Introduction to “Pericles in Paradise”

E.M. Forster’s immersion in the thriving community of European writers and artists in Alexandria compensated for the social alienation he had experienced upon his arrival to Egypt in 1915 to volunteer with the Red Cross, and eventually nurtured an increasingly positive outlook on the country and its people. Equally integral to Forster’s cultivation of a sense of belonging was his first homosexual relationship with an Egyptian tram-conductor, which fulfilled long-held dreams of escape from stifling English norms of masculinity. Forster’s confidence as a writer was boosted by this growing intimacy with the Alexandrian milieu, yet his personal rejuvenation remained tethered to an unequal distribution of power and status. Not only was he an Englishman navigating a city under British rule, but his liberal and equalitarian credentials were in tension with the privileges accorded to him by his participation in an Alexandrian elite — a world apart from the realities of the native Egyptian population.

The theatrical sketch “Pericles in Paradise” (1918), published here for the first time, bears the mark of these complex conditions of Forster’s residence in Egypt.[i] The protagonist, Pericles Anastassiades, was a real-life Greek-Alexandrian cotton merchant and amateur painter with literary and intellectual interests. Educated in England and well-connected within the foreign community of artists and literati in Alexandria he was key to the expansion of Forster’s social circle in the city.[ii] Anastassiades’ investment in both commerce and artistic pursuits was a rare combination that galvanized Forster’s exploration of a conflict that he saw as typically Alexandrian— between the elevated realm of culture and the superficiality of a world dominated by monetary concerns. In the travel essay “Cotton from the Outside” (1918) Forster presented Anastassiades as a knowledgeable guide of the

chaotic Alexandrian cotton market, a typecasting starkly contrasted with the author's self-fashioning as an ignorant and bewildered outsider.[iii] "Pericles in Paradise" revisits these anxieties about the disorienting colonial space, but remains a unique instance of Forster's reliance on the register of the fantastic —amidst a thirteen-year long fallow period in his career as a writer of fiction— to parody Western insularity and its internal conflicts by transferring Anastassiades to a symbolic realm.[iv]

The sketch opens with Pericles standing on the "staircase of heaven," unable to determine the correct route toward paradise. As other characters appear on the scene —modelled by Forster after Greek and European artists and expatriates, as well as famous personalities of the wartime political scene in Britain— a resolution to Perciles' conundrum is foregrounded.[v] However, farcical miscommunications, gaffes, and the final revelation that the entire episode was a dream, satirize the absence of a common framework of reference that would breed consensus. Through stylistic experimentation with the humorous and absurdist tropes of the British pantomime, as well as its medieval-inspired convention of placing "heaven" and "hell" on either side of the stage, Forster draws attention to the incongruous coexistence of artists, the military, and the colonial administration in the city. Pericles is ultimately cast as the hero of an unyielding quandary, his loss of agency and direction gesturing to Forster's own difficult relationship to the backdrop of British imperialism, and even interrogating his profound belief in the power of homosocial artistic groups —what he termed "the aristocracy of the sensitive"— to reset the moral compass of a depraved world ("What I Believe" 70).[vi]

While it is unclear whether Forster regarded the piece to be worthy of publication, the narrative strategy of temporal and spatial displacement employed in "Pericles in Paradise" is also at the heart of the rest of his fiction. Expeditions to

extraterrestrial sites —for example “heaven” in “The Celestial Omnibus” (1911) and in *Howards End* (1911) — are stages for existential exploration or escapes from heteronormativity and conventionality in Forster’s novels, but also in his less-known stories.[vii] It is to the latter portion of Forster’s writings, often deemed too “whimsical, slight, or nonserious” for critical consideration, that Ambreen Hai turns to suggest that Forster routinely used fantasy “as a form of code” to convey a political message— one that linked homosexual desire “with interlocking forms of societal oppression such as of race, class, and gender” (218). Similarly telling of Forster’s pervasive interest in marginality is Pericles’ failure to relate his vocation, nationality, religion, and politics to other characters in the sketch. Beyond the text’s comical surface lies the disquieting reality of Pericles’ position as a radical outsider to the society he inhabits.

