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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation, “Only Connect”: Friendship, Belonging, and Space in the Works of J. M. Barrie, E. M. Forster, and J. R. Ackerley, argues that early- and mid-twentieth-century narratives of friendship bring a sense of openness to spatial regimes and social boundaries of the period. In conversation with recent scholarship on Victorian friendship—especially Richard Dellamora’s *Friendship’s Bonds* (2004), Leela Gandhi’s *Affective Communities*, and Sharon Marcus’s *Between Women* (2007)—and queer and affect theory, my readings of J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1911), E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924), and J. R. Ackerley’s *My Dog Tulip* (1956) cover a variety of fictional spaces spanning metropole and empire—such as the Victorian nursery, Neverland, pastoral England, the colonial social club, the Marabar Caves, the animal clinics and public parks of London—in order to locate and better understand friendship as a recurring set of affects and practices between selves and others that are horizontal and emerging, not hierarchical and foreclosed. Mapping different formations and moments of friendship in a range of spaces, my dissertation highlights the extent to which friendship, as a narrative trope and theoretical framework, affords new ways of thinking about being, belonging, and becoming with others. My dissertation also examines the different ways in which Barrie, Forster, and Ackerley’s narratives of friendship confound major themes of the Victorian novel, such as gender-specific separations of private and public life, the marriage plot, bourgeois subject-formation, nation-building, and the racialization of colonial subjects. While mindful of higher-stake concerns over identity-formation, ideological debates over subjectivities and their corresponding communities of belonging, the four chapters in this dissertation are more interested in bearing out the affective energies of friendship, and the unpredictable or non-teleological ways in which they are invoked in certain moments and places but not others. That
friendship brings together selves and others in affective and unsystematic ways on the one hand, and seeks to express its livingness and becoming beyond established identity markers such as gender, race, class, and sexuality, and normative communities of belonging such as the family and the state, on the other hand, are ideas whose interconnectedness my dissertation seeks to draw out more overtly.
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Introduction

The desire of a reparative impulse . . . wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self.

—Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*

“Friendship” . . . is one name for the co-belonging of nonidentical singularities

—Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities*

In his novel *Burmese Days* (1934), George Orwell paints a rather grim picture of friendship. Set in British Burma, the story revolves around James Flory, an English merchant and a friend of Dr. Veraswami, an Indian doctor who wants to join the Kyauktada [ki-yoke-ta-da] Club, of which Flory is a member. An unpleasant task faces the protagonist: although the heyday of imperialism has come and gone, Kyauktada Club, like other English clubs in colonial outposts is “the spiritual citadel, the real seat of the British power,” proud of the fact that it has “never admitted an Oriental to membership” (17). Against the inevitable decline of the Empire, the club performs a social and political function of belonging, and of Englishness, that builds its solidarity on the absence of the Other. The club is foundational to an imagined community that performs itself at the expense and exclusion of others: if one cannot control Burma, so the logic goes according to the British, at least one can take comfort in not having to become friends with the Burmese. What makes Flory’s life even worse, however, is how this race-based belonging is undermining yet another potentially important relationship, namely his burgeoning romance with Elizabeth Lackersteen, who is growing comfortable living in Burma as a burra memsahib—a white woman of high social standing in India. The more Flory wants to expose Elizabeth to the “authentic” side of Burma, taking her to places where the natives gather, the more Elizabeth rejects the idea. Elizabeth’s rejection to interact with the natives, as Flory will soon find out, is a sign of her increased identification with, and loyalty to, the Anglo-Indian community to which
she wishes to belong. Caught between competing alliances, and lacking the social space to foster genuine friendship and belonging with others, cross-gender as well as cross-cultural, Flory kills himself at the end of the novel.

I am invoking Orwell’s representation of friendship in *Burmese Days* here not to suggest that friendship was an impossible quest under imperialism, but to highlight the poignancy of how the lack of friendship, or the lack of means to connect with others, can lead to the impoverishment or cessation of a human life. Orwell’s representation of friendship in *Burmese Days* is singular rather than conclusive, however. Where Orwell hits the hardest in the novel—the fact that friendship is the collateral damage of colonialism—is also where he fails to see the pliancy of friendship. In different ways, J. M. Barrie, E. M. Forster, and J. R. Ackerley, contemporaries of Orwell, underscore the potentiality and hopefulness that, I argue, is inherent in friendship. That friendship fails to respond or chooses not to recognize systems of hierarchy on the one hand, and opens up conditions of possibility for non-normative modes of intimacy and belonging to exist and amass its own meaning, on the other hand, are ideas that I find different resonances in Barrie, Forster, and Ackerley’s fiction. Manifesting itself in different moments and spaces, friendship, as my dissertation consistently argues, reimagines ideas of being, belonging, and becoming with others as something more open and accidental. The idea that friendship can reconfigure prescriptive places of belonging into a sharable space made up of horizontal relations is a paradigm that I return to throughout the dissertation.

My dissertation examines the different linkages and relations between friendship, belonging, and space in *Peter Pan* (1911), *Howards End* (1910), *A Passage to India* (1924), and *My Dog Tulip* (1956). These texts, I argue, collectively suggest an affective impulse in friendship that brings confusion and a sense of openness to a host of normative relations
anchored strategically in certain places but not others. Concrete and conceptual spaces such as the Victorian nursery, middle-class homes, pastoral England, the colonial outpost, the animal clinic, and the streets of London, for example, give access, visibility, and protection to certain relations but not others, rendering feelings and formations of belonging a highly differentiated experience. In addition, my readings of these texts also try to bear out an accidental and ongoing nature of friendship, following the extent to which friendship mobilizes bodies and affined groups to unlikely moments when and spaces where the experience of belonging, of being together, does not always have a clear purpose or destination in sight.

My dissertation claims that friendship—along with its affective and spatial dynamics—is a key theme, if sometimes overlooked, in Edwardian and early-twentieth-century English fiction. At a time when England was still in the wake of Queen Victoria’s rule, personal and social identities were challenged and reconfirmed by changes: both at home—with the increasingly vocal demands of the New Woman, the working class, sexual dissidents—and abroad—with the decline of empire and subsequent loss of India and Africa. During these periods, England was well aware of its positioning among shifting social, political, and global terrains, as well as competing identities and relations spanning gender, class, and race. ¹ Taking a cue from Virginia Woolf, who in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (1923) asserts that “on and about December 1910 human character changed. . . . all human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children,” (4-5) I read Barrie, Forster, and Ackerley’s depictions of friendship as ways of explaining—and—experimenting—some of these gradual shifts of human relations. If bounded, rigid, and complacent are by now commonplace adjectives to describe this period, post-Victorian subjectivities and social dynamics nonetheless

¹ See also Griffin and Phegley for fin-de-siècle anxieties over women’s suffrage and companionate marriage, and the increased mobility of previously disenfranchised groups.
reflected, in complex ways, affinities for and anxieties of transition and flux that were the undertow of Edwardian society. Among other scholars of Victorian culture, Judith R. Walkowitz, in *City of Dreadful Delight* (1992), draws attention to a metropolitan restlessness beginning in earnest at the end of the nineteenth century. Late-Victorian London, according to Walkowitz,

[washi a] contested terrain [in which] marginalized groups—working men and women of all classes—repeatedly spilled over and out of their ascribed, bounded roles, costumes, and locales into the public streets and the wrong parts of town, engaged on missions of their own. (41)

What these “missions” came about, or to what ends they served, are less important to my dissertation than the idea that from the late-Victorian period onward, individuals and groups flew in and out physical and socio-cultural spaces with increased frequency, not totally constricted by inherited spatial regimes—which were highly gender-specific, class-conscious, racially divided, and hetero-normative.

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Friendship’s relation to and relevance in Victorian England, in fact, has been taken up by scholars in recent years: collectively, Richard Dellamora’s *Friendship’s Bonds* (2004), Leela Gandhi’s *Affective Communities* (2006), and Sharon Marcus’s *Between Women* (2007) consider friendship’s general and particular impact on systems of gender, class, and race, and the various ways in which friendship confounds distinctions of domesticity and the public sphere. These

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2 Other canonical novels of the period include Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), D. H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love* (1920), and W. Somerset Maugham’s *The Painted Veil* (1925), as well as later novels looking back at the Edwardian tradition. A number of children’s and fantasy fiction written in the same period, such as E. Nesbit’s *Five Children and It* (1902), Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), also feature friendship as an alternative means of achieving intimacy and sustaining feelings of community in various ways.
recent publications on friendship in Victorian England appeal to an expansive scope of analysis, from the interplay of self and other, inclusion and exclusion, to normativity and subversion, on which systems of hierarchy and belonging are reinforced and renegotiated by turns. In linking the intimate life of male friendship to that of citizenship and community, Dellamora brings into focus a Victorian England where “writers [Anthony Trollope, William Gladstone, Benjamin, Disraeli] were engaged in an attempt to connect personal intimacy in friendship with the experience of democracy,” a connection intended to reinforce the parliamentary representation and reach of Victorian England, one that strategically invoked ideas of friendship to promote an unified, and broader, identity of English citizenship that includes the internal Others such as the Irish and the Jews (2, 21-23). While Dellamora focuses on Victorian friendship’s functions in the public sphere, Marcus attends to a variety of female friendships operating in the private sphere. In Between Women, Marcus argues that female friendship affords new ways for women to play with ideas of subjectivity and the different roles that middle-class women assume: “Friendship illustrated the play in the middle-class family system by providing women with a relationship outside the family and marriage that could be imagined as freely chosen, based purely on affinity and affection” (70). Theorizing female friendship as a concept and practice alternative to what she refers to as “the concept of lesbian continuum, once a powerful means of drawing attention to overlooked bonds between women,” (29) Marcus locates affections and affinities between women other than a sexual identity that corresponds to, and reinforces, a larger system of hetero-normativity. Both Dellamora and Marcus’s work, in studying friendship’s roles in creating the condition for and facilitating same-sex intimacies in the civic and companionate realms, provide nuanced readings of this period’s middle-class relations that, though faced with a
host of normalizing indexes such power and sexuality, were complex in ways that go beyond the
purview of hierarchical reasoning.

In *Affective Communities*, Leela Gandhi takes up the emotional pull of friendship, arguing that as a connecting force, friendship accrues multiple senses and sites of belonging through an inclusivity of differences. Tracing friendship as an “anticolonial thought” in the context of late Victorian radicalism, Gandhi maps a diffuse history made up of affects and affinities of individuals and social groups, which collectively embody a kind of togetherness “that refuse[s] alignment along the secure axes of filiation to seek expression outside, if not against, possessive communities of belonging” (10). In connecting seemingly disparate stories of reform and radical thought that were marginalized, from late Victorian homosexuality, animal welfare, to mysticism and aestheticism, Gandhi recuperates an anticolonial ethos inherent in the exercise and extension of friendship. More importantly, Gandhi’s accounts of late-Victorian friendships offer a language of befriending an other that, I argue, is key to getting nearer to that which we do not understand, but without needing to objectify it or to speak on its behalf. In sum, recent scholarship on Victorian friendship has shown the extent to which everyday practices of friendship of the period affected and were affected by existing structures of power in metropolitan and colonial contexts, and how these practices of friendship mediated and moved about in complex ways within the bounds/places of normative relations.

In many ways, my dissertation extends Dellamora, Marcus, and Gandhi’s insights on Victorian friendship to the Edwardian and early-twentieth century contexts to better understand friendship’s contribution to this later period’s fiction. Not so much an intervention into the scholarship of Victorian friendship as a focused study on twentieth-century narratives of friendship and their relation to Post-Victorian understandings of affective and spatial regimes,
my dissertation examines the ways in which friendship intervenes in major themes of the Victorian novel whose influence on twentieth-century English fiction continues to be enormous—such as gender-specific separations of private and public life, the marriage plot, bourgeois subject-formation, nation-building, the racialization of colonial subjects. Indeed, my dissertation focuses more on when and where narratives of friendship diverge from or revise normative understandings of subjectivity, sexuality, intimacy, and community, and the events and places that anchor and facilitate these normative understandings. In short, in examining Barrie, Forster, and Ackerley’s narratives of friendship, I hope to bring to light a post-Victorian everydayness that has difficulty eventuating or expressing itself at the level of representation. The friendships discussed in my chapters, indeed, do not always feel like an event, a milestone, or a stage of life. They take up space and involve selves and others, flowing in and out of space without so much a clear purpose of their affects or means of survival.

Drawing from a constellation of scholarship on Victorian friendships, postcolonial thought, affect, queerness, and space, my dissertation continues the effort of establishing friendship as a vocabulary and theoretical framework. In short, I argue that we can better apprehend and analyze moments and spaces of post-Victorian fiction that are of an experiential nature: that is, by anchoring our readings around notions of friendship, we can better comprehend various affects and durations of everyday relations other than in terms of race, gender, and class. My *apolitical* stance on reading friendship into everyday relations is not naively utopic; rather, it derives from an argument against the idea that all personal and social relations can be sufficiently understood as expressions of identity and ideology. To counter various identity-based and ideological claims, the narratives of friendship I trace in my
dissertation describe personal and social relations as that which cannot be explained away by a normativizing and legitimizing language of affiliation and affection.

The idea that friendship is unincorporated into the schemata of established knowledge, one that Jacques Derrida traces through his work *The Politics of Friendship* (1997), suggests an experiential aspect of friendship that is unique to other relationalities that organize themselves around a teleology or toward a specific goal or destination, the arriving of an event—marriage, for example—as an acknowledgement of its existence and epistemological relevance to systems of knowledge and representation. To think about friendship, or to think in terms of friendship, as my dissertation tries to do, is to apprehend personal and social relations not in terms of what they are or what they represent, but more in terms of how bodies and spaces involve one another, and through a host of feelings—affection and belonging, for example—springing from the interactions of bodies and spaces. According to Derrida, the objects of friendship cannot be clearly laid out ahead of time, for friendship, not an event or epistemology but the endurance of a hope, embodies “a certain non-knowledge . . . [that] is future-producing,” a process whereby “what will have to be assumed, however impossible it may seem” becomes necessary for the living out of a friendship that follows no teleological path that can be predicted, or made stable, by means of epistemological and philosophical thought (31-32).

Experiencing friendship “with an open heart” is important insofar as it attunes what is to come, what is to happen, to feeling. The openness that friendship gestures toward, and the conditions of possibility (the perhaps) that friendship offers, is a sensibility to the unfolding of affects in space that I try to bear out in my readings of *Peter Pan, Howards End, A Passage to India*, and *My Dog Tulip*. In so doing, it will become clear that spatial regimes—be they seemingly innocuous or logical, such as those governing children’s behavior towards adults or
strangers, those governing the minds of working class or colonial subjects, those governing higher or lower orders of animate life, etc.—do tend to reify identities and the relations between them. To begin to understand the literary imaginations of—and interventions into—the affective and spatial dimensions of friendship of Edwardian and early-twentieth-century English fiction, my four chapters look at the various ways in which subjects and relations, as mediated by feelings of friendship, operate in material and acculturated places: from the Victorian nursery and the fantasy-filled colony that is Neverland in J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*; the pastoral and colonial landscapes, the class-specific and cultural socialities in E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*; to the animal clinic and humans-only streets and parks in J. R. Ackerley’s *My Dog Tulip*.

But how does friendship foster a closeness or sense of belonging between bodies and social worlds while, at the same time, gesturing toward openness? What kind of space is needed for friendship to exercise its affective potential to its fullest? Similar questions on affect and space have been raised in the works of Henri Lefebvre, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Michel de Certeau, whose theoretical insights on space and subject positions, and on architecture and affect, are foundational knowledge on which I build my spatial understandings of friendship. If social space, as Henri Lefebvre suggests, takes “[t]he form of encounter, assembly, simultaneity [and] implies actual or potential assembly at a single point,” (101) my dissertation asks what is being assembled when friendship takes place, and how ideas of place and space complicate, and are in turn complicated by, different forms of encounter between bodies, social worlds, and their attendant ideas about identity and belonging. Put another way, I want to ask to what extent does the feel of a place, or an affective relation with others in space, tell us about the particular ways
in which we perform belonging in certain subject positions and through social dynamics but not others.

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In tracing the mobility of various kinds of friendship—that between children, between classes, between the colonizer and the colonized, and between classifications of being animate—my overall project argues that for non-normative forms of affinity and attachment to take place, they must either literally or figuratively turn place into space, allowing ordinary affects—spontaneous and accidental—to fill up the places that are predisposed to maintaining certain forms and dynamics of relations but not others. Friendship generates a host of surplus affects, and facilitate them unpredictably amidst personal and social relations, bringing to light a potential, a preference, to chart new ways of being—and being with others—that do not habituate agency in the forms of identity and ideology. In the forms of cultural habits and social norms, but inhabit in the space where Eve Sedgwick refers to as “the middle ranges of agency,” where forms of affinity and attachment take shape, take place, and refresh the imaginaries and locations of living and belonging (13). Or, as Kathleen Stewart describes it so elegantly, forms of everyday affinity and attachment are like “beginnings . . . [that do not] mean to come to a finish . . . [but] spread out into too many possible scenes with too many links between them . . . in an effort to stay in the middle of things” (128). In this within “the middle ranges of agency,” between identities and ideologies, where I hope my readings of friendship locate “beginnings” of affinity and attachment that take intimacy and belonging closer to the lived experiences of everyday life that need not arise to the level of an event.

Chapter One analyzes Barrie’s bestselling Edwardian fantasy Peter Pan, in which the friendship between Wendy Darling and Peter Pan, and its affective and spatial dynamics,
reconfigure the Victorian nursery. *Peter Pan*, I argue, resists a logic/rhetoric of progression and development that has allowed adult and state intervention to empty out the potential of radical alterity and queerness that is one with childhood. Wendy’s more-than-bourgeois and stranger-friendly motherly affects, as performed in Neverland, conflate family and friendship on the one hand, and confuses distinction of reality and play, on the other; it is through these surplus affects of care and community-building of Wendy’s that Barrie, I argue, seek to relax an increasingly tightened and brittle Englishness. An Edwardian rethinking of childhood—from a secluded innocence and vulnerability of Romantic sensibilities to an agent/facilitator of openness—*Peter Pan* is also an attempt to update Englishness, rendering the concept more palatable and less authoritarian, in part by distancing it from an oppressive paternity and progressivism, as represented by Mr. Darling (the Victorian gentleman) and Captain Hook (the agent of colonial power), who seek to occupy and take dominion of the spaces of bourgeois domesticity and the British Empire, respectively.

