Jack London, *People of the Abyss* [1903] in *Novels and Social Writings*, Donald Pizer (ed.), The Library of America: New York, 1982, pp. 1-184, here 127.

²⁵ Charles Booth, *Descriptive Map of London Poverty* [1889], London Topographical Society: London, 1984; LSE, *Charles Booth Online Archive*, <http://booth.lse.uk> (Accessed 14 August 2008). Ralph Hyde (“Charles Booth’s Poverty Maps: A Bibliographical Note” in Booth, *Descriptive Map*) has described the complicated bibliographical history of the map. Forster met Booth at least once, in 1912 (*Locked Journal*, 23 June 1912).

²⁶ Booth (*Descriptive Map*) coloured streets dark blue if he considered them characterised by very poor inhabitants employed casually and living in a state of “[c]hronic want”; red denoted middle-class, “[w]ell-to-do” zones.

²⁷ “The usual hoarse-voiced men paraded the streets with plants on barrows. Some shouted; others sang” (Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* [1929], Hogarth Press: London, 1978, p. 39).

²⁸ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London. First Series: Poverty. 2. Streets & Population Classified*, Macmillan: London, 1902; *Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London. Third Series: Religious Influences. 2. London North of the Thames: The Inner Ring*, Macmillan: London, 1902.

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considered undesirable as part of a great metropolis.

The proximity of Forster's beginnings to the homes of the very poor subtly distinguishes him from Woolf and Lytton Strachey, two London contemporaries. Woolf and Strachey wrote accounts of their respective childhood homes at Hyde Park Gate and Lancaster Gate in the 1920s for the Bloomsbury Group's Memoir Club, of which Forster was also a member.²⁹ Booth may have coloured Melcombe Place gold, but the very fact that a railway terminus could be situated there indicates that it stood on the fringes of the West End. As with the site of his mother's upbringing, Forster's birthplace situates him closer to the Bast classes, and even to those below them in the abyss, than readers might expect. It is perhaps the looming silhouette of Marylebone station which should be remembered when Forster invokes London's railway termini in *Howards End*.

During his post-university novel-writing years, Forster became associated with two sites on the southern and eastern fringes of Bloomsbury, places which connect the young agnostic writer with the Christian Socialism of the mid-Victorian era. Both the Kingsley Temperance Hotel, Hart Street,³⁰ and The Working Men's' College, Great Ormond Street, were in what between 1857 and 1917 was the London W.C. postal district. The hotel was named after the Victorian writer and low-church Anglican thinker, Charles Kingsley, himself influenced by the founder of the Working Men's College, F.D. Maurice.³¹ Here, Forster and his mother stayed after their first trip to Italy in the autumn of 1902, leaving during the following spring for a further five months abroad, then returning to the same London base between August 1903 and March 1904.³² The hotel enters Forster's fiction in *A Room with a View*, in which a travelling pair of spinster sisters, the Miss Alans, are "found in their beloved temperance hotel near Bloomsbury – a clean airless establishment much frequented by provincial England".³³

Shortly after moving into the Kingsley Hotel for the first time, Forster began teaching at the Working Men's College on the invitation of the historian G.M. Trevelyan. In this role he became embroiled in a disagreement over the mission movement between Christian and agnostic factions at King's College, Cambridge, finding himself on the anti-religious side.³⁴

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury" [c.1922] in S.P. Rosenbaum (ed.), *A Bloomsbury Group Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1993, 355-72; Lytton Strachey, "Lancaster Gate" [1922] in Rosenbaum, *Bloomsbury Group Reader*, pp. 344-54.

³⁰ The hotel still exists, now called "The Kingsley" after a spell as the Thistle Bloomsbury.

³¹ See Bernard M.G. Reardon, "Maurice, (John) Frederick Denison (1805-1872)" in ODNB; Norman Vance, "Kingsley, Charles (1819-1875)" in ODNB. The College, in Reardon's words, was intended to be a "people's college", a substitute university for the poor.

³² *Chronology*, pp. 14-15; 17-18.

³³ *Room with a View*, ch. 19 p. 211.

³⁴ Furbank I, pp. 99-101.

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The Working Men's College, situated in southern Bloomsbury until 1905 and after that in Crowndale Road, St Pancras, was founded by Maurice in 1854 at a time when education of any sort for the poorer classes was chronically lacking in London.³⁵ Forster's invitation came in response to an account of "Pension life" he gave Trevelyan, who did not think tourism and "the shallower side of intricate psychology" worth writing about.³⁶ Instead of studying tourists, Trevelyan recommended that Forster study life more broadly by working at the College, implying that this would help him develop as a novelist. It was through the College that Forster first established teacher-student relationships with young working-class men (his students there were all male), and he would continue to prescribe reading and impart cultural knowledge in his subsequent relationships with social inferiors such as Bob Buckingham. The quasi-religious notion that souls needed saving in the darkest districts of the Victorian city, moreover, stood behind both the mission of the College and Forster's own involvement in it. In terms of London's own geography, the College lay on the edge of professional and respectable but no longer fashionable Bloomsbury, red on the Booth map, but also close to Seven Dials, most notorious of all the West End rookeries in the earlier nineteenth century.³⁷ The physical location of the hotel and the College on the eastern fringes of a pre-Bloomsbury-Group Bloomsbury provides a local and physical context for Forster's own writings on London.

Attention to the local detail of London place not only reveals the multiple ways in which Forster's life and writing were connected to London but also makes groupings in his fiction – the Schlegels, Wilcoxes and Basts of *Howards End*, for example – seem inter-related rather than, as critics have tended to think, oppositional. Discussions such as those of Sara Blair and Andrea P. Zemgulys of the relationships between Forster's contemporaries and specific places pay more attention to the writers than the places, and this is even true, despite his adventurous approach, of Franco Moretti.³⁸ The sophisticated historical criticism produced

³⁵ In the 1860s there were "in the whole of London only forty grammar and proprietary schools for boys, containing just over 6,000 pupils, while for girls there were only twelve such schools, containing less than 1,000 pupils" (Shepherd, *London*, p. 285).

³⁶ Letter from Trevelyan to Forster, 9 May 1902, cited by Furbank (I, pp. 93-94).

³⁷ By the 1890s, when Booth surveyed London, Seven Dials itself seems to have been cleaned up. Most of the streets radiating from the circus which gave the area its name he coloured pink indicating respectable working class status, although strips of "semi-criminal" black remained nearby. See Booth, *Descriptive Map*, and, on earlier Victorian views of London's slums, H.J. Dyos, *Exploring the Past: Essays in Urban History*, David Cannadine & David Reeder (eds), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1982, pp. 130-8. A street photograph of 1890s Seven Dials (H.J. Dyos & Michael Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, two volumes, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1973, between pp. 246 and 247, their Image 93) shows it crowded with people, especially children, but apparently tidy and well-looked after.

³⁸ Sara Blair, "Local Modernity, Global Modernism: Bloomsbury and the Places of the Literary", *English Literary History* 71 (2004), pp. 813-38; Zemgulys, "Night and Day is Dead"; Franco

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since the 1980s now needs to be partnered by an equally sophisticated geographical criticism.

Two other London locations found their way into Forster's Edwardian novels, the first in the home of a satirised portion of the upper-middle class in *A Room with a View*, the second as a shaky and threatened island of culture in the sea of London of *Howards End*. The first is 11 Drayton Court, Drayton Gardens, London S.W. This block of flats is between the Brompton Road and the Fulham Road, in another intermediate space, this time between Chelsea and South Kensington. The same zone is traversed by Woolf's Katherine Hilbery in *Night and Day* as she moves from the home of the intellectual elite and literary celebrities in Chelsea to that of the repressed and retired army officers to the north.³⁹ Drayton Court was the address of Forster and his mother between March and September 1904 and is perhaps recalled in the "Well-Appointed Flat" of Mrs Vyse, mother of the sexually ambiguous aesthete Cecil Vyse, who is Lucy Honeychurch's failed suitor in *A Room with a View*.⁴⁰

The second location is 1 All Souls Place, Portland Place, London W. This was the childhood home of Forster's university mentor Dickinson, the son of a portrait painter.⁴¹ 1 All Souls Place became the model for Wickham Place, the London "moorings" of the Schlegels in *Howards End* until they are swept away.⁴² It has a more central position than either Melcombe Place or Bloomsbury, a few hundred yards north of Oxford Circus and almost next door to the Queen's Hall, where the Schlegels in the 1910 novel first encounter Leonard Bast.⁴³ Like Battersea Rise, like Melcombe Place, and like the many slums eliminated so that railway termini and new roads could be built, Wickham Place is demolished and replaced. From Mansfield Park to Bleak House, country houses in nineteenth-century British novels tended to have a solidity which helped them survive the plot, and fictional aristocratic town houses such as the Crawleys' Great Gaunt Street house in *Vanity Fair* could also have an enduring quality. Forster makes Howards End similarly

Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, Verso: London, 1998; Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, Verso: London & New York, 2005.

³⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Night and Day*, Hogarth Press: London, 1950, p. 28.

⁴⁰ *Chronology*, pp. 18-19; *Room with a View*, ch. 11 p. 138. Forster in the novel explicitly locates the flat London's "S.W." postal district (*Room with a View*, ch. 11 p. 140).

⁴¹ Forster's maternal Whichelo ancestors were also painters, but less successful than Lowes Cato Dickinson (1819-1908). The elder Dickinson painted the portrait of F.D. Maurice, and was among the founders of the Working Men's College (see Bernard M.G. Reardon, "Maurice (John) Frederick Denison (1805-1872)" in ODNB; Shannon R. McBriar, "Dickinson, Lowes Cato (1819-1908)" in ODNB), another link between Forster and the earlier generation of more explicitly didactic artists and educators.

⁴² *Howards End*, ch. XIII p. 80.

⁴³ See Furbank I, p. 173. All Souls' Place was so close to the Queen's Hall that the fictional house cannot be on the site of the non-fictional one. Margaret tells Leonard that the Schlegels live "quite near" the concert hall, but the conversation which ensues (*Howards End*, ch. V pp. 29-31) is far too long for the distance between the real-life pair.

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durable, but not Wickham Place, the impermanence of which is closely connected to the version of London constructed in *Howards End*.

Several London addresses mattered in Forster's later life: the houses of Bloomsbury Group members in the years surrounding the First World War; two houses in Brunswick Square, Bloomsbury where Forster had rooms between the mid-1920s and the Second World War, a period when his main residence was at Abinger Hammer in Surrey;⁴⁴ the riverside lodging of Ackerley in Chiswick, west London, site of Boat Race Day parties in the 1920s; the London Library in St James's Square, on whose committee Forster sat in the 1930s, which linked him to the literary and political 'Establishment' and almost functioned as a third gentleman's club for him, with the Savile Club and later the more prestigious Reform Club as his other two;⁴⁵ the places referred to in his 1937 *Reynolds News* essay reprinted as "London Is a Muddle", places which shift Forster's London northwards and eastwards towards the City – focus of Eliot's London in *The Waste Land* – and the Islington in which Forster's friend Plomer was exploring the seediness then fashionable among younger writers;⁴⁶ the streets and houses of London affected by the Blitz, as described by Forster sporadically during the Second World War; Arlington Park Mansions, Chiswick, his London flat between 1940 and the early 1960s;⁴⁷ and the house in Wendell Road, Shepherd's Bush, bought by Forster for Bob and May Buckingham to replace a smaller maisonette in nearby Hartswood Road, where the couple would live until moving in 1953 to Coventry, to the house where Forster would die seventeen years later.

5.2.2. Journeys through London, July 2006-August 2008

Unlike most of the places covered in this study, London is a place with which I have had complex and varied encounters of my own over a long period of time. I was born in 1970 on its north-eastern edge, in a hospital which until 1965 had been situated in Essex and then became part of Greater London, and I spent my childhood nearby. As a child, I did not feel like a Londoner. London seemed somewhere at a distance, to be ventured into on family

⁴⁴ "West Hackhurst", p. 19.

⁴⁵ A private library supported by members' subscriptions, physically close to Pall Mall and initially housed in the Travellers' Club building there, the London Library has much in common with the most famous gentlemen's clubs, although in the early twentieth century it, unlike them, admitted women. See London Library, "A Brief History of the Library".

⁴⁶ In the City, flanking London Bridge, Forster refers to the office building Adelaide House and the church of St Magnus the Martyr; the latter comes into "The Fire Sermon", the third section of *The Waste Land*.

⁴⁷ Forster continued paying rent on the flat until the end of his life, as demonstrated by his bank statements (Williams Deacons Bank Ltd., MS KCC/EMF/17/5, 1942-1969) although he seems to have spent little time there after the early 1960s.

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outings and school trips. Car journeys into London in the late 1970s took me past many of the bombed churches, pre-fabricated houses and corrugated metal fences around empty lots which then still remained on the fringes of the City and in inner suburbs of North and East London, in places like Shoreditch, Old Street, Bethnal Green, a legacy of the Blitz. I passed through seemingly vast zones of run-down Victorian houses in Hackney and Finsbury Park, many of them subdivided into bedsits.⁴⁸

Since then, I have experienced spells as both a resident of London and a visitor. During 1980s teenage years, the West End was a place of leisure not inaccessible but some way off, reached by London Underground trains. A decade away from London followed then, between 1998 and 2002, living in inner London and working in the West End, I finally came to think of myself as a Londoner. In these years I developed a fascination with the physicality of London, with its richness as a leisure resource for someone with no spare cash, leisure to be had simply by wandering into Harlesden or across London Fields. The layout of the city, its boundaries of boroughs and what Philip Larkin in “The Whitsun Weddings” called its “postal districts packed like squares of wheat” became my territory.⁴⁹ I avidly travelled the last bus routes operated by 1960s Routemaster buses with their rattling engine note, chasing them down New Oxford Street and Essex Road, grasping the pole at the back and leaping on, heading home on what seems now always to have been a dark November evening; I became a hoarder of maps and books related to London.

Five journeys, two in 2006, two in 2007 and one in 2008, to the scattered Forster sites of central and west London were part of the preparation for writing this study. The first was a midweek walk from Holborn Underground station north through Bloomsbury, under a heavy grey sky, in the middle of July during a summer when the grass of the London squares had already been burned yellow by a heatwave.⁵⁰ Ian Nairn wrote in 1966 that “[a]s anything more than an area on a map, Bloomsbury is dead”, killed by “[t]own planners and London University”.⁵¹ But the unglamorous motley of the area – containing university departments, hospitals, small restaurants and council estates – has perhaps saved it from the extremes of large-scale commerce and showy prosperity which have since the 1960s obliterated the former character of many inner London districts. Brunswick Square lies east of Russell Square in the scruffier, less-visited half of Bloomsbury. Badly bombed during the Second

⁴⁸The atmosphere of the era is well captured by Jonathan Barker’s photos of Westbourne Park and Shoreditch in the 1970s (available online at flickr.com).

⁴⁹ Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems* [1988], Anthony Thwaite (ed.), Marvell Press & Faber: London, 1990, p. 116.

⁵⁰ See Image 17.

⁵¹ Ian Nairn & Peter Gasson, *Nairn’s London: Revisited by Peter Gasson* [1966], Penguin: London, 1988, p. 96.

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World War, it is today more a corner on a twisting road than a square, dominated by post-war buildings. A few early-nineteenth-century terraced houses survive on its northern side. Forster's London lodgings between the mid-1920s and the height of the Blitz were at numbers 26 and 27 on the western side, now occupied by the white ziggurat of flats flanking the 1960s Brunswick Centre.⁵² A few hundred metres to the north east lies the district around Judd Street, land once owned by Tonbridge School and allowed to become a lucrative slum in the nineteenth century.⁵³

A year later, in August 2007, I walked through Gordon Square, home of Vanessa and Virginia Stephen between 1904 and 1908.⁵⁴ It was broad, long and beautiful, having survived the Blitz near-intact. Forster's position on the physical edge of Bloomsbury in the 1920s and 1930s recalls the site of his birth, on the frontier between, in Booth's terms, golden Dorset Square and dark blue Lisson Grove. It also recalls his situation with the Bloomsbury Group, in relation to which Plomer wrote that despite his "perching place" in Brunswick Square, Forster remained "an independent" rather than a full-scale member.⁵⁵ He always had one foot in and one foot out. Gordon Square and Brunswick Square may both be 'Bloomsbury', the Stephen sisters and Forster all Bloomsbury Group members, but actual visits to the two squares serve to distinguish them: physical encounters thus bring something to a literary-critical study of place which cannot be had purely through the reading of texts.

Third, on a busy weekday in December 2006, as pale winter sunshine gave way to heavy fog, I drove to Chiswick in search of the flamboyant Edwardian mansion block which was Forster's London base after 1940. The street outside this building fronted Turnham Green and contained red buses of different heights. Perpendicular to it was Chiswick High Street, filled with hurried Christmas shoppers. Like the houses Forster lived in at Tunbridge Wells and Weybridge, but unlike Rooksnest or West Hackhurst, the Chiswick block bears a plaque commemorating Forster's life there, even though this was never more than a secondary home for him during the last three decades of his life. I did not ring the doorbell. Forster never described the flat or the building, and only referred to it in scattered letters, usually on mundane topics, to Bob Buckingham. Instead, I peered through gathering fog across the green space opposite the flats, towards the ghostly spire of Christ Church, Turnham Green,⁵⁶

⁵² *Chronology*, pp. 89, 105; Bridget Cherry & Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 4: North* ['The Buildings of England'], Penguin: London, 1998, p. 328.

⁵³ Booth, *Life and Labour: Religious Influences 2*, p. 169; Cherry & Pevsner, *London North*, pp. 330-1; D.C. Somervell, *A History of Tonbridge School*, Faber: London, 1947, p. 95.

⁵⁴ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, Knopf: New York, 1997, pp. 199-204.

⁵⁵ William Plomer, *At Home: Memoirs*, Cape: London, 1958, p. 107.

⁵⁶ See Image 18; on this church see Cherry & Pevsner, *London North West*, p. 392.

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recalling Glen Cavaliero's account of the Victorian Gothic churches of Eastbourne,⁵⁷ and wondering whether this particular one had ever disturbed the elderly agnostic Forster as he put his tie on or boiled an egg as had the "horrible spire" visible from the window of the flat at 11 Drayton Court, South Kensington, in 1904.⁵⁸

Next, on a sunny August afternoon becoming evening in 2007, a Sunday, I cycled from Clapham Junction station to the City of London. I sought out the Thornton houses around Clapham Common, and then journeyed to the City along the oldest route into London from the south-west, through Southwark and across London Bridge passing Adelaide House, described by Forster in "London Is a Muddle". Clapham Common has long been a playground for Londoners and half-way through this August bank holiday weekend seemed to be struggling to cope with their numbers, the litter bins overflowing, and Frisbee players crashing into variegated drinkers.⁵⁹ No trace of Battersea Rise remains on the western side of the Common, its site now covered by parallel streets of Edwardian terraced houses,⁶⁰ although some houses from the beginning of the nineteenth century – grand, but smaller than Battersea Rise – remain nearby.⁶¹

Then I entered the region now occupied by the Notre Dame Estate, a fortress-like 1940s local authority development resembling four streets of uniform terraced cottages stacked on top of one another. Its name preserves that of a convent which stood there between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries on the site of a house occupied until 1814 by Robert Thornton. This Thornton lost his entire fortune in financial speculation and left for America in 1814, where he lived under pseudonyms until his death twelve years later.⁶² At the heart of the estate, flanked by a near-derelict playground, stands the forlorn neo-classical portico of what was once a Thornton orangery. In 1810 it would have been surrounded by what Marianne Thornton called "the most expensive gardens in this vicinity".⁶³ The architectural clashes here dismayed Forster during the 1950s, researching his biography of Marianne: to him the "exquisite greenhouse" looked "death and desolation [...] in the midst of an LCC Housing Estate".⁶⁴ To quote Lefebvre, there is a series of "stratified and tangled networks" – historical places or produced spaces, traces of which survive into the present –

⁵⁷ Glen Cavaliero, *A Reading of E.M. Forster*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1979, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁸ Furbank I, p. 109.

⁵⁹ See Image 19.

⁶⁰ See Image 16.

⁶¹ The area is described by Bridget Cherry & Nikolaus Pevsner (*London 2: South* ['The Buildings of England'], Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1983, p. 386).

⁶² *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 36-8, 323.

⁶³ See Image 20; Cherry & Pevsner, *London South*, p. 387.

⁶⁴ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 38.

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overlaying one another here, which has intensified since Forster's death.⁶⁵ Today, like the classic urban slum of the past, the Notre Dame Estate has only two almost hidden entrances connecting it with the outside world, with the bars and young professionals of Clapham beyond. Immediately to its east and also abutting onto the common lies another near cul-de-sac, Crescent Grove, this one containing stuccoed 1850s houses now renovated at vast expense and with silvery brand-new cars parked outside them. This area immediately east of Clapham Common exemplifies the layered nature of social space – thinking once more of Lefebvre – and can be a representative image for my study as a whole.

Just west of there, across the north-eastern corner of the Common, stood Holy Trinity church, once attended by the Thorntons, Macaulays and other Clapham Sect members. Its environs, deserted and overgrown, contained little evidence of human activity other than a plaque to the 'Sect' and a few empty dark blue cans of Tennent's Super. Just outside its unlocked gates was a packed paddling pool and a monument occupied by fading revellers.⁶⁶ Then I went onwards down near-deserted straight streets through Kennington to Southwark and across the Thames into the City. Adelaide House looked squat and massive, like the bottom seven floors of an art deco New York skyscraper.⁶⁷ For Forster, like his Chiswick flat, this was a thing of modernity, of the post-First-World-War twentieth century.

The fourth trip, on a windy August Saturday in 2008 when clouds rushed across the sky and sunshine came and went, was a cycle ride from Marylebone to Chiswick. Dorset Square, although no doubt slightly grander, gives an indication of how Melcombe Place would have looked had it survived: narrow yellow terraces dating from the early nineteenth century and – now – a number of blue plaques commemorating literary and artistic residents of the past. In the taxi-rank outside Marylebone Station was a temporary fenced enclosure containing Portsmouth football fans being observed by British Transport Police as they waited for a train to Wembley. On the other side of the road were several glossy limousines in the charge of young chauffeurs wearing dark glasses.⁶⁸ I have not yet discovered whether the terminus or the hotel occupies the precise site on which Forster was born.⁶⁹ Cycling westwards beyond Lisson Grove from here, into the area which Jack London found a squalid slum but which now contains social housing of the Peabody Buildings type, I saw another stand-off between Portsmouth fans and police, this time with the fans in royal blue outside a pub drinking beer,

⁶⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [1974] (translated from French by Donald Nicholson-Smith) Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1991, p. 403.

⁶⁶ See Image 19.

⁶⁷ See Image 21.

⁶⁸ See Image 22.

⁶⁹ I consulted an 1870s Ordnance Survey map of the site, but it lacked house numbers and so was unable to tell me which.

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and the police in black and fluorescent yellow gathered over the road from them and swigging bottled water.

Further west, having passed through Paddington, Holland Park and Shepherds Bush Green and down the Goldhawk Road I entered a no-man's land between inner and outer suburbia, including,⁷⁰ eventually, the streets inhabited by the Buckinghamhs between the 1930s and the early 1950s. Forster was never a resident here, but two houses here acted as a semi-home for him, particularly when his London base was at nearby Turnham Green after 1940.⁷¹ Bob and May Buckingham, originally from the central London slum of Somers Town, between St Pancras and Euston station, moved in the 1930s to a maisonette in Hartswood Road on the borders of Shepherd's Bush, Stamford Brook and South Ealing.⁷² At the southern, Stamford Brook, end of Hartswood Road is a curve flanked by varied red-brick arts-and-crafts flavoured houses, small-scale imitations of the artists' houses of Kensington such as those in Melbury Road also reminiscent of some in North Oxford; northwards, these give way to smaller houses and then – smaller still – maisonettes. Helped financially by Forster, the Buckinghamhs moved during the Second World War to a full-scale house in the same neighbourhood, only a couple of hundred metres round the corner from Hartswood Road at 129 Wendell Road, W12. The Buckinghamhs came from working class backgrounds, and Forster at times treated them like servants, unceremoniously giving them minor instructions.⁷³ But the zone they lived in places them socially as respectable householders situated on the border of the working class and middle class, he a policeman and later a probation officer, she a nurse. Forster always described the Buckinghamhs as friends rather than retainers, and died at the house to which they moved in Coventry after Bob's retirement from the Metropolitan Police.⁷⁴

Forster first met Bob Buckingham in 1930 through Harry Daley. Daley, like Buckingham,

⁷⁰ Near the boundary between Zone 2 and Zone 3 in terms of the London Underground. See Transport for London, "Tube Map".

⁷¹ For a picture of Forster (and Ackerley) in the garden at Wendell Road with the Buckinghamhs, see Furbank II, between pp. 268 and 269.

⁷² A maisonette is one of the flats in a terraced house divided into two, a flat on the ground floor and one on the first, each with its own front door on the street: a compromise between the British sense of a home as a plot of ground and the constraints of urban living.

⁷³ "Thought I packed hairbrush, but if I did not ask Robert to bring Monday", Forster wrote to May Buckingham in 1944, and in letters of the same year he thanks her for cleaning West Hackhurst, his maids having become too decrepit (E.M. Forster, [Correspondence with May Buckingham], MS KCC/EMF/18/81/5-6, 1943-1947, 17 August 1944). In a letter to Britten, Bob Buckingham is praised for having "acted as secretary, nurse, valet, cook, footman, and general buffer" during Forster's second trip to the USA (E.M. Forster, [Correspondence with Benjamin Britten], MS BPL 124/A, 1944-1969, 19 June 1949).

⁷⁴ On Forster's habits and last days in Coventry see May Buckingham, "Some Reminiscences" [1979] in J.H. Stape (ed.), *E.M. Forster: Interviews and Recollections*, Macmillan: Basingstoke & London, 1993, pp. 77-9.

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was a policeman with whom Forster had a love affair which developed from his membership of a circle linked in place terms with Hammersmith and Shepherd's Bush.⁷⁵ Around 1926 Ackerley, then a newly-acquired younger literary friend, put Forster in touch with a raffish set that congregated for parties on Boat Race day at Ackerley's lodgings on the river at Hammersmith Terrace.⁷⁶ For the members of this group the policemen based at Hammersmith Broadway were a source of cross-class 'rough trade' as the guardsmen based in central London near Hyde Park had been for wealthier homosexuals since the mid-nineteenth century..⁷⁷

From the 1920s onwards, Forster was a part-time dweller in a homosexual *demi-monde* centred on the river in west London, which had a particular identity defined by place, a relationship to the winding of the river through this more comfortable and – some have thought since the Victorian period⁷⁸ – morally loose quadrant of London. The connection to the officers based at Hammersmith Broadway, itself a homosexual pick-up point described with place resonances by Daley in his memoirs as “the pleasure centre for this end of London in the same way that Piccadilly Circus was supposed to be for London as a whole”,⁷⁹ was also a connection to the underworld of west London. Daley in particular was notorious for fraternising with the local criminals, and Forster himself seems to have liaised with some potentially violent and untrustworthy pick-ups during this period.⁸⁰ Hammersmith Terrace itself lies in Chiswick a mile or two due south of the Buckingham's neighbourhood, a row of 1750s houses wall-like behind and fronting the river. Here, Ackerley would later remember, he became immersed in a decayed Bohemia when he rented rooms in the junk-filled house of a manufacturer of novelties named Arthur Needham, a debased survival of the 1890s Decadence.⁸¹ The parties Ackerley organised were related to the river and provide a carnivalesque dimension to Forster's associations with London in middle age.

My own wanderings through Forster's London finished at Hammersmith Terrace, where I passed London workers with Antipodean accents out for a weekend stroll, and overheard a podgy couple in pink polo shirts with private-school vowels claiming one could still buy a

⁷⁵ Harry Daley, *This Small Cloud: A Personal Memoir*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London, 1986; Furbank II, pp. 141-3, 165-9.

⁷⁶ See Furbank II, pp. 135-43, 157-9, 165-9; Peter Parker, *Ackerley: A Life of J.R. Ackerley*, Constable: London, 1989, pp. 112-13. For photographs of this group see *Selected Letters II*, p. 77; Furbank II, between pp. 108 and 109.

⁷⁷ J.R. Ackerley, *My Father and Myself*, Bodley Head: London, 1968, pp. 23, 162; Parker, *Ackerley*, pp. 139-44; on Ackerley's relationship with his father see also the recent queer-studies account by Helena Gurfinkel (2008).

⁷⁸ Meredith 1914: ch. XXXVI pp. 402-11; Nairn & Gasson, *Nairn's London Revisited*, p. 123.

⁷⁹ Daley, *This Small Cloud*, p. 92. Ackerley (*My Father and Myself*, pp. 186-7) would later reminisce about “the notorious Hammersmith urinals”.

⁸⁰ See e.g. “Locked Journal”, 15 April 1933.

⁸¹ Ackerley, *My Father and Myself*, pp. 183-5.

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castle “down there” – somewhere in France or Italy? – for four hundred thousand pounds. It was low tide on the river.⁸² Under a grey sky the view eastwards from there, with a gravelly shore exposed on both sides of the river, and industry visible to the south in Wandsworth or Battersea, felt gloomy rather than raffish.

I am a Londoner, but most of these journeys in London took me to sites I had never previously visited. They provided me with a feel for distances and for the physical relationship of places (the homes of Ackerley and the Buckinghams in West London, for instance). They were fresh experiences to be mapped onto an existing wealth of knowledge derived from both reading about and simply living in London.

5.3. London in the Early Diaries and *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1898-1905)

Forster’s earliest surviving accounts of London are in his diaries for 1898 and 1899, some recording day-trips after which he returned home to Tonbridge or Tunbridge Wells. Shopping trips, taken with his mother, anticipate those of the Miss Alans in *A Room with a View*, who regard “travel as a species of warfare, only to be undertaken by those who have been fully armed at the Haymarket Stores”.⁸³ Other visits were undertaken in pursuit of culture. In January 1898, during the Christmas holidays of his first year at King’s, Forster had an outing to a London art exhibition with his mother, judging the English landscape artists George Heming Mason and Frederick Walker “much superior to Constable”.⁸⁴ Forster’s maternal grandfather, like several other Whichelos, had made his living in London as a painter.⁸⁵ Central London was also a place the young Forster crossed when travelling between railway termini. The following day, *en route* for Cambridge and now alone, Forster visited an exhibition of John Everett Millais’s paintings and then walked to the Albert Memorial and the museums at South Kensington. The pattern was repeated after the Christmas holidays the following year, when he visited a Rembrandt exhibition – a painting of an abattoir there seemed “disgusting” to him – and made various social calls.⁸⁶

⁸² See Image 23.

⁸³ 1899 Diary, 29 June; *Room with a View*, ch. 19 p. 211.

⁸⁴ 1898 Diary, 12 January. On Mason and Walker, well-regarded in the late nineteenth century, see Christopher Newall, “Mason, George Heming (1818-1872)” in ODNB; Christopher Newall, “Walker, Frederick (1840-1875)” in ODNB.

⁸⁵ See *Marianne Thornton*, p. 249. The most successful artist among Forster’s maternal ancestors was (Charles) John Mayle Whichelo (1784-1865), chiefly known for naval scenes but also, like Constable, Mason and Walker, active as a landscape artist. See Mark Pottle, “Whichelo, (Charles) John Mayle (bap. 1784, d. 1865)” in ODNB.

⁸⁶ 1899 Diary, 9 January. Forster explained his disappointment with the Rembrandt paintings by saying

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In Forster's diary for the period after he graduated from Cambridge and had travelled to Italy, the period of his earliest fiction, he still views London as a young aesthete. No longer a day-tripper but a resident, albeit a transient one staying at the Kingsley Hotel in Bloomsbury and the Drayton Gardens flat in South Kensington, Forster in the city seeks material and inspiration as he works to find a voice.⁸⁷ Having described the dispiriting view from the window of 11 Drayton Court, Drayton Gardens, Forster in March 1904 attempted a literary anatomy of a London fog – “different to a scirocco” through having “character, while the scirocco produces emptiness, the negation of beauty” – in a way that anticipates his efforts to develop as a nature writer on trips to Northumberland at about the same age.⁸⁸ In July of the same year, he went alone to see “the evening band in the park”, noticing “scarlet uniforms” and “green gas lamps against an orange & pink sky” which, he thought, he never would have noticed “if it had not been for pictures”.⁸⁹ The “creatures as colourless as myself” he saw in the audience reinforce the notion that Forster and his creation Leonard Bast should be compared rather than contrasted. Leonard is seen by the Schlegels as “colourless, toneless”, not the “gay dog” they expected.⁹⁰ During the same visit, he feels that he is “contributing to vast vulgarity”, then feels guilty on seeing “how others attended and were pleased”. He contrasts the scene in the park with “music and Italy”: perhaps the opera scene in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* in which “the bad taste of Italy” is described as “majestic” because it “observes beauty” was constructed as an opposite of this drab English performance.⁹¹ Forster felt in 1904 that he himself and the audience at the band concert, both components in the later character of Leonard, shared the drab atmosphere of the English capital.

A study of London writing in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods by Nicholas Freeman divides its material into three main categories: ‘empiricist’, ‘impressionist’ and ‘symbolist’, situating *Howards End* among symbolist writings on the city. Yet there are moments in Forster's diary for the Edwardian years in which he reaches closer to the empiricist London territory of writers such as George Gissing and Arthur Morrison.⁹² An example is a scene he observed on a bus in 1905 in which the “conductor tried to make a red

that he “didn't understand them”.

⁸⁷ Proof that Forster was thinking this way at the time is that in 1904 he refers explicitly to his collection of memories of travel abroad as a source of raw materials for writing (“Notebook Journal”, 12 July 1904).

⁸⁸ “Notebook Journal”, March 1904. See also Furbank I, p. 109.

⁸⁹ “Notebook Journal”, 18 July 1904.

⁹⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XIV p. 84.

⁹¹ *Where Angels*, ch. 6 p. 107.

⁹² Nicholas Freeman, *Conceiving the City: London, Literature and Art 1870-1914*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2007, pp. 35-79 (on the empiricists, especially Gissing), 156-7 (on *Howards End*). David Medalie (*E.M. Forster's Modernism*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 2002, pp. 84-92) gives a compelling account of the tension between realism and symbolism in *Howards End* as a whole.

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moustached loafer pay an extra penny: loafer refused: long argument, & conductor was wrong & apologized”.⁹³ The conductor’s lack of “beastliness or triumph” impresses Forster: he enjoys finding decency in men of the lower orders, as he would throughout his life. The London aspect of the exchange between the bus conductor and the “loafer” is that it happens in motion through the city in a transitional space (the bus) which brings people from different social classes into contact with one another while they remain anonymous and independent of one another. Forster’s early accounts of Home Counties social relationships, for example his references to neighbours of different classes in a memoir concerned with Rooksnest, contrast with this in that they see everyone as graded, ranked and known. London for Forster in his early twenties was a source of creative stimuli which had aspects of the exotic. As such, its role was closer to that of foreign travel for the young Forster than that of the Home Counties.

London is chiefly connected with travel and motion – and in particular with the railway – in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. This novel contains only one scene actually set in London, the departure at the beginning of Lilia and Caroline for Italy, specified as being from “Charing Cross”.⁹⁴ Moments after the train departs, the Herritons seem to be back in Sawston: there is a Home-Counties sense of popping up and down from town. As an imaginative milieu, Sawston is far from Forster’s London: the Herritons glimpse London rapidly and superficially, as Forster did in youth. Another scene, not set in London but during travel towards it, is important to the book as a whole. Philip and Caroline at one point travel “between Sawston and Charing Cross” and during the journey Caroline feels able to narrate the whole story of Lilia’s disastrous involvement with Gino from her own point of view.⁹⁵ In the in-between, temporary space of the train, rather than be tongue-tied and self-righteous as at Sawston, Caroline is freed of the constraints of that place. At the end of the novel, Philip states his plan for the future as “London and work”, but readers do not discover whether or not he succeeds in escaping Sawston. The freedom to talk afforded by the railway carriage might seem not so much a characteristic of London itself as a place as a characteristic of journeys themselves as spatial moves: the journey across the Alps by train at the end of the novel has a similar role for Philip and Caroline.⁹⁶ However, Forster consistently associates London with railway interchanges, with transit, in writing as far apart

⁹³ “Notebook Journal”, 16 March 1905.

⁹⁴ *Where Angels*, ch. 1 p. 19.

⁹⁵ *Where Angels*, ch. 5 pp. 73-8. Marc Augé’s notion of ‘non-place’ could be invoked at this point, but he links his term with a later historical period, that he calls “super-modernity”, in contrast with the “Baudelairean modernity” which preceded it. See Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* [1992] (translated from French by John Howe), Verso: London & New York, 1995, p. 110.

⁹⁶ *Where Angels*, ch. 10. pp. 153-60.

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in time as his diaries for the 1890s and the 1950s.⁹⁷

5.4. London as Aesthetic Hell? *The Longest Journey* and *A Room with a View*

Forster's five pre-1914 novels all develop the impressions gathered in the diaries of 1898 to 1904, viewing the movement and anonymity of the city as alienating as well as liberating. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* hints at a positive side to London. Motion and instability are a significant part of its place identity in *The Longest Journey*, while *A Room with a View* opens with a comparison between London and Italy. *The Longest Journey*, *A Room with a View* and *Howards End* all view London negatively. Concentrating on the last of these, critics have tended to read Forster as a writer opposed to the metropolis, as a ruralist. However, the link in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* between London and freedom re-emerges with more force in *Maurice*.

After graduating from Cambridge, Rickie Elliot in *The Longest Journey* attempts to establish himself as a writer, taking lodgings in South Kensington, where Forster had been living in 1904 when he described the band concert in the park. The failure of Rickie's brief attempt to become a metropolitan bohemian is indicated in a sequence during which he has a restaurant lunch with his fiancée Agnes Pembroke and then visits the offices of a periodical (his stories are rejected). At the restaurant, the couple happen to meet Rickie's Cambridge friend Tilliard. Tilliard views London, and especially Soho, where this restaurant is located, as an opportunity to "study life".⁹⁸ By the early twentieth century Soho had for centuries already been home to a concentration of continental European and especially French immigrants; in the eighteenth century it was reputed to be filled with brothels; in 1872, according to Peter Brooker, the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé found it inhabited by "quiet working families", with "an army of street-harlots, beggars, con-men", "assorted villains" and "dapper gentlemen" moving amongst them.⁹⁹ In attributing his "pigging" in Soho to the fact that "it was so frightfully convenient and frightfully cheap", and hypothesising, with a hint of sarcasm, that Rickie will somehow be using the district as a source of "copy" for his writing, Tilliard implies both that he himself is a sophisticated observer merely glancing in – one who, Forster reveals, thinks that his "sister [...] would never have been lured into a Soho

⁹⁷ See e.g. "Locked Journal", 18 October 1951.

⁹⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 15 p. 142.

⁹⁹ Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, pp. 532-4; Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & London, 2004, p. 27.

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restaurant—except for the experience of the thing”¹⁰⁰ – and that Rickie and Agnes are there because they, unlike him, are really *in* the urban mire.

Aside from this scene, a journey into London is recounted in *The Longest Journey* which anticipates the narrative style D.H. Lawrence would later develop in *Women in Love*.¹⁰¹ In both novels, there are passages which disconnect characters from the novel’s own time scheme. To the English tradition of realism, stretching back to Defoe and involving an appearance of temporal consistency and locational precision, these passages add a note of prophecy or revelation.¹⁰² Chapter 30 of *The Longest Journey* narrates Stephen Wonham’s entire life, although he has been encountered as a character and his appearance described as early as Chapter 10 of the novel.¹⁰³ As a narrative encompassing decades set into a novel which for most of its duration moves at a pace connecting days, weeks and months, the story of Stephen prefigures *Women in Love*, and specifically Lawrence’s Chapter XVII, entitled “The Industrial Magnate”, which extracts Gerald Crich from day-to-day involvement with the other main characters, Rupert Birkin and the Brangwen sisters, and recounts Gerald’s long-term involvement with the family firm in a time-span connecting his childhood and adulthood.¹⁰⁴ These passages from Forster and Lawrence’s novels, in turn, anticipate the cinematic technique of montage, developed in the 1920s not long after they were published.

Raised in Wiltshire, associated in the novel with a Wild England based on the earth, Stephen Wonham’s link with the soil of that county is severed during *The Longest Journey*. He first appears in the novel freshly come from standing in pouring rain on Cadbury Rings in place of the shepherd Flea Thompson, who has gone off to court a sweetheart. At this moment, with Stephen’s hair “so wet that it seemed worked upon his scalp in bronze”, his link with the landscape of the county seems unbreakable.¹⁰⁵ The severance happens after Stephen, drunk and furious at the ill-treatment of the local poor, smashes a window at Cadover.¹⁰⁶ He then wanders away from Wiltshire, passes through Sawston where Agnes offers him money to leave – he goes without taking any – and, looking “a villainous young brute”,¹⁰⁷ passes through suburbs of various levels before arriving at London. This symbolic

¹⁰⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 15 p. 143.

¹⁰¹ For instance the chapter in which Gudrun Brangwen takes a working-class lover (D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* [1920], David Farmer *et al.* (eds), Penguin: London, 2007, ch. IX pp. 116-18).

¹⁰² Medalie (*Forster’s Modernism*, p. 85) calls “prophecy” Forster’s “broad term for symbolist elements and techniques”. See Forster’s discussion of the concept of prophecy in *Aspects of the Novel* (pp. 116-33).

¹⁰³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 10 pp. 86-87.

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, ch. XVII pp. 221-33.

¹⁰⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 10 p. 87.

¹⁰⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 244.

¹⁰⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 245. Refusals to accept payment had a symbolic value for Forster revealed in the encounter with a shepherd at Figsbury Ring in Wiltshire which inspired *The Longest*

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journey includes an evocation of England's essence recalling late-Victorian and Edwardian readings of early modern writers as prophets of English nationhood. The "gathering of the waters of Central England—those that flow off Hindhead, off the Chilterns, off Wiltshire north of the Plain" into the Thames seems a reference to Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* anticipating the one in *Howards End*.¹⁰⁸

Stephen wanders through suburbs which suggest the outer circles of hell, before reaching the city which is the "heart of the modern world". Like the Thames and the Congo in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the London of *The Longest Journey* seems one of "the dark places of the earth": "a stream in hell" is what Forster calls the Thames.¹⁰⁹ In London Stephen, "not hampered by genteel traditions", gets casual work as a removal man, a job which mirrors the city's temporary, rushed and unstable character:

He moved people from the suburbs to London, from London to the suburbs, from one suburb to another. His companions were hurried and querulous. In particular, he loathed the foreman, a pious humbug who allowed no swearing, but indulged in something far more degraded—the Cockney repartee. The London intellect, so pert and shallow, like a stream that never reaches the ocean, disgusted him almost as much as the London physique, which for all its dexterity is not permanent, and seldom continues into the third generation. His father, had he known it, had felt the same; for between Mr. Elliot and the foreman the gulf was social, not spiritual: both spent their lives in trying to be clever. And Tony Failing had once put the thing into words: "There's no such thing as a Londoner. He's only a country man on the road to sterility."¹¹⁰

This London, like the train bound there in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* which enables Philip and Caroline to speak freely, or the bus on which the young Forster witnessed the encounter between bus conductor and "red-moustached loafer", is characterised by movement, but in contrast with those scenes it is a degraded, degenerate place. Stephen's movement into London looks forward to the dislodged movement of the Basts in *Howards End* through the inner suburbs of South London after Leonard becomes unemployed.

The hint that there is something inevitably cursed about London which sterilises its inhabitants, however lively they might seem on the surface, chimes with recent efforts to use Edwardian ideas about euthanasia as contexts for Forster's earlier writing: David Bradshaw's account of *Howards End*, for example.¹¹¹ Forster did not see this physical decline as

Journey: see Furbank I, p. 117.

¹⁰⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 246.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* [1902], Paul O'Prey (ed.), Penguin: London, 1973, ch. 1 p. 29; *Longest Journey*, ch. 30.

¹¹⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 30 p. 245.

¹¹¹ David Bradshaw, "Howards End" in David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to E.M.*

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something only afflicting urban clerks, however: the wealthy Home Counties character Philip Herriton, is, like Leonard, “weakly built”, and the upper-middle-class Rickie Elliot is much more markedly deformed than either.¹¹² Leonard not only represents a threatening other but also, like Philip and Rickie, has things in common with Forster himself, described by his biographer as “unathletic, with sloping shoulders [...] the very model of what a healthy English schoolboy was not supposed to be” during his teens.¹¹³

As well as with hell and racial degeneracy, the London of *The Longest Journey* is connected with the Aesthetic Movement of the 1880s and 1890s. Chapter 29 of the novel, immediately preceding the one in which Stephen journeys into London and becomes a removal man, covers the period in which Rickie and Stephen were born, looking back to the fashionable London of Oscar Wilde’s day. Rickie, like Forster, seems to have been born around 1880: his undergraduate days were in the last days of Queen Victoria’s reign judging by technology, the subject matter of undergraduate conversations and other internal evidence.¹¹⁴ Scenes narrated shortly before Stephen Wonham was conceived must therefore take place in the early 1880s, since Rickie is “a skinny baby” when they happen.¹¹⁵ At the centre of this view of London is Mr Elliot, Rickie’s father, representative, like the cockney removal company foreman, of the city’s shallow and over-confident instability.

Stephen’s parentage is revealed in a tale told in flashback covering a journey into London which parallels his own later one. A countryman named Robert, meets and falls in love with Rickie’s mother, already married to Mr Elliot, at Cadover in Wiltshire.¹¹⁶ Robert pursues the Elliots to London, and there by chance spots Rickie’s father “with a strange lady”.¹¹⁷ Readers have already learned how Mr Elliot “departed”, moving to “three rooms [...] full of books and pictures and flowers” in “town”, following a perceived failure of taste on the part of his wife.¹¹⁸ His lodgings allude to a connection between Rickie’s father and the Aesthetic Movement: the rooms are perhaps in Chelsea. Aiming to get closer to the wife, Robert next

Forster, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007, pp. 151-72, here 160-2. According to Bradshaw (“*Howards End*”, p. 161), it was a widespread Edwardian belief that urban life was “a road to sterility” which was “by its very nature dysgenic” and “Leonard’s feeble, deformed and undernourished body is the incarnation of all that dread”.

¹¹² *Where Angels*, 5.70.

¹¹³ *Furbank I*, p. 43.

¹¹⁴ The horse tram service described in *The Longest Journey* operated between 1880 and 1914 (Cambridge Museum of Technology, “Cambridge Street Tramways”); Edward VII, now “our own king”, was “still Prince of Wales” in Rickie’s undergraduate days, the novel says (*Longest Journey*, ch. 7 p. 70).

¹¹⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 29 p. 234.

¹¹⁶ Robert’s surname is not stated but must be Wonham, the identity of Stephen’s parents being concealed so that readers can discover for themselves and be shocked that it is Rickie’s mother and not his father who is Stephen’s illegitimate parent.

¹¹⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 29 p. 234.

¹¹⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 2 p. 22.

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makes friends with Mr Elliot, and through him meets a circle of “youngish men” who “liked to shock him with tales of naughty London and naughtier Paris”. Like Tiliard in Chapter 15, they speak of “seeing life” with a degree of innuendo. Robert wearies of these “silly people”, pursues Mrs Elliot to the “remote suburb” where she lives, and carries her off to Sweden. Mr Elliot then realises that “his wife could never belong to him again”.¹¹⁹

As in both *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *Maurice*, the two English places involved in this story, central London and a comfortable outer suburb (Sweden is off-stage: the plot never takes readers there) are connected by train. All three novels make a to-ing and fro-ing between these zones an important part of the place identity of each and of their relationship to one another. London becomes a place ventured to and from, but also a place where one might potentially make a new life. Rickie, for instance, attempts to establish himself in London as a writer, while Lucy Honeychurch in *A Room with a View* develops a vague intention, when her romantic hopes seem likely to be dashed, to “share a flat for a little with some other girl” in the metropolis, rather than just visit it on a “cheap ticket” for a day now and then.¹²⁰ London here is a place to which one journeys, through a mixed in-between space of organised transport, and as such is comparable to the India of *A Passage to India* and “The Other Boat”.

Stephen’s friends the Thompsons, shepherds and cottagers of Cadover, drift to the city after their expulsion from the countryside. In *The Longest Journey*, the waters of England may gather at London, but this metropolis is more a place of dispersal than concentration while Stephen, as a removal man, becomes a sort of Charon on the waters, ferrying uprooted passengers around. The Wiltshire milieu is one in which the Thompsons – fertile rather than sterile – have, until the novel’s present, been embedded for “hundreds of years”.¹²¹ Evicted along with four other families by the steward Mr Wilbraham after the windows of Cadover are broken, the Thompsons leave for “various parts of London” and so lose their fixed and known place in the landscape. As with the comparison between Mr Elliot and the foreman of the removal company, the metropolitan experience is already, for Forster, one which removes people from traditional social placement and casts them into a new, unknown world.

In *A Room with a View*, going up to London resembles international travel. This novel includes reminders of London in Italy, connecting the two places in the social education of an innocent girl, an education which contains faint suggestions of the fall into dangerous knowledge which certain female characters in Victorian novels experience, characters who through their background of rural poverty are more vulnerable than Lucy: George Eliot’s

¹¹⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 29 p. 237.

¹²⁰ *Room with a View*, ch. 19 p. 214.

¹²¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 34 p. 279; Bradshaw, “*Howards End*”, pp. 160-2.

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Hetty Sorrel, Hardy's Tess Durbeyfield. At the Pension Bertolini in the second paragraph of the novel Lucy twice observes that their surroundings remind her of London. For one thing, there is the lack of a view (students of Forster's biography will recall the "low houses" and "backs of a block of flats" which he observed from the window of 11 Drayton Court¹²²), for another the "Cockney" accent of the landlady, in the drab dining room with its portraits of Queen Victoria and Tennyson, filled with undistinguished English guests.¹²³ Shopping in Florence, they are directed by the local Anglican clergyman to buy "many hideous presents and mementoes [...] all of which would have cost less in London".¹²⁴ Cecil Vyse, at least, thinks "Italy and London" are similar, calling them "the only places where I don't feel to exist on sufferance".¹²⁵

Forster views Cecil more wryly and sympathetically than he does Rickie's father in *The Longest Journey*, but both are aesthetes who personify London. Critics in the 1990s, including Joseph Bristow and Eric Haralson, interpreted Forster's career as an extended state of shock resulting from the fall of Wilde,¹²⁶ something which has been claimed to have made him caricature and reject the stereotypical Wildean aesthete figure in his portrayal of the character of Risley in *Maurice*. Bristow's claim that Risley, called by him "a society wit", "embodies the worst traits" of aestheticism is, however, palpably false: Risley is acerbic, intellectual and self-confident, enviable for his freedom of mind; he is part of Maurice's process of liberation.

Before he created Risley, Forster in earlier fiction did see one aspect of London as suspicious, though, and this was a side he connected with the Aesthetic Movement. Allusions to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* connect Cecil, implicitly homosexual, to Wilde. After a first cigarette, another "did not seem quite as divine" for him, we hear.¹²⁷ As an adjective, 'divine' was one of the "unmanly" superlatives frequently associated with aesthetes – Risley uses them too¹²⁸ – while cigarettes are appreciated as "exquisite" in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.¹²⁹ Cecil may be charming but he has a cruel sense of humour and is emotionally untrustworthy. Mr Beebe intuits that he is not like other young men, considering

¹²² Furbank I, p. 109.

¹²³ *Room with a View*, ch. 1 p. 23.

¹²⁴ *Room with a View*, ch. 5 p. 73.

¹²⁵ *Room with a View*, ch. 8 p. 110.

¹²⁶ See Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885*, Columbia University Press: New York, 1995, p. 81; Eric Haralson, "'Thinking about Homosex' in Forster and James in Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (eds.), *Queer Forster*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1997, pp. 59-73, here 60; Nicholas Royle, *E.M. Forster*, Northcote House: Plymouth, 1999, p. 62.

¹²⁷ *Room with a View*, ch. 8 p. 108.

¹²⁸ *Maurice*, V.20.

¹²⁹ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* [1891], Robert Mignall (ed.), Penguin: London, 2000, p. 77.

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him “something worse than a tease”,¹³⁰ yet Lucy is drawn to him enough to become engaged to him. In place terms this dangerous magnetism could be considered an aspect of the metropolis; it recalls the way Sibyl Vane in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is drawn away from her acting career by the seductive charms of the novel’s eponymous main character.¹³¹

Cecil seeks to initiate Lucy into London life via a trial visit to the city. Her sojourn at the “well-appointed flat” he shares with his mother takes place in August or September when the metropolis is “deserted”, the London Season of spring and early summer having finished. He hopes to teach her “the framework of society” with “society itself [...] absent on the golflinks or the moors”.¹³² Lucy is taken to a dinner party where all the other guests are second-class celebrities, “the grandchildren of famous people”.¹³³ There, she is impressed by the “witty weariness” of the London circles she is now encountering, which makes both the Pension Bertolini and rural Surrey seem “crude” in comparison. Lucy now contrasts the Bertolini with London rather than associating the two. Her previous day-trip and temperance-hotel view of the city is replaced by a new one, centred on of these faded sophisticates. Another aspect of the metropolis is revealed: its multiplicity and mutability, since it can at any time and for any individual generate experiences completely different from previous encounters with it.

By the end of the novel, Lucy has become capable of imagining a different London, a London in which as an office worker she would anticipate the role of Mary Datchet in Woolf’s *Night and Day* rather than counterfeit the family background of that novel’s Katherine Hilbery. The sheer potential and multiplicity of the metropolis in Forster’s fiction should be emphasised. It seems to be London which Lucy rejects when she jilts Cecil, announcing her uncertainty to him by hypothesising a situation in which “I was fitted for your wife – for instance, in London”:¹³⁴ she cannot act the part he is asking her to, a part which crucially involves place identity. The true reason for her rejection of Cecil is that Lucy realises she is in love with George Emerson, but her lie is concocted from her actual response to place: she shudders to think of herself dining with the grandchildren of famous people for years to come. But the imagined career-girl life in a flat, the life Lucy’s mother scathingly associates with “typewriters and latchkeys” and “being carried off kicking by the police” after a women’s suffrage demonstration – a London entirely different from Cecil’s – is also a

¹³⁰ *Room with a View*, ch. 10 p. 134.

¹³¹ Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*, pp. 42-60.

¹³² *Room with a View*, ch. 11 pp. 140-1.

¹³³ This gathering recalls both the Wedgwood and Darwin descendants who periodically made Forster uncomfortable in rural Surrey, as revealed most plainly in “West Hackhurst” and the descent of Katharine Hilbery in Woolf’s *Night and Day* (ch. 1 pp. 7-9) from a famous poet.

¹³⁴ *Room with a View*, ch. 17 p. 190.

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future she considers.¹³⁵

Alongside Cecil's aestheticism, Lucy's possible independent career, and the role of the city as retail hub,¹³⁶ a further aspect of London's variety in *A Room with a View* is represented by the free-thinking Emersons. It is an encounter with them in the National Gallery, and an understanding of how the rural Surrey society of Summer Street will judge them socially, that leads Cecil to his practical joke of installing the father and son in "Cissie" cottage.¹³⁷ The Emersons are members of the urban administrative and literary middle-class, the son a clerk with a railway company and the father a retired journalist.¹³⁸ George might be seen as *infra dig* by the denizens of Summer Street, but he holds a position similar to that of a higher-grade civil servant,¹³⁹ works in central London and only "runs down" to his father at weekends. His father's career was perhaps focused on the region Rickie fails to penetrate in *The Longest Journey*: Holborn, Fleet Street, Chancery Lane, Bloomsbury, although perhaps the Emersons did not always live in central London. After the advent of the railways, writers could live outside central London, often doing so as a way of getting decent accommodation less expensively.¹⁴⁰ In the "Lucy" drafts, Mr Emerson senior's prototype is a coarse but honest commercial traveller – straightforwardly a social inferior to tourists with private incomes taking tours lasting months; the metropolitan creature he becomes in *A Room with a View* has a far more complex relationship to visitors up from Sawston or the Surrey Hills.

Critics in the 1990s and 2000s who have alluded to Forster's interest in English place have tended to see him as a ruralist, someone who rejected or even demonised London and longed in an escapist or nostalgic way for an end to building and movement, for a return to the soil.¹⁴¹ Typically, this alleged rejection is connected with notions of English national identity. Parrinder argues that for Forster "urban and industrial development [...] was a

¹³⁵ *Room with a View*, ch. 19 p. 214.

¹³⁶ To Cecil's disgust, the furniture at Windy Corner is sent there from the Tottenham Court Road (*Room with a View*, ch. 8 p. 108); Lucy and her mother go shopping there (*Room with a View*, ch. 19 p. 215).

¹³⁷ *Room with a View*, ch. 10 p. 236.

¹³⁸ *Room with a View*, ch. 14 p. 166.

¹³⁹ Members of the so-called 'intellectual aristocracy' such as Ralph Lewis Wedgwood, from the famous Staffordshire family and a Trinity contemporary of G.E. Moore and G.M. Trevelyan (see Geoffrey Hughes, "Wedgwood, Sir Ralph Lewis, first baronet (1874-1956)" in ODNB), served the great railway companies before their 1948 nationalisation much as they did Whitehall departments.

¹⁴⁰ Hardy and Richard Jefferies – who lived at Surbiton and Tolworth in Surrey respectively whilst establishing themselves as writers (Michael Millgate, "Hardy, Thomas (1840-1928)" in ODNB; Andrew Rossabi, "Jefferies, (John) Richard (1848-1887)" in ODNB) – are cases in point.