Forster’s preoccupation with the precarious identity of a misfit is also potently reflected in the sketch’s fictional rendition of C.P. Cavafy, the Greek-Alexandrian poet whom he intensely admired and whose work he promoted throughout his lifetime.[viii] During the early stages of their acquaintance Forster had addressed a letter to the poet, in which he evoked Dante’s *Inferno* to contemplate on the correlation between their artistic dispositions and homosexual orientation (cryptically termed “depravity”) (*The Forster-Cavafy Letters* 35-36).[ix] The letter’s conflation of questions about sexuality and notions of artistic uniqueness prefigured the Cavafy-character’s selection of the downward route on the sketch’s paradise staircase, as well as the poet’s own labelling of his solitary deviation as “a regrettable tendency”.[x] In this light, Forster’s description of Cavafy as a poet “standing at a slight angle to the universe”, in a critical essay that has been crucial to the way Cavafy has been imagined, read, and written about ever since 1919, echoes the author’s meditations on

creativity and homosexuality as agents of difference and detachment ("The Poetry of C.P. Cavafy" 91).[xi]

Cavafy's descent to an archetypal *topos* of transcendence and Pericles' quest, at once comical and desperate, betray the sketch's allegorical distillation of a world punctuated by rigid structural divisions. Fraught with treachery and unrealized expectations, the paradisial 'journey' parodies stereotypical depictions of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism as an exemplar of diversity and tolerance. It gestures, instead, to a critique of social norms that includes, but also reaches beyond, its Alexandrian reference. Epitomizing Forster's use of fantasy to "stage the otherwise unspeakable, presenting readers with possibilities that took them out of the realm of the conventional without having to name what those possibilities might be" (Hai 222), the alternate universe of "Pericles in Paradise" poses bigger questions than it can resolve. It provides, however, an invaluable perspective into the opaque ways in which Forster's non-novelistic writing engages with transgression and otherness —themes that are accepted as central to understanding Forster's work as a whole.

Notes

I am grateful to The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge and the Society of Authors as the E.M. Forster Estate for kindly granting me permission to publish this work.

[1] The opening lines of the sketch, which was unearthed in manuscript form amongst the E.M. Forster Papers at King's College, Cambridge (KCC), also made an appearance in a letter the author sent to the poet Robert Trevelyan on 23 August 1918 as part of an exchange of artistic endeavors: "Thank you for your poem on Confuscius [sic]. It amused me very much. Perhaps sometime I will send you a copy of my 'Pericles in Paradise' but you do not know any of the people". (Lago and Furbank, 1: 294-5). The letter provided the lead to the full play, which has remained unpublished to date. It is handwritten, accompanied by an archivist's note (1986) informing that it has been "copied in an unknown hand"; that of "Sir Robin Allason Furness, or Aida Borchgreviate (sic), or George Antonius" (KCC).

[1] Anastassiades introduced Forster to the Greek-Alexandrian poet C.P. Cavafy in 1917. There is critical consensus on the crucial impact this meeting had on transforming Egypt from a locus of initial disappointment and misgivings ("Letter 157: To Malcolm Darling," *Selected Letters*, Vol. I, 238-239) to a place of creative inspiration for Forster. Anastassiades and Forster shared a profound appreciation of Cavafy and his work, and dedicated themselves tirelessly to disseminating his poetry and keeping his memory alive. For an incisive account of Pericles' intimate relationship to the poet during his

lifetime, as well as for details on the ways he handled archival material in his possession after the poet's death, see Tsirkas (234-238).

[1] According to Claire Buck "Cotton from the Outside" constitutes "a near burlesque dramatization" of the dichotomy Forster sets up to distinguish "the premodern and the picturesque" Alexandria from the modernized city with its colonial inflections (98-99).