Chapter Two focuses on two friendships—those between Margaret Schlegel and Ruth Wilcox, and between Helen Schlegel and Leonard Bast—and their impact on the narratives of inheritance—material, cultural, and spiritual. The accidental nature of these two friendships, and the affective energies they evoke, bring confusion to assumptions about the placement and recipient of a will or a legacy. The transfers of Howards End, a country house that is the symbol of pastoral England, whose ownership passes from Ruth Wilcox, Margaret Schelgel, and eventually to Helen and Leonard’s illegitimate son, I argue, is Forster’s attempt to redistribute the material and cultural wealth of England more evenly. By taking away the excess of the Wilcox family and giving it to Leonard Bast’s heir, the novel sides with the dispossessed and disinheritened, through the mediations of the cultural class as embodied by the Schlegel sisters. In
tracing an affective impulse to connect with, and not collect, people, ideas, and things, *Howards End* also develop an ethos of belonging—and the passing on of that belonging—that is more firmly rooted in affined relations, not affiliation in a legal sense.

Chapter Three brings the spatial idiosyncrasies of friendship to the different spaces of colonial India, as represented in *A Passage to India*, from those marked by an epistemology of the colonizer and the colonized, by a history and cultural memory of violence (the Indian rebellion of 1857), to sites of accidental and spontaneous friendship that open up new ways of relating to others that gestures toward the disorientation or collapse of self. In this chapter, I argue that the trope of colonial friendship has been underemphasized, whose perceived function has been to serve larger narratives of belonging, as such anticolonial nationalism or neocolonialism, but little more. Focusing on the uneventful aspects of friendship, and the intractable way in which friendship does not make its presence felt in key events, I suggest that we read colonial friendship—that between Aziz and Mrs. Moore, for example—as an imagined way of being with another/an other that serves no purposes that can be co-opted by a colonial epistemology that always seeks to read and lock belonging in place in identitarian and ideological terms, preventing cross-cultural friendship from exercising its affective and spatial potential, from becoming a way of life.

In Chapter Four, I trace in the unfolding of a cross-species friendship of sixteen years between Ackerley (a contemporary and friend of Forster) and Tulip, an Alsatian bitch. That Ackereley is insistent upon calling Tulip a friend, instead of a pet, is an observation on which I build an analysis of more-than-human subjectivities and spaces. In this chapter, I question the taxonomic and human-centric reasoning that is always already written into private and public places, from one’s apartment, to the animal clinic, the omnibus, and the streets and parks of
London. I argue that Ackerley’s diminishing of his agency as a pet owner, and his willingness to comprehend the way Tulip apprehends the world, communicates with others, and exercises her affection and sexuality, have allowed the man to see more clearly and reject the discriminatory practices in place that make visible certain bodies and affective ties but not others. By allowing Tulip to exercise her agency as his friend in private and public places, Ackerley regains a sense of openness and belonging through another (animate) way of seeing and being in space.

\(^3\) See Ackerley’s *My Father and I* (1968) for a more explicit discussion of the writer’s homosexuality, of England’s intolerance toward it, an intolerance compounded by the silence around this subject between Ackerley and his father, which he refers to as a typical figure of the absent, emotionally remote father of the Edwardian period.
Friendship and the Imagination of Childhood, Care, and Community in J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*

J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, the play, was first performed to a live audience in 1904:

“London was there in force, so were the critics, and a glittering West End audience waited expectantly . . . *Peter Pan* was called back year after year, drawing in so many audiences that it became one of the most successful plays ever staged” (Chaney 230-233). The question—What is it about *Peter Pan* that has captivated its audiences and readers for over a century?—is an important one to ask. It is a timely question to ask as well, as *Pan*, a future Hollywood blockbuster, and *Finding Neverland*, a Broadway musical, will reanimate this century-old fantasy with computer-generated imagery and new songs and dances, respectively, in 2015. Reimaginings of *Peter Pan*, however, have a tendency to normalize the fantasy, converting its make-believe and subversive qualities into something more palatable for traditional family values, as seen in *Hook*, a film adaptation of *Peter Pan* in 1991.

The allure of Peter Pan lies elsewhere, I contend: what appeals to us for over a century, I argue, is not a fantasy of perpetual childhood or untroubled domestic bliss, but its representation of a childhood with agency, and a rethinking of care and belonging that extends beyond narrow definitions of the (nuclear) family. To better understand *Peter Pan*’s enduring inspiration, one needs to look back into the history of late-Victorian England, a period of time when childhood was undergoing reform and rapid change. For childhood in late-Victorian and Edwardian England, which I argue is being intervened and reimagined in *Peter Pan*, was not a universal ideal sequestered somewhere in the woods of Romantic poetry, but a stage of life rendered delicate and devoid of agency whose wellbeing was a major concern of society and the nation-

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4 My analysis of *Peter Pan* will be based on the novel version, *Peter and Wendy*, appeared in 1911. For the sake of convenience, I will use the title *Peter Pan* throughout this essay.
state: “By 1900 arguments about the importance of rearing healthy and educated future subjects were commonplace, and the Victorian state intervened in the lives of children in unprecedented ways” (Frost 9-10). If children were still considered innocent and guileless, it was an achieved condition of parental care and state governance rather than anything natural. The increasing intervention into the imagination of the child, and into a child’s access to imagination, was an Edwardian obsession (Frost 163). That Peter Pan was written in this period, one that read—and restricted—childhood in particular ways, I argue, is key to understanding its impact. In his fantastical representation of childhood through friendship, Barrie recuprates a child’s agency and capacity to interact with another in non-normative ways, in order to revitalize inclusive notions of care and community that are based not on control over children and their ability to make-believe, but on a curiosity and respect toward difference. By invigorating notions of care and community through friendships between children and the strange figures they encounter, Barrie is also taking on an impoverished Englishness that locks belonging in policed places and affiliated relations rigidly to a different space whose everyday reality is felt through the crisscrossing and interaction between what is real and what is possible (if seemingly fantastical), status quo and spontaneity.

Similar to other children’s stories written roughly in the same period, Peter Pan is conscious of reimagining childhood as a stage of a subject’s experience of himself/herself in relation to others that should be kept open, and less intervened in a logic of progressive development (i.e. from child to citizen). This literary trend in opening childhood to spaces beyond the family, and in increasing child agency, ran counter to the period’s dominant view of middle-class childhood:
Middle-class mothers and fathers believed that to rear healthy, happy children they must emphasize obedience, duty, unselfishness, and fortitude. . . . a Victorian parent would not allow children to decide what to eat for meals or where they would go on vacation. . . . and they had little to no knowledge of the psychology of childhood. (Frost 166)

That children should discover the world around them, and to grow accustomed to and respectful of the lives of others, is a literary shift away from two prominent views on childhood—the Romantic child and the child/citizen of the Victorian period—and away from a reifying innocence that locks children in time and space, rendering them inert, unable to cope with life without parental or governmental care. The Edwardian turn of childhood,

in many ways, modern children’s literature remains an Edwardian phenomenon, that [the] default mode of childhood . . . remains that decade or so before the First World War: the time between the death of Queen Victoria . . . the time when writers looked back over the loss and could only barely anticipate the end of the old order. (Lerer 253-254)

Perhaps it was the anticipation of “the end of the old order” that led children’s writers in the post-Victorian era to find a “new order” of things within the realm of childhood. This literary turn of childhood at the Edwardian period seems to run counter to social norms and state regulations of the time that sought to immobilize the child as the figure of innocence and passivity, as a potential victim of power. Rather than protecting children from learning too much and too quickly, Edwardian children’s literature—Peter Pan, The Secret Garden, and others—seem to encourage to children to grow robust and wise in different ways, not just upwards but sideways as well. ⁵ More Often than not, these stories employ friendship as a means whereby

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⁵ See Stockton for her theory of the queer child and children growing sideways, as “ways of growing that are not growing up” (11).
children learn to see themselves through their interaction with others, others who are sometimes
different from them in drastic ways. Literary representations of childhood of this period, in
short, offer an alternative understanding of children that gives them more agency and space for
their everyday life and relations with others, as opposed to in reality, where children were
considered better off by having as little contact as possible with strange figures outside of their
family structure: “[D]omesticity, the Victorian ideology of the family, permeated the cultural
landscape . . . all worked together toward a harmonious, sanctified home life” (Frost 11). That in
Peter Pan childhood is open to other forms of influence outside of parental supervision is an
example of a literary intervention into norms and regulations that seek to do the opposite. 6 If as
Kathryn Bond Stockton argues, when socially constructed notions of innocence are imposed
upon the child unequivocally, it “leaves one open to its peculiar dangers. . . . [to] diminishment
both for children, who are made to be this titillating purity, and for adults who are titillated by
it,” the preservation of innocence is akin to an impoverishment of growth, emotionally and
empathetically speaking (12). Moving from a discrete phase of human development secluded in
a protected environment, to one of curiosity and robustness that is ready to venture into other
aspects and habitats of life, Peter Pan engages with the possibility of children growing/moving
sideways—the Darling children fly horizontally, they form (relatively) horizontal relations with
the Peter Pan cohort, for instance—by playing with the spatial dynamics of the nursery, with the
help of Peter Pan and Tinker Bell, and by taking them (temporarily) away to Neverland, where it
is difficult to tell time, since the clock has been swallowed by a crocodile. Read in this light, this
Edwardian rendering of childhood can be seen as an alterity of being and becoming that
delays/disrupts the child/citizen paradigm, giving children the space needed to experience

6 See Dieter Petzold for a discussion of the conscious separateness between the world of children and that of adults.
childhood rather than preserving it for its eventual disappearance. This socialization of childhood, or how childhood or childlikeness is practiced through its daily interactions with others in both realistic or fantastical/more-than-human settings, is the subject of much Edwardian children’s literature, including E. Nesbit’s *Five Children and It*, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1911), among many others. This Edwardian turn of childhood, of which *Peter Pan* is a part, is decidedly more-than-familial; by incorporating friendship as a key component of these stories, *Peter Pan* promotes understandings of being, becoming, and belonging that are not subjugated by hegemonic epistemologies of self and other.

The enduring impact of *Peter Pan* on modern perceptions of childhood has been the subject of children’s literature scholarship. In this chapter, however, I seek to do something else: first, to recuperate moments and spaces of children’s friendship in the novel that have been increasingly overlooked by contemporary culture in favor of normative ideas of belonging as fitted for the middle-class family and other sites of belonging to which a child’s future (as a lawful citizen) is oriented; and, second, I pay close attention to the everyday affects and interactions between the Darling children and the inhabitants and environs of Neverland to trace out an ethos of community, based more on notions of sociality and sharing than of subjectivity. Finally, in spanning the real and the fantastical, *Peter Pan* invites us to bring into proximity what is empirically proven and what is imagined, not canceling each other out but enriching the diverse potential of knowability that is intimately linked to notions of being and becoming, where and how. To do all this, Barrie must first recuperate a loss of agency in the child, an affective and spatial potential to reach in to/welcome that which he or she does not yet—or seek

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7 See Rose, Lerer, Stirling, and Rudd for the decades-long discussion of *Peter Pan* and its relation to contemporary discourses on children literature.
to—understand, in part by letting the Darling children exercise friendship as a means to imagine their expansive sense and space of community.

The Friendly Encounter of Two Childhoods

Romantic ideas of childhood, which Peter Pan reimagines his Edwardian audience, harken back to a period in which poets and philosophers alike extoled childhood in a language of innocence and naturalness, regarding this early stage of lived existence as that which should be adored and protected from a host of sullying forces—social, cultural, and economic—that are likely to corrupt children. 8 “Arresting and invoking childhood as a permanent state,” Judith Plotz writes, “the male Romantics produce children not as integrated into the social realm but as a race apart” (xv). The Romantic idealization of the child, and the legislation in place—the Factories Regulation Act of 1833, the Criminal Law Amendment of 1885 (which raised the age of consent from 13 to 16 years of age)—seek to isolate the child from “the social realm,” and from an everyday life made up of others. The idea that children are to remain innocent and unspoiled—thereby in need of adult or state intervention—increasingly became a common belief among middle-class Victorians. This protection of the child, however, carries with it a tendency to immobilize childhood, especially girlhood, turning it into an “essentially passive . . . blissful stasis” (Robson 52).

Childhood in Peter Pan, however, is quite the opposite of “stasis” and passivity, as revealed in the initial encounter between the Darling children and Peter Pan. When Peter Pan and Tinker Bell quietly enter the Darling nursery in search of Peter’s shadow in J. M. Barrie’s Peter Pan (1911), the two are speaking in a language—“the fairy language”—that is not human,

8 See McGavran Jr.’s Romanticism and Children’s Literature in Nineteenth-Century England for essays on Romantic and Victorian preoccupations with childhood, its representations, and its various relations to nature, morality, and development.
different from the language Wendy, John, and Michael speak, with which they accumulate knowledge, mature into their identities, and become one with the world of adulthood. “You ordinary children can never hear it,” as the narrator says, “but if you were to hear it you would know that you had heard it once before” (24). This introduction of these fairy-language-speaking entities—taking the form of a boy and of a tiny glow—into the lives of the Darling children, has a profound impact on the relocation of childhood from the place of protection unreachable by strangers, to the queer spaces of contact wherein children form relations with those who are not figures of authority, but strangers hailed from other places, with their own language, history, and sense of being. A symbol of the eternal child, willful and skeptical of growth, Peter Pan is hailed into the familiar place of childhood—the nursery—to find his shadow, which he has left behind during his last stealthy visit. Peter Pan’s attempt to retrieve something that he has lost in someone else’s nursery is revealing in at least two ways: first, his attempt to retrieve his precious shadow, a part of him but also not a part of him, in someone else’s nursery resonates with a nostalgia for childhood that we have been acculturated to feel, a nostalgia for childhood that prompts us to retrieve it within other children. More important, with this act of retrieval being interrupted by Wendy Darling’s curiosity and subsequent intervention, Barrie seems to suggest a certain agency within a child that resists or at least reacts to attempts of retrieval or rediscovery that render what is “lost” as something that lays inert among the stuff of other children. Whereas Peter Pan’s shadow, indeed, remains inert—“If he thought at all, but I don’t believe he ever thought, it was that he and his shadow, when brought near each other, would join like drops of water, and when they did not he was appalled”—Wendy’s imagination activates itself (24). It is at this critical juncture, when Peter Pan is helplessly trying to reunite with what has been lost and now lies inert, that Wendy and Peter Pan meet for the first time.
Peter Pan’s childlike helplessness renders him queer to Wendy, for among other things, he resorts in vain to reuniting with his shadow “with soap from the bathroom,” rather than with needle and thread (24). In this instance, Peter Pan embodies the innocence, the unfamiliarity with the ways of life, that marks him as the Romantic figure of the child, whereas Wendy, now a problem solver, takes on the role of comforting a child. This juxtaposition of the Romantic child and the Edwardian child brings out the opposite forces of two childhoods, and their attendant complexities, that Barrie seeks to harmonize. For if Peter Pan represents an unapologetic Romantic vision of the eternal child, he is also the facilitator of change in Wendy; Wendy, being part of this encounter of two childhoods, is given the opportunity to experience her childhood differently, through his. This encounter of childhoods, in short, becomes a two-way intervention: it intervenes into the inertia of one childhood that renders the child a figure of helplessness and stunted growth (due to an imposed innocence), as it brings an affective potential of irregularity to another childhood that undergoes its stages of development in prescriptive, progressive terms, attuning its presence and future to the rhetoric of child/citizen as the only available spectrum of its growth.

The means with which Barrie bridges these two versions of childhood is friendship. If friendship is, as Leela Gandhi defines it, an “immature politics ... a distinct style of coalition and collaboration marked by apparent disregard for what we now know as ‘identity’ or ‘single-issue’ politics,” Peter Pan and Wendy’s mutual recognition of each other’s difference, which carries an affective presence, is also a friendly encounter (7). This encounter, I argue, does not reinforce what they do or do not know, as it opens both children’s field of vision, allowing them to see and touch that which they have never experienced before. Though queer and strange, Peter Pan does not represent, in Wendy’s eyes, the figure of the stranger, a potential danger to
her domesticity. Rather, Wendy befriends the strangeness that is in Peter Pan, exercising an inclusive sense of belonging, a process of nearing another/an other that falls outside the regimes of difference, that Sara Ahmed refers to as a particular recognition that “constitute ‘the subject’ in relation to ‘the stranger,’ who is recognized as ‘out of place’ in a given place” (8). Instead of a stranger, Peter Pan becomes to Wendy a friend whose strangeness does not relate negatively to her normative self. Reading their initial encounter through the lens of friendship, I argue, is key to developing an analysis of their interactions in the Victorian nursery and Neverland in terms other than those of sameness and difference. As a mediator between two understandings of childhood, as embodied by Peter Pan and Wendy Darling, friendship helps foster an environment that is sustained by an interdependence of lives, a collective living capable of exercising wellbeing and care for others that runs counter to a mode of us-versus-them logic that trades on invasion, territorial control, and violence inflicted upon others.