¹⁴¹ Daniel Born, "Private Gardens, Public Swamps: *Howards End* and the Revaluation of Liberal Guilt", *Novel 25* (1992), pp. 141-159; David Gervais, *Literary Englands: Versions of 'Englishness' in Modern Writing*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993; Patrick Parrinder, *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006.

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negation of the true England”.¹⁴² Reading Forster’s fiction as part of an account of Englishness in English literature, David Gervais, meanwhile, concentrates almost entirely on *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*, seeing the former as a trial run for the latter and the two novels together as containing all that Forster had to say about England.¹⁴³ During his discussion of *The Longest Journey*, Gervais claims that Forster’s characters “have their meaning only in relation to England as a whole”.¹⁴⁴ These critics, in other words, play down local or regional distinctions, sub-national aspects of place, emphasising instead national identity.

But among Forster’s novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *Maurice* in particular contain quite different views of London from the largely negative picture provided by *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*. Critics who emphasise ruralist constructions of national identity in Forster have overlooked local particularity and aspects of urbanism in his writing. In place terms, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View* have most often been connected with an international opposition between England and Italy, leading to the erroneous assumption that in these novels Forster equates his own national identity with prosperous, narrow-minded outer suburbs. *Maurice*, on the other hand, has not usually been thought of in place terms at all but entirely in relation to sexuality. In fact *Where Angels Fear to Tread* contains suggestions of London as a place of escape from Sawston values, an escape connected to the transport network linking the metropolis and its dependent places, the various sorts of suburb and dormitory town which surround it. And while London in *A Room with a View*, through Cecil, is associated with a self-conscious and even duplicitous Aesthetic Movement, it is connected to many other things besides: sympathy with London’s multiplicity begins to emerge here. This trend continues in Forster’s subsequent writing, which between 1910 and the end of his life sixty years later becomes steadily more sympathetic to London. But in order to appreciate this change, we must consider first his most extended, most aesthetically coherent and most negative portrait of London, in *Howards End*.

5.5. City of Flux: London in *Howards End*

While early readers of *A Room with a View* were observant about its treatment of Surrey, the journalists who reviewed *Howards End* on its appearance in 1910 hardly noticed London. An

¹⁴² Parrinder, *Nation and Novel*, p. 298.

¹⁴³ Gervais, *Literary Englands*, pp. 67-84.

¹⁴⁴ Gervais, *Literary Englands*, p. 69.

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anonymous reviewer in the *Standard* did judge place to have an “all-pervading influence” on the novel, but these early commentators seem to have thought literary place only a feature of books with rural or foreign settings.¹⁴⁵ Reviewers, even thoughtful and sympathetic ones such as Percy Lubbock, R.A. Scott-James and Clive Bell, did not mention London at all. But in writing *Howards End* Forster clearly worked hard to produce a coherent image of the city. The reviewer, who came closest to understanding the centrality of the metropolis was Edward Garnett. More than the characters of *Howards End*, Garnett opines, Forster’s concern here “is the ideas behind them, the code of manners and morals, and the web of forces, material and mental, that are woven before our eyes in the life of London”.¹⁴⁶

More recent readings of *Howards End* tend to take London for granted rather than examine it. Most of the discussions of London in *Howards End* between Forster’s death and the early 1990s were by Marxist or materialist critics: Widdowson, Perry Meisel, Daniel Born and Frederic Jameson.¹⁴⁷ Jameson’s view that London should be read as the novel’s “bad opposite of place, of Howards End” recalls, surprisingly, the anonymous 1910 review in the *Standard*. Perry Meisel in 1987 saw Forster as painting a “proto-wastelander picture” of London in *Howards End*,¹⁴⁸ viewing it as a city filled with detritus and therefore anticipating the “stony rubbish” of T.S. Eliot’s poem.¹⁴⁹ Meisel does not consider another Eliotian parallel: London in *Howards End* is presented as a place of Heraclitean flux in a way that anticipates the “crowd” which “flowed over London Bridge” in the “Unreal City”,¹⁵⁰ a flux expressed through the novel’s treatment of housing and road-building rather than any descriptions of actual crowds.¹⁵¹ One non-Marxist critic, Glen Cavaliero, did describe the “sprawl” of London as menacing Forster’s Home Counties. Characteristically, Cavaliero is being attentive to place in this statement, one advantage of his critical approach, although he is inclined to treat it as inert background to the action of the novels.¹⁵²

Much of the most recent work on *Howards End* has also paid insufficient attention to

¹⁴⁵ This reviewer made no mention of London, instead reserving the notion of place for the eponymous house of *Howards End* ([Anonymous], [unsigned review of *Howards End* in the *Standard*] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 128-9, here 128).

¹⁴⁶ [Edward Garnett], “Villadom” [1910] [unsigned review of *Howards End* in *The Nation*] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 139-42, here 141.

¹⁴⁷ Peter Widdowson, E.M. Forster’s ‘*Howards End*’: *Fiction as History*, Sussex University Press: London, 1977, pp. 18-20; Perry Meisel, *The Myth of the Modern: A Study in British Literature and Criticism after 1850*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 1987; Born, “Private Gardens, Public Swamps”; Fredric Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism” [1990] in *The Modernist Papers*, Verso: London & New York, 2007, pp. 152-69.

¹⁴⁸ Meisel, *Myth of the Modern*, p. 177.

¹⁴⁹ T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems, 1909-1962*, Faber: London, 1974, pp. 61-86, here 63.

¹⁵⁰ Eliot, *Collected Poems*, p. 65.

¹⁵¹ Bradshaw’s description (“*Howards End*”, p. 161) of the streets of London in *Howards End* as “surprisingly deserted” highlights this.

¹⁵² Cavaliero, *Reading*, p. 3.

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London,¹⁵³ but there are exceptions. David Medalie quotes the description of London in the voice of the narrator as “a caricature of infinity” and moves on to Helen’s experience in St Paul’s Cathedral which follows. But his interest is in the novel’s overall symbolic pattern: he does not see the references to London in *Howards End* as a coherent account of place.¹⁵⁴ Among more recent critics, Elizabeth Outka examines the economics of housing in the novel,¹⁵⁵ but does not relate this to the living context of the city inhabited by the Basts, Schlegels and Wilcoxes of *Howards End*: in terms of place, this represents no advance from Cavaliero’s 1979 view. Nicholas Freeman’s alignment of *Howards End* with what he identifies as conflicting realist and symbolist views of the city is more helpful,¹⁵⁶ but most of the other recent contextual accounts of the novel are uninterested in London.¹⁵⁷

Masterman and Jack London, using the concept of an ‘abyss’ of poverty abutting the prosperity of London, made an opposition between the rich and the poor of the great metropolis, but Forster, socially speaking, concentrates on a broad middle band. Instead of describing a London society which includes both aristocrats and paupers as Dickens had done in *Bleak House*, he restricts himself to the middle classes. Soon after Leonard is introduced, readers learn that he is “not in the abyss” but can see it (he later stands on its edge), while Margaret “is disturbed by odours of the abyss” on encountering the Basts; Helen’s gift of five thousand pounds to Leonard will, she hopes, raise “one person from the abyss”.¹⁵⁸ Daniel Born argues that “Masterman’s and [Jack] London’s accounts of the poor city-dweller form the prototype in practically every detail for [...] Leonard Bast”.¹⁵⁹ But the Basts’ Camelia Road flat, for all its pokiness and gloom, is not, as Born claims, “lifted straight out of *People of the Abyss*”: it is better appointed than the places of Jack London’s East End, and part of a respectable, if also uncultured and unstylish, inner suburb. Tibby Schlegel and the Basts, like Mr Elliot and the removal company foreman in *The Longest Journey*, may be members of different classes but alike exemplify Forster’s view in the later Edwardian years that modern London was a “foretaste” of a terrifyingly unstable “nomadic

¹⁵³ S.P. Rosenbaum (S.P. Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group Volume 2*, St Martin’s Press: New York, 1994, pp. 438-88), for instance, says hardly anything about London in a fifty-page chapter on *Howards End* aspiring to comprehensiveness.

¹⁵⁴ Medalie, *Forster’s Modernism*, pp. 87-8; *Howards End*, ch. XXXIV p. 199.

¹⁵⁵ Elizabeth Outka, “Buying Time: *Howards End* and Commodified Nostalgia”, *Novel* 36 (2003), pp. 330-50.

¹⁵⁶ Freeman, *Conceiving the City*.

¹⁵⁷ E.g. Leslie White, “Vital Disconnection in *Howards End*”, *Twentieth Century Literature* 51 (2005), pp. 43-63; Bradshaw, “*Howards End*”. Andrea Zemgulys (*Modernism and the Locations of Literary Heritage*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 107-25) includes a chapter on Chelsea in *Howards End* in a historicist study more concerned with T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf than with Forster.

¹⁵⁸ *Howards End*, ch. VI p. 35, ch. XIV p. 86, ch. XXX p. 182.

¹⁵⁹ Born, “Private Gardens, Public Swamps”, pp. 148-9.

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civilization” still to come.¹⁶⁰

More than a piece of social criticism, Forster’s presentation of London in *Howards End* is a carefully constructed piece of symbolism, and as such unusual among his otherwise responses to place, most of which are less systematised. The novel’s use of colours and the four elements support Freeman’s reading of it as a symbolist view of the city.¹⁶¹ Forster’s delineation of London in *Howards End* recalls Lawrence’s reading of Hardy’s *The Return of the Native* in which the setting, Egdon Heath, not the characters, are the source of the novel’s “real sense of tragedy”.¹⁶² London in *Howards End* is a city in flux. It is grey in colour and restless. Paradoxically, it is both alive and inhuman, but neither animal nor monstrous. It is deceptive. It is linked to cosmopolitanism in the sense of rootlessness or nomadic life – the life which moves from one lodging to another, as Tibby and Leonard both do – and to imperialism, associated with the Imperial and West African Rubber Company, the Wilcox family business, with its headquarters in central London.

The concept of flux in *Howards End* relates to instability in human life but also to the ceaseless change of flowing water. The attention paid to rivers in a poetic attempt to grasp English nationhood recalls Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*, hymned as “incomparable” by Forster’s authorial narrator.¹⁶³ In *The Longest Journey*, as Stephen approached London the city had been understood as the place where the waters of all southern England congregate. In *Howards End*, paradoxically, rivers become an aspect of rural permanence to be contrasted with the human-generated mutability of the city, its buildings counterfeiting stability. Henry Wilcox blames the “detestable little river” at Oniton in Shropshire for the fact that he cannot settle there, in a place which Margaret has begun thinking of as “a permanent home”.¹⁶⁴ Yet what drives Henry away from Oniton is not the house’s dampness, resulting from its position in a river valley, as he claims, but his own restlessness, a consequence of his own urban identity. The river’s flow “down into England”, contra Henry, never stops: that is how rivers are. The Wilcoxes, with “no part in the place, nor in any place”, depart after the wedding “leaving a little dirt and a little money behind”.¹⁶⁵ The enduring and irresistible but often unobtrusive power of rivers relates to that of sexual desire, the flows of *Howards End* in this respect subtly anticipating the “life-flow” and “downflow” of the physical encounter between Ursula and Birkin in *Women in Love*, with its reference to “rivers of strange dark fluid

¹⁶⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XXXI p. 186.

¹⁶¹ Freeman, *Conceiving the City*, pp. 156-7.

¹⁶² D.H. Lawrence, “The Real Tragedy” [1914] in R.P. Draper (ed.), *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1975, pp. 64-72, here 65.

¹⁶³ *Howards End*, ch. XXIII p. 142.

¹⁶⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XXXI p. 185.

¹⁶⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XXIX p. 178.

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richness” as “a strange flood”.¹⁶⁶ Decades later, Forster would tell Benjamin Britten that in writing the libretto to an opera by the composer he sought “love [...] flowing down its agonising channel”,¹⁶⁷ and a similar sense is present in the earlier novel. Helen and Leonard’s only sexual encounter has as its soundtrack “murmurs of the river that descended all night from Wales”.¹⁶⁸

Margaret may be “lulled” by the river at Oniton, but elsewhere she is suspicious of rivers, declaring her “mistrust” of them on the seafront at Swanage and comparing them to the “continual flux of London”, which she has come to hate, in response to Henry Wilcox’s statement that he will leave his nearly-new house at Ducie Street because the area is “going down”.¹⁶⁹

London in *Howards End* is the capital not only of flux but also of greyness, a place of drabness, one paradoxically (because being full of life is one of the expected qualities of a city) lacking in life. Leonard and Margaret, attempting to connect, refer to “life’s daily grey” and to “greyness” as things to “struggle against” or go “beyond”, and to the “universal grey” which drains life from people’s “many-coloured efforts” to change things.¹⁷⁰ If London is grey,¹⁷¹ so also is the dawn Leonard sees on the Surrey Hills, which were being encroached upon by London in Forster’s youth.¹⁷² It is also the adjective which Margaret and Henry mull over when assessing Leonard himself, the novel’s representative ordinary Londoner.¹⁷³

Several times in *Howards End*, grey is juxtaposed with much more vivid colours, particularly the red of fires and sunsets. Recalling Forster’s own view from Drayton Court, the prospect from Wickham Place near the beginning of the novel is comparable to impressionist painting: a “fantastic skyline” of flats which “towered black against the hues of evening” while “to the left the older houses raised a square-cut, irregular parapet against the grey”.¹⁷⁴ It is “grey waters” that, according to the narrator, Leonard is trying to “push his head out of” by appreciating Beethoven and Ruskin in the hope of seeing “the universe”.¹⁷⁵ Walking through the West End of London Christmas shopping, Margaret Schlegel and Ruth Wilcox pass through an intermittent “clot of grey” (literally, fog) which “tasted like cold

¹⁶⁶ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, ch. XXIII p. 314.

¹⁶⁷ Forster to Benjamin Britten, December 1950.

¹⁶⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XXVII p. 172.

¹⁶⁹ *Howards End*, ch. XX p. 132.

¹⁷⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XIV p. 91, ch. XVI p. 104, ch. XV p. 94, ch. XV p. 93.

¹⁷¹ See also *Howards End*, ch. XXX p. 182, ch. XXXI p. 183.

¹⁷² *Howards End*, ch. XIV p. 88.

¹⁷³ *Howards End*, ch. XVI p. 106.

¹⁷⁴ *Howards End*, ch. V p. 32. On literary impressionism, or “fragmentary realism”, as a way of viewing London in the 1880s and 1890s see Freeman, *Conceiving the City*, pp. 89-146, here 144.

¹⁷⁵ *Howards End*, ch. VI p. 38.

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pennies”.¹⁷⁶ In these earlier chapters, then, grey can be various things: a straightforward description of physical conditions, as in the third of these examples; a metaphor for urban life as in the second, where the uncertainty of signification contributes to the novel’s enduringly mysterious appeal; or a component of a symbolic whole, needing to be united with fiery colour, as in the first. The grey of London in *Howards End* is not a straightforward negative but a component of something ideal and complete. The central symbolic passage of the novel, which calls for connection between “the prose in us” and “the passion”, imagines love “glowing against the grey, sober against the fire”.¹⁷⁷ Greyness is not rejected outright in *Howards End* – and nor is London: each needs to be combined with something else in order to be made whole.

The living greyness ascribed by Forster to London in *Howards End* is twice emphasised in one of the extended pieces of summary put into the voice of an omniscient, quasi-authorial, narrator. This narrator’s perspective sometimes blurs with that of Margaret, the character in the novel who is closest to the discursive position of the author, Forster (both, for instance, use the phrase “continual flux”). About a third of the way through the book, marking the passage of time after Ruth Wilcox dies and her dying wish for Margaret to inherit Howards End is suppressed, this passage, opening on “grey tides”, contains in miniature the novel’s whole portrait of London:

Over two years passed, and the Schlegel household continued to lead its life of cultured but not ignoble ease, still swimming gracefully on the grey tides of London. Concerts and plays swept past them, money had been spent and renewed, reputations won and lost, and the city herself, emblematic of their lives, rose and fell in a continual flux, while her shallows washed more widely against the hills of Surrey and over the fields of Hertfordshire. This famous building had arisen, that was doomed. Today Whitehall had been transformed: it would be the turn of Regent Street tomorrow. And month by month the roads smelt more strongly of petrol, and were more difficult to cross, and human beings heard each other speak with greater difficulty, breathed less of the air, and saw less of the sky. Nature withdrew: the leaves were falling by midsummer; the sun shone through dirt with an admired obscurity.

To speak against London is no longer fashionable. The Earth as an artistic cult has had its day, and the literature of the near future will probably ignore the country and seek inspiration from the town. One can understand the reaction. Of Pan and the elemental forces, the public has heard a little too much—they seem Victorian, while London is Georgian—and those who care for the earth with sincerity may wait long ere the pendulum swings back to her again. Certainly London fascinates. One visualizes it as a tract of quivering grey, intelligent without purpose, and excitable without love; as a spirit that has altered before it can be chronicled; as a heart that certainly beats, but with no pulsation of humanity. It lies beyond everything:

¹⁷⁶ *Howards End*, ch. X p. 60.

¹⁷⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XXII p. 134.

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Nature, with all her cruelty, comes nearer to us than do these crowds of men. A friend explains himself: the earth is explicable—from her we came, and we must return to her. But who can explain Westminster Bridge Road or Liverpool Street in the morning—the city inhaling—or the same thoroughfares in the evening—the city exhaling her exhausted air? We reach in desperation beyond the fog, beyond the very stars, the voids of the universe are ransacked to justify the monster, and stamped with a human face. London is religion's opportunity—not the decorous religion of theologians, but anthropomorphic, crude. Yes, the continuous flow would be tolerable if a man of our own sort—not anyone pompous or tearful—were caring for us up in the sky.

The Londoner seldom understands his city until it sweeps him, too, away from his moorings, and Margaret's eyes were not opened until the lease of Wickham Place expired. She had always known that it must expire, but the knowledge only became vivid about nine months before the event. Then the house was suddenly ringed with pathos. It had seen so much happiness. Why had it to be swept away? In the streets of the city she noted for the first time the architecture of hurry, and heard the language of hurry on the mouths of its inhabitants—clipped words, formless sentences, potted expressions of approval or disgust. Month by month things were stepping livelier, but to what goal? The population still rose, but what was the quality of the men born? The particular millionaire who owned the freehold of Wickham Place, and desired to erect Babylonian flats upon it—what right had he to stir so large a portion of the quivering jelly?¹⁷⁸

This passage moves from being lodged in the fictional plot in the first paragraph, concerned with the lives of the Schlegels over time, and with an authorial narrator seeming to describe their lives on the “grey tides” of London as one of “continual flux”, to essayistic reflections in the second paragraph which are then identified as representing Margaret's thought in the third. Peter Widdowson uses this very passage to argue that Forster sympathised with the rural rather than the urban,¹⁷⁹ but it might be more accurate, following Nicholas Freeman, to see him in 1910 as harking back to the position of James McNeill Whistler in the 1870s:¹⁸⁰ neither rejecting the city outright in the manner of Ruskin, nor celebrating it as Woolf and Joyce would do in the 1920s. Another critic, Jeremy Tambling,¹⁸¹ accuses Forster of denying “the experience of the street and the crowd”, but the portrayal of London in *Howards End* is more subtle and, while deeply ambivalent about the city, more appreciative than Tambling realises.

London, according to this passage, not only sits on grey waters, but is itself “a tract of quivering grey”, recalling the human brain. It seems, too, to be a giant – “anthropomorphic,

¹⁷⁸ *Howards End*, ch, XIII pp. 79-80.

¹⁷⁹ Widdowson, *Forster's 'Howards End'*, pp. 18-20.

¹⁸⁰ See Freeman, *Conceiving the City*, pp. 118-19.

¹⁸¹ Jeremy Tambling, “Introduction” in Jeremy Tambling (ed.), *E.M. Forster* [‘New Casebooks’], Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 1995, pp. 1-13, here 3. Tambling, perhaps thinking of the Merchant-Ivory screen adaptations, contrasts Forster with Joyce and Woolf and accuses him of retreating “from otherness and clinging to an ideology of ‘Englishness’”

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crude” – which breathes commuters in and out. There is an amplification here of the general and paradoxical sense in *Howards End* that London is somehow watery. The sense is found in an extended metaphor which runs throughout the passage, connecting words and phrases like “tides”, “shallows”, “swept away” and “moorings”. This reverses the reality of human settlements: necessarily linked to water but always on land. To make the city the capital of waters, as Forster first does in Stephen Wonham’s walk into London, is in a sense an apocalyptic reversal of the sort found in William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* (in which Trafalgar Square is transformed from a “great space surrounded by tall ugly houses” into an orchard of apricot trees).¹⁸² London’s other characteristics in *Howards End* include the “architecture” Margaret sees and the “language of hurry” she hears on the street in London, recalling as they do the similarity between Mr Elliot and the removal-firm foreman in *The Longest Journey*. She only becomes fluent in this language after her “moorings” at Wickham Place are cut: within a London which “only stimulates” and “cannot sustain”, she is left “hurrying over its surface for a house without knowing what sort of house she wanted”.¹⁸³

London in *Howards End* is a place of tides, is itself water with its inhabitants temporarily moored there until “swept away”. Only a few Londoners, chiefly moneyed and sophisticated ones such as the Schlegels, can swim on these tides. Tides are water in motion, water pulled to and fro by something uncanny – the moon – in a way that can be plotted but nevertheless defies logic. Britain really *is* a place of tides, one might argue, surrounded as it is by ocean, at least in contrast with its great competitor in the era of *Howards End*, Germany. The Schlegels’ German cousin contrasts her home on the shores of the “tideless Baltic” with the blowy, chalky Dorset coast of England,¹⁸⁴ and several times in the novel Forster contrasts stolid Germany with mutable England, not clearly preferring either.¹⁸⁵

Tides, both literal and figurative, abound in *Howards End*, frequently standing metaphorically for London. The main road near Wickham Place is “a tide that could never be quiet”.¹⁸⁶ The death of Ruth is felt by Margaret as “the outgoing of this tremendous tide”, part of an extended metaphor of ebb and flow in which Ruth’s son Paul is a mere “ripple”.¹⁸⁷ The attraction of Chelsea Embankment, on the Thames just west of central London, is as a place where people can enjoy “fresh air and the whisper of the rising tide”; there Henry

¹⁸² William Morris, *News from Nowhere: Or an Epoch of Rest: Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance* [1891], Krishan Kumar (ed.), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995, p. 43.

¹⁸³ *Howards End*, ch. XVII p. 109.

¹⁸⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XIX p. 121.

¹⁸⁵ Forster was frequently sarcastic about Wilhelmine Germany in his youthful travelling years, but he spent five happy months during 1905 in Pomerania as a private tutor (*Chronology*, pp. 22-3; *Furbank I*, pp. 124-34).

¹⁸⁶ *Howards End*, ch. V p. 35.

¹⁸⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XII pp. 76, 75.

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observes “[f]ull tide” and Margaret “sadly” notices the beginning of the tidal ebb.¹⁸⁸ A “tide of passion” threatens to overcome Margaret after Henry’s proposal of marriage, during an exchange which she has struggled to keep “in tints of the quietest grey”,¹⁸⁹ while a “double and treble collision of tides” – approved of patriotically by Mrs Munt, the novel’s synecdochic representative of the benevolent yet small-minded English bourgeoisie – characterises the south coast of England.¹⁹⁰ On the south coast of England, not in London, a conversation between Helen and Margaret falls into a “long silence, during which the tide returned into Poole Harbour”, and the “displacement” of land this involves become a demonstration of the fact that “England was alive”.¹⁹¹ “[H]igh tide” is observed by Henry at the same coastal resort town, Swanage, his elderly wooing of Margaret mocked by a group of young men who overhear them and, to the couple’s middle-class ears, turn the word Cockney-fashion into “toid”.¹⁹² Later, his old adultery exposed, Henry’s “sin” is a “tide” against which a contrary feeling, that Margaret is “not altogether womanly”, flows.¹⁹³ Tides are found on the south coast and in Hertfordshire as well as in London, but Forster seems to associate them with the capital, to see them as an aspect of what he calls the “City’s trail”.¹⁹⁴ In terms of mutability London leads and the rest of England follows.

The city in *Howards End* could be mapped and the movements of its characters cartographically traced as Bourdieu has done for the Paris of Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education*.¹⁹⁵ Such a map would need to include the novel’s non-fictional locations. A map or gazetteer covering these locations within London – seen in the novel as components of London rather than as places in their own right – would include: the Queen’s Hall in Langham Place near Oxford Circus, the concert hall where Leonard first meets the Schlegels;¹⁹⁶ the points along Leonard’s walk home after the concert (Westminster Bridge, St Thomas’s Hospital, Vauxhall);¹⁹⁷ the Houses of Parliament, passed by Leonard on the same journey and later sneered at by Henry;¹⁹⁸ Chelsea Embankment, the slightly risqué spot with

¹⁸⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XV pp. 99, 100. The place of Chelsea Embankment in *Howards End* is investigated by Zemgulys (*Modernism and Locations*, pp. 107-25).

¹⁸⁹ *Howards End*, ch. XVIII p. 120.

¹⁹⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XIX p. 121.

¹⁹¹ *Howards End*, ch. XIX p. 127.

¹⁹² *Howards End*, ch. XX p. 132.

¹⁹³ *Howards End*, ch. XXIX p. 175.

¹⁹⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XIX p. 121.

¹⁹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* [1992] (translated from French by Susan Emanuel), Polity Press: Cambridge, 1996, pp. 40-3. See also Moretti, *Atlas*; Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*.

¹⁹⁶ *Howards End*, ch. V p. 25. Destroyed by a bomb in 1941, the Queen’s Hall forms a connection between the novel-writing Forster of 1910, and the diarist witnessing the Blitz in the early 1940s.

¹⁹⁷ *Howards End*, ch. VI p. 36.

¹⁹⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XVIII p. 117.

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“something continental” about it where Helen and Margaret Schlegel meet Henry one evening;¹⁹⁹ Westminster Bridge Road and Liverpool Street, symbols of the inexplicable vast living thing that Forster represents London to be;²⁰⁰ the major railway termini of Paddington, Euston, Liverpool Street, Waterloo, Kings Cross and St Pancras, viewed by Margaret as “gates to the glorious and the unknown”;²⁰¹ St Paul’s Cathedral, illusory beacon of hope in the city for Helen and Leonard which symbolises Forster’s floating, delusional London and which also appears on the logo of Leonard’s employers the Porphyryon Insurance Company;²⁰² the restaurant Simpson’s of the Strand (avoided throughout life by the cultured Londoner Margaret but accepted by her when she embraces the Wilcoxes and their values) – where clergymen, presumably up from the country, devour “saddles of mutton”;²⁰³ the railway suburb of Tulse Hill in the southern suburbs, where the Bastis decamp after leaving the flat they initially inhabit;²⁰⁴ Regent Street, where Leonard dons his oversized hat after leaving the Schlegels, a symbol of commerce as Margaret goes shopping with Ruth Wilcox, and the next place to be “transformed” in the rushing city.²⁰⁵

Such a map would also include the invented London streets and houses of the novel, not to be found on any map. Among them are: Wickham Place, the home of the Schlegels, said by Forster to have been “somehow suggested” by 1 All Soul’s Place, the family home of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson;²⁰⁶ Camelia Road, location – in an inner suburb south of the river, perhaps South Lambeth or Stockwell – of the flat occupied by Leonard and Jacky Bast until Leonard loses his job;²⁰⁷ and Ducie Street, “close to Sloane Street” on the border of plutocratic Belgravia and artistic Chelsea,²⁰⁸ site of the London house taken by the Wilcoxes whose adjacent mews is an excuse for Henry to once again move on.

Social spaces, Bourdieu writes, are “structured and hierarchized”,²⁰⁹ and any view of a metropolis, even one as multiple as Forster’s in *Howards End*, must exclude some aspects. Camelia Road, site of Leonard and Jacky’s flat, is cut off from the Schlegels and Wilcoxes,

¹⁹⁹ *Howards End*, ch. XV p. 94.

²⁰⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XIII p. 80.

²⁰¹ *Howards End*, ch. II. p. 11. Less important termini, including Cannon Street, Charing Cross (setting for the opening of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*), London Bridge and Marylebone (site of Forster’s birth) are unmentioned.

²⁰² *Howards End*, ch. XXXIV p. 200, ch. XLI p. 226, ch. XVI p. 101.

²⁰³ *Howards End*, ch. XVII pp. 109-10.

²⁰⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XIV p. 90.

²⁰⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XIV. p. 91, ch. X p. 61, ch. XIII p. 79.

²⁰⁶ Oliver Stallybrass, “Editor’s Introduction” in E.M. Forster, *Howards End* [1910], Edward Arnold: London, 1973, pp. vii-xix, here viii.

²⁰⁷ In his notes to the 1973 Abinger Edition of *Howards End*, Stallybrass suggests (Forster, *Howards End*, p. 356) that “Leonard is heading for Brixton”.

²⁰⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XV p. 99.

²⁰⁹ Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, p. 43.

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who can move with more freedom between one another's worlds in the west-central districts they inhabit than Leonard can in trying to enter their world. Tibby Schlegel is as unable to enter the struggling south-London world of Leonard Bast as Leonard is to enter Tibby's: pursuing the Basts, attempting to deliver money to them from Helen, he encounters a "scurf of books and china ornaments" at an abandoned lodging of theirs.²¹⁰ Words and concepts related to business abound in *Howards End*,²¹¹ but there is little reference to other sorts of power. Henry views Parliament "contemptuously" as a place only notable for "talking", thinking that "the most important ropes of life" are elsewhere, presumably in the financial and commercial world. The London of *Howards End* excludes or denies the governmental and royal city, then, just as, in Bourdieu's account, Flaubert excludes the "aristocratic asceticism" of the Faubourg Saint-Germain from the Paris of *Sentimental Education*.²¹² Forster excludes other zones: the vast abyss of the East End beyond the Tower of London; any districts north of the centre; all of the outer suburbs. The "City's trail" may have reached the south coast of England but the City of London, the centre of financial production itself, is also absent. The furthest north and east of the clearly identified points in the London of *Howards End* are Kings Cross Station, terminus for trains northwards to Hertfordshire, and St Paul's Cathedral.²¹³ Wapping, heart of the port on the Thames to the east is mentioned once, it is true, but only as a source of "smokes" which makes the moon invisible in Wickham Place.²¹⁴ The London of *Howards End*, including only railway termini, west-central districts and inner suburbs to the south and south-west, matches fairly exactly Forster's own experience of the metropolis up until 1909. Later in his career, Forster would discover and examine a few spots in the excluded northern and eastern regions, but his London throughout life was a radius connecting west and centre.

The ruling ideology of the future world which in *Howards End* Forster opposes to the permanence of the earth of the house in Hertfordshire is "cosmopolitanism", and this new world has London as its capital.²¹⁵ Tibby, with his half-German ancestry, is more obviously than the Basts a cosmopolitan, although Jacky Bast, like Tibby, has travelled abroad (in her

²¹⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XXX p. 183.

²¹¹ E.g. *Howards End*, ch. IV p. 19, ch. XX p. 131, ch. XXII p. 139, ch. XXIX p. 178, ch. XXXIV p. 200. In a letter of 1922, D.H. Lawrence (*The Letters of D.H. Lawrence. Volume 4, June 1921-March 1924*, Warren Roberts et al. (eds), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1922, p. 391) warned Forster apropos of *Howards End* that "business is no good".

²¹² Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, p. 41.

²¹³ The text provides no information for judging whether the Imperial and West Africa Rubber Company lies in the City or further West, for example in Holborn or close to Trafalgar Square.

²¹⁴ *Howards End*, ch. V p. 35.

²¹⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XXXI p. 186, ch. XLI p. 229.

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case to Cyprus where she was perhaps a prostitute).²¹⁶ The word “cosmopolitan” first appears in *Howards End* as a bigoted sneer by Charles Wilcox aimed at Margaret.²¹⁷ It is afterwards applied to Tibby by Margaret herself, then by Tibby, ironically, to himself.²¹⁸ Margaret comes to understand that, along with motor-car exhaust fumes, “cosmopolitan chatter” is the key to the modern world. Like Tibby, the Bastis are citizens of the world because they have been uprooted and can stick nowhere. Henry in *Howards End*, wealthy enough to live anywhere but unable to settle, and the Thompsons, the evicted Wiltshire shepherds of *The Longest Journey*, are for Forster ultimately alike: dislodged; dislocated (in the etymological sense).

Asked where all those displaced by a mass demolition and eviction of the sort that would later sweep away Forster’s birthplace had gone, a poor Londoner interviewed by a journalist in 1866 replied that “some’s gone down Whitechapel way; some’s gone in the Dials [Seven Dials, near Covent Garden]; some’s gone to Kentish Town; and some’s gone to the Workus”.²¹⁹ Forster is sensitive to such displacements and dislodgements, which happened repeatedly in and around the London of his own childhood. The French philosopher Henri Bergson in his 1907 work *Creative Evolution* saw cinema as a suspect medium in which immobile images counterfeit through their juxtaposition that eternal actuality of change which Bergson called duration.²²⁰ London in *Howards End* reverses Bergson’s view of cinema, presenting itself as enduring when in fact it is in a constant and, some might say, unhealthy state of change. Like the growth of Salisbury in *The Longest Journey* it is a symbolic instance of “the modern spirit”,²²¹ but it is also unmistakably a place with a shape that can be traced on maps and in personal experience.

²¹⁶ *Howards End*, ch. XXIX p. 176.

²¹⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XI p. 75.

²¹⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XVIII pp. 115-16.

²¹⁹ Shepherd, *London*, p. 271. Shepherd estimates that more than 120,000 people were evicted for the construction of new railways and termini in London between 1853 and 1901.

²²⁰ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* [1907] (translated from French by Arthur Mitchell), Henry Holt: New York, 1911; Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* [1934] (translated from French by Mabelle L. Andison), Philosophical Library: New York, 1946, p. 301; Leonard Lawlor & Valentine Moulard, “Henri Bergson” in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2008, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2008/entries/bergson> (accessed 20 October 2009).

²²¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 33 p. 270.

5.6. Avant-Garde Thinking, Stockbroking and Slum Work: London in *Maurice*

In 1971, when *Maurice* was first published, Michael Radcliffe claimed that, in contrast with Forster's other novels, the "spirit of place" is absent from it.²²² Other early reviewers agreed, calling the book "schematic" and a "thesis novel".²²³ If London in *Howards End* is portrayed in a way comparable to a richly orchestrated symphony or a sizeable oil painting, the city in *Maurice* is more like a solo piano piece or a rapidly-executed sketch in pencil. Subsequent critics of *Maurice* have overwhelmingly concentrated on its treatment of sexual identity. Robert K. Martin is concerned with "Forster's concept of homosexuality" in the novel and while aware of the place "atmosphere" of "late-Victorian Cambridge" relegates this largely to the status of scenery.²²⁴ Recent readings such as Howard J. Booth's also tend to read *Maurice* as essentially a treatise on homosexuality.²²⁵ In place terms, *Maurice* is a novel which, unlike Forster's earlier writings, ultimately subordinates locality and regionality to an idea of England as a nation-state. But this is a more complex novel than often thought, and critics' failure to examine the specifics of place in it – beyond making a few cursory references to Forster's depiction in it of Cambridge – has led to simplifying and misleading readings.

What Radcliffe did not see is that place gives a subtle colouring to many of the novel's key episodes. An example is Maurice's decision, influenced by the aesthete Risley, to consult an unorthodox therapist on the subject of his homosexuality. Having travelled up to London from the his lover Clive Durham's family home at Penge in Wiltshire by train, accompanied by Clive's brother-in-law Archie London, Maurice Hall is taken by taxi, in the course of one brief paragraph, from Waterloo to the house of the consultant. En route, he is troubled by the thought he has "often growled at" hypnotism "from behind the *Daily Telegraph*".²²⁶ The audience for his growling would have been other regular travellers on the train up from the

²²² Michael Radcliffe, [untitled review of *Maurice* in *The Times*] in *Critical Heritage* pp. 442-4, here 443.

²²³ Paddy Kitchen, [untitled review of *Maurice* in the *Times Educational Supplement*] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 444-7, here 445; Walter Allen, "The Least of Forster" [1971] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 437-8.

²²⁴ Robert K. Martin, "Edward Carpenter and the Double Structure of *Maurice*" in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, pp. 100-14, here 101, 106.

²²⁵ Howard J. Booth, "*Maurice*" in Bradshaw (ed.), *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 173-87, here 180. Booth ("*Maurice*", pp. 185, 186) observes that "*Maurice* is not simple and straightforward" and intelligently calls for a study comparing it with Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, but for the most part provides only contextualising refinements to the dominant reading of the novel which revolves around sexuality.

²²⁶ *Maurice*, ch. XXXVI p. 155, ch. XIX p. 83. The same newspaper has earlier been identified as Maurice's reading matter on his daily train commute to work in the City.

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suburb where he lives, the irritating thing for him being the unconventional, progressive trends which exist in the city alongside money-making. A London setting is established for the next scene, which juxtaposes two sides of the city: the edgy, avant-garde one represented by Risley and the hypnotist, and the suburban, conservative side present in Maurice himself, City of London commuter and *Telegraph* reader.

Among the key features of the handling of place in *Maurice* are not only the insistent emphasis on the fate of England as a whole in the novel's later chapters but also the use of place names for two characters and a house, blurring their origins in local English place, or suggesting that instead of something unique, a name – whether of a person or a place – is merely label. The name of Archie London, which becomes pun-like in phrases such as “Archie London was also returning to town”.²²⁷ Earlier, when Maurice and Clive's mothers first meet, it is at the “London house” of Clive's sister Pippa, she having “married a Mr London, a coincidence that made a great impression on” Maurice's sister Kitty.²²⁸ Even Penge, the Wiltshire house of the Durhams which stands in the novel for the weakening but still powerful position of the English landed gentry, shares its name with a South London suburb. Forster was elsewhere alert to something comic in the very idea of Tunbridge Wells, and the non-fictional Penge has a place in the folklore humour of South-East England as inherently absurd, something which Forster was perhaps alluding to in naming the fictional country house.²²⁹ Clive Durham's surname is also a place-name. On first hearing of him, Maurice's mother confuses him with “a don named Cumberland”.²³⁰ Speaking to the hypnotist, Maurice uses “Mr Cumberland” as his “pseudonym for Clive”.²³¹ Some names in *Maurice*, moreover, repeat and echo other novels by Forster. Clive's fiancée and later wife Anne has the middle name “Wilbraham”,²³² the same as the surname of the villainous steward of Cadover in *The Longest Journey*, while Mr Ducie, the prep-school master who draws diagrams in the sand to demonstrate human reproduction in the first chapter of *Maurice*, then reappears in the British Museum as Alec tries to blackmail Maurice, shares his name with the street near Sloane Square which is the London home of the Wilcoxes in

²²⁷ *Maurice*, ch. XXXVI p. 153.

²²⁸ *Maurice*, ch. XIX p. 82.

²²⁹ Philip Gardner (“Textual Notes” in *Maurice*, pp. 225-322, here 236) hypothesises that in the name of the house Forster perhaps “intended a sentimental, or mischievous, covert allusion to” his Cambridge friend H.O. Meredith, often understood as the ‘original’ for Clive in *Maurice*, who was “born in nearby Wimbledon”. But in terms of imaginative geography Wimbledon is not similar to Penge, and the two are not neighbouring or especially similar locales within the southern suburbs of London.

²³⁰ *Maurice*, ch. VIII p. 39. Readers familiar with *The Longest Journey* might recall the way Miss Appleblossom in that novel confuses two discrete place entities when she talks about “Cambridge College” (*Longest Journey*, ch. 6. p. 58).

²³¹ *Maurice*, ch. XXXVI p. 156.

²³² *Maurice*, ch. XXX p. 129.

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Howards End.²³³ This redeployment of names muddies them. Elsewhere in the novel matters which in the classic English novel of the nineteenth century – in George Eliot, say – would have to be built up to, their place in the plot somehow concealed, are handled in a rapid, perfunctory way: Forster seems to show his workings, as maths students might say. An example would be the words announcing the “Episode of Glady Olcott.”²³⁴ The 1971 reviewers of *Maurice* overlooked the fact that instead of hastiness or lack of effort, the novel’s recycling and redeployment of names could instead be considered a dashing dismissal of novelistic convention.

Another means of erasing differences between English places in *Maurice* is the treatment of weather. Late on, Forster uses heavy rain to suggest that Penge and London are fundamentally alike as components of a relentlessly dull, downbeat England. After Clive gets married, Maurice arrives at Penge for an August holiday in “pouring rain”, which continues into the first evening of his stay “with a monotony nothing could disturb”, penetrating the decaying roof of the house.²³⁵ The following morning Maurice goes shooting with Archie London in “even drearier” weather,²³⁶ and the rain follows Maurice to London when he afterwards meets Alec Scudder on the steps of the British Museum:

The rain was coming down in its old fashion, tapping on a million roofs and occasionally effecting an entry. It beat down the smoke, and caused the fumes of petrol and the smell of wet clothes to linger mixed on the streets of London. In the great fore court of the Museum it could fall uninterrupted, plumb onto the dragged doves and the helmets of the police.²³⁷

The “old fashion” in which the rain is falling directs readers to connect London with Penge. The “smoke”, “fumes of petrol” and “smell of wet clothes” of this London, meanwhile, are enumerated in a much more matter-of-fact way than their predecessors, the greyness, flux and hurry attributed to London in *Howards End*.²³⁸

Despite the deployment of rain which connects it with rural England, London does have specific place characteristics in *Maurice*. It is the home of an avant-garde yet also a philistine centre of commerce, and its comfortable environs and commuter districts are shadowed by inner-city slums.

²³³ *Maurice*, ch. I. p. 6, ch. XLIII pp. 193-4.

²³⁴ *Maurice*, ch. VIII pp. 40-1.

²³⁵ *Maurice*, ch. XXXIV pp. 142, 146.

²³⁶ *Maurice*, ch. XXXV p. 149.

²³⁷ *Maurice*, ch. XLIII p. 190.

²³⁸ The fall of rain is also a flow of water recalling the river which accompanies Helen and Leonard’s coupling at Oniton in the earlier novel: it echoes sexual acts. As an intrusion from outside (“occasionally effecting an entry”) it parallels Alec’s appearance by night in Maurice’s room at Penge (*Maurice*, ch. XXXV pp. 151-2, ch. XXXVII pp. 165-6), moreover.

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Bourgeois narrow-mindedness and advanced thinking go hand in hand here rather than being straightforwardly opposed. The Hall family are placed “near London” at the beginning of the novel,²³⁹ but London becomes more important after Maurice leaves university, as his thoughts and Clive’s turn towards their future careers. The young men expect their lives to be a “prison house”, with Clive “working for the bar, Maurice harnessed to an office”, both careers unmistakably situated in London.²⁴⁰ A “breath of modernity” which blows shortly afterwards into the mind of Pippa Durham,²⁴¹ making her, unlike their mother, wonder whether Clive is homosexual, seems connected to the fact that since her marriage Pippa has moved to London, implicitly becoming somewhat more sophisticated in the process. In the same chapter, Maurice’s daily commute on “the 8.36 to town”, during which he reads the *Daily Telegraph*, is introduced, as is the “little flat in town” where he spends every Wednesday night with Clive.²⁴² Work and the commute to London regularise Maurice’s life, then, but also allow him to join Clive in a city centre location not policed by mothers, schoolmasters or college deans. The flat seems to be near the Thames, close to the Strand and the Inns of Court: the pair retreat there after a dinner “at the Savoy” before Clive’s departure for Greece; it is “small, dark and silent”.²⁴³ It is entered via “a passage that recalled the approach to Risley’s rooms at Cambridge”. London in *Maurice* thus has an enclosed and restrictive aspect recalling the claustrophobic indoor Cambridge scenes earlier in the book. Other than Clive’s town flat, examples of this include the darkened consulting room of Lasker Jones, and the British Museum, said to resemble “a tomb”.²⁴⁴

Avant-garde thinking associated with London is represented in *Maurice* not only by Risley but by several other characters. Pippa London, née Durham, is close to being one such. Kitty Hall makes friends with a “socialist” young woman, Violet Tonks, at “an Institute” presumably in central London.²⁴⁵ Violet gives Maurice her ticket to a performance of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony. Risley, encountered once more there, announces that he has “come to see all respectable London flock” to this piece, the incestuous homosexual origins of which he emphasises. The hypnotist Lasker Jones,²⁴⁶ consulting whom is Risley’s recommendation, operates in the medical district of London north of Oxford Street at “6 Wigmore Place, W”. He seems “advanced” to Maurice and speaks, in cosmopolitan fashion,

²³⁹ *Maurice*, ch. II p. 7.

²⁴⁰ *Maurice*, ch. XVIII p. 81.

²⁴¹ *Maurice*, ch. XIX p. 83.

²⁴² *Maurice*, ch. XIX pp. 83, 84.

²⁴³ *Maurice*, ch. XXI p. 93.

²⁴⁴ *Maurice*, ch. XXVI pp. 156-8, ch. XLIII p. 190.

²⁴⁵ *Maurice*, ch. XXV p. 103, ch. XXIX p. 123.

²⁴⁶ *Maurice*, ch. XXXII p. 138.

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with a “slightly American” accent.²⁴⁷ A contrasting medical practitioner is the Halls’ neighbour and family doctor, Dr Barry, described by Forster in his 1960 “Notes on *Maurice*” as “uninformed”, and in the novel itself the difference between the two is among other things importantly a place difference: between socially progressive city centre and conservative suburb.²⁴⁸ London’s association with freedom of thought and action is disapproved of by a modern thinker of a very different sort from Violet, Risley and Lasker Jones, the extremist neo-Christian clergyman Mr Borenus, who reveals to Maurice that Alec has spent a night in London after leaving Penge and concealed this fact, as if association with the city were itself sufficient to convict the gamekeeper of sexual crimes.²⁴⁹

For much of the book London restricts Maurice rather than liberating him. London is where he works in his father’s old office, his City of London job not only binding him to the 8.36 every morning but also to the conventional thinking of the metonymic “railway carriage”: the group of men who, like him, are daily travellers in it.²⁵⁰ Whereas for Philip Herriton and Caroline Abbott in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* a movement by train between the suburbs and the centre of London suggests liberation, here in *Maurice* it functions differently. Maurice is materially prosperous until he runs away with Alec, but this comes at the cost of mental and physical enslavement to one aspect of London: the grasping, money-driven City.

London has a further place dimension in *Maurice* largely so far ignored by critics: the slums. *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End* both use such districts as subtly disturbing subtexts or others for more prosperous parts of the city. London property is one of the roots of Sawston School’s wealth in *The Longest Journey*, and I have argued that the non-fictional Tonbridge School’s status as ground landlord of a slum district south of Kings Cross is an important context for this. In *Howards End*, the slums are alluded to in the concept of the abyss which threatens Leonard and perhaps other characters as well. Maurice Hall encounters the slums of the metropolis through the advanced thinking of London, as part of an attempt to take his mind off sex matters by doing something worthwhile. After Clive turns heterosexual, Maurice, feeling spurned, turns into what his fellow commuters in the “railway carriage” find a worryingly “serious” character, getting involved with “the College Settlement in South London” and with the “rescue work” of “preventative charities” (politically liberal ones, this is to say, rather than Evangelically religious ones).²⁵¹ Later,

²⁴⁷ *Maurice*, ch. XXXIV p. 146, ch. XXXVI p. 155.

²⁴⁸ *Maurice*, p. 213.

²⁴⁹ *Maurice*, ch. XLV p. 206.

²⁵⁰ *Maurice*, ch. XXVIII p. 122, ch. XLII p. 189.

²⁵¹ *Maurice*, ch. XVIII p. 122.

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talking to Clive's wife Anne, Maurice is dismissive of this work, claiming not to sympathise with "the poor" despite wanting to "give them a leg up for the sake of the country generally": "Caddies and a College mission in the slums is all I know", he says, going on to claim that "[t]he poor don't want pity. They only really like me when I've got the gloves on and am knocking them about".²⁵² Maurice's attitude convinces Anne that she has "entrusted her hundred pounds to the right sort of stockbroker", that he is unsentimental about distinctions of wealth in society, and therefore will not be soft-hearted with her money. But his words do not, like several pronouncements by Henry Wilcox in *Howards End*, amount to saying that it is needless to worry about the poor since they make their own rational decisions. Maurice's views are tied up with his unsuccessfully sublimated homosexuality: the appearance of tough-mindedness is an attempt to mask his inner confusion.

Later still, after meeting Lasker Jones and receiving Alec's blackmail note, Maurice's belief in his work at the office collapses. The clientele of Hill and Hall, "drawn from the middle-middle classes", he now recognises as seekers of "continuous shelter" who are condemned to a lack of "real joy" by the very protected nature of their existence: resting, that is, on the suffering of those beneath them from whom they avert their gaze.²⁵³ Maurice now feels revolted by his clients, and in the railway carriage he reflects aloud on "the ethics of his profession, like a clever undergraduate". His travelling companions are unable to believe that he means what he says, concluding instead that he is expressing "a cynicism not unseemly in a business man". "All the time he's investing steadily, you bet", they surmise on the last day he will ever travel with them, "[r]emember that slum talk of his in the spring[?]"²⁵⁴ The slums call the values of these people, who deceive and enslave themselves, into question, Forster suggests. The tripartite London of *Maurice*, with its slums, intellectually-advanced central districts and comfortably complacent outskirts, is an interim stage in the protagonist's narrative of liberation, standing between the suburbs and the woods.

5.7. Enjoying the Muddle (1918-46)

Forster's relationship with London during the inter-war decades and in the period of the Second World War was friendlier than it had earlier been. Various texts document this: essays in *Abinger Harvest*; a 1937 article which was collected into *Two Cheers for Democracy* as "London is a Muddle"; diary entries describing the wartime bombing of the city; letters and other sources documenting his friendships with Ackerley and Plomer.

²⁵² *Maurice*, ch. XXXIV p. 143.

²⁵³ *Maurice*, ch. XLII p. 188-9.

²⁵⁴ *Maurice*, ch. XLII p. 189.

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London is treated more pragmatically than symbolically in these later writings. Forster's encounters with the city in these decades can be mapped precisely, a process resembling the insertion of a multitude of pins into a view of the city from above, and involving a combination of literary critical and biographical work with geographical and experiential study of the sort I have called physical encounters. Forster frequently connects muddling with wrong-headedness, but it can be a less judgmental notion of confusion. In the title "London Is a Muddle" it indicates an appreciation of the multiplicity of human life, and this was something he increasingly associated with London.

In the 1920s and 1930s Forster became, instead of a novelist based in his mother's house at Weybridge, a man of letters and broadcaster shuttling between a Bloomsbury *pied-à-terre* and his inherited, if ultimately transient, home at Abinger Hammer. His 1946 memoir of this house, "West Hackhurst", recounts numerous journeys to and from London, starting before Forster lived there when the house was still occupied by his father's sister Laura. Her friend Lady Farrer grew up as Euphemia Wedgwood, "in London [...] in an atmosphere which was worldly yet moral, intellectual yet public-spirited"; Laura sends "the village shoemaker, Mr Boorer [...] to London for lessons" in leather-working; during her dispute with the rector of Abinger, in which Laura wanted an extra Sunday service for Abinger Hammer villagers in the mission room she established there (the parish church being some way south of the village), this clergyman "would disappear to London when he expected to hear from her and would reply too late, from his club"; when a woman is assaulted in a woodland near the village the immediate local assumption is that the culprit "had come from London".²⁵⁵ Cecil Farrer, who would become Third Baron, enters the memoir in the mid-1930s as Forster's next-door neighbour in Abinger, and is stated then to have been "in the Foreign Office" and so a daily commuter to London on the train.²⁵⁶ In his diary, a year before the outbreak of war, Forster records bringing tinned supplies "each time I come from London" and then hiding them, and writes that "other middle class people do the same".²⁵⁷ To and fro they go, again and again.

Alongside a shuttling and commuter-like movement to and from the city, another aspect of Forster's relationship with London in the inter-war years was what in "West Hackhurst" he calls "the beginning of my London life" in the 1920s: "It began very mildly, with a room at Mrs Marshall's in Brunswick Square but here I found a refuge from Surrey worry, and hence came important developments, with which I am not here concerned".²⁵⁸ The "developments"

²⁵⁵ "West Hackhurst", pp. 1, 8, 9, 22; *Creator as Critic*, pp. 109, 113, 114.

²⁵⁶ "West Hackhurst", p. 29.

²⁵⁷ "Locked Journal", 17 August 1938.

²⁵⁸ "West Hackhurst", p. 19.

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are the homosexual encounters and activities focused on Ackerley and Buckingham. In “West Hackhurst” he writes that he began, during the 1920s, to “look longingly towards industrialism and London”,²⁵⁹ his view of the city becoming more positive than that expressed in *Howards End* and *The Longest Journey*. This led to occasional problems, as when a drunk acquaintance, presumably working class, visited Brunswick Square, “an unpleasant experience [...]” in which the caller “tried for my watch and my pullover and actually got a cap and 2/-”. On this occasion the arrival of another contact, “Tich”, averted the threat of violence, but the possibilities of adventure in London, and even its risks, were among its attractions for Forster during this period.²⁶⁰

Central to this new life for Forster in London between the 1920s and the 1940s were friendships, notably those with Ackerley and Plomer. These two younger writers were preoccupied with rivers, canals and other waterways, associating them with both freedom and decay, and their interwar writings on London provide a context for Forster’s.²⁶¹ Between them, they turn the riverside zone of west and south-west London into a carnivalesque site in which restrictions such as the 1880s law criminalising homosexuality, known as the ‘blackmailer’s charter’, might be temporarily suspended.²⁶² Ackerley, who lived in close proximity to the Thames in west London for much of his life, was raised at Richmond, unaware that his father was keeping a second family nearby and that his parents were not married. Writers both before and after since, from Meredith in the 1850s to Ian Nairn in the 1960s, have associated Richmond with sexual licence.²⁶³

The London of Ackerley and Plomer is also a repository of garbage: the Victorian knick-knacks Plomer celebrated at the Caledonian Market in Islington, north London; the “flotsam and jetsam of wood, cork, bottles, old tin cans, French letters, and the swollen bodies of

²⁵⁹ “West Hackhurst”, p. 28.

²⁶⁰ “Locked Journal”, 15 April 1933.

²⁶¹ On Ackerley’s life see Ackerley, *My Father and Myself*; Parker, *Ackerley*; Peter Parker, “Ackerley, Joe Randolph (1896-1967)” in ODNB. On Plomer’s, see Peter Alexander, *William Plomer: A Biography*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1989; Peter F. Alexander, “Plomer, William Charles Franklyn (1903-1973)” in ODNB; William Plomer, *Double Lives: An Autobiography*, Cape: London, 1943; Plomer, *At Home*. On their relationships with Forster see the index to the second volume of Furbank’s biography (Furbank II, pp. 337, 345). On Plomer’s feelings about relics of the Victorian period in twentieth-century London see Jason Finch, “Plomer, Community-Making, Time and the Victorian Era” in Roger D. Sell (ed.), *Literary Community-Making: The Dialogicality of English Texts from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, Benjamins: Amsterdam & Philadelphia, forthcoming.

²⁶² On the legal situation see Bristow, *Effeminate England*, pp. 1-2.

²⁶³ George Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel: A History of Father and Son* [1859], Constable: London, 1914, ch. XXXVI pp. 402-11; Nairn & Gasson, *Nairn’s London Revisited*, p. 123. Nairn sensed in Richmond “a disturbing whiff of Soho or Brighton”. The “Death by Water” section of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* contains lines spoken by a woman which suggest a similar view of the place: “Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew / Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees / Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe” (Eliot, *Collected Poems*, p. 74).

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drowned cats, dogs and birds left by the tide” which Ackerley notices on the riverside at Putney.²⁶⁴ The tide had gone out on the decaying imperial metropolis, figuratively speaking, leaving an absence which could fill with what Plomer in his poem “The Caledonian Market” calls “monstrous detritus”: physical and attitudinal leftovers from the Victorian past. This absence, it seems from a consideration of all three writers’ relationship with London between the 1920s and the 1950s, characterised metropolitan life at the moment when apparent progress was motor-driven and outward moving, on bypasses and arterial roads.

Between the 1920s and the 1950s, Forster’s references to Bob Buckingham connect this policeman, friend and sometime lover, as well, with the Thames. The relationship between Forster and Buckingham began when they met at Ackerley’s annual Boat Race party on 12 April 1930.²⁶⁵ In the 1940s, letters written by Forster reveal his fear that a boat on the Thames would usurp Buckingham’s leisure hours and affection, thus replacing Forster himself.²⁶⁶ Aged 71, Forster described to Benjamin Britten a domestic scene at Buckingham’s house in Shepherd’s Bush: with Buckingham’s wife May cooking asparagus about to be eaten by Forster, and with his son Rob “mending a gutter on the roof”, Bob himself was “coaching younger policemen [out rowing] on the river”.²⁶⁷ When Forster came to write his annual assessment of the year in the “Locked Journal” during the last hours of 1954, he recorded that Bob, “May, her brother and Sylvia are carousing at the Boat House”.²⁶⁸ The Thames-side world frequented by early-twentieth-century homosexuals has been described by a biographer of the composer Noël Coward as “transpontine”,²⁶⁹ the meandering of the Thames making it hard in this zone to live a riverside life without repeatedly crossing bridges, whereas people living further east in London typically have a firm attachment to either the north or the south bank of the river. Ackerley, Buckingham and Forster can all be seen as transpontians.