[1] By the time Forster arrived in Egypt he had already published *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howards End* (1910) and the collection of short stories *The Celestial Omnibus* (1911), but it was only in 1924, five years after he left Egypt, that his next major fictional work *A Passage to India* (since considered his magnum opus) appeared. Forster had also written *Maurice* between 1913 and 1914, but the novel was only published posthumously in 1971 due to Forster's inhibitions about its homosexual content. Other than the sketch presented here, the only other text from the period between 1911 and 1924 in which Forster reverts to fantasy and fiction is "England's Honour [Being extracts from the diary of Mme. Kyriakidis, Ramleh.]" which was published in *The Egyptian Mail* on 26 January 1919 (Quinn and Hejazi 144-145).

[1] The sketch's focus on the privileged few relates it to the rest of Forster's non-fictional Egyptian writings, which have been criticized for perpetuating a glorified narrative of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism that altogether erased the native population from representation. (Halim 120-178). Some critics have argued, however, that despite endorsing aspects of the city's expatriate culture Forster also maintained a critical view of the "bogus 'European' culture of Alexandria" and its distance from "the reality of the indigenous world" (Jeffreys 72-73) in his Egyptian pieces. Forster's Egyptian writings include: the guidebook *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*, first published in 1922, with new editions appearing in 1938 and 1961; the collection *Pharos and Pharillon*, which includes eight out of numerous articles on Egypt that Forster published from 1916 onwards, mainly in *The Egyptian Mail* and *The Egyptian Gazette* (both publications catering for Egypt's expatriate population), while others appear in *The Uncollected Egyptian Essays of E.M. Forster* (1988); "Notes on Egypt," which formed part of the Labour Pamphlet *The Government of Egypt: Recommendations by a Committee of the International Section of the Labour Research Department, with Notes on Egypt by E.M. Forster*, and is dated by the editors of the volume to 1921 whereas others have dated it to 1920.

[1] In numerous critical essays Forster made a case for the artist's power to "legislate through creating" and to introduce, through art, "order" upon a disjointed world ("Art for Art's Sake" 91-92). Forster's belief in finding spiritual and intellectual guidance in collectivities of like-minded creators — "the aristocracy of the sensitive" ("What I Believe" 70)— encompassed visions of homosocial kinship. This subtext became particularly evident when Forster admitted the influence that Edward Carpenter's ideas on homosocial utopianism had on his work in the 'Terminal Note' to *Maurice* (added to the published version of the novel in 1971) (Martin 29-39, Rahman 40-57). Similar preoccupations with the socially visionary aspects of fraternity-making underwrote Forster's appeals to "Love the Beloved Republic" as the foundation of human relationships ("What I Believe" 67), as well as his engagement with Platonism (Raschke 65, Poburko 31). A strong homosocial subtext emerges from "Pericles in Paradise" as soon Pericles exclaims that "One just wants a woman here and it would be perfect," a desire that Sir Bartle interprets in strictly voyeuristic terms ("And you shall sketch&sketch&sketch&sketch and sketch and sketch…"). This sparse and fleeting reference to female presence, articulated in terms of the sketch's male characters' artistic ambitions, appears as an instance of "the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (Sedgwick 25-26). In light of the fact that Pericles was likely homosexual, the episode can be read as further suggestive of the conventional expectations tethered to heteronormative sexuality and their subsequent defiance.

[1] The homoerotic undertones of Forster's symbolic topographies have been extensively explored by criticism. The enchanted space of the dell in *The Longest Journey* has been described as "a geographical "eternal moment"—a corner of space that exists beyond time" (195) and as a "symbolic hollow" (Stone 195, 198), with critics subsequently highlighting the ways in which its "magical or mythical undertones (…) reflect the tensions generated in Forster's personal struggles with gender identity and orientation" (Miracky 139). According to Miracky, the use of fantasy in the novel "queers" realism, exemplifying Forster's general tendency to resort to fantastical plots "marked at times by frequent contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies" in order to "not only express his struggles with same-sex desire but also offer a subtle critique of the society which produces such conflict" (130, 132). Similarly, Ralph Pordzik argues that the outer-space in "The Machine Stops," (1910) a short story