The Darling Nursery: Forgetfulness and the Forging of New Relations

The Darling nursery that stages the beginning of Peter Pan is a space that first receives the strange encounter of two symbolic systems—that of middle-class domesticity and that of an unscripted and inclusive sociality. This encounter of difference, and the impact it produces, appeals to an image of childhood that is neither Romantic nor radical; instead, it points to childhood as an openness elsewhere in which children are given the room to imagine alternative systems of knowing and being with others. If the Victorian nursery was indeed a space of socialization whose purpose was to develop children into sensible beings capable of reason and restraint, while learning and appreciating the virtues of middle-class domesticity embodied by a set of hierarchical relations between parents and children, between siblings, and between family and household staff, Barrie’s representation of the Darling nursery bears little resemblance to
that which is familiar to his Victorian forebears. From Mrs. Darling, the nurse (which happens to be a dog), to Wendy Darling’s extraordinary hospitality to strangers, and the porous boundary between the nursery and that of the outside world, *Peter Pan* enacts, within a reimagined space of childhood, affects and gestures of forgetting that point to a more expansive way of orienting one’s self and senses of being in close proximity with the strange and not-yet-known. In representing the Darling nursery as a space of make-believe and spontaneity, Barrie challenges the prescribed functions of the nursery as a site of cultural reproduction. ⁹ What happens in the Darling nursery, I argue, is an enactment of childhood that recontextualizes itself based on Romantic and Victorian narratives of childhood, ones that in idealizing it, often relegate it to “nature” or policed spaces wherein the child’s imagination and mobility is monitored. ¹⁰

Indeed, upon a closer look at the Darling’s nursery, one sees plenty of unorthodoxies that would raise many Victorian eyebrows. Mrs. Darling, for one, is no typical mother: “her romantic mind,” as the narrator tells us, “was like the tiny boxes, one within the other, that come from the puzzling East, however many you discover there is always one more” (5). The invocation of “the puzzling East” seems to suggest that Mrs. Darling is preoccupied somewhere, somehow too far and ethereal to bear a proper address. Instead, the reader has to settle with the adjective “puzzling” that points us to an “East” that enters with Mrs. Darling the space of the nursery. This brief description of Mrs. Darling’s interiority is important, for it sheds light on an alterity of mind that is different than, if not at odds with, the conscious effort of raising her children properly, as Mr. Darling would have her do. Her relationship with her children, ⁹ See Tange for a description of the Victorian nursery as a space of discipline and imitation, a place where “children had the perfect environment in which to learn how to be properly middle-class and to adore (and wish to emulate) their parents – for Nurse doled out the punishment . . . while papa and mama offered the rewards” (225).

¹⁰ See Plotz, particularly in Chapter One, for a discussion of “the de-contextualizing of the child” and subsequent chapters on the “recapturing and reconstructing childhood identity” through sites of authority.
especially with Wendy, is of one of harmony that trades authority and order for affection and occasional misbehavior. Such a relationship between mother and children—“[the] lovely dances [between them] . . . The gaiety of those romps! And gayest of all was Mrs. Darling, who would pirouette so wildly that all you could see of her was the kiss” (8)—deviate a great deal from the prescribed relationship between parents and children that is supposed to enact itself in the nursery. Mrs. Darling’s involvement in her children’s adventures is apparent, as every night before bedtime she talks to them, leaving behind a world of adult worries that occupy the mind of her husband. These frequent entries into the nursery do not so much reinforce Mrs. Darling’s authority over the space of her children, as they bring the mother closer to the imaginative space of her children, a space made up of horizontal relations as opposed to vertical ones that mark the figures and subjects of authority. If, as Claudia Nelson writes, that “the moral superiority that nineteenth-century convention attributed to women was firmly tied to women’s ability to mother,” and it was mothers who “were expected to penetrate the nursery occasionally . . . to provide sex education for her young daughters and perhaps also young sons” (46, 51), then Mrs. Darling, in assuming the role of the mother in fin-de-siècle England, enters the nursery with both motherly affects and fanciful thinking that unmoors rather than anchors her children, complicating a motherhood that was extolled by writers of a previous generation such as Sarah Stickney Ellis. 11

Despite her frequent interactions with her children, Mrs. Darling, as wife and mother, relies significantly on the support of others, including a canine nursemaid Nana—“the nurse was a prim Newfoundland dog”—to help carry out her duties. What is absurd is that they have

11 b. 1799, d. 1872. Ellis’s works cover an array of definitions of and tasks for middle-class women. See The Daughters of England (1842) and The Mothers of England (1843), among others, for a cult of domesticity that seeks to anchor the figure and future of the woman in the home.
employed a member not of another class, but of another species, to do the job, and that Mrs. Darling is perfectly content not to take a more directive position within the private sphere:

Mrs. Darling was married in white, and at first she kept the books perfectly, almost gleefully, as if it were a game, not so much as a Brussels sprout was missing; but by and by whole cauliflowers dropped out, and instead of them there were pictures of babies without faces. She drew them when she should have been totting up. . . . [Nana] proved to be quite a treasure of a nurse. How thorough she was at bath-time, and up at any moment of the night if one of her charges made the slightest cry. Of course her kennel was in the nursery. (6-7)

That the Darling household is, in fact, more-than-human, with Nana the dog performing the daily chores and disciplining of childbearing, can be read as Barrie’s critique of excessive human intervention into the imaginative spaces of childhood. Poking fun at the nurse, a hired worker and surveillance device and, by extension, Victorian parenting in general, Barrie downplays the importance of house rules that preside over the nursery, and the need to have a figure of adult authority to police children into behaving properly as miniatures of their middle-class parents. Instead of a nurse, we have a fluffy creature, one that actually shares the affective space of the nursery—“Of course her kennel was in the nursery”—and becomes one with the nurturing and care of that space. The Darling nursery, in a word, is an anomaly. For in introducing a trusted canine into her domestic realm, and sharing the task of managing household expense and childcare, Mrs. Darling is setting an example for her children that having fun, and surrounding oneself with loving others, is key to one’s happiness. That is to say, rather than reinforcing the Victorian standards of wife and mother, Mrs. Darling is apt to forget those standards in favor of having closer contact with her children as a supporter, not a shepherd, of their emotional growth.
and make-believe adventures. A listener to rather than a lecturer of her children, Mrs. Darling patiently attends to Wendy’s fantastical reasoning. On discovering “leaves of a tree . . . on the nursery floor . . . [that] were not there when the children went to bed,” Mrs. Darling, though worried, entertains Wendy’s conjecture, as the child says, “‘I do believe it is that Peter Pan! . . . It is so naughty of him not to wipe’ [his feet clean]” (11). This fantastical response from Wendy, however unbelievable, is enough to stop for the time being Mrs. Darling’s inquiry, as the mother cannot think of a reason good enough to counter her daughter’s imaginings: “Mrs. Darling did not know what to think, for it all seemed so natural to Wendy that you could not dismiss it by saying she had been dreaming” (11). Mrs. Darling’s not knowing “what to think” in encountering Wendy’s make-believe, in many ways, suggests a concession to letting unexplainable things stand in the space of the nursery, a gesture that unpegs the disciplinary functions of the nursery. Mrs. Darling’s habits of forgetting, in short, create the conditions of possibility for a merging of worlds; as the figure that stands between the nursery and the outside world, Mrs. Darling is not always vigilant about the windows being securely closed, so much so that Peter Pan is able to enter the nursery as he pleases.

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The first encounter of Wendy and Peter Pan is filled with forgotten facts and spontaneous acts of overlooking differences. More surprising, it is Wendy who is performing these acts of forgetting: while Wendy is supposed to “know better” because of her familiarity with the domestic milieu, her readiness to receive Peter Pan, a stranger, suggests a deviance from her role as a gentleman’s daughter. If “[i]n the 1860s and 1870s . . . an appropriate method of disciplining female children . . . [was] sheltering gently reared girls . . . designed to produce dutiful children who adhered to the standards set by parents,” Wendy’s behavior towards
strangers shows quite the opposite behavior (Nelson 86). Indeed, a comparison between Wendy and Victorian representations of girlhood suggests that the former, while “girlish” and innocent still, is dynamic rather than static, with a great deal of agency of her own. “The little girl,” writes Catherine Robson, “is the key to male security,” arguing that Victorian ideas of girlhood facilitate other needs, positioning the girl, “as a service for others—or more precisely, for male others” (76). The encounter of Wendy and Peter Pan, however, highlights a curiosity towards strangers, a curiosity that leads to potential fun as well as risks, as Wendy pacifies the crying intruder in the nursery. The nursery is a site filled with normative and disciplinary functions; as a space of childhood but for adults, the nursery is a scene of social reproduction within a larger project—the consolidation of the bourgeoisie and imperialism—a reproductive space of consciousness and consent. As Ann Stoler writes, “childrearing [as] practices . . . focus… on restraint of passion and individual self-control in which the mother [is] cast in a model role” (143). The encounter of Wendy and Peter Pan, however, pays little attention to the disciplinary function of the space, in favor of something off the script and unprecedented.

“‘Boy . . . why are you crying?’ is the first thing Wendy says to Peter Pan (24). Wendy’s first question is not “Who are you?” or “Why are you here?” but one that recognizes and responds to an affective display of helplessness—a boy trying, in vain, “to stick [his shadow] on with soap from the bathroom” (24). “Not alarmed to see a stranger crying on the nursery floor,” (24) Wendy is more concerned with understanding the source of Peter Pan’s frustration in her presence, rather than interrogating his illegitimate entry, something that she might have done in the interest of establishing herself as the rightful occupant of the said space. Indeed, the conversation that follows their initial encounter shows less interest in parsing out differences in upbringing and general outlook on life between Wendy and Peter Pan, than in eliding them in
favor of a possible friendship. Just as Peter Pan is untroubled by Wendy’s name—Wendy Moira Angela Darling—a series of proper nouns that secure her name to a traceable narrative of genealogy, Wendy quickly learns to overcome the relatively shortness of Peter’s name or the strange inexactness of his address: “Second to the right . . . and then straight on till morning” being what Peter Pan gives Wendy as the directions to Neverland (24). The extent to which their conversation is veering increasingly off-track, and the way in which Wendy and Peter Pan accept the strangeness of their exchange as a given, or a welcoming change, collectively suggest a radical gesture flouting concepts and conventions of time and space, and their relation to a progressive narrative of development to which children and adult alike are tied. The slow process by which Wendy is unlearning the lessons and etiquette of a middle-class life, and the openness with which she receives all that she does not yet understand, require a willingness to forget established knowledge and its impact on private and public spaces. A change in Wendy’s methods of knowing and behaving, in fact, has been set in motion before she reaches Neverland:

When people in our set are introduced, it is customary for them to ask each other’s age, and so Wendy, who always liked to do the correct thing, asked Peter how old he was. . . .

“I don’t know,” he replied uneasily, “But I am quite young.” He really knew nothing about it . . . Wendy was quite surprised, but interested; and she indicated in the charming drawing-room manner, by a touch of her night-gown, that he could sit nearer her. (27)

The interjection of an adult opinion into Wendy’s handling of Peter Pan is apparent. The comment—“When people in our set are introduced, it is customary . . .”—draws attention to Wendy’s deviation from a social world to which she belongs. While it is reasonable to attribute Wendy’s deviation to her insufficient grasp of proper etiquette, I want to highlight instead a separateness of a “People in our set” to which Wendy is hailed, and an affective relation between
Wendy and Peter Pan that is spontaneously forgetful of cultural niceties. Indeed, the affective gesture of drawing near that which she does not understand, not to mention “[her] charming drawing-room manner,” reveals an interest in other modes of living not acknowledged to by bourgeois respectability, an interest that is also an indication of Wendy’s new role in the otherwise disciplinary space that is the nursery.

Seeing that Wendy is friendly and non-judgmental, Peter Pan invites her to Neverland. The suspension of disbelief Wendy exercises in their first encounter, among other things, secures an invitation from a stranger; more significantly, by accepting the invitation, Wendy is taught how to fly, a completely different mode of mobility that necessitates a reconceptualization of various spatial relations between her personhood and things and locations that were once familiar to her, like the nursery. Floating about the ceiling, Wendy enjoys a different vantage point from which to reconsider the nursery, its design, its disciplinary function, and its trajectory of development. The ability to fly, and the sensation of flight, is a disorienting experience:

They were all on their beds, and gallant Michael let go first . . . and immediately he was borne across the room. They were not nearly so elegant as Peter Pan, they could not help kicking a little, but their heads were bobbing against the ceiling, and there is almost nothing so delicious as that. (34)

Both viscerally and mentally speaking, the horizontal posture of flying, rather than the vertical posture of walking, I argue, literalizes the idea of “growing sideways,” what Stockton sees as an alternative to the progressive, upward-bound rhetoric of human development. By extending the hand of friendship to the eternal boy who is Peter Pan, and by urging her siblings John and Michael to go to Neverland with her without parental consent, Wendy blithely separates herself and her actions from a system of power relations that places the father before the mother, parents
before children, and family before servants and strangers. Between two bodies oriented by
different modes of knowing, I argue, is a fleeting moment and space that holds the possibility of
beginnings and being otherwise. If spontaneous encounters are what Kathleen Stewart calls—
“moving forces . . . immanent in scenes, subjects, and encounters . . . something that takes off
with the potential trajectories in which it finds itself in the middle”—the initial encounter
between Wendy Darling and Peter Pan is nothing less than a convergence of different modes of
self and social orientation (128). The disorienting impact of this contact, and the flights of
fancy—literally—that ensue, form a scene of recognition of failures (not a failure of recognition)
that generate new ways of relating oneself to the other that escapes the strictures of identitarian
logic. With so many things conveniently forgotten, Wendy, now much lighter, is ready for
Neverland.

Inclusive Relations and Affects of Care in Neverland

“‘Now just wriggle your shoulders this way,’” Peter Pan instructs the Darling children,
having sprinkled fairy dust on them, “‘and let go’” (33). But what does it mean to “let go”? To
the Darling Children, it means a letting go of facts—that humans cannot fly, that fairies do not
exist, that human-fairy interaction are the stuff of make-believe, that Neverland, having no
address to speak of, can not be reached, for example. Letting go, in short, is an action, an
affective gesture of removing oneself from systems of knowledge that have anchored one’s self
and senses of being. That the Darling children can fly is not simply because they are covered
with fairy dust, but because they “let go”; and in letting go of what they have known and leaping
forward and up, the air that otherwise holds no weight, receives them. This achieved airiness,
however, is tiring, requiring much effort of one to stay awake; the expanse that lies between the
nursery and Neverland is uncertainty, and Wendy is afraid: “Certainly they did not pretend to be
sleepy, they were sleepy; and that was a danger, for the moment they popped off, down they fell.

. . . there was always the possibility that next time you fell [Peter Pan] would let you go” (38). To stay awake, to be conscious that they are flying across the ocean, is essential to their eventual landing in Neverland. This awareness of their will to make-believe, and the vigilance that it requires of the Darling children, signals an independent agency that, fanciful or realistic, is exercised outside the purview of parental care. The Darling children keep awake of their own accord, because they want to seeNeverland; for this to happen they must take responsibility. This easily overlooked period between nursery and Neverland, in fact, represents the liminal space from a childhood that assumes no agency of its own, to another one that acquires its agency through interacting with the unknown, and reaching to the yet-to-come Neverland.

Wendy does not land on Neverland of her own accord; she literally falls on it, having been shot by an arrow aimed at her by Tootles, one of the Lost Boys. This violent act, facilitated by Tinker Bell yelling at the Lost Boys, “‘Peter wants you to shoot the Wendy,’” is the result of an unchecked loyalty to Peter Pan, as it is “not in their [the Lost Boys’s] nature to question when Peter ordered” (56). The chain of commands, from Peter Pan to the Lost Boys, is well-established; without a hesitation they inflict violence upon “the Wendy,” a strange entity that translates into danger. Read in this light, Neverland, not unlike the nursery, is a place of order, a land with marked by different competing affiliations and sites of belonging. That is, until the arrival of the Darling children, Neverland has its own code of community that is based on sameness and difference, the distinction of friends and foes. For Tootles’s mistake—“killing” a friend instead of a foe—Peter Pan is ready to inflict pain, using the same arrow that has struck Wendy “as a dagger” to strike Tootle. This cyclical nature of violence is interrupted by Wendy, however, when she has “raised her arm” twice to stop Peter Pan, whispering to herself, “‘Poor
Tootles’” (59). When Peter Pan finally learns of the cause of this series of confused violence, he cries, “‘Listen, Tinker Bell . . . I am your friend no more’” (59). While Tinker Bell eventually turns around, and is forgiven, an important lesson is being learned by Peter Pan and his cohort: that is, a perceived danger based on a dialectics of friends and foes, of familiarity and foreignness, can turn out being a constitutive part of an expanded sphere of care and community. “Friendship,” Sara Ahmed argues, “involve[s] the ritualisation of certain forms of touch, while the recognition of a stranger might involve a refusal to get too close to touch” (49). From Tootles’s arrow that aims at piercing through the skin of Wendy, to Wendy’s touching Peter Pan’s arms to stop the same arrow to damage Tootles’s body, a transition from seeing to touching has already taken place. Out of jealousy and violence, there comes finally a shift from an epistemology of difference to an experience of it is generative: not violence but peacemaking.

All this confusion of belonging and betrayal in Chapter V, “The Island Come True,” points to the limitations of an understanding of friends and foes, of the proper sphere of care, that animates itself at the sight of the Other. This dialectical reasoning of friends and foes, however, is interrupted and made ineffective by Wendy’s forgiveness. By forgiving Tootle’s violence toward her person, and by stopping Peter Pan from inflicting pain on Tootle as punishment, Wendy transitions from “the Wendy”—a strange entity to Neverland—to becoming constitutive of a new mode/node of affection, a make-believe family of which she is asked to be the mother. Affected by this, the Lost Boys quickly build her a house, too ready to replicate a domesticity they themselves have little experience and memory of. A girl in Neverland, it seems, is all that it requires for the boys to erect partitions between private and public, between homely comforts and worldly hostilities. “‘Wendy lady,’” Slightly, one of the lost boys, says, “‘for you we built this house,’” and before too long all the lost boys are “on their knees, holding out their arms [and
crying], ‘O Wendy lady, be our mother’” (65). At first glance, the building of a new home in Neverland and Wendy’s assumption of the mother role can be read as a reinforcement of colonial expansion, where England is sending her daughters to far-flung colonies, to protect the men from going native or behaving in ways that undermine the projected moral and physical superiority of the bourgeois class (and disciplining the wild and childlike natives). Kirsten Stirling, for example, reads Wendy’s presence in Neverland as an enactment of a domestic fantasy that is controlled by Peter Pan:

Wendy’s arrival in the Neverland literally encloses her in her domestic fantasy . . . and Wendy becomes identified with the structure that encloses her to the extent that ‘Wendy house’ has passed into regular British English usage. . . . Wendy’s house becomes inseparable from her assumption of the maternal role in Neverland. (49)

Whereas Stirling reads complexity into this “domestic fantasy” of Wendy, arguing that “Wendy’s interpretation requires Peter to commit to other aspects of fatherhood . . . [and] Peter’s refusal of the sexuality implied by such a role,” (52) I see an element of alterity in this domestic fantasy, one that shifts the idea of family, the locus of familial affection, from consanguinity to compassion. This shift, among other things, allows Wendy to exercise a motherhood that is not based on a genealogy of sameness but on an affective orientation toward that which is formerly outside the purview of motherly care.