The transpontine zone was also a trans-legal one: it was through a homosexual circle whose activities could have led to imprisonment that Forster met the policemen Daley and Buckingham. Members of the circle surrounding Ackerley repeatedly stepped across the permeable boundary separating the police from criminals and sometimes this led to odd

²⁶⁴ William Plomer, *Collected Poems*, Cape: London, 1973, p. 119 (see also Plomer, *At Home*, pp. 1958: 126-7); J.R. Ackerley, *My Dog Tulip* [1956], New York Review Books: New York, 1999, p. 36.

²⁶⁵ *Chronology*, p. 106.

²⁶⁶ See the unpublished correspondence between Forster and Buckingham (MS KCC/EMF/18/82, 1932-70), for example a letter from Forster to Buckingham dated 27 July 1945; see also Mary Lago, *Calendar of the Letters of E.M. Forster*, Mansell: London & New York, 1985, p. 49.

²⁶⁷ Forster to Benjamin Britten, 25 May 1950.

²⁶⁸ “Locked Journal”, 31 December 1954.

²⁶⁹ Philip Hoare, “Coward, Sir Noël Peirce (1899-1973)” in ODNB.

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juxtapositions. Buckingham once arrested a lover of Ackerley's called Freddie Doyle – resident in Olympia, then a hinterland between upper-middle-class Kensington and the then poorer districts further west – for housebreaking:

Bob had never met Freddie and it was only when he went to the Olympia flat and recognized Ackerley's gramophone that he realized who it was he had taken into custody. He was very upset, as indeed was Ackerley, who of course blamed himself. Had he given Freddie some money at the weekend there would have been no need for his friend to go out housebreaking.²⁷⁰

Buckingham and Doyle, one on either side of the law, were both working-class Londoners involved in homosexual relationships with men from a higher social class. The river in West London could carry boats full of rowers, floating condoms and even dead babies; the covert sex life of Forster and his friends between the 1920s and the 1950s, somehow associated with the Thames, is descended from the mystical, half-realised watery flows of *Howards End*.

This developing London life, by the 1930s, increasingly included connections with Establishment literary and artistic sites. Forster's connection with one of these, the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, went back considerably further. As early as 1904, Forster used a story entitled "The Helping Hand", unpublished until after his death, to depict a barbed world of connoisseurs, experts, fashionable society and controversies over attribution which he centred on the National Gallery.²⁷¹ Leonard in *Howards End* feels after sleeping with Helen "as if some work of art had been broken by him, some picture in the National Gallery slashed out of its frame".²⁷² When the First World War broke out, Forster volunteered to help cataloguing paintings at the National Gallery, only a couple of minutes' walk from the gentlemen's clubs of Pall Mall.²⁷³ Forster's letters to the press, written chiefly to the *Listener* until Ackerley's retirement then afterwards to the *Times*, were from 1933 onwards frequently addressed from the Reform Club in Pall Mall.²⁷⁴ By 1939, he was also on the committee of the London Library in nearby St James's Square. At a meeting shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, for example, Forster voted alongside Harold Nicolson to allow the daughter of the homosexual Victorian thinker J.A. Symonds to examine her father's

²⁷⁰ Parker, *Ackerley*, p. 256.

²⁷¹ *Life to Come*, pp. 55-60.

²⁷² *Howards End*, ch. XLI p. 225.

²⁷³ See *Selected Letters I*, pp. 205, 213-14.

²⁷⁴ See e.g. Lago, *Calendar*, pp. 120, 123, 177. The earliest of the now-published Forster letters to be addressed from the Reform Club was written to Robert Graves and dated 5 May 1923 (*Selected Letters II*, p. 37).

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autobiography, long deposited but not accessible to readers at the London Library²⁷⁵ After the meeting, Forster entered one of the key cultural zones of wartime London when he went with Ackerley to the Wheatsheaf pub on Rathbone Place in the area north of Oxford Street and east of Bloomsbury known as Fitzrovia.²⁷⁶

Forster's "Locked Journal" contains several evocative descriptions of the atmosphere of London during the Second World War. In November 1939, Forster provides a series of images of London in the 'Phoney War' period including balloons, searchlights and an ultraviolet light at the bottom of the Haymarket; the following year he describes London on fire as viewed from Chiswick.²⁷⁷ Even more harrowing are images glimpsed by Buckingham during his work as a policeman in the Blitz and described by him to Forster. In May 1940, Buckingham "had to go to Hammersmith Baths which have been fitted up as an additional mortuary", shrouds hanging on the walls and awaiting the corpses the next air-raid will generate; in July 1943, he reported bodies in the streets of Fulham "covered with mortar dust, and black jelly at the end of legs and arms", as well as "a man pinned under a girder in the Northend [*sic*] Road screaming".²⁷⁸ Forster's 1941 essay "The London Library" juxtaposes two opposed aspects of London recalling both *Howards End* and *Maurice*. The essay sees the private library in St James's Square as an isolated "symbol of civilisation" threatened in wartime by the "imbecile storm" of the Blitz, seen as combining "the progress of science and the retrogression of man".²⁷⁹

In the interwar decades, Forster associated with the Bloomsbury Group but also developed his own literary salon, with Ackerley, Buckingham, Plomer, Christopher Isherwood and others as members. These two groups are the "Bloomsbury and more than Bloomsbury" referred to in "West Hackhurst",²⁸⁰ the two sides of a new connection with London. The topographic exactness of writings on London by Virginia Woolf such as *Mrs Dalloway* and her 1930s essay "Street Haunting" provide a further context for Forster's interwar writing on the metropolis. An examination of Forster's interwar London writing can begin with two pieces of occasional prose, firstly a review essay which meditates on literary treatments of London, describing sites within it mostly near Bloomsbury, and quoting Woolf on the British Museum and streets to the east of there.²⁸¹ The second, "London Is a Muddle", is a topographic account aimed at showing visitors to London around.

²⁷⁵ "Locked Journal", 12 October 1939.

²⁷⁶ See Paul Willetts, "Fitzrovia (*act. c.1925-1950*)" in ODNB.

²⁷⁷ "Locked Journal", 13 November 1939, 8 September 1940.

²⁷⁸ "Locked Journal", 3 May 1940, 16 July 1943.

²⁷⁹ *Two Cheers*, pp. 304, 305.

²⁸⁰ "West Hackhurst", p. 22.

²⁸¹ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 102-10.

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The essay included in *Abinger Harvest* as “The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf” originally appeared in the *Criterion* in April 1926 as “The Novels of Virginia Woolf”,²⁸² after *A Passage to India* and before *Aspects of the Novel*. Forster wrote it knowing from recent experience what it was to write a novel that experimented by being “more rhythmical” – as he described Woolf’s oeuvre after *Jacob’s Room*²⁸³ – while still being a recognisable development of the English novel-writing tradition connecting Fielding in the eighteenth century with Forster, Woolf and Arnold Bennett in the present. In early 1926 Forster accepted the Clark Lectureship at Cambridge soon after giving lectures on the subjects of Woolf and the modern novel at various sites around England in February.²⁸⁴ This review essay on Woolf is therefore an important text in the genesis of *Aspects of the Novel*.

London, in this essay, is part of “what she [Woolf] calls life”, with Forster taking the last six words of the fifth paragraph of *Mrs Dalloway*, “life; London; this moment in June”, as Woolf’s “promise” in her fiction and quoting them three times in the essay.²⁸⁵ Forster’s verdict that Woolf’s second novel *Night and Day* is the “least successful” of her fictional productions derives from a negative judgement on its treatment of place, Forster objecting that its “two protagonists [...] are screwed into Chelsea or Highgate as the case may be, and move from their bases to meet in the rooms and streets of a topographical metropolis”.²⁸⁶ The details of the real London might consequently seem “surface” matters obscuring the true task of a novelist, much as Woolf herself could suggest that metonymic details were surface matters and not the true concern of a novelist. In her essay “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”, for instance, she accuses “the Edwardians” – Bennett, John Galsworthy and H.G. Wells – of failing to see the true person underneath a woman glimpsed in a railway carriage, and seeing instead only “factories”, “Utopias”, or “the decoration and upholstery of the carriage”.²⁸⁷ Forster accuses *Night and Day* of failing to grasp the city just as Woolf accused “Edwardian” novelists of failing to grasp the “willo-the-wisp” of a human being. Woolf’s second novel, on this reading, overly schematises the geography of the city, turning it into something like a board game and its characters into pieces. Such a treatment, Forster implies, conceals the fact that real place is a core part of the nebulous thing that is life, the thing which the novelist

²⁸² The name change was necessary because it was written before the publication of Woolf novels such as *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* and makes no reference to them. See Elizabeth Heine, “Sources and Textual Notes” in *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 403-44, here 416.

²⁸³ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 110.

²⁸⁴ *Chronology*, pp. 92-93.

²⁸⁵ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 103, 103, 109; Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* [1925], Stella McNichol (ed.), Penguin: London, 1992, p. 4.

²⁸⁶ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 103.

²⁸⁷ Virginia Woolf, “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” [1924] in Rosenbaum, *Bloomsbury Group Reader*, pp. 233-49, here 234, 243.

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must attempt to grasp.

According to Forster it was in the next novel Woolf wrote, *Jacob's Room*, that she succeeded in grasping “the actual working of a brain” instead of turning her characters into automata. To demonstrate this, he refers to a chain of impressions which move in the protagonist Jacob Flanders’s head from the Reading Room of the British Museum via the streets thereabouts with their “cab whistles” and a drunken woman “in the mews behind Great Ormond Street”, to Jacob’s lodgings on the eastern fringes of Bloomsbury where, late at night he sees “with astonishing clearness” the rain, his neighbours’ lights having gone out, and “how the Jews and the foreign woman, at the end of the street, stood by the pillar-box arguing”.²⁸⁸ The passage Forster chooses to cite is one intimately concerned with the specifics of London geography, specifics which are traced in it as carefully as are the movements of Jacob’s thought.

In discussing *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf’s next novel, Forster anticipates later readers by viewing London, “chorusing with all its clocks and shops and sunlit parks” in his words, as central to the novel.²⁸⁹ The intensity of feeling for literary place in the Woolf essay is marked, even among Forster’s writings. In the second paragraph, Forster calls the main setting of Woolf’s debut novel *The Voyage Out* “a South America not found on any map”.²⁹⁰ He concludes with an account of the history of the English novel:

English fiction, despite the variety of its content, has made little innovation in form between the days of Fielding and those of Arnold Bennett. It might be compared to a picture gallery, lit by windows placed at suitable intervals between the pictures. First come some portraits, then a window with a view say of Norfolk, then some more portraits and perhaps a still life, followed by a window with a view of Persia, then more portraits and perhaps a fancy piece, followed by a view of the universe.²⁹¹

Norfolk and Persia have already been referred to, Forster alleging that contemporary novelists other than Woolf and Joyce “admit aeroplanes or bigamy, or give some fresh interpretation of the spirit of Norfolk or Persia, or at the most reveal some slight discovery about human nature” but do no more than this.²⁹² Forster, it might seem, thinks that reference to Norfolk and Persia – to real place, the real world – belongs to a genteel, outmoded tradition. Woolf on his reading wants to destroy this gallery with its leisurely walking pace and assumptions of a comfortable social position; on the evidence of *Jacob's Room* she will

²⁸⁸ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 107-8; Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* [1922], Hogarth Press: London, 1980, pp. 108-9.

²⁸⁹ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 105-6.

²⁹⁰ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 102.

²⁹¹ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 109-10.

²⁹² *Abinger Harvest*, p. 109.

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replace it with “a spiral whirling down to a point”; on that of *Mrs Dalloway* with “a cathedral”. The windows may be kept or they may not, Forster seems to say; the portraits are indispensable. London is present in the 1926 essay on Woolf much as countries and international politics are present in the 1923 essay “My Wood”, despite its concern for the universalities of property ownership. The wood next to West Hackhurst is used as a tool in an argument there, and London, Norfolk and Persia play the same role in “The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf”.

The Woolf essay emphasises imaginative or metaphoric place, but metonymic accounts of actual places do not disappear from his writing after the 1920s. The piece first published in 1937 as “E.M. Forster Looks at London” and afterwards collected as “London Is a Muddle” differs from “The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf” in that it is a topographic essay.²⁹³ Like the notes on the countryside surrounding West Hackhurst which coalesced in *Two Cheers for Democracy* as “The Last of Abinger”, “London is a Muddle” is concerned with place in itself and for itself, not as an illustration of something else. Its original context was the coronation of George VI, the essay appearing three days before the event in the Sunday newspaper of the Co-Operative Movement, *Reynolds News*.²⁹⁴ The target audience of this introduction to London seems to have been poorer people from the provinces visiting it for the first time to see the festivities. The “spoilt” view of the city from a hotel room of the essay’s opening paragraph recalls the view at Drayton Gardens Forster noted in 1904, but his point in “London Is a Muddle” is that while such messiness is characteristic of it, the city is nevertheless always “redeemed by something charming, entertaining, antiquated”.²⁹⁵

Most of the essay is taken up by examples of London’s redeeming features, and these are things with a connection to the sort of London that Ackerley and Plomer chronicled, things found on the fringes of the centre and not “smartened up” with the “false splendour and false orderliness” which he finds in “these Coronation arrangements”.²⁹⁶ This sense that the real London has moved outwards anticipates writers such as Nairn who would become associated with the urban conservation movement in later decades.²⁹⁷ One site charted in “London Is a Muddle” and identified with a real, rough-edged London, is Adelaide House, the huge new

²⁹³ See *Bibliography*, p. 149 on the bibliographical history of this essay.

²⁹⁴ The paper had been “the leading working-class paper in England, especially in the north” (Louis James, “Reynolds, George William MacArthur (1814-1879)” in ODNB) during the nineteenth century, and became owned by the Co-Operative movement in 1929.

²⁹⁵ *Two Cheers*, p. 353.

²⁹⁶ *Two Cheers*, p. 357.

²⁹⁷ “The human essence of the city is now in places which are often nothing to look at: Brentford, Mitcham, Charlton, Tottenham, Plaistow, West Ham, Wembley” (Nairn & Gasson, *Nairn’s London Revisited*, p. xiv). The ‘real’ city had moved further out for Nairn in the 1960s than it had been for Forster and Plomer in the 1930s, but the earlier writers and the later one record the same process.

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office block “at the city end of London Bridge”, described as a “vast cube” with “a garden, an orchard, and a putting-green” on the roof. This building is presented as a massive art-deco update of the kind of commercial bustle associated with the Wilcoxes in *Howards End*. Forster points out to his readers, new to London, a “narrow chasm” beneath Adelaide House leading down by a “ponderous and grimy stairway” to Lower Thames Street, peopled by fish-porters, and the Wren church St Magnus the Martyr “crouched in the cavern” there.²⁹⁸ This juxtaposition, unlike those of *Howards End*, occupies a vertical plane. Under the shallow money-making glitz of the metropolis, Forster means, there is something more ancient and more worthwhile. London, he concludes, is “an untidy city, and ought not to be tidied up”.

This essay looks further east in London than does *Howards End*, towards the oldest parts of the city. Its literary forebears seem to be Defoe, William Blake and T.S. Eliot, not Dickens, Samuel Butler, Masterman and Galsworthy, the quartet who in different ways inspired the London of *Howards End*. The London of the 1937 essay is a city of the tradesman, the mystic, the foreigner, the misfit and the nonconformist rather than of the Holborn and West End social critic. Even more Wilcox-like than the glamorous if crass Adelaide House, from the perspective of the 1937 essay, is the ruined curve of Regent Street, now a “bad muddle” shaped by greed, and referred to in *Howards End*, unlike the complex around London Bridge.²⁹⁹

The positive escape from this mess is to be found north of the centre up the Caledonian Road, but not in the marketplace there filled with picturesque tat which Plomer hymned. In this neighbourhood Forster smells a “sweetish and not disagreeable” smell, notices the “quiet” colouring of the district, “as is usual in London”, spots “little boys” bathing in the Regent’s Canal and sailing locusts in handkerchief boats there, and then has “a little surprise”:

For the canal disappears into the side of a hill. Pitch darkness, no lamps, no towpath. It has vanished under the heights of Pentonville. It keeps its course for over half a mile, absolutely straight, so that when the tunnel is empty the swimmers can see a tiny spot of daylight at its further end. Occasionally a string of barges passes through behind a tug, on its way to the docks.³⁰⁰

Perhaps the waters of Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* flow through *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*, and perhaps they reappear here. The canal is also an invigorating counterpart

²⁹⁸ *Two Cheers*, pp. 353-4.

²⁹⁹ *Two Cheers*, p. 355; *Howards End*, ch. XIII p. 79.

³⁰⁰ *Two Cheers*, pp. 355-6.

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to the dead babies of Plomer and the used condoms of Ackerley: a breath of life, a mere suggestion of the mystical significance Forster gives the eponymous house of *Howards End* and Mrs Moore in *A Passage to India*. “London Is a Muddle” ends with low-key, unenthusiastic praise of the city: quoting Eliot’s “public bar in Lower Thames Street” in *The Waste Land*, Forster praises the muddle of the metropolis.³⁰¹ Unnoticed by Forster’s critics, the essay’s subtle advocacy of London counterbalances the dystopian portrait of a hellish metropolis to be found in *Howards End*.

In “London Is a Muddle”, Forster even emerges as something of a London connoisseur, a role which might surprise readers of the earlier novels. The American publisher Robert Giroux, writing in 1987 of Forster’s 1949 second visit to the USA, recalls Forster’s injunction “when you come to London, to visit the spot along the Thames where the wagon tracks that went into old London bridge are still visible, cut deeply into the earth”, and that he afterwards followed Forster’s advice, successfully locating this “spot not far from Saint Mary Woolnoth [...] located much lower than the elevations of the modern bridges”.³⁰² Here is the verticality of the complex around Adelaide House from “London Is a Muddle”; here, too, is a sense that the urban setting could be every bit as primeval as any rural one. The archaeological layering of the city recalls once again the build-up on top of one another, with no layer entirely obliterating the ones beneath it, of the social spaces envisaged by Lefebvre.³⁰³ Forster ends “London Is a Muddle” by gently mocking his one-time loathing of the capital, felt from the “immense distance away” of Hertfordshire.³⁰⁴ Readers who believe Forster was a ruralist should pay attention.

5.8. Around Clapham Common: “Battersea Rise”, *Marianne Thornton* and Other Writings (1926-56)

The insider’s knowledge of London found in Forster by Giroux could be read as exemplifying his long-standing attachment to an idea of England – whether rural or urban – that contained traces of an ancient past. His appreciation of the canal’s disappearance under “the heights of Pentonville” could, similarly, be connected to the wish expressed by the narrator of *Howards End* that England had “a great mythology”.³⁰⁵ Forster’s writing on

³⁰¹ *Two Cheers*, p. 357.

³⁰² Robert Giroux, “Meeting ‘An Old and Valued Author’” [1987] in Stape, *Interviews and Recollections*, pp. 91-7, here 95.

³⁰³ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 117-18.

³⁰⁴ *Two Cheers*, p. 357.

³⁰⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XXXIII p. 190.

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London after his last novel appeared in the mid-1920s is driven by something different from such a myth-making view of national identity, however: an urban scepticism about the rural pretences of the English upper-middle class. Their comfort, he came to feel, was secretly derived from money made by exploiting people in cities. Forster became thankful that the urban world of the twentieth century was removing this class from power. This pro-urban, pro-modern and pro-London Forster emerges at greatest length in a book which at first glance seems a nostalgic act of family piety comparable to his act of corporate piety, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson: his 1956 Marianne Thornton: A Domestic Biography*.³⁰⁶ London engulfed Clapham Common in the nineteenth century, and the story of urban expansion in the nineteenth century is a place-related story which is as important to Forster's *Marianne Thornton* as is the book's account of gradual changes to a family. The genesis of this "domestic biography" is to be found in three essays first published between 1922 and 1935 which were collected into *Abinger Harvest* and there placed one after another: "Mr. and Mrs. Abbey's Difficulties", "Mrs. Hannah More" and, most particularly, "Battersea Rise".³⁰⁷

The bleaker aspect of inner South London was something Forster wrote about in *Howards End*.³⁰⁸ Leonard Bast is initially domiciled somewhere north of Clapham, perhaps in Stockwell, where Forster's mother's family lived for part of her childhood.³⁰⁹ On his walk home after the Queen's Hall concert, Leonard crosses Westminster Bridge and later goes "through the immense tunnel that passes under the South-Western main line at Vauxhall".³¹⁰ Writing after the Second World War, meanwhile, Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner describe the general prospect of inner South London – viewed from a car, presumably – as consisting of an "apparently interminable sequence of dingy Victorian and Edwardian shopping parades" leading to "the occasional bleak concrete roundabout" and the "converging nineteenth-century railway viaducts which still overshadow the neighbourhoods close to the Thames".³¹¹

In Forster's 1922 essay "Mr. and Mrs. Abbey's Difficulties" the name of a particular place, now in London, sounds periodically like a discord in a piece of modern music: Walthamstow. The essay conceals until its last lines the fact that it is concerned with the

³⁰⁶ For no clear reason, the subtitle of *Marianne Thornton* has been dropped from the recent scholarly edition of the biography. It ought to be restored in any future reprint.

³⁰⁷ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 222-42. Forster's 1939 essay "Henry Thornton", collected into *Two Cheers for Democracy* (*Two Cheers*, pp. 192-6), is another forebear, but has little to add on the topic of place.

³⁰⁸ Southwark, the oldest and most central part of South London, has contained tanneries, brothels and other unsavoury aspects of city life for several centuries. See Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, pp. 691-2. An evocative 1930s account by Ada Elizabeth ('Mrs Cecil') Chesterton (*I Lived in a Slum*, Victor Gollancz: London, 1936, pp. 77-104) provides colour on Southwark and its past.

³⁰⁹ Furbank I, pp. 1-4.

³¹⁰ *Howards End*, ch. VI p. 36.

³¹¹ Cherry & Pevsner, *London South*, p. 22.

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maltreatment of the poet John Keats and his siblings by their guardians following the death of their mother.³¹² This concealment is possible because the first names of the brothers and sister are so typical of England in the age of Jane Austen: “John, George, Tom, and Fanny”.³¹³ The year 1821, the precise date of the events in the essay, is initially not revealed either, but readers of Forster’s piece in the *London Mercury* a century later could have detected that the setting was some way in the past by the statement that the guardian Mr Abbey, a London tea merchant, “had added to his office in Pancras Lane a residence at Walthamstow, and to the latter a conservatory”. By 1920, Walthamstow had become the archetypal high-density working-class railway suburb,³¹⁴ at the time the essay is set, readers would have surmised, it was still semi-countryside. Throughout the essay, Forster maintains a tongue-in-cheek distinction between Walthamstow and London, implying that he, like his readers, knows full well that Walthamstow is not at all rural. Discovering a mocking rhyme in John Keats’s hand, Mrs Abbey has to wait until her husband next “came down from Pancras Lane” before being certain that it is insulting; the consequence is that she prohibits Keats’s sister Fanny from going “up to see her brother in town, and she discouraged his visiting Walthamstow”.³¹⁵ Distance is – comically, with hindsight – placed between London and Walthamstow. Further references to “life at Walthamstow”, to Fanny ending “her connection with Walthamstow in the arms of a Spaniard”, then to Mr Abbey’s bitter thoughts “as he sat at Walthamstow in the evening of his own life”, play with the same group of associations.³¹⁶ *Marianne Thornton*, while not mocking its subjects in the manner of “Mr. and Mrs. Abbey’s Difficulties”, also recounts how a district once accessible from London by a City merchant, yet rural and secluded enough to be viewed as a country home, is engulfed by the spectacularly rapid nineteenth-century growth of the metropolis. The 1922 essay shares with the 1956 biography a sense that the pleasures of such a setting might have been illusory even as they were enjoyed, and might have bred a proto-Sawstonian, moralistic complacency.

The essay “Mrs. Hannah More”, first published in 1926, was the first of several pieces on his wealthy Clapham Sect forebears published by Forster in the decades after *A Passage to*

³¹² On the actual story of what happened to Keats see Kelvin Everest, “Keats, John (1795-1821)” in ODNB.

³¹³ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 222.

³¹⁴ See e.g. F.M.L. Thompson, “Introduction: The Rise of Suburbia” in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Rise of Suburbia*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982, pp. 1-25, here 19. Between 1871 and 1911, Walthamstow’s population increased more than tenfold, from 11,000 to nearly 125,000 (W.R. Powell, “Walthamstow: Introduction and Domestic Buildings” in *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 6 [VCH]*).

³¹⁵ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 224.

³¹⁶ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 226, 228, 229.

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India.³¹⁷ It begins by stating that “Hannah More was the godmother of my great-aunt”,³¹⁸ then enumerates the connections to Hannah More of items of furniture and mementos scattered around Forster as he wrote it at West Hackhurst. The tiny mystical charge of such items is felt repeatedly in Forster’s later essays, memoirs and journals. The Clapham Sect, mentioned once in the essay, chiefly enter “Mrs. Hannah More” through the name of Zachary Macaulay and through allusions to the movement for the abolition of slavery.³¹⁹ Clapham the place is not mentioned. The next essay in the sequence Forster deliberately constructed in *Abinger Harvest* has more to say about the specific place history of London and its environs in the nineteenth century.

Like *Howards End*, the essay “Battersea Rise” has as its title the name of a house, like *Howards End*. It originated as a review of a book by Dorothy Pym also entitled *Battersea Rise*, and criticises that book for inadequately linking people and place:

If the spirit of a house is to be conveyed some inventory must be kept of the people who have lived there, the family tree must be kept open, relevant papers searched, etc. As it is, we wander up and down from Pitt Room to Nankeen Rooms, from one Henry to another, from undated event to unasccribed picture until we scarcely know where we are.³²⁰

An act of locating – the aim being to “know where we are” – is what links the study of a place and the study of a family. Spatial metaphor – “we wander up and down” – is for Forster the natural way of thinking about such attempts to understand.³²¹ Collecting the essay into *Abinger Harvest* Forster perhaps felt that these closing comments were injudicious. But the failures, as he saw them, of Pym’s book were very much starting points for the more precise charting of the Thornton past Forster would himself attempt in *Marianne Thornton*, while the family-centred irritability of the deleted paragraphs would return to Forster’s

³¹⁷ Christopher Tolley (*Domestic Biography: The Legacy of Evangelicalism in Four Nineteenth-Century Families*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1997) opposes the Bloomsbury Group’s essentially negative view of Victorian religion and accordingly questions Forster’s account of the Thorntons (see also John Wolffe, “Clapham Sect (act. c.1792-1815)” in ODNB). Tolley places the heyday of the group in the period of the Napoleonic Wars (c.1793-1815), whereas earlier scholars (e.g. Henry Elliot Malden, “Parishes: Clapham” in *A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 3* [VCH]) placed it in the thirty years or so that followed.

³¹⁸ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 231. The great-aunt is Marianne Thornton.

³¹⁹ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 231, 232, 234, 236.

³²⁰ Cited in Elizabeth Heine, “Sources and Textual Notes”, p. 434. Like “Mr. and Mrs. Abbey’s Difficulties”, “Battersea Rise” first appeared in the *London Mercury*. The passage was deleted by Forster when editing the essay for inclusion in *Abinger Harvest*.

³²¹ Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, written around the same time as the texts by Forster discussed in this section by someone also connected to turn-of-the-century Cambridge thought, begins with a use of spatial metaphor similar to this (see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The German Text with a Revised English Translation* [1963] (translated from German by G.E.M. Anscombe), Blackwell: Oxford, 2001 ix^e.)

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writing in “West Hackhurst”.

Rather than the false note of Walthamstow sounded in “Mr. and Mrs. Abbey’s Difficulties”, “Battersea Rise” is built around the drive by carriage to and from London and Westminster, and London’s nineteenth-century growth in the opposite direction towards and around Battersea Rise. The Thornton house is traced back to “a small Queen Anne building, standing on the edge of that very wild tract, Clapham Common”.³²² Henry Thornton the elder – designated “our great-grandfather” to emphasise the cousinhood of Forster and Pym, and Forster’s personal connections to the Thorntons – “was for over thirty years M.P. for Southwark, and no doubt he found the house convenient, because he could easily drive up to Westminster”. A generation later “[t]he money continued to come down from London, London itself crept nearer” and a younger Thornton “drove up every day to the City in a spider-like gig, wearing a stove-pipe hat”.³²³ After his death in 1881 the house froze in a stately past until its demolition in 1907, while “London came nearer and nearer”:

The house faced the road and the coming onslaught, but its garden behind retained the illusion of untouched country. The tulip tree grew higher, the Japanese Anemones and St. John’s Wort increased, the rabbits and other pets multiplied, the books stood unaltered and unopened in the library, the maids still whitened the white squares and avoided the black squares of the tessellated pavement in the hall.³²⁴

Despite the negative implications of “onslaught”, a key word in this passage is “illusion”. In “Battersea Rise” family pride co-exists with nostalgia for the time when Clapham was free of London. Forster’s insists on London’s relentless approach. The once great house surrounded by the city seems charming yet isolated, artificial and deluded, mistakenly equating itself with civilisation as the world beyond its gates passes it by. In this, “Battersea Rise” anticipates later writing allegorising the international decline of Britain, such as David Storey’s 1963 novel *Radcliffe*.³²⁵

Forster’s *Marianne Thornton* puts the period of great wealth, influence and piety at Battersea Rise between about 1790 and 1830 into the context of the nineteenth century as a whole, in which the Thorntons and their relatives gradually became less grand and prominent, and endured scandal. Overall, the book memorialises a vanished place, a sense

³²² *Abinger Harvest*, p. 238.

³²³ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 240. This line is reworked in *Marianne Thornton* so, perhaps, as to have a gloomier feel: “[t]he widower drove up in his gig every morning to the Bank, wearing his stove-pipe hat, returned in the evening tired, and disinclined for company” (*Marianne Thornton*, p. 149).

³²⁴ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 242.

³²⁵ Storey in *Radcliffe* describes “the Place” a huge, decaying house, formerly alone on a moor and now surrounded by a Yorkshire industrial town (David Storey, *Radcliffe* [1963], Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1965, p. 21).

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Forster himself, according to “Battersea Rise”, was able “dimly” to recall: “did I ever go to the house in the early eighties, led by some cousin in my peacock-blue velvet suit?”, he wonders: he cannot be sure.³²⁶ If Forster in “London Is a Muddle” seems to envisage a readership unfamiliar with the details of London, *Marianne Thornton* treats the city more loco-allusively than loco-descriptively, assuming an audience who know London as it is in the mid-twentieth century but may have forgotten – or never have known about – its previous 200 years.

A source for the way Forster understood and experienced the sense of place is included in *Marianne Thornton*: a poem written, Forster says, by an uncle of his as a “precocious schoolboy at the Charterhouse”. This was entitled “The Tulip Tree” and named after a plant in the garden at Battersea Rise regarded by the Thorntons as “almost a pre-taste of heaven”:³²⁷

The old tree stood upon the lawn,
And cast its shade around;
And sweetly bloomed the violets
Upon that hallowed ground.

It seemed the Genius of the line,
The Guardian of the race,
Had made that ancient tulip-tree
His sacred dwelling-place.³²⁸

Forster’s sense of real place grew alongside a spiritualisation of place he felt to be inherited from his Clapham forebears. Christopher Tolley has written that despite an “experience of affection for houses” shared with his great-aunt, Forster reworked Victorian domestic biography into something more ambiguous than the pious accounts of ancestors and their homes which members of Clapham Sect families wrote.³²⁹ Tolley hopes to rescue nineteenth-century Christians from the sneers of their agnostic descendents, people such as the Bloomsbury Group. Forster’s deployment of texts such as his uncle’s poem alongside his own ironic and historically-aware narrative, however, juxtaposes a treatment of earlier Clapham views as dated and ‘period’ with a genuine belief in the force of symbols of place such as the tree.

Both Tolley and Evelyne Hanquart-Turner speculate that Forster wrote *Marianne*

³²⁶ *Abinger Harvest*, p. 238.

³²⁷ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 18. The Thornton children were convinced that the tulip tree “would have been cut down by Napoleon had he succeeded in invading England”, Forster (*Abinger Harvest*, p. 240) claims in “Battersea Rise”.

³²⁸ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 197.

³²⁹ Tolley, *Domestic Biography*, pp. 230-1, 233.

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Thornton as a way of coping with his enforced 1946 departure from Abinger, but neither mentions the “West Hackhurst” memoir.³³⁰ Both before and soon after Forster’s death, there were several critics who saw a quasi-religion of place derived from Clapham as the motivating force in his writing.³³¹ But the account early in “West Hackhurst” of Laura Forster’s relationship with dead family members, including Thorntons, seems sceptical about the claims of place to provide an emotional or spiritual grounding for people. Forster describes his aunt gardening at West Hackhurst “\skilfully yet/ sentimentally”, with a tulip tree to imitate the one at Battersea Rise, a grass slope to imitate one at the home of Hannah More, and jasmine because her “uncle Archdeacon Forster” had been fond of it.³³² There are fond memories of childhood buried in Forster’s statement that “many generations of children have slid down” the slope, but he reports these memories in a cool tone of voice, not for instance describing himself sliding down as a boy. After describing this memorial garden, Forster reflects on attempts such as Laura’s to preserve a family past in a sort of private museum:

Inside the house memories thickened. With the exception of the W.C., all the upstairs rooms are labelled: Stisted, Battersea Rise, Penn, Chelsea, Clapham: \places she had loved/. Chelsea was on my present sitting room: it recalled the rector of St Luke’s, Chelsea, M^r Blunt, a great friend of hers, and this is too much, and I have taken Chelsea off. But the others remain, even Clapham where the skirts hung. Pictures have notes behind, furniture inscriptions, a table belonging to Bishop Jebb never had any thing put on it.³³³

The sense throughout “West Hackhurst” is that past should be left in the past. The family recollections of *Marianne Thornton* have a warm and generous tone but “West Hackhurst”, written when Forster was neither inactive nor tranquil, sceptical about the past and ready to jettison it, is an acerbic and refreshing counterpart to the domestic biography.

The earlier sections of *Marianne Thornton* cast Marianne in the family roles of “Daughter” and “Sister”. In the first, “Daughter: 1797-1815”,³³⁴ Clapham’s distinctness from London in the early nineteenth century is emphasised (we recall Walthamstow). Forster describes Robert Thornton, brother of Henry Thornton the elder, as the most conspicuously

³³⁰ Tolley, *Domestic Biography*, pp. 232-3; Evelyne Hanquart-Turner, “Editor’s Introduction” in *Marianne Thornton*, pp. vii-xviii, here viii.

³³¹ E.g. J.B. Beer, *The Achievement of E.M. Forster* [1962], Chatto & Windus: London, 1963; John Colmer, *E.M. Forster: The Personal Voice*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1975.

³³² “West Hackhurst”, p. 6; *Creator as Critic*, p. 112.

³³³ “West Hackhurst”, p. 6; *Creator as Critic*, p. 112..

³³⁴ *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 13-72. This passage is also quoted by Zemgulys (*Modernism and Locations*, p. 123), who mistakenly names Forster’s aunt Laura “Effie Ferrers” and suggests that “West Hackhurst” was written “fifteen years after” *Howards End* (in fact it was 35).

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wealthy member of the family until he lost his fortune speculating on the stock market and fled to the USA. Robert had, Marianne wrote in her “Recollections”, “the most expensive gardens in the vicinity” and cultivated the acquaintance of royalty.³³⁵ It was Robert Thornton’s home, “close to the present tube-station” on “the south side of the Common”, and not Battersea Rise at the western end of the Common, Forster says, which was “the family nucleus”.³³⁶ Robert’s surviving “memorial” in Clapham, Forster wrote in 1956, was “the exquisite greenhouse or ‘orangery’ where he entertained Queen Charlotte, an elegant classical building with seven columns and a pediment – that is to say it was elegant until recently”, when incorporated into “an L.C.C. Housing Estate”.³³⁷ Forster says that the orangery looks awful there, but never suggests, in the 1950s when council estates were still seen as a solution to social problems rather than a problem in themselves,³³⁸ that the estate ought not to have been built. Forster’s response to the 1950s situation of Robert Thornton’s orangery recalls his mixed feelings a few years earlier about Stevenage new town. In 2007, the Notre Dame Estate seemed to me an island of deprivation in a sea of wealth, weeds growing long there and the swings and roundabouts in a children’s playground rusted and broken. The setting of the orangery perhaps had more “death and desolation” about it than when Forster visited half a century earlier.

In the second section, “Sister: 1815-1852”,³³⁹ the relationship to London of the earlier Thorntons is sketched in terms of their business and charitable activities. Among the central London locations connected with the earlier decades of Marianne’s adulthood are those halls situated mid-way between the City and West End of London where evangelical Anglicans from all over England congregated for huge annual meetings concerned with abolition and missionary work.³⁴⁰ More dramatically, “Sister” narrates the story of a banking crisis in 1825-6.³⁴¹ The fact that the English middle-classes until the early twentieth century stood “upon money as upon islands” was a long-time concern of Forster’s, memorably expressed in *Howards End*.³⁴² Two Thorntons were partners in a bank which collapsed at this time, threatening to destroy the family’s wealth, but one of them, Henry Thornton the younger,

³³⁵ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 36. Marianne’s “Recollections”, given by him to Cambridge University Library in 1966 (see Hanquart-Turner, “Editor’s Introduction”, p. viii), were Forster’s main source.

³³⁶ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 21.

³³⁷ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 38. Photographs taken during Forster’s visit survive: [Anonymous], [photographs of Robert Thornton’s orangery at Clapham], MS KCC/EMF/27/109, : [c.1950-1955].

³³⁸ The change from a belief in a planned future to be achieved through slum clearance to a wish for conservation of the past can be traced by comparing 1930s works on housing with 1970 ones (see e.g. E.D. Simon, *The Anti-Slum Campaign*, Longmans Green: London, 1933, Jeremy Harrison (ed.), *Reprieve for Slums: A Shelter Report*, Shelter: London & Edinburgh, 1972).

³³⁹ *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 73-198.

³⁴⁰ *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 125-6. The meetings peaked in the 1820s and 1830s.

³⁴¹ *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 106-24.

³⁴² *Howards End*, ch. VII p. 46.

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Forster depicts as an honourable and credit-worthy merchant-hero who saved the family. The idyll of Clapham, then, sits on the murky finances of the City, and always risked destruction as the result of rash ventures or inaccurate forecasts.

Eventually, though, it is no spectacular financial crash but the relentless advance of London emphasised in “Battersea Rise” which destroys the world of Marianne’s childhood. The changing world on the fringes of London is well described by a passage near the opening of the third section of *Marianne Thornton*, “Aunt: 1852-1879”:³⁴³

[A]fter Marianne left Battersea Rise, her address became Number One, The Sweep, The Pavement, Clapham Common. It was a graceless address and ‘East Side’ was generally substituted. The Pavement was a convex curve of houses into which was nicked the concave of The Sweep. Both of them survive, but all the houses are new.

No one managed to love The Sweep. The three houses in it formed a single block; Miss Thornton on the left, Dr Spitta in the middle, the Williamses on the right. The Williamses attracted no attention except when their drains smelt, but with Dr Spitta there flickered faint suburban warfare. He wanted a better semi-circle of grass in front, and suggested that the trees should be lopped; Miss Thornton would not have the trees lopped, she liked trees. He wanted the three houses painted alike, which would have conveyed the impression of a single residence with his surgery door in the centre; Miss Thornton did not mind how shabby anything looked, and her nephew drew a line of paint in the night from top to bottom to remind Dr Spitta of his limitations. It was not much of a place to live in for thirty-five years, or to die in; still it served; it had a sideways squint of the Common and the Cock Pond and the Church, and she liked to fancy it was ‘within sound of the Battersea Rise Dinner Bell’, half a mile away. The original Thornton estate was close, with cousins still living on it, and behind her was the amusing growth of Clapham. Modernity never frightened her. When she was asked to sign a protest against the introduction of horse-drawn trams, her comment was ‘Not if I know’d it’, and she wished she was well enough to use the things herself.³⁴⁴

This environment, unlike Battersea Rise and the Walthamstow of “Mr. and Mrs. Abbey’s Difficulties”, is thoroughly urbanised. Dr Spitta’s ambitions, connected with the word *suburban*, are squalid, and the sound of “the Battersea Rise Dinner Bell” is an illusion. Cherry and Pevsner situate Clapham’s change from somewhere “quite separate from London” into a suburb in the 1840s;³⁴⁵ the squabbles at The Sweep took place not long afterwards. Most of *Marianne Thornton* occupies a position of belatedness relative to the heroic age of the book’s first section. The “amusing growth of Clapham” to the north “behind” Number One, The Sweep is as central to the meaning of the biography as are the details of individuals’ lives.

Despite Marianne’s tolerance of “[m]odernity”, Forster portrays her in old age as a

³⁴³ *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 199-245.

³⁴⁴ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 201.

³⁴⁵ Cherry & Pevsner, *London South*, p. 379.

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dinosaur, with “little perception of the industrialism that was rapidly engulfing” young mid-Victorians and unaware of “the existence of a shop-assistant class”.³⁴⁶ Marianne’s attitude to governesses is something Forster finds “discreditable”: in her letters to one governess “[t]he employer has too much the whip-hand [...] and flicks too knowingly at the sore places”; he reminds readers that his own mother was a governess when she met the Thorntons, before marrying Marianne’s nephew.³⁴⁷ Her family, the Whichelos, introduce a struggling, semi-genteel portion of the London middle-classes into his story. Lily Forster was the daughter of “a drawing-master” who “painted pleasing pictures of the Claude-Turner type” and, having a large family, “had to teach in Stockwell Grammar School and other institutions of the Clapham neighbourhood”.³⁴⁸ The “amusing growth of Clapham”, it becomes clear, is a piece of free indirect discourse representing Marianne’s snobbish and outdated attitude to an often struggling but also vibrant and human London which was growing around her:

The children had to earn their living almost in their childhood, the boys as clerks, the girls as governesses. It seems terrible as one writes it down, cushioned by the Welfare State, and Dickensian catastrophes did occur. But there were good looks about and good taste and good spirits, and it may be that these qualities form as sound a defence against Fate as a solid education and a considered morality. Anyhow the Whichelos muddled through. They had no enthusiasm for work, they were devoid of public spirit, and they were averse to piety and quick to detect the falsity sometimes accompanying it.³⁴⁹

The spectre of Leonard Bast, who initially lives somewhere near Stockwell, rises again. These lines suggest that humanity cannot be contained by government planning, and Robert Thornton’s orangery *did* look “death and desolation” to Forster when it was surrounded by the Notre Dame Estate. But there are no sneers at the Welfare State here. Forster is not nostalgic about the Victorian era, even in old age.

The final part of *Marianne Thornton*, recounting Forster’s own arrival and early childhood, includes London-related squabbles in which Marianne tries to make Forster’s mother remove him as a toddler from Melcombe Place in Marylebone. Forster quotes from a letter by his mother in which a cranky, ageing Marianne is mentioned as insisting that “London is very bad for that child”. Lily herself laughed at Marianne for distinguishing the winds at Melcombe Place from those at Clapham: both are London, she thinks.³⁵⁰ Marianne

³⁴⁶ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 228.

³⁴⁷ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 225.

³⁴⁸ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 249. See also Furbank I pp. 1-4.

³⁴⁹ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 250, noting that the muddle of the Whichelos seems like a positive rather than a negative quality.

³⁵⁰ *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 259-60.

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observed that at Melcombe Place “[y]our rooms are so small”; Lily retorted: “I am afraid I shall never have such large ones again”.³⁵¹ She never did, yet Forster at the end of the biography sees this as nothing to mourn. Cosier and more low-key on London than either *Howards End* or “London Is a Muddle”, *Marianne Thornton* describes the inner suburbs of the city as a place whose buried layers, unlike those underneath Adelaide House near London Bridge, are still close to the surface.

5.9. Being In-Between: “John Skelton” and the Train Up to Town

Forster wrote virtually nothing about the flat in Chiswick. His publisher B.W. Fagan called this site a “London retreat” to which Forster would cart a “battered and disreputable handbag” containing “a hairbrush, a newspaper, half a pair of pyjamas, two eggs in a brown paper bag, a house-shoe, a book by Henry James, and various assorted articles” on brief jaunts down from Cambridge in his later years.³⁵² A retreat or hiding place in the metropolis for a writer of global fame is noteworthy, indexing as it does both the anonymity of the city so much the concern of modern writers from Blake to Eliot, and the conditions of post-modern celebrity.

Late in his career, Forster described the Tudor poet John Skelton as responsible for two distinct groups of English regional works, one connected with London and another with a different region. Skelton, Forster says, was primarily “an East Anglian” but “evidently liked London and the court, being a busy contentious fellow”.³⁵³ He makes different poems by Skelton represent different regions, situating “Philip Sparrow” among “the East Anglian poems” then turning “to London and the political satires”.³⁵⁴ Certain genres belong in certain places, it seems: Skelton’s poems of personal affection, however rough, belong in East Anglia; his “contentious” works in London. One combative, anti-Scottish poem, Forster says, was generally thought to have been written by Skelton “in his Diss rectory”, but he sees this as “unlikely—not because of its tone, but because it implies a close contact with affairs which he could only have maintained at Court”.³⁵⁵ A key concern of Forster’s “John Skelton”, in other words, is the close association between who Skelton was in terms of place,

³⁵¹ *Marianne Thornton*, p. 260.

³⁵² B.W. Fagan, “Forster and His Publishers” in Stallybrass, *Aspects of E.M. Forster*, pp. 93-8, here 95.

³⁵³ *Two Cheers*, pp. 135, 136. Originally a lecture delivered at the first Aldeburgh festival in 1950, Forster’s account of Skelton was gathered soon afterwards into *Two Cheers for Democracy*.

³⁵⁴ *Two Cheers*, pp. 136, 145.

³⁵⁵ *Two Cheers*, p. 150.

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and what sort of writer he was. “John Skelton” may seem a whimsical piece of belle-lettristic criticism written by an old man. Yet there is a clarity in the association between the writer and local and regional English place here which lays bare the central concerns of Forster’s whole career.

Forster portrays Skelton as, in terms of place identity, neither one thing or the other, and other commentators saw the elderly Forster in much the same way. In 1959, a piece written by Molly Panter-Downes for the *New Yorker* to mark Forster’s eightieth birthday viewed him as a Cambridge “Kingsman”, but emphasised the continued London connections often forgotten in views of his old age:

Though he has now been based at King’s for thirteen years, he retains a small flat in London and thinks nothing of popping up from Cambridge by an afternoon train, attending a concert, going on to somebody’s party, and getting himself home late to his flat by underground, since taxis are one of the luxuries he does not approve of treating himself to. After a few days of seeing theatres and his friends, and maybe taking in several miles of any large and exhausting exhibition on view, he returns to Cambridge in good shape.³⁵⁶

The journey between London and Cambridge is also recorded in a diary entry representing an ordinary day earlier in the 1950s.³⁵⁷ Garnett’s recollection of Forster in the early 1920s rushing away from parties in Bloomsbury to catch the last train “back to Weybridge” encapsulated a frozen, age-old Bloomsbury tradition about Forster, but the more vivid diary entries of Siegfried Sassoon simultaneously depict Forster as continually shuttling between London and the genteel outer suburbs.³⁵⁸ The in-between space of the commuter train as described in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *Maurice* should be invoked here too. London is the in-between place of Forster’s writing: hateful but liberating; ever-changing but ever-present from his birth in Melcombe Place to the Chiswick flat he retained until death. Through it runs the endless flux sometimes symbolising sexuality, of the river’s flow. In the same year that he described to Britten “Bob coaching younger policemen” on the Thames, Forster told the composer that what he wanted from *Billy Budd* was a sense of “love constricted, perverted, poisoned, but never the less flowing down its agonising channel; a sexual discharge gone evil”.³⁵⁹ real and local place is once again inseparable from the half-buried personal undertones of Forster’s writing.

³⁵⁶ Molly Panter-Downes, “Kingsman” [1959] in Stape, *Interviews and Recollections*, pp. 196-205, here 198.

³⁵⁷ “Locked Journal”, 18 October 1951.

³⁵⁸ Garnett, “Forster and Bloomsbury”, p. 32; Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries 1923-1925*, Rupert Hart-Davis (ed.), Faber: London & Boston, 1985, pp. 48-9.

³⁵⁹ Forster to Benjamin Britten, December 1950.

5.10. Conclusion

Being a Londoner makes it hard to accept generalisations about this particular massive and complicated place. Forster's writing about London frequently sees it from outside, with the suggestion that it threatens those nearby. Such a perspective is exemplified by the "red rust" of London "creeping" over the other counties of southern England at the close of *Howards End*, and the "London fog" which penetrates the pine forests of the Surrey Hills in *A Room with a View*.³⁶⁰ The outsider's view can be positive, though, as in the "rare inversion" of a longing view back towards the teeming metropolis in "West Hackhurst" in which the city becomes equated with "romance".³⁶¹ From the 1920s onwards, the city was transformed for him into a place of sexual and intellectual liberation, a place in which he operated as a public intellectual, yet a place in which he never felt unequivocally at home.

³⁶⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XLIV p. 240; *Room with a View*, ch. 10 p. 130.

³⁶¹ "West Hackhurst", p. 23.

6. King's College and Cambridge

6.1. Views of Forster's Cambridge

One version of Forster's relationship with Cambridge is well-known: liberation in youth; the intellectual world of G.E. Moore; the final spiritual and physical home, with pilgrims coming to visit him there. According to Furbank, Forster's Cambridge "was essentially the 'Apostolic' one", the reference being to the elite discussion society of the Apostles which Forster was invited to join in 1901.¹ But Forster's relationship with the university city was considerably more varied and complex than this version of it indicates. Forster lived long enough to create what could be considered an authorised version of himself, albeit one less systematic than the reworking of a literary career to be found in the New York Edition of Henry James's works, or in the development of Hardy's Wessex.² Unlike James and Hardy, Forster never had to write to short deadlines for a periodical in order to get novels published and, perhaps in consequence, he hardly modified the texts of his novels in shaping this authorised version of himself. *Maurice* is his only novel to have undergone substantial revision, and that was of a manuscript, not a published book. The text of *A Passage to India* was tweaked in response to comments on matters of detail, but having published it Forster, in Mary Lago's words, "had had his say on India in novel form".³

Rather than in his novels, it was above all in his prefatory statements and broadcasts that Forster created a version of Cambridge for public consumption. This was an idealised Cambridge of the past, "the Cambridge of G.E. Moore which I knew at the turn of the century: the fearless uninfluential Cambridge that sought for reality and cared for truth", "not the Truth of the mystic or the ter-uth of the preacher but truth with a small 't'".⁴ Forster's public version of Cambridge was highly influential. It influenced the American academics and journalists who visited him there during the 1950s and 1960s, for example.⁵ It also influenced the public image of England's ancient universities – evening sunshine, punting,

¹ Furbank I, p. 77. Forster was elected to the Apostles on 9 February 1901 (*Chronology*, p. 10).

² See Simon Gattrell, "Wessex" in Dale Kramer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1999.

³ Mary Lago, *E.M. Forster: A Literary Life*, St Martin's Press: New York, p. 93.

⁴ *Longest Journey*, p. xxiii; see Elizabeth Heine, "Afterword" in *Longest Journey*, pp. 291-349, here 314.

⁵ Molly Panter-Downes, "Kingsman" [1959] in J.H. Stape (ed.), *E.M. Forster: Interviews and Recollections*, Palgrave: Basingstoke & New York, 1993, pp. 196-205; Wilfred Stone, "Some Bloomsbury Interviews and Memories", *Twentieth-Century Literature* 43 (1997), pp. 177-95.

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spires, candy-striped blazers, effete young men with strong jaws and mushroom-shaped hairstyles – which appeared on screen during the 1980s in the Merchant-Ivory adaptation of *Maurice*.⁶

There are two Forsterian Cambridges, one for outsiders and one for insiders. In some of the writings which constructed the latter, Forster's "Locked Journal" chief among them, the insider group consisted until 1970 only of Forster himself. Inside Cambridge circles, Forster's identity as a member of King's defined him. King's in the early twentieth century had been perceived as somewhere combining sexual, not least homosexual, license with free-thought in intellectual matters.⁷ Leavis partly ascribed the success of Forster's 1927 Clark Lectures at Trinity College, later published as *Aspects of the Novel*, to the fact that "Kingsmen are always loyal",⁸ and loyalty to a group of insiders, a fellowship or brotherhood, is a vital element of Forster's Cambridge. The list of those given the manuscript of *Maurice* to read before about 1920 resembles a who's who of Apostles and of King's or Trinity College – and later Bloomsbury – contemporaries: E.J. Dent, Dickinson, John Maynard Keynes, John Tresidder Sheppard, Sydney Waterlow, Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey and R.C. Trevelyan.⁹

Forster's two presentations of Cambridge, that for outsiders and that for insiders, have things in common. Both turn away from town, for example, concentrating only on gown. Forster was physically and emotionally drawn to working-class men throughout life, but they hardly figure in any of his accounts of Cambridge. The women in his fictional accounts of Cambridge tend to be outsiders. Examples are manifold: the interloping Agnes Pembroke at the beginning of *The Longest Journey*; connections of hers and the Ansell's; and the college servant Mrs Aberdeen in the same novel, an outsider in that she goes home to an outlying district of the town every night. With the exception of Virginia Woolf who, in *A Room of*

⁶ James Ivory (dir.), *Maurice* (film), 1987. A comparable 1980s image of the ancient universities in the early twentieth century appeared in the 1982 Granada TV adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. It is near impossible to weigh the relative importance of Forster, Waugh and other contributors to it such as Max Beerbohm in the construction of this image.

⁷ "Balliol fills the ordinary high places in Church and State, but if you are going to start a new religion or regulate a new country, it is advisable to call on us. [...] The word for guidance by Kingsmen and King's ideas has not yet been coined, but Aristodemocracy has been suggested", Kingsman Shane Leslie wrote (*The Cantab*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1926, p. 97).

⁸ Cited in Oliver Stallybrass, "Editor's Introduction" [1974] in *Aspects of the Novel*, pp. 9-19, here 13.

⁹ Philip Gardner, "The Evolution of Forster's *Maurice*" in Judith Scherer Herz & Robert K. Martin (eds), *E.M. Forster: Centenary Revaluations*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto & Buffalo, 1982, pp. 204-23, here 207-8; L.P. Wilkinson, *Kingsmen of a Century: 1873-1972* [1980], King's College: Cambridge, 1981, pp. 49-51, 70-1, 88-90, 216-19. Among those who read the manuscript of *Maurice* soon after its completion, Edward Carpenter was considerably older than the others, but he, as well as being influential on the book's view of homosexuality, was also a Cambridge man. The only women to read the first, 1914 version of *Maurice* were married to Cambridge connections of Forster's: Elizabeth Trevelyan, and Florence, the wife of Forster's King's contemporary George Barger (see Furbank I, pp. 63, 113, 219).

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One's Own, presented herself as an outsider in Cambridge and whom Forster ironically imagined after her death as receiving a degree from the university,¹⁰ women are excluded from his subsequent writings on the place. Then again, his public idealisation of Cambridge, by which he means the university, disguises its less appealing side. A bitter clash with the classical scholar and poet A.E. Housman, Professor of Latin and Fellow of Trinity when Forster delivered the Clark lectures there, is an example of the feuds which could develop behind the elegant facades.

Wilfred Stone, quoting Forster's biography of Dickinson on the "peculiar clean white light" of Cambridge discussion societies, asks whether they could "really have been *this* good?" and draws attention to "Forster's extravagant thankfulness at being received in this company".¹¹ But other readers between the 1970s and the 1990s tended to believe Forster's own account of his relationship with Cambridge. John Colmer, for example, accepts Forster's 1960 introduction to *The Longest Journey*, written 53 years after its first publication, as an authoritative guide to that novel.¹² Glen Cavaliero, expressing what I have called the 'spirit of place' view, sees Cambridge in Forster's life and work as a "moral and intellectual climate" opposed to that of Surrey; S.P. Rosenbaum takes the claims of the 1960 introduction still further, arguing that *The Longest Journey* is an illustration of Moore's 1903 philosophical article "The Refutation of Idealism", and in a later piece traces Bloomsbury's roots in "puritan, utilitarian Cambridge"; Claude J. Summers accepts that Forster's account of Dickinson's move from "misery at public school" to joy and enlightenment at King's is "reminiscent of Forster's own experience as distilled in *The Longest Journey*"; Mary Lago accepts Forster's account of his intellectual flowering as an undergraduate and – in his fourth year – Apostle, and finds in the Cambridge of *The Longest Journey*, a system of "values"; Jeremy Tambling refers to Cambridge only as part of the "touristic sense of Edwardian England" he detects in the Merchant-Ivory films.¹³ All of them repeat Forster's public account of Cambridge as his spiritual home and site of liberation, which associates it with

¹⁰ *Two Cheers*, pp. 242-58.

¹¹ Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, 1966, p. 42.

¹² John Colmer, "The Longest Journey" [1975] in Harold Bloom (ed.), *E.M. Forster*, Chelsea House: New York, 1987, pp. 47-65, here 53.

¹³ Glen Cavaliero, *A Reading of E.M. Forster*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1979, p. 14; S.P. Rosenbaum, "The Longest Journey: E.M. Forster's Refutation of Idealism" in G.K. Das & John Beer (eds), *E.M. Forster: A Human Exploration: Centenary Essays*, New York University Press: New York, 1979, pp. 32-54; S.P. Rosenbaum, *Victorian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group Volume 1*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1987, p. 30; Summers 1983: 313; Lago, *Literary Life*, pp. 13, 34; Jeremy Tambling, "Introduction" in Jeremy Tambling (ed.), *E.M. Forster* ['New Casebooks'], Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 1995, pp. 1-13, here 2. Tambling's use of the word "nostalgic" suggests that he draws no firm line between Forster's writings and the later screen adaptations of them.