belonging to the genre of "dystopic fiction," appears to be "cloaking a tale of sexual transgression" with the series of binary oppositions introduced positing one term "as the standard or norm, against which the other is a deviation" (Pordzik 55, 57) a dichotomous structure also at play in the geographical dilemma posed by the "staircase of heaven" in "Pericles in Paradise. While Forster's novel *Maurice* follows the conventions of realism, it ends with the male companions' escape to the liberating space of the woodland. It recalls narrative tropes that had already appeared in the "Story of a Panic" (1903) where sexual awakening takes place away from society, during a moment of panic in the woods. While Forster did not explicitly refer to the use of fantasy as a means for articulating "the love that dare not speak its name" he elaborated upon the basic principles of the fusion between fantasy and realistic storytelling in his work: "the introduction of a god, ghost, angel, monkey, monster, midget, witch into ordinary life; or the introduction of ordinary men into no man's land, the future, the past, the interior of the earth, the fourth dimension". (*Aspects of the Novel* 75-78). The shortage of conceptual categories that Pericles' failure to attain an imagined paradise in the sketch designates is reminiscent of the "vision of an alternative life frequently referred to but never unveiled" in "The Machine Stops" (Pordzik 69-70) as well as of Rickie's unsuccessful, "Carpenter-like attempts to foster fraternity" in *The Longest Journey* (Miracky 139). In these works, contradictions, anguish, and open-endedness, are enabled by Forster's use of fantasy to guide the reader toward the subconscious desires of his characters.

[1] Forster had written to Trevelyan in 1917 expressing his enthusiastic first impressions of Cavafy ("Letter 173: To Robert Trevelyan," *Selected Letters*, Vol. I, 266-267). This was the beginning of the British author's personal investment in Cavafy's work, which spanned thirty years and materialized in the publication of critical pieces, the promotion of translated poems in the *Criterion*, and persistent, if unfruitful, efforts to publish a volume with a selection of Cavafy's translated work in England when Cavafy was still alive.

[1] Forster experienced recurring writing blocks, which he perceived as the outcome of social constraints inhibiting the expression of his sexual identity. He combatted them with his robust faith in the aesthetic category as a vehicle toward social betterment, tolerance, and inclusivity but also with an effort to trace a genealogy of authors sharing the same artistic and personal anxieties (as is evident in a private compilation of a list of homosexual authors in a 1908 diary entry [Martin 37]). The latest biography of Forster *A Great Unrecorded History* (2010) as well as the earlier path-breaking collection of critical essays *Queer Forster* (1997) have applied the fraught relationship between creativity and homosexuality to a better understanding of Forster's work.

[1] Michael Haag reads the "staircase of heaven" as an allusion to the steps leading to Cavafy's flat at Rue Lepsius, which had been ascended and descended by many famous personalities of the arts and letters (58). It is not impossible that the busy staircase in Forster's piece was indeed to some extent inspired by this image; however, the fact that Cavafy is seen to descend the staircase still deserves focused attention as a metaphoric rendering of the poet's deviation from the norm. It should be noted that Haag based his brief analysis on the opening lines of the play as quoted in Forster's letter to Trevelyan, rather than on the entire manuscript.

[1] "The Poetry of C.P. Cavafy" was the first critical essay to introduce Cavafy to an English-speaking audience. Initially published in *The Nation and the Athenaeum* (25 April 1919), it was republished in the *Egyptian Gazette*, Alexandria (17 May 1919) and eventually included in Forster's *Pharos and Pharillon* (1923). Its impressionistic account of Cavafy's persona has become broadly symbolic of the relationship that developed between British author and Alexandrian poet.

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Theatrical Sketch “Pericles in Paradise”, by E.M. Forster.
(transcribed from manuscript)

[Scene: Heaven. A staircase stretching infinitely in either direction and down through space. Pericles is discovered standing in an attentive attitude upon one of the steps.]