Instead of simply heeding Peter Pan, who says to Wendy, “‘What we need is just a nice motherly person,’” (65) Wendy exercises her motherly affects to create an inclusive environment of care. While it is true that Peter Pan, as the head of the make-believe family, often asserts his influence, the everyday activities of this household are carried out through Wendy’s childlike understanding of motherhood. Indeed, a closer look at Wendy’s sense of motherhood and
domestic duties reveal a departure from Victorian ideals: “[T]he attributes of home and woman
converged around a fairly constant set of purposes in the middle decades of the nineteenth
century: nurturing the family and confirming its identity as middle-class” (Tange 31). Although
it is true that Wendy thinks that she is being the perfect mother, that she is not doing anything out
of the ordinary, the blitheness with which she becomes everyone’s mother—including her
siblings and the Lost Boys—is a gesture of nurture that does away with, rather than reinforces,
the home as a middle-class site of belonging made up only of those with legitimate relations.

The domestic routines of Wendy’s household, as the narrator tells us, are carried out with
earnest care that makes the distinction of what is real and what is make-believe a secondary
concern: “. . . those rampant boys of hers gave her so much to do. . . . The cooking, I can tell
you, kept her nose to the pot, and even if there was nothing in it, even though there was no pot,
she had to keep watching that it came aboil just the same” (69). These make-believe domestic
practices, if conventional at a glance, reveal a commitment to caring for others who need not
actually be family members. Wendy, by virtue of being in close proximity of Peter Pan and the
Lost Boys, is breaching decorum, blithely revising and relaxing “the ideological dominance of
the middle classes in the Victorian era, the expectations for virtuous girls in all walks of society
were strongly influenced by the mores of the bourgeoisie” (Nelson 81).

Care—a concept and practice—is also being reworked in Neverland, and the providers
and recipients of care are sustained by the make-believe of reciprocal sociality, not a hierarchical
structure subtending patriarchy. A family unit made up of middle-class children, working-class-
like orphans, and Peter Pan and a somewhat belligerent fairy, in short, challenges rather than
confirms the proper place of family life, on which normative notions of care are based. That is, care in Peter Pan is being resituated, coming not solely from the preferred sites of family and
state. And those receiving care are not subject to a logic of ownership that turns affection into a possessive claim—she is my child, he is the ward of the state, or this people is under the jurisdiction and care of England. That the language of care is a problematic one did not escape Barrie himself, as his life and increasing involvement with the Llewelyn Davies family show. “At various times,” writes Chaney of Barrie’s relations with the boys, “Barrie felt extremes of pride, possessiveness, protectiveness, and a desire for gratitude” (286). Barrie’s emotional and physical closeness with the boys “had placed himself in loco parentis for the five boys. He acted as their father, and wanted also to be their mother” (286). As Barrie himself struggled to find a language to describe his love and care for boys not of his own, but dear to him as if they were his, Peter Pan, I argue, became an alternative space in which the complex feelings a paternal figure had for children who felt like his own are given a chance to explore themselves without incurring comments and criticism from society. More particularly, a more expansive language of care, one that is not subject to epistemologies and distinctions of normative love, is able to articulate itself without much irony through make-believe and fantasy, as we see in Wendy’s somewhat unusual and capacious understanding of motherly affect.

A storyteller, Wendy often brings together everyone in the household before bedtime. While the stories Wendy tells do not deviate from lessons of domesticity and family life, they do confuse the distinction of family and friends. When Wendy finds out that the Lost Boys are sad to see her leave, “off to something nice to which they had not been invited,” Wendy promptly offers, on her parents’ behalf, to adopt all of them: “‘Dear ones . . . if you will all come with me I feel almost sure I can get my father and mother to adopt you. . . . it will only mean having a few beds in the drawing-room’” (100). Not just the nursery, but the drawing room of the Darling household, too, is now in service of those in need. This extension of care, an affective gesture of
kindness to others, mobilizes the idea of care to members outside of one’s family. Instead of vertical relations organized by a gender-based hierarchy, what we have with the Darling children and the Lost Boys are horizontal relations that exercise care and senses of belonging in a more inclusive way. By assigning new, extra-familial roles to physical spaces within the family—the nursery, the drawing room, etc.—*Peter Pan*, through practices of make-believe, is forging ways to experience and experiment with family without attaching it to epistemological constraints that dictate the roles and spaces of intimacy and belonging.

Perhaps the most salient of Wendy’s motherly influences over her family, as well as those adjacent to it, is felt through her tolerance toward that which is different from her. A closer look at the interpersonal and spatial dynamics that take place in Neverland, for example, makes explicit the extent to which Wendy is able to exercise care and extend a sense of community to her brothers and the Lost Boys that goes beyond the vision of Victorian femininity and maternity. We learn, for example, that the Darling children and the Lost Boys love to play in the mermaid’s lagoon. While it is “Wendy’s lasting regrets that all the time she was on the island she never had a civil word from one of [the mermaids],” (73) her acceptance of the mermaids’ incivility toward her enables others to enjoy the lagoon, and thereby sustains the conditions of possibility of friendship between the children and the mermaids. Her open-mindedness toward that which she does not understand, among other things, sets an example for the boys, and this non-violent stance toward difference is not without a positive impact. In Chapter VIII, “The Mermaid’s Lagoon,” Wendy’s gestures of non-interference are what help bring together different social worlds:

She was often at the lagoon . . . on sunny days after rains, when the mermaids come up in extraordinary numbers to play with their bubbles. . . . [Though] the moment the children
tried to join in . . . the mermaids immediately disappeared . . . Nevertheless we have proof that they secretly watched the interlopers . . . for John introduced a new way of hitting the bubble, with the head instead of the head, and the mermaids adopted it. This is the one mark that John has left on the Neverland. (74)

Rather than clashing, the two social worlds—that of Wendy’s make-believe household and that of the mermaids—have achieved an understanding of shared living. For Wendy, the lagoon is not simply a playground for the present pleasure of her “children,” but a habitat of the mermaids whose history and relation with the space she and her children need to respect. There has been no violence, even though the children and the mermaids do not feel, think, or play the same way. “Thinking big,” as Timothy Morton argues, “means realizing that there is always more than our point of view. . . . an environment . . . is made up of strange strangers” (58). Wendy understands the necessity of non-interference in more-than-human interactions; her tolerance of what she does not understand—i.e., the fact that the mermaids do not care for her or play with bubbles the same way as her brothers—allows the children and mermaids to share the lagoon in peace. By turning motherhood into motherly affects, and by extending maternal care to those who will receive it in Neverland, Wendy resituates her being and senses of belonging to a site where family affects and associations carry themselves out in ways that run counter to those prescribed to Victorian domesticity.

Reimagining Communities and Sites of Belonging

In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Judith Halberstam locates an agency in the child, insofar as “the child sees his or her family and parents as the problem, the child who knows there is a bigger world out there beyond the family, if only he or she could reach it” (27). Halberstam’s understanding of childhood, similar to Stockton’s in many ways, calls attention to a sense of
space of childhood that reaches outwards. The child’s imagination, quite naturally, meanders outside of home to unlikely places that by chance teach the child what it means to belong somewhere.

When the Darling children have the misfortune of being captured by Captain Hook, and are subsequently given a choice to live under Hook’s protection as pirates, both John and Michael are tempted (“Red-handed Jack” and “Blackbeard Joe” are private names that instantly come to John’s mind). But when ordered by Hook to renounce their status as “respectful subjects of the King,” the boys hesitate. “You would have to swear, ‘Down with the King,’” says Captain Hook to the boys, to which the boys cry, “I refuse” (120). In such moments as this, normative notions of an English community and citizenship triumph. That both John and Michael Darling, together with the Lost Boys, refuse the opportunity to convert from being “subjects of the King” to becoming pirates can be seen as a performance of English superiority charged with imperialist sentiments. Arguments about Peter Pan operating within the spaces of bourgeois domesticity, upon whose creeds the nation imagines itself as a community of like-minded citizens, are often made because “[t]he Darling children’s choice of turning away from Neverland and returning home solidifies the family and its social values” (Bryd 57). “The ‘appropriate’ choice is reinforced, these arguments go, with the decision of relocating the six Lost Boys to the Darlings’ drawing room” (57).

Such readings of belonging as either coercive or coaxing, by Captain Hook and Wendy Darling respectively, and of the Darling children’s eventual return to England, however, carry the risks of eliding the various modes of belonging experimented with in the novel that run counter to established structures of family and nationhood. For when the captured Wendy exclaims on the ship, “These are my last words dear boys . . . I feel that I have a message to you
from your real mothers, and it is this: ‘We hope our sons will die like English gentlemen,’” it is
difficult to gauge what Wendy actually means. Right before this exclamation, Wendy has found
Captain Hook to be less than perfectly attired; despite “the elegance of his diction . . . the
distinction of his demeanour . . . [and the fact that] in dress he somewhat aped the attire
associated with the name of Charles II,” Hook has “soiled his ruff, and suddenly he knew she
was gazing at it. With a hasty gesture he tried to hide it, but he was too late” (120). As if to
punish or poke fun at this grown Victorian gentleman in form and education—Hook receives a
proper education, allegedly, from Eton—Wendy looks at Hook “with a look of such frightful
contempt that he nearly fainted” (120). Instead of addressing the Lost Boys, Wendy’s lofty
speech of “‘We hope our sons will die like English gentlemen’” seems to be directed at Hook’s
less-than-perfect embodiment of cleanliness, mocking him as well as the Englishness he
possesses. Read in this context, Wendy’s retort dismisses Captain Hook’s claims that his
Englishness is superior to that of the Lost Boys or the Darling Children. Instead of being
incorporated into a cohort of belonging led by Captain Hook, Wendy prefers her own
community, one that is less hierarchical and patriarchal.

Wendy’s failure or unwillingness to incorporate Captain Hook and his lot into her sphere
of motherly compassion and care does not speak to an intolerance of difference, as it does her
stance against an established sense of Englishness that overly privileges education, status, and
affectation. By coercing everyone into becoming his subject (by virtue of being a pirate),
Captain Hook embodies a community-building that is at odds with Wendy’s motherly inclusion.
The inclusive community reared by Wendy’s motherly affects and Peter Pan’s make-believe in
Neverland confuses rather than confirms the logic of imperialism. This community is growing to
be such a nuisance for Captain Hook that he is determined to crush or convert it into something
more traditionally and hierarchically defined. That the Darling children refuse to listen to Captain Hook, a figure of colonial dominance, is a blatant defiance of authority. The Darling children, in short, are invested with the power to refuse orders from a paternal figure, something that Barrie entertains rather than censors. Instead of promoting hierarchy or patriarchy, Barrie’s novel consistently pokes fun at notions of affiliation and filialness that are achieved or maintained through power and manipulation. Early on in the novel, for example, we have glimpses of Mr. Darling’s domestic presence, which, though comical, is not without an abusive streak. His pontification to Mrs. Darling on household finances and the costs of childcare—

“‘Now don’t interrupt . . . I have one pound seventeen here, and two six at the office; I can cut off my coffee at the office . . . don’t speak, my own . . . quiet, child—dot and carry the child—there you’ve done it!’”—for example, demonstrate a paternal figure towering over his family in ways that are not uncommon among his Victorian contemporaries (6). By consigning Mrs. Darling to a stage of childlike innocence and helplessness, Mr. Darling becomes the only adult in the household capable of making rational decisions. Nor is Mr. Darling keen on Nana, a dog, taking care of his children, even though he knows that “no nursery could possibly have been conducted more correctly” (8). Compounded by the fact that Mr. Darling has “his position in the city to consider . . . [and] a feeling that she [does] not admire him,” Mr. Darling is often unfair to Nana, as when he blames her for putting “nonsense” in his children’s active minds and putting children’s medicine into her bowl (8-18). Such little gestures of paternal authority never hurt anyone, to be fair to Mr. Darling, but the whims and needs that propel such acts within his household demonstrate the power the father has over those in his care, whether or not he chooses to exercise or withhold it, or in what manner. As John Tosh writes, “Authority, guidance and discipline continued to be viewed as central to the father’s role. Masculinity, after all, was
essentially about being master of one’s own house, about exercising authority over children as well as wife and servants” (89). As a caricature of Victorian patriarchy, Mr. Darling’s presence in the domestic realm—not dissimilar to Captain Hook’s presence in Neverland—is a problem. 

_Peter Pan_ takes up as it imagines children with agency to escape or even defy a protection that exercises itself in the form of authority and control. Similarly, Captain Hook is a paternal figure, if his influence is felt more in the colony than in the home. That Barrie describes Hook as belonging to the class of men who “had been at a famous public school [Eton College]; [and whose] traditions still clung to him like garments,” is more than a coincidence (117). A pirate, a tyrant, a man preoccupied with proper diction and manners, Hook is a caricature of the Victorian father figure that must preside over the home, and exercise authority over his wife and children to validate himself and his public achievements. “No children love me!” exclaims Hook, revealing his insecurity and a need to overcome by converting the Darling children into pirates under his care.

The final duel between Peter Pan and Hook in many ways resembles the clash of two visions of being in this world: while Peter Pan is carefree, to the point of irreverence, toward proper nouns and relations, and has a fear of grammar (he does not know how to write), Captain Hook is careful with his diction, comportment, and deeply paranoid about what people think of him. Their differences, as reflected in the communities they help form have a significant impact on the Darling children, particularly on the way they think about criteria for inclusion and exclusion. During the sword fight, Captain Hook shouts at Peter Pan, “‘Pan, who and what art thou?,’” to which the youngster answers “‘I’m youth, I’m joy . . . I’m a little bird that has broken out of the egg’” (130). This unmeditated answer troubles Captain Hook greatly, as he knows that not knowing “in the least who or what [one is] . . . is the very pinnacle of good form” (130). For
a man who is obsessed with proper learning and attire, Captain Hook struggles with the lucidity and intuitive wisdom of a child’s answer. This short exchange between adult and child reveals, among other things, the capacity of children to arrive at the meaning of one’s being and sense of belonging that is subject to cultural erasure, and the fear of an Englishman of being undone by an unlearned child. Peter Pan’s expression of his core being—“I’m youth, I’m joy”—is affect-based, whereas Captain Hook, with all of his learning, cannot find words to rebut such a nonsensical response. As the duel is about to end, with the well-dressed man losing the battle, Barrie gives us one closer look at the “villain”:

What sort of form was Hook himself showing? Misguided man though he was, we may be glad, without sympathising with him, that in the end he was true to the traditions of his race. . . . and as he staggered about the deck striking up at them impotently, his mind was no longer with them; it was slouching in the playing fields of long ago, or being sent up for good . . . And his shoes were right, and his waistcoat was right, and his tie was right, and his socks were right. (132)

These memories of Eton, to which Hook’s being and sense of belonging are intricately linked, seem to suggest a former stage of happiness that the adult was hitherto trying to repress until the final moments before his death. These specific references to Eton also make explicit Barrie’s ambivalence toward a formal education that is supposed to serve the best candidates for the future of England. That a graduate of Eton is losing a sword fight not to another gentleman, but to a child who does not know his grammar, suggests the price one pays for belonging to that which one deems superior to all else, to a mode of community that compels us to defend it, because it is better, ours. This duel between Captain Hook and Peter Pan, among other things, point to a deep-seated imagination of communities predicated upon a love for othering:
In the age when it is so common for progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals (particularly Europe?) to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism . . . nations [also] inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love (Anderson 141).

That a love for one’s community can inspire both “self-sacrificing love” and “fear and hatred of the Other” is what Barrie seeks to redress in Peter Pan. And for such a redressing of communal love, childhood becomes the imaginative space for rethinking the fundamental elements of care and community. By removing the Darling children from the nursery to Neverland, if temporarily, Barrie is able to enact a childhood in the presence of others, out of which alternative understandings of one’s being—what one feels instead of what one is or is not—senses of non-identitarian belonging are formed. Horizontal rather than vertical, the friendships between the Darling Children, Peter Pan, and the Lost Boys occupy an inclusive space of care and community that articulates itself not in terms of authority or control—that of legitimacy and ownership—but in terms of voluntary participation. In short, Peter Pan demonstrates to children and adults alike that there is at least one alternative way of achieving community—one that does not involve grammar—and that children, like the Darling children, can benefit from venturing outside the familiar milieu of care and community, to a living with others that need not reinforce distinctions between the civil and the uncouth, between legitimate sites of belonging and what and where it feels like to belong.

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The Darling children eventually return home, bringing the Lost Boys with them. One by one they go back to school and to life’s routines, and “in time [the Darling Children] could not even fly after their hats” (145). While it is not difficult to see that the ending of Peter Pan is
bringing readers back to an everyday life that is normal, and thereby canceling much of the fantastical effects of the story, the condition of flight and possibility is still intact. When Wendy—now a grown woman and mother—refuses to go to Neverland with Peter Pan, saying “I can’t come . . . I have forgotten how to fly,” Peter Pan will not relent (151). And eventually Wendy is persuaded into accepting and seeing magic again, into giving her daughter Jane the chance to fly instead: “Of course in the end Wendy let them fly away together. Our last glimpse of her shows her at the window, watching time receding into the sky until they were as small as stars” (152). The suggestive mood that fills the beginning pages of Peter Pan with a sense of possibility is once again in effect, giving Wendy an option—and space—to participate in a world of fancy that she has previously chosen to forget. If, as Seth Lerer writes, the success of Peter Pan lies in “its evocative recall of . . . woodland fantasy . . . its filtering of high Victorian school and domestic culture . . . [and in seeking] a meaning in fantastical rather than empirical or scientific life,” Peter Pan, in taking us to Neverland, a place with no specific address or sense of time, is also successful in bringing together different modes of knowing, and different manners of living, through friendly gestures that aim for the uncharted territories of care and community with a host of unidentifiable others.