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images of light and of an opening door.

Among certain critics writing since the late 1980s an awareness has emerged that Forster's Cambridge is related to the creation and maintenance of elite groups. They disagree, however, whether such groups should be interpreted positively or negatively. Rustom Bharucha sees elites like the Bloomsbury Group as "marginal" attempts to resist the "aggressive" and "competitive" "ethos of masculinity" which dominated Britain in the period of the Empire.¹⁴ Jonathan Rose, in an account which emphasises that the BBC Third Programme's 1940s and 1950s controllers George Barnes and John Morris were Kingsmen, presents this particular radio network as a nepotistic attempt to establish "a closed shop for intellectuals, which would deliberately exclude the self-educated".¹⁵

Others provide a more nuanced perspective. Joseph Bristow shows how, in the character of Stewart Ansell in *The Longest Journey*, Forsterian Cambridge-based brotherhood is treated ironically: "[I]f *The Longest Journey* seeks to reach out toward the real 'cow' many miles from Cambridge, it does so on a model that is inescapably tied to the exclusive brotherly ambience of the university it would sharply criticise".¹⁶ Bristow is alert to the shortcomings of Ansell, the novel's philosopher character, notably his inability to think other than in abstractions.¹⁷ The university, however, needs to be distinguished from the college and each again from societies such as the Apostles, instead of merely being lumped together with them. There has not been enough critical sensitivity to the fact that in Forster's two chief fictional accounts of it, *The Longest Journey* and *Maurice*, Cambridge is portrayed very differently.

Recent critics continue to assume that Forster's Cambridge is a matter of common knowledge. Howard J. Booth, discussing *Maurice*, does not mention Cambridge once.¹⁸ But nearly a quarter of the novel covers its protagonist's university days, and Clive Durham is left haunted for the rest of his life by images of Maurice Hall appearing from "some eternal Cambridge [...] beckoning to him [...], shaking out the scents and sounds of the May Term" at the novel's close.¹⁹ Both Clive's homosexuality his and subsequent repression of it are inseparable from the place in which he had his sexual awakening. Among recent critics who

¹⁴ Rustom Bharucha, "Forster's Friends" [1986] in Bloom, *Forster*, 153-68, here 157.

¹⁵ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 2001, p. 436.

¹⁶ Joseph Bristow, "*Fratrum Societati*: Forster's Apostolic Dedications" in Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (eds), *Queer Forster*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1997, pp. 113-36, here 124-5. The cow is material reality.

¹⁷ Bristow, "*Fratrum Societati*:", pp. 121-2.

¹⁸ Howard J. Booth, "*Maurice*" in David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007, pp. 173-87.

¹⁹ *Maurice*, ch. V. p. 18 - ch.XIV p. 64, ch. XLVI p. 214.

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do mention Cambridge, Anne Ardis sees Forster's fiction set in southern Europe as strongly critical of the attitudes of "Cambridge men", while David Medalie derives Bloomsbury from the Apostles and the Apostles from Moore, thus making all of them offspring of the Cambridge of Forster's 1960 "Introduction".²⁰

Furbank, in his authorised biography and elsewhere, has developed a rich biographical view of Forster's relationship to Cambridge.²¹ Like those of Noel Annan and L.P. Wilkinson, Furbank's narrative is that of an insider.²² A Kingsman and Apostle himself (unlike William Plomer, initially Forster's choice as biographer), Furbank holidayed with Forster more than once before being appointed official biographer. He admitted this closeness himself in an article published just after Forster's death, recalling an occasion when he had shared a hotel room with Forster and a conversation between the two as they undressed for bed.²³ Furbank's personal closeness to Forster and the more detached perspective of recent critics are both worthwhile ways of getting closer to Forster's Cambridge: shuttling between insider and outsider positions is a helpful manoeuvre.

In considering Cambridge, Forster critics have not on the whole distinguished sufficiently between college, university and town. The volume edited by Stallybrass for Forster's ninetieth birthday, filled with pieces by insiders, King's connections and other friends, contains a piece on Forster and King's by a Kingsman,²⁴ but nothing on Cambridge more generally. And Forster's relationship with Cambridge is not often sufficiently historicised. To an outsider, perhaps, Cambridge has a medieval image, yet like the English public schools it was greatly modified by Victorian reformers. New statutes of 1856 led to a transformation of the University and its colleges.²⁵ Among the consequences were the admission of non-Etonians to King's and the metamorphosis of the College from a moribund institution into an academic powerhouse, guided by men such as Oscar Browning, Dickinson

²⁰ Anne Ardis, "Hellenism and the Lure of Italy" in *Bradshaw, Cambridge Companion*, pp. 62-76, here 63, 66; Medalie 2007: 35-36.

²¹ P.N. Furbank, "The Personality of E.M. Forster", *Encounter* 35.5 (1970), pp. 61-8; P.N. Furbank, "The Philosophy of E.M. Forster" in Herz & Martin, *Centenary Revaluations*, pp. 37-51.

²² Noel Annan, "Forster, Edward Morgan (1879-1970)" in E.T. Williams & C.S. Nicholls (eds), *The Dictionary of National Biography 1961-1970*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1981; Noel Annan, "Morgan Forster Remembered" [1970] in Stape, *Interviews and Recollections*, pp. 80-2; Patrick Wilkinson, "Forster and King's" in Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), *Aspects of E.M. Forster: Essays and Recollections Written for His Ninetieth Birthday January 1, 1969*, Harcourt, Brace & World: New York, 1969, pp. 13-28.

²³ Furbank, "Personality", p. 68.

²⁴ Wilkinson, "Forster and King's".

²⁵ See University of Cambridge, "The Revived University of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" in *The University of Cambridge: A Brief History*; see also Christopher N.L. Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge, Volume IV: 1870-1990*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993, pp. 82-98 on reform between 1872 and 1914.

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and Forster's tutor Nathaniel Wedd.²⁶ Other consequences included the establishment of new Triposes, or courses of study, and of the first colleges for women.²⁷ None of the actual buildings Forster inhabited at King's predated the nineteenth century.²⁸ All this is the kind of detail commonly overlooked by critical discussions of Forster's Cambridge, not to speak of the historical debate on the relationship between universities and elites in modern Britain.²⁹ Outsiders' views of the university now seem mainly based on pretty buildings, Georgian prints and screen recreations. That they also include an image of groups of young men, potentially homosexual, fervently debating the Good, has a lot to do with Forster's authorised version.

Forster's best-known portrait of Cambridge is in *The Longest Journey*, but those of *Maurice* and *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* are also important in the construction of such an image. In addition to these writings, Forster's diaries for the years 1898-1900 and again after 1946 contain many of his most intimate private projections of the place. Forster's changing and often contradictory feelings about Cambridge during the period 1901-1946, when he was *not* living there, are revealed by several essays and the various writings, some more public than others, in which he analysed his spat with Housman. Cambridge in Forster is more than the passages in which the architecture and other famous signifiers of the university are described. It is also connected with the movement to and fro along a railway to London, the shape of a life dominated by Cambridge, as Clive's is revealed to be at the end of *Maurice*, a life in which Cambridge is thought of as an inevitable "stage", as a family friend suggests it will be to Maurice as he leaves school. It is also the Cambridge attitude carried abroad, as by Fielding or Hamidullah in *A Passage to India*, or by the characters of Forster short stories

²⁶ Christopher Gillie, *A Preface to Forster*, Longman: Harlow, 1983, p. 182; Furbank I pp. 53-60. To avoid exaggerating a sense that the mid-Victorian reforms represented a sudden birth of modernity at Cambridge, though, it is worth noting that King's was only a "little closed society of Etonian fellows and scholars" from approximately 1814 to 1873. Between the college's foundation in the fifteenth century and 1814 there had usually been some, if only a few, non-foundation fellow-commoners among the students. See J. Saltmarsh, "King's College" in J.P.C. Roach (ed.), *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely, Volume III: The City and University of Cambridge* [VCH], Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research: London, 1959, pp. 376-408, here 398, 403.

²⁷ Gillian Sutherland, "Education" in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, three volumes, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990, vol. III, pp. 119-69, here 154. Among the new Triposes was Modern History, studied by Forster in his fourth year as an undergraduate.

²⁸ His first lodgings in the town at King's Parade, and the house he lived in after the Second World War with L.P. Wilkinson and his wife at 3 Trumpington Street might be older, but do not date back further than the eighteenth century. On Wilkinson see King's College, Cambridge, Modern Archive, "The Papers of Lancelot Patrick Wilkinson".

²⁹ See e.g. R.D. Anderson, *Universities and Elites in Britain since 1800* [1992], Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995.

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such as the early "Albergo Empedocle".³⁰

6.2. Physical Encounters with King's and Cambridge

6.2.1. Histories: Architectural, Social, Corporate, Anecdotal,

Disparate categories of writing and image illuminate the Cambridge inhabited and written about by Forster. Among them are memoirs and recollections, such as those of Annan, Stone and Gwen Raverat.³¹ Personal knowledge of Forster and King's stands behind Annan's accounts of the Cambridge spies, and of how Forster has been associated with their treachery³². Novels by Kingsmen, such as Shane Leslie's *The Cantab* and E.F. Benson's *David of King's*, also animate the picture.³³ Diaries, memoirs and autobiographies are helpful, as are the official histories by John Saltmarsh and L.P. Wilkinson on King's, and by Elisabeth Leedham-Green on the University.³⁴ The civic side of Cambridge has received less attention than the academic: The *Victoria History of the Counties of England* volume concerned with "The City and University of Cambridge", for instance, devotes more than twice as many pages to the latter as to the former.³⁵ Photographs also enlighten, for example those of Forster's rooms at King's immediately after he died, revealing as they do the bric-a-brac of a lifetime, paintings, old furniture and oriental carpets on the one hand, and a grim, draughty, British institution on the other. They show that Forster slept in a narrow single bed

³⁰ Maurice, p. 16; *Life to Come*, pp. 10-35.

³¹ Noel Annan, *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics and Geniuses*, HarperCollins: London, 1999; Stone, "Bloomsbury Interviews and Memories"; Gwen Raverat, *Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood* [1951], Faber: London, 1987. Stone's account ("Bloomsbury Interviews and Memories", pp. 177-9) of Moore as a silent old man in a shabby Victorian house away from the colleges is peculiarly evocative.

³² Noel Annan, *Our Age*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London, 1990, pp. 119-20; 232-5.

³³ Both of these novels were published in 1924, also the year of Forster's *A Passage to India*. Leslie, *Cantab*, p. 45. Like the earlier historian J.W. Clark (*Cambridge: Brief Historical and Descriptive Notes*, Seeley: London, 1890, p. 180), Leslie views the Victorian Gothic parts of the College as pretentious, describing the main entrance as bearing "some resemblance to the grotesque Pavilion at Brighton, and more to a magnum of brandy flanked by four soda-water bottles" (Leslie, *Cantab*, p. 46).

³⁴ Diaries e.g. of A.C. Benson (*The Diary of Arthur Christopher Benson* [1987-1925], Percy Lubbock (ed.), Hutchinson: London, 1931); on Leonard Woolf's memoirs see Rosenbaum, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, p. 120. Saltmarsh, "King's College"; L.P. Wilkinson, *A Century of King's: 1873-1972*, King's College: Cambridge, 1980; Wilkinson, *Kingsmen of a Century*; Elisabeth Leedham-Green, *A Concise History of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996. Leedham-Green provides a corrective to a Forster-centred viewpoint in emphasising science at twentieth-century Cambridge.

³⁵ Roach, *History of Cambridge*.

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with a chamber pot underneath.³⁶

Among architectural studies, the mighty standard Victorian history of the university's buildings by Robert Willis and John Willis Clark considers King's and Eton College together and thus positions Forster's college at the heart of the British establishment³⁷ Pevsner's descriptions of Cambridge architectural space are also suggestive:

Open courts, i.e. courts open on one of their four sides, are specially characteristic of Cambridge [...]. They establish a relation between college space and surrounding outer space rare at Oxford, where colleges seem altogether more closed in, more forbidding even in their stone fronts. Cambridge likes occasionally to leave gaps between the buildings of a court so as to let space float in and out. King's is the most familiar example.³⁸

Pevsner's comments suggest that the atmosphere of a place is best gathered by open-minded personal observation. And like Cambridge as described by Pevsner, Forster's Cambridge was always linked to the outside world, not turned in on itself, from the cow across the river in *The Longest Journey*, to the dell of the same novel and the motorcycle ride in *Maurice*, to the inviting mode of address of the Clark Lectures and the welcome he offered to a stream of visitors when he was living there as a literary celebrity in the post-war decades. Architectural history is indeed bare without people in it. In a photo of Senate House,³⁹ a young woman checking her own or others' exam results is as important as the style of the colonnade, since it tells us something about *use*. At this point it might be helpful to think back to Certeau's "Walking in the City",⁴⁰ its concern being with the walker through the city as creative appropriator.

How Cambridge was before Forster got there matters too: places exist in time. The nineteenth-century architectural historian and Cambridge University official John Willis Clark, in a topographic and historical book about the university aimed at a general audience, gives an account of King's itself which plods through the statutes of the College before

³⁶ Ramsey 1970. See also *Selected Letters II*, p. 291, where photographs of his rooms taken in 1969 are reproduced.

³⁷ Robert Willis & John Willis Clark, *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge, and of the Colleges of Cambridge and Eton*, three volumes, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1988, vol. I, pp. 313-619. King's and Eton share a Founder, King Henry VI. The former Eton house master Oscar Browning was a famous, even infamous, King's figure during Forster's first years there (see Ian Anstruther, *Oscar Browning: A Biography*, John Murray: London, 1983).

³⁸ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire*, Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1970, p. 38.

³⁹ See Image 24.

⁴⁰ Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City" [1974] (translated from French by Steven Rendall) in Graham Ward (ed.), *The Certeau Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford & Malden, MA, 2000, 101-18, here 106-7. As Certeau points out, "[t]races" – among them narratives such as the present one and photographs – of a pedestrian journey through a city "lose what existed, the act of *going by itself*".

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1800.⁴¹ But his chapter on social life at early nineteenth-century Cambridge is considerably more evocative, evoking the landscape around the university in the decades preceding the coming of the railway and the reform of the statutes.⁴² The land was then “quite unenclosed”, and “to the south and south-east” it was possible for “a man on horseback” to “gallop for miles, uninterrupted by a single fence”.⁴³ In the same period, a “row of ancient houses” obscured the front of King's before the construction of the screen and gatehouse by William Wilkins.⁴⁴ There is something Dickensian about Clark's view of the recent past, an attempt to find quirky, near-medieval survivals into living memory, for example in his description of University dignitaries being jostled by a hostile crowd during a fair.⁴⁵ Clark's narrative indicates how Forster's immediate predecessors saw their city and their university. Glimpses of King's around the time of Forster's death, during Edmund Leach's time as Provost (1966-79), when the college was more tolerant of student radicalism than any other at Cambridge college, are also available.⁴⁶ In 1972, the College was among the first group of men's colleges to admit women undergraduates.

The physical layout of King's today is no medieval survival, although it does records a medieval plan. The endpapers of a short introduction to the College printed privately by King's in the 1950s reproduce the plan intended by the Founder, Henry VI, alongside the actual layout of the College buildings at the time the book appeared.⁴⁷ In the earliest plan for the college, it had a shape quite different from the open one Pevsner describes. Its main axis was originally to have been linear and to have extended from King's Parade to the River Cam, roughly east to west. The Chapel would have had a court to each side of it and therefore been at the physical heart of the College, not left standing alone, and far larger than everything around it, as was eventually the case. In 1592, the College would not have looked the way it does today: the mighty Chapel with two small courts huddled to the north of it and a jumble of buildings to the east, but to the south just an empty gap.⁴⁸ This is the space which, until the eighteenth century, was scheduled to be filled according to the Founder's

⁴¹ Clark, *Cambridge*, pp. 282-325.

⁴² Clark, *Cambridge*, pp. 142-86.

⁴³ Clark, *Cambridge*, p. 283.

⁴⁴ Clark, *Cambridge*, pp. 284, 180.

⁴⁵ Clark, *Cambridge*, pp. 285-7. Clark's account of a clash between undergraduates and local young men in 1846 while the famous American dwarf General Tom Thumb was being exhibited, in which “the blood” is said to have “flowed from no part more vital than the nose”, seems perhaps has excessively jaunty tone which attempts to recapture that of an eighteenth-century novel, but clashes between town and gown certainly did happen. See Leedham-Green, *Concise History*, p. 112; Roach, *History of Cambridge*, pp. 76-7.

⁴⁶ James Laidlaw, “Leach, Sir Edmund Ronald (1910-1989)” in ODNB; Wilkinson, *Century of King's*, pp. 129-53.

⁴⁷ John Saltmarsh, *King's College and Its Chapel* [1961], Cambridge: King's College, 1975.

⁴⁸ Willis & Clark, *Architectural History of Cambridge*, vol. I p. 553.

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plan: the courts and buildings of Forster's day occupy what was then walled emptiness. Until the construction of the Gibbs Building during the 1720s to the south of the Chapel, the College buildings were concentrated to the north of the Chapel, hemmed in by late medieval walls and with the Chapel looming over them,⁴⁹ rather than on a great plain with gusts of air rattling through as is the feeling today in the Front Court and behind the Gibbs Building towards the Cam.

Architecturally speaking, the older Cambridge colleges have not changed very dramatically since the beginning of the twentieth century. Images of mid-twentieth-century Cambridge, meanwhile, the Cambridge of the era when Forster lived there, show it looking from a twenty-first-century point of view, drab, tidy and coloured in muted tones; still English rather than a stop on the global tourist trail.⁵⁰ The different Cambridges of the Founder's plan, the unenclosed fields of the nineteenth century, and of our own time's globalised studies and tourism, can fall into a longer *durée*. But understanding the physicality of King's in history and its relationship to other components of the city and University, an understanding to be attained both through study and actual visits, illuminates Forster's relationship to it.

6.2.2. In Cambridge, Summer 2006

As a boy, I had relatives living near Cambridge and it must have been then that I first visited the city and walked around some of its colleges. My earliest clear memory of the city, though, is of interviewing at King's at the age of seventeen in 1987. The memories of that afternoon are scattered: a friendly porter; an antechamber outside a don's study, where I stared at a bookshelf and met the interviewee who had been in before me; a hot room with two young dons sitting above me – me on a soft sofa, they on hard chairs – firing questions about Imagism; tea at a hotel afterwards. I did not get an offer and hardly visited the place for another nineteen years. Instead I became first a redbrick undergraduate then an Oxford postgraduate, then worked in London and abroad. The summers of 2006 and 2007, however, saw me spend several weeks in Cambridge. In 2006 I stayed first at a bed and breakfast off the Huntingdon Road – and Cambridge is also places like this –, then in the ancient brick front court of Queens' College which had been turned over to conference guests, separated

⁴⁹ See the 1688 print of the College reproduced by Willis & Clark (*Architectural History of Cambridge*, vol. I. p. 323).

⁵⁰ See e.g. a 1950s photograph of the screen and gatehouse of King's with the Chapel (Saltmarsh, *King's College and Its Chapel*, p. 15). Apart from the disappearance of railings next to the road, the 1950s image in the Saltmarsh book is not very different from the 1890s one reproduced by Furbank (I, pp. 112-13). For the view now see Image 25.

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by a narrow street and a wooden door, usually locked, or by an alley stinking of college kitchens, from the library at King's. A year later, my base was a decrepit terraced cottage in the Castle Hill area of the city.⁵¹

During these two summers I worked in the Modern Archive at King's, part of the College Library, in the Wilkins Building.⁵² In the Archive, I looked out through 1820s Gothic Revival windows. The Chapel was ahead, across the main quad beyond the 1870s fountain with its statue of Henry VI. Outside, the quad was crossed from time to time by Senior Members in ones and twos, and was fiercely hot one summer then drenched with rain the next. Groups of tourists emerged sporadically from the Chapel and American undergraduates on a summer program hailed one another. James Gibbs's Fellows' Building, austere and Palladian, was to the left and Wilkins's 1820s screen and gatehouse to the right.⁵³ Every morning, lunchtime and afternoon, climbing or descending the stairs, I passed Oscar Browning's portrait, hung on a rose-coloured wall.

On 1 August 2006 the Second Bursar of King's showed me Forster's rooms and some other places with connections to him. As a first year undergraduate, Forster lived in lodgings across King's Parade from the porter's lodge. The buildings are now owned by the college, and have all recently been renovated. The Second Bursar told me in his mild Scots accent that a lot of "ingenuity" had gone into them. I was expecting rickety staircases, tiny kitchens, airless bathrooms, and oddly-shaped rooms with low beams, rather like the ramshackle terraced house on a street of boutiques in central Oxford where I had lodged for a few months in the spring and summer of 1996. Instead, a neat little set had been placed under the eaves. From outside, their brickwork cleaned and their window-frames spruce and new, shops catering to tourists below, the buildings in 2006 presented a contrast with the grimmer images which remain of them from Forster's lifetime.

The Second Bursar told me that all the King's buildings of the past had been planned as grander and more comprehensive additions to the College than they eventually turned out. There were going to be three buildings like the Gibbs Building, one on the space now occupied by the Wilkins Building and another on the site of the later screen and gatehouse, but the College ran out of money. Likewise in the 1960s there was a plan to replace the whole of the Wilkins Building.⁵⁴ When the screen and gatehouse were themselves built in the early nineteenth century the College simply knocked down the small medieval provost's

⁵¹ See Image 26; Image 27; Image 28.

⁵² I never agreed with Clark (*Cambridge*, p. 180) that the College was unfortunate in being "induced to employ Wilkins", or that the early nineteenth century was "devoid of architectural taste".

⁵³ For the Gibbs Building, see Image 29.

⁵⁴ See Pevsner, *Cambridgeshire*, pp. 98-9.

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lodging that stood between the present-day lodge and the pavement, closer up to the pavement. The Wilkins screen, low, Gothic-revival in style, and with large windows, was derided by the College's Victorian historian Clark but it was precisely this architectural addition which introduced the airiness described by Pevsner as characteristic of Cambridge colleges more broadly in contrast with more enclosed Oxford ones. In the 1970s, the rooms which had been Forster's between 1953 and 1970, together with a neighbouring one were turned into a graduate centre, somewhat battered by the time I visited. An 1870s mantelpiece originally at West Hackhurst and brought here by Forster is still in evidence, but so are pieces of furniture which post-date him, including a table-football table.⁵⁵

Next, I was shown a portrait in oils of Forster dated 1949, in the wine room, where candidates for fellowships are interviewed. In the corridor outside were some cartoons: Oscar Browning appeared again. In the corridor upstairs in the Old Provost's Lodge, there was a red chalk drawing of Forster. I also saw the rooms Forster moved into in his second year, the autumn of 1898:⁵⁶ in the then-new Bodley building with the main room looking northwards to Clare College, and bedroom south towards Queens'. An American summer-school student staying there thought he had heard of Forster. There was a limited view of King's Piece, the meadow across the river. Thinking about the opening of *The Longest Journey*, perhaps set in this room, I looked for cows, but none were visible. More of the river would have been more visible in the 1890s; the farthest wing of the Bodley buildings were not there in Forster's youth, having been built in the 1920s, so there would have been a view north as far as the gardens of Clare College.

Afterwards, the Second Bursar and I walked across the grass back to the Gibbs Building, where his office was. On the grass we stopped by the Victorian fountain: Henry VI on top, holding the will in which he made his founder's donation; figures around it at the bottom. The Second Bursar's room and a neighbouring one shared a grand antechamber lined with books in many different alphabets. On the landing beyond, there was a deep rectangular sink filled with wine glasses waiting to be washed up. The atmosphere was simultaneously scruffy and lordly.

Later still, just before lunch – the wrong time – I took photos in the corridor leading to the Hall in the Wilkins Building. This led to a reprimand from a passing College administrator. “Do not take photos. Please. Just do not take photos.” No doubt tourists with cameras enter forbidden zones throughout the summer. Stammering a bit I explained that I was a visiting

⁵⁵ Forster (*Two Cheers*, pp. 300-1) describes his King's sitting room at the beginning of his essay “In My Library”: its white paint, its variegated bookcases, the early Victorian Gothic windows, its brightness when the sun shines.

⁵⁶ Furbank I, p. 57.

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scholar working in the archive. When she first looked at me, smiling, I had thought she was going to greet me: I felt sure she must have seen me passing through the library over the previous month. I realised now that she had never noticed me. Then I said that I had just been shown round by the Second Bursar and that he had told me that it was I would take photographs for personal use. In response to this there was no apology, only a sniffy withdrawal: "well if you have the Second Bursar's permission that is alright then; all right". I felt awkward, as if I had outstayed my welcome, like a poor relation. An experience of mine such as this might seem irrelevant to an understanding of Forster's relationship with Cambridge. I may come across as resentful and therefore unlikeable in it. But everyone's experience of place includes moments such as these.

6.3. Undergraduate Diaries (1898-9)

Forster was a sporadic diarist. For much of his life he kept no diary at all, at times putting aside the so-called "Locked Journal" which served as his private journal between 1909 and the time of his death, or losing the key then rediscovering it.⁵⁷ The diaries and journals he kept while living in Cambridge are varied. As an undergraduate he used the same commercially-sold diary, Collins' Portable, in 1898 and 1899. Forster kept his later "Locked Journal", by contrast, in a volume which had family resonances of a sort to which he was attached in later life: in the 1850s it had belonged to a cousin on the wealthy Thornton side. The "Locked Journal" is comparable with the commonplace book Forster kept in an equally-prized volume which had once belonged to Bishop Jebb.⁵⁸ Forster critics have not often discussed Forster's diaries and journals as literary texts.⁵⁹ But they demonstrate the range and variety of his views of Cambridge, the fact that it had different emphases at different times in his life, and show the development of related, overlapping sorts of corporate personality.

During the first half of 1898, Forster kept his diary fairly consistently, but gaps appear in the summer and there are no entries at all after 3 October. The 1899 diary has entries on just 53 days scattered through the year. In later years, it was only on 31 December, when Forster typically penned a sort of profit and loss account of the previous year, that his journal almost always got written. There are occasional entries for other dates, with far more and far longer entries in some years than others. The extremely relaxed, even diffident, diary entries that

⁵⁷ "Locked Journal", 7 October 1934, 31 December 1950.

⁵⁸ *Commonplace Book; Marianne Thornton*, pp. 83-4.

⁵⁹ One of the few such discussions is by Stuart Christie (*Worlding Forster: The Passage from Pastoral*, Routledge: New York & Abingdon, 2005, pp. 69-89).

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Forster wrote makes them a particularly revealing source for anyone wishing to understand his relationship – over more than 70 years – with: they disprove the widely held notions that his relationship with Cambridge in old age was entirely harmonious, complacent and exploitative.⁶⁰ Equally, King's should not be merged with the rest of Cambridge, but seen in its specificity. Forster's diaries are accretions, not works shaped like either novels or memoirs. The way place is imagined in them can nevertheless be interpreted as patterned.

The 1898 and 1899 diaries begin in the second term of Forster's first year at King's and end in the first term of his third year.⁶¹ They therefore cover the earlier stages of his undergraduate intellectual development. Furbank's account of these years draws heavily on the diaries, but says nothing about how Cambridge the place is rendered therein;⁶² no other critical discussions of the early diaries exist, to my knowledge. Compared with Forster's two main later journals they are public and conventional, suburban even:⁶³ one might speculate about which stationer they were bought from or whether a relative gave them to him. As their brand name suggests, Collins' Portable diaries are small enough to be carried about with ease, and Forster wrote in them wherever he was staying in these years, in Abinger, Cambridge, Stevenage, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells or Northumberland. Forster was raised in a world which put a great emphasis on corporate personality, something the early diaries reflect. He passes a rainy day in Stevenage reading Kipling's *Captains Courageous*, and keenly follows the fortunes of King's in rowing tournaments, enjoying a "glorious day" on 11 June 1898.⁶⁴ The early diaries portray a young man who attempts to be correct in his responses, or who is content to record conventionality and play his role in it, a role he is still learning. His verdict on the Elizabethan domestic tragedy *Arden of Faversham* is a jaunty "rather good".⁶⁵

In cheering for the King's boat on the river, Forster supports his college within the intercollegiate rivalries of the University, and in so doing presents himself as a normal undergraduate with healthy interests. The same is true when he forces himself alone round the golf course, reflecting that he is "too bad to play with anybody" else.⁶⁶ At the same time, Forster's aesthetic and intellectual interests are beginning to blossom. He notes the lectures

⁶⁰ See e.g. Panter-Downes, "Kingsman"; Simon Raven, "The Strangeness of E.M. Forster" in Stape, *Interviews and Recollections*, pp. 156-61.

⁶¹ 1898 Diary; 1899 Diary.

⁶² Furbank I, pp. 49-71.

⁶³ They include printed information including the names of members of the Cabinet, a list of taxes, excises and duties, and a list of the times abroad in different places when twelve noon at Greenwich (12.09 in Paris).

⁶⁴ 1898 Diary, 7 August, 11 June; see Furbank I, p. 58.

⁶⁵ 1898 Diary, 3 January.

⁶⁶ 1898 Diary, 22 February.

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of Lord Acton on the French Revolution in the spring of 1898, and those of Roger Fry on Venetian painting the following year, also listing what he has been reading.⁶⁷ Oscar Browning appears as a College character but not an intellectual influence: “Thought of going to see O.B. Didn’t”.⁶⁸ When Forster later records a visit to Browning it is to hear gossip about the crowned heads of Europe and to play a Schubert duet with the older man on the piano.

Referring back to the triad of my Introduction and thinking spatio-textually, Cambridge in these early diaries is connected by a railway line to London, and via London – it being necessary to cross London to get the train to Tonbridge or Tunbridge Wells from another terminus – to Forster’s homes in the holidays. The connection through London frequently becomes an opportunity to visit galleries and so for the young Forster to put himself through a programme of aesthetic self-improvement.⁶⁹ Journeys out of Cambridge can also be excursions, such as the one in May 1898 “up Madingley road” which led Forster into an “old chalk pit full of young trees, & thence into a wood where” he “got some bluebells but was turned out by an angry policeman”.⁷⁰ In these diaries there is little or no description of the appearance and atmosphere of Cambridge, although much is implied by the numerous walks and talks with fellow Old Tonbridgians Sydney Worters and Howard MacMunn.⁷¹ References to a “glorious” day watching boat races or the “splendid” garden at Tonbridge hardly convey the writer Forster was to become.⁷²

One place-related dichotomy is that Forster’s reading habits were quite different in Cambridge from at Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. In the holidays he was reading Seeley’s *Expansion of England*, Robert Browning’s *The Ring and the Book* and Kipling’s *Departmental Ditties*; in term-time books by Henrik Ibsen, Maurice Maeterlinck, Housman, and Plato’s *Symposium*.⁷³ Conventional late-Victorian allegiances at home could on this evidence be contrasted with the interest in more *avant-garde* literature, including contemporary realism and naturalism, which was developing concurrently in Forster’s university circles. As well as up-to-date authors, there seems to have been a particular King’s canon of dead writers. At Cambridge, Forster’s reading might have resembled that which structures debate between Ansell and Rickie in Chapter 9 of *The Longest Journey*: P.B.

⁶⁷ 1898 Diary, 27 May; Furbank I, p. 70.

⁶⁸ 1898 Diary, 30 January.

⁶⁹ 1898 Diary, 13 January, 9 January, 29 June; 1899 Diary, 9 December.

⁷⁰ 1898 Diary, 8 May; see also Furbank I, p. 56.

⁷¹ Furbank I, pp. 47, 51-2, 69, 157.

⁷² 1898 Diary, 11 June, 14 June.

⁷³ 1898 Diary, 7 January, 25 February, 16 March; 1899 Diary, 29 March, 22 May. Stape (*Chronology*, pp. 4-9) lists some of Forster’s extra-curricular reading while he was at university.

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Shelley, Dante, Meredith, Jane Austen, and Plato.⁷⁴ He also shared with the undergraduate brotherhood in that novel a passion for Wagner.

There are brief glimpses of urban, as opposed to university, Cambridge in the earlier journals. On 10 February 1898 Forster reports: "Drunken man escorted me all through town saying 'give me a penny to buy a loaf of English bread for my starving child.' Thought I shd burst with laughter." There were probably not many children starving in 1890s Cambridge, despite the agricultural depression which had started in the 1870s and, among other things, driven down the income of college fellows.⁷⁵ Stark inequality between town and gown did exist as a feature of Cambridge life at the beginning of the twentieth century, however. Gwen Raverat, born in 1885, notes how "frightened" in childhood she was of the poor, much more numerous and visible in late Victorian Cambridge than when she wrote her memoir after the Second World War.⁷⁶ Another glimpse is in a walk Forster takes with MacMunn "all through Barnwell slums to near Cherry Hinton".⁷⁷ In the view they get of "smoky town from a bridge", there is a sense of Camille Pissarro's views of South London, with the dirty industrial city and rural remnants mixed up together. Events in the world outside only occasionally intrude. Among these, the South African War (1899-1903), a crisis for British imperialism, enters once as the theme of a roughhouse game in which Forster is made to play a Boer.⁷⁸

6.4. Beyond the College Gates: *The Longest Journey*

While Cambridge is not mentioned once in either of the first two novels Forster started, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room with a View* (begun as "Lucy" in 1902, published in a heavily reworked form in 1908), it is very important to *The Longest Journey* (1907), Forster's second published novel. In *The Longest Journey*, Cambridge is partly a creation of the protagonist Rickie Elliot's mind. This becomes clear when Rickie's belongings – pictures, "his chair, his inkpot" – arrive from Cambridge at the public school boarding-house where he and Agnes – now his wife – are to live and work with her brother, the schoolmaster Herbert. Rickie's possessions, formerly a "jumble" of the beloved and the uncared-for, are now forcibly organised, "distributed where each was seemly" by forces

⁷⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 9 pp. 81-2. Forster's short story "The Celestial Omnibus" introduces some elements of this canon to a wider audience.

⁷⁵ W.A. Armstrong, "The Countryside" in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, three volumes, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990, vol. I pp. 87-153, here 113-14.

⁷⁶ Raverat, *Period Piece*, pp. 168-9.

⁷⁷ 1899 Diary, 6 November.

⁷⁸ 1899 Diary, 9 December.

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beyond his control: the depressingly conventional Herbert and Agnes, readers will naturally assume.⁷⁹ Rickie, extremely sensitive “to the inside of a house”, notices the “decision of arrangement” which characterises the boarding-house.

Rickie's belief that domestic environments reflect their occupants' psychologies anticipates that of Lytton Strachey in his memoir (written around 1922) of his London childhood home, “Lancaster Gate”. There, Victorian obliviousness to material surroundings is contrasted with the pleasure and pain which “staircases [...] doors [...] cornices [...] chairs [...] ceilings [...] passages” and even “a rug”, according to Strachey, cause for his contemporaries.⁸⁰ While Strachey certainly read *The Longest Journey*, the chief point to make about this similarity of outlook is that it reflects a way of thinking which was current among Apostles at King's and Trinity during the first years of the twentieth century.⁸¹

The three places arranged in Rickie's mind – Cambridge, Sawston and Wiltshire – give their names to the three sections of *The Longest Journey*. Therefore it might seem as though Cambridge is entirely a mental construction of Rickie's, a symbolic place, in this novel, standing for the life of the mind and for true friendship, say, and opposed to another place standing for conventional, narrow-minded suburbia and a third that is wilderness. Some critics, for example John Colmer, read *The Longest Journey* like this.⁸² Ansell and Stephen Wonham, it is true, both enter the constrained, conventional world of Sawston as shocking figures from elsewhere: in some sense they are both personifications or spirits of place, the former of Cambridge and the latter of Wiltshire. This perhaps supports the idea that the places of *The Longest Journey* solely represent aspects of the mind of its protagonist, Rickie. Cambridge in this novel is not however only a stage in Rickie's mental development symbolising intellectual freedom for him. It also contains things from the “great world” outside which, according to Rickie shortly before they graduate, “looks down on it” and the existence of which Ansell then denies.⁸³

The undergraduate philosophical debate of the novel's earlier chapters – including the gently satirised dispute of the book's opening concerning whether or not “the cow is there”⁸⁴

⁷⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 17 p. 155. The passage, in Rickie's free internal discourse, uses passive verb forms – Rickie “was to live” at Dunwood “perhaps for many years” – to convey his lack of agency.

⁸⁰ Strachey (“Lancaster Gate” [1922] in S.P. Rosenbaum (ed.), *A Bloomsbury Group Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1993, pp. 344-54, here 344-5) writes that while “[o]ur fathers [...] could understand that it would make a difference whether one spent one's life in an ancient family seat in Gloucestershire or in a red-brick villa at Tooting [...] the notion that the proportions of a bedroom, for instance, might be significant would have appeared absurd to them”.

⁸¹ Strachey studied at Trinity. For his reading of *The Longest Journey* when it appeared, see Furbank I, p. 150.

⁸² Colmer, “*The Longest Journey*”, p. 53.

⁸³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 7 p. 62.

⁸⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 1 p. 3. The cows on King's Piece, west of the Cam and visible from the Gibbs

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– is the aspect of Cambridge in *The Longest Journey* that has been most discussed by critics. Notable among such discussions was the disagreement between Rosenbaum and Furbank in the 1970s and 1980s over whether *The Longest Journey* should be considered an expression of Moore's philosophical realism.⁸⁵ In this exchange a Cambridge insider, Furbank, who first met Forster at the Apostles,⁸⁶ clashed with an outsider, Rosenbaum, a North American professor. Literary scholars sometimes see relationships of analogy of which philosophers are wary.⁸⁷ Furbank, although himself a literary academic, denies that there are real parallels between Forster's writing and the substance of Moore's arguments and, indeed, the detailed parallels between *The Longest Journey* and Moore's philosophy drawn by Rosenbaum turn Forster into a more systematic thinker than he ever truly was. But the question of the reality of external things does recur throughout the novel. Moore's key point in his 1903 paper "The Refutation of Idealism" is that there is as much evidence for the existence of material things that are perceived, as there is for the existence of the consciousness of the person doing the perceiving.⁸⁸ Idealism had typically denied the former, materialism the latter. When Rickie reflects on the lives of college servants,⁸⁹ Ansell is silent: social injustice is not his concern. Rickie's sympathy with the lower classes is vague. But Ansell's inability to see Agnes puts a question mark against the philosophy he espouses.⁹⁰ In 1934, Forster wrote that during the First World War Dickinson and the Trinity Idealist philosopher J.M.E. McTaggart held opposed views about the fighting but that McTaggart "chose to regard" these "as mystically non-existent": perhaps Ansell anticipates this, and Forster in portraying him satirises

and Wilkins Buildings, have been an established part of Cambridge lore at least as far back as the 1870s. Illustrations in guidebooks and memoirs covering this period frequently show the animals ruminating with the West front of the Chapel rearing up beyond them. In this sense at least, the cow really *was* there. See e.g. Frederick Arnold, *Oxford and Cambridge: Their Colleges, Memories, and Associations*, R.T.S.: London, 1873, p. 261; Clark, *Cambridge*, p. 152; Raverat, *Period Piece*, p. 18.

⁸⁵ Furbank (I, p. 49) stated that "[t]oo much has been made of the influence of G.E. Moore" on Forster. Rosenbaum ("Forster's Refutation of Idealism"; S.P. Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group Volume 2*, St Martin's Press: New York, 1994, pp. 226-58) attempted to prove in response that Forster *was* influenced in a formative way by Moore. Furbank ("Philosophy of Forster", pp. 44-5) then reasserted that for him "[n]o amount of reading *The Longest Journey* or the account of the Apostles' society in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* gives me any feeling that Forster followed, or was even aware of, Moore's mode of argument about Idealism". See Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, pp. 500-1, for a further defence of the view that the systematic influence of Moore's philosophy can be detected in Forster's writing and especially in *The Longest Journey*.

⁸⁶ Furbank II, p. 291.

⁸⁷ The claim of Ann Banfield (*The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2000, p. 108) that there is a "trajectory" in Woolf's novels resembling one in the philosophy of Bertrand Russell is a case in point.

⁸⁸ G.E. Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism", *Mind* n.s. 12 (1903), pp. 433-53..

⁸⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 6 p. 56; see below.

⁹⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 1 p. 7.

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philosophical idealism.⁹¹ Ansell is wrong, Forster suggests in *The Longest Journey*, a novel in which the reality of the “great world” is repeatedly stressed. Students like Rickie who end up without first-class degrees are forced to go out from Cambridge into the world outside.

Forster described Cambridge not only in an idealising and generalising way but also with historically and geographically local precision. Existing discussions of Forster's Cambridge overlook the type of observations which, in the 1920s, Virginia Woolf associated with Arnold Bennett and other Edwardian novelists: minutely detailed descriptions of externals such as advertisements, buttons, brooches and train timetables made with “immense care”.⁹² Unlike Bennett, Woolf thought, Forster had “too overpowering a sense” of the “peculiarities” of individuals to believe that descriptions of externals could capture them.⁹³ Forster does attempt mental leaps into the heads of his characters, even those not socially or racially similar to their creator.⁹⁴ But Forster's Cambridge is also filled with specifics.

Among these are details of the studies undertaken by Rickie and his friends. Ansell reads for Moral Sciences; Rickie, like Forster, for Classics.⁹⁵ The Moral Sciences Tripos had been established as recently as 1851 and was “despised” early on, so much so that when Woolf's father Leslie Stephen became an examiner on it in 1861 he had no students to examine.⁹⁶ By 1909, the intellectually narrow classicist narrator of Forster's story “Other Kingdom” would dismiss metaphysical questions on the grounds that he had not studied Moral Sciences.⁹⁷ Philosophy was, for the Victorians, inseparable from notions of duty, as the very name ‘Moral Sciences’ indicates. Moore's *Principia Ethica* is, as well as a piece of detailed philosophical argument, a witty repudiation of Victorian notions of duty comparable with Samuel Butler's novel *The Way of All Flesh*, both appearing in 1903.⁹⁸ Moore claims in *Principia Ethica* that “the mere unconscious ‘habit’ of performing duties [...] has no intrinsic

⁹¹ Dickinson, p. 170. Rosenbaum (*Edwardian Bloomsbury*, p. 236) suggests that it is Hegelian idealism – McTaggart's creed – that makes Ansell blind to the reality of women.

⁹² Virginia Woolf, “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” in Rosenbaum, *Bloomsbury Group Reader*, pp. 233-49, here 241.

⁹³ Woolf, “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”, p. 246. Woolf however argues that the “early work” of both Forster and D.H. Lawrence was “spoilt” by an attempt to “compromise”: “they tried to combine their own direct sense of the oddity and significance of some character with Mr Galsworthy's knowledge of the Factory Acts, and Mr Bennett's knowledge of the Five Towns”.

⁹⁴ Such leaps, notably Forster's in *Howards End* into the head of Leonard Bast, have been criticised. Eagleton (*Exiles and Émigrés: Studies in Modern Literature*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1970, p. 39) calls Leonard “a mere cypher”, and various critics since have agreed.

⁹⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 3 p. 29, ch. 7 p. 61, ch. 17 p. 154.

⁹⁶ Leedham-Green, *Concise History*, pp. 152-6; Noel Annan, *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London, 1984, pp. 36; 41-2.

⁹⁷ *Machine Stops*, p. 61.

⁹⁸ *The Way of all Flesh* (Samuel Butler, *The Way of all Flesh* [1903], Michael Mason (ed.), Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1993) was written in the 1880s but was not known to the public until its publication after Butler's death in 1902. See Elinor Shaffer, “Butler, Samuel (1835-1902)” in ODNB.

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value whatsoever”,⁹⁹ but there is a fierce, cold intellectualism, impatient with conformism, in Ansell's choice of Tripos which contrasts with Rickie's. In deploying the Moral Science tripos thus, Forster takes a detail from the “great world” outside the book and gives it meaning within his fictional world.

Another such detail invites decoding by a small coterie among Forster's readers: the novel's subtle set of references to the non-fictional Cambridge Apostles.¹⁰⁰ When Tilliard, one of the university friends in the novel, refers to his sister's sense of injustice that “the brother just above me” had “lately married” someone other than her, he is making an in-joke not only contained in the word *brother*, but also in the life-stage of Forster's contemporaries in the Apostles in 1907. These ‘brothers’ had a long-established habit of pairing with one another's sisters.¹⁰¹ The words “above me” might even appear to the outsider to be about the “brother”'s physical location, but it seems unlikely that this married man is living in college rooms above Tilliard's at the moment the words are spoken: Edwardian Cambridge undergraduates rarely wed. Instead, “above me” must refer to the order of precedence within the Apostles, its customs as a secret society, in a way that would only have been understood by a tiny group.¹⁰²

Tilliard, though one of their circle, is subtly different from Rickie and Ansell, thus undermining their status as representative embodiments of the Cambridge world. In the conversation which opens *The Longest Journey*, it is Tilliard who denies the reality of the cow while Ansell asserts it, and Tilliard afterwards proves better at handling the “great world”. Wealthy and conventional, with polished manners, Tilliard hates conflict and detects “nastiness” in Ansell which repels him.¹⁰³ Ansell thinks Tilliard looks like “an undersized god, with not a curl crooked” even when the light is off, and the others think he will become a diplomat.¹⁰⁴ Tilliard is an intellectual, not a games-player, but prefers to talk about “ladies”

⁹⁹ G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* [1903], Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1922, p. xxiv.

¹⁰⁰ Bristow (“*Fratrum Societati*:”, pp. 121-2) covers the notion of brotherhood in the novel, thinking about the concept more broadly and allusively rather than relating it exclusively to the Apostles.

¹⁰¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 8 p. 79. Leonard Woolf, for example, continued this tradition by marrying Thoby Stephen's sister. In an earlier generation, A.H. Hallam was engaged to the sister of his fellow Apostle Alfred Tennyson before dying in 1833.

¹⁰² Peter Allen (*The Cambridge Apostles: The Early Years*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1978) covers the first decades of the Apostles, the 1820s and 1830s, when Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Hallam were members. For the whole period between 1820 and 1914, the fullest account is by W.C. Lubenow (*The Cambridge Apostles, 1820-1914: Liberalism, Imagination and Friendship in British Intellectual and Professional Life*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998). See also Frances Mary Brookfield, *The Cambridge 'Apostles'*, Scribner: New York, 1906; Furbank I, pp. 75-9.

¹⁰³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 8 p. 78.

¹⁰⁴ *Longest Journey*, ch. 2 p. 19.

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rather than use the word *women*, and, unlike Ansell, will not say *damn*.¹⁰⁵ Later he reappears, elegantly slumming while cramming for the civil service, at a Soho restaurant where Rickie and Agnes are anxiously discussing the former's prospects as a writer. Tilliard has moved on, and now disparages Ansell's "Cambridge, home—home, Cambridge" routine, although Tilliard and Ansell remain friends as readers in the British Museum.¹⁰⁶ If Furbank is right and the intellectual thrust of the novel is not a philosophical realism derived from Moore but an attack on monogamy, then Tilliard must be its villain, since he thinks monogamy and the falling away of friends in adulthood "ordained by nature".¹⁰⁷ Tilliard is an ambivalent figure, one whom Forster relishes as he does Tibby Schlegel in *Howards End*, and perhaps even envies for slipping so happily through the orthodoxies of life.¹⁰⁸ The smoothness and social orthodoxy of Tilliard are as much a part of Cambridge as the raw intellectuality of Ansell.

Another detail is the identity of the Cambridge college of which Rickie, Ansell, Tilliard and Widdrington are members. This is unnamed but resembles King's in several respects. One name for the college *is* given. Miss Appleblossom, the Ansell's housekeeper and former shop manager, is said to have an "admiration of University life" which is "shrill and genuine".¹⁰⁹ But the Spartan habits of Rickie's circle shock Miss Appleblossom: "[t]he sight of young fellows making tea and drinking water had made her wonder if this was Cambridge College at all".¹¹⁰ Miss Appleblossom's speculation, perhaps, helps the middle-class readership Forster clearly had in mind when writing – people beyond his own intimate circle – feel comfortable: there is no such place as "Cambridge College" in reality, such readers know; Miss Appleblossom has confused the University and its colleges. Miss Appleblossom's error, however, shows the extent to which Forster in *The Longest Journey* merges the characteristics specific to King's and the Apostles with Cambridge as a whole, thus creating the myth of the university city as temple of thought. Forster discursively erases divisions like those between colleges which existed even within the Apostles.¹¹¹

One of the earliest reviews of *The Longest Journey* appeared in the *Cambridge Review*,

¹⁰⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 8 p. 79.

¹⁰⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 15 p. 142, ch. 20 p. 180, ch. 20 p. 182.

¹⁰⁷ Furbank, "Philosophy of Forster", p. 46; *Longest Journey*, ch 8 p. 80.

¹⁰⁸ For speculations on the history of Forster's personal sexual life before 1914, see Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885*, Columbia University Press: New York, 1995; Christopher Lane, *The Ruling Passion: British Colonial Allegory and the Paradox of Homosexual Desire*, Duke University Press: Durham, NC & London, 1995: 145-75; Martin & Piggford, *Queer Forster*.

¹⁰⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 3 p. 31.

¹¹⁰ *Longest Journey*, ch. 6 p. 58.

¹¹¹ In December 1903 J.T. Sheppard, later Provost of King's, read a paper to the Apostles entitled "Kings or Trinity". On Sheppard, see Noel Annan, "Sheppard, Sir John Tresidder (1881-1968)" in ODNB. On Sheppard's paper comparing King's and Trinity outlooks, see Furbank I., pp. 104-7; Rosenbaum, "Forster's Refutation of Idealism", pp. 48-9.

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addressing an audience of Cambridge University insiders, and sums up the novel's Cambridge thus: "[t]here is no 'local colour,' no description of the May Races, but the mental atmosphere of a small group of undergraduates in a certain College has been caught and unerringly put into words".¹¹² The reviewer is right about "local colour": there are no spires in the novel other than that of a Roman Catholic church on the road leading into town from the railway station. The *Cambridge Review* hints to other Cambridge men here – in the phrase "a certain College" – that Forster is describing King's, and it is true that the college of the novel closely resembles King's in location.

Understanding this resemblance of location involves tracing Rickie and Ansell's journey to the college from Cambridge railway station, first on a horse-drawn tram which derails, then walking through a city which smells of drains, then on another tram.¹¹³ Taken today, a journey from the station to the area of the colleges would follow a similar route, up the straight avenue of Station Road then right onto the busier Hills Road and towards the centre, the difference just over a hundred years later being that a memorial to the men of the city and University who died in the First World War now stands at the junction of Station Road and Hills Road. Entering the city this way, Rickie and Ansell pass what the historian of Cambridge J.P.C. Roach has called the "florid bulk" of the late-Victorian Gothic Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs.¹¹⁴ They then board "the slow stuffy tram that plies every twenty minutes between the unknown and the market-place" past the nineteenth-century classical façades of Downing College, Addenbrooke's Hospital and the Fitzwilliam Museum,¹¹⁵ a route which would get them close to King's Parade.¹¹⁶ Another clue to situating Rickie and the others on a non-fictional map of Cambridge in that, after getting his BA, Rickie takes "sallow lodgings in Mill Lane",¹¹⁷ just south of King's and close to where Forster would live after the Second World War on Trumpington Street.

Heine remarks that "the details of Cambridge and college life in *The Longest Journey* are so accurate [...] that it seems safe to assume that if Rickie sees 'the college cat chasing the college tortoise', then in Forster's student years (1897-1901) there were such animals to be

¹¹² [Anonymous], [review of *The Longest Journey* in *Cambridge Review*] [1907] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 85-6, here 85.

¹¹³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 6 pp. 55-6.

¹¹⁴ Roach, *History of Cambridge*, p. 138; Forster (*Longest Journey*, ch. 6 p. 57) insinuates that this edifice is both modern and vulgar in having an imaginary – arriving but also clearly *arriviste* – "Protestant parent" mistake it for "the colleges" then discover "that it was built by a Papist who made a fortune out of movable eyes for dolls".

¹¹⁵ On these buildings see Roach, *History of Cambridge*, pp. 106-8, 489 and 326-7.

¹¹⁶ Certainly the fictional friends' college is not Trinity, the road there being beyond the marketplace on the route described.

¹¹⁷ *Longest Journey*, ch. 7 p. 62.

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seen".¹¹⁸ However, Miss Appleblossom's "Cambridge College", Cambridge cannot be easily equated with King's. For one thing, the college in the novel is "small", not a natural descriptor for King's with its mighty chapel, equally mighty self-belief, and spacious physical atmosphere.¹¹⁹ Although in 1900 King's did not admit nearly as many students as St John's or Trinity, it has been a major college in terms of wealth and prestige since its foundation.¹²⁰ The non-fictional college is only named once in *The Longest Journey*: "the roof of King's" along with "the balls of Clare" and the summer boat races are among the things Agnes's "May-term chaperon" Mrs Lewin has been shown repeatedly on her many visits.¹²¹ If Forster's fictional world is consistent, then Cambridge College cannot be equated with King's, since King's appears in it as something separate. Conventional undergraduates such as Tilliard, tram journeys, the smell of drains and female interlopers all prove that the "great world" has a footing in Cambridge as elsewhere.

Accounts of walks outside the college to the edge of the city and beyond are another aspect of Cambridge of *The Longest Journey* which indicate that in writing it Forster was alert to particularity, and not just making a myth. Among his own undergraduate friends, walking had been a craze which they opposed to the cult of games, associated in *The Longest Journey* with the public school at Sawston.¹²² Among these walks is the one to the dell off the road to Madingley where Rickie tells his friends his personal history in Chapter 2 and where he later goes with Agnes. Such routes also include the one to the meadow where Rickie and Ansell debate the relationship between Cambridge and the "great world" in Chapter 7, but also the connection between the centre of the city and the "unknown" from whence the "slow, stuffy tram" winds its way.¹²³ Spatial theorists Lefebvre and Certeau have valuably recommended the investigation of routes and networks in developing an understanding of social space and the relationships that users positioned differently have to it.¹²⁴

Interclass relationships also figure. Rickie meets his college servant Mrs Aberdeen on the tram from the station into town, tries to be friendly across class barriers in a way Sheppard would have identified as classically 'King's', and is rebuffed – "[s]he did not like being spoken to outside the college" – leaving him to reflect on her life away from the college,

¹¹⁸ Heine, *Afterword*, p. 304.

¹¹⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 7 p. 58.

¹²⁰ Brooke, *History of the University of Cambridge*, pp. 33-7, 41-57, 67-73.

¹²¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 7 p. 67.

¹²² It is characteristic of Forster that Sawston's name should be playfully stolen from that of a place near Cambridge. See Furbank I, pp. 116-19.

¹²³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 6 p. 57.

¹²⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [1974], translated from French by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1991, pp. 117-18; Certeau, "Walking in the City".

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unknown to the undergraduates: "Here these bedders come and make us comfortable. We owe an enormous amount to them, their wages are absurd, and we know nothing about them. Off they go to Barnwell, and then their lives are hidden. I just know that Mrs Aberdeen has a husband, but that's all".¹²⁵ Later in *The Longest Journey* Rickie has a fevered dream following his collapse at Sawston in which Mrs Aberdeen features.¹²⁶ As a "gentle, shadowy woman" whose physical labour for "her 'gentlemen'" at Cambridge becomes a moral work of deep significance for a shamed Rickie after his fall into hypocritical conventionality Mrs Aberdeen becomes – like Ruth Wilcox in *Howards End* and Mrs Moore in *A Passage to India* – a spiritual presence. Her Cambridge location in Barnwell – the "unknown" where the tram originates – contributes to her mystery.

Overall, *The Longest Journey* had two envisaged audiences. One included the majority of people who might actually buy the book, perhaps envisaged by Forster as less brutal versions of Agnes Pembroke. The other, just as significant for Forster, was a little coterie of insiders. Noting in *The Longest Journey* that the servants at Cadover talked about the house's "pendiment" is something for the former, a middle-class audience who are nevertheless outside Forster's intellectual circle.¹²⁷ Such readers are prompted by the reference to think about classical architecture, and permitted thereby to look down on an ignorant servant class, whether or not they actually have many servants themselves. Much the same is true of Miss Appleblossom and "Cambridge College", although her name is something different, a touch of pure English nature in the Ansells' shop: Forster's treatment of her cannot simply be defined as snobbery.

The references to the Apostles in *The Longest Journey* are directed at the second, far smaller audience. Strachey could therefore wonder whether Forster's fictional Widdrington, standing in the quad patting his stomach, was in fact Strachey himself.¹²⁸ For the larger audience, Forster creates an idea of Cambridge designed to modify the one they might have got from real life philistines: that "the 'Varsity" leaves a man "hopelessly behind".¹²⁹ To do this, Forster blurs the University, its colleges, and the town which houses them, creating a generalised image of Cambridge which he defended in the 1960s "Author's Introduction" on the grounds that Moore's Cambridge had been "fearless" and "uninfluential".¹³⁰

There are several Cambridges in this novel, then. Tilliard, the tram, the Catholic church

¹²⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 6 p. 56. Forster himself, unlike Rickie, actually went to Barnwell (1899 Diary, 6 November).

¹²⁶ *Longest Journey*, ch. 23 pp. 192-3.

¹²⁷ Instead of *pediment*. *Longest Journey*, ch. 11 p. 96.

¹²⁸ *Longest Journey*, ch. 8 p. 75; Furbank I, p. 150.