Pericles Someone must come along soon. Then I shall know which way to go. It’s no use going up and having to come down or going down and having to come up. One assumes it will be up, but these places are very tricky. [nodding] There must be some rule, some arrangement. I shall just stop still and see. [His face brightens at the sound of steps far below] Hullo Sir Bartle! So you’re following me.

Sir Bartle [ascending into the scene] Bless me what a climb [he stops] Ah! Hullo Pericles! What a delightful place, what a perfectly delightful place.

Pericles It’s Heaven, eh, Sir Bartle.

Sir Bartle I should just think it was. Look at the view, and the what dye’ call them and the thing ummi jigs those winged things. What do you call them?

Pericles [fidgety] Quails, Quails. Shall we be getting on?

Sir Bartle But isn’t it a delightful place?

[page break]

Pericles [genial] One just wants a woman here and it would be perfect.

Sir Bartle And you shall sketch & sketch & sketch & sketch and sketch and sketch...

Pericles So shall we be getting on?

Sir Bartle And here comes our eminent friend Cavaffy **[*sic*]**.

Oh! Better and better [Cavaffy steps slowly into the scene but from above]

Pericles [laughing] Hullo! Why are you going the wrong way?

Cavaffy A regrettable tendency, my dear Perry, a regrettable tendency.

Pericles But surely the show's upstairs. You ought to go up with Sir Bartle and me, not down.

Cavaffy Follow the Baronet, my dear Perry, follow the Baronet.[1] Perhaps regrettably, perhaps not regrettably, I descend, I descend. [he does so]

Sir Bartle [calling after him] Have you seen any quails?

Cavaffy Sir Bartle, I have not, and your question frankly puzzles me. But I am pleased to have met you, very pleased.

Pericles Now what's one to make of a chap like that? Now there's a chap of acknowledged talent. [Sir Bartle repeating quails has resumed his climb] 'Pon my word I believe Cavaffy would know. Old Sir Bartle's a bit passé. Besides I'm an artist myself, I'll risk it. [He runs down a few steps & runs into Terni who is ascending.]

Terni Accidente

Pericles [shrieking] You call yourself an artist! Well, you ought to go down not up. down not up

Terni Ségno la mia mentalità[2] [he moves up & disappears]

[page break]

Pericles Now there's another chap of acknowledged talent and a very smart chap too. What's one to make of that? [He catches sight of Agostino, also ascending] Well I shall know now —Agostino— just a word between friends I'm in a bit of a fix to be quite frank. I don't know whether the show –you know, the big show, the chief show- is upstairs or down. Which is it?

[1] Baronet: a member of a British hereditary order of honor ranking below the barons, and made up of commoners designated by Sir before the name.

[2] Italian, meaning: "I follow my own mindset."

Agostino Non posso dire. Sono incêrto anch'io, segno Terni chè montà[3] [He follows him.]

Pericles Perhaps the poets go down and the musicians up. But I'm a painter, so which am I to do? [He returns to his step then sees Gen. Boyle descending the flight towards him, +gives a great sigh of relief] Oh well that settles it. The reception is obviously in the rez-de-chaussée. Hullo General! How are you General? Going down to Heaven? So am I. May I come along with you? There 's a poet friend of mine I'd like to present if — [He stops. An Admiral is ascending towards them out of the abyss.] Hullo Admiral, excuse me, but do you care for music? [He remains upon his step] Perhaps the navy goes up and the Army down. But I'm a cotton merchant, so which am I to do? [Enter from above Mr John Mc Neill] Well he ought to know he's so popular. [Enter from below Bishop Mc lnnes] Well he ought to know, he's so influential. Perhaps nonconformists go down and Church of England up. But I'm Orthodox, so what am I to do [Mr Loyd George from above] Hooray, hooray, that's the man to win the war. [Mr Balfour from below] Or is that the man? Perhaps Tories go up and Liberals down. But I'm a