In this chapter, I have shown the extent to which friendships between children and that which they encounter becomes the means through which a dialectics of familiarity and foreignness, of friends and foes, gives way to a more relaxed and expansive understanding of care and community. What connects the Victorian nursery and Neverland is a sense of play, of make-believe, that has given the Darling children access to alternative understandings of place—that a place does not so much control their subjectivity or imagination as the other way around. With these new understandings, the Darling children foster a more robust sense of living with
others, whose affects of care of community-building adults have forgotten how, just as they have forgotten how to fly. In the next chapter, I turn to E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* to demonstrate the affective forces of cross-class friendships and their impact on normative notions and places of inheritance, both in terms of material property and cultural belonging. By bringing together family and friendship, and by squeezing their different claims on everyday relations into the crowded places of middle-class English life, Forster preserves a space for friendship to generate its own sense of its presence and objects of inheritance in everyday life, even when normative claims of affiliation have undermined friendship’s condition to belong somewhere, anywhere.
“Only Connect”: Friendship, Family, and the Objects of Inheritance in E. M. Forster’s *Howards End*

The final test of a novel will be our affection for it, as it is the test of our friends, and of anything else which we cannot define.

—E. M. Forster, in *Aspects of the Novel*

When E. M. Forster published *Howards End* in 1910, a novel that reflects on the preoccupations of its time—the distribution of wealth and welfare, the balance of culture and common sense, concrete and conceptual locations of belonging, among others—would bring him fortune and fame: “Impressive sales of *Howards End* . . . bought Morgan enough money to undertake a six-month journey to see Masood [a dear friend of Forster’s] . . . in India” (Moffat 106). The novel, however, meant more than a steady cash flow, for it secured also a legitimate reason, or excuse, necessary for Forster to temporarily separate himself from his mother—Alice Clara Whichelo—who lived with him till her death in 1945 (Forster in his sixties by then). A catalyst, *Howards End* launched Forster closer to his friend, to whom his later work *A Passage to India* was dedicated, and further away from home and England, where his sense of belonging is a filial and normative one. That the resonances of friendship are felt in and through to *Howards End*, in real life as in fiction, is a significant aspect of the novel that is seldom taken up.

Traveling as far as Kyoto, Japan, J. R. Ackerley, another dear friend of Forster, stumbled upon a used copy of *Howards End* in 1960. In his letter to Forster, Ackerley writes, “You will be pleased to hear that someone else bore my heart up and tranquillised my mind during the past week—and that was you. . . . It was a great pleasure to have your mind in the room” (quoted in Braybrooke, 182). In a brothel near Osaka where Ackerley was nursing a broken heart, it was his friendship with Forster, via *Howards End*, that brought him comfort. From England, India, to Japan, the force of *Howards End* was felt through an interconnected-ness that is friendship. Connection between spaces and sentiments, I argue, is a central theme of the novel; the
entanglements of the Schelgels, the Wilcoxes, and the Basts—three different representations of English society and culture—unsettle Edwardian assumptions of belonging on the one hand, and challenge entrenched, normative ideas about intimacy and inheritance, on the other.

The story told in *Howards End* is one of class and cultural divisions in Edwardian England. It is also a tale of motion and transition: set in London, *Howards End* unfolds the daily lives of the Schlegel sisters—Margaret and Helen—who, together with their brother Tibby, represent that which is opposite to the Wilcoxes, a family believing in industry and home life (Henry made a fortune in the colony), and suspicious of culture and cosmopolitanism. Half-German and therefore not “English to the backbone,” contrary to what their aunt Mrs. Munt is apt to say, the Schlegel sisters, with an income well invested and renewed each other, nonetheless face one challenge: they are about to be priced out of the nicest parts of London, which has begun catering to commerce rather than culture at the start of the novel. With the decision not to renew the lease of Wickham Place, where the Schlegel siblings were brought up, Margaret and Helen each find their present and future becoming unhinged. Margaret and Helen will each search and try to secure happiness in their own way, running into Henry Wilcox and Leonard Bast respectively. It is in incorporating these men in their lives where complications and crises arise, further exacerbating an otherwise simple wish of the sisters: to live happily among those whom we love, and to respect and harm not those whom we do not understand, if that means fleeing the increasingly unconnected London all together.

The beginning chapter of E. M. Forster’s *Howards End*, which takes the form of two letters from one Schelgel sister to another, captures the entire span of a summer love affair of Helen and Paul Wilcox, youngest son of Henry and Ruth Wilcox. These letters soon becomes the catalyst for bringing together a host of other people, whose subsequent relations and dealings
with one another will prove to last much longer than one season, and that these relations, as they
invoke obligations of family and friendship by turns, also highlight the problematics of
inheritance, both materially and metaphorically speaking. In Helen’s second to Margaret, she
writes, “‘I am having a glorious time. I like them [the Wilcoxes] all . . . They are the very
happiest, jolliest family that you can imagine. I do really feel that we are making friends’” (5).
The younger sister here finds herself enamored with the idea of family life—embodied by the
Wilcoxes—and is happy to included as a family friend. This harmonious closeness between
family and friendship turns out to be short-lived. For no sooner than does Paul makes clear to
Helen that he is in no position to marry, that it would take him years to establish his own means
in Nigeria, than their romance dissipates quickly into an embarrassment for Helen, which, in
turn, develops into a distaste for Mr. Wilcox’s fair but unrelenting ways as a father and man of
commerce. A woman with independent means, Helen is not subject to the pressure of securing
one’s fortune, as Paul is; nonetheless, the way her “lover” is being bullied into accepting his
station in life by his father/family structure is something that troubles Helen deeply. As Helen
tells Margaret of her time spent with the Wilcoxes, upon her return to Wickham Place, their
residence in London:

“I was still happy while I dressed, but . . . when I went into the dining-room I knew it was
no good. There was Evie—I can’t explain—managing the tea-urn, and Mr. Wilcox
reading the Times. . . . and Charles was talking to [Paul] about Stocks and Shares, and he
looked frightened. . . . When I saw the others so placid, and Paul mad with terror in case I
said the wrong thing, I felt for a moment that the whole Wilcox family was a fraud, just a
wall of newspapers and motor-cars and golf-clubs.” (26)
This view of the Wilcoxes, as the story unfolds, will harden into a belief for Helen, a belief that it is the commercial class of England, the nouveau riche, who is responsible for sucking life out of idealistic men and women like Paul and herself, depriving them of beauty and romance. Indeed, for the remainder of *Howards End*, she finds herself increasingly at odds with Henry Wilcox and the world he represents.

Were Helen be the heroine of Forster’s novel, one might be tempted to read the novel as a straightforward rejection of late-Victorian notions of family life, wherein hierarchy regulates the flow of love and legacy. However, it is not only from Helen’s perspective but from Margaret’s that different views on affection, taking the forms of family and friendship by turns, are being played out in unexpected ways. While Helen’s disillusionment with the Wilcoxes, as well as her subsequent relationship with Leonard Bast, further cements her radical views on family and friendship, Margaret insists on the connections of human relations—familial, social, and political. Throughout the novel, Margaret tries to understand in earnest (sometimes in vain) a vision of the good life that does not turn into a denial or rejection of others. Through multiple subject positions and relations—as a single woman, sister, niece, friend, agent of social change and wife, Margaret has come to realize that principles alone do not bring people together happy:

“All over the world men and women are worrying because they cannot develop as they are supposed to develop. . . . It is part of the battle against sameness. Differences—eternal differences, planted by God in a single family, so that there may always be colours; sorrow perhaps, but colours in the daily grey.” (353-354)

*Howards End*, as I will argue later, brings awareness to the comforts and constraints placed upon individuals as they recognize—or fail to recognize—one another as part of a connected whole. In highlighting the connectedness of human relations, Forster’s novel offers friendship—
that between Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox and that between Helen and Leonard, for example—as an affective force through which to map personal feelings and social/cultural affinities that find themselves muted, unable to voice their needs or inherit the things they want.

*Howards End*, I argue, attempts a different representation of the intimate life, one that takes more fully into account of non-representational affects and relations, is an inquiry that often finds itself overshadowed by a host of well-defined (op)positions: women’s rights versus patriarchy, social responsibility versus capital, London versus pastoral England, individualism versus conformity:

*Howard Ends* [takes] a wider view . . . balanc[ing] two families with very different values, each equally convinced of the supremacy of their way of seeing life: Margaret and Helen . . . who cherish personal relations and the liberal values of ‘temperance, tolerance and sexual equality’ . . . the Wilcoxes, who believe in money, business, and power. (Moffat 99)

Embracing various conflicts of fundamental differences in everyday life, as Moffat claims, *Howards End* also apprehends the spaces in which differences can coexist with each other in relative peace, minding each other’s presence—each other’s right to the present—as time softens the outermost layers of discord for a more enriching feel of being and becoming that is the future. This utopic vision of intimacy is in many ways a response to the logic of practicality that had shaped many a Victorian perception or representation of love within the bounds of family and kinship: “The real heritage, the only one of any value in Foster’s opinion, passes through the spirit rather than through the blood . . . [the] novels demonstrate the importance of [the] reconsideration of the rights and definitions of lineage predicated on emotional temperament” (Dickson 169). David Lodge, similarly, locates a source of tension over competing notions of
intimacy, inclusion, and inheritance, as they play themselves out in personal and socio-cultural ways:

_Howards End_ fingers with unparalleled precision a sensitive spot in the consciousness, or conscience, of the liberal literary intelligentsia . . . If culture at the personal level ultimately depends on the possession of money . . . can it be shared equally in society? And what stance should the advocates of culture adopt toward those who make money, and towards those who have little or none. (xiii)

Whereas Moffat, Dickson, and Lodge, among others, have rightly identified multiple areas of tension and division in _Howards End_, the identification of tension and division, I argue, is not at the heart of the novel. Rather, in drawing out seemingly unbridgeable differences—gender, class, notions of agency and belonging—and flooding everyday life with them, the novel cautions against a regenerative logic of sameness and difference that serves to confound human relations. The uneven politics of identification is not something the novel escapes from, as critics have suggested, but a concern Forster addresses by placing human relations more squarely into the mix of everyday conflicts. Christopher Lane and Stuart Christie, in analyzing Forster’s escapism via their readings of _Maurice_ and _Howards End_, have concluded that pastoral imaginings are a means by which Forster extricates alternative human relations—homosexual, for example—from the harshness of an English culture from which Forster increasingly dissociates. Whereas Lane argues that there is an “often antagonistic gap between Forster’s politics and fiction, and again between his ‘public’ novels about friendship and his ‘private’ and posthumous stories about sex between men of different races,” (146) I see in _Howards End_ a sustained interest in representing human relations—through invocations of friendship—as
something immanently present in this world, not transcendental, to be transported to someplace else.

It is affinity based on shared senses of belonging, not affiliation and kinship in a legal sense, that is being experimented as a possible—if not preferred—form of inheritance in *Howards End*. In deploying friendship as a means to materialize the idea and impact of connection, Forster’s novel shows the extent to which friendship is able to bring vitality and fluidity to the legacies and locations of belonging, while imagining new venues to connect people, ideas, and things that are otherwise distinct or discrete. What *Howard Ends* achieves, I argue, is the approximation of a vision of human relations grounded immanently in everyday life, an alterity of intimacy sustained by the on-goings of affects—present and mutually felt—and not pre-organized by entrenched, identity-based systems of love and legacy. By crowding the normative spaces of family with friends and other figures, not removing human relations from those spaces, Forster is actively imagining a set of affinities whereby human relations and their responsibilities to one another are carried out in terms experiential rather than epistemological. Throughout the novel, the demarcations of family and friendship are blurred and crossed by turns, along with the allocations (or dispossessions) of values and things to which these two arenas of human relations are subject. Sentiments of family and friendship, and the inheritances to which they are drawn invoke a vocabulary of connectedness that runs counter to the impulses of collecting—hence taking possessions of—people, ideas, and things.

Friendship and the Unlikely Spaces of Connection

Friendship comes and goes flittingly in *Howards End*; it complicates the daily lives of the Schlegel sisters through its decentering tempos and trajectories. Among other things, the friendships between Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox, and that between Helen and Leonard Bast,
generate feelings and forces that illuminate new ways of thinking about personal intimacy, sociality, and cultural belonging. These friendships operate within the concrete and conceptual places of everyday life—a luncheon peppered with current and controversial topics, last-minute Christmas shopping, impulsive visits to Wickham Place, a pastoral-inspired journey into Howards End that results in Leonard’s death; they also catapult those involved into deeper, conceptual spaces of the not-yet-known. The unexpected ways in which friendship operates in the novel, I argue, bring a surplus of affects to the novel, to the extent that people, places, and their routinized relations to each other are being turned into unpredictable resonances, going off-scripts or spontaneously somewhere else by turns.

Margaret’s friendship with Mrs. Wilcox begins with a guarded passivity that verges on pessimism. When Mrs. Munt, aunt of Margaret Schlegel, pays a surprise visit one morning to Wickham Place—where the Schlegel siblings have lived since they were born—the niece knows something has gone awry. “Oh, Margaret,” Mrs. Munt exclaims, “such a most unfortunate thing has happened” (58). By that, she means the Wilcox family, with whom Helen Schlegel spent one summer in their country house Howards End, is moving to London, to “[o]ne of the flats in the ornate block opposite” Wickham Place (58). Receiving this news with calmness, which disappoints to her aunt, Margaret does not think it a “disaster.” Unlike her sister Helen, who adored the Wilcoxes with a passion for one summer and no more, or Mrs. Munt, who is determined not to like them, Margaret takes a less radical approach: she tolerates them. That Margaret is tolerant toward that which she does not know, and that she favors everyday relations over abstract labels and definitions, is the very foundation on which a series of fleeting friendships and chance encounters are allowed to acquire meaning. As Margaret ruminates the meaning of personal relations, and trying to fit the Wilcoxes into her design, her mind drifts
away: “She . . . felt that those who prepare for all the emergencies of life beforehand may equip themselves at the expense of joy . . . [while it] is necessary to prepare for an examination, or a dinner party . . . human relations must adopt another method, or fail (62). It is precisely this openness to that which is to come regarding personal relationships that creates the condition of a possible friendship with Mrs. Wilcox.

It takes one luncheon with Mrs. Wilcox to complicate Margaret’s understandings of personal and social relations, however. While hitherto to Margaret friendship deepens with a cultivation of common interests and compatible outlooks on life—or women’s rights in this case—Ruth Wilcox’s presence during one of her political lunches has left Margaret feeling confused. For, among other things, Ruth Wilcox is apolitical and uninterested in the advancement of women’s status in society: “Clever talk alarmed her, and withered her delicate imaginings; it was the social counterpart of a motor-car, all jerks, and she was a wisp of hay, a flower” (77). For the liberal, educated, well-traveled, and financially independent Margaret, her new friend’s very non-position in things that matter greatly to the democratization of gender and social equity is baffling. Though conscious of shielding her elderly friend from answering questions imposed upon her by other guests, Margaret cannot ignore one fatal remark Mrs. Wilcox makes in response to women’s suffrage: “I sometimes think that it is wise to leave action and discussion to men. . . . I never follow any arguments. I am too thankful not to have a vote myself” (80). Such a remark Margaret cannot ignore, and in an attempt to bring Mrs. Wilcox around, Margaret impresses upon her friend the question of female agency, asking, “We didn’t mean the vote, though, did we? Aren’t we differing on something much wider, Mrs. Wilcox?” (80). And to which Mrs. Wilcox responds—“I don’t know, I don’t know”—a response, or resistance, to Margaret’s questioning. And with this Margaret’s friends dismiss
Mrs. Wilcox, labeling her “uninteresting,” leaving Margaret alone to ponder over the seemingly unbridgeable gap between herself and the new friend (80-81).

The fact that friendship belongs to an aspect of life that is not predictable or eventful is what makes it a confusing, if rewarding, lived experience. “But no law—public opinion, even—punishes those who coquette with friendship, though the dull ache that they inflict, the sense of misdirected effort and exhaustion, may be as intolerable”: equipped with this understanding and little else, Margaret has to connect with Mrs. Wilcox in ways more than what her rational mind can tell her (82). Setting up a comparison between friendship and other relations “as intolerable” and governed by “law” and “public opinion,” Forster brings attention to the easy tendency of subjecting friendship to a language of normative intimacy that cannot comprehend the former in its true light. The friendship between Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox, in short, challenges available understandings of female friendships in the context of Victorian society “as cultivation of “feminine virtues of sympathy and altruism,” a reinforcement of “gender roles and consolidated class status . . . [that] provided women with socially permissible opportunities to engage in behavior commonly seen as the monopoly of men: competition, active choice, appreciation of female beauty” (Marcus26).

Instead, *Howard Ends* provides an alternative understanding of female friendship that cannot be reduced to one single quality or purpose: friendship between women is neither subversive nor subservient, neither utopic nor utilitarian, whose complexity is revealed in manners case-by-case rather than conclusive. Forster’s representation of female friendship, at least in this case with Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox, seems less to do with approximating male agency—“provid[ing] women with socially permissible opportunities to engage in behavior commonly seen as the monopoly of men”—than to do with opening up new spaces within which
female friendship operates in a variety of ways. Marcus, in short, sees agency being facilitated by female friendship, to the extent that it affords women the right to access spaces hitherto designated only for men. My analysis of female friendship, based on *Howards End*, points more toward the potential rather than practical, that friendship provides both Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox, for example, a means whereby they form a sociality that is not tethered to or mindful of the privileges of male homosocial bonding in the public sphere.