¹²⁹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 3 p. 36.

¹³⁰ Forster, "Author's Introduction" in *Longest Journey*, pp. xxi-xxv, xxiii.

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built by a doll manufacturer and Mrs Aberdeen, as much as Ansell and the cow, all belong there.

6.5. Glimpses from Afar: *Howards End* and “Arctic Summer”

In *Howards End* Forster, through the character of Tibby Schlegel, calls the ancient universities into question more than in any of his earlier novels. In Chapter 12, Tibby's decision to go to Oxford instead of Cambridge is explained, in the narrator's paraphrase, by his view that “Oxford is—Oxford: not a mere receptacle for youth, like Cambridge”.¹³¹ Tibby is less cultured and more sybaritic than Forster's Cambridge men. His preference for the “august and mellow University, soaked with the richness of the western counties that it has served for a thousand years” also glances satirically at Oxford's close association with the Aesthetic Movement and Decadence of the late-Victorian period. Forster takes a connoisseur's delight in Tibby who, like the similar character of Tilliard in *The Longest Journey*, is drawn to the career of a diplomat.¹³² But Tibby lacks something. Friendless and “frigid”, he falls in love with the place rather than with people, a negative trait for Forster, afterwards remembering only “a colour scheme”.¹³³ Whereas Cambridge, for Forster, can educate people to become connecting and connected humans, Oxford perhaps turns out isolated drones. Tibby suspects that his desire for “civilization without activity” is something he will find in “the other place”, meaning hell; his sister Margaret interprets the words “the other place” to mean Cambridge, and suggests that he can find them in Oxford as well.¹³⁴ Oxford and Cambridge have frequently stereotyped one another as the worldly one and the puritanical one, the Tory one and the Whig one.¹³⁵ Tibby's Oxford is not a worldly place of dining clubs and standing for Parliament, but a Paterian retreat into blue china and contemplation. In Tibby, then, Cambridge enters *Howards End* as the implicit positive term in an opposition the novel never stresses.

The only other reference to Cambridge in *Howards End* could be read in radically different ways. Leonard Bast recalls a train trip there and an overnight stay, a business trip for his employers the Porphyryon insurance company. On the train he was befriended by a “decent-mannered undergraduate”. This was “[p]erhaps the keenest happiness he had ever

¹³¹ *Howards End*, ch. XII p. 78.

¹³² When Helen calls on her brother after fleeing Oniton, he is leafing through a Chinese grammar, considering whether to become a “Student Interpreter” (*Howards End*, ch. XXX p. 179).

¹³³ *Howards End*, ch. XXXIV p. 199.

¹³⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XIII p. 82.

¹³⁵ For reflections on the Oxford-Cambridge relationship by a writer himself described by a biographer as “too Oxford for Cambridge, too Cambridge for Oxford” (David Cannadine, “Annan, Noel Gilroy, Baron Annan (1916-2008)” in ODNB), see Annan, *Our Age*, p. 235.

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known”, according to Forster’s narrator, an assertion that could seem absurdly patronising to twenty-first century readers.¹³⁶ In Forster’s case, though, the novelist’s teaching at the Working Men’s College provides a “clue”, in Furbank’s words,¹³⁷ to his meaning here. Forster was a genuine believer in the outreach possibilities of the College, its chance of touching and changing the lives of men such as Leonard through the liberating effects of secular culture. Writing in the 1920s but looking back to the first decade of the century when he was an undergraduate, Shane Leslie satirically makes a fictional don at King’s call for an “Agnostic Mission” to be started by the college, so that “London working men” can benefit from the influence of King’s “Fabians and Shavians”.¹³⁸ This idea is presented as a joke in Leslie’s novel, but Forster’s London teaching during his twenties could well be understood as contributions to an unofficial “Agnostic Mission”. It is not clear whether the undergraduate of *Howards End* is making a pass at Leonard by inviting him to “coffee after hall”. Forster, though, in connecting with young men of the lower classes, was doing much more than seeking sexual partners.¹³⁹

Forster distanced himself from Cambridge during and either side of the First World War. Appropriately, Oxford is glimpsed from afar through the window of a train to Shropshire in *Howards End*, its colleges wrongly identified by Margaret Schlegel’s travelling companions. In these years, Forster retained his connections with Cambridge, notably in travelling to India with Dickinson and R.C. Trevelyan in 1912-1913, and taking riding lessons by Leonard Woolf before the same trip,¹⁴⁰ but spent little time there. In “Arctic Summer”, Forster views Cambridge from the vantage-point of London with caution and even suspicion. At the moment when the futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti was lecturing in London, Forster in his unfinished novel became interested in technology.¹⁴¹ The protagonist, the Cambridge-educated Treasury official Martin Whitby, is married to the free-thinking

¹³⁶ *Howards End*, ch. XIV p. 90. Furbank (I, p. 175) calls the passage “slightly embarrassing” from the point of view of the 1970s. More recently, John Carey and Jonathan Rose have both argued that Edwardian intellectuals such as Forster despised clerks such as Leonard and that they ought not to have done. See Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939*, Faber: London, 1992; Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 2001.

¹³⁷ Furbank I, p. 175.

¹³⁸ Leslie, *Cantab*, p. 70.

¹³⁹ Through his teaching at the Working Men’s College, Forster struck up a lifelong friendship with the Germanist E.K. Bennett, formerly a clerk at the Crosse and Blackwell pickle factory, and later a fellow of Gonville and Caius College and one of the companions of Forster’s old age. See Furbank I, p. 176, Furbank II, pp. 302-3; “Locked Journal”, 30 November 1953.

¹⁴⁰ Furbank I, pp. 220-33, 216-17.

¹⁴¹ On Marinetti see e.g. Laurence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites & Public Culture*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 1998, pp. 28-38. In *Arctic Summer*, Martin’s encounters with modern technology include a near-tragic visit to a makeshift Italian cinema and an unsettling telephone call to Cambridge (“Arctic Summer”, pp. 156-7, 185).

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daughter of a Cambridge Head of House. Martin resembles one of Forster's contemporaries in Bloomsbury in that he is said to have "laughed at Cambridge" but still "enjoyed a weekend there" now and again.¹⁴² Martin's encounter with Cambridge, ends in the sudden suicide of an undergraduate accused of sexual offences. "Arctic Summer" is filled with "great world" – and specifically internationalist – suspicion of the university, a deceptive "shelter" from the "rough winds" of the real world for Martin which, unlike "Paris or Bonn or Bologna", is capable of "pompously ruining three boys for life".¹⁴³ This unfinished novel, written on the eve of the First World War, contains a loss of faith in English institutions which contrasts with *Howards End*.

6.6. "Their Rooms": *Maurice*

When *Maurice* was first published in 1971, many critics were disappointed. For Michael Ratcliffe in *The Times* "the territory of Forster's own first 30 years; public school, matriarchy, Greece, Italy, Cambridge" was not as "dazzlingly illuminated" in *Maurice* as in *The Longest Journey*, and "the spirit of place" was, unlike in Forster's other novels, absent.¹⁴⁴ More recent critics, particularly those associated with gay or queer studies, have defended *Maurice*. Robert K. Martin has argued that *Maurice* is divided into two parts, each representing an interpretation of homosexuality.¹⁴⁵ The first, he says, is that of academic Hellenism – specifically that of the *Symposium*, in which Plato argues that it is possible to sublimate and refine sexual love – and the second that of Edward Carpenter, visiting whom in September 1913 Forster felt himself "touched" by an ideal of physical, cross-class homosexual love.¹⁴⁶ Bristow argues that *Maurice* is superior to *The Longest Journey* in that it meets "head-on the challenges posed by [...] ceaseless returns to Cambridge" and the Apostles.¹⁴⁷ Such views have proved influential.¹⁴⁸ *Maurice*, however, needs to be examined as a novel with much content that is unrelated to sexuality, including particular contexts of place.

¹⁴² "Arctic Summer", p. 189.

¹⁴³ "Arctic Summer", pp. 158, 187. The contrast is pointed out by Martin's forthright and radical sister-in-law, with whom Forster clearly intends readers to agree.

¹⁴⁴ Michael Ratcliffe, [untitled review of *Maurice* in *The Times*] [1971] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 442-4, here 442, 443.

¹⁴⁵ Robert K. Martin, "Edward Carpenter and the Double Structure of *Maurice*" [1983] in Tambling, *E.M. Forster*, 100-114.

¹⁴⁶ Julia Annas, "Plato (1)" in Simon Hornblower & Anthony Spawforth (eds), *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Third Edition, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1996, 1190-3, here 1192; *Maurice*, p. 215. Forster read the *Symposium* in April 1899 at the age of 20 (Furbank I, pp. 256-7).

¹⁴⁷ Bristow, "*Fratrum Societati*:", p. 126.

¹⁴⁸ See e.g. James J. Miracky, "Pursuing (a) Fantasy: E.M. Forster's Queering of Realism in *The Longest Journey*", *Journal of Modern Literature* 26 (2003), pp. 129-44; Booth, "*Maurice*".

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There are points of comparison between the Cambridge of *Maurice* and that of *The Longest Journey*. In both novels the university city fits into an overall national system, in which it is connected by railway to London, and in which it occupies a position between the Home Counties and a wilder England beyond. In the case of the Cambridge of *Maurice* this wilderness is that of the Fenlands of East Anglia, entered by Maurice Hall and Clive Durham on a motorcycle ride, after which Maurice is expelled from the university.¹⁴⁹ There are differences, though. The Cambridge of *The Longest Journey* is fairly rich and varied, with its college servants, walks and tram-rides, whereas that of *Maurice*, except during the motorcycle ride episode, is claustrophobically internal. The Cambridge of *Maurice* is dominated by two-handed scenes in their lodgings between Maurice and Clive, with the pair interrupted by and avoiding intrusions by their fellow students.

In *Maurice*, relations between outside and inside are significant. As Robert K. Martin points out, the love Maurice finds with the gamekeeper Alec Scudder is of the "open air".¹⁵⁰ The overwhelming emphasis in the Cambridge of *Maurice*, by contrast, is internal, with heads banged, doors stumbled into, sheets and pyjamas torn and coffee spilt. The love between Maurice and Clive belongs to Cambridge "and particularly to their rooms".¹⁵¹ Clive, "awake to the printed word",¹⁵² is very much an indoor person: he takes some of his books with him on the pair's fateful motorcycle ride into the Fens, but fails to read them. The relationship between Clive and Maurice, led by the former, deliberately exemplifies the Platonic sublimation of physical love advocated by late nineteenth-century Hellenists such as John Addington Symonds, and lived out by Forster's college mentor Dickinson.¹⁵³ Enclosed, oppressive features of the interiors of buildings, and architectural thresholds, do recur later in the novel, for example in the corridor outside Clive's London flat which recalls for Maurice the approach to other rooms at Cambridge.¹⁵⁴ Alec enters Maurice's room at Penge, the Durham family home, through a window in the middle of the night just as Maurice himself had climbed into Clive's Cambridge bedroom.¹⁵⁵ *Maurice's* three chief settings are all claustrophobic, and all feature journeys into gardens and similar spaces after dark and across thresholds at night, but neither Penge nor the suburb where the Halls live is as internal and enclosed as the novel's Cambridge milieu.

The sense of Maurice having come inside is especially important to the portion of the

¹⁴⁹ *Maurice*, ch. XIII p. 61.

¹⁵⁰ Martin, "Edward Carpenter", p. 100.

¹⁵¹ *Maurice*, ch. XIV p. 64.

¹⁵² *Maurice*, ch. XII p. 55.

¹⁵³ See Martin, "Edward Carpenter", p. 105.

¹⁵⁴ *Maurice*, ch. XXI p. 93.

¹⁵⁵ *Maurice*, ch. XXXVII p. 166, ch. XII p. 59.

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novel set at Cambridge: “during his second year he underwent a change. He had moved into college and it began to digest him. His days he might spend as before, but when the gates closed on him at night a new process began”.¹⁵⁶ Shortly afterwards, Maurice calls on an “odd”, free-thinking postgraduate student, Risley: he enters Trinity College just before the evening curfew and waits “until the gates were shut behind him” before “humbly” seeking spiritual help from the intellectually superior college.¹⁵⁷ The first important encounter between Maurice and Clive takes place in Risley’s rooms at Trinity, then on the same night they go to the rooms of an undergraduate with a pianola, and then to Clive’s rooms.¹⁵⁸ Their intimacy at the beginning of the next term, the Lent (winter-spring) term of Maurice’s second year, begins in Maurice’s rooms, then continues in Clive’s at “coffee after hall”.¹⁵⁹ The next term, towards summer, opens in Maurice’s rooms and Maurice soon afterwards has an emotional breakdown during the night there.¹⁶⁰ After this, Clive and Maurice speak in the former’s rooms after a debating society meeting.¹⁶¹ Features of these meetings are interruptions and a relationship between the undergraduate’s set of rooms and the enclosed outdoors of the court or quadrangle outside.¹⁶²

Specific internal features fill the Cambridge of *Maurice*. The interplay between the two rooms of a Cambridge set is used by Forster in the scene after the debating society meeting, when Maurice wants to talk about the *Symposium*. Clive goes “into the other room” and begins “to undress”, and shortly afterwards is “about to close the door between them”.¹⁶³ As for interruptions, Maurice and Clive are “interrupted” by Chapman, an “old chum” of Maurice’s from school as they become closer, exemplifying Maurice’s move away from the old boys of his public school with whom he began Cambridge life.¹⁶⁴ When Maurice and Clive meet during the May term of Maurice’s second year, “[a]bsurd people” come “thundering up the stairs”,¹⁶⁵ making them spring physically apart after an embrace. Doors feature too: that of Maurice around which Clive peers, looking pale; that of Clive which

¹⁵⁶ *Maurice*, ch. V p. 18.

¹⁵⁷ *Maurice*, ch. VI pp. 23-4.

¹⁵⁸ *Maurice*, ch. VI p. 24, ch. VI p. 28.

¹⁵⁹ *Maurice*, ch. VII pp. 30-8.

¹⁶⁰ *Maurice*, ch. IX. pp. 42-4, ch. X pp. 46-7.

¹⁶¹ *Maurice*, ch. XI, pp. 49-51.

¹⁶² The Cambridge ‘set’, still in use in older buildings, typically involves a door leading off a staircase (itself entered by a door from an outdoor court) into a larger room which functions as a study-cum-living room, and a smaller bedroom opening off this first room. See the discussion by Willis & Clark (*Architectural History of Cambridge*, vol. III pp. 297-310) of the history of students’ chambers and studies at Cambridge. They indicate (*Architectural History of Cambridge*, vol. III pp. 304-10) that the habit of having one room enclosed inside another was established by the early seventeenth century.

¹⁶³ *Maurice*, ch. XI p. 49.

¹⁶⁴ *Maurice*, ch. VII p. 30, ch. XXVIII p. 120, ch. V p. 18.

¹⁶⁵ *Maurice*, ch. IX p. 44.

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slams shut after Maurice rejects his first advance.¹⁶⁶ There are also numerous references to the enclosing, socially stifling features of such rooms, from the waste-paper basket and hearthrug involved in Maurice's first "ragging" of Clive, to the ceiling Maurice stares at and the mantelpiece Clive springs up to lean nonchalantly against when they seem about to be caught in an embrace.¹⁶⁷ Related to these inner spaces is that of the court, a space in the open air which is enclosed by the college walls, a sort of inner outer space.

Maurice and Clive's college has even less in common with King's than the one Miss Appleblossom in *The Longest Journey* calls "Cambridge College". The college in *Maurice* seems an unintellectual, humdrum one of the sort appropriate to an unexceptional ex-public schoolboy like Maurice himself. The don we see most of, Cornwallis, is a feeble drudge compared to the inspiring Wedd and Dickinson at King's during Forster's undergraduate years. The glamorous, dangerous Risley is pointedly elsewhere.

Cambridge beyond the college walls is emphasised far less in *Maurice* than in *The Longest Journey*, the whole city having the airless university environment of Clive and Maurice's rooms. Maurice once strolls "out into the town" for a Turkish bath but there is nothing in this novel to compare with the detail of the journey to Rickie's college from the railway station in *The Longest Journey*.¹⁶⁸ The world outside the walls appears most clearly in two episodes involving Maurice's motorcycle and sidecar, the first when he gives Clive a lift back from a fraught tennis match, nearly crashing into a wagon-full of women *en route*; the second the ride into the Fens which leads to Maurice being rusticated.¹⁶⁹ There are moments of real-world precision in the second trip outside, Maurice and Clive threading Jesus Lane before "[t]hey swirled across the bridge and into the Ely road". There is also Cambridge precision of a different sort in the identification of Risley – inside the walls of another college – as a Trinity man elevated socially and intellectually above members of Maurice's college.

The novel's setting in time is later than that of *The Longest Journey*. Clive's Hellenism may fit with Robert K. Martin's view that the novel has a "late-Victorian" setting, but Forster himself identified the "action-date" of the novel – meaning the Penge chapters – as "about 1912", suggesting a setting for the Cambridge section in about 1904-1905 – years when Strachey, like Risley in the novel, was in Cambridge as a BA, trying for a fellowship.¹⁷⁰ The Cambridge chapters of *The Longest Journey* by contrast have their late-Victorian setting

¹⁶⁶ *Maurice*, ch. IX p. 42, ch. IX p. 44.

¹⁶⁷ *Maurice*, ch. VII p. 3, ch. IX p. 44.

¹⁶⁸ *Maurice*, ch. VI p. 28.

¹⁶⁹ *Maurice*, ch. X p. 46, ch. XIII pp. 60-2.

¹⁷⁰ Martin, "Edward Carpenter", p. 106; *Maurice*, p. 219. The motorcycle and sidecar combination also supports a later time-setting than that proposed by Martin, the first sidecar for a motorbike having been launched in England in 1903.

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clearly marked by the comment that Edward VII was still Prince of Wales when Rickie and Agnes walked to Madingley.¹⁷¹ Maurice and Clive are thus some five years younger than Forster himself. An outdated Victorian-style Hellenist in the age of the internal combustion engine, Clive is a dinosaur. He is contrasted with another, culturally more modern figure: Risley.¹⁷²

Maurice is not attracted to Risley, but the latter is an abrasive, refreshing presence in the novel, as Strachey seemed to his contemporaries. Risley's room is where Clive has gone to get the pianola records of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, the *Pathétique*, and it is after a performance of the same piece in London that the protagonist meets Risley again.¹⁷³ A college neighbour thinks that listening to Tchaikovsky puts Maurice into "the aesthetic push",¹⁷⁴ but this is not the Aesthetic Movement of the 1870s. Risley is instead close to up-to-date developments in psychology, referring Maurice to the "advanced" practitioner of hypnosis Lasker Jones, as well as directing him towards Tchaikovsky as a model who "had fallen in love with his own nephew".¹⁷⁵ Maurice immediately borrows "a life of Tchaikovsky" from the library and is "thrilled" by the "[t]he episode of the composer's marriage", reading between the lines unlike "the normal reader" who "vaguely assumes incompatibility". Under Risley's tutelage Maurice can understand "what the disaster meant" and the composer's biography proves "the one literary work" ever to help Maurice understand himself.¹⁷⁶ Risley helps Maurice find a route which leads away both from an unthinking public-school position and from a Hellenist one, and Risley is not just a generalised Cambridge man but, as a Trinity man, a member of a particular subdivision within the University.

In *Maurice*, his "most concentrated novel" according to Summers,¹⁷⁷ Forster differentiates groups within Cambridge through representations of their vocabulary. One of the dimensions

¹⁷¹ *Longest Journey*, ch. 7 p. 70.

¹⁷² Martin's discussion of the novel from the point of view of sexuality, on the whole insightful, misses the significance of Risley, seeing only the contrast between Clive's bookish sexlessness and the physical, cross-class love between Maurice and Alec, inspired by Edward Carpenter.

¹⁷³ *Maurice*, ch. XXXII p. 137.

¹⁷⁴ *Maurice*, ch. VI p. 26.

¹⁷⁵ *Maurice*, ch. XXXVI p. 155, ch. XXXII p. 137.

¹⁷⁶ *Maurice*, ch. XXXII p. 138. Tchaikovsky visited Cambridge shortly before his death in 1893 at the invitation of the university's Musical Society. But it was after 1900 that he became really popular in England: from 1902 there was a "weekly Tchaikovsky night" at the Queen's Hall in London (Bret L. Keeling, "No Trace of Presence: Tchaikovsky and the Sixth in Forster's *Maurice*", *Mosaic* 36 (2003), pp. 85-101, here 89), scene of Leonard's first encounter with the Schlegels in *Howards End*. Forster himself had heard the *Pathétique* at the Queen's Hall with his mother in April 1898 (1898 Diary, 20 April). See also the discussion by Alan Sinfield (*The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment*, Cassell: London, 1994, p. 145).

¹⁷⁷ Claude J. Summers, *E.M. Forster*, Frederick Ungar: New York, 1983, p. 142. *Maurice* is divided into 46 chapters, *The Longest Journey* into 35, but *Maurice* contains less than half the number of words as *The Longest Journey*.

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of its Cambridge is a lexical one. It uses a vocabulary so colloquial as at times to appear clichéd or trashy. Clive and Maurice use slang expressions such as “[r]ugger” and the “vac”.¹⁷⁸ When Maurice and Clive first become friends, there is “nothing but ragging” between them “for many days”.¹⁷⁹ ‘Ragging’ is a word encompassing both joking, as when Maurice says “I’m only ragging” to Clive during their first meeting, and physical horseplay, as when Maurice, grabbing Clive shortly afterwards “rolled him up in the hearth-rug and fitted his head into the waste-paper basket”.¹⁸⁰ Such slanginess seems connected to Maurice’s identity as a wealthy suburban “Philistine” in contrast to the sophisticated Risley with his plays on French words.¹⁸¹ Maurice is a member of the “suburban classes” which according to Dr Barry have no need for a university degree, someone who, like *The Longest Journey*’s thuggish Gerald, can call university “varsity”.¹⁸² As well as vocabulary, intonation is involved. Risley uses “unmanly superlatives”, while “[i]n each of his sentences he accented one word violently”.¹⁸³ Risley’s manner of speaking contrasts with the “flat toneless voice” of Cornwallis, the sexually repressed Dean of Maurice and Clive’s college, described by Risley as a “eunuch”.¹⁸⁴ Within this environment it is Clive, in fact, whose language seems unmarked: not vulgar or affected. Once again this places him at the centre of the Cambridge of *Maurice*: “Clive is Cambridge”, Forster wrote in 1960.¹⁸⁵

There may be trams and college servants in *The Longest Journey*, but Cambridge is even less glamorised in *Maurice*. The philosophical debate and tobacco smoke of *The Longest Journey* give way in *Maurice* to struggles over Greek in tutorials conducted by an emasculated academic. Cambridge is also less *particularised* through description in *Maurice* than in *The Longest Journey*. With little more than a substitution of names and a motorcycle ride into the Cotswolds rather than the Fens, it could become Oxford, something not at all true of *The Longest Journey*’s Cambridge. Ansell may stand for an incomplete Cambridge, but Clive stands for an undesirable one recognisably connected to that of “Arctic Summer”. The liberating potential of Cambridge in *Maurice* is damaged by the University’s tendency to turn the world into abstractions. Clive is wrong about homosexuality in that he denies the body. His intellect is that of the “best classical scholar in his year”,¹⁸⁶ not that of the philosopher. What this means is that Clive is outstanding at versification and feats of

¹⁷⁸ *Maurice*, ch. VII p. 34, ch. VII p. 38, ch. IX p. 43.

¹⁷⁹ *Maurice*, ch. VII p. 37.

¹⁸⁰ *Maurice*, ch. VII p. 37, ch. VI p. 25.

¹⁸¹ *Maurice*, ch. XXXII p. 137.

¹⁸² *Maurice*, ch. XV p. 67, ch. XLII p. 185.

¹⁸³ *Maurice*, ch. V p. 20.

¹⁸⁴ *Maurice*, ch. VII p. 37, ch. V p. 22, ch. XXXII p. 138.

¹⁸⁵ *Maurice*, p. 216.

¹⁸⁶ *Maurice*, ch. XIV p. 63.

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memory, but not at free thinking.

Like *The Longest Journey*, *Maurice* needs to be understood in terms of two audiences, an outside and an inside one. The difference is that Forster kept *Maurice* for much longer in the territory of the insiders – to whom he spoke directly through it – rather than releasing it into the outside world loaded with double meaning as he did *The Longest Journey*. The earliest readers of *Maurice* were Cambridge insiders, some Apostles, others not.¹⁸⁷ Sheppard and Keynes were asked to keep it “as dead as a secret can be”.¹⁸⁸ Strachey, like other early readers such as H.O. Meredith and Carpenter somehow ‘in’ the novel, was given it in 1915 as was Florence Barger; R.C. and Elizabeth Trevelyan in 1920. Having read *Maurice* was in these early years a badge of intimacy with Forster himself, and of being a member of Forster’s own little association, more personal than that of the Apostles. But Clive and what could be called his disembodiment of homosexuality should not be considered a criticism of Cambridge. *Maurice* instead functioned as counsel to Cambridge, reporting that elite homosexuality had moved on from the days of Pater and Symonds, from words to actions, and from indoors to outside. Notably, too, it had taken on an inter-class aspect, something marking it off quite clearly from the passionate friendships between members of the Apostolic elite which had been the sort of homosexual relationship most typical of the nineteenth century for those from Tennyson to Dickinson whose social position was similar to Forster.¹⁸⁹

6.7. College Topography and the Gibbs Building: *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*

Two decades in which Forster had relatively little contact with Cambridge came to an end in the mid-1920s. Cambridge is in the background to *A Passage to India*: Fielding and Hamidullah have been educated there. A few references to Cambridge are also to be found in Forster’s other 1920s writings. The good influence of his tutor Wedd on Forster and the spiky, innuendo-laden opinions of the Cambridge aesthete Charles Sayle about Forster’s early writings, for example, are both sketched in the memoir “My Books and I”,¹⁹⁰ which was read to the Bloomsbury Group around 1922. Forster’s connection with Cambridge was

¹⁸⁷ See Philip Gardner, “Editor’s Introduction” in *Maurice*, pp.vii-liv, here xviii-xix.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Gardner, “Evolution of *Maurice*”, p. 208.

¹⁸⁹ Dickinson’s passionate feelings for fellow Apostles are detailed in his *Autobiography* (Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, *The Autobiography of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson and Other Unpublished Writings*, Dennis Proctor (ed.), Duckworth: London, 1973, e.g. p. 89), not published until forty years after his death.

¹⁹⁰ E.M. Forster, “My Books and I” [c. 1922] in *Longest Journey*, pp. 360-6.

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restarted when he gave the Clark Lectures at Trinity between January and March of 1927.¹⁹¹ The lectures, “anti-academic, playful, full of odd, brilliant metaphoric flights”, in Furbank’s words,¹⁹² were successful, and led – as well as to *Aspects of the Novel* – to an offer of a temporary fellowship of King’s. Forster accepted this on the understanding that he would only live in college for six weeks a year, his life being focused then on his mother in Surrey and his developing London-based sex life.

After this, Forster worked hard for further recognition by the college, resulting in his appointment to write the official biography of one of his own mentors, the humanist, Hellenist and political thinker G. Lowes Dickinson. In this book, Forster dutifully praises the thoughtfulness of Dickinson’s will (see below), and records Dickinson’s “conscientious rather than active” role in the administration of King’s, and his “various interests” outside the college, in Cambridge and London.¹⁹³

Forster’s life of Dickinson, published in 1934, has tended to be seen as part of a consistent dramatization by the novelist of an opposition between the public school world of “Sawston-Tonbridge” – as Trilling put it – and the enlightened, liberating one of Cambridge.¹⁹⁴ Certainly, among Forster’s materials for the biography was the image of Cambridge found in *The Longest Journey* and later crystallized in the 1960 “Author’s Introduction” to that novel. The main direct source for the biography was Dickinson’s manuscript “Recollections”. But the account in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* of Dickinson arriving at Cambridge aged eighteen and discovering “[t]hat the public school is not infinite and eternal [...] that lessons may have to do with leisure, and grammar with literature” comes from Forster’s own developing mythology of Cambridge.¹⁹⁵ According to Forster, Dickinson, who was elected a fellow of King’s at the age of 25 in 1887 and remained one until his death in 1932, gradually came “to inhabit the university spiritually”. Statements like this contribute to the notion of Cambridge as Forster’s own spiritual home after 1946, and so help build the Forster myth.¹⁹⁶

Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, after its subject’s arrival at King’s as a young man, makes only brief sallies beyond the walls of the college. These moves are inseparable from vertical sorts of social relations. As in *The Longest Journey* there is reference to the college servants, who lived outside the college: “It surprised [Dickinson] that people who went to and fro and had not even a permanency of masters should be so loyal to the college; among his

¹⁹¹ *Chronology*, pp. 95-6.

¹⁹² Furbank II, p. 144.

¹⁹³ *Dickinson*, ch. 14 p. 167.

¹⁹⁴ Lionel Trilling, *E.M. Forster*, New Directions: Norfolk, CT, 1943, p. 27.

¹⁹⁵ *Dickinson*, ch. 6. p. 22.

¹⁹⁶ *Dickinson*, ch. 6 p. 28.

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Cambridges, the Cambridge of dependants was never forgotten", Forster claims.¹⁹⁷ Movement "to and fro" between an obscure home and the Cambridge college, movement like that of Mrs Aberdeen – and even Ansell, in Tilliard's view – in *The Longest Journey*, carries a certain social stigma.¹⁹⁸ Such people as Dickinson's "bed-makers Mrs Newmans and Mrs Richardson, Mrs Asplin, and his gyps Rose and Fuller" were remembered in his "thoughtful and affectionate" will, Forster says, alongside "other friends", but the distinction of rank between the Fellow and the college servants seems always to have been maintained.¹⁹⁹ As in Forster's relations with A.E. Housman – and as in those with the Farrer family – there is tension for Forster between an egalitarianism he longs to feel and a deep-seated belief in the reality of social distinctions.

As a prelude to examining the place-internal account of King's given in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, there is something to be learnt from Forster's treatment of Dickinson's place relations with the world outside the college. Forster describes Dickinson as someone who spent his earlier years shuttling between London and Cambridge then settled down into a static existence at King's, as a sage figure who attracted disciples, chiefly themselves travelling from London,²⁰⁰ to sit at his feet for a short while. Dickinson, like his biographer, was born in Marylebone, central London. But Forster, who moved away so young as to feel only very faintly that he was a native of the metropolis, presents Dickinson as having deep-rooted links to London.²⁰¹ The London home of Dickinson's family at All Souls Place close to the northern end of Regent Street, he says, remained Dickinson's "headquarters for many years" into adulthood.²⁰² After this, Dickinson's two unmarried sisters continued to keep what Forster calls a "charming little house" at Edwardes Square in Kensington; following the death of one of them in 1924, the surviving sister moved with another sister, now a widow, to a flat in Chelsea described by Forster as "the last of the long series of [Dickinson's] London homes".²⁰³ Although the biography describes some journeys overseas,²⁰⁴ Forster never details Dickinson's own movement within England, for example to or from

¹⁹⁷ *Dickinson*, ch. 14 p. 166.

¹⁹⁸ As in *The Longest Journey* and the undergraduate diaries, it is the Barnwell district of Cambridge which stands here for the impoverished side of the town. When an undergraduate, Dickinson "took a class of poor boys at Barnwell", Forster writes, as well as trying to reform town prostitutes and student miscreants (*Dickinson*, ch. 6 p. 24).

¹⁹⁹ *Dickinson*, ch. 14 pp. 166-7.

²⁰⁰ *Dickinson*, ch. 14 p. 166.

²⁰¹ See e.g. *Dickinson*, ch. 1 pp. 1-2, ch. 12 p. 152.

²⁰² Until the death of Dickinson's father, the painter Lowes Cato Dickinson, in 1908, when the younger Dickinson was aged 45 (*Dickinson*, ch. 6 p. 28). The Schlegels' house at Wickham Place in *Howards End* was modelled on All Souls Place.

²⁰³ *Dickinson*, ch. 10 p. 103, ch. 12 p. 152.

²⁰⁴ Overseas travel to China, India and the USA is the subject of one chapter (*Dickinson*, ch. 11 pp. 104-28).

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Cambridge.

The layout and buildings of King's are described in more detail in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* than in either *The Longest Journey* or *Maurice*, two novels which include extended Cambridge sections each set in an unnamed college representing one aspect of Cambridge as a whole. The biography contains two pieces of topographic writing, each recounting the same walk. One of these is an invitation by Forster to "follow" Dickinson "from his rooms, down the sloping lawn, over the bridge, through the avenue, across the Backs" which leads into a quote from Dickinson written in the Fellows' Garden of King's in 1928; the other, mirroring this, is a rehearsal of the same walk, undertaken as a way of getting perspective on the whole ensemble – visual, architectural, cultural – that Forster here claims King's to be.²⁰⁵ There is a concentration of detail around the Gibbs Building, where Dickinson lived for most of his time at King's.²⁰⁶

The walk and the building are connected. Forster claims that the Chapel of King's tends "to nullify itself when it has become familiar and to enter but little into the general consciousness of the college".²⁰⁷ The reason for this might be "its very size" as Forster says, but probably has to do with its slightly odd relationship in the twentieth century to the rest of the college.²⁰⁸ Forster makes the relationship between the Chapel and the Gibbs Building into an analogy for "the range of the English mind": the "soaring chapel buttresses" on the one hand and the "ladder, [...] hand-cart, [...] and [...] small heap of sand" found in the large archway in the centre of the Gibbs Building on the other.²⁰⁹ This archway links the front court and the Back Lawn behind, leading down to the river. From across the river, looking back in the direction of the Gibbs Building and the Chapel, the most famous of all Cambridge views is available. Immediately above the archway are the rooms Dickinson had for the last twenty years of his life.²¹⁰ These rooms are at the centre of the college, with Front Court to the east of them, the lawn to the west, the Chapel to the north, and the nineteenth

²⁰⁵ *Dickinson*, ch. 14 p. 167, ch. 9. pp. 51-2.

²⁰⁶ The Gibbs Building is very plain, a quality deriving from an interpretation of the wishes of Henry VI, and "extremely classical" for its date (1723-1729), according to Pevsner (*Cambridgeshire*, pp. 94-95). Although Pevsner also remarks that it "stands separate from the chapel, to be appreciated as an architectural monument on its own", an image of the two buildings together, such as that reproduced by John Summerson indicates that they function as an ensemble precisely by being dissimilar neighbours. See Summerson, (*Architecture in Britain 1530-1830* [1953], Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 1993, p. 331.

²⁰⁷ *Dickinson*, ch. 9 p. 51.

²⁰⁸ Wilkinson (*Century of King's*, p. 120) calls the office of clerical Dean at King's as a "strange assignment", "running a quasi-cathedral which is also a college chapel for a Governing Body consisting largely of unbelievers".

²⁰⁹ See Image 29. The archway concerned is straight ahead beyond the fountain in the photograph.

²¹⁰ The rooms were formerly the home of another influential Kingsman with Forster connections, the early nineteenth century evangelical Anglican preacher Charles Simeon, an associate of the Clapham Sect's clergyman John Venn.

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century Wilkins Building – which includes the college's hall and library, and the set occupied by Forster between 1953 and 1970 – to the south. Dickinson's rooms were on two levels,²¹¹ the lower containing the “great semicircular window” overlooking Front Court, an attic room above “with a little circular window up in the middle of the pediment”: “Here Dickinson sometimes slept, and anyone who came into college late could see the small round eye of his light—the highest habitable point in King's”.²¹² Stressing its height Forster makes the “eye” of the college in Dickinson's room compete with the Chapel. To walk beyond the Gibbs Building, where “a new world opens”, towards the river and then turn round, Forster's topographic account claims, is to see the view that “has been depicted and described since curiosity began” but also to see “how the buildings of Gibbs dominate”: “they, not the chapel, [...] would reign in the last resort, but they are too moderate and too civilized to declare their power”. The Gibbs Building becomes the secular and rational counterpart to the soaring heavenward ascent of the Chapel.

In 1956 the “burbling and buzzing” of Bach in the Chapel made Forster reflect in the “Locked Journal”: “I was in the greatest building of the 15th century. But what had it done, and what triumph did sighing croaking Bach commemorate?”²¹³ The sense of might, triumph and completion in the Chapel is combined with one of shame and confusion. Forster wants a new Establishment, cleaned of Hebraism and Hellenism alike, and hopes that he might find it in Dickinson. The reader of *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* might feel sceptical. Editing Dickinson's *Autobiography*, first published in 1973, Dennis Proctor called Forster's decision to exclude his subject's sexuality “a serious omission in the portrait as well as a gaping hole in the narrative”,²¹⁴ and the best recent work on *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* has been by critics writing from an explicitly gay or queer perspective. George Piggford argues that *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* is a parody of Victorianism which attempts to rewrite history through allowing “primary sources to ‘speak for themselves’; Bristow sees the book as the culmination of Forster's meditations throughout his life on the notion of – non-religious – apostolic brotherhood.²¹⁵ Yet it surely makes more sense to see the book as a somewhat awkward act of duty than as any sort of culmination of Forster's career. Later works by Forster were more personally significant for him and more final: “West Hackhurst”; *Two Cheers for Democracy*; *Marianne Thornton*.²¹⁶

²¹¹ See Image 29.

²¹² *Dickinson*, ch. 14 p. 163.

²¹³ “Locked Journal”, 21 April 1956.

²¹⁴ Cited in Oliver Stallybrass, “Editor's Introduction” in *Dickinson*, pp. vii-xix, here xiv.

²¹⁵ George Piggford, “Camp Sites: Forster and the Biographies of Queer Bloomsbury” in Martin & Piggford, *Queer Forster*, pp. 89-112, here 107; Bristow, “*Fratrum Societati*”, pp. 131-3.

²¹⁶ Recent studies of ‘life-writing’ have viewed *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* more positively. Max

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The meditation on place in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* is a distinctive part of Forster's account of the life of Dickinson, but its own specific time context also calls for recovery. The biography was written while Forster was a temporary Fellow of King's.²¹⁷ The early 1930s, however, was a period when according to Furbank Forster was "rather 'off' Cambridge", and was the most active phase of his homosexual life in London.²¹⁸ There are tensions here as in all Forster's other accounts of Cambridge: that between non-Cambridge outsiders and Dickinson intimates, for example. Others include that between King's and the rest of Cambridge, with many members of the university at large not feeling as well-disposed towards Dickinson as Forster and his friends did; or that *within* King's, between the circles associated with Dickinson, Forster and – a little later – Rupert Brooke, on the one hand, and those such as Shane Leslie who enjoyed "'high-spirited' [...] escapades" such as semi-nude tricycle rides.²¹⁹

6.8. Wartime Views: "Virginia Woolf" and "Cambridge"

In 1941, at the blackest, most uncertain point for Britain of the Second World War, just before Germany attacked the Soviet Union, Forster wrote two short pieces connected with Cambridge. One was an obituary of Virginia Woolf delivered as the Rede Lecture in Senate House on 29th May. The other was a shorter review in the *New Statesman and Nation* for 10th May of John Steegman's book *Cambridge*.²²⁰ Both were included in *Two Cheers for Democracy* ten years later.²²¹

Senate House, like the Fellows' Building at King's, was designed by James Gibbs, and is the geographical and ceremonial centre of the University of Cambridge. Delivering his lecture there, Forster occupied a subtly different position from the one he presented as Dickinson's, in the eye of King's atop the Gibbs Building, the source of humane and non-religious light in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*. In his obituary, Forster identifies Woolf as partially a Cambridge writer. He assumes that his audience is familiar with her satirical portraits in *A Room of One's Own* of fictional Cambridge colleges she called "Oxbridge" –

Saunders, for example, appreciates it as a reflective "meditation on the nature of a memoir" ("Forster's Life and Life-Writing" in Bradshaw, *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 8-31, here 20).

²¹⁷ Forster was awarded a six-year Fellowship of King's in February 1927 on the strength of his Clark Lectures (*Chronology*, p. 96).

²¹⁸ Furbank II, p. 158.

²¹⁹ Wilkinson, *Century of King's*, p. 72.

²²⁰ Steegman was an art historian best known for his work on Victorian artistic taste. See Nikolaus Pevsner, "Foreword" in John Steegman, *Victorian Taste: A Study of the Arts and Architecture in Britain from 1830 to 1870*, Nelson: London, 1970, pp. v-viii.

²²¹ *Two Cheers*, pp. 242-58, 348-53.

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based on King's – and "Fernham" – a combination of Newnham and Girton.²²² At "Oxbridge", mock-gallant exclusion of women is combined with fine cuisine; "Fernham" is characterised by grim austerity.²²³ Forster concentrates on the playful side of Woolf, author of *Orlando* and participant in the Dreadnought hoax, imagining her fooling the Cambridge authorities into granting her a degree.²²⁴ Later, he points out that among the pompous figures of male authority opposed by Woolf were "the harmless don in his gown". In the lecture Forster partly positions himself as one such "harmless" or "innocent" university figure, having already been a Fellow of King's – albeit temporary and non-resident – for some of the 1920s and 1930s, but partly as, like Woolf, an amused and sceptical commentator on the university.

In *Two Cheers for Democracy*, the review of Steegman's book appears in the final section, "Places", under the title "Cambridge". This positioning suggests that Forster himself identified it as his definitive late statement on Cambridge.²²⁵ Authorities cited in the essay include Dickinson and Browning, members of a tradition of King's bachelor dons stretching back at least as far as the university reforms of the late nineteenth century.²²⁶ The review gives Browning the last word, suggesting that far from being a comic or exploitative don, he should be seen as a visionary for understanding that Cambridge needs to open itself to all classes and both genders and so for rescuing the human mind which if "unenlightened, passes away into native darkness".²²⁷ The dilemma in this essay is in fact similar to that in "The Challenge of Our Time", the 1946 broadcast in which Forster seemed torn between his horror at the destruction of the English countryside and his recognition that families living in slums must be re-housed in order that they might get a fair chance. In both "Cambridge" and "The Challenge of our Time", Forster struggles to decide between the two: something is being destroyed which is beautiful and long-lived, but the good which the destruction may yield is likely to outweigh the sadder consequences. It is a classic socialist dilemma, felt most strongly by Forster in the years immediately before and after the 1945 Labour General

²²² Oxbridge, like Miss Appleblossom's "Cambridge College" in *The Longest Journey*, is actually a blend of the university and its older colleges: Woolf (*A Room of One's Own* [1929], Hogarth Press: London, 1978, pp. 10-12) slides from talking about the "colleges" of Oxbridge to being inside one of them which is then referred to as "Oxbridge". On the non-fictional visits to Cambridge by Woolf which inspired these scenes see Lee 1998: 556.

²²³ Woolf, *Room of One's Own*, pp. 16-17, 26-7.

²²⁴ *Two Cheers*, p. 243.

²²⁵ The section also includes similarly final statements by Forster on India, South Africa, the USA, T.E. Lawrence's cottage at Clouds Hill in Dorset, London, Abinger and other places.

²²⁶ Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, by contrast, groups together Browning and another King's figure of the generation above hers, the churchman W.R. Inge, as woman-haters.

²²⁷ *Two Cheers*, p. 352. Woolf (*Room of One's Own*, pp. 80-1) suggests that Browning was a sinister sexual predator rather than a charming eccentric.

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Election victory.²²⁸ In “Cambridge” the dilemma is expressed as a struggle between the “prig”, or self-righteous, worthy person, and the “snob”, privileged and change-resistant. Steegman, according to the review, stands firmly on the snobbish side: it is pointless for women to study at the university, he thinks, and also “[t]he poor man from the elementary school” will not enjoy himself there because he will fail to make friends.²²⁹

Forster's expresses himself sinuously and elusively, through witty spatial metaphor. “Cambridge” contains an imaginary trip on a punt through the city. In a way which recalls Woolf's *Orlando*, this journey blends historical and geographical precision with fantasy. The trip begins by heading northwards from King's “under Clare Bridge”, quite possible on a punt, but then goes “through the Gate of Honour” of Gonville and Caius College – a gate on one side of a quadrangle, not on the water – and “down the Combination Room of [St] John's”, both impossible on a punt. Forster next imagines the Cambridge of the past, exemplified by a lack of lavatories and tepid food served to dons in their rooms. Such characteristic details of the older Cambridge had been included in Forster's earlier pieces of writing on the place.²³⁰ Writing at a time when the post-war world was beginning to be planned, Forster imagines this Cambridge which he sees passing away as being “asphalted” over, and its lavatories flushing “with municipal self-righteousness.”²³¹ Perhaps the Pitt Press is visible from Gonville and Caius College, despite all the buildings in between,²³² but Jesus College and the new University Library building are at opposite sides of the centre of Cambridge, one to the east and the other to the west. One certainly cannot take a punt onto the Market Square, furthermore, or down the “Pem”, the conduit in the street south of King's, moreover.²³³ The journey described then, is largely impossible, and the review is perhaps best thought of as a sort of fantasia on a real place.

This review holds a particular interest for the student of Forsterian place because it is a miniature example of genre for whose development Forster praised Steegman for adding to: the “guide [...] in the fuller sense of the word Guide”. Steegman, Forster said, had written a

²²⁸ Similarly, Forster's younger King's colleague Noel Annan was converted in the 1960s to support for Labour's comprehensive school programme. See Annan, *Our Age*, pp. 360-76. Annan, like Forster of the soft left, then worked as an advisor on education to the Labour governments of the 1960s and 1970s.

²²⁹ *Two Cheers*, p. 348.

²³⁰ In the opening chapter of *The Longest Journey* “kitchen-men with supper-trays upon their heads” appear, anticipating the “lukewarm” food brought “on heads from kitchens” of the 1941 review (*Longest Journey*, ch. 1 p. 4). The unusual fact that Dickinson had a flush toilet in his set had been noted in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (ch. 13 p. 164).

²³¹ *Two Cheers*, p. 349.

²³² The Pitt Press is a Gothic building at the corner of Trumpington Street and Silver Street built for the University Press between 1831 and 1833 (Leedham-Green, *Concise History*, p. 119). It is situated to the south of King's and Caius to the north.

²³³ The Pem is mentioned in the opening chapter of *The Longest Journey* (ch. 1. p. 11).

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piece of topographic writing that combines “historical”, “architectural”, and social”, and with them past, present and future.²³⁴ This was something Forster had attempted in his own 1922 book on Alexandria after toying light-heartedly with the presence of Baedeker in his early fiction set in Italy.²³⁵ A quote from Woolf's *Jacob's Room* which is used in the obituary of her is also used here. This refers to “the light of Cambridge” illuminating all around, once more recalling Dickinson's position inside the highest window of the Gibbs Building at King'. The essay centrally juxtaposes the view that old-established places ought to be obliterated on the grounds that they are unfair and obsolete, with affection for the eccentricities of such places, Cambridge being a prime example. Forster proposes such obliteration in an allusion to the classical notion of the spirit of place and the *genius loci*:²³⁶ his joking solution to the “dilemma” into which reading Steegman puts him. He recommends “razing the whole sacred area to the ground. The dons and other portable valuables could first be transported to a safe spot and Hitler would do the rest free of charge. [Cambridge] would survive as a memory then, and a memory can do more than either a mummy or a travesty towards civilising the world”.²³⁷ Despite the warm feelings for an idealised Cambridge which is also the world of his own youth, “the place which I have loved for forty years, and where I have made my best friends”, in this essay Forster concludes that Cambridge must open its doors to women and “elementary schoolmen”, rather than stay picturesque and unchanging.²³⁸

6.9. Tensions in Corporate Identity: Forster and Housman; King's and Trinity

Trinity College figures in *Maurice* in the person of Risley. Its “disdainful radiance” there shines on Maurice Hall and his suburban ilk from on high.²³⁹ In writing about Trinity Forster seems anxious to pay homage to it, yet slightly mocking about its pose of superiority. The college appears in quite a different light in a memoir written for the Bloomsbury Group's Memoir Club sometime between 1936 and 1953, probably after the Second World War.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ *Two Cheers*, p. 351.

²³⁵ *Alexandria*. The guidebook mode is also used in the opening chapter of *A Passage to India*.

²³⁶ Remembering that the 1960 “Author's Introduction” (*Longest Journey*, p. xxiii) calls Ansell “the undergraduate high-priest of that local shrine”.

²³⁷ *Two Cheers*, p. 352.

²³⁸ *Two Cheers*, pp. 348, 352.

²³⁹ *Maurice*, ch. VI p. 24.

²⁴⁰ E.M. Forster, “A.E. Housman”, MS KCC/EMF/11/1, c.1937; *Creator as Critic*, pp. 124-30. Forster's reference to Mary “Molly” (1882-1953) MacCarthy at the beginning of the memoir indicates that the memoir was written for the Bloomsbury Group's Memoir Club, a group which

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This piece of writing, itself a development of a shorter memorandum apparently addressed to himself which Forster began in 1928 and then abandoned, recounts the novelist's relations with the scholar and poet A.E. Housman.

Forster's relations with Housman paralleled an opposition in their literary criticism between the belletristic and the dryly scholarly. Before it was offered to Forster, the 1927 Clark Lectureship had been offered to Housman, who gave "a proud dignified refusal in the interests of exact scholarship", according to Forster.²⁴¹ Forster and Housman were alike in that the approaches to literature they advocated were becoming out of date during the interwar years. In the 1920s, a new school of Cambridge literary critics emerged, doing something quite different from either the drawing-room reflections of Forster or the exact scholarship of Housman.²⁴² These new professional critics were associated with I.A. Richards and the Cambridge School of English, founded in 1918.²⁴³ In Forster's undergraduate days, reading and writing on English literature had been extracurricular, except when a college prize was involved.²⁴⁴ In *The Longest Journey*, meanwhile, Rickie uses the term "English Essays" as a way of dismissing a letter from Ansell which cites Shelley's *Epipsychidion*, the source of the novel's title and the poem he himself reads on Cadbury Rings during his epiphanic moment at the book's imaginative centre.²⁴⁵

Housman was close in age, sexuality and classical training to Dickinson, the former twenty years older than Forster, the latter seventeen, but whereas Forster used Dickinson as a positive model of what the Cambridge bachelor don could be and of what such a figure could give to the world, he figures Housman as a bitter, isolated homosexual. The basic facts of Forster's relations with Housman are as follows.²⁴⁶ A youthful enthusiast for *A Shropshire*

was often referred to as hers. The annotation by Charles John Morris on the first page of the MS at King's of the memoir, stating that it was initially written "for one of the Cambridge societies", would therefore seem to be misleading. The catalogue of the Modern Archive at King's and the memoir's editor Jeffrey M. Heath (see *Creator as Critic*, p. 452) suggest a date around 1950 for it, and Forster's reference at the end of the memoir to "a wave of war worry" passing over him shortly after Housman's death supports this, indicating that he was writing after the Second World War when such worry had receded into the past.

²⁴¹ *Creator as Critic*, p. 127.

²⁴² A.E. Housman, "The Name and Nature of Poetry" [1933] in *Selected Prose*, John Carter (ed.), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1961, pp. 168-95, here 168) thought that people qualified to be literary critics were rarer than "returns of Halley's comet".

²⁴³ Richards and his followers were "the one original movement in the humanities" of interwar Oxbridge, according to Annan (*Our Age*, p. 310).

²⁴⁴ Such as that at King's won by Forster in December 1899 for a piece on English novelists (*Creator as Critic*, pp. 150-61). See Furbank I, pp. 70-1; *Chronology*, p. 8.

²⁴⁵ *Longest Journey*, ch. 13 pp. 126-7; Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Epipsychidion" [1822] in *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Thomas Hutchinson (ed.), Oxford University Press: London, 1934, pp. 411-24, here 415.

²⁴⁶ See Philip Gardner, "'One Fraction of a Summer Field': Forster and A.E. Housman", *Twentieth-Century Literature* 31 (1985), pp. 161-9.

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Lad, like many of his age and class, Forster took the poems on a solitary walking tour of Shropshire in 1907; he wrote an unanswered fan-letter to the poet from there and also worked Shropshire into *Howards End* in the shape of Oniton, before discovering that Housman was a classicist who in 1911 had been appointed Professor of Latin at Cambridge and become a Fellow of Trinity.²⁴⁷ In January 1923, following the publication of Housman's *Last Poems*, Forster wrote another letter and this time received a reply.²⁴⁸ Forster's account of their relations when he was Clark Lecturer deserves examination:

As second choice, I was courteously received by him, he attended two of the lectures, [and] let it be known, through his circle, that he approved them [...] Our most intimate conversation was on the subject of Paris. 'When I go there,' said the Professor with a twinkle, 'it is to be in unrespectable company.' This was offered as a jest, and accepted as such, but so offered that I might make the mistake of accepting it seriously if I chose, which was intriguing. Well pleased with such progress, I ventured to climb the forbidding staircase which led to his rooms. They were sported but I dropped a visiting card through the slit.²⁴⁹

The reference to Parisian naughtiness, itself somehow late Victorian,²⁵⁰ makes Forster feel he has been invited to become more intimate with Housman. In *Maurice*, Risley and Clive similarly draw the protagonist in, through allusions to castration, Plato and Tchaikovsky. As in Risley's Trinity corridor the closed door inside a college building is encountered, although it never opens for Forster as for his fictional hero.

Forster remarked in a 1936 review of Housman's posthumous *More Poems* and the authorised biography of him by A.S.F. Gow that in his "adequate haven at Cambridge" Housman skulked out of the sight of his public accompanied by "a glass of port".²⁵¹ Something of the King's Puritanism, which Sheppard had in 1903 played up to by humorously recounting a scene of drunkenness at Trinity, men "flushed & oozing with wine",²⁵² can be detected in Forster's view of Housman. This something is not noticeable to everyone who has been to Cambridge, though, only those familiar with a certain view of

²⁴⁷ *Creator as Critic*, p. 126; Furbank I, pp. 70-1; Norman Page, "Housman, Alfred Edward (1859-1936)" in ODNB; Forster and Housman first met at dinner in Cambridge not long before the First World War (*Creator as Critic*, p. 126).

²⁴⁸ *Selected Letters II*, p. 33.

²⁴⁹ *Creator as Critic*, p. 127. Like one of the "Sims" training to be clergymen in Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (ch. 47 p. 216), a fictionalisation of 1850s Cambridge which was highly influential on the Bloomsbury Group, Housman occupied "spartan" rooms "in a distant corner" of his college (Page, "Housman"). The word "sporting" here means in university slang that Housman's door was closed to visitors, as when Maurice, having rejected Clive, calls on him to find "the door sported" or "people inside" (*Maurice*, ch. XI p. 65).

²⁵⁰ It recalls the passage in *The Longest Journey* detailing the tastes of old Mr Elliot and his circle in what can be surmised to have been around 1880 (*Longest Journey*, ch. 29 p. 234).

²⁵¹ *Prince's Tale*, p. 122.

²⁵² Furbank I, p. 106.

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Trinity held by Kingsmen at a particular time.

There is another reference to Housman as “the Professor” in the *Listener* article.²⁵³ Referring to him thus suggests that Forster felt a mixture of social superiority and inferiority towards Housman. As a descendant of the Clapham Sect and modern aesthete, leisurely in his literary manners, Forster came from a background socially superior to that of Housman, son of a provincial solicitor. Housman, Forster perhaps implies, has made his way by a grinding, relentless application to the driest sort of scholarship, something undertaken in the hope of upward social mobility through the winning of academic honours. The Cambridge professor, though, had reached an established status and position which the itinerant novelist returning to his alma mater after decades elsewhere did not yet have. Forster wavers between the positions of outsider and insider.

The follow-up to the closed door was more unpleasant. In 1928, Forster sent Housman a copy of his second collection of short stories, *The Eternal Moment*, together with a note suggesting a comparison between Housman's “Hell Gate” in *Last Poems* and Forster's short story “The Point of It”, in which an ageing, self-satisfied classicist fails to understand the meaning of his own life.²⁵⁴ By 1928, Forster had already begun and abandoned a memoir on Housman, written more for himself rather than any outside audience.²⁵⁵ This had been occasioned by the discovery, through inter-High Table gossip spread by ‘Dadie’ Rylands,²⁵⁶ that Housman felt Forster had snubbed Trinity by dining too much at King's while Clark Lecturer. There is some reason to believe, then, that his presentation of “The Point of It” to Housman was less innocent than Forster himself afterwards claimed. His claim was that he wrote “somewhat warmly and a little sentimentally” to the poet; he received, he says, an “absolutely hateful” reply which he immediately burned, and there was no further contact between the two.²⁵⁷ Housman died eight years later.

The incident left scars. Forster felt increasingly ambivalent about Housman's poetry. It had once seemed to him as liberating as the life of Tchaikovsky is for Maurice Hall. In 1907, Forster wrote in the 1920s, he had come to the conclusion that “the poems concealed an experience” and that this was “that the poet had fallen in love with a man”.²⁵⁸ In 1927, Forster called the poet “my natural food”, but by the late 1930s he seems to have been connecting Housman to earlier phases of his own life. The two memoirs both place Housman

²⁵³ *Prince's Tale*, p. 120.

²⁵⁴ *Selected Letters II*, p. 85; A.E. Housman, *Collected Poems* [1939], John Carter (ed.), Cape: London, 1967, pp. 94-7; *Machine Stops*, pp. 119-34.

²⁵⁵ E.M. Forster, [First memoir of his relations with A.E. Housman], MS KCC/EMF/11/1 [1927], f. 72r.

²⁵⁶ See *Creator as Critic*, p. 128, where Rylands is pictured “titupping towards me over the grass with his tale”.

²⁵⁷ *Creator as Critic*, pp. 127, 128.