[page break]

Socialist [King George V from above] Well you couldn't beat that. [The Kaiser from below] Still I'm not so sure. Perhaps the English go down and the Germans up. But I'm a Greek. [He remains standing on his step. Frantically:-] This wont do, I'm wasting time, I must come to a decision. I must introduce some personal cachet.... There must be some arrangement or something.... I know what, I'll follow the

[3] Italian, meaning: "I couldn't say. I am unsure myself, I am following Terni who ascends."

very next person, whoever it is, never matter whom,
because whichever way I go im certain to be among
congenial and interesting people. If I dont get the General
I'll get the Bishop . And so on. Yes.
[He waits. For a long time the scene is empty. Then enter at
exactly the same moment Charitakis with a great many
books, from above, and Madame Charitakis with not quite
so many books, from below. They meet on the step and
begin to exchange notes.
Charitakis Rumours of snails.
Pericles Snails? Snails? Well it can't be up this way
Madame C. Rumours of pails and of tails.
Pericles Still it hardly sounds hers. **[unintelligible;unsure]**
Charitakis [writing] The conclusion is obvious. Read scalae
scales, stairs
Madame C. Obviously [also writes]
Pericles I like this, its tonic, its the scientific method. One
can live too much in art. [ingratiating] So which is
it please? Down the scales or up? Music eh as well
as science! [he laughes ***(sic)***]
Charitakis [To his wife] This terminates the present investigation
[page break]
Madame C Does it?
Charitakis You have done with your books.
Madame C. Have I? [They give all their books to Pericles]
Pericles [peevish] Too many, too heavy, books are no use
when you haven't a book case.
Charitakis [tapping the pile] The answer to your question is in
there. Being not a philosophic question it is not
answerable. [He and Madame C. disappear at the
same moment, he proceeding down the staircase,
she up. Pericles is left nursing their library.]
Pericles [staggering] Apparently wives go up and husbands down
But I'm – I don't know what I am, [with a burst

of candour] Yes I do. I'm a shit— [he scuttles
up a few steps. The books impede him. He scuttles
down and they over balance him so that he
falls right over the banisters into his bed.
The Lady of the Moment Mais...
Pericles [sitting up] J'ai trop mangé.[4]

Notes

I am grateful to The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge and the Society of Authors as the E.M. Forster Estate for kindly granting me permission to publish this work.

[i] The opening lines of the sketch, which was unearthed in manuscript form amongst the E.M. Forster Papers at King's College, Cambridge (KCC), also made an appearance in a letter the author sent to the poet Robert Trevelyan on 23 August 1918 as part of an exchange of artistic endeavors: "Thank you for your poem on Confuscius [sic]. It amused me very much. Perhaps sometime I will send you a copy of my 'Pericles in Paradise' but you do not know any of the people". (Lago and Furbank, 1: 294-5). The letter provided the lead to the full play, which has remained unpublished to date. It is handwritten, accompanied by an archivist's note (1986) informing that it has been "copied in an unknown hand"; that of "Sir Robin Allason Furness, or Aida Borchgreviate (sic), or George Antonius" (KCC).

[ii] Anastassiades introduced Forster to the Greek-Alexandrian poet C.P. Cavafy in 1917. There is critical consensus on the crucial impact this meeting had on transforming Egypt from a locus of initial disappointment and misgivings ("Letter 157: To Malcolm Darling," *Selected Letters*, Vol. I, 238-239) to a place of creative inspiration for Forster. Anastassiades and Forster shared a profound appreciation of Cavafy and his work, and dedicated themselves tirelessly to disseminating his poetry and keeping his memory alive. For an incisive account of Pericles' intimate relationship to the poet during his lifetime, as well as for details on the ways he handled archival material in his possession after the poet's death, see Tsirkas (234-238).

[iii] According to Claire Buck "Cotton from the Outside" constitutes "a near burlesque dramatization" of the dichotomy Forster sets up to distinguish "the premodern and the picturesque" Alexandria from the modernized city with its colonial inflections (98-99).