The last-minute Christmas shopping that brings together Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox as they venture into commercial London—“‘Harrod’s or the Haymarket Stores’” as Mrs. Wilcox puts it—reveals a deeper bond of friendship that animates itself in the crosscurrents of impulse and imagination. That friendship situates itself outside of available rubrics of affection and belonging is pitted against the increasingly commercialized London whose air “tasted like cold pennies” (84). Overwhelmed by the demands of Christmas, Mrs. Wilcox enlists Margaret’s help as they go from shop to shop to find gifts for the Wilcox family. The very act of gift-giving, which invests love and the transfer of it to others in concrete objects, stresses Mrs. Wilcox as it baffles Margaret. The fact that affection, goodwill, and love are being gauged and then fitted into little precious or not so precious commodities troubles Margaret:

> Vulgarity reigned. . . . How many of these vacillating shoppers and tired shop-assistants realized that it was a divine event that drew them together? . . . These people, or most of them, believed it . . . But the visible signs of their belief were Regent Street or Drury Lane, a little mud displaced, a little money spent, a little food cooked, eaten, and forgotten. (84)

As Margaret surveys the field of festivities, her vision draws inwards, meeting that of Mrs. Wilcox. When the latter finds out that the Schlegels will be “homeless” before too long—they
will not renew their lease to Wickham Place—and are in search of a new home, Mrs. Wilcox is much disturbed by it. “‘You will be very sorry to leave it,’” says Mrs. Wilcox to Margaret, “It is monstrous, Miss Schlegel; it isn’t right . . . I would rather die than—Oh, poor girls! Can what they call civilization be right, if people mayn’t die in the room where they were born’” (85-86).

If Mrs. Wilcox was found somewhat lacking in opinions at Margaret’s luncheon some weeks ago, here it is Margaret’s turn to be speechless. Unable to locate where Mrs. Wilcox’s passion comes from, the younger woman “[does] not know what to say,” attributing the outbursts of emotion to the fact that Mrs. Wilcox is tired from shopping (86).

What Margaret, or even Mrs. Wilcox, does not at this moment understand is that their friendship has entered, temporarily, into an emotive space in which their shared senses of belonging is in search of a common ground. Margaret’s losing Wickham Place—a place of childhood memories—is what activates Mrs. Wilcox’s empathy. Her subsequent impulse to invite Margaret to *Howards End* the very same day—“‘Come down with me to Howards End now . . . I want you to see it’”—is a natural conclusion of her imaginings of belonging. And in that space of belonging Mrs. Wilcox awaits Margaret, wishing to give it her (86). Mrs. Wilcox’s affective gesture of sharing Howards End with Margaret, which Margaret does not recognize and refuses to accept (by declining the impromptu invitation), is the gift of friendship. And this gift “worthy of your acquaintance,” as Mrs. Wilcox puts it, will take the shape of Howard End, whose concreteness is what Mrs. Wilcox needs to communicate with force her affection for a friend whose feelings of belonging, and the space in which to house those feelings, is a matter of great significance (83). The friendship between Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox, in short, makes explicit the affective dimension of friendship that yields not so much recognition of or a need for
existing commonalities or common positions on ideology or politics, as it does a slow process of nearing one another in the absence of goals.

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In describing the Edwardian novel, Jane Eldridge Miller calls attention to Forster’s contradictions regarding notions of intimacy and the marriage plot in his novels: “Forster’s five Edwardian novels demonstrate a fascination with as well as a resistance to marriage. . . . The rights of women, women’s suffrage, and indeed, women in general, seem to have been of negligible interest to Forster as well” (46). Attributing this neglect or lack of interest to Forster’s homosexuality and his Victorian scruples over marriage and divorce, Miller sees in Forster a wish to “be recognized as a ‘modern’ writer,” whose novels represent modernity with “a pessimistic attitude . . . with scenes of separation” (46). In Howards End, as in A Passage to India, however, intimacy—as a concept as well as practice—is consistently invoked in a variety of contexts and scenarios. 12 Through imaginings of friendship, Forster, I argue, constructs alternative avenues and access to feelings of intimacy and belonging in terms and sentiments more-than-bourgeois, with repeated gestures toward a future unfolding of affection that is not bound by normative visions and rules of marriage and the marriage plot. In particular, Howards End captures the affective energies of urban life in London, where Helen and Leonard, among throngs of others modern women and men of different classes and histories, share the spaces and resources of the city, if still in vastly uneven ways and manners. If modern English cities, according to Lydia Murdoch, “offered greater opportunities for reinvention and experimentation with one’s identity,” where men and “women entered public spaces and came together in close 

12 The next chapter of this dissertation will address more fully the various roles friendship plays in creating and sustaining alternative spaces for cross-cultural affinities and senses of belonging in colonial India, as represented in A Passage to India.
proximity with people from different backgrounds,” Howards End is mindful of encapsulating this aspect of modernity (205-206). Indeed, the friendship between Helen and Leonard is one that is built upon anomalies and aberrations. As their proximity grows in frequency, so does a new sense of intimacy that captures what Murdoch sees as “the shifting, ambiguous nature of gender . . . and class in the Victorian era [and beyond]” (206). From Helen’s friendship with Leonard, cross-class and cross-gender, Forster, I argue, attempts to test a code of conduct between men and women that speaks to respectability but fails to recognize the interstices of city life wherein new intimacies form new affinities and alliances between individuals that do not locate their happiness in a highly stratified society.

Compared to Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox’s, the friendship between Helen and Leonard Bast is contentious, confusing, chasing after a sense of utility or justification that eventually takes itself to Howards End as well. In representing the relationship between Helen and Leonard this way, Forster seeks to portrays an entanglement of affects and relations that is normative life, whose competing claims on the way we feel and relate to others often stuns the growth of friendship, prematurely pruning its emotional trajectories or, worse, uprooting it from the concrete and conceptual places of belonging: “Ideologies happen . . . Power snaps into place. Structures grow entrenched. Identity take place. . . . But it’s ordinary affects that give things the quality of a something to inhabit and animate” (Stewart 15). The “ordinary affects” of friendship, in this case that of Helen and Leonard, too, are like things that take up space and amass senses of presence that “inhabit and animate” personal relations: brief and spontaneous encounters between Helen and Leonard are consistently confounding for both—they cannot agree on things and are prompt to misunderstand one another—but in confusing them, the moments of sociality their friendship opens up also allow them to express themselves in new
ways. From trying to explain who they are, what they represent or reject, to becoming more connected to each presence without knowing why, Helen and Leonard embody the everyday forces of friendship that are non-teleological.

Leonard is drawn into the social world of the Schlegels in search of his umbrella. Not a nice umbrella, but nonetheless his own: the belief that he has a right to claim what is his, what he has purchased with money earned honestly, propels Leonard from the Queen’s Hall to the doorstep of Wickham Place. That Helen has stormed out in the middle of a symphony, taking his umbrella with her, is alarming to the young man, for carelessness with money and things he cannot afford. Wickham Place is culturally and socioeconomically alienating to Leonard; the more Helen and Margaret try to make him comfortable by turning him into one of theirs, the more awkward and inferior he feels. With every polite question thrown at the man he gets more tense and defensive. “If only he could talk like this [the Schlegel sisters], he would have caught this world,” Leonard laments to himself, with injured sarcasm:

Oh, to acquire culture! Oh, to pronounce foreign names correctly! Oh, to be well informed, discoursing at ease on every subject that a lady started! But it would take one years. With an hour at lunch and a few shattered hours in the evening, how was it possible to catch up with leisured women who had been reading steadily from childhood?

... “I supposed my umbrella will be all right... I don’t really mind about it.” (41)

By the time Helen goes to find his umbrella and exclaims, “‘It’s an appalling umbrella. It must be mine,’” (43) Leonard flees the scene. Nonetheless, this cross-class, cross-gender encounter between strangers plays a significant part in the novel; in bringing together Helen and Leonard, and their differently-informed notions of idealism and the past of Edwardian England that is the visions and long walks of the Romantics, Forster delineates the endurance of a friendship whose
condition of meaningful resonances comes only from an inexplicable desire to be near one another that, although bearing a resemblance to romance, seeks to exercise its affects beyond the normative frame of intimacy and marriage.

“London is a muddle, and not always an unpleasant one,” Forster writes in *Two Cheers for Democracy*; the variegated nature of the city, a place always already connected to something else, untidy but not “always . . . unpleasant,” is the backdrop against Forster imagines a mundane—not idealized—interconnectedness of people and things: If you want an example, look out of your bedroom window . . . Your view is sure to be ‘spoilt’ by something vulgar or shabby, but it may be redeemed by something charming, entertaining, antiquated. Anyhow, it will not be all of a piece” (353). Any view of London, including all kinds of relations therein, is that of a palimpsest: layer upon layer, splendor here and squalor there, the city houses people driven by different pasts and ethos, some of whom collide and cancel out each other, whereas others find meaning in their brief and chance encounters. The extent to which individuals like Helen and Leonard try—if sometimes in vain—to find moments of resonance in this city of randomness and fragmentation, is like a fundamental human effort on which Forster builds his visions of friendship.

Leonard’s visits to Wickham Place, and the Schlegel sisters’ attempt to include him in their social world, are neither smooth nor successful. The more both parties try to ignore their differences in education and taste, the more their relationship becomes awkward and astringed. The fact that both Helen and Margaret feel protective toward Leonard—because they are in a position to do so and feel compelled by it—is a major source of anxiety for Leonard. His first visit to Wickham Place, as mentioned earlier, leaves Leonard walking home with his umbrella, “[o]bscurely wounded in his pride” (47). But the impact of this brief encounter between the
Schlegel sisters and Leonard endures, and Leonard cannot forget Helen and Margaret for the next two years. His second visit to Wickham Place, born out of a confusion—his wife Jacky has walked to the same place in search of her husband, whom she suspects to be in some relation with a mistress—proves, initially, to be as awkward as the first time: “An air of evasion characterized Mr. Bast. . . [he] was obviously lying,” and Helen is insistent upon finding out whereabouts the man has gone in absence of his wife for days (122). Helen’s incessant questioning, and his inability to extricate himself cleanly from it, results in a sudden outburst of emotions, as the man confesses, angry at Helen, “‘I don't call it fair . . . It was something else . . . I was somewhere else . . . I walked all the Saturday night . . . I walked’” (122-123). This outburst of emotions, in many ways, help deviate all three of them from the orbit of respectability. Romantic ideas of walking, and the affective energies of walking alone from city to countryside, fill the living room and animate its inhabitants. Where cultural niceties fail, sheer excitement takes over, as Helen and Margaret are compelled to ask Leonard to describe every aspect of his lone walk into the woods. Questions like “‘Did you actually go off the road?,’” “‘Yes, but the wood . . . How did you get out of it?,’” and “‘But wasn’t the dawn wonderful?’” are met with answers of candor and same excitement. Before too long, all three are laughing, connected. “‘Then you don’t think I was foolish,’” asks Leonard, to which Helen, with “her eyes aflame,” replies, “‘No, it wasn’t foolish! . . . You’ve pushed back the boundaries; I think it splendid of you’” (126). The structural unevenness that is apparent in their friendship is now set aside—if only temporarily—to make room for spontaneous affects that connect the three in a space past “the boundaries”; what boundaries are being “pushed back” are unclear, but the feeling that their friendship is moving somewhere, removing layers that have hitherto separated them, is palpable, especially to Helen and Leonard.
As the friendship between them deepens, however, new conflicts arise: the more Helen wishes to improve the life of Leonard, the more Leonard holds back. This moving forwards and backwards of emotions is disorienting to both. What Helen initially rationalizes in the form of social justice, and in her struggle against the hypocrisy of human relations, will morph into something less identifiable but more difficult for her to confront with in concrete ways. The more Helen tries to pin down what Leonard needs, and how much she should compensate for Henry Wilcox’s bad career advice (which leads to Leonard quitting his insurance job at the Porphyron), the less Leonard feels like he is a friend. And without friendship, he retreats from the Schlegels, which Helen follows by traveling to Germany, away from her family. In the interim between Helen’s retreat from the thick of human relations to her eventual emergence—facing Leonard, her family, the world of the Wilcoxes, and her relation to them—Margaret is tasked with picking up the pieces of friendship, as she tries to fit them into the designs of everyday life, grounding friendship more firmly in the thick of human relations, familial and otherwise, rather than transcending or forgetting it.

“Only Connect” and the Objects of Inheritance

“Only connect!” Forster writes in Howards End, “Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted . . . Only connect, the beast and the monk, robbed of their isolation that is life to either, will die” (195). This famous series of invocations appeal to the very action of connecting entities and identities, a human effort differed from its near-rhyme collecting. For if the act of collecting is a process of accumulation, whereby the collector assumes the role of the protector (the ability to own) and curator (the ability to display), to connect is to draw oneself nearer to people, ideas, and things, an effort that need not operate within the logic of ownership and classification. Victorians’ complex relations with the securing
and transfer of one’s property, along with logistical concerns over space and sentiment can be seen as

[O]ne universally acknowledged truth about the Victorians is that they loved their things. . . Victorian novels made much of such objects, returned to them repeatedly, and interrogated their significance in a variety of puzzling ways. . . [and] certain belongings come to seem dually endowed: they are at once products of a cash market and, potentially, the rare fruits of a highly sentimentalized realm of value both domestic and spiritual. (Plotz 1-2)

This love of things, of turning things into one’s belongings, is both concrete and cultural. And as the critic suggests, “Victorian novels made much of . . . objects,” interrogating the “significance” of bringing things and people—belongings—into one’s realm of belonging, Forster in Howards End, too, picks up this Victorian tradition. More specifically, in this Edwardian novel notions of ownership and the spaces of belonging are being brought close together, and as they find themselves in the presence of one another, with little room to claim or turn to, these ideas of property (what is rightfully mine and mine to bestow?) and impulses to belong (where is home or that shared space of connectedness?) must acknowledge the presence of others, as well as the ramifications these ideas and impulses invoke.

Collecting and connecting also engender different understandings of and relations to space: while what is collected requires further action—that of seclusion and protection—which, I argue, reads into space an exclusivist logic, the act of connecting—“Only connect!” as Forster unequivocally announces—thickens space with difference and variety to the extent that the very places designed for only certain people, things, and for the protection of owned/labeled belongings are being tested to their epistemological limits. Forster claims in Aspects of the
Novel, “the final test of a novel will be our affection for it, as it is the test of our friends, and of anything else which we cannot define” (23). In connecting rather than collecting everyday relations, I argue, Howards End conflates rather confirm the bounded-ness of family and friendship, by literally crowding them—and their different needs—into shared spaces and scenarios (23). That is, friendship is not so much an alterity outside of family, but an alternative—and more expansive—understanding of affection that connects different forms of family and units of belonging. Friendship, as invoked repeatedly in these shared spaces and scenarios of human relations, becomes an intervention into an exclusivist logic of property that divides belonging—an affect, an action—into discrete units and spaces whose respective belongings (in the form of people, ideas, and things) are divorced from that which is meant to be shared, both concretely and conceptually speaking. In the novel, characters—Margaret and Helen Schlegels, Leonard Bast, Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox, for example—hold different views on connection and collection, shaping how they think about possession and belonging, as well as the way they form and maintain relations. As the story unfolds, however, some of their notions of inheritance and belonging acquire more sensitivity towards others: while not every character radically changes in terms of their beliefs, it is nonetheless the case that their beliefs, in being brought into proximity with others, become humanized, less rigid. They coexist. “Inheritances,” Allan Hepburn writes, “trouble the certainty of property and ownership . . . [which] are central to the British . . . novelistic tradition” (22). In Howards End inherits but revises this novelistic tradition, filling its pages with debates over renting versus owning a house, over the logistics of moving people, furniture and stocks from place to place.

In Howards End, Forster complicates matters of inheritance by turning intended objects of lawful ownership into a portable idea and sharable goal; in doing so, it revises also normative
notions of intimate relationships by connecting friendship to matters of inheritance that are often considered family business. That Mrs. Wilcox, upon her death, wishes to pass on her family estate Howards End to Margaret is as aberrant as it is seemingly anti-familial. So confused and hurt by Mrs. Wilcox’s decision to leave her family estate Howards End to Margaret, to a friend, for example, her surviving family—husband and children—cannot but see this wish as a betrayal to her family and the sanctity of family:

The incident made a most painful impression on them. Grief mounted into the brain and worked there disquietingly. Yesterday they had lamented: “she was a dear mother, a true wife: in our absence she neglected her health and died,” Today they thought: ‘She was not as true, as dear, as we supposed. (103)

The meaning of Mrs. Wilcox’s death, in short, is being revised and reassessed the moment her family discovers her “disloyalty,” the moment she is found to have exercise her right as a property owner outside the realm of her family. That both husband and children are unable, or unwilling, to understand the logic of her bequest from her own perspective, from their collective memories of her devotion to them, while understandable under the circumstances, nonetheless reveal their staunch belief in proper familial relations over other modes of relations. The Wilcoxes, in short, will not allow their objects of inheritance (their rightful claims to Mrs. Wilcox’s house in this case) be challenged by and transferred to a stranger, however nice she was to their mother.

In analyzing the archetype “the angel of the house” and the way it stabilizes property within the domestic sphere, Nunokawa writes, “the woman conscripted at home is assigned the duties of property that capital can no longer be relied upon to discharge” (124). In many ways, Mrs. Wilcox inherits the image of “the angel of the house.” Her very personhood—“She
approached [her family] . . . trailing noiselessly over the law . . . a wisp of hay in her hands. She
seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that
overshadowed it”—captures an essence that is not of capital, of outer influences of motor cars
(22). Indeed, were it not for her friendship with Margaret, which intensifies during the
occasional absences of other Wilcoxes and at the end of her life, Mrs. Wilcox would meet, at
least in a superficial sense, every description of the dutiful wife and mother, whose own needs
facilitate those of her family. Mrs. Wilcox embodies, in short, “[the] reliable agent of propriety .
. . the domestic monitor whose durability there as property . . . is the still point in an age of
capital” (Nunokawa 123-124).