²⁵⁸ Forster, [First Housman memoir], f. 72r.

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as “a light in the sky, where the dexterity of his art kept him”.²⁵⁹ Technical skill not fellow-feeling, then, was what stopped Forster from altogether dismissing Housman after the 1920s. As late as 1963, when Forster wrote to Plomer identifying the original of Oniton as Clun in Shropshire, he reported that in 1907 he had gone there alone “except for the dubious accompaniment of A.E. Housman”.²⁶⁰

Philip Gardner sees the combination of “retrospection with a degree of self-protection and wounded *amour-propre*” which he finds in the two memoirs as a consequence of the relationship between the two writers.²⁶¹ Personal relations were important to Forster, of course, but the Housman memoirs could also be understood as resulting from relationships between individuals and Cambridge colleges, places which have a corporate identity. Forster's public stance, famously expressed in “What I Believe”, was usually against corporate relations, there identified with “my country”, and in favour of personal ones, identified there with the notion of “my friend”.²⁶² But the opposition between – King's College – Cambridge and the public school of *The Longest Journey, Maurice* and – still more clearly – *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, suggests a distinction between *types* of corporate identity. Cambridge, Forster says, is devoted to “education” characterized by “nonchalance” and “ease”, to the creation of “an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky” of the sort commended in “What I Believe”.²⁶³ The public school, by contrast, he sees as dedicated to “firmness, self-complacency and fatuity”.²⁶⁴ This is not a rejection of corporate identity *per se*. Forster's acceptance of a certain sort of corporate identity, that represented by King's, is demonstrated by his eagerness to move back to the college after 1946. The same eagerness is demonstrated by his willingness to write the biography of a great modern figure in the corporate grouping, Dickinson, in a way that could be made public in 1934, and so demonstrate to the grouping Forster's own loyalty, his status as ‘one of them’.

More subtle than the public school versus Cambridge opposition is that between King's

²⁵⁹ Forster, [First Housman memoir], f. 72v. The wording in the later memoir (*Creator as Critic*, p. 126) is identical, except that the word “maintained” is substituted for “kept”.

²⁶⁰ Meaning that Forster took a volume of Housman's poems with him on the trip. See *Selected Letters II*, p. 287. Furbank does not make Forster's reaction to the Housman experience clear. There are no mentions of Housman in the index to the first volume of Furbank's *Life*, but the 1907 walking tour *does* appear in the text, and there Furbank (I p. 153) footnotes Forster's initial enthusiasm for Housman: “[a]s we shall see, he had to revise this opinion when he came to know Housman”. But there are no references to Housman in the pages of Furbank's second volume (Furbank II pp. 144–56) referring to 1927 and 1928. The exchange with Housman is referred to by Lago and Furbank in their edition of Forster's *Selected Letters*, but only very briefly (*Selected Letters II* p. 85).

²⁶¹ Gardner, ““One Fraction of a Summer Field””, p. 162.

²⁶² *Two Cheers*, p. 68.

²⁶³ *Longest Journey*, ch. 6 p. 58; *Two Cheers*, p. 73.

²⁶⁴ *Dickinson*, p. 22.

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and Trinity. Sheppard, writing in 1903, opposed his own college to Trinity, where, he claimed, the prevailing opinion is “that there are two classes separated by a clear distinction, the clever and the not clever”.²⁶⁵ The fear of being defined as stupid by Trinity is what oppresses Maurice Hall as he seeks out Risley. An apparently personal statement by Forster about Housman such as a remark on his fondness for wine, or the claim that “[p]ettiness [...] disfigured his scholarship; his attacks on other Latinists in his prefaces to Manilius and Juvenal are brilliant, scathing and sound, yet they are in the last analysis undignified, for dullness ought to be reprimanded dully” could therefore be taken as a coded allusion to the excessive drinking and intellectual pettiness characteristic of Trinity men,²⁶⁶ although another way of viewing the relationship between the two colleges, would be to interpret the rivalry as something more good-natured, something deriving from a shared sense of superiority in comparison to other Cambridge colleges and therefore the world.²⁶⁷ Never having been a Cambridge undergraduate meant Housman would never be an Apostle, though. Perhaps, indeed, it was an unsubstantiated sense of being insulted, both personally and in a corporate way, which caused Housman to lose his temper with Forster in 1928.

Forster's Cambridge contained tension, and not just mutual admiration, between two of its greatest components, King's and Trinity. Evidence of this is provided by the “long digression on the subject of Wynstanley” which provides Forster's explanation of the 1928 snub.²⁶⁸ This is an embedded story, a memoir within a memoir, recounting Forster's relations with the historian D.A. Winstanley, a near contemporary of the novelist's. Like Forster's mentor Dickinson, like Housman, and like Forster himself after 1946, Winstanley was a bachelor don. Fellow of Trinity for 41 years until his death, Vice-Master of Trinity from 1935 onwards, and author of a four-volume history of Cambridge,²⁶⁹ Winstanley was an archetypal Cambridge insider, both of college and University. Forster presents him and Housman to his Bloomsbury audience as examples of “the celebrated Trinity silliness”.²⁷⁰ Central to Bloomsbury, it should not be forgotten, were Trinity men such as Strachey, MacCarthy, Clive Bell and Leonard Woolf, while Forster could be no less waspish about Kingsmen than Trinity men, something his reference to Rylands in the second Housman memoir demonstrates. Nevertheless, the digression on “Wynstanley” does seem intended to say

²⁶⁵ Furbank I., p. 105.

²⁶⁶ *Prince's Tale*, p. 118.

²⁶⁷ The Kingsman L.P. Wilkinson (*Century of King's*, p. 35) similarly emphasises the closeness of King's and Trinity, specifically that the Conversazione Society or Cambridge Apostles, began in the 1820s “centred on Trinity, and soon reached out especially to King's”.

²⁶⁸ *Creator as Critic*, pp. 128-9.

²⁶⁹ Peter Searby, “Winstanley, Denys Arthur (1877-1947)” in ODNB. Characteristically, Forster always misspells Winstanley's name as “Wynstanley”.

²⁷⁰ *Creator as Critic*, p. 129.

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something about the “silliness” of Trinity, the college ready to remember “till death” such a trifling point as Forster’s not having eaten there enough. “What a college! What dons!” Forster exclaims.²⁷¹

The digression hints to Forster’s Bloomsbury Group listeners that Winstanley was homosexual, for example by saying he had a crush on Rylands, but also in its confident statement that Forster and he were “the same sort”,²⁷² and its imputation to Winstanley of “feminine malice” in Egypt and on the way home from there between 1915 and 1919. Forster was drawn to Winstanley when the two met at Alexandria, partially because they were both Cambridge men but also, Forster implies, because of a shared sexual identity. Gradually, though, Winstanley began to “rise in the official atmosphere” while the less clubbable Forster did not. Forster implies that the eventual failure of Winstanley to help him during a 1919 evacuation from Marseille was an act of pettiness, the failing which he also attributes to Housman. The digression, ending with its image of Winstanley grim-facedly dealing with Forster over the Clark lectures, together with the “decent enough” reply, written “without effusiveness”, which Forster gets when he writes to try and sort out the mix-up over the dining, and even the fact that Forster’s 1936 *Listener* review had been of what he calls a biographical “sketch” by “Gow of Trinity”, combine to create a distinctly uncomfortable feeling about Trinity.²⁷³ The relationship between Cambridge – and specifically the circles of intellectuals centred on King’s and Trinity – was about to be complicated by politics. By the time of Housman’s death in 1936 Strachey had been dead for several years and the spy Guy Burgess, who studied history at Trinity between 1930 and 1935, was about to become a London contact of Forster’s.²⁷⁴

6.10. Cambridge in the “Locked Journal” (1946-56)

The journal Forster kept in the period after his move back to Cambridge in 1946 is full of short descriptions of his domestic surroundings – unlike the undergraduate diaries of 1898 and 1899 – but also describes wrangles and conflicts within and between colleges. Surrounding Forster as he writes in “the low soft chair from my West Hackhurst ‘study’ [...] prettily recovered in cretonne” are “a good electric light” and “a good gas fire”.²⁷⁵ But

²⁷¹ *Creator as Critic*, p. 129.

²⁷² *Creator as Critic*, p. 128.

²⁷³ *Creator as Critic*, p. 130; on Gow see Hugh Lloyd-Jones, “Gow, Andrew Sydenham Farrar (1886-1978)” in ODNB.

²⁷⁴ *Chronology*, pp. 130, 139.

²⁷⁵ “Locked Journal”, 28 December 1952, 31 December 1947. Furbank recalls him in this period with a tiny vase of flowers beside him and surrounded by correspondence from friends, although Forster

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Forster also records falling out with the couple who let him lodge at their house when he moved back to Cambridge, for example.²⁷⁶ And attending a lecture by Leavis, he struggles “to separate the grain from the bad breeding and bad temper”, concluding that Leavis’s teaching over “all these years” must have been “[h]armful both to the boys and himself”.²⁷⁷ There is a sense of the bitchiness of high-table life, moreover, in Forster’s observation that “our societas at King’s [...] might easily turn bitter” if a couple more unpleasant colleagues were “introduced”.²⁷⁸

Some of the less pleasant aspects of high-table life are absent. Forster nowhere mentions the 1954 suicide of the Dean of King’s, Ivor Ramsay, who threw himself from the roof of the Chapel. Nevertheless, this terrible event and Forster’s simultaneous feelings of discomfort about the life of the dons are perhaps related.²⁷⁹ King’s, few have recognised, could be a place where Forster felt *uncomfortable*, fearing himself considered “distinguished yet so undistinguished” in the eyes of “[p]eople like Dadie”.²⁸⁰ His position there was rather unusual: Honorary Fellows of King’s were not usually allowed to reside in the College, but in Forster’s case a special exception was made.²⁸¹ Connections to academics such as “Dadie” Rylands – may have made Forster uncomfortable, but they also helped establish him at the College. It was at the suggestion of Rylands, the Fellow in English who in Wilkinson’s words formed “a vital link between Bloomsbury and King’s”, that Forster had been invited to live in the college following the loss of West Hackhurst.²⁸² Forster’s Cambridge life in the 1950s could also simply be sedate, as his boring little teas with his friend E.K. Bennett, Fellow of Caius are. During one of these, Forster wrote in his journal, he lacked energy, and the two reflected on the decline of poetry in the modern world, where the educated keep their eyes on “the pavement” like “the industrialised slave”.²⁸³

The “Locked Journal” entries written between the 1940s and the 1960s contain less about Cambridge the town than the undergraduate diaries, less still about public events. “Korea

himself felt overwhelmed by “unanswered letters”, his “rhythm” breaking down (Furbank II, p. 292; “Locked Journal”, 19 June 1948).

²⁷⁶ “Locked Journal”, 31 December 1953.

²⁷⁷ “Locked Journal”, 25 April 1956.

²⁷⁸ “Locked Journal”, 7 June 1954.

²⁷⁹ According to Wilkinson (*Century of King’s*, p. 119), Ramsay had been viewed as a “figure of fun” by some of the other King’s Fellows. Ramsay, like Forster, was an old Kingsman with the common touch who was seen as unintellectual and eccentric on his return to the College.

²⁸⁰ “Locked Journal”, 18 October 1951.

²⁸¹ Forster described himself as “an interloper” with “no right” to be living there in a speech he delivered at King’s on his eightieth birthday (*Creator as Critic*, p. 134).

²⁸² Wilkinson, *Century of King’s*, pp. 94, 114; see also Annan, *Dons*, pp. 170-92. Rylands’ position between King’s and Bloomsbury is demonstrated by the fact that he hosted the lunch on which the first chapter of Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* is based.

²⁸³ “Locked Journal”, 30 November 1953.

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rumbles” but there is nothing on the Festival of Britain or the return of a Conservative government in 1951,²⁸⁴ while the crisis-filled autumn of 1956, time of Suez and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, is a blank: there are no entries at all between 25 August and 4 December. In the spring of the same year, Forster's entries had been reflections on Leavis and on the failure of Christianity: the world beyond the University and its colleges seems far off. Forster was isolated in Cambridge, despite the fact that outsiders paid court to him there.

In 1951, Forster recorded in detail “for future reference” a single ordinary day, 18th October. On this day he journeyed by train to Cambridge from his flat in Chiswick: the position of Cambridge at the end of a line with London, Forster crossing the metropolis on his way from one home to another, is a spatial aspect of the undergraduate diaries which recurs in the “Locked Journal”. On the same day, in between reading Annan's new biography of Leslie Stephen,²⁸⁵ and noting his own “idleness and torpidity” in doing so, Forster takes “[n]o exercise”. It is a far cry from the walks to Cherry Hinton and the dell half a century before. Instead, the Honorary Fellow falls asleep in his first class carriage from London, later eating a “generally good” dinner in Hall at King's, comprising “scaloped fish a bit dry but excellent roast mutton red currant jelly, roast potatoes, gravy, creamy-onion mess; and finally hot rice pudding and cold stewed pear”. Describing a dinner does not make him a sybarite, though. Writing about food was something Forster felt Stephen's daughter Virginia did incomparably well,²⁸⁶ and the account of 18th October 1951 is part of an attempt which lasted until Forster's death to keep alive the power of impressions.

Forster's Cambridge during these years of austerity in Britain is largely cosseted and walled off but is also connected by the train and by visitors – friends, foreign journalists and academics – to the outside world. For all its comfort it contains boredom and tension, too. It might seem strange that Forster, with his interests, never wondered what was going on in the town. Sex suggests a reason why. Forster notes his “dirty” thoughts, thoughts which he wants to control but cannot, while at the same time he does “not want to sacrifice [...] the pleasures of eroticism”.²⁸⁷ “At all events” he concludes with relief “I don't go hanging about urinals or showing my aged genitals to girls”. Casual pick-ups of working-class men in pubs, streets and public toilets, practised actively by Forster's friends Joe Ackerley and Plomer in the 1930s and 1940s but renounced by both after the Second World War,²⁸⁸ were one reason for

²⁸⁴ “Locked Journal”, 29 June 1950.

²⁸⁵ Noel Annan, *Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time*, Macgibbon & Kee: London, 1951.

²⁸⁶ *Two Cheers*, pp. 251-2.

²⁸⁷ “Locked Journal”, 25 August 1956.

²⁸⁸ Peter Alexander, *William Plomer: A Biography*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1989, p. 244; Peter Parker, *Ackerley: A Life of J.R. Ackerley*, Constable: London, 1989, pp. 209-15.

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homosexuals to make excursions into town before the Sexual Offences Act of 1967. Forster preferred to be safe; his Cambridge became a retreat.

6.11. Conclusion

The changes which have happened to Cambridge since Forster's last years there could be seen in the terms of the anthropologist Marc Augé as marking a shift from the modern to the supermodern.²⁸⁹ Cambridge of course has long been a tourist site, and in the Cambridge of the early twenty-first century elements representing history continue to exist. But these elements are constituted and emphasised as things for consumption by students, foreign tourists, British visitors and local residents alike. Forster was himself interested in the guidebook, a textual genre which tends to reconstitute place as a series of signs or fixed routes. Forster's Cambridge was not only the Cambridge of G.E. Moore, site of spiritual liberation and intellectual brotherhood, it was far more complex than that: also somewhere of drains and dinners and bitchy dons.

On a Forsterian conceptual map, Cambridge is connected by a line – essentially that of the railway, although Maurice once travels there by motorcycle there once – to London; it occupies an intermediate point between the Home Counties and the wilder England beyond. In Forster's hands, though, it is also somewhat de-placed, not inside any of these entities and combining elements of all of them. Forster's treatments of it in his writing constantly mediate between internal and external stances or positions in relation to it, and internal and external audiences to whom they are addressed. Cambridge, however, does not have a single hidden and coded meaning for insiders. The connection between Forster's double life as a homosexual and that of Burgess and the other Cambridge spies should not be exaggerated. In the case of the essay "Cambridge", for example, the public and outer meaning – that it is a good thing, a much needed change for Cambridge to open up to men and women from outside the traditionally privileged classes, even though this may mean some appealing things from the past have to disappear – is victorious.

²⁸⁹ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* [1992] (translated from French by John Howe), Verso: London & New York, 1995, p. 96.

7. Rooksnest, Stevenage, Hertfordshire

7.1 Views of Forster's Hertfordshire

The house near Stevenage in Hertfordshire which Forster knew as Rooksnest is now known as Rooks Nest House,¹ and the question of its name complicates the relationship between fiction and non-fiction. Forster memorialised the house in an account he wrote at the age of fifteen, calling it “Rooksnest”.² Few critics have shown interest in Forster’s treatment of Rooksnest except as the original for the eponymous house of *Howards End*. Even a critic such as Joseph Bristow who treats one place – Cambridge – as something with a specific, positive identity in Forster’s writing, largely ignores the local specifics of place and their relationship to the workings of literary communication.³ Discussions of *Howards End* tend almost without exception to consider Howards End the fictional house as a symbol for all England or rural England, and therefore to overlook the particular part of a particular county – Hertfordshire – in which it is placed. In fact, the local setting is a complex overlap of town, rural district, parish and neighbourhood. Judith Scherer Herz observed accurately in the 1980s that “Forster was a memoirist in his fiction, a fiction maker in his memoirs”, but even today his non-fiction is commonly overlooked.⁴ Such forgetfulness is remedied by focusing on a particular place zone such as Hertfordshire, as it appears in writings produced throughout Forster’s life, and by paying attention to the impact he has had on the county even after his death.

The Home Counties, as a term, is a late-nineteenth-century coinage denoting the counties surrounding London.⁵ Their identification as something distinct from rural England indicates

¹ For pictures of the house at different times see Margaret Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, Phillimore: Chichester, 1995: 103; Furbank I, between pp. 112 and 113; Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, 1966, between pp. 276 and 277; the dust-jacket of E.M. Forster, *Howards End*, Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Edward Arnold: London; the cover of Paul B. Armstrong’s edition of *Howards End*. The foliage between the house and the road has grown up considerably since the 1880s.

² E.M. Forster, “Rooksnest” in *Howards End*, Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Edward Arnold: London, 1973, pp. 341-51, here 341.

³ Joseph Bristow, “*Fratrum Societati*: Forster’s Apostolic Dedications” in Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (eds), *Queer Forster*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1997, pp. 113-36.

⁴ Judith Scherer Herz, “The Remaking of the Past in Forster’s Non-Fiction”, *Twentieth-Century Literature* 31 (1985), pp. 287-96, here 287.

⁵ OED2: *home* n.1 and a. 2.b. Kent, Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire are almost invariably considered Home Counties, while Essex (more industrial; less picturesque) and Sussex (not adjacent to London) are often also labelled as such.

7. Rooksnest, Stevenage, Hertfordshire

how much impact the metropolis was having by then on its surroundings.⁶ In fact Middlesex, the county in which London once was, and which London now fully occupies, had been converted agriculturally to a “monoculture of hay” serving the capital as early as the eighteenth century.⁷ Before these counties were covered with London suburbs or filled with commuters, then, they were already in London’s orbit. As for Forster, the Home Counties are a unit in his understanding of English place, but he also distinguished them from one another. In particular, Hertfordshire for him is not the same as Surrey or what he calls “Sawston”. Where Hertfordshire is politically Liberal and more generally permissive in its attitudes, somewhat higgledy piggledy and unpicturesque, and the site of eccentric survivals of the past and inter-class relations that can be honest, warm and animated, Surrey is excessively cosy and picturesque, stifling in its upper-middle-class respectability. Sawston, meanwhile, is a pretentious, pushy middle-class world of schools, colonial service and temporary stays in large, nondescript Victorian houses. Among critics the closest to grasping this is Glen Cavaliero, who describes the Forsterian Hertfordshire landscape as “open, utilitarian in the true sense”.⁸ Hertfordshire, Cavaliero says, “rather than the Home Counties south of London” was “Forster’s abiding spiritual ambience”.

Whereas Cambridge in *The Longest Journey* and Surrey in *A Room with a View* were of some interest to those novels’ earliest readers, reviewers of *Howards End* at the time of its publication had little to say about the Hertfordshire setting.⁹ The two reviewers of the novel most sympathetic to Forster were the only ones to mention Hertfordshire and they only did so *en passant*. R.A. Scott-James, editor of the politically Liberal *Daily News*, noted the “Hertfordshire environment”; Edward Garnett, a valued adviser on literary matters to the young Forster, alluded to “Mrs. Wilcox’s modest, old-fashioned house in Herts”.¹⁰

Among mid-twentieth-century readers, James McConkey’s view of “Howards End, its hayfield, wych-elm, vine and garden, and [...] the neighbouring Six Hills” as symbols of “an awakening to the continuity and unity which the earth affords” well represents criticism of the Trilling era, which saw the universal but not the local aspects of Forsterian place.¹¹ McConkey was not concerned with the fact that the Six Hills have a precise non-fictional

⁶ P.L. Garside, “London and the Home Counties” in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, three volumes, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990, vol. I pp. 471-539, 471.

⁷ Garside, “London and the Home Counties”, p. 476.

⁸ Glen Cavaliero, *A Reading of E.M. Forster*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1979, p. 14.

⁹ *Critical Heritage*, pp. 73-6, 85, 92-3, 110-12.

¹⁰ R.A. Scott-James, “The Year’s Best Novel” [1910] [review of *Howards End* in *Daily News*] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 135-9, here 136; [Edward Garnett], “Villadom” [1910] [unsigned review of *Howards End* in *The Nation*] in *Critical Heritage*, pp. 139-42; see also *Selected Letters I*, p. 117.

¹¹ James McConkey, *The Novels of E.M. Forster* [1957], Archon: Hamden, CT, 1971, p. 118.

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original in Stevenage, whose name Forster did not change: “[b]arrows, probably Roman and constructed for burial purposes”, in Pevsner’s words.¹² Wilfred Stone, similarly, saw mainly a general and symbolic significance:

Houses have the symbolic role in this novel that rooms had in the last. *Howards End* is modeled on the house in Hertfordshire where Forster and his mother lived for ten years, but it is also [...] a symbolic house, a house with a view. Of the three principal houses in the book, this one is the most important: it is the country house, and represents all of England and her spiritual inheritance that can be implied in the phrases ‘the English countryside’ and ‘the existence, in an established home, of the family.’¹³

For John Colmer, too, writing in 1969, *Howards End* “contracts the whole of England within a single house”.¹⁴

Since Forster’s death, Hertfordshire’s more specific sub-national role in his writing has not really been reappraised. Peter Widdowson’s 1977 account mentions the Great North Road as it appears in *Howards End* and the proximity of Forster’s Hilton to London, but not the fact that Forster’s Hilton bears as close a relationship to Stevenage as Forster’s London does to London.¹⁵ As Widdowson writes, the setting of *Howards End* in Hilton, “like the scenery” Mrs Munt has just seen, is said by Forster to strike “an indeterminate note” between “England” and “Suburbia”. Widdowson nevertheless concludes that *Howards End* the house is to be equated with England not suburbia.¹⁶ Francis Gillen similarly claims that the fictional house has a “pervading rural spirit”.¹⁷ But Forster positioned the house specifically *somewhere* in England: close to London, on the edge of this particular semi-suburban town. In the 1970s, discussions of Forster’s writing on Hertfordshire exaggerated both the rural qualities of this particular county and its symbolic – or metaphoric – role in the book, as opposed to its metonymic – or referential one. Later readings, for example that of Krishan Kumar from 2003, hardly redress the balance.¹⁸

¹² Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire* [1953], Second Edition, Bridget Cherry (rev.), Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1977, p 347. A road called Six Hills Way runs through the New Town centre of Stevenage today.

¹³ Stone, *Cave and the Mountain*, pp. 237-8.

¹⁴ John Colmer, “*Howards End* Revisited” in J.H. Stape (ed.), *E.M. Forster: Critical Assessments*, four volumes, Mountfield, East Sussex, 1998, vol. III pp. 240-9, here 246.

¹⁵ Peter Widdowson, *E.M. Forster’s ‘Howards End’: Fiction as History*, Sussex University Press: London, 1977, pp 66-7.

¹⁶ *Howards End*, ch. 3 p. 13; Widdowson, *Forster’s ‘Howards End’*, p. 67.

¹⁷ Francis Gillen, “*Howards End* and the Neglected Narrator” [1970] in Stape, *Critical Assessments*, vol. III pp. 250-63, here 252.

¹⁸ Kumar (*The Making of English National Identity*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003, p. 213) takes *Howards End* as his primary example of the pastoralism, or “rural ideology” which in his view characterize statements of English national identity between 1901 and 1914.

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Like Gillen in 1970, Paul R. Rivenberg in 1982 is more interested in the intra-textual role of the narrator in *Howards End* than matters of extra-textual reference.¹⁹ S.P. Rosenbaum refers to the memoir as evidence for the strongly autobiographical nature of *Howards End*,²⁰ but is no more concerned with extra-textual reference than Gillen or Rivenberg. Instead, he investigates intertextuality and influence: the relationship between *Howards End* and the work of writers such as Jane Austen, Charles Lamb, Meredith and Moore. He does, however, refer perceptively to the more physical, non-textual side of Hertfordshire, exploring the meanings of England and ‘end’: “Literally, Howards End – like Mackery End in Lamb’s essay – is the outlying property, beyond a village, once owned by the Howards. Symbolically, a farmhouse like Howards End is the purpose of England, the end-result of its ‘fair complexities’”.²¹ Like Stone in the 1960s, Rosenbaum in the 1990s gives symbolic meaning priority over literal. He gets closer to the actual Hertfordshire only when he considers party politics in the novel, referring to an equation Forster makes between Hertfordshire and Liberalism in which the problem, Rosenbaum claims, is that “middle-class Conservatives like Henry Wilcox do not leave the county alone”.²²

A provocative recent reading by David Bradshaw, meanwhile, whilst acknowledging that *Howards End* is “set in London, Hertfordshire, Dorset and Shropshire”, shows no more interest than its predecessors in the specifics of these English places as contexts for the novel.²³ Bradshaw concentrates on eugenics and the Edwardian rubber boom, but he does note that “a good deal of the significance the narrator attaches to the fictional dwelling reflects the author’s nostalgia for the only childhood home in which he appears to have been truly happy”.²⁴ Who attaches the significance, though: the narrator or Forster himself? Bradshaw distinguishes the non-fictional Rooksnest and the fictional Howards End, claiming that the more rural Rooksnest, “surrounded by extensive meadows”, contrasts with the “suburban sprawl” about to overrun Howards End,²⁵ but this contrast might be an extra-textual rather than an intertextual one: that between childhood memories of the 1880s and a visit to Stevenage in 1906.

Critics have always treated Rooksnest, the original of Howards End, as the background to

¹⁹ Paul R. Rivenberg, “The Role of the Essayist-Commentator in *Howards End*” [1982] in Stape, *Critical Assessments*, vol. III pp. 291-8, here 292-3.

²⁰ S.P. Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group Volume 3*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke & New York, 1994, p. 438.

²¹ Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, p. 444.

²² Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, p. 455.

²³ David Bradshaw, “*Howards End*” in David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007, pp. 151-72, here 163.

²⁴ Bradshaw, “*Howards End*”, pp. 167-8.

²⁵ Bradshaw, “*Howards End*”, p. 168.

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a literary symbol, and in recent decades they have argued for the nationalistic and historically positioned undertones of this symbol. But quite a different understanding of Forster's Hertfordshire emerges if his relations with the house and the town are considered in the historical context of his whole life, and if the famous symbolic position of a fictionalised Rooksnest in *Howards End* is put alongside pieces of writing that are far less well-known, an 1894 memoir and a 1946 broadcast notable among them.

7.2. Physical Encounters with Rooksnest and Stevenage

7.2.1. Passing Through, Planning and Patronage

Various physical and historical aspects of Stevenage can be understood as non-textual contexts for Forster's writing on the place. Three have especial importance: the town's position on major routes running north from London; its situation at the heart of an area in which, during the twentieth century, various settlements planned for former Londoners were sited; and its relationship to Anglican ecclesiastical patronage.

Understanding Forster's relationship with Hertfordshire involves facing different problems from those encountered in considering other English places in his work. First, there is the relationship between house and locality, town and county, and the relationship of all these levels to the national. This relationship could be envisaged as a series of concentric circles, with house surrounded by locality, town, county and nation in that order, but such an arrangement is complicated by two factors. First, Rooksnest does not stand unequivocally in the centre of the town – as King's College does in Cambridge – but on its periphery. Rosenbaum points this out in his comparison with Lamb's 1820s essay "Mackery End, in Hertfordshire", in which a return to a forgotten place, a "farm-house,—delightfully situated" in the same county as Rooksnest is commemorated and transformed into something shared via the work of memories from childhood.²⁶ Forster identified Rooksnest as a rural idyll threatened by its looming urban neighbour: locally or apparently Stevenage – which becomes Hilton in *Howards End* –, but ultimately London. The metaphor of Hertfordshire the Forsterian literary place as part of a group of concentric circles is further complicated by the fact that Forster in the symbolic meaning he confers on Rooksnest makes the house stand for the whole country *as well as* being itself, with its own particularity and uniqueness.

²⁶ Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, p. 443; Charles Lamb, "Mackery End, in Hertfordshire" [1821] in *'Elia' and 'The Last Essays of Elia'*, Jonathan Bate (ed.), Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 88.

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Hertfordshire, Nikolaus Pevsner wrote, has a “proximity to London” which a visitor is “hardly ever allowed to forget”.²⁷ London’s outer suburbs extend “solidly” into the southern parts of the county, and the great houses of courtiers and financiers have been abundant there since the early seventeenth century.²⁸ The landscape of Hertfordshire, “austere” in Glen Cavaliero’s words, “friendly, green, gently rolling, with no large river, uneventful but lovable” in Pevsner’s, is not notably picturesque or spectacular.²⁹ In the mid-twentieth century Stevenage was designated the first New Town, so becoming a site where former slum dwellers were rehoused. This transformation could be seen as the latest in a long sequence of occasions when impoverished Londoners such as Forster’s Leonard Bast and Dickens’s Jo – the London crossing-sweeper in *Bleak House* who arrives at the brickmakers’ cottages “tramping he didn’t know where”³⁰ – reached this particular county. These two fictional characters both move in desperation towards other characters who with their London-derived wealth have retreated to Hertfordshire for peace and quiet. The planned and spacious New Towns may seem far from the chaotic central London slums decried by Dickens. But in the biggest of them, Milton Keynes, at least one commentator has sensed “the whiff of a massive, dispersed ghetto”.³¹ Books on Stevenage since the establishment of the New Town have fallen into two camps: those concerning themselves entirely with the New Town,³² and those which ignore or downplay it.³³

Hertfordshire is a mixture. Its place in the social history of Britain is split between a relationship with London and an identity as part of a more fully rural countryside.³⁴ Hertfordshire seems somewhere to be gone through in order to get somewhere else. It is not London, nor East Anglia, nor posh Home Counties like Surrey, nor déclassé London hinterland like Essex, nor is it the Midlands, but it contains aspects of all these. Coming from London, a traveller crosses it to get to the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland.

²⁷ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 19.

²⁸ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 31.

²⁹ Cavaliero, *Reading*, p. 14; Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 17.

³⁰ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* [1853], Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1971, ch. 31 p. 484.

³¹ Andrew Saint, “New Towns” in Boris Ford (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain Volume 9: Since the Second World War*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1988, pp. 147-59, here 152. The twentieth century “intelligentsia” have also been criticised for the “passionate affair with the city” which made them hate Milton Keynes and other examples of post-urbanism (Tim Mars, “The Life in New Towns” in Anthony Barnett & Roger Scruton (eds), *Town and Country*, Cape: London, 1998, p. 269.

³² E.g. Timothy Collings, *Stevenage 1946-1986: Images of the First New Town*, SPA: Stevenage, 1987; Bob Mullan, *Stevenage Ltd: Aspects of the Planning and Politics of Stevenage New Town 1945-1978*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1980.

³³ E.g. Ashby, *Stevenage Past*; Robert Trow-Smith, *The History of Stevenage*, The Stevenage Society: Stevenage, 1958.

³⁴ On the relationship between Hertfordshire and London, see Garside, “London and the Home Counties”, pp. 521-5; on the rural aspects of the county, see W.A. Armstrong, “The Countryside” in Thompson, *Cambridge Social History*, vol. I pp. 87-153.

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Hertfordshire is on the high road through Britain, traversed by ancient roads such as the Celtic Icknield Way and the Roman roads of Watling Street, Akeman Street, Ermine Street and Stane Street.³⁵ Today, trends evident in Forster's time and earlier have become still clearer. The roads heading north through the county include the M1, towards the Midlands and north-west England, the A1, formerly the Great North Road, leading eventually to Edinburgh by way of the east coast, and the A10, leading to East Anglia. From east to west in the south of Hertfordshire runs the M25, the London orbital motorway completed in 1986. In addition to roads, the railways connecting London and the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland all run through the county, as do two canals, the New River, begun 1609-1613, and the Grand Junction – now Grand Union – canal dating from the turn of the nineteenth century.

Since the nineteenth century, Hertfordshire has often been chosen as the site of planned settlements, towns created from scratch. The two 'garden cities', Letchworth, where building started in 1904, and Welwyn Garden City, begun in 1919, are short distances to the north and south of Stevenage.³⁶ Both were planned by Ebenezer Howard, a London-born autodidact, influenced by a reforming, utopian strand in Protestant Nonconformism; both began as self-financing but non-profit making private schemes.

During the Second World War the Greater London Plan drawn up by Forster's exact contemporary Patrick Abercrombie marked a shift in the planning of settlements for Londoners from private enterprise to state intervention.³⁷ Abercrombie argued for the "planned decentralization of more than a million people and associated industry", the people "to be accommodated in a ring of new towns beyond the green belt".³⁸ The Greater London Plan, published in 1945, the year when the Labour Party won a landslide General Election victory as servicemen returned from war, is an ambitious and confident piece of work: physically large as a document, and filled with coloured maps of London's surroundings as they were near the end of World War Two and as they could become afterwards, if the planners' recommendations were put into effect. Unlike Letchworth and Welwyn, the new settlements were not envisaged as self-sufficient: Abercrombie used the term "satellite towns", suggesting, perhaps, the inescapable nature of London's magnetism.³⁹ Three of the New Towns eventually built were in Hertfordshire: Stevenage – the first to be formally

³⁵ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, pp. 17-18.

³⁶ Mervyn Miller, "Howard, Sir Ebenezer (1850-1928)" in ODNB; F.J. Osborn, "Preface" in Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* [1898], F.J. Osborn (ed.), Faber: London, 1965, pp. 9-28, here 12-14.

³⁷ Patrick Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan 1944*, HMSO: London, 1945.

³⁸ Mervyn Miller, "Abercrombie, Sir (Leslie) Patrick (1879-1957)" in ODNB.

³⁹ Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan*, p. 161.

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designated as such, in 1946 – Hemel Hempstead and Hatfield, with “Harlow in Essex [...] only just across the border”,⁴⁰ while Milton Keynes, designated in 1967 and largely built in the 1970s and 1980s, lies not far north-west of Stevenage, in the same London-Midlands road and railway corridor.

The 1912 *Victoria County History* of Hertfordshire describes the physical and historical setting of Stevenage when *Howards End* was published:

The parish is for the most part a little over 300 ft. above the ordnance datum, a slight depression in the south being the only part below this level. In the north-east the ground rises to 470 ft., and reaches an altitude of just over 400 ft. in two isolated points on the western border [...]. The Great North Road runs through the centre [...]. About three-quarters of a mile south of Stevenage, lying beside the road, are six tumuli, known as the Six Hills, which point to the antiquity of this road. The Great North Road forms the main street of the town. At the northern end of the town it forks, one branch going slightly westwards to Hitchin and the other northwards to Graveley and Baldock. At the same point Julian’s Road turns west to Fisher’s Green. The church of the Holy Trinity is situated at the south end of the High Street; a road running behind it in a northeasterly direction leads to the older church of St. Nicholas and passes on to Chesfield Park [...]. From the church of St. Nicholas a road runs west into the Baldock Road, passing the Bury, the Rectory and Woodfield, the residence of Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Butler Fellowes, K.C.B., J.P.⁴¹

This account places the Great North Road at the centre of Stevenage. Until the coming of the New Town the identity of Stevenage was that of a road town. In the railway-driven Victorian era it retreated into sleepiness: Dickens, in the 1860s story “Tom Tiddler’s Ground”, called its High Street “drowsy in the dullest degree”.⁴² The town Forster and his mother moved to in 1883 had thus become a backwater following a vibrant coaching heyday in the first half of the nineteenth century which had left the High Street filled with inns.⁴³ Since 1912, deliberate human agency – urban planning – has moved the town centre southwards, so that it is now close to the Six Hills described by both the *Victoria County History* author and by Forster in *Howards End*.

Forster’s paternal grandfather was an Anglican clergyman and his father was employed by the architect who built the second Anglican church in Stevenage; the life of the Forsters at Rooksnest took place on the edge of the town in the same zone as the local manor house and the original Anglican church, St Nicholas. These three factors make ecclesiastical patronage and the town’s manorial status important in considering Forster’s Stevenage. For 800 years

⁴⁰ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 37.

⁴¹ William Page, “Parishes: Graveley” in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 3* [1912] [VCH].

⁴² Charles Dickens, “Tom Tiddler’s Ground”, *All the Year Round* VI (1862) [Extra Christmas Number], p. 3.

⁴³ Trow-Smith, *History of Stevenage*, p. 62.

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the Lord of the Manor of Stevenage was a cleric, between the Reformation and 1868 the Bishop of London.⁴⁴ Manorial history might seem irrelevant to the study of a twentieth-century writer, but it is significant that the manor house next to St Nicholas, was always in the hands of the Church. St Nicholas is some fifteen minutes' walk north up a hill from the later High Street of Stevenage, the former Great North Road, which is now the main thoroughfare of what since 1946 has become the 'Old Town'. Forster's childhood home, Rooksnest, lay nearby, beyond the church. The Rector of Stevenage from 1834 to 1874 of the nineteenth century was George Becher Blomfield, brother of the Bishop of London Charles James Blomfield. He was an uncle of the architect Arthur Blomfield, who built Stevenage's overspill church, Holy Trinity, in 1861, "before his style", in Pevsner's words, "became smooth and competent and stale",⁴⁵ and who later in the 1860s trained Forster's father.⁴⁶ Forster's paternal grandfather, Charles Forster, was Rector of Stisted in Essex for some decades before his death in 1871, and was himself closely connected to the episcopacy as the chaplain and confidant of John Jebb, Bishop of Limerick, Ardfert and Aghadoe in the 1820s and 1830s.⁴⁷ In *Howards End*, Holy Trinity is, in the barbed words of the narrator, the product of "Science", who "roofed it with tin".⁴⁸ This is in a passage which relates to one another the fictional Hilton's two churches, seemingly exact equivalents of those in Stevenage before the New Town.

A final point of ecclesiastical context for his Stevenage is that Anglican parish churches owned the sort of glebe land which according to Forster or his narrator in *Howards End* "should have" bordered the whole Great North Road but had been "filched" by "Henry [Wilcox] and his kind".⁴⁹ There was a connection between Forster and his mother's stay in the town and Anglican patronage, then, which positioned them outside, apart from, or above, town life. The reference to glebe land indicates that this was a connection which could branch out into a notion of the Church as guardian of the rural environment, despite Forster's agnostic and even anti-clerical leanings.

⁴⁴ Page, "Parishes: Graveley". By 1868 clerical pluralism and non-residence were disappearing (Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995, p. 3) and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners assumed the increasingly meaningless title Lord of the Manor of Stevenage.

⁴⁵ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 346.

⁴⁶ Furbank I, p. 5.

⁴⁷ *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 83-4; Alexander Gordon, "Jebb, John (1775-1833)", David Huddleston (rev.) in ODNB. In November 1910, the month of *Howards End*'s publication, Forster visited Stisted, writing that he had previously "never thought of the past as a scene of such beauty" (E.M. Forster, [account of visit to Stisted (Essex)], MS KCC/EMF/12/14, 1910; see also Christopher Tolley, *Domestic Biography: The Legacy of Evangelicalism in Four Nineteenth-Century Families*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1997, pp. 240-1).

⁴⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XXXIII p. 190.

⁴⁹ OED2: *glebe* n. 2.b. *Howards End*, ch. XLIII p. 236.

7.2.2. Three Visits to Stevenage, June-December 2006

Not counting journeys past or through by road and rail, I have visited Stevenage three times. The first time I walked from the railway station to Rooks Nest House, looked at the front of the house and took a few trespassing steps onto a gravel path, then walked back to the station. The second was confined to the New Town, involving a visit to the town museum in the basement of what Pevsner called the “depressingly ugly” 1950s New Town church of St George.⁵⁰ Both times I arrived by train from London Kings Cross, like Mrs Munt at the beginning of *Howards End* and Leonard near the end. Stevenage railway station is no longer positioned where it was in Forster’s youth: a new station was opened further south, in the centre of the New Town, in 1973. Margaret on her mission to rescue the Schlegels’ books from Miss Avery emerges onto the green of the Old Town – “the village” as Forster terms it in the “Rooksnest” memoir⁵¹ – just as pre-1973 visitors by rail would have done, and goes straight ahead into “the long chestnut avenue that connects it with the church.”⁵² A further dislocation of the district containing Rooksnest and St Nicholas’ has happened since the railway station shifted to the south: they are now a car drive or a lengthy walk away from the town centre.

My third visit was undertaken by car and this time I entered Rooks Nest House itself, having written to the owner beforehand. Approaching from the south on a bright, frosty December day, I inadvertently passed Stevenage on the A1(M), so took the exit following it and approached the town from the north. Apposite here is Augé’s account of how a landscape is different seen from a motorway than from older roads which were there before the motorways, still there today but often declassified.⁵³ Taking his examples from France, Augé points out that a traveller is isolated from the towns being passed on a motorway, that prospects seem wider and the sky larger, and that history or culture are constituted in a certain way for the car-user through signs of a particular colour announcing tourist sites. While Forster lived most of his life in an age which, according to Augé, preserved temporality in a way now obsolete, Forsterian car travel is an instance of what Augé calls “supermodernity”, in which “the individual consciousness” is subjected to “entirely new experiences and ordeals of solitude”.⁵⁴ In *Howards End*, Forster associates car journeys with

⁵⁰ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 353.

⁵¹ E.M. Forster, “Rooksnest” in *Howards End*, Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1973, p. 349.

⁵² *Howards End*, ch. XXXIII p. 190. For a description of the Avenue and a photograph of it in about 1910 see Margaret Ashby, *Forster Country*, Flaunden Press: Stevenage, 1991, pp. 62-3.

⁵³ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* [1992] (translated from French by John Howe), Verso: London & New York, 1995, pp. 96-7.

⁵⁴ Augé, *Non-Places*, pp. 93, 77.

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a blurring and concealment of the relationship between people and places,⁵⁵ yet he lived most of his life in the age Augé calls that of a “Modernity in art” which he claims preserved “all the temporalities of place”:⁵⁶

During my June 2006 walk from the present railway station to Rooks Nest House, I experienced three distinct social spaces, in Lefebvre’s sense of the term.⁵⁷ Next to the station is the fully pedestrianised shopping precinct, among the first of its kind in Europe.⁵⁸ This is joined by a footbridge over a dual carriageway, the former site of the Great North Road being occupied in 2006 by the car-park of a Tesco supermarket,⁵⁹ to the second, that of the Old Town. This latter was redefined on the 1949 masterplan for Stevenage New Town as one of the component neighbourhoods of the satellite town as a whole, alongside new areas on the site of fields or former hamlets.⁶⁰ Alternatively, this social space could be understood as having come into being in 1946. There was no distinction between old and new in Stevenage until that year other than that between the earliest settlement up near St Nicholas’ and the newer development, perhaps begun in the thirteenth century, along the Great North Road. The third space is that of Rooksnest itself, which is today set in a conservation area known as the “Forster Country”.

The name “Forster Country” combines that of the writer, seen as a piece of local heritage, with the notion of countryside, and associates this zone with others that are larger and elsewhere in England: the Dorset associated with Hardy or the Yorkshire of the Brontës, for example. It has been used in the title of a book by a local historian,⁶¹ and in so-far successful attempts to stop the land being built on by developers.⁶² The area designated by the writer’s name stretches from the northern end of the High Street of Stevenage’s Old Town, the former Great North Road, via the avenue of trees called by the narrator in *Howards End* a “tempting approach”, across a busy road where in 2006 as in 1997 “[g]raffiti is sprayed all over the concrete bridge supports close to flourishing wild arum lilies”,⁶³ to Rooksnest itself,

⁵⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XIII p. 143.

⁵⁶ Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 77.

⁵⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [1974] (translated from French by Donald Nicholson-Smith), Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1991, pp. 26-7.

⁵⁸ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, pp. 350-1.

⁵⁹ See Image 30.

⁶⁰ Stevenage Development Corporation, *The New Town of Stevenage*, Stevenage Development Corporation: Stevenage, 1949, p. 15; Mullan, *Stevenage Ltd*, p. 49.

⁶¹ Ashby, *Forster Country*.

⁶² See Anonymous, “Fate of Forster Countryside: Last Phase of Stevenage New Town”, *Guardian* (London), 19 October 1960; Sue Fisher, “Say No to Betrayal of Green Belt”, *Gazette* (Stevenage), 8 August 1997, p.9; Maev Kennedy, “Green Belt War Rages through Forster Country”, *Guardian* (London), 29 November 1997; Margaret Ashby *et al.*, “One Foot in the Forster Country: Stevenage, Hertfordshire” [Photocopied booklet available at Stevenage Museum], 1998.

⁶³ *Howards End*, ch. XXXIII p. 190; Fisher, “Say No”; see Image 31.

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north-east of the Old Town, then opens out to the north and north-west encompassing woodland, and fields spanned by pylons.⁶⁴

My passage through the three spaces seemed an ascent through different social levels of England. That of the New Town around the new railway station,⁶⁵ first seen on a warm Saturday afternoon in June 2006, as the England football team prepared for a World Cup Finals match against Ecuador the following day – crosses of St George, some of them homemade, were everywhere – seemed to embody a southern England which in the 2000s was frequently stigmatised using the word *chav*.⁶⁶ A cultural space for working-class pride, the kind of space which still certainly existed when poorer Londoners moved to Stevenage New Town after the Second World War – the word often used for it is *community* –, has, some would say, since disappeared.⁶⁷ Previous moves in the same direction should not be forgotten, particularly those of middle-class commuters drawn by the railway. The Coach and Horses, formerly a coaching inn with a pedigree apparently stretching back to 1800,⁶⁸ perhaps marks the boundary between the first space and the intermediate second, that of the Old Town. When I passed, this pub seemed to combine vernacular red brick, which, in Pevsner’s words, “became fashionable” in Hertfordshire in the late fifteenth century and with which local vernacular timber-framed buildings such as Rooksnest itself, perhaps in the eighteenth century, were faced,⁶⁹ and a sagging tiled roof, with insensitive uPVC replacement windows, a designation as a “Sports Bar”, concrete benches, a Porsche outside, and unattractive chalkboard signage. It seemed like the bastard offspring of Rooksnest and the New Town.⁷⁰

Next door is Blomfield’s Holy Trinity, and beyond that the second space, the High Street of the Old Town. In the 1970s Bridget Cherry wrote that “[t]he motorway has taken the through traffic, and the new town the main activity, so that in twenty years the old centre has changed remarkably little”.⁷¹ With its buildings almost all survivals from the nineteenth century and earlier but filled with takeaway restaurants and the estate agents serving the

⁶⁴ See Image 32.

⁶⁵ See Image 33.

⁶⁶ OED3: *chav* n. The negative connotations of the word are detectable in both the OED3’s use in its definition of the phrase “brash and loutish behaviour”, and in OED3’s illustrative quotations dated 2002 and 2004.

⁶⁷ On the sense of community which still existed in the east London working-class district of Bethnal Green during the 1950s, for example, see T.F.T. Baker, “Bethnal Green: Building and Social Conditions after 1945, Social and Cultural Activities” in *A History of the County of Middlesex Volume 11: Stepney, Bethnal Green* [1998][VCH].

⁶⁸ Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, p. 10.

⁶⁹ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 23.

⁷⁰ See Image 34.

⁷¹ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 345.

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surrounding New Town, the Old Town looks like an old town at first glance.⁷² In a sense, of course, it is. But the buildings of the Old Town also seem to have been occupied and taken over by the needs of one district of the New. Some photographs of the High Street at the moment the New Town arrived seem indeed to convey a dull stateliness that might support the notion of an unchanging, sleepy town before the advent of planning,⁷³ but others suggest that before the Second World War the Great North Road was already getting crammed with democratised motor traffic and busy street furniture.⁷⁴ It seems an ascent, up the Avenue from there, to the road to Weston described in *Howards End* as leading “into the untouched country”.⁷⁵ Forster expands the distance between the church and the house, making it “over a mile” when it is barely half that distance between St Nicholas and Rooks Nest House, but the contrast with the town, the “Forster country” now ring-fenced as it seems,⁷⁶ remains startling.

For my part, I never saw Stevenage before 2006 and have not been there since. My journeys there could thus be seen as a species of travel writing in a way that, for instance, the visits to Forster-related sites in London I undertook between 2006 and 2008 could not. Perhaps travel writing is a faster route to apparent meanings than other sorts of place relations: the accidents of a particular route and the conditions encountered on one day can be elevated into a way of understanding a whole place.

7.3. After Moving Away (1894-1906)

7.3.1. The “Rooksnest” Memoir (1894)

Forster’s 1890s writings prove that he was genuinely very attached to Rooksnest, even passionate about it, during his teenage years, and that he did not manufacture this particular feeling for place afterwards. The memoir Forster began in 1894 as a schoolboy at Tonbridge the year after he and his mother had moved away from Hertfordshire has chiefly been looked at from two points of view. It has either been seen as a context for *Howards End*,⁷⁷ or as evidence for Forster’s biography in childhood. Together with letters by Forster’s mother it is the chief source for the colour and detail of Forster’s life between March 1883, when the pair

⁷² See Image 35.

⁷³ Trow-Smith, *History of Stevenage*, p. 27.

⁷⁴ Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, p. 32.

⁷⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XXXIII p. 191.

⁷⁶ See Image 36.

⁷⁷ Accounting for its presence in full in Stallybrass’s Abinger *Howards End* and of excerpts from it in Armstrong’s Norton Critical Edition: “Rooksnest”; *Howards End*, pp. 286-90.

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moved there from London, and September 1893 when, their lease not being renewed, they moved to a house in Tonbridge.⁷⁸

An immediate problem is its status as text. The memoir was begun in a green notebook which also contained notes taken while reading a school textbook on Alexander the Great.⁷⁹ These notes appear at the other end of the notebook from the personal material: throughout life Forster would re-use diaries and notebooks in this way. The bulk of the memoir was written when Forster was fifteen, with one paragraph – on his relations with the garden boy Ansell – added in 1901 after his graduation from Cambridge, and two further paragraphs and extracts from five letters added in 1947, when Forster was 68 and had just returned to King's. On the one hand, the memoir could be seen as the product of Forster's youth, with notes to it added later. On the other, it could be seen as a text which evolved throughout his life between the ages of 15 and 68. He deliberately kept it together in one notebook, after all.

It makes sense to divide the twenty paragraphs written in 1894 into six sections.⁸⁰ These concern, respectively: the arrival of the Forsters, including the outside of the house and its relationship to its surroundings; the inside of the house; the neighbours; the garden, meadow and water supply; the domestic animals of the Forsters; and "the village", as Forster in 1894 put it.⁸¹ This movement could be reconceptualised as an arrival by "fly",⁸² a taking stock of the house and its surroundings, an entry into relations of various sorts with neighbours, an account of the texture of life there for a small boy who noticed the garden, the animals and the crookedness of the old house, and finally a carriage journey into the village which recalls Jane Austen's fictional accounts of small-town southern England.

It is striking that Forster has no memory of actually entering when he arrived at the house. Crossing thresholds separating the interiors of buildings from the outside world was an activity charged with symbolic meaning for him. Think of his statement in *Goldsworthy*

⁷⁸ Furbank I pp. 15-18, 25, 30-1; Mary Lago, *E.M. Forster: A Literary Life*, St Martin's Press: New York, 1995, pp. 11-12; *Chronology*, pp. 2-4.

⁷⁹ E.M. Forster, "Rooksnest", MS KCC/EMF/11/14, 1894-1947.

⁸⁰ I cite the memoir from Stallybrass's widely available edition of *Howards End*. The most widely used paperback editions of the novel include the memoir among appendices to the text (e.g. E.M. Forster, *Howards End*, Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Penguin: London, 1975, 333-43). Stallybrass somewhat misrepresents it, though. In the original notebook, Forster ("Rooksnest" MS) described the content of each page in its header: he headed the first four pages "The House", the fifth "The Plums", the sixth and seventh "The Franklins", the eighth "The Garden", the ninth "The Meadow", the tenth "Disadvantages", the eleventh and twelfth "Animals", and left the thirteenth blank. Stallybrass's pagination is different, and the verso of each sheet in his appendix reads, capitalised, "ROOKSNEST". As a result, Forster's summary headings are reduced to four, "THE HOUSE", "THE FRANKLINS", "THE GARDEN" and "THE ANIMALS", with a fifth, "LETTERS", added.

⁸¹ Forster, "Rooksnest", p. 349. The Victoria County History author (Page 1912) always refers to Stevenage as "the town": Forster's use of the word *village* instead could be read as a statement of social superiority to the settlement.

⁸² Forster, "Rooksnest", p. 341. A 'fly' here is a one-horse station taxi, the equivalent of a minicab (see OED2: *fly* n.2 3.b.).

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Lowes Dickinson that “freedom can sometimes be gained by walking out through an open door”, and the juxtaposition of room and view in *A Room with a View*.⁸³ The second and third paragraphs begin with a promise to say something “about the house”, but then seem to forget this task, dealing instead with the house’s elevated position above an area itself elevated. Forster identifies Stevenage here as being on the Great Northern Railway, “the highest point on the line between London and York”:

Rooksnest is a good deal higher than Stevenage so we had a very fine view to the west and north-west over Hertfordshire and part of Cambridgeshire. People who were accustomed to call Herts an ugly country were astonished at this view and the surroundings of the house were altogether very pretty, first and foremost the fine view, and to the north a peep of the park with its little woods of firs and oaks.⁸⁴

The same stance of slightly defensive loyalty to Hertfordshire characterises many of Forster’s references to the county. The “peep of the park” suggests a relationship that was to characterise Forster’s later rural sojourn at Abinger in Surrey, where he occupied an intermediate position between the landowners in their big house on the one hand and farmers and villagers on the other.

The landowner himself, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Handley Wilkinson, who lived at Chesfield Park, the house here glimpsed through the hedge, is not praised in the memoir: he “closed up” the “great farm chimney” of the house and replaced it with “a wretched little grate”; he left the Forsters reliant on “the rainwater we caught from the roof and on two pails of well water from the farm for which we paid a fabulous price”.⁸⁵ Forster’s breezy, resentful attitude towards Wilkinson foreshadows the one he would later take towards his ground landlords in Surrey, the Farrers. Wilkinson’s name resembles that of Forster’s Wilcoxes, furthermore, and the Colonel had married the sister of a previous part-owner of the manor of Graveley, while his successor as proprietor of Chesfield Park held the lordship of the manor of Graveley “in right of his wife”.⁸⁶ Thinking of Ruth and Henry Wilcox’s relationship to the fictional *Howards End*, these points suggest new contexts for *Howards End*, in the attention to inheritance through female blood lines which the novel and the memoir share.

Alongside the re-used notebook which contains it, a characteristically Forsterian feature of the memoir is that it contains a sketch-map of the place it describes. Forster’s father was an

⁸³ *Dickinson*, p. 22.

⁸⁴ Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 341.

⁸⁵ Forster, “Rooksnest”, pp. 342; 347-8. Forster forgets or fabricates here, in that he has Wilkinson telling them they “had got on all right for six years” without water “and could go on for longer” (Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 347), when in fact the landowner died in 1888, five years after the Forsters arrived (Page, “Parishes: Graveley”).

⁸⁶ Page, “Parishes: Graveley” 1912.

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architect employed by Arthur Blomfield, as was Thomas Hardy. But whereas Hardy mapped the Wessex of his writing, a blend of fiction and non-fiction,⁸⁷ the younger Forster mapped non-fictional places. Other places so treated were Alexandria and the kitchen garden of West Hackhurst, recorded in his commonplace book in 1946.⁸⁸ The map of Rooksnest contains the house and its complete plot, with the hedged road to its right marked by an arrow “To Weston” pointing towards the top of the page and another “To Stevenage” pointing towards the bottom,⁸⁹ “THE FARM ORCHARD” below the house and “THE MEADOW” to its left. The intermediate position of Rooksnest between the real countryside of Weston, also the direction in which Chesfield Park lies, on the one hand, and Stevenage, “the village”, on the other, mirrors an intermediate social position already glimpsed in the young Forster’s “peep of the park”.

The early paragraphs of the memoir also attempt to define the the house as a gentry seat. Forster insists that “Rooksnest was not an ordinary name of a house but the name of a hamlet consisting of us and the farm below”,⁹⁰ and his reference to his mother’s fury at the possibility that the house would instead be named “Chisfield Villa”. The word *villa* had overtones of suburban pretentiousness during Forster’s youth, as the mockery in *A Room with a View* of “Cissie and Albert”, the names of two houses, makes clear.⁹¹ The intermediate position apparent from the map is mirrored by a desire to have the social status of Chesfield Park, then, yet to be the equal in earthy humanity of the farm below it. At this point it is worth invoking Lefebvre’s notion of social space, in which space is “a sort of reality of its own, a reality clearly distinct from, yet much like, those assumed in the same global process by commodities, money and capital”,⁹² a reality which the Marxists and structuralists with whom Lefebvre was arguing in the 1970s often denied. Space is real, on Lefebvre’s argument, yet it is also characterized by concealments of its own socially produced nature. The fact that a church or manor house is on a rise above a village is a result of powerful groups early in a place’s history having seized the best sites. It also remains much later in time as a visual confirmation and demonstration of the relationship between the church, manor house and village. Rooksnest and Howards End, as described by Forster, have an intermediate position, below a big house and above a farm, with a “town” or “village” further below the latter.