[iv] By the time Forster arrived in Egypt he had already published *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howards End* (1910) and the collection of short stories *The Celestial Omnibus* (1911), but it was only in 1924, five years after he left Egypt, that his next major fictional work *A Passage to India* (since considered his magnum opus) appeared. Forster had also written *Maurice* between 1913 and 1914, but the novel was only published posthumously in 1971 due to Forster's inhibitions about its homosexual content. Other than the sketch presented here, the only other text from the period between 1911 and 1924 in which Forster reverts to fantasy and fiction is "England's Honour [Being extracts from the diary of Mme. Kyriakidis, Ramleh.]" which was published in *The Egyptian Mail* on 26 January 1919 (Quinn and Hejazi 144-145).

[v] The sketch's focus on the privileged few relates it to the rest of Forster's non-fictional Egyptian writings, which have been criticized for perpetuating a glorified narrative of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism that altogether erased the native population from representation. (Halim 120-178). Some critics have argued, however, that despite endorsing aspects of the city's expatriate culture

[4] French, meaning "I ate too much."

Forster also maintained a critical view of the "bogus 'European' culture of Alexandria" and its distance from "the reality of the indigenous world" (Jeffreys 72-73) in his Egyptian pieces. Forster's Egyptian writings include: the guidebook *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*, first published in 1922, with new editions appearing in 1938 and 1961; the collection *Pharos and Pharillon*, which includes eight out of numerous articles on Egypt that Forster published from 1916 onwards, mainly in *The Egyptian Mail* and *The Egyptian Gazette* (both publications catering for Egypt's expatriate population), while others appear in *The Uncollected Egyptian Essays of E.M. Forster* (1988); "Notes on Egypt," which formed part of the Labour Pamphlet *The Government of Egypt: Recommendations by a Committee of the International Section of the Labour Research Department, with Notes on Egypt by E.M. Forster*, and is dated by the editors of the volume to 1921 whereas others have dated it to 1920.

[vi] In numerous critical essays Forster made a case for the artist's power to "legislate through creating" and to introduce, through art, "order" upon a disjointed world ("Art for Art's Sake" 91-92). Forster's belief in finding spiritual and intellectual guidance in collectivities of like-minded creators — "the aristocracy of the sensitive" ("What I Believe" 70)— encompassed visions of homosocial kinship. This subtext became particularly evident when Forster admitted the influence that Edward Carpenter's ideas on homosocial utopianism had on his work in the 'Terminal Note' to *Maurice* (added to the published version of the novel in 1971) (Martin 29-39, Rahman 40-57). Similar preoccupations with the socially visionary aspects of fraternity-making underwrote Forster's appeals to "Love the Beloved Republic" as the foundation of human relationships ("What I Believe" 67), as well as his engagement with Platonism (Raschke 65, Poburko 31). A strong homosocial subtext emerges from "Pericles in Paradise" as soon Pericles exclaims that "One just wants a woman here and it would be perfect," a desire that Sir Bartle interprets in strictly voyeuristic terms ("And you shall sketch&sketch&sketch&sketch and sketch and sketch…"). This sparse and fleeting reference to female presence, articulated in terms of the sketch's male characters' artistic ambitions, appears as an instance of "the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (Sedgwick 25-26). In light of the fact that Pericles was likely homosexual, the episode can be read as further suggestive of the conventional expectations tethered to heteronormative sexuality and their subsequent defiance.