The force of Mrs. Wilcox’s will—“I should like Miss Schlegel (Margaret) to have
Howards End”—however, is such that her agency and independence of spirit is creating a space
of belonging wherein Margaret, though a stranger to Mrs. Wilcox’s children, is deemed more
suitable to inherit a family estate (101). A disruption of grief, Mrs. Wilcox’s symbolic gesture
brings forces of friendship into the realm of family, forcing her family to recognize an aspect of
her love to which they are not heir. While her family is able to ignore her request by
rationalizing this aberration, attributing it to “illness, and . . . the spell of a sudden friendship,”
the resonances/ramifications of this symbolic gesture of inheritance linger throughout the rest of
the novel. Carrying “no date, no signature” and written in pencil, Mrs. Wilcox’s final request
has an enormous impact on her surviving family, for, among other things, it opens up matters of
inheritance: from straightforward business of capital and family alone to matters that include
ideas of care and friendship as well, the objects of inheritance here are being considered in a
larger context. Eventually, Margaret does inherit Howards End through a traditional route—by
marrying Henry Wilcox. This seemingly normative conclusion of Howards End, where
Margaret is now part of the Wilcox family, is less of an endorsement of the rightful linkages between family and inheritance, between husband and wife, than a revision of these linkages from within. Having an independent income of her own, Margaret is not in need of Henry’s financial protection; all she wants Howards End for is to secure the future of a nurturing space where Mrs. Wilcox has passed on to her symbolically, a space Margaret wishes to pass on to her nephew—the son of Helen and Leonard, born out of wedlock. That “baby” is to inherit Mrs. Wilcox’s home, “baby” whose name is never revealed in the novel, is Forster’s intervention into the idea of legitimacy regarding matters of inheritance. “She intends when she dies to leave the house to her—to her nephew, down in the field. Is all that clear? Does everyone understand,” Henry addresses his children, as the Wilcox family is gathered together to discuss the logistics of dividing up the family fortune (357). With Charles in prison and Paul serving the king in Nigeria, Howards End falls into the hands of Leonard’s son. When Henry has to pause for a second to name the connection between Margaret and her nephew, he cannot find a better way to describe the boy than to say “her nephew, down in the field”: that a boy “in the field” is to inherit, through Margaret, the country house whose owner had “[trailed] over the [same] lawn . . . a wisp of hay in her hand” invokes, I argue, a new practice of inheritance, one that does not radically challenge the idea of family per se, so much as it broadens the meaning of family to ensure that spiritual relations and affinities between people we find special—between friends—are not left out of the proper sphere of intimacy and inheritance. As the bond between Mrs. Wilcox and Margaret that has escaped names and labels, the relation between Margaret and “baby”—Leonard’s son—defies easy definitions. In the realm of bourgeois inheritance where genealogy and gentility matter, Howards End, and the passing of it from owner to another, is guided by a different light: not one of patrilineal logic that collects bodies and ideas into a one’s
domain, but one of deep personal resonances that connect bodies and ideas to fields of belonging.

*Howards End*, in taking up various notions and tensions of portability (flux) and immobility (permanence), also inquires into the locations of cultural belonging and the subjects of cultural inheritance. Analyzing the novel through the lens of justice, and in the interstices of law and literature, Melanie Williams argues that Forster’s novel is actively engaged with a political unevenness of its time that rendered certain agents and objects of inheritance more suitable over others. “The text indicates the inadequacy of abstracted theories of justice in reflecting the intimacy which obtains personal acts and public polices and practices,” Williams writes, arguing that the asymmetric distribution of justice is filtered and felt through one property that is Howards End. However, I argue that the novel emphasizes not so much “the need to link” together different systems of knowledge and relations as it does a way of life that endure ideological impasses, personal as well as political. Unlike Williams and others who are apt to read the novel as a negotiation between three aspects/forces of Englishness—the Wilcoxes who represent the world of commerce and Empire, the Schlegels who embody the intellectual and cosmopolitan spheres, and the Basts, a class of displaced citizens facing material and spiritual poverty—I argue that *Howards End* is more interested in teasing out an ethics of everyday endurance, and of hope, that renders modern life closer to the affective than to the agential. “We are not concerned with the very poor,” Fosters writes in Chapter 6, that “[t]his story deals with gentefolk, or with those who are obliged to pretend that they are gentefolk (47).” Despite this remark, the novel is not unsympathetic to the exhaustion and endurance of Leonard Bast, whose life, however precarious, affects those surrounding it in quotidian and profound ways. *Howards End*, I argue, is not simply a negotiation of who/what class should inherit England’s past or
future, or who/what class is most responsible for the merits and ills of society. Rather, it portrays an entanglement of lives that, despite their differences, are more the sum of identity and ideology. If as Williams argues, that Forster’s novel exposes the insufficiencies of abstracted justice to right the wrongs of modern England, an alternative to abstraction is needed instead. Not abstracted justice imposed from above, but the unfolding of affective ties between different classes and heritages of belonging is the focal point of the novel. Toward the possibility of a community wherein the past, present and future of England is affectively shared rather than singularly guarded—as is demonstrated in the novel through friendship and the practices of coexistence—is a expansive vision of cultural inheritance that Forster seeks to approximate in *Howards End*.

Indeed, Forster’s vision of cultural inheritance is expressed in no small part through Leonard’s struggle with an obsession to define and assert his place in the commercial and cultural spheres of England. While the Wilcoxes and the Schelegls enjoy financial security and a firm place in modern England, Leonard does not. The fact that Leonard’s presence in the novel is often perceived as migratory rather than stationary is perhaps one of the reasons why he is less frequently studied as a figure of culture, an embodiment of Englishness, in recent scholarship.  

It is important, however, to recuperate Leonard as a force behind Forster’s mapping of cultural value, for, among other things, Leonard’s wish to occupy a cultural space that is beyond the Schlegel/Wilcox totality, beyond the influences of cosmopolitanism or common sense, is what

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13 See White’s essay for an analysis of the symbolic roles of the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes, comparing and contrasting “the aesthetic/spiritual [and] the ethical/material spheres” that the two families represent respectively, while paying almost no attention to Leonard Bast’s role in Forster’s complex, if at times contradictory, stance on culture.
connects him to pastoral England, which to Forster is a place of significance. For him, inheritance is an amorphous entity that does not involve furniture, books, stocks, and annual incomes; to inherit England is a spiritual journey inwards, or walking into the woods. At first glance, Leonard’s relationship to pastoral England is the most tenuous: Howards End, a central object of inheritance, does not come to him till the very end of the story (and his life); his lack of exposure to the literary and cultural spheres of England has relegated him to the margins of collective consciousness.

“The boy, Leonard Bast, stood at the extreme verge of gentility,” we learn of his struggle early on in Chapter 6, “He was not in the abyss, but he could see it, and at times people whom he knew had dropped in, and counted no more” (47). Throughout the novel, Leonard has to fight his way into the consciousness of the Schlegels, and having entered it, he has to convince Helen and Margaret that he is not a statistic, a social problem to be solved through debate over luncheons and afternoon teas, but as an individual, a friend, who gives and takes affection as an equal. Leonard’s poverty and philosophical bent on things are objects of pity for the sisters, and in their eagerness to help, to save Leonard from falling into the abyss—“‘What is the good of your stars and trees, your sunshine and the wind, if they do not enter into our daily lives,’” says Margaret to Leonard—the sisters join forces with Henry Wilcox (150). A mistake Helen later learns, for in soliciting help from Henry, Leonard’s life is made further impoverished; in seeking justice, Helen has alienated herself from Henry and, to an extent, from Margaret as well. These actions, however, do not bring Leonard closer to them as they render him further and further away from that which he seeks: self-respect and a sense of belonging. In her attempt to help Leonard get on with life, Helen, inadvertently, takes much vitality away from him, especially

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14 Invocations of bucolic England abound in Forster’s novels: Howards End in *Howards End*, the “greenwood” ending of *Maurice*, the idealized Cambridge in *The Longest Journey*, for example.
after the episode where Helen shows up with the Basts at Henry’s daughter’s wedding reception, where Helen demands that the elder man compensate for what Leonard has suffered due to Henry’s inaccurate information and careless advice. All this confusion, in short, contributes to Leonard’s self-pity:

“Walking is well enough when a man’s in work . . . Oh, I did talk a lot of nonsense once, but there’s nothing like a bailiff in the house to drive it out of you . . . I shan’t ever again think night in the woods is wonderful . . . Because I see one must have money . . . I wish I was wrong, but—the clergyman—he has money on his own, or else he’s paid; the poet or the musician—just the same; the tramp—he is no different . . . Miss Schlegel, the real thing’s money and all the rest is a dream” (249).

Helen’s insistence upon helping Leonard, ironically, only serves to bring him closer to the world of Henry Wilcox, a toxic environment for the poor idealist. Whereas the Schlegel sisters have their own money and education to withstand that world, Leonard is defenseless against the pomposity of commerce and common sense. His presence at the Wilcox wedding reception cements his sense of inferiority, and with this last confession Leonard will part with Helen and is heard no more. That is, until his final attempt to reconnect with Helen, which ultimately connects his existence to that of Howards End, the concrete and cultural inheritance of pastoral England. In Chapter 41, Leonard reappears from shame and guilt, taking himself away from London to Hertfordshire, home to Howards End. As he removes himself further away from the cultural epicenter that is London, and closer to Howards End, where Helen is, Leonard gradually wakes from the stupor that is city life:

Leonard noticed the contrast when he stepped out of it into the country. Here men had been up since dawn. Their hours were ruled, not by a London office, but by the
movement of the crops and the sun. That they were men of the finest type only the
sentimentalist can declare. But they kept to the light of daylight. They are England’s
hope. (338)

Leonard’s epiphany—or renewal—is connected to a bucolic landscape whose sense of time is
not “ruled . . . by a London office” but is paced by “the movement of the crops and the sun.”
Though not the “finest” specimen of England, the men in the fields represent “England’s hope,”
a space to which Leonard affectively belongs. The tactile quality of everyday life, and the
organic rhythm that is the countryside, is portrayed as a space with more hope than the
vicissitudes of modern England. And to bucolic England Leonard returns: his appearance in
Howards End brings him death, but his death also disinherits Charles—eldest son of Mr. and
Mrs. Wilcox—who being in prison for having “murdered” Leonard, will not take the house. The
transmission of Mrs. Wilcox’s spiritual legacy, in roundabout ways, relays from one friendship
to another. From Mrs. Wilcox to Margaret, and from Margaret to the son of Helen and Leonard,
Howards End inherits friendship’s fruit as much as it is an object of inheritance. If “[a] will
binds inheritors to property, which always involves the future of that property,” as Allen
Hepburn writes, and “[i]nheritance, as a duty, stretches indefinitely forward in time,” the fact that
“baby”—the illegitimate son of Helen and Leonard—is to inherit Howards End extends the
future of the said property to a space of belonging that is neither exactly of the Wilcox’s, the
Schlegel’s, nor the Bast’s (10). That Howards End turns out to be a shared object of inheritance,
and a sanctuary for the enfeebled Henry Wilcox, his wife Margaret, Helen, and baby, reflects a
commitment of peaceful cohabitation, one that carries hope “forward in time,” as it endures itself
amidst identity and ideological differences. In the end, Margaret does find out about Mrs.
Wilcox’s will and the subsequent action the Wilcoxes took to prevent a stranger from inheriting
a family house. “Margaret was silent. Something shook her life in its inmost recesses,” and with nowhere to redirect this but outwards, she heads to “the garden [of] laughter,” where Helen cries, “The field’s cut! . . . the big meadow! . . . it’ll be such a crop of hay as never!” (358-359). This instinct of self-preservation through connecting oneself to others, a will of sorts, does not so much “bind inheritors to property,” like Hepburn suggests, as it points toward a field of belonging that can and ought to be shared.

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In *Aspects of the Novel*, Forster writes, “The main facts in human nature are five: birth, food, sleep, love and death. One could increase the number—add breathing for instance” (47). Unlike those five “main facts” of life, however, breathing is more like a non-representational action that points to basic survival and little else. Unlike “birth,” “love,” and “death,” life events that find themselves reified into concepts, everyday affects such as opening oneself to others, or befriend feelings and fields one does not understand, carry a robustness that can be described but not defined. “Ordinary affect,” Kathleen Stewart writes, “is a surging, a rubbing, a connection of some kind . . . not about one person’s feelings becoming another’s but about bodies literally affecting one another and generating intensitives” (128). Everyday affects, in short, play an important part in *Howards End*, as in the way they reanimate and reimagine notions of belonging and inheritance by turns. It is also through these everyday affects—non-representational but not without an impact on the logic of representation—that Forster envisions community and culture and their future configurations.

The extent to which this ideological torpor renders listless and illegible alternative forms of everyday intimacy, and thereby reinforcing normative relations between the colonizers and the colonized, and the disciplinary spaces that separate them, will be taken up next chapter, as I
analyze the potential and non-representational tendencies of friendship in E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*. Rather than rehearse what is by now a commonplace, that colonial friendship represented in the novel is born out of a frustrated sexuality and its orientalist fantasies, a erasure rather than witness of cross-cultural affinities, I produce an alternative reading of colonial friendship whose affective and spatial forces are such that they fail, as if by choice, to adhere to the moorings of epistemology and history for an otherwise, to an elsewhere, that remains to be invented.
Failures that Connect; or, Colonial Friendships in
E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*

E. M. Forster dedicated *A Passage to India* (1924) to his life-long friend Syed Ross Masood, who, at seventeen and in need of a Latin tutor for his entrance exams to Oxford, was introduced to Forster in 1906. The timing was perfect: Forster was going through a period of solitude, writing *The Longest Journey* (1907). This interim of single-minded productivity, “[a] narrow suburban life that would stretch out interminably, unchangingly into the future . . . [was disrupted by a] wonderful dark-skinned boy,” (Moffat 88), whose grandfather had risked his life protecting the Anglo-Indian community during the Indian revolt of 1857. The friendship between Forster and Masood, born out of a working relationship between tutor and pupil, would eventually outlast Forster’s other romantic relations, including his romance with Ali Mohammed, an Arabic Egyptian whose premature death in 1922 slowed down and much complicated the completion of *Passage*. “‘When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has had to go,’” Forster later told Masood, “‘my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable’” (quoted in Moffat, 190). Where invocations of interracial romance are caught in the impasse of identity and ideological differences, friendship offers itself as a narrative thread with which the writer sutures together cross-cultural affinities. The “little bridge of sympathy between East and West” that was initially supported by a fantasy of cross-cultural—and primarily homosocial—romance would ultimately rest on an unfolding ethos of friendship, something far less definitive or purposeful than romance.

Indeed, friendship would inspire Forster as an enduring force, informing not only his views on subjectivity and sociality, but also matters concerning the British Empire. In a BBC recording studio on August 15, 1947, a decade after Masood’s death, Forster would find himself
being asked to comment on the birth and partition of India and Pakistan. Instead of politics, however, Forster invoked once more his friendship with Masood, as he spoke over the microphone radio to listeners at home and abroad:

Today, the country I have known as India enters the past and becomes part of history. A new period opens, and my various Indian friends are now citizens of the new India or of Pakistan. You must excuse me if I begin with my friends. They are much in my mind on this momentous occasion. It is nearly forty years since I met, here in England, the late Syed Ross Masood. But for Masood I should never have come to your part of the world. (quoted in Lago, et al., 394).

In real life as in fiction, Forster’s insistence on placing friendship ahead of political concerns or historical events reflects a considered ignorance of a subjective life whose importance bears the shape of a recognizable cultural and national identity, in favor of a life whose subjectivity and the spaces in which it apprehends/articulates itself are bound up with those of others, as experienced by the characters in Passage.

In employing friendship as a lens through which to read the different modes of meaningful contact as represented in Passage, I seek to reexamine Forster’s notions of intimate encounter and collective belonging in ways that do not adhere to the available analytic frames—i.e., that of homosexuality or anticolonial nationalism—within which critics have studied the novel. Rather than assessing Forster’s representations of friendship in Passage as effective or ineffective responses to the uneven material conditions of colonial India, or to forms of binary resistance that would coalesce into a subaltern subject/identity or an anticolonial nationalism, I read friendship as it is collectively represented in the novel—as a way of life—to show the extent

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15 See Suleri’s “Forster’s Imperial Erotic” in *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992) and Baucom’s “The Path from War to Friendship” in *Out of Place* (1999) for critiques of Forster’s colonial or flawed representations of cross-cultural relations.
to which *Passage* creates moments and spaces in which to imagine alternative ways of being oneself and belonging to others that undercut the colonial taxonomies of gender, race, and class. Throughout this chapter, I explore a dimension of friendship that is more experiential than epistemological, arguing that friendship carries the potential to foster non-identitarian ways of being and belonging with others, within a world dominated by contractual modes of affiliation and affection. For what gives friendship a radical potential, according to Leela Gandhi, is that in collecting individuals as “singularities,” friendship “form[s] community without affirming an identity . . . [and in a way to] co-belong without any representable condition of belonging” (26). A “shared estrangement [that] is also a communal invention,” friendship, Tom Roach likewise argues, brings with it a pre-condition of shared frustration towards stasis, and a potential of redefining life—singular and multiple—afresh as a collective impulse, however tenuous or unattainable it may be in achieving it (2). What Gandhi and Roach call attention to is a shared sense of belonging that is also a collective effort to invent new conditions of possibility in which friendship is to take place and thrive. This “achieving” of friendship outside the “representable condition of belonging,” I argue, hinges upon an ethics of non-recognition that does not reinforce the affective and spatial arrangements of sameness and difference, as it bears witness to an everydayness of close encounters and proximate relations between bodies and groups—individual or collective—that is too often being written outside the purview of normative belonging.

In representing friendship in *Passage* as an affective force that binds together bodies and social groups, I want to bear out the conditions of alternative personal and social relations that resist hegemonic epistemologies of sameness and difference. The sense of possibility and on-going nature of friendship, I argue, help resituate discussions of being and belonging with others
at a human scale, and in ways that dissociate colonial and postcolonial realities from a
historiography sustained by Manichean reasoning. *Passage* challenges colonial biopolitics and
its attendant taxonomies (i.e., race and sexuality) by downplaying the dialectical tension between
the colonizer and the colonized, in order to recuperate a possibility of achieving cross-cultural
affinity and intimacy as a thinkable past, one that will in turn shape the contours of the present
and the future. By invoking friendship in unlikely social situations—and involving unlikely
bodies therein—Forster recuperates rather than reduces the complexity of colonial lived
experiences that were often rendered as non-events, immature or invisible in the face of grand
narratives of colonialism that are favored by “official” accounts of history.  