⁸⁷ On which see Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004, pp. 234-5.

⁸⁸ *Alexandria*, e.g. pp. 84-5, 109, 122-3, 141; *Commonplace Book*, p. 169.

⁸⁹ Forster’s sketch map is reproduced in Armstrong’s edition (*Howards End*, p. 285).

⁹⁰ Forster, “Rooksnest”, pp. 341-2.

⁹¹ *Room with a View*, ch. 8 p. 110.

⁹² Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 26.

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Forster describes the interior of Rooksnest as “peculiar”.⁹³ The main staircase was hidden in what was supposed to be a cupboard, there were “signs of a trapdoor in the ceiling” of the hall, and – a “curious” fact, the young Forster thought – the entrances to the maids’ rooms in the attic had high sills below their doors that were beams of wood.⁹⁴ The house was a converted farmhouse, probably dating from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, one of the “two-story structures incorporating a chimneystack” which, Pevsner writes, from Tudor times onwards gradually “replaced the open halls” earlier typical of Hertfordshire.⁹⁵ Members of the leisured classes tended not to live in houses like this before the 1880s. The “Great Depression” in English agriculture, beginning in the late 1870s and with the worst over by 1894, coincided exactly with the Forsters’ tenure of Rooksnest.⁹⁶ Before 1882, the house had been part of a farm owned by a family called Howard; in that year they finally surrendered to economic conditions.⁹⁷ The Forsters were beneficiaries of the depression, in other words: had farming there been viable, the house would never have been let as a private house. This is something Forster never seems explicitly to have realised. After the First World War, the letting and sale of former agricultural buildings, both cottages and farmhouses, to commuters, artists, writers and others with income that was essentially urban became widespread. Beneficiaries included the Woolfs at Rodmell in Sussex and T.E. Lawrence at Cloud’s Hill in Dorset.⁹⁸ Original features such as those Forster describes as having struck him in 1894 became, as Elizabeth Outka has shown, selling points used by estate agents.⁹⁹ A house such as Rooksnest must have been much odder to a middle-class person of the 1880s than it would become later.

Forster glances first one way then the other at the neighbours. To the north at the lodge, the gates of Chesfield, were the Plums, disliked by the boy and his mother. The father of this family was the gamekeeper at Chesfield. A gamekeeper is an estate servant who defends private property with, if necessary, physical force, somewhat like a policeman, bearing in mind Forster’s later relationships with London policemen, and the fact that Alec Scudder in *Maurice* is the Durhams’ gamekeeper. Throughout his life, then, Forster tended to occupy the boundary area between established propertied authority and what it excludes or what

⁹³ A description of the interior of the house at the time the Forsters lived there, accompanied by evocative illustrations, is provided by Ashby (*Forster Country*, pp. 19-31).

⁹⁴ Forster, “Rooksnest”, pp. 342-3.

⁹⁵ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 26.

⁹⁶ Armstrong, “Countryside”, pp. 113-14; see also Read 1979: 221-222. Arable farmers seem to have been the hardest hit.

⁹⁷ Ashby, *Forster Country*, pp. 10-11; Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, p. 102.

⁹⁸ Armstrong (“Countryside”, p. 127) refers to the tendency of farmers to let “better cottages to ‘weekenders’”.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Outka, *Consuming Traditions: Modernity, Modernism and the Commodified Authentic*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009, pp. 68-95.

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threatens it. To the south was the farm, held by the Franklins. This was a family Forster would fondly keep in touch with until at least 1949, the date of a photo he kept of himself and his contemporary Frank Franklin, who died in November of that year.¹⁰⁰ The Franklins of the memoir are shrewd and crafty but charming.¹⁰¹ The Franklin house divided in a triadic way into “three ‘reception rooms’”, denoting different degrees of respectability.

Animals were more prominent in the teenage Forster’s perception of place at this stage than in his later accounts of places with personal significance.¹⁰² In 1894 Forster described the house as “overrun with animals” from the Franklins’ farm. The Forsters let their meadow to Mr Franklin the farmer on the condition that “no obnoxious animal should be allowed to be there”, a stipulation meaning in practice that they “had every animal but a horse”:

There were always hens and guinea-fowls. Those we were used to, but also there was always a sample of whatever animal happened to be in the meadow. If it was large it crashed through by the dell, if small it crawled under the bottom wire of the fence. To the former class belonged cows, calves and sheep, to the latter pigs, lambs, hens, ducks and guinea-fowls. Add to these the occasional animals that strayed in from the road and the keeper’s puppies that played in the back garden and you have a good idea what its appearance was. Once a donkey got in, and Mr Stewart suggested that we should tie horns on and have it as a stag.¹⁰³

While Forster’s relationship with the farm seems chaotic but comic, that with the landlord seems subtly threatening. “Charles Poyntz-Stewart, M.A., J.P.”,¹⁰⁴ Wilkinson’s son-in-law, was to become the master of Chesfield Park after the Forsters’ 1894 departure from Stevenage; a younger member of the family was still there when Forster visited during the 1940s. Stewart’s joke could also be understood as a sneer: the Forsters occupied such a small plot that to have a stag on their land would be absurd. Today there are cows in the field below Rooks Nest House,¹⁰⁵ but no conservation ruling could restore the sense of chaotic, working abundance, of being in the midst of a vibrant rural area, that the 1894 memoir confers on Rooksnest.

¹⁰⁰ [Anonymous], [“Frank Franklyn and E.M. Forster at Rooksnest”] [photograph], MS KCC/EMF/27/696, 1949. It seems (Mary Lago, *Calendar of the Letters of E.M. Forster*, Mansell: London & New York, 1985) that he was never in written contact with the Franklins, only calling on them when visiting friends closer to his own class in the neighbourhood.

¹⁰¹ The catalogue of the Forster archive at King’s spells the name of the family as “Franklyn”, but I have followed the authority of the historian of Stevenage Margaret Ashby (*Forster Country*, pp. 8, 114, 172; *Stevenage Past*) in spelling it “Franklin”. Forster himself frequently misspelled names – even that of a close friend such as J.R. Ackerley – but in this case he appears to have been right.

¹⁰² The long description of the antics of the Rooksnest cats prefigures the place of the cats Toma and Tinka in his 1940s account of “West Hackhurst” (“West Hackhurst”, pp. 38, 39, 55).

¹⁰³ Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 347.

¹⁰⁴ Page, “Parishes: Graveley”; see also Ashby, *Forster Country*, pp. 11, 32-5.

¹⁰⁵ See Image 24.

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As well being besieged by farm animals the house, as portrayed by Forster in the memoir, is surrounded by traditional rural practices: the “three or four fangs stuck deep into the rugged bark” of the wych elm due west of the house about which the young Forster speculated about.¹⁰⁶ The early twentieth century was a period when, to quote W.A. Armstrong, belief in witchcraft in rural England “became an increasingly private matter”¹⁰⁷. Hardy was also concerned with the disappearance of rural folk belief, in referring to popular beliefs in the English countryside as “fast-perishing lumber”.¹⁰⁸ In *Howards End*, Ruth tells Margaret that the pig’s teeth found in the bark of an identical tree to the one in the memoir “are almost grown over now, and no one comes to the tree”, while Henry, cut off from tradition, refuses to believe in the custom when Margaret later tells him about it until he has the evidence of his own eyes.¹⁰⁹

The house’s relationship to “the village” is apparent at the very beginning of the memoir, in the journey by “fly” and the reference to Stevenage’s topographic position, then again at the end. Stevenage is described as “one long straggling street built down the London Road”,¹¹⁰ the Forsters entering “at the higher end”, and the road “disfigured” by “ugly new houses” beyond “Trinity Church”, and a “poorer part” of the town concealed in the streets west of the High Street towards the railway line. All this is a statement of the socially-produced nature of the Forsters’ surroundings at Stevenage in the 1880s and 1890s.

7.3.2. “Ansell” and Extension Lecturing (1898-1906)

After moving away from Rooksnest, in 1893, Forster maintained his links to the neighbourhood through his former neighbours the Postons, the family of a stockbroker.¹¹¹ Forster visited them in March 1898, part-way through his first year at Cambridge. During this trip, he heard a local story about the Howard family, once of Rooksnest, renewed his friendship with the Franklins and made what might seem a far-fetched statement: “Weather glorious: climate is diff. to Cambridge as possible, & country looks lovely”.¹¹² Smaller-scale, local relationships of place, those which could be called microcosmic, were always important to Forster. Here, the differences perceptible between Stevenage and London on the one hand – 25 miles away to the south – and Cambridge on the other – fractionally further away to the

¹⁰⁶ Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 346.

¹⁰⁷ Armstrong, “Countryside”, p. 129.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* [1891], Tim Dolin (ed.), Penguin: London, 1998, p. 50.

¹⁰⁹ *Howards End*, ch. VIII p. 54; ch. XXII pp. 136-7, ch. XXIV p. 148.

¹¹⁰ Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 349.

¹¹¹ Furbank (Furbank I, p. 142) sees the Postons as originals for the Wilcoxes of *Howards End*.

¹¹² 1898 Diary, 5 March.

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north – seem real and substantial. Forster visited Stevenage again later in the same year, noting that the country there looked “beautiful in spite of wet”.¹¹³

A verbal parallel between Forster’s 1901 addition to the memoir and the early short story “Ansell”, which dates from 1902 or 1903,¹¹⁴ seems not to have been noticed by earlier Forster readers. This story is not set in Hertfordshire, but at a grander country house than Rooksnest in an unnamed rural English location with similarities to the home of Forster’s uncle, William Howley Forster, in Northumberland. The eponymous character of “Ansell” shares his name with both the protagonist’s philosopher friend in *The Longest Journey* and with a non-fictional garden boy at Rooksnest. More specifically, Forster wrote in the memoir that “Our time was spent on the straw stacks, and our shrill shrieks constantly penetrated there, to the great annoyance of Mr H., my tutor, who said it was childish and undignified”.¹¹⁵ The following very similar passage appears in the short story: “The sound of our whoops and shrieks as we jumped with abandon on one another’s hats penetrated even into the smoking-room, where my father was arguing with my cousin as to the respective merits of Eton and Winchester as a school for me. The noise exasperated them”.¹¹⁶ The words *shrieks* and *penetrated* appear in both, perhaps suggesting a sexual subtext that Forster may not have understood when he penned either the short story or the earlier addition to the memoir. Just such a subtext was detected by the Cambridge aesthete Charles Saule in Forster’s 1904 story “The Story of a Panic”.¹¹⁷ Other parallels between the passages quoted from the memoir and the short story are unmistakable. The two boys are placed out of doors in both narratives, disturbing male authority figures concerned with the narrator’s educational future, who are indoors. Returning to the subject of Rooksnest in 1901, then, Forster altered the emphasis. The real-life Ansell was unmentioned in 1894, when the only servants to figure were maids. Perhaps this was the result of a sexual awakening, an enhanced self-knowledge acquired at King’s, but Forster’s perception of Rooksnest the place was as sharp in 1894 as in 1901, sharper even. The 1901 addition to the memoir could instead be seen as an instance of Forster moving from indoors to out of doors, a shift that finds echoes throughout *The Longest Journey*, *A Room with a View* and *Maurice*, in all of which the outer world is preferred to the inner.

Forster returned to Hertfordshire in the autumn of 1903 as a Cambridge University extension lecturer, speaking six times at Harpenden on the Republic of Florence and

¹¹³ 1898 Diary, 6 August.

¹¹⁴ Oliver Stallybrass, “Introduction” in *Life to Come*, pp. vii-xxi, here viii.

¹¹⁵ Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 350.

¹¹⁶ *Life to Come*, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ E.M. Forster, “My Books and I” in *Longest Journey*, pp. 360-6, here 362; Furbank I, pp. 113-14; *Bibliography*, p. 104.

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apparently considering renting a house there.¹¹⁸ In 1907 he gave a series of lectures on the same topic at Stevenage. The year before, he had revisited the town for the first time in eight years, noting in his Journal that everything seemed “smaller” than before.¹¹⁹ Furbank is mistaken in saying that it was on this visit that Forster was first invited into the third room of the Franklins’ house, the inner sanctum, since the section of the “Rooksnest” memoir written in 1894 describes this room, “hung round with oak apples” and with “an open chimney”.¹²⁰ It was the spirit of the Franklins as Forster saw it, rather than the interior of their house, which got into *Howards End*.¹²¹

7.4. The Threat of the Plutocrat (1909-10)

7.4.1. “Other Kingdom”

At the end of Edward VII’s reign Forster wrote more than once of a Hertfordshire threatened and fenced off by rich men. A foretaste of the damage caused by “Henry and his kind” in *Howards End* is to be found in the 1909 short story “Other Kingdom”.¹²² The plutocratic character of the Edwardian period has become part of its reputation. Looking back from 1947, George Orwell recalled the “naïvely snobbish chatter” of pre-World-War-One schoolboys “about Switzerland, and Scotland with its ghillies and grouse moors, and ‘my uncle’s yacht’, and ‘our place in the country’, and ‘my pony’, and ‘my pater’s touring car’”.¹²³ Bradshaw emphasizes the rubber boom, which during the course of *Howards End*, turns Henry Wilcox from a wealthy man into an extremely rich one.¹²⁴ Bradshaw’s argument for a pro-Wilcox *Howards End* is engaging but in this novel it is the Wilcox type and not the Schlegel one which is perceived to be the threat to Hertfordshire – and hence to the English countryside as a whole.

In “Other Kingdom”, a wealthy City of London businessman with the same initials as Henry Wilcox – Harcourt Worters – fences off a Hertfordshire wood. This he has bought

¹¹⁸ *Chronology*, p. 17. Between 1903 and 1911, Forster gave ten series of extension lectures, all on the same topic, the majority of them at towns in the Home Counties and East Anglia.

¹¹⁹ “Notebook Journal”, 17 September 1906.

¹²⁰ Furbank I, p. 141; Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 344.

¹²¹ The cover of the notebook originally used to take notes on Alexander the Great now reads “Rooks Nest – for Howards End / Mrs Franklin helped for Miss Avery”, an identification presumably made by Forster in 1947.

¹²² *Howards End*, ch. XLIII p. 236. See also Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, 50-1.

¹²³ George Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys” [1947] in *The Penguin Essays of George Orwell*, Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus (eds), Penguin: London, 1984, pp. 416-52, here 441.

¹²⁴ Bradshaw, “*Howards End*”.

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ostensibly as a gift for the girl he has brought “out of Ireland” to become his wife but actually, it would seem, he takes control of it because it had previously been “an ugly notch in the rounded contours of the Worters estate”.¹²⁵ “Other Kingdom” is a story about property, and about whether the spirit can be fenced. There is little specific Hertfordshire here: setting it in this county rather than Surrey or Kent might seem an arbitrary piece of Home Counties detail on Forster’s part. But the air of freedom Forster breathed in Hertfordshire makes the setting particularly appropriate. There is also a clear echo of the teeth in the wych elm at Rooksnest, which appear in *Howards End*. The young woman, Evelyn Beaumont, tells Worters that she does not want a man-made path in her copse. She does not want it fenced because doing so would put a stop to “The Fourth Time of Asking”, a local tradition in which young men and women courting come to the wood together and cut their initials into the bark of trees, then come back several times to cut them again and so renew their vows. Like Henry hearing about the teeth in the wych elm, Worters scoffs: ““You wonderful person! I’ve lived here all my life and never heard a word of this. Fancy folk-lore in Hertfordshire! I must tell the Archdeacon: he will be delighted—””¹²⁶ In the nineteenth century the Anglican clergy were, Armstrong writes, among the “powerful forces [...] ranged against the ‘prior culture’”,¹²⁷ but by the first decade of the twentieth century rural English folk tradition seems no more than a curio to a representative of cultural officialdom such as Worters’s friend the Archdeacon. The money-making man’s exclusion from the culture of his own place is a theme shared by “Other Kingdom” and *Howards End*.

7.4.2. “Hints of Local Life” in *Howards End*

Criticism concerned with the place aspects of *Howards End* has tended to be interested in the national rather than the local context. More recently this has been supplemented by interest in imperial and colonial space which frequently attends to connections between modernity, Modernism and globalisation: what I have called the ‘Modern space’ approach.¹²⁸ Frederic Jameson argues that the flux and dislocation associated with the Great North Road in *Howards End* is also that which Forster’s novel connects in the wider world with imperialism as a force.¹²⁹ Rather like Raymond Williams, Andrew Thacker associates modernity with the city, seeing both – and their offshoot, the motor-car – as a threat to

¹²⁵ *Machine Stops*, pp. 45-67, 52, 48.

¹²⁶ *Machine Stops*, p. 57.

¹²⁷ Armstrong, “Countryside”, p. 129.

¹²⁸ See pp. 20-4 above.

¹²⁹ Fredric Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism” [1990] in *The Modernist Papers*, Verso: London & New York, 2007, pp. 152-69, here 163.

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Forster's desire for settlement which was associated with rural England.¹³⁰ The Wilcoxes, after all, run the Imperial and West African Rubber Company, as emphasised by Bradshaw,¹³¹ Henry has a map of Africa on his office wall, and is "the man who bought forests from the natives for a few bottles of gin".¹³² *Howards End* is also a novel about a collection of localities which are not only components of England or "rural spaces in which national identity is explored",¹³³ but also, uniquely, themselves.

In assessing the localities of this novel, it makes sense to begin at the level of the county and move inwards to that of the house. The only character in *Howards End* whose direct speech names Hertfordshire is Ruth Wilcox, Henry's first wife. It was through her that the house came to him: Margaret, on hearing "the history of the little estate", imagines his appearance before Ruth and her grandmother "as a deliverer",¹³⁴ come to save their home from a decline caused by lack of money. This is an allusion – one missed by most of Forster's readers now – to the agricultural depression of the 1870s and 1880s. The grandmother, "a plainer person, but very kind", in the view of locals at Ruth's funeral,¹³⁵ is the first Mrs Wilcox's connection to a pedigree which links her to the past of Hertfordshire and of the locality. This connection is to a folk tradition of just the sort to which Evelyn in "Other Kingdom" introduces the undeserving Harcourt Worters. The entry into Hertfordshire of the urban outsider Leonard, himself the grandson of farm labourers given specific county origins in Lincolnshire and Shropshire,¹³⁶ leads to similar connections:

Leonard saw up into the Tewin Woods and towards the church, with its wild legend of immortality. Six forest trees—that is a fact—grow out of one of the graves in Tewin churchyard. The grave's occupant—that is the legend—is an atheist, who declared that if God existed, six forest trees would grow out of her grave. These things in Hertfordshire; and farther afield lay the house of a hermit—Mrs. Wilcox had known him—who barred himself up, and wrote prophecies, and gave all he had to the poor. While, powdered in between, were the villas of business men, who saw life more steadily, though with the steadiness of the half-closed eye.¹³⁷

Ruth is the connection between the hermit – also mentioned in Helen's second letter at the beginning of the book – and the businessmen, remembering D.H. Lawrence's later warning

¹³⁰ Andrew Thacker, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism*, Manchester University Press: Manchester & New York, 2003, pp. 59-62; Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, Tony Pinkney (ed.), Verso: London & New York: 1989.

¹³¹ Bradshaw, "Howards End", pp. 163-8.

¹³² *Howards End*, ch. XXIII p. 141, ch. XXXIV p. 201.

¹³³ Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 59.

¹³⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XXIV p. 147.

¹³⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XI p. 66.

¹³⁶ *Howards End*, ch. XXVII p. 170.

¹³⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XLI p. 229.

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against “glorifying” the latter.¹³⁸ Such things as the trees sprouting from the atheist’s grave and the hermit, like the tradition of the “Fourth Time of Asking” in “Other Kingdom”, might be expected further afield from London than Hertfordshire, but not in so domesticated a county.

The county is also alluded to in Chapter III of *Howards End* when the Schlegels’ aunt Mrs Munt travels to Howards End in order – as she sees it – to rescue Helen. The fact that Howards End is in Hertfordshire should be clear to any attentive reader of the chapter who knows the South of England: Mrs Munt’s destination is on “the North Road”; she leaves London from Kings Cross station, and shortly before getting off she passes through what Forster’s narrator calls “the North Welwyn Tunnel of tragic fame”.¹³⁹ According to Stallybrass “three goods trains piled up in” the tunnel in 1866.¹⁴⁰ The allusion, then, turns recent history into modern myth. Hertfordshire is named for the first time by Ruth in her London conversations with Margaret, initially in referring to the wych-elm at Howards End as “the finest” such tree in the county, and secondly in suggesting that while London is fog-bound “they are sitting in the sun in Hertfordshire”.¹⁴¹ As in Forster’s 1898 diary, micro-climatic distinctions emerge.¹⁴² After this, apart from the indirect speech of a maid at the Wilcox London house in Ducie Street letting Leonard know where Margaret has gone,¹⁴³ Hertfordshire is only named by the authorial narrator.

The narrator sometimes ranges Hertfordshire alongside other southern English counties, but more often distinguishes it from them. On three occasions, Hertfordshire is contrasted with Surrey. The change that has happened in the two years separating the novel’s twelfth and thirteenth chapters is associated with the constant rebuilding of London, which “rose and fell in a continual flux, while her shallows washed more widely against the hills of Surrey and over the fields of Hertfordshire”.¹⁴⁴ Geographical identity emerges for the county here: not quite flat; richly agricultural. Hertfordshire is contrasted in party political terms with Surrey, too, in a combination of the narrator’s voice and Margaret’s:

To define [Hertfordshire] were difficult, but Margaret knew what it was not: it was not snobbish. Though its contours were slight, there was a touch of freedom in their

¹³⁸ *Howards End*, ch. I p. 7; D.H. Lawrence, [letter to E.M. Forster] [1922] in Warren Roberts *et al.* (eds), *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence Volume 4: June 1921-March 1924*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1987, p. 301; see also Bradshaw, “*Howards End*”, p. 162.

¹³⁹ *Howards End*, ch. III p. 13; ch. II pp. 11-12.

¹⁴⁰ Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 353.

¹⁴¹ *Howards End*, ch. VIII p. 54, ch. X p. 64.

¹⁴² Forster’s partly serious attention to such local differences of climate perhaps derived from his great aunt Marianne Thornton (see *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 259-60).

¹⁴³ *Howards End*, ch. XLI p. 228.

¹⁴⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XIII p. 79.

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sweep to which Surrey will never attain, and the distant brow of the Chilterns towered like a mountain. ‘Left to itself,’ was Margaret’s opinion, ‘this county would vote Liberal.’ The comradeship, not passionate, that is our highest gift as a nation, was promised by it, as by the low brick farm where she called for the key.¹⁴⁵

British parliamentary politics, of course, divides the map into differently-coloured zones according to which party different areas tend to prefer. The first and third sentences here represent Margaret’s view, the second and fourth being spoken by the authorial narrator. But the voices of Margaret, this narrator, and Forster himself are perhaps consciously blurred throughout *Howards End*.

Hertfordshire is also contrasted with wilder, more obviously scenic or romantic counties: Westmorland and Shropshire.¹⁴⁶ Its character is expressed most lyrically during a motor drive from the London offices of the Wilcox firm to Hertfordshire, a drive in which for Margaret scenery “congealed” and she “lost all sense of space”.¹⁴⁷ Here it is with archaic diction (“fare ill with”) and inversions of word order (“England meditative”) that the authorial narrator connects the county to an early modern English attempt to elevate the country. Drayton in *Poly-Olbion* tried to establish a “great mythology” of a kind the authorial narrator – or perhaps it is Margaret – later wishes were more abundant in England:¹⁴⁸

If Westmoreland can be missed, it will fare ill with a county whose delicate structure particularly needs the attentive eye. Hertfordshire is England at its quietest, with little emphasis of river and hill; it is England meditative. If Drayton were with us again to write a new edition of his incomparable poem, he would sing the nymphs of Hertfordshire as indeterminate of feature, with hair obfuscated by the London smoke. Their eyes would be sad, and averted from their fate towards the Northern flats, their leader not Isis or Sabrina, but the slowly flowing Lea. No glory of raiment would be theirs, no urgency of dance; but they would be real nymphs.¹⁴⁹

Delicacy, reticence, withdrawal and an apparent lack of intensity, then, characterise the country in the high-flown passages voiced by the narrator and concerning Hertfordshire. The book also consistently sees the county as both a place where the folk past survives and as one stifled by the change of the Imperial present. These two associations are embodied in, on the one hand, the sprouting churchyard tree and the hermit referred to in Leonard’s one-way railway journey between London and Hilton, and, on the other, “the parks of politicians” passed by Mrs Munt on her train trip and “the great estates that throttle the south of

¹⁴⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XXXIII p. 191.

¹⁴⁶ *Howards End*, ch. XXIII p. 142; ch. XXV p. 151.

¹⁴⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XXIII pp.142-3.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Drayton, *Works*, five volumes, William J. Hebel et al. (eds), Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1931-1941, vol. IV; *Howards End*, ch. XXXIII p. 190.

¹⁴⁹ *Howards End*, ch. XXIII p. 142.

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Hertfordshire” the lack of which is noted by Margaret, or is it the narrator?¹⁵⁰

As well as having a particular character among English counties, Hertfordshire in *Howards End* is also divided within itself. The novel’s assertion of the importance of sub-county locality, indeed, is another thing ignored by readings of *Howards End* which are only concerned with lumping together house, neighbourhood and county as aspects of a symbol of England. Take, for instance, Mrs Munt’s arrival at Hilton station:

The station, like the scenery, like Helen’s letters, struck an indeterminate note. Into which country will it lead, England or Suburbia? It was new, it had island platforms and a subway, and the superficial comfort exacted by business men. But it held hints of local life, personal intercourse, as even Mrs. Munt was to discover.¹⁵¹

It is the opposition between “England” and “Suburbia”, with the former to be equated with the rural, which critics have noted in this passage.¹⁵² The third and fourth sentences of the paragraph just quoted could be read as enlarging the England versus suburbia dichotomy, the third expanding the idea of “Suburbia” and the fourth that of England. But just as “personal intercourse” is the territory of the urban Schlegels as well as of surviving Hertfordshire rustics, so the place of these “hints of local life” might be connected to the character of this particular locality, not just part of a binarism in which Hertfordshire stands for or illustrates rural England.

Such hints for Forster are often contained in boys and men of the lower classes. Among them are a boy at Hilton railway station who calls out to Charles Wilcox on her arrival that Mrs Munt is “wanting Howards End”, the woodcutter and gravediggers who are in the background at Ruth’s funeral, and the little boy, Tom, who brings milk to Helen and Margaret as they camp out in Howards End and later becomes part of their ménage there.¹⁵³ Of these it is little Tom, sharing the first name of old Howard, the last of the former line at Howards End,¹⁵⁴ who is closest to the house and its immediate surroundings. The woodcutter at the funeral is also significant: he gets a visual perspective on the whole locality not so far noticed by Forster critics, and comparable to the narrator’s often-noted account of “system after system of our island” viewed in a northward glance from the Isle of Purbeck taking in more than could really be seen from there.¹⁵⁵ From atop one of “the churchyard elms” that he

¹⁵⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XLI p. 229, ch. III p. 13, ch. XXXIII p.190.

¹⁵¹ *Howards End*, ch. III p. 13.

¹⁵² Patrick Parrinder (*Nation and Novel: The English Novel from Its Origins to the Present Day*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006, p. 298), for example, claims that for Forster “England, ideally, consists of unspoiled countryside”.

¹⁵³ *Howards End*, ch. III p. 13; ch. XI pp. 65-6; ch. XXXVII p. 211; ch. XLIV pp. 237, 243.

¹⁵⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XXIV p. 146.

¹⁵⁵ *Howards End*, ch. XIX pp. 120-1.

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is pollarding, “high above” the funeral-goers, the woodcutter sees “the village of Hilton, strung upon the North Road, with its accreting suburbs; the sunset beyond, scarlet and orange, winking at him beneath brows of grey; the church; the plantations; and behind him an unspoilt country of fields and farms”.¹⁵⁶ In the terms of what Furbank has called Forster’s “philosophy”,¹⁵⁷ the woodcutter is a relative of Stephen Wonham and Alec Scudder, a child of the earth who returns to the place of death after “a night of joy”, wishing he had taken all “[t]hey lilies, they crysants”. Equally, making reference to real place, and seeing things in what I have called loco-referential terms, the woodcutter could be said to be in a tree on the northern edge of the churchyard of St Nicholas, Stevenage.

Elsewhere in the novel Hilton is associated with the extension of “the City’s trail” into the surrounding counties, which in the section set in Dorset is said to reach as far as Bournemouth,¹⁵⁸ on the borders of the West Country and a hundred miles south-west of the capital. Leonard sees the “contrast” between Hilton and “the country” thereabouts, when he passes through on his fateful walk up to Howards End. In the countryside, “men had been up since dawn”, but those in Hilton itself typically had their “hours [...] ruled [...] by a London office”;¹⁵⁹ they are commuters, like a briefcase-carrying man in a photo taken around 1900 of the Bowling Green in Stevenage which Margaret Ashby reproduces.¹⁶⁰ The expansion of London’s influence into the Home Counties is no less to the fore in *Howards End* than in the non-fictional studies of the towns of Colchester in Essex and Ramsgate in Kent during the late nineteenth century since carried out by historians.¹⁶¹

The novel also makes loco-referential mention of the 1870s-1890s agricultural depression, for example by Henry as he shows Margaret round “his property” soon after their engagement.¹⁶² Here, Henry fits the time of crisis for the farms thereabouts into a general narrative of local history which corroborates a 1990s local historian’s opinion of the fortunes of farms in the neighbourhood: that Hertfordshire suffered “even more than other counties from the effects of cheap imports”.¹⁶³ Bradshaw’s account of *Howards End* suggests, wrongly in my view, that the novel overlooks the agricultural depression, instead idealising

¹⁵⁶ *Howards End*, ch. XI pp. 65-6.

¹⁵⁷ P.N. Furbank, “The Philosophy of E.M. Forster” in Judith Scherer Herz & Robert K. Martin (eds.), *E.M. Forster: Centenary Revaluations*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto & Buffalo, 1982, pp. 37-51.

¹⁵⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XIX p. 121.

¹⁵⁹ *Howards End*, ch. XLI p. 229.

¹⁶⁰ Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, p. 5.

¹⁶¹ Garside, “London and the Home Counties”, pp. 496-7.

¹⁶² *Howards End*, ch. XXIV p. 147.

¹⁶³ Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, p. 70.

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rural England.¹⁶⁴ Henry's view of the district's recent history is at best partial. After all, he is one of the "business men" elsewhere in the novel deemed shallow and grasping. He has positive feelings about the "people at the Park" – the neighbouring great house, related to Howards End as the non-fictional Chesfield, home of the Forsters' landlord, is related to Rooksnest – who "made their pile over copper" and are thus, like Henry himself, *nouveau-riche* plutocrats.¹⁶⁵ Insights into the history of the neighbourhood are, however, to be found in Henry's account of how "Avery's Farm, Sishe's—what they call the Common, where you see that ruined oak—one after the other fell in, and so did this, as near as is no matter". These events must have been in the 1870s or 1880s if the Wilcox children are in their twenties when the action of the novel takes place. The narrative fits with the view of Henry as "deliverer" which emerges in the same paragraph, a view which Forster equivocally accepts. Henry *is* a greedy philistine, his wish to rebuild the ramshackle Howards End as a house "further away from the road" with its origins as a farm obliterated *is* reprehensible, in Forster's eyes. Yet at the same time his intervention and marriage to Ruth *did* lead to the preservation of the house which at the end of the novel will be the bastion of local England against grey cosmopolitan change.

Also in the locality are the Six Hills, whose significance in the symbolic patterning of the novel few critics have discussed.¹⁶⁶ In *Howards End*, the Hills are situated opposite Charles and Dolly Wilcox's house at the southern end of what the narrator, looking through the woodcutter, calls Hilton's "accreting suburbs".¹⁶⁷ This was the area where the fifteen-year-old Forster thought "ugly houses [...] much disfigured the road",¹⁶⁸ an area now close to the centre of Stevenage new town, where the Six Hills have been surrounded by roundabouts, yellow lines, and red-brick pseudo-vernacular office buildings.¹⁶⁹ To a distracted Henry, the Six Hills – perhaps suggesting earthy female fertility – are "[c]urious mounds" while Margaret, driving "her fingers through the grass" covering one of them on hearing Henry tell her his son Charles will go to prison for Leonard's manslaughter, experiences the hill moving "as if it were alive".¹⁷⁰ Spiritually, the Six Hills oppose the bourgeois garden of Charles and Dolly's house opposite, where the Wilcox father and son pace "in their dressing-gowns", and where Margaret, arguing with her husband over the consequences of her sister's pregnancy,

¹⁶⁴ Bradshaw, "Howards End", pp. 166-7.

¹⁶⁵ *Howards End*, ch. III p. 13; ch. XLI p. 229; ch. XXIV p. 147.

¹⁶⁶ An exception is McConkey (*Novels of Forster*, p. 119), who notes them principally as the site of "the crisis of Margaret and Henry's relationship".

¹⁶⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XI p. 65.

¹⁶⁸ Forster, "Rooksnest", p. 349.

¹⁶⁹ There are two photographs online illustrating the present situation of the Six Hills (Anonymous, "Six Hills", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Hills (accessed 6 June 2008)).

¹⁷⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XXIV p. 147, ch. XLIII p. 237.

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wants to remain standing rather than sit so that she can view “the Six Hills, covered with spring herbage”.¹⁷¹ The garden of the couple’s house stands for the small and constrained in money-making, suburbanizing life. Its limited attractiveness is comparable to the fact that, as Forster’s narrator tells us, the beauty of Charles’s “rubbishy little creature” of a wife, Dolly, will fade.¹⁷² Yet Forster – frustratingly, for a reader like Lawrence – will not allow his readers to dismiss it unequivocally. Instead of condemning him outright, Forster makes Charles the only Wilcox with an attachment to locality. It is he who moves to Hilton after Ruth’s death in the hope of keeping his widowed father settled at Howards End, he who Margaret says loves Howards End in “an untaking way” as “his mother’s house”, and who is the reason why she wants her pregnant sister not to occupy the house overnight.¹⁷³ All this is so in spite of the fact that Charles is disliked by those representatives of “local life”, the gravediggers at his mother’s funeral.

As Rosenbaum writes, “the resemblance is close” between the fictional Howards End and the non-fictional Rooksnest first described by Forster in the 1894 memoir.¹⁷⁴ The surroundings in both include a road to one side and the garden turning into a meadow to the other; the “Park”, a bigger house, up the hill; and the farm down, visible through a hedge, with a “dell” in near the border between the two.¹⁷⁵ There is one difference, though. The house of *Howards End* is repeatedly emphasised as having nine rooms on the front. In her first letter, Helen describes “nine windows as you look up from the front garden”. But only eight windows are visible in a similar view of Rooksnest today, as when Forster lived there, since there are only two attic windows in the roof facing the front.¹⁷⁶ The central bedroom on the first floor, in the same position as Forster’s mother’s bedroom at Rooksnest,¹⁷⁷ is referred to twice, first in Margaret’s discovery that a cot which once belonged to her younger brother Tibby has been placed there by Miss Avery, and second in the revelation that Helen’s child by Leonard has been born in this “central room”.¹⁷⁸ The centrality of this room is given added symmetrical importance by the addition of the third window above.

A soft patina of age sits on both Rooksnest and Howards End; they share a sunny aspect and a vine adorning the front. Each, too, is almost overrun by animal life. The landscape gardener William Kent had in the early eighteenth century introduced to English country

¹⁷¹ *Howards End*, ch. XLII p. 231, ch. XXXVIII p. 215.

¹⁷² *Howards End*, ch. XI p. 68.

¹⁷³ *Howards End*, ch. XV pp. 99-100; ch. XXXVII p. 214.

¹⁷⁴ Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, p. 438.

¹⁷⁵ For the dell, or “dell-hole”: Forster, “Rooksnest”, pp. 346-7; *Howards End*, ch. XXIII pp. 143-4. For the “park” or “Park” see Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 341; *Howards End*, ch. XXIV p. 147.

¹⁷⁶ *Howards End*, ch. I p. 5.

¹⁷⁷ Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 343.

¹⁷⁸ *Howards End*, ch. XXXII p. 194, ch. XLIV p. 240.

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houses the innovation of the ha-ha, which, in Jeremy Black's words, established "a boundary between garden and park that did not interrupt the prospect but did prevent animals from entering the garden: sheep were decorous and utilitarian, but at a distance".¹⁷⁹ The prospect viewed from both the fictional and non-fictional houses in Forster's writing is one in which this foundational distinction of the eighteenth and nineteenth century country house is broken down. As in the memoir of Rooksnest, an earthy animal life surrounds the fictional house. Having refused cake in the "best parlour" of the home of Mrs Avery's niece "over which the touch of art nouveau had fallen", Margaret emerges to find children "playing uproariously in heaps of golden straw". This recalls the scene with the real-life garden boy Ansell in the memoir which was reworked in the early short story "Ansell". Outside, too, the would-be genteel niece is "mortified by innumerable chickens, who rushed up to her feet for food, and by a shameless and maternal sow".¹⁸⁰ The chapter in which Henry is scandalized to learn of Helen's pregnancy ends with an account of the land next to Howards End occupied by "a string of farm cats" blocking the exit.¹⁸¹ This emphasis on animals and breeding alludes as well to human (hetero-)sexuality, and so is at odds with the easily-drawn conclusion that Forster's rural England is emasculated or sterile or excessively mannered, a place of tea parties and garden sports. Considering these animals' fertility and Helen's pregnancy, perhaps, Forster's claim that had he been "allowed" to stay at *Howards End* he would have become heterosexual himself should not be lightly dismissed.¹⁸²

Finally, there are gables. Helen's first letter to her sister reveals that, surprisingly, there are "no gables and wiggles" – or "gamboge-coloured paths" – at the home of the Wilcoxes.¹⁸³ This absence distinguishes Howards End from both the house Henry and Margaret plan for themselves in Sussex, an architectural elevation of which reveals "a good many gables and a picturesque skyline",¹⁸⁴ and that of Harcourt Worters in "Other Kingdom", the gables of which are praised by one of his female relatives but are recognised by the narrator, Inskip, as examples of the "home-made gable" and therefore as making the "mansion" look "like a cottage with the dropsy".¹⁸⁵ Inskip, with his aesthete's good taste, condemns these gables. The gable is itself a vernacular feature, a feature of a rich man's house emulating details of those of the poor, attached in a diluted, post-Wordsworth belief that the rural ordinary is inherently good. But it is bogus. The non-fictional Rooks Nest House contains two dormer

¹⁷⁹ Jeremy Black, *Historical Atlas of Britain: The End of the Middle Ages to the Georgian Era*, Sutton: Stroud, 2000, pp. 150-1.

¹⁸⁰ *Howards End*, ch. XXXIII p. 192.

¹⁸¹ *Howards End*, ch. XXXVI p. 207.

¹⁸² Forster, "Memory" [1930] in *Creator as Critic*, pp. 61-4, here 63.

¹⁸³ *Howards End*, ch. I p. 5.

¹⁸⁴ *Howards End*, ch. XXXII p. 187.

¹⁸⁵ *Machine Stops*, p. 53.

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windows, features which by the late nineteenth century were starting to be perceived as picturesquely rural,¹⁸⁶ but which were not built to be so, while its only gables are the structural rather than decorative ones at the east and west ends of the house. Forster is elsewhere ambivalent about whether or not good taste should rule, though, and the narrator of “Other Kingdom” does not speak with his author’s voice. Forster shared a little of Henry Wilcox’s contempt for “your artistic crew” who would fail to understand *Howards End*,¹⁸⁷ despite condemning the effects of “Henry and his sort” on the rural Home Counties, and particularly on the rebellious, unpicturesque Hertfordshire.

In the portrayal of the county of Hertfordshire in *Howards End* the biographical, then, combines with the local-historical, and with an understanding of the specifics of particular neighbourhoods, to create an image of a portion of rural England with its own distinctive character, vigorous, and neither deferential nor picturesque. Forster himself found “hints of local life” not only in the necessarily impure rural environment of Rooksnest, but also in the brotherhood of King’s College, Cambridge and in the homosexual fellowship he entered into with Ackerley, Buckingham and others, in West London between the 1920s and the 1950s. What appealed to him, I claim, was the local, not the rural.

7.5. Survival or Revival (1910-45)?

After *Howards End*, Forster paid little attention to Hertfordshire for two decades. In the interim, he began to elaborate the myths of his own life that grew from the reformulations of that life to be found in the earlier novels. This myth-making led him to revisit the area around Rooksnest, beginning with a visit to the Poyntz-Stewart family there in 1930, as Forster recorded in an account he read to the Memoir Club then.¹⁸⁸ In the early 1930s, speaking to fellow Bloomsbury Group members, it was the relationship of the house to his own personal history that Forster emphasised. He took the detached, cool tone appropriate to the environment of the Group.¹⁸⁹ These were the surroundings in which he claimed that his life and sexual orientation would have been different had he been able to stay on at Rooksnest. Then there was another gap of a decade or so, during which Forster concentrated on London and his relations with the Farrer family in Surrey. During the Second World War, Rooksnest took on a renewed importance for him.

In 1946, Forster would suggest that there had been little change around Rooksnest in the

¹⁸⁶ OED2 s.v. *dormer* n. 2, especially 1871 quotation.

¹⁸⁷ *Howards End*, ch. XXIV p. 148.

¹⁸⁸ See *Commonplace Book*, p. 330.

¹⁸⁹ Forster, “Memory”, pp. 62-3.

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first half of the twentieth century. “It must always have looked much the same”, he reflected, and “[l]ife went on there as usual until this spring”.¹⁹⁰ Although there were undoubtedly more of the villas which represent “Suburbia” not “England” at Hilton in *Howards End*,¹⁹¹ especially considering the building boom of the inter-war years in south-eastern England, photographs of Stevenage High Street in the 1930s appear to confirm this, showing a broad expanse on a sunny summer day, flanked with old coaching inns.¹⁹² Heavy black cars and motorcycles are visible but not numerous; other features of the twentieth century visible include belisha beacons to mark a pedestrian crossing. The scene seems far removed from the lurid clash and bustle I encountered at Stevenage in 2006. A 1975 photo of the part of the High Street including the Yorkshire Grey pub records an interim phase. The painted logos of a brewer and an oil company are by then visible; visual clutter has been introduced by television aerials, street lights and road markings.¹⁹³ Such perceptions of obtrusiveness or intrusiveness need relativising, though. What seemed loud and vulgar in the 1930s may seem muted or even quaint to me, and the sense I get from the 1975 signage is complicated by the fact my childhood was filled with signs like these.

Away from the High Street, and particularly on the western side of Stevenage towards the railway new industries related to the town’s transport connections were emerging in the interwar years.¹⁹⁴ Forster may have thought Stevenage unchanged until the New Town decision of 1946, but the Vincent H.R.D. Motorcycle Company was designing and manufacturing its products on the High Street after 1927.¹⁹⁵ The appearance in southern England of industries which served prosperity and made consumer goods was charted in 1934 by J.B. Priestley.¹⁹⁶ Priestley’s *English Journey* divides England into three, firstly an “Old England” of stale gentility and cathedrals, secondly an “industrial England [...] of “coal, iron, steel, cotton, wool, railways”,¹⁹⁷ and thirdly somewhere American-influenced, filled with broad asphalted highways and glamorous in a tawdry way. The arterial roads radiating from London exemplify Priestley’s third England. Returning to London from Norfolk, “roaring down the Great North Road”, having joined it at Baldock, not far north of

¹⁹⁰ I cite *Two Cheers for Democracy* from the first American edition rather than from the later Abinger Edition (E.M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy* [1951], Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), Edward Arnold: London, 1972). The Abinger Edition of *Two Cheers for Democracy* was one of the first volumes in the series to appear, was essentially a reprint rather than a separate scholarly edition.

¹⁹¹ *Howards End*, ch. III p. 13.

¹⁹² Garside, “London and the Home Counties”, p. 531-2; Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, pp. 93-4.

¹⁹³ Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁴ Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, pp. 67, 70-5; Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 54.

¹⁹⁵ Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, p. 89.

¹⁹⁶ On Forster’s – rather uncomfortable – relations with Priestley see Furbank II, pp. 18, 155-6, 194.

¹⁹⁷ J.B. Priestley, *English Journey: Being a Rambling but Truthful Account of What One Man Saw and Heard and Felt during a Journey through England during the Autumn of the Year 1933*, Heinemann: London, 1968, pp. 398-9.

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Stevenage,¹⁹⁸ Priestley and his chauffeur soon find themselves in a thick fog, tailgating a lorry:

This is the England of arterial and bypass roads, of filling stations and factories that look like exhibition buildings, of giant cinemas and dance-halls and cafés, bungalows with tiny garages, cocktail bars, Woolworths, motor-coaches, wireless, hiking, factory girls looking like actresses, greyhound racing and dirt tracks, swimming pools, and everything given away for cigarette coupons. If the fog had lifted I knew that I should have seen this England all around me at that northern entrance to London.¹⁹⁹

It was this sort of England which led socialists such as Lewis Silkin, the minister responsible for planning immediately after the War, to hate “the endless strings of houses along main roads which grew up in the Thirties before the town planning legislation” and therefore think New Towns necessary.²⁰⁰ Forster’s claim in 1946 that the New Town plan threatened to “completely [...] obliterate the ancient and delicate scenery around Stevenage” ignores the fact that the district had by the 1930s become a marginal zone on the edge of Priestley’s third England.²⁰¹ But the predictable suggestion that could be derived from this, that Forster was guilty of genteel nostalgia, itself overlooks the dichotomy between “England” and “Suburbia” early in *Howards End*,²⁰² a dichotomy which ascribes to England both marginality and an internal division.

Alongside this new England of arterial roads and cheap consumer goods developed, between the two World Wars, the discipline of town planning. Turn-of-the-century planning had been typified by Ebenezer Howard, with his goal of an ideal community brought about by cooperation between private individuals and investors. After the First World War the “Metro-land” of advertisements for the extension of the Metropolitan Line north-westwards into what was once rural Middlesex and Buckinghamshire represented a commercialised version of Howard’s sort of enterprise.²⁰³ In the same period, Abercrombie replaced Howard as the leading figure in British town and country planning. He acted as a consultant to various local authorities and wrote on “The Preservation of Rural England” in the 1920s then, before and during the Second World War, became instrumental in the shift towards a government-led approach to planning: national and strategic, not piecemeal and local.²⁰⁴ The

¹⁹⁸ Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 395.

¹⁹⁹ Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 401.

²⁰⁰ Collings, *Stevenage 1946-1986*.

²⁰¹ *Two Cheers*, p. 59.

²⁰² *Howards End*, ch. III p. 13.

²⁰³ See e.g. T.C. Barker & Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport: Passenger Travel and the Development of the Metropolis Volume II: The Twentieth Century to 1970*, George Allen & Unwin: London, 1976, pp. 275-6.

²⁰⁴ Miller, “Abercrombie”.

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Second World War, according to one historian, resulted in “an almost mystical belief that somehow planning would provide all the answers”.²⁰⁵ Legislative change making possible this move from individual initiative to centralised control was brought about, at least in part, by a friend of Forster’s, Edward Hilton Young, who shaped the wide-ranging Town and Country Planning Act of 1932, as Minister for Health in the National Government of Ramsay MacDonald.²⁰⁶

Sometime during the Second World War, Forster again began making regular visits to Rooksnest. His attachment to for the place of his childhood was rekindled. Perhaps Blitz-era community spirit was a factor when, at a National Gallery concert sometime around 1942, Forster re-encountered Elizabeth Poston, daughter of the couple he had visited at Highfield, their house near Stevenage, in 1898.²⁰⁷ Poston had occupied Rooksnest since 1914. Like Forster, Poston – a composer – was connected to the BBC during the war and hence required to be in central London for much of the time, in her case broadcasting music to Europe which perhaps contained coded messages, and like him she was one of the pillars of the BBC radio Third Programme after the war. She became attached to Forster, who in turn developed his feelings about Rooksnest and the countryside around it into something combining sentimentality, a spiritualisation of place recalling aspects of Romantic poetry, and a more hard-headed dismissiveness. In August 1943, writing to Bob Buckingham, Forster reported having had a “marvellous time at Stevenage”,²⁰⁸ having stayed at Rooksnest with Poston and her elderly mother, and visited a pub with Frank Franklin. It was perhaps this visit on which Forster, as recorded by his commonplace book, was made to “feel” a sense of the “holy” by seeing a childhood contemporary “aged 60 now, running round in the low sunshine after mushrooms at Chesfield and untouched by time”.²⁰⁹

The imbuing of Rooksnest and its neighbourhood with spirituality of a sort continued in 1944 with the references to it in Forster’s memoir of West Hackhurst. There, Forster represents his relationship with Rooksnest as a youthful love affair whose importance he has only recently understood on revisiting it, and which means that “I have never been able to

²⁰⁵ Helen Meller, *Towns, Plans and Society in Modern Britain*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997, p. 67.

²⁰⁶ Wayland Kennet, “Young, (Edward) Hilton, first Baron Kennet (1879-1960)” in ODNB. The connection between Forster and Young, exact Cambridge contemporaries, the former at King’s and the latter at Trinity, stretched back to their undergraduate days. In October 1909 the two went on a walking tour of Wiltshire together (*Chronology*, p. 35), while the politician’s cottage in the same county was used by Forster and other members of the Bloomsbury Group as a holiday retreat around the same time.

²⁰⁷ Jamie C. Bartlett, “Poston, Elizabeth (1905-1987)” in ODNB.

²⁰⁸ E.M. Forster, [Correspondence with R.J. ‘Bob’ Buckingham], MS KCC 18/82, 1932-1970.

²⁰⁹ *Commonplace Book*, p. 160. This contemporary, called by Forster “Neil Stuart”, was actually Niel Poyntz-Stewart, an eccentric and perhaps mentally retarded member of the local landowning family (Ashby, *Forster Country*, pp. 128-9, 174).

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give myself away to West Hackhurst or any other human dwelling”.²¹⁰ Later on in the portion of the memoir written before January 1944, Forster echoes his 1930 Bloomsbury talk when he represents his relationship with Rooksnest as his second nearest “approach to feudalism”, calling Rooksnest “the Howards End house in Hertfordshire”.²¹¹

Feudalism is a social relationship grounded in rights over land. In “West Hackhurst” Forster is deeply ambivalent about land-holding of this sort, the whole memoir focusing on his unhappy relationship with the Farrers. Later in 1944, Forster recorded in the “Locked Journal” the “[s]trange violence of a dream that the Postons were giving up Rooksnest”:

It was death and humiliation [...] The house was altered, and they were putting off the packing until I had left. The intense feeling I have had from revisiting of late years. The house is my childhood and safety – the 3 attics preserve me. Only a little of my passion [...] was used up in Howards End. Perhaps it has increased with the knowledge that my mother cannot revisit the shrine [...] [the thought] that the house will vanish from the earth and the bare hill top be left seems less silly each time I recall it. I work to elevate West Hackhurst, which I connect with no acute joy.²¹²

In 1945 Forster’s mother died, the war ended, and he was turned out of West Hackhurst.²¹³ By this time, Forster had mentally transformed Rooksnest and the area around it from a question mark, the road not taken and the possibility of having been “a different person” had things happened differently,²¹⁴ into a lost lover, a failed closeness to a mystical notion of ‘the land’ and a charm warding off evil which itself recalls the pig’s teeth of *Howards End* and the Franklins’ inner room of three in the Rooksnest memoir.

7.6. “The Challenge of Our Time” and the New Town Debate (1945-60)

Forster responded to the announcement in March 1946 that Stevenage was to be the first New Town in a radio broadcast. On Sunday 7 April at 9.15am on the BBC Home Service he presented “The Point of View of the Creative Artist” as part of a series on “The Challenge of Our Time”.²¹⁵ Talks in the series were given by scientists, historians, a classicist, a

²¹⁰ “West Hackhurst”, p. 12; *Creator as Critic*, p. 117.

²¹¹ “West Hackhurst”, p. 24 (the second of the two pages numbered “24” by Forster).

²¹² “Locked Journal”, 15 July 1944.

²¹³ *Chronology*, pp. 145-6; Furbank II, pp. 263-4.

²¹⁴ Forster, “Memory”, p. 63.

²¹⁵ E.M. Forster, “The Challenge of Our Time: The View of the Creative Artist”, *Listener* 35 (1946), pp. 451-2; *Bibliography*, p. 243 (F3a (113)). Forster retitled the talk “The Challenge of Our Time” when it was collected into *Two Cheers for Democracy* (*Two Cheers*, pp. 55-60). This is the title I henceforth use for it.

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theologian, a philosopher and Forster himself.²¹⁶ Among the listeners at this particular time of the week would have been people about to go to church. Forster's agnosticism sometimes set him at odds with the BBC. The first BBC director-general, John Reith, was strongly religious and saw his job as, in effect, an evangelical ministry.²¹⁷ Forster's April 1946 talk was itself a kind of sermon, but one spoken softly, as if in conversation, rather than declaimed from the pulpit, and characterised by uncertainty instead of dogma.

Forster's activities in fields other than novel-writing are often still ignored or played down. Among the few critics to have examined Forster's broadcasting, Mary Lago has done so at greatest length, entitling one of the five chapters of her *Literary Life* of Forster "The BBC Broadcasts", and so putting them at the centre of his literary activity between 1928 and the early 1960s.²¹⁸ In an opening discussion of the 1946 talk, Lago accepts Forster's own representation of his attitudes on science and class.²¹⁹ As a piece of persuasive rhetoric by a "Creative Artist" who by 1946 was an experienced broadcaster of eighteen years' standing, however, the talk is less straightforward than Lago's discussion makes it appear. A more nuanced view of Forster's broadcasting is offered by Todd Avery, who recognises the "irreducible ambivalence" of Forster's attitudes to radio as a medium.²²⁰ This is an ambivalence which can also be detected in his attitude to the New Town development at Stevenage.

In "The Challenge of Our Time", Forster redefines the New Town or "satellite town" project as one for a "[m]eteorite town" because, he claims, the New Town plan has "fallen out of a blue sky" onto Stevenage.²²¹ The first anyone locally had known about the New Town, he says, had been when "someone who was applying for a permit to lay a water pipe was casually informed that it would not be granted since the whole area had been commandeered".²²² Hints of an over-mighty, Big-Brother-like state power are here conveyed by vocabulary and grammar: the word "commandeered" and the use of the passive voice.

But Abercrombie's *Greater London Plan* had already publicly recommended that Stevenage would be an ideal location for a "satellite". Abercrombie argued that while the

²¹⁶ Lago, *Literary Life*, p. 1.

²¹⁷ Todd Avery, *Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics, and the BBC, 1922-1938*, Ashgate: Aldershot & Burlington, VT, 2006, p. 14; Ian McIntyre, "Reith, John Charles Walsham, first Baron Reith (1889-1971)" in ODNB.

²¹⁸ Lago, *Literary Life*, pp. 96-112, 115-22. The insider's perspective given on Forster's broadcasting by John Arlott ("Forster and Broadcasting" in Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), *Aspects of E.M. Forster: Essays and Recollections Written for His Ninetieth Birthday*, January 1, 1969, Harcourt, Brace & World: New York, 1969, pp. 87-92) is also illuminating.

²¹⁹ Lago, *Literary Life*, 1-5.

²²⁰ Avery, *Radio Modernism*, p. 62.

²²¹ *Two Cheers*, p. 59.

²²² *Two Cheers*, p. 58.

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“good lands on the Chalky Boulder Clay will remain predominantly agricultural and rural”, it would be logical to position a New Town at points where “there is a marked through line of communication”.²²³ At least as far back as Michael Drayton, writers – among them, in the twentieth century, both Forster and Pevsner – have stressed the importance to this particular county of the ancient roads as lines of communication. Among the Home Counties Hertfordshire was a natural site for New Town development.²²⁴ The position of Stevenage – like that of Hilton in *Howards End* – on the road and rail route north of London came in the 1940s to justify development that would transform the town.

Abercrombie later explains in detail why Stevenage is among his “Selected Sites for New Towns”.²²⁵ It is already “tending to develop industrially”, he says. Its transport connections and “fine wide” main street give it the potential to become much larger, even if twentieth-century development there has so far been ugly and piecemeal: “a cinema, faced with badly designed sham half-timber work, terminates the main street vista to the north”. Stevenage was not an idyllic survival on which development would fall like a “meteorite”, as it is portrayed in “The Challenge of Our Time”. Ashby notes that “apparent continuity at Rooks Nest was an illusion”, while for “people in Stevenage and the surrounding villages” life during in the 1930s and the period of the Second World War, “seemed to consist of rapid change alternating with dreadful monotony”.²²⁶ *Howards End* is filled with a sense of foreboding about development of a different sort, that of suburban villas; but having hardly visited since 1910 Forster knew little about changes to the town since then. Although revered by locals such as Poston, Forster was more or less always an outsider in his dealings with the Stevenage area after 1894.