[vii] The homoerotic undertones of Forster's symbolic topographies have been extensively explored by criticism. The enchanted space of the dell in *The Longest Journey* has been described as "a geographical "eternal moment"—a corner of space that exists beyond time" (195) and as a "symbolic hollow" (Stone 195, 198), with critics subsequently highlighting the ways in which its "magical or mythical undertones (…) reflect the tensions generated in Forster's personal struggles with gender identity and orientation" (Miracky 139). According to Miracky, the use of fantasy in the novel "queers" realism, exemplifying Forster's general tendency to resort to fantastical plots "marked at times by frequent contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies" in order to "not only express his struggles with same-sex desire but also offer a subtle critique of the society which produces such conflict" (130, 132). Similarly, Ralph Pordzik argues that the outer-space in "The Machine Stops," (1910) a short story belonging to the genre of "dystopic fiction," appears to be "cloaking a tale of sexual transgression" with the series of binary oppositions introduced positing one term "as the standard or norm, against which the other is a deviation" (Pordzik 55, 57) a dichotomous structure also at play in the geographical dilemma posed by the "staircase of heaven" in "Pericles in Paradise. While Forster's novel *Maurice* follows the conventions of realism, it ends with the male companions' escape to the liberating space of the woodland. It recalls narrative tropes that had already appeared in the "Story of a Panic" (1903) where sexual awakening takes place away from society, during a moment of panic in the woods. While Forster did not explicitly refer to the use of fantasy as a means for articulating "the love that dare not speak its name" he elaborated upon the basic principles of the fusion between fantasy and realistic storytelling in his work: "the introduction of a god, ghost, angel, monkey, monster, midget, witch into ordinary life; or the introduction of ordinary men into no man's land, the future, the past, the interior of the earth, the fourth dimension". (*Aspects of the Novel* 75-78). The shortage of conceptual categories that Pericles' failure to attain an imagined paradise in the sketch designates is reminiscent of the "vision of an alternative life frequently referred to but never unveiled" in "The Machine Stops" (Pordzik 69-70) as well as of Rickie's unsuccessful, "Carpenter-like attempts to foster fraternity" in *The Longest Journey* (Miracky 139). In these works, contradictions, anguish, and open-endedness, are enabled by Forster's use of fantasy to guide the reader toward the subconscious desires of his characters.

[viii] Forster had written to Trevelyan in 1917 expressing his enthusiastic first impressions of Cavafy ("Letter 173: To Robert Trevelyan," *Selected Letters*, Vol. I, 266-267). This was the beginning of the British author's personal investment in Cavafy's work, which spanned thirty years and materialized in the publication of critical pieces, the promotion of translated poems in the *Criterion*, and persistent, if unfruitful, efforts to publish a volume with a selection of Cavafy's translated work in England when Cavafy was still alive.

[ix] Forster experienced recurring writing blocks, which he perceived as the outcome of social constraints inhibiting the expression of his sexual identity. He combatted them with his robust faith in the aesthetic category as a vehicle toward social betterment, tolerance, and inclusivity but also with an effort to trace a genealogy of authors sharing the same artistic and personal anxieties (as is evident in a private compilation of a list of homosexual authors in a 1908 diary entry [Martin 37]). The latest biography of Forster *A Great Unrecorded History* (2010) as well as the earlier path-breaking collection of critical essays *Queer Forster* (1997) have applied the fraught relationship between creativity and homosexuality to a better understanding of Forster's work.

[x] Michael Haag reads the "staircase of heaven" as an allusion to the steps leading to Cavafy's flat at Rue Lepsius, which had been ascended and descended by many famous personalities of the arts and letters (58). It is not impossible that the busy staircase in Forster's piece was indeed to some extent inspired by this image; however, the fact that Cavafy is seen to descend the staircase still deserves focused attention as a metaphoric rendering of the poet's deviation from the norm. It should be noted that Haag based his brief analysis on the opening lines of the play as quoted in Forster's letter to Trevelyan, rather than on the entire manuscript.

[xi] "The Poetry of C.P. Cavafy" was the first critical essay to introduce Cavafy to an English-speaking audience. Initially published in *The Nation and the Athenaeum* (25 April 1919), it was republished in the *Egyptian Gazette*, Alexandria (17 May 1919) and eventually included in Forster's *Pharos and Pharillon* (1923). Its impressionistic account of Cavafy's persona has become broadly symbolic of the relationship that developed between British author and Alexandrian poet.

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