Foster’s privileging of an everydayness of proximate relations over a reality of anticolonial struggle in Chandrapore, I argue, should not be seen as a naïve escapism, as critics have consistently argued along the lines of sexuality and nationalism, but as a commitment to getting nearer to an understanding of colonial encounters whose lived experience and affective impact is always already at risk of being erased or reified.

**Queer Affects and Colonial Friendships**

Small yet enigmatic gestures and interactions abound in *Passage*: Mrs. Moore’s removal
of her shoes in a Muslim temple; Aziz’s outpours of emotion—first surprised anger, followed by feelings of gratitude and camaraderie—at the presence of Mrs. Moore; Aziz playing impromptu polo with a British solider; Mr. Fielding’s unorthodox tea party, for which Aziz shows up unfashionably early and offers his collar stud to the host; Aziz’s spontaneously inviting the English to the Marabar Caves (little does he know what is to come), Mr. Fielding feeling compelled to visit the sick Aziz; Miss Quested fainting in one of the Marabar Caves, the list goes

16 See Chakrabarty’s *Provincializing Europe*, particularly Chapter 4 “Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts,” for his distinctions “between historians’ histories and other constructions of the past” (106).
on. These everyday interactions between Mr. Fielding, Aziz, Mrs. Moore, and Adela Quested are confusing and spastic rather than meaningful and steady, however. At first glance, they lack coherence; they seem like exceptions rather than the norms of colonial relations. Suggestive rather substantive, the intermingled lives of these characters resist being translated into a series of events, into a history of successes or failures of colonial relations. The social web thus formed by the crisscrossing of these characters, who are strangers to each other, is akin to a colonial microcosm comprising small-scale lived experiences between the colonizers, the colonized, and the in-between whose daily interactions with one another reveals something different from the ones traced by larger, and less experiential, narratives of colonial history. The encounters between the characters in *Passage*, uneventful and seemingly lacking purposes, bring a sense of particularity to colonial relations: "particularity is not necessarily to assume the other [as] graspable . . . [but to] move our attention . . . to the particularity of modes of encountering others . . . [that] move beyond the dialectic of self-other" (Ahmed 144).

I argue that the “non-events”—along with their affective and spatial irregularities—between Aziz, Mrs. Moore, Adela and Fielding are integral to an ethos of friendship that is the corner stone of the novel. *Passage*, in many ways, exemplifies what Judith Halberstam refers to as “[an] imaginative ethnograph[y],” an approach to observing and writing about lived experiences that begins not “with a goal, with an object of research and a set of presumptions” (12). The spontaneous and accidental aspects of colonial friendship in *A Passage to India* point to interstices of everyday colonial relations that cannot be explained by established—or borrowed—epistemologies that seek to label and confine them.

Instead of bringing to surface a legibility of identity crisis or sexual desire, and its relation to neocolonialism or anticolonialism, my reading of the novel is more aligned with what
Stuart Christie refers to as a “queer illegibility,” a reading that privileges “the ‘prophetic’ . . . [and its] creative pressure on representation” (157). This queer stance on friendship is of a reparative nature, an attempt to reimagine and better understand moments of Passage where cross-cultural affinity and affection is presented as a way of life, an end in itself and not a means to something else. What Sedgwick and others have apprehended so articulately is a queer mode of knowing that opens up places that are prescribed and contained by established hermeneutics. José Muñoz, in Cruising Utopia, brings out the future orientation and expansive range of queerness, envision queerness as “a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present” (1). Taking a cue from contemporary queer theory as traced by Sedgwick, Halberstam, and Muñoz, and among others as well, I want to focus on the areas where many queer theory and friendship intersect or complement one another. And if as Muñoz suggests, that queerness is “not yet here” and “[a] rejection of a here and now,” I see friendship—its affective and spatial nature—as that which gestures beyond official accounts/announcements of intimacy and belonging for something interactive between bodies and social worlds that are less definite and ever-evolving as well.

Previous readings of Forster’s representations of friendship in Passage are heavy on the alleged failures or unsustainability of cross-cultural friendship, which they attribute to Forster’s obsession with a class-specific homosexuality trapped within the binary of self and other, or of nation and empire. My reading does not seek to repeat previous claims made about Forster’s

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17 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick uses queer friendship as an example to describe the “deroutinized . . . temporality” associated with those deemed not normal or failing to adhere to common sense. Reparative reading, according to Sedgwick, is more attuned to the question, “[W]hat it means to identify with each other[?]” (148). See Sedgwick’s Touching Feeling for more detail on reparative reading and its intent.

notions of friendship, especially those filtered through a psychoanalytic frame that, in privileging sexuality, or homosexuality, as a site of knowledge, neglect nascent structures of feeling colonial friendship may invoke in non-teleological ways. Instead, I want to recuperate moments of arrested potentiality, of emergent forms of intimacy, in a host of places within Passage that point toward present and future moments of meaningful contact, to spaces beyond a cyclical epistemology of violence that is colonial history. Foster’s novel, I insist, should not be read as a failed attempt at representing cross-cultural affinities that inadvertently reinforces the dictates of colonial history. Rather, in dedicating itself to the everyday interaction between racialized and gendered bodies and their attendant social groups, the novel is an active imagining of the present-future of meaningful contact between identities and categories whose orientation toward the not-yet-known disrupts the Manichean logic of colonial historicity. As a narrative of colonial friendships, Passage reimagines the colony as a policed state that nonetheless contains individuals with accidental and spontaneous emotions that cannot be predicted or pre-empted.

[Wonderful intro to chapter—really well framed analytically, and theoretically and well written!]

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Against the backdrop of the slow decline of the Raj, and before India’s eventual independence in 1947, Passage is haunted by memories and representations of colonial violence—namely the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Interestingly, however, the novel chooses not to dwell on those collective memories but begins its tale with a conundrum: the possibility of a sustaining friendship between Indians and the British. The novel’s distancing from the documented trauma of colonial relations is not an act of irresponsibility (as critics in the past

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19 In Colonial Power, Colonial Text, M. Keith Booker writes, “The use of . . . violence by the British is . . . an important subtext in almost all British fictions about India, ranging from early post-Mutiny visions of deranged murderous Indians (and concomitant British retribution) to . . . retrospective accounts of the Mutiny as the result of a failure of epistemological and theatrical techniques of power that rendered military intervention necessary” (11).
have called it), but an attempt to preserve literature’s autonomy from a historiography that pre-
empts the possibilities of thinking otherwise, of reconstructing the past differently. Critics such as Ian Baucom have attributed this distancing from colonial violence in Passage to Forster’s
escapist, orientalist fantasies with empire, “manufactur[ing] the India he encountered in 1912-
1913 as a space of tourism . . . [ignoring] the Mutiny . . . [for] a vision of a reified, precious India
threatening always to collapse into a souvenir of itself” (121). But if, as Dipesh Chakrabarty
argues, that “[s]ubaltern pasts as like stubborn knots that stand out and break up the otherwise
evenly woven surface of the fabric,” and that there should be “a certain measure of equality
between historians’ histories and other constructions of the past,” then Forster’s reticence
regarding the persistent memory of the Indian Mutiny, I argue, is a deliberate gesture of failure
that allows for alternative possibilities and ways to fill the gaps of history (106).

Opening the novel with musings over the possibility of cross-cultural friendship between
the English and the Indians, Forster bypasses larger debates over colonial subjugation and
subaltern resistance to enter into a complex social sphere made up of small-scale, everyday
colonial relations that are more fluid and difficult to define. In Chapter II, the reader is
introduced to three India characters—Mahmoud Ali, Hamidullah, and Aziz—whose dinner
gathering becomes an occasion for a discussion “as to whether or no it is possible to be friends
with an Englishman” (7). While Mahmoud Ali rejects the idea of colonial friendship altogether,
Hamidullah, who has been to England before, partially agrees with his friend but complicates the
verdict by saying, “I only contend that it is possible in England” (7). This opening exchange
between Mahmoud Ali and Hamidullah over colonial friendship is significant, for it complicates
the question of colonial friendship from one of relationality—personally and socially speaking—
to one of spatiality as well. In other words, this spatial turn of friendship brings into focus
everyday entanglements of sensation and space that inform the perception and performance of colonial relations. Indeed, a reconceptualization of friendship in terms of physical encounter, emotional proximity, and their correlation, is key to understanding Forster’s representations of friendship in the novel. Moving away from epistemology, and closer to experientiality—a word I take to describe a self-orientation and relation to others that is primarily informed by the sensorium—I approach Foster’s representations of colonial friendship less as an ideological stance against a racialized, bourgeois identity politics that help secure British rule over India, and more as a pliable way to capture and amass inchoate meaning out of a range of lived experiences between the putative agents and subjects of empire, between insiders and outsiders, that often go unnoticed or are downplayed. This conscious moving away from epistemology to experience does not suggest that the two registers are always already mutually exclusive, but promotes an emphasis on the affective dimensions of friendship as represented—or failed to represent—in various colonial locations in Passage.

Bearing out the affective potential of colonial friendship in various places in the novel is, I believe, one way out of an ideological impasse colonial and postcolonial studies sometimes run into, what Sara Suleri identifies as “a conceptual impoverishment . . . the fiction of complete empowerment both claimed by and accorded to colonial domination [being] repeated by the fallacy of the totality of otherness” (13). The extent to which categories like “the colonizer” and “the colonized” have become convenient short-hands for complex identities and ideological leanings is problematic, for it oversimplifies the highly fragmented and hybrid realities of colonialism. 20 In highlighting the lived experiences of colonial friendship, I attend to the lineaments of colonial relations whose affinity and sociality in the realm of the everyday, as a

20 See Nandy for a skepticism toward “basic cultural criticism that might have come from growing intellectual sensitivity to the rigid British social classes and subnational divisions” (33).
body of non-knowledge, is in fact strongly felt in, and intimately bound up with, the reparable histories of colonialism.

**Unlikely Colonial Encounters; Unscripted Structures of Feeling**

The initial musings over the possibility of cross-cultural friendship in Chandrapore, British India that fill the pages of Chapter II will, like a succession of waves, continue its ebbs and flows in subsequent chapters, bringing together Aziz, Mrs. Moore, Fielding, and Adela in accidental and unscripted ways that confound unfamiliar structures of feeling through which they perceive themselves and others, but lead them to places where available expressions of self and belonging—racial and cultural stereotypes, patriotic feelings, gender divisions, class-specific expectations, etc.—fall short in apprehending or defining what it is they will be experiencing throughout the novel. One such accidental encounter between Mrs. Moore and Aziz takes place in a mosque near the English club, immediately following Mahmoud and Hamidullah’s debate over the locatability of colonial friendship. Unfamiliar with the cultures and customs of Chandrapore, Mrs. Moore walks about as she would in London, blithely unaware of the spatial dynamics of the colonial state as she walks toward a nearby temple. Little does she know that Aziz, after having dinner with his friends, would take refuge in the same temple, to avoid the British quarter of Chandrapore, with streets “named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles . . . symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India” (12). This and other crisscrossing of characters, and the resulting emotional effects of these spontaneous encounters, form the very structure the novel, through which Forster imagines the affective and spatial dynamics of colonial friendship.

Mrs. Moore and Aziz’s first encounter is an accident, to say the least. The physical layout and social sphere of Chandrapore—a fictional city in India—leave little room for genuine
contact between Indians and the English. As Alan Johnson writes, “The interest in spatiality . . .
was especially powerful under colonialism because the tools behind Europe’s global conquest . . .
were precisely those geared to geographical acquisition and control” (29). Read in this context,
then, Mrs. Moore’s decision to leave the English club for fresh air, when the colonial officers
and their families are at their seats watching *Cousin Kate*, a comedy on English middle-class
romance, and her subsequent entry into a temple, are radical movements. Mrs. Moore’s moving
away from a familiar site of solidarity and to a holy place for the Muslims, a colonial space to
which she does not belong by virtue of her race and faith, is just the kind of spontaneity that
colonial spatial regimes seek to pre-empt. If as Kevin Booker argues, that *Cousin Kate* “conveys
a complacent sense of security and stability that differs dramatically from the air of crisis that
permeates in Foster’s novel,” (72) Mrs. Moore, by distancing herself from the English club and
*Cousin Kate*, suggests her intuitive awareness of an internal crisis among the English from which
she wishes to extricate herself.

In hearing Mrs. Moore enter the mosque, Aziz, as if being hailed by the history of
colonial violence, shouts: “Madam! Madam! Madam! . . . this is a mosque, you have no right
here at all; you should have taken off your shoes; this is a holy place for Moslems” (18). Upon
learning that Mrs. Moore has taken off her shoes at the entrance, Aziz promptly adjusts his tone
from an insulted colonial subject to an amicable local, saying to Mrs. Moore “I think you ought
not to walk at night alone, Mrs. Moore. There are bad characters about and leopards many come
across from the Marabar Hills. Snakes also” (18). As Mrs. Moore and Aziz continue to go off-
script, the two begin talking about matters that are personal and intimate, so much so that,
without knowing it, “[t]he flame that not even beauty can nourish was springing up . . . [and
Aziz’s] heart began to glow secretly” (21). When Mrs. Moore says to him suddenly, “I don't
think I understand people very well. I only know whether I like them or dislike them,’” Aziz responds with an air of absolute certainty, “‘Then you are an Oriental’” (21). The process of identification taking place here, if inaccurate, is genuine, and out of this comes the beginning of their friendship. Mrs. Moore’s evolving status from being an intruder to having become “an Oriental,” in short, indicates not only Aziz’s changing attitude toward her, or Mrs. Moore’s attitude toward him, but the extent to which the emotional experience of colonial encounter often confounds the terminologies of bourgeois subjectivity and racialized otherness that are mapped onto different bodies and places.

The good will invoked between Aziz and Mrs. Moore, more spontaneous and accidental than logical, is something that the colonial machinery cannot easily predict or preempt. This good will, for one, temporarily dulls, if not nullifies, subtle snubs and blatant contempt directed at the colonized: reading the sign that reads “Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore Club even as guests,” Aziz is unperturbed: “[a]s he strolled downhill beneath the lovely moon, and again saw the lovely mosque, he seemed to own the land as much as anyone owned it. What did it matter if a few flabby Hindus had preceded him there, and a few chilly English succeeded” (22). This change in Aziz’s emotional state, from calling Mrs. Moore “an Oriental” when she (technically) is not and (epistemologically) should not, to making light of the invidious colonial divide and the exile of his people, is not an exercise of wishful thinking on Forster’s part, whose utopic visions of colonial harmony have been subject to criticism. Rather, I see this particular encounter as a kind of historical retrieval of emotional and cross-cultural amities that was previously erased or papered over in the production of an official colonialism. The palimpsestic and unpredictable nature of colonial encounter, good or bad, is subject to present and future unfoldings, not just the dictates of an artificially-made-unvaried past, as the novel suggests.
One particular significance of this friendly colonial encounter between Aziz and Mrs. Moore is that it gives space within the novel to cultivate intimacy that is informed by past events, but whose narrative trajectory need not be predestined. As Sara Ahmed writes, “emotions are performative . . . and they involve speech acts . . . which depend on past histories, at the same time as they generate effects” (13). Their mutual feelings of good will, unstructured and ephemeral, perform a retrieval or revisiting of previously-damaged conditions on which cross-cultural intimacy and sociality were thought to depend. These encounters and emotions of colonial friendship, then, are of a temporal and spatial order that challenges any straightforwardly chronological accounts of colonialism that seeks to compress its uneven histories into the emptied, homogenous time of the modern nation-state.

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Accidental or spontaneous encounters and their complex emotional impact on the major characters in Passage also serve to highlight the artificiality of the colonial social sphere, as well as various kinds of spatial partitioning of race, gender, and class in place to reinforce, not always successfully, Britain’s rule over India: “The colonial population in India tended to define itself in terms of a very narrow class and income range: they adopted the way of life and norms of behaviour appropriate to upper-middle-class or upper-class British people” (Mills 45). But bourgeois cultivations of subject-formation and collective belonging in the colonies were never a secure project, as Ann Stoler argues, “[the] subjacent histories [are] wedged in the folds of dominant ones . . . in the proximities of socialization . . . and caught in the interstices of elaborate state inspection systems . . . that . . . could not manage desire—much less sex (7). In agreeing with Stoler’s general position on the subversive potential lodged within the micro-sites and “interstices” of empire, however, I am hesitant to place too much emphasis on sexuality as a site
of resistance or counter-knowledge. My reading of Passage thus far has examined the accidental and experiential qualities of friendship to reimagine alternative colonial relations that are less subject to the reproduction of knowledge/hegemonic epistemologies. The radical nature of colonial friendship lies not in its ability to pose as a direct challenge to colonial power; rather, colonial friendship supplies an indirect influence over the everyday maintenance of personal and social relations, introducing unfamiliar structures of feeling and modes of belonging to a carefully stratified society that seeks to dictate every aspect of subject-formation and affiliation. Illegible and nonthreatening in the eyes of the law, colonial friendship can more easily enter into the zone of cross-cultural intimacy than can interracial sexual and familial relations.

Traveling from England to Chadrapore to meet her future husband Ronny Heaslop, a city magistrate who is also the eldest son of Mrs. Moore, Adela’s wish to see the real India has been stymied consistently by those in her community who are unable or unwilling to help. Her frustration with the British circle—for their conservative jingoism and for purposefully obfuscating her vision of India—is first articulated the same evening that Mrs. Moore first encounters Aziz. “It’ll end in an elephant ride, it always does,” Adela complains to the elderly woman, “Look at this evening. Cousin Kate! Imagine, Cousin Kate! But where have you been off to? Did you succeed in catching the moon in the Ganges?” (22). Adela’s anxiety to see the real India stems from her ambivalence toward what her life would become, should she decide to marry a colonial officer and be labeled