Later in April 1946, H.D. Dawson of Leicester, who identified himself as a “planner”, wrote to the *Listener* objecting to this section of Forster’s talk. Dawson questioned the truthfulness of Forster’s account, implying that the plan had been advertised beforehand with the proper time allowed for objections to be presented. A draft version of a letter from Forster to “the Town Planner” – presumably Dawson – passes on Poston’s opinion that the notices of compulsory sale which were issued in the spring of 1946 had been illegal.²²⁷ Having just buried his mother and been served with notice to vacate West Hackhurst, Forster felt that a pattern was emerging: mindless or hostile powers were tending to break the

²²³ Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan*, p. 93.

²²⁴ The present character of southern England as “urban countryside” can be traced back to “the extension of the Metropolitan Line into Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire” in the 1880s, according to Tim Mars (“Life in New Towns”, p. 274).

²²⁵ Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan*, p. 161.

²²⁶ Ashby, *Forster Country*, p. 124.

²²⁷ Elizabeth Poston, [Correspondence with E.M. Forster], MS KCC/EMF/18/438, 1915-1960; Ashby, *Forster Country*, pp. 138-9.

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continuity of individuals' lives.²²⁸ The planner, for his part, picked up on Forster's description of himself in the April 1946 broadcast as belonging to "the fag-end of Victorian liberalism", observing that "when [Forster's] friends have spent half-a-century in establishing a social order in which each community occupies far more space than ever before, Mr. Forster can hardly complain if his (and my) beloved Home Counties don't look the same as they did".²²⁹ Dawson, in other words, aligned Forster with the forces in government defending the rights of landowners to develop just as they liked. He did not, like most readers of *Howards End*, identify Forster as a preservationist.

"The Challenge of our Time", not being a narrative, contains no spatial arrangement internal to itself and capable of being understood in a formalist way as independent of the non-textual 'outside'. Yet its range of references to real place is complex. Near the beginning, for example, Forster mentions "having been to India last winter", where "starvation and frustration can reach proportions unknown to these islands".²³⁰ The deictic centre is the United Kingdom, and within this South-East England is central: Forster's position is metropolitan.²³¹ Forster then suggests that the "doctrine of *laissez-faire* will not work in the material world", since it leads "to the black market and the capitalist jungle".²³² Markets and jungles are metaphorical examples of "produced space" in Lefebvre's sense.²³³ Additionally, the broadcast contains implicit references to places 'abroad' that are at present unlike England – places of "censorship" and "secret police" – and explicit reference to the Holy Roman Empire of medieval Europe. The penultimate paragraph moves from the – presumably English – "countryside" to the universality of "the writer, the artist".²³⁴ Here, the value of art is said to lie in its connection with order. The positions of this talk were able to communicate outside the British context: in the 1960s an American scholar interpreted the whole of Forster's work by means of the same pairing.²³⁵ In the broadcast, art is said to create sites or places, "little worlds of its own", suggesting that it is not actual conservation of any individual place that matters. Finally, in referring to "terrified governments" and

²²⁸ The Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 radically increased the powers of government over development, although it was a further act of 1947 which was to mark the change from ownership of land to local authority consent as the key factor in planning.

²²⁹ *Two Cheers*, p. 56; H.D. Dawson, [Letter], *Listener* 35 (1946), p. 548.

²³⁰ *Two Cheers*, p. 55.

²³¹ The broadcast which became "The Challenge of Our Time" was intended for a domestic audience, but the majority of Forster's 91 radio broadcasts between August 1941 and March 1947 were on the BBC Overseas Service, after 1942 called the Eastern Service, and were book reviews aimed at "English speaking people in India" (*Bibliography*, p. 235; see also Arlott, "Forster and Broadcasting", p. 67).

²³² *Two Cheers*, p. 57.

²³³ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 84.

²³⁴ *Two Cheers*, pp. 59-60.

²³⁵ Alan Wilde, *Art and Order: A Study of E.M. Forster*, New York University Press: New York, 1964.

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“Official Secrets Acts” Forster once more wavers between specifically British place reference and global liberal-humanist comment.²³⁶ The talk’s British point of view is not opposed to its internationalism. The latter aligns Forster with George Orwell as part of the non-communist left.²³⁷ In this sense the place reference of the piece is to the western side in the Cold War world of the years after 1945.

Within literary reference to place, I have elsewhere distinguished between *loco-allusiveness*, in which a writer assumes knowledge of the place described on the part of the readership, and *loco-descriptiveness*, in which the assumption is on the contrary that the readers know nothing of the place in question.²³⁸ While a loco-descriptive mode is usual in Forster’s writings on ‘abroad’ – Italy, Egypt, India and so on – his earlier writing on England tended to be loco-allusive, assuming an audience fairly close geographically and attitudinally to the author himself. Most of the references to place in Forster’s 1946 talk are loco-allusive. Yet the successful publication of the talk as part of *Two Cheers for Democracy*, with its much broader, near-global, implied readership, indicates that such references were inclusive enough to have meaning for an audience without an understanding of British and more particularly Home Counties specifics.

Loco-allusive reference to Stevenage is to be found in the sixth paragraph of what in its 1951 published form is a nine-paragraph essay. Here, Forster offers a position for his readers which requests their “assent”, to use a critical term derived ultimately from T.S. Eliot.²³⁹ Stevenage is not named here, though. In his letter to Dawson, Forster said this was because he did not “wish those living in it to be troubled by additional correspondence”. Instead, Forster locates the site of the meteorite town-to-be in the “home counties”, describing the area where he “was brought up as a boy” as “the loveliest in England”:

There is nothing special about it—it is agricultural land, and could not be described in terms of beauty spots. It must always have looked much the same. I have kept in touch with it, going back to it as an abiding city and still visiting the house which was once my home, for it is occupied by friends. A farm is through the hedge, and when the farmer there was eight years old and I was nine, we used to jump up and down on his grandfather’s straw ricks and spoil them. Today he is a grandfather himself, so

²³⁶ *Two Cheers*, p. 60.

²³⁷ As a younger man, Forster had been profoundly influenced by the internationalist and pacifist political thinker Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (see e.g. Patrick Wilkinson, “Forster and King’s” in Stallybrass, *Aspects of E.M. Forster*, pp. 13-28, here 19-20, 24-5).

²³⁸ See Jason Finch, “Surrey in *A Room with a View*: A Candidate for Scholarly Mediation”, *NJES: Nordic Journal of English Studies* 6 (2007), pp. 105-27, here 105-6.

²³⁹ T.S. Eliot, “The Metaphysical Poets” in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, Faber: London, 1975, pp. 59-67. See also Roger D. Sell, *Literature as Communication: The Foundations of Mediating Criticism*, Benjamins: Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 2000, pp. 173-5.

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that I have the sense of five generations continuing in one place.²⁴⁰

Forster praised Hertfordshire, then, but did so by contrasting it with “beauty spots”. He asks his readership to assent to an England whose loveliness is mysterious, not consisting in the picturesque or the sublime but seeming to involve endurance over time. Forster’s view that the district “must always have looked the same” differs from his account of Surrey, a Home County which he did not idealise, and which figures in his pageant play *England’s Pleasant Land*, written ten years before the radio talk.²⁴¹ There, he had highlighted the power struggles and physical modifications – enclosure, industry, poverty – of the south-eastern English countryside over several centuries. Around Rooksnest, he closed his eyes to such matters. This may seem inconsistent. But there were (and are) very real distinctions between and within the different counties of England: the power of great landowners and the relative independence of small farmers, for example, varied greatly from county to county in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁴² The New Testament expression “abiding city” turns Rooksnest into a modern earthly paradise.²⁴³ But Forster’s claim that he has “kept in touch with” the district around Rooksnest since boyhood also jars with the fact that he had little contact with it from 1906 to 1943. Finally, as in the 1890s memoir, as in “Ansell” and as in *Howards End*, the motif recurs of boys jumping in a riotous, carefree way on straw and belonging to their elders.

Frank Franklin, Forster’s contemporary, was recorded as the “grandson” in the 1890s memoir and Forster made a journal note of his engagement after visiting the neighbourhood in 1906.²⁴⁴ Forster presents the Franklins as representative figures of an unchanging neighbourhood, five generations in one place. This is misleading. As old-established residents, the Franklins were not representative of the population of Stevenage as a whole. This family became vigorous opponents of New Town development at Stevenage. Jack Franklin, son of Frankie, was, in the words of Timothy Collings, “behind the famous ‘Silkingrad’ campaign” when “[o]n Friday, December 20, 1946, residents of Stevenage awoke to discover” the word *Silkingrad* written in place of *Stevenage* on various signs around the town, including at the railway station.²⁴⁵ It is hard to disentangle the potential racism – the Labour Town and Country Planning Minister Lewis Silkin was the son of

²⁴⁰ *Two Cheers*, p. 158.

²⁴¹ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 353-401.

²⁴² Armstrong, “Countryside”, pp. 94, 102, 134.

²⁴³ Hebrews 13:14 in the 1881 Revised Version.

²⁴⁴ Forster, “Rooksnest”, p. 344; “Notebook Journal”, 17 September 1906. In 1930, Forster (“Memory”, p. 63) had included “Frankie Franklyn’s enormous shoulders” in his account of emotional withdrawal from the district.

²⁴⁵ Collings, *Stevenage 1946-1986*, p. 14.

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Russian-Jewish immigrants – contained in the idea of Silkingrad from a long-established English opposition, shared by liberals and conservatives, to state interference. The building of villas and the opening of factories must have brought many newcomers to the town well before the decision was taken to build the first New Town in Stevenage.

Things moved on. Updating his 1894 memoir in 1947, Forster recorded the living and the dead.²⁴⁶ The elder Franklin's High Court action the same year, attempting to get development at Stevenage halted, saw Silkin condemned by a judge for not having "acted with an open mind" but did not stop the New Town from being built and was only the first in a long line of similar court battles and public enquiries.²⁴⁷ The New Town itself was built in various stages between the 1940s and the 1980s.²⁴⁸ The pro-Modern Movement Pevsner described the nascent New Towns in 1953 as having the chance of being "the first towns in England since Bath of which their inhabitants and the country can be unreservedly proud".²⁴⁹ Some have considered Pevsner an alien influence in post-war English culture, a representative of the continental Modern Movement to be contrasted unfavourably with the conserving – and conservative – native viewpoint of John Betjeman,²⁵⁰ and certainly his position on the New Towns was not universally held in the 1950s. In a history of Stevenage which reads like a memorial for the older town lost under development, for example, Robert Trow-Smith complained that "the town planner sitting before his maps has by-passed all the processes of natural growth of towns in relation to their environments, which have been working slowly for a thousand years".²⁵¹

The failure to stop development at Stevenage contributed to Forster's sense of despair in the last section of the "West Hackhurst" memoir, written in 1947:

I sustained another blow. If M^f Silkin didn't go and select Stevenage, the home of my childhood and the proposed asylum of my old age, for the first Satellite Town. It was as if Fate was determined to cut all my roots. It was as if I was to get the worst of both worlds – \feudalism/ had driven me out, the plansters wouldn't let me in. Even if I had got in, and found lodgement in the \doomed/ area, I should have lived for the next ten years \under the menace/ scaffoldings, newly made \arterial/ roads and municipal lakes [...] Stevenage and Rooksnest our old house there (the house that is Howards End) form another story of the land and my abortive connections with it, which may some day get down on to paper. Here they \appear/ as the culmination of ill luck, the

²⁴⁶ Forster, "Rooksnest", p. 350.

²⁴⁷ Collings, *Stevenage 1946-1986*, p. 16.

²⁴⁸ Collings, *Stevenage 1946-1986*; Mullan, *Stevenage Ltd*; Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, pp. 345-58.

²⁴⁹ Pevsner, *Hertfordshire*, p. 37.

²⁵⁰ Tim Mowl, *Stylistic Cold Wars: Betjeman versus Pevsner*, John Murray: London, 2000; see also David Matless, "Topographic Culture: Nikolaus Pevsner and the Buildings of England", *History Workshop Journal* 54 (2002) pp 73-99, here 76.

²⁵¹ Trow-Smith, *History of Stevenage*, p. 81.

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final notification that I had no \foothold.²⁵²

One response to events at Stevenage was for Forster, unobtrusively, to buy Rooksnest for the Postons, in 1950 “helping” with, it would seem, some money for a deposit and in 1961 paying off the mortgage.²⁵³ Forster returned to the topic of Rooksnest towards the end of his 1956 biography of his great-aunt Marianne Thornton. Here he suggests that the house is responsible for his personal “slant upon society and history”, contrasting Rooksnest’s setting in his 1880s childhood with its 1950s position “just outside a twentieth-century hub and almost within sound of a twentieth-century hum”.²⁵⁴ This “slant” he describes as “middle-class [...], atavistic, derived from the Thorntons” and subsequently “corrected by contact with friends who have never had a home in the Thornton sense”. Rooksnest in the 1880s is here said to have been “in the wilds”. The characteristics Forster, writing in *Marianne Thornton* in 1956, says that he “utilised” in *Howards End* seem frozen as mythic components of it for him by the 1950s: “[t]he garden, the overhanging wych elm, the sloping meadow, the great view to the west, the cliff of fir trees to the north, the adjacent farm through the high tangled hedge of wild roses”.

Between 1894 and 1960 Forster’s writings on Stevenage were addressed to audiences varying greatly in size and make-up. At the smallest – his 1894 memoir was essentially an *aide-memoire* – the audience could be made up of one person, the author himself. On the other hand, between 1941 and 1961 at least 400,000 paperback copies of *Howards End* were printed in Britain alone.²⁵⁵ The authorial personae offered by Forster also vary over time and between audiences. What they all share is something that recalls Virginia Woolf’s description of Forster as “a butterfly”.²⁵⁶ A connection to place resembling that of a butterfly to a flower is what they suggest: close yet also including preparedness to move on without regret. This, perhaps, makes the ideal of settlement on one spot as proposed at the end of *Howards End* unconvincing.

It is tempting to assess Forster’s response to the Stevenage New Town debate as either progressive or reactionary. Poston certainly saw Forster as someone with influence within the Establishment who could represent her interests and those of other propertied residents in the area. When the question of further development came up in 1960, she wrote to Forster briefing him on how to approach the Conservative Housing Minister Henry Brooke –

²⁵² “West Hackhurst”, p. 46 (the second of two pages numbered ‘46’ by Forster.

²⁵³ “Locked Journal”, 31 December 1950; Ashby, *Forster Country*, pp. 147-8.

²⁵⁴ *Marianne Thornton*, pp. 270, 269.

²⁵⁵ *Bibliography*, p. 18.

²⁵⁶ Virginia Woolf, “Old Bloomsbury” in S.P. Rosenbaum (ed.), *A Bloomsbury Group Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, MA, 1993, pp. 355-72, here 369.

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Charterhouse, Balliol, married so-and-so – and contrasting Brooke with “the arch-devil, the General Manager of the Corporation, a specious, common little Scot called MacDougall (very communistic) who has planned himself into the old rectory”.²⁵⁷ Perhaps private conversations between Forster and Poston did involve inter-class mockery of this sort, but the tone of these remarks is not that of Forster’s writing. Weight’s claim that Forster’s 1946 talk represented a sort of class war, “a clear sign that the class camaraderie fostered by the Second World War had not lasted much beyond VE-day” goes too far.²⁵⁸ The 1947 reference in “West Hackhurst” to events at Stevenage shows not bitterness towards Silkin but fatalism: it would have to happen there, wouldn’t it? There is also a recognition that *it* – New Town building – had to happen somewhere, because it was truly needed. Forster’s approach to the Stevenage New Town debate could be understood as equivocation, this is to say, or it could be read more favourably as an openness to different points of view.

Through Hilton Young, Forster was connected to aspects of what the cultural geographer David Matless has called the “planner-preservationist” movement.²⁵⁹ After the First World War, for one thing, Forster became not less but more sympathetic to the socialism of the Labour Party, which advocated centralised planning instead of *laissez-faire*.²⁶⁰ Matless has advised researchers examining Pevsner to view him in a historicised, nuanced way rather than taking sides for or against him as they have often so far done; the same advice could help students of Forster.²⁶¹ Indeed, what Avery calls “irreducible ambivalence” is characteristic of Forster’s stance on Rooksnest and Stevenage in the age of the planners.²⁶² Ultimately, he was not as attached to Poston or the house as she was to him and it, and he was also glad enough to slink off back to his home after 1946 at King’s College, Cambridge.

The significance of Rooksnest and its neighbourhood as remembered place is important to an understanding of Forster, yet so is the fact that this memorialisation was a tool, a means for him to get to somewhere else, to understand a dimension of humanity, as also were the “friends who have never had a home in the Thornton sense” – the working-class Buckingham, in particular. Forster’s reference in the 1946 talk to his “working-class friends in north London who have to bring up four children in two rooms” seems heartfelt and

²⁵⁷ Poston to Forster, 3 October 1960. Richard McDougall, “the former County Treasurer, who was perceived as a public relations and prestige-projects type”, was General Manager of the Development Corporation of Stevenage between 1957 and 1967 (Mullan, *Stevenage Ltd*, p. 58).

²⁵⁸ Richard Weight, “Silkin, Lewis, first Baron Silkin (1889-1972) in ODNB.

²⁵⁹ David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, Reaktion: London, 1998, pp. 25-100.

²⁶⁰ This is demonstrated by Forster’s 1920s writing for the *New Leader* periodical, organ of the Independent Labour Party.

²⁶¹ Matless, “Topographic Culture” (2002).

²⁶² Avery, *Radio Modernism*, p. 62.

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entirely genuine.²⁶³ I do not agree with Stone that Forster's desire, when faced with north London, is "to wipe it from the face of the earth and grow a Hertfordshire in its place":²⁶⁴ there is little evidence in any of Forster's writing of a wish to obliterate and start again. Forster, viewing development at Stevenage, did speak as though change need never have happened, but he also empathised with the people who moved there from worse conditions in London. Politically speaking, he was nimble enough to avoid ever becoming either a supporter of relentless governmental action in the supposed public good or an isolated figure dying for the land, like Edward Alexander Pilgrim of Romford in Essex, who hanged himself on his property in 1954 in protest against compulsory purchase orders.²⁶⁵

7.7. Conservation or Reinvention? The Forster Country (1960-97)

The direct effect of Forster has been greater on the countryside around Rooks Nest House than on any of the other English places with which he was associated. His name, after all, has been given to the stretch of land north and west of the *Howards End* house by those attempting to stop New Town development from spreading. The designation "Forster Country" can be traced to a newspaper article of 1960. It later became the title of a book by a local historian recording the literary and picturesque aspects of the area,²⁶⁶ and appears in the name of the local preservation society, the Friends of the Forster Country. It also features on a monument between St Nicholas' churchyard and the fields looking north and west, unveiled by the same society in 1997.²⁶⁷ The use of Forster in support of conservation after 1960 contrasts with the fact that in the 1946 broadcast he himself defined the neighbourhood as "nothing special" to look at and said that it "could not be described in terms of beauty spots". Its link to him is almost accidental: he happened to have spent his childhood years here and, leaving, established a pattern which would recur throughout his life in which an attachment to particular places was interrupted by both periodic uprootings that were not his choice, and by a personal choice of rootlessness, of a semi-peripatetic existence. Forster has been used as the reason for the protection of this zone, which willy-nilly becomes a Forsterian beauty spot in just the same way that Wordsworth, the Brontës and Hardy are

²⁶³ *Two Cheers*, p. 59.

²⁶⁴ Stone, *Cave and the Mountain*, p. 13.

²⁶⁵ John Davis, "Pilgrim, Edward Alexander (1904-1954)" in ODNB.

²⁶⁶ Ashby, *Forster Country*. Ashby's perspective on Stevenage contrasts strongly with for example Pevsner's.

²⁶⁷ The monument has the year 1994 inscribed on it because this was the year when the land was declared part of the Green Belt, according to Kennedy ("Green Belt War"). See Image 37.

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thought of as having their own particular landscapes and regions of England. All these writers, Forster included, consciously re-worked place as well as observing it and recording it more passively; all, too, became appropriated, after their deaths and irrespective of their own wishes, by others' constructions of place.

In October 1960, Forster and Poston exchanged a flurry of letters over the latest development plans, which threatened the land next to Rooksnest. Poston encouraged Forster to believe that he really could influence matters at Stevenage:

It strikes me that in your modesty about yourself, you perhaps underrate the power you have, even from another 'corner', with such people as govt figureheads! [...] [Y]ou are held in such national (international) reverence & esteem for your writings, for *Howards End* & the values you have there written about, that a word from you in a plain letter might do more than anything. It is the minister who has to sift the evidence & decide this case; all we want is for him to realise what the issue is, & to come and look at it from this hill-top, when he comes to Stevenage on the 17th.²⁶⁸

Forster seems to have been more reluctant to get involved than he had been in 1946, while undoubtedly feeling a duty of friendship to Poston and a lingering, albeit fading, attachment to Rooksnest and its surroundings. In May 1958, Forster noted in his commonplace book that the problem with *Howards End* was his failure to care for any of its characters, and that while he "once did care" for the house in it, this was perhaps a problem since it "took the place of people and now that I no longer care for it their barrenness has become evident".²⁶⁹ The reference to place here is almost an aside, but this entry is also the baldest statement in his writing on Rooksnest of the fact that Forster did sometimes feel the need to produce his feeling for place, which in truth ebbed and flowed, to order. He was ready to discard places as well as to cling on to them, just as he was sometimes ready to discard friends.

Forster's view in the late 1950s that the countryside of his boyhood was something belonging to the past, incapable of being preserved, is demonstrated by a radio talk of late 1958.²⁷⁰ Here, hoping that the "superior size" of Germany might "preserve the rural heritage that smaller national units have had to scrap – the heritage which I used to see from my own doorstep in Hertfordshire when I was a child", he regrets that rural England "has failed to outlast me".²⁷¹ In October 1959 Forster noted in his commonplace book the discovery via

²⁶⁸ Poston to Forster, 5 October 1960 (MS KCC/EMF/18/438).

²⁶⁹ *Commonplace Book*, p. 204.

²⁷⁰ E.M. Forster, "Recollections of Nassenheide" in *Listener*, 1 January 1959, pp. 12-14; *Prince's Tale*, pp. 302-9. For bibliographical information about this talk see Kirkpatrick (*Bibliography*, pp. 167, 245). The relevant entries are C493 and F3a (143).

²⁷¹ *Prince's Tale*, p. 309.

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Poston “that Rooksnest, so long protected by me, is to be destroyed”.²⁷² The news reminded him of general trends rather than giving him an intense feeling for locality, as in 1943.²⁷³ The resigned tone of these reflections also contains the sense of his being an emotional proprietor (“so long protected by me”), a guardian of place, and the sense that, like offspring, the place is of interest simply because he has nurtured it. The year 1960, when Forster was 81, was at the very end of his public career as an intellectual, writing and broadcasting fairly regularly: after this he would slip into retirement at King’s and with the Buckingham. His ultimate response, as so often, was a gift of money, leading Poston to write to him on 21 November: “[y]ou have saved my little boat”.²⁷⁴ Forster did not prove to have as much clout with Brooke as Poston had hoped, but he *was* made central when, on 19 October 1960, the *Guardian* covered the latest planning wrangle.²⁷⁵

Headed “Fate of Forster countryside: Last phase of Stevenage New Town”, this article lacks local precision and struggles to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction, but nevertheless memorialised Forster’s connections to the area. After beginning by announcing that the fate of “160 acres of good farmland” is about to be sealed at a meeting in Stevenage Town Hall, and that Thomas Sharp, “a past president of the Town Planning Institute” will speak against the development, the article explains that “[t]here is special interest in this countryside because part of it is Rooks Nest Farm, the Forster country of ‘Howards End’”. Poston, it continues, welcomes to “Rook’s Nest House” “visitors from all over the world who have somehow identified Howard’s End”. Contained here is the notion of a literary ‘original’: visitors identifying the house this way would be correct, the article implies. The visitors are said to “have written letters of protest about what they feel is an outrage against literary England”. Literary-critical concepts in this journalism, especially that of a literary original and of “literary England” clash with the thinking of F.R. Leavis, a dominant figure in English studies during the 1960s. Leavis, after all, had in 1948 described the notion of a “tradition of ‘the English novel’” as a “disastrous” one.²⁷⁶ Also at work here is a discourse of conservation, and in this respect the *Guardian* article is ahead of its time. The *Guardian*’s response to Forster seems to derive from an understanding of his political views and their consonance with those of the newspaper. By 1960 the *Guardian* had become the leading left-liberal British newspaper.²⁷⁷ Throughout the second half of the twentieth century it was

²⁷² *Commonplace Book*, p. 215.

²⁷³ *Commonplace Book*, p. 160.

²⁷⁴ Poston to Forster, 21 November 1960 (MS KCC/EMF/18/438).

²⁷⁵ Anonymous, “Fate of Forster Countryside”.

²⁷⁶ F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1948, p. 153.

²⁷⁷ In 1945 the paper shifted from a position on “the reforming side of the Liberal party” to support for

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associated with an educated, gentle sort of stance on politics and with the notion of a liberal establishment, two things with which Forster could be connected.²⁷⁸ Among the positions the *Guardian* was taking in 1960 which could be identified as progressive or radical were its support for nuclear disarmament and its opposition to the ban on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.²⁷⁹ The article then states that “[t]he house is exactly as described in Helen Schlegel’s letter at the beginning of the book [...] [t]he nine windows are still there”. In fact, as the photograph accompanying the article shows, the non-fictional Rooksnest has – as when the Forsters lived there – eight windows. Fictional place starts to become detached from its supposed original

The *Guardian* article also contains class-related tension when it refers to “the unforgivable jargon of the planners”. Forster’s 1947 description of this new breed of professionals as “plansters” is somewhat similar, suggesting as it does that they are unwelcome intruders. The *Guardian* article’s tone recalls Poston’s explanation to Forster that getting Sharp involved is a matter of “setting a planner to catch a planner”.²⁸⁰ In conclusion, the *Guardian* journalist remarks that “Stevenage Residents’ Association, which is mobilising objections, does not base its case on selfish interests”. The countryside needs protection, the article implies, and it just so happens that influential people, some of them *Guardian* readers perhaps, live near the land which is in danger. Still, Poston and her allies were not acting unselfishly: the proposed development affected the landscape around their own houses. Finally, the *Guardian* summarises the beliefs of the Residents’ Association: “for the sake of the uprooted people who come to live in Stevenage, this landscape of beauty and tradition should be spared obliteration”. In their efforts to protect the ‘Forster Country’, campaigners such as John V. Hepworth have since used the argument that the authorities should regard an open space like this as a “green lung”:²⁸¹ Hampstead Heath, Clapham Common and Epping Forest have functioned in this way for London since the Victorian era. But there is no suggestion in the article or any of the material produced over the subsequent forty years demanding the protection of the ‘Forster Country’ that the land therein be taken out of the hands of landowners and, like these open spaces, become in effect everyone’s.

Forster continued to be used for the purposes of ‘conservation’ after his death. In

Labour (Alistair Hetherington, *Guardian Years*, Chatto & Windus: London, 1981, p. 80). On the demographics of the readership in the post-war decades see Hetherington 1981: 28.

²⁷⁸ See Dennis Griffiths, “The Guardian” in Dennis Griffiths (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the British Press 1422-1992*, Macmillan: London & Basingstoke, 1992, pp. 280-1; Louis Heren, “The Post-War Press in Britain” in Griffiths, *Encyclopedia of the British Press*, pp. 56-64.

²⁷⁹ Hetherington, *Guardian Years*, pp. 56-69, 126-30. In 1961, the *Guardian*’s “Advice to Staff” included some very Forsterian concerns – “slum clearance, new towns”, “Books” and “the countryside” – among the newspaper’s topics “given special attention” (Hetherington, *Guardian Years*, pp. 29-30).

²⁸⁰ Poston to Forster, 3 October 1960.

²⁸¹ Fisher, “Say No”; Kennedy, “Green Belt War”.

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September 1976 a letter to the *Times* signed by Stallybrass and, in Ashby's words, "twenty-nine other distinguished persons from four continents" protested at yet another plan to build on the 'Forster Country'.²⁸² The objections were upheld: on this occasion, if not in 1960, "distinguished persons" seem to have received a hearing. The same month, September 1976, saw Rooks Nest House become Grade I Listed, significantly reducing the chance of planning permission being given in future for projects which would significantly alter its surroundings.

Forster, according to a leaflet marking the centenary of his birth, was "very distressed" at the notion that the farmland around Rooksnest might be built on as part of the New Town development,²⁸³ but his private writings of the late 1950s provide little evidence of such distress. The author of this leaflet, Ashby, produced in 1980 "A Brief Guide to E.M. Forster's Stevenage",²⁸⁴ a mimeographed sheet, which could be regarded as an attempt to fix the sites of a Forster heritage area around Stevenage and so move the area towards the status of Higher Bockhampton or Haworth. As well as a book entirely concerned with the 'Forster Country', in the 1990s Ashby produced another, *Stevenage Past*, which only covers post-1945 events very briefly.²⁸⁵ Stevenage's present started in 1946, it would seem. The deposition to a 1988 Public Inquiry made by opponents of further development included an appendix on "The Literary Landscape" surveying Forster's connections with the neighbourhood, detailing the proportion of *Howards End* set in Stevenage, and assessing the extent to which the house and its immediate environment have changed since Forster's boyhood.²⁸⁶ Rooksnest largely got protected because it was shown to be important to the novel, itself already judged to be important. This appendix asserts that while much of *Howards End* is set elsewhere, "important actions and feelings occur" in the Hertfordshire passages.²⁸⁷ In 1989, the Friends of the Forster Country held an "Edwardian Walk"; some participants dressed up in period costumes, perhaps thinking of the film adaptations of Forster's novels being made then.²⁸⁸

In 1997, finally, the defence of the 'Forster Country' once more got into the press. In August of that year a Hertfordshire newspaper printed a coupon which readers could sign in

²⁸² Ashby, *Forster Country*, p. 155.

²⁸³ Margaret Ashby, "Stevenage Museum: Edward Morgan Forster 1879-1970" [photocopied leaflet available at Stevenage Museum], 1979.

²⁸⁴ Margaret Ashby, "A Brief Guide to E.M. Forster's Stevenage" [mimeographed sheet available at Stevenage Museum], 1980.

²⁸⁵ Ashby, *Forster Country*; Ashby, *Stevenage Past*.

²⁸⁶ John V. Hepworth [?], "The Literary Landscape" [typescript appendix to document opposing further development of the 'Forster Country', available at Stevenage Museum], 1988.

²⁸⁷ Hepworth, "Literary Landscape", p. 1.

²⁸⁸ For a photograph of the event see Ashby, *Stevenage Past*, p. 110.

7. Rooksnest, Stevenage, Hertfordshire

order to “object to the proposal to build 500 houses on Green Belt land in Forster Country, north of Stevenage”.²⁸⁹ Green Belt status had been secured two years previously, according to the same article, which presented the latest threat as a matter of the Green Belt’s “betrayal”. The article is accompanied by a description of a walk from the High Street to Rooksnest, comparable with my own attempts to recreate physical encounters with place. This is a narrative which is unusually sensitive to the clashes between past and present, nature and traffic, of the path described. The walk ends at the monument beyond the churchyard, at the point where “Forster Country stretches before you with Rooks Nest, nestling amongst the trees”. Rooksnest was completely hidden by trees from this point when I visited in 2006, yet there the memorial stone stands.

In November 1997, the *Guardian* again took up the story. The nature of the planning debate in the late 1990s is apparent from the headline: “Green belt war rages through Forster country”.²⁹⁰ The occasion was the unveiling of the memorial stone between the churchyard and the fields,²⁹¹ while Hertfordshire county council had a month earlier agreed to the building of up to 10,000 houses on Green Belt land near Stevenage. The fear underlying the conservationist argument, though, seems similar to that of 1910, when Forster had Margaret point out the “red rust” of London “creeping” towards Howards End:²⁹² Maev Kennedy, writer of the 1997 *Guardian* article, describes the concerns of the Friends of the Forster Country – led by Ashby and Hepworth – that Stevenage and the towns around it will be turned “into one dreary stretch of suburbia”. The article ends by looking west, beyond the view Forster celebrates, and across the Great North Road – by 1997 the A1 – to where “there are more rolling fields, a Grade I listed Tudor house, a hornbeam wood, Site of Special Scientific Interest, and the Almshouse Swallow-hole, a geological feature” but where they lack “a Forster”. Impatience with ‘culture’ can be sensed when a landowner living west of the A1 is quoted as declaring in exasperation that “I’m sure we must have a writer at least as good as that wretched man”. The “wretched man” concerned has become a totem in a game of Nimbyism which he would hardly have understood, tending as he did towards fatalism about historical change. The ‘Forster Country’ survives into a new millennium but feels somewhat like a zoo or museum, strictly marked off from the outside world and filled with a sense of conscious preservation.

²⁸⁹ Fisher, “Say No”.

²⁹⁰ Kennedy, “Green Belt War”.

²⁹¹ See Image 29.

²⁹² *Howards End*, ch. XLIV p. 240.

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Above this town focused on transport networks, transformed during the twentieth century, is the house. A physical encounter with Rooksnest and Stevenage provides an unusually neat demonstration of the way that place as experienced – like the contested space which Lefebvre proposes – is socially produced. The history of Forster's relations with Hertfordshire seems peculiarly to call for attention to the relationship between place and the development of communicative literary personae.²⁹³ Forster constructed this part of Hertfordshire for his own purposes, turning it into a quasi-sacred site, and also presented a version of this construction to readers. But between 1970 and 1997, he was used at Stevenage in a way utterly beyond his control and against what can be understood of his wishes. The Forsterian construction of Hertfordshire, finally, has striking similarities to that of Pevsner, even though the two wrote independently: both are charmed by the county yet are determined to distinguish it from orthodox notions of the picturesque; both know its inescapable relation to London and transport networks.

²⁹³ See Sell, *Literature as Communication*, pp. 58, 88.

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Forster's sensitivity to place and to the feelings it aroused in him have long misled critics. The religion of place identified by earlier critics such as Beer and Colmer, which can be traced from his memorializing of Figsbury Ring during his twenties to his references to the tulip tree at Battersea Rise during his seventies, blended the serious and the ironic. Considerable attention has also been paid to the houses which, in Furbank's words "loomed large" in his writings,¹ and they have tended to be viewed as places charged with value, either positive or negative. In recent years, such concerns have been overshadowed by an interest in the international spatial dimensions of Forster's works prompted by post-colonial studies. Less attention has been paid to the local and regional geographic resonances of his work, which are the focus of the present work.

Detailed examination of the real English places mediated in his writings in fact confounds many of the stereotypes and preconceptions which have grown up around the topic of Forster in England. He was in no straightforward sense a ruralist, or anti-urban. His imaginative constructions of certain locales, for example his idealization of collegiate brotherhood which focused on King's College, Cambridge, sits alongside a documentary, observing quality alert to small details, even those contradicting his simultaneous endowment of a particular place with meaning or an ethical charge. Moreover, the micro-differences between places within the Home Counties of England, the zone of Forster's upbringing and most of his adult life, call into question large-scale generalizations about differences between metropolis, suburb and countryside, and about the national and international dimensions of his work.

This study began with a survey of work to date on Forster and on space and place in relation to his work. This led, in the second part of the introductory chapter, into a consideration of numerous approaches to the study of space and place formulated in different academic and non-academic disciplines. The reading of Forsterian place which followed is indebted to a combination of approaches, theories concerned with everyday life and the relationship of the individual as user to constructed and produced space, empirically-based, bottom-up techniques drawn above all from studies in English local and architectural history. Certain other theoretical approaches to space and place which are outlined in the introduction merit more in-depth application in future research, notably the fusion of continental and Anglo-Saxon philosophical approaches to place and the notion of experience which has been proposed by Malpas, and the cognitive linguistic account of human spatial perception

¹ Furbank II, p. 290.

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developed by Levinson.² Theoretically speaking, the problem of the relationship between literature and the real, or extra-textual, and the definition of the latter terms, calls for considerably more attention.

An important component of this study is what I have called physical encounters with real places. The question of what it means to walk on the ground that a writer occupied while writing, or retrace the steps taken by literary characters, is something which has periodically engaged literary critics since the nineteenth century. Formalist criticism in the twentieth century tended to dismiss such journeys and speculations as improper; the historicism which has dominated at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has done scarcely more justice to them. Both formalism and historicism, indeed, have emphasised the imaginary or constructed nature of literary places, whether this has been seen as part of an individual's 'worldview', or whether such a status has been seen as a consequence of power struggles between dominant and oppositional social forces. The relationship between literary places and extra-textual experience remains a surprisingly under-theorised and under-explored field.

The combination of these physical encounters with various sorts of textual study conveyed to me a sense of both the enduring and the fleeting, the idealised and the reporting, in literary and non-literary place. Recording and analysing my physical encounters with place alongside the study of text has been a vital step towards a study of literary place which could be described using archaeology as an analogy.³ At the former orangery of Robert Thornton in Clapham, or stumbling through surviving hedgerows and across Wiltshire fields, I encountered sites which were at once the same ones visited and written about by Forster, and different places in each historical moment.

Chapter 2 surveyed Sawston, Forster's complex imaginative construction which is also a representation of prosperous, corporatist and intolerant middle-class life in southern England at the end of Queen Victoria's reign. This chapter argued that extra-textual reference has not received sufficient attention from readers. In youth, Forster equated Sawston, his 'own' background or rather one aspect of it, the stuffer outer-suburban side rather than the rural gentry or the urban intellectual sides, with the whole of England. This is best encapsulated in his "Notes on the English Character".⁴ By the mid-1920s, he had moved completely away from any identification of Sawston with England.

² J.E. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1999; Stephen C. Levinson, "Language and Space", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996), pp. 353-82; Stephen C. Levinson and David P. Wilkins (eds), *Grammars of Space: Explorations in Cognitive Diversity*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006.

³ Compare the work of an archaeologist interrogating literary notions of landscape: Matthew Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape*, Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2007.

⁴ *Abinger Harvest*, pp. 3-13.

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Wild England is an imaginative concept of Forster's around which Chapter 3 has been built. It was an ideal he derived from a strand in late-Victorian literary constructions of sub-national English place such as those of Cornish, Hardy and Jefferies. While in youth he sought it, in later life he tended to look back on it with only a faint sense of regret and loss, as one might a relative who died during one's childhood. He sought it in various sorts of zone and activity: the social environment of the country gentry, the specific landscapes of different counties, bloodshed (which excluded him), and in the grassy paths which preceded asphalt roads and in places survived into the twentieth century, but it was a chimera.

Chapter 4 focused on the Surrey Hills area around Abinger Hammer, but also covered Weybridge, on the Thames west of London. The Surrey Hills, imaginatively speaking, became for Forster the frontier between the Home Counties and a possible Wild England beyond. At Abinger, he occupied their southern flanks, looking away from the metropolis. But he felt that they were reduced to cosiness and domesticity by the London rich and powerful who put down roots there, masquerading as country gentry. This zone is charged with ambivalence. It, not Sawston or Cambridge, I argue, was the area which came closest to being a home for Forster (although his relationship with English places was always one of shifts and incomplete identifications). Yet he did not live there until after completing his last novel and, after that, as he chronicled in an unjustly-overlooked major work of his later years, "West Hackhurst: A Surrey Ramble", his relationship to it in middle-and old-age shifted between the sceptical and the downright hostile. Ultimately, this place filled him with a bitterness which was hard to overcome.⁵

Always connected to different aspects of the multiplicity of London, the topic of Chapter 5, Forster was always also ambivalent about the metropolis. He became more pro-London in later life, a fact obscured by critics' attention to his most negative and symbolist portrait of it, in *Howards End*. Later works see it not only as a repository of curiosities, but also as a liberated space, notably in western districts flanking the Thames. The river, indeed, flows through all Forster's relations with the city, linking Chelsea Embankment as it appears in *Howards End*, with his later friendships with men like Buckingham and Ackerley. While in *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End* the city represented for him a rapacious and forgetful modernity, it later became for him an enigma and even a place in which layers of different pasts could be uncovered.⁶

Chapter 6, on Cambridge, centred on the relationship or opposition between insiders' and

⁵ Furbank II, pp. 282, 289.

⁶ As when he described to Robert Giroux "the spot along the Thames where the wagon tracks that went into old London bridge are still visible, cut deeply into the earth" (J.H. Stape (ed.), *E.M. Forster: Interviews and Recollections*, Macmillan: Basingstoke & London, 1993, p. 95).

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outsiders' views of the city, University and King's College. Forster was less straightforwardly adoring of Cambridge than has sometimes been thought, and he views the city and these institutions in subtly different ways in different pieces of writing produced over several decades. This fact has until now been obscured by a tendency on the part of critics to believe Forster's own pronouncements about his relationship with Cambridge, rather than to analyse his portrayals of it alongside one another. In this case, then, the main insights were provided not by literary biography but by close reading. Particularly in Forster's earlier writings on it, there are sides to his Cambridge – such as its districts, its public transport, and its setting in the surrounding countryside – which complicate a view of it such as that advanced by Joseph Bristow in which it relates entirely to apostolic brotherhood.⁷ Biographical views of Forster's old age, meanwhile, have tended to associate him solely with Cambridge in the last quarter-century of his life, but his relationship with London continued and the chapter ended by arguing that he could be best interpreted spatially during this era as shuttling between the two.

Chapter 7, concerned with a series of concentric circles surrounding Rooks Nest House, related literary symbol to the fiction versus non-fiction pairing. Its argument was that in studies of Forster's Hertfordshire, which have overwhelmingly been focused on the eponymous house of the novel *Howards End*, critics have paid insufficient attention to the interplay between fiction and non-fiction. In a study focused on place rather than text, Forster's writings before and after *Howards End* become as important as is the canonical novel itself to an understanding of his perceptions and constructions of Hertfordshire. Moreover, a study of Forster's relations with Hertfordshire provides evidence both of literature's ability to interact with and indeed change the world beyond its pages, and of the way that writers and their productions are co-opted after their deaths in the interests of causes they may have known nothing of or which they may even have been hostile to while alive.

The approach taken by this study could be described as deep locational criticism. It involves a central focus on localities including towns, cities, urban districts, counties and physical-geographic region. To do this is to focus on aspects of literature which have traditionally been understood as background elements. To align writings concerned with and produced in one particular locality with one another in the first instance, as opposed to with other writings produced in the same historical moment, or by writers with a relationship of influence, is a ready source of insights such as those on Forster outlined in the previous paragraphs summarising the chapters of this study. In terms of Forster studies, one direction

⁷ Joseph Bristow, "Fratrum Societati: Forster's Apostolic Dedications" in Robert K. Martin & George Piggford (eds), *Queer Forster*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 113-36.

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in which this research could develop would be exploration of his writings on ‘abroad’, concerning chiefly Italy, Alexandria and India, but also the USA and various European locales. His memoir “West Hackhurst”, moreover, has so far received very little critical attention, and a fuller account of it might challenge the still-orthodox way of viewing Forster’s career as having to all intents and purposes ended in the 1920s.

Beyond Forster studies, there are consequences for literary studies more generally. Literary place studies are still fairly underdeveloped in comparison to the richness and sophistication of literary history. Theoretical cues such as those provided by Lefebvre, Levinson and Malpas indicate the way that the study of the relationship between literature and place might, at last, fulfil its potential.

Åbo/Turku, December 2010

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Note: because of the frequent difficulty in distinguishing city from university, there is only one entry for Oxford and one for Cambridge on the list below. Non-specific references to Forster, England, Britain and the United Kingdom have also been ignored, on the grounds that the whole book is concerned with them. Please names are identified as being in London if they were part of the London postal area defined in 1857. Those which were outside London until the establishment of Greater London in 1965 have both their earlier county and 'Greater London' after their name on the following list. Where applicable, places elsewhere in England also have their pre-1974 and post-1974 county given.

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Svensk sammanfattning

Det här är den första studien av E.M. Forsters verk om engelsk plats som överspänner hela författarens produktion. Forster hade en stark känsla för plats men under de senaste åren har hans sensitivitet för det unika hos varje plats han upplevde till stor del ignorerats av kritiker. I denna studie framläggs en *djupt lägesbunden kritik* (*deep locational criticism*) som kan tillämpas i studier av andra författare, grupper och perioder. Till grund för kritiken ligger Henri Lefebvres begrepp det producerade rummet. Den bygger även på praxis att från detaljerna arbeta sig mot en större helhet som karaktäriserar topografer och lokal- och arkitekturhistorikers arbete. Nyckeln till att tillämpa djupt lägesbunden kritik ligger i att analysera historiska närläsningar av platsrepresentationer i litterära texter jämsides med berättelser om resor till och studier av de platser som författare skriver om och där de levt sina liv. I avhandlingen fästs genomgående lika stor uppmärksamhet vid Forsters dagboksanteckningar, memoarer och essäer som vid hans skönlitterära verk. Forster betraktas här som en prosaförfattare inom olika genrer istället för att främst ses som en romanförfattare.

Forster skrev om subnationella, regionala och lokala engelska platser som kan återfinnas på kartan. Han konstruerade också uppfattningar om plats genom att kombinera områden som verkligen existerade och reflektera över deras identitet. En undersökning av detta avslöjar spänningsförhållanden, tvetydigheter och mikroberättelser. Forster var inte så säkert förankrad i Cambridge som ofta framställs. Han har ofta uppfattats som en motståndare till London men det var han inte. Visserligen demoniserade han London i sina tidiga skrifter, men i senare verk såg han staden som en plats för frigörelse. I egenskap av känd författare har Forster ibland blivit en bricka i andras spel, även efter sin död. I denna avhandling konceptualiseras hans syn på relationen mellan the Home Counties (grevskapen närmast London) och det England som låg bortom visuellt som en måltavla, med ett mångfacetterat London i centrum, the Home Counties i två ringar utanför och bortom detta en uppfattning om det vilda England. Forster var inte bara fäst vid engelska platser utan avfärdade också deras betydelse på ett närmast beräknande sätt.

Första kapitlet inleds med en översikt av forskning om Forster och om rum och plats i förhållande till hans litteratur. Därefter behandlas flera perspektiv på studiet av rum och plats som formulerats inom olika akademiska och icke-akademiska discipliner. En viktig del av avhandlingen som helhet omfattar det jag kallar fysiska möten med verkliga platser.

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Förhållandet mellan litterära platser och extratextuell erfarenhet är fortfarande ett förvånansvärt underteoretiserat och outforskat område. Genom att kombinera dessa fysiska möten med olika slags textstudier upplevde jag känslan av både det varaktiga och det flyktiga, det idealiserade och det rapporterade i litterär och icke-litterär plats.

Kapitel 2 granskar Sawston, Forsters komplexa, fiktiva konstruktion som också utgör en representation för förmöget, korporativistiskt och intolerant medelklassliv i södra England mot slutet av drottning Victorias regentperiod. Här diskuteras främst Forsters tidiga verk "Nottingham Lace", romanerna *Where Angels Fear to Tread (Där änglar vägrar gå)*, *The Longest Journey* och *Maurice*, samt en essä skriven 1913, "Notes on the English Character". I kapitlet hävdar jag att de extratextuella hänvisningarna inte har röjt tillräcklig uppmärksamhet hos läsarna. I sin ungdom likställde Forster Sawston med hela England och tog då fasta på sin "egen" bakgrund eller snarare en aspekt av den: den inskränkta villaförortssidan istället för den lantadliga eller den urbant intellektuella sidan. I mitten av 1920-talet hade han övergett all identifikation av Sawston med England.

Det vilda England är Forsters eget fiktiva begrepp, kring vilket kapitel 3 har byggts upp. Detta var ett ideal som han härledde ur ett element i senviktoriaiska litterära konstruktioner av subnationell engelsk plats. I sin ungdom sökte Forster det inom olika områden och aktiviteter: den sociala miljön hos lantadeln; de specifika landskapen i olika grevskap; jakt och fiske; grässtigarna som föregick asfaltvägarna och på sina ställen överlevde in på 1900-talets sida. Med tiden började han tro att det vilda England inte längre existerade och senare i livet såg han tillbaka på det med en svag känsla av förlust. *The Longest Journey* utgör igen en viktig text här, liksom även andra skönlitterära och facklitterära verk som handlar om Shropshire, Suffolk, Northumberland och Peak District.

Kapitel 4 fokuserar på Surrey Hills-området runt Abinger Hammer, men behandlar även Weybridge som ligger vid Themsen västerom London. I Forsters fantasi blev kullarna på Surrey Hills gränsen mellan Home Counties och ett eventuellt vilt England utanför. I Abinger bosatte han sig på kullarnas södra sluttningar med ryggen mot metropolen. Men han ansåg att Surrey Hills reducerades till mysiga och hemtama kullar av de rika och mäktiga londonbor som bosatte sig där. Det här området har en tvetydig laddning som upptagits i romanen *A Room with a View (Ett rum med utsikt)*, samt en avsevärt senare essä, "The Last of Abinger". Jag anser att det var detta område, och inte Sawston eller Cambridge, som blev det närmaste till ett hem för Forster. Ändå levde han inte där förrän efter slutförandet av sin sista roman. Efter detta beskrev han sin relation till området i medelåldern och på äldre dagar i det orättvist förbisedda, sena storverket "West Hackhurst: A Surrey Ramble", och växlade härmed mellan en skeptisk och en rent avvisande inställning. Slutligen fyllde denna plats

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honom med en bitterhet som var svår att övervinna.

Forster anknöt alltid till olika aspekter av Londons mångfald, vilket utgör temat för kapitel 5. Samtidigt kände han sig alltid också ambivalent gentemot metropolen. Under senare delen av sitt liv antog han en mer positiv inställning till London; ett faktum som överskuggats av att kritiker fäst uppmärksamhet vid hans mest negativa och symboliska porträtt av staden i *Howards End*. I senare verk, till exempel i essän "London is a Muddle" samt i krigstida dagboksanteckningar i sin "Locked Journal", ser han London inte bara som ett förråd av kuriositeter, utan också som ett frigjort rum, framför allt de västra distrikten invid Themsen. Forsters London är mångfacetterat: de slumområden som anspelas på i *Maurice* skiljer sig radikalt från det Clapham som uppslukas av stadens tillväxt i *Marianne Thornton*.

Kapitel 6 handlar om Cambridge och fokuserar på förhållandet eller motsättningen mellan invigdas och utomståendes syn på staden, universitetet och King's College. Forster betraktar staden och dessa institutioner på subtilt olika sätt i olika skrifter producerade under flera årtionden. Kritiker har tenderat tro på Forsters egna uttalanden om sitt förhållande till Cambridge istället för att analysera hans olika skildringar av det sida vid sida. I detta fall härstammar alltså mina främsta insikter inte från litterär biografi utan från närläsning. I synnerhet Forsters tidiga texter om Cambridge beskriver sådana sidor hos staden – som till exempel dess distrikt, dess kollektivtrafik och dess miljö i landsbygden runt omkring – som påvisar att den inte enbart kan likställas med en själsfrände. Trots att biografiska uppfattningar om Forsters äldre dagar ofta har knutit honom enbart till Cambridge under den sista fjärdedelen av hans liv, fortsatte hans förhållande till London. Här analyseras verk producerade efter att Forster fyllt femtio, såsom biografien *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, jämsides med romanerna han skrev som yngre. Jag avslutar kapitlet genom att argumentera för att Forster under den här perioden bäst tolkas rumsligt som växlande mellan London och Cambridge.

Kapitel 7 handlar om den serie koncentrisk cirklar som omsluter Rooks Nest House och relaterar litterär symbol till kombinationen av skönlitteratur versus facklitteratur. Jag hävdar här att kritiker fäst alltför lite uppmärksamhet vid samspelet mellan skönlitteratur och facklitteratur i studier av Forsters Hertfordshire och istället övervägande koncentrerat sig på det namngivande huset i romanen *Howards End*. I ett kapitel som fokuserar plats istället för text blir Forsters texter före och efter *Howards End* precis lika betydelsefulla som den kanoniska romanen själv för förståelsen av hans uppfattningar om och konstruktioner av Hertfordshire. Av stor vikt är även Forsters inlägg i debatten om Stevenage New Town från 1940-talet fram till 1960-talet. Historien om Forsters relationer till Hertfordshire bevisar såväl litteraturens förmåga att stå i växelverkan med och till och med förändra världen

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bortom sidorna, som att författare och deras produktion approprieras efter sin död för att driva skäl som de kanske inte kände till, eller till och med motsatte sig under sin livstid.

Images



1. Tonbridge, Kent, July 2006: "the penultimate day of school before the holidays".



2. Tunbridge Wells, Kent, July 2006: "a vast Victorian hotel modelled on a French château".



3. Tunbridge Wells, Kent, July 2006: "something burnt out or wrecked about the place".



4. Salisbury, Wiltshire, July 2006: "the narrow main road into the messy centre".



5. Milford Hill, Salisbury, Wiltshire, July 2006: "a possible candidate".



6. A30 near Salisbury, Wiltshire, July 2006: "the cross of St George faded to orange and the background tattered and greying".



7. Figsbury Ring, Wiltshire, July 2006: "a univallate hillfort covering 15.5 acres with entrances on E and W".



8. Winterborne Dauntsey, Wiltshire, July 2006: "overgrown by creeper".



9. Acton House, Felton, Northumberland, April 2007: "yellowish sandstone".



10. Aldeburgh, Suffolk, August 2007: "the stony front".



11. Abinger Hammer, Surrey, July 2006: “picture-postcard greenery and tile-hanging combined with metallic paint and Saturday motocross bikers”



12. Abinger Hammer, Surrey, July 2006: “extensions, double doors and concrete balls”



13. Surrey, December 2006: “a photocopied sheet indicating the way on some orienteering trail [...] sharing space with a wooden signpost marking the top point of the Downs”.



14. Weybridge, Surrey, August 2008: “the very column which stood in Seven Dials [...] between 1694 and 1773”.



15. Shepperton, Surrey, August 2008: “where George Meredith once had a cottage”.



16. Canford Road, London SW4, August 2007: “gentrified from the 1980s onwards”.



17. Brunswick Square, London WC1, July 2006: “burned yellow by a heatwave”.



18. Turnham Green, London W4, December 2006: “the ghostly spire of Christchurch, Turnham Green”.



19. Clapham Common, London SW4, August 2007: “a monument occupied by faded revellers”.



20. Notre Dame Estate, London SW4, August 2007: “the forlorn classical portico of what was once a Thornton orangery”.



21. Adelaide House, London EC2, August 2007: “squat and massive”.



22. Marylebone Station, London NW1, August 2008: “glossy limousines”.



23. River Thames near Hammersmith Terrace, London W4, August 2008: “gloomy rather than raffish”.



24. Senate House, Cambridge, June 2006: “a young woman checking her exam results is as important as the style of the colonnade”.



25. Gatehouse of King's College, Cambridge, June 2006: "a stop on the global tourist trail".



26. Canterbury Street, Cambridge, June 2006: "a bed and breakfast off the Huntingdon Road".



27. Queen's College, Cambridge, July 2006: "the ancient brick front court".



28. Hale Street, Cambridge, July 2007: "a decrepit terraced cottage in the Castle Hill area of the city".



29. Fellows' Building, King's College, June 2006: "beyond discreet warning signs".



30. Stevenage, Hertfordshire, June 2006: "the car park of a Tesco supermarket".



31. Stevenage, Hertfordshire, June 2006: "graffiti is sprayed all over the concrete bridge supports".



32. Stevenage, Hertfordshire, June 2006: "fields spanned by pylons".



33. New Town, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, June 2006: “the word ‘chav’”.



34. Stevenage, Hertfordshire, June 2006: “the bastard offspring of Rooksnest and the New Town”.



35. Stevenage, Hertfordshire, June 2006: “the Old Town looks like an old town at first glance”.



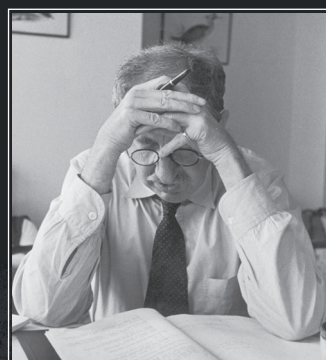
36. Stevenage, Hertfordshire, December 2006: “ring-fenced, as it seems”.



37. Stevenage, Hertfordshire, June 2006: "the memorial stone between the churchyard and the fields".

This is the first study of E.M. Forster's writings on English place to cover the full range of his writings. Forster's feelings for place were intense, but in recent years his sensitivity to the uniqueness of every place he experienced has largely been ignored by critics. Here, a deep locational criticism applicable to the study of other authors, groupings and periods is proposed. This feeds on the notion of produced space devised by Henri Lefebvre. It also draws on the practice of topographers and local and architectural historians, who begin with details and move from these towards a larger picture. Key to the practice of deep locational criticism is the juxtaposition of close, historicised readings of the representations of place in literary texts with accounts of journeys to and researches into the places writers write about and in which they have lived their lives.

Forster wrote about sub-national, regional and local English places which can be found on maps. He also constructed ideas of place by combining zones which actually existed and intuiting or generalising about their identities. Examination of this reveals tensions, ambiguities and micro-narratives. He was less secure in Cambridge than is often thought. People have thought him anti-London. He wasn't. Yes, he demonised it in earlier writings, but in later ones he saw it as a site of liberation. As a famous writer, he has sometimes become a token in a game played by others, even after his death. At Stevenage, something called the 'Forster Country' has been constructed and used as a way of blocking schemes for building on farm land. This study conceptualises his view of the relationship between the Home Counties around London and England beyond visually as a target, with a multiple London at the centre, then two rings beyond, the Home Counties and, outside that, an idea of Wild England, first pursued, later abandoned. In youth, Forster understood England by means of his own part of it. When young, he mockingly and satirically portrayed the comfortable, hypocritical public-school field he dubbed 'Sawston'. Later on, he cast this aside. Forster was not only attached to English places but also calculatingly dismissive of their importance.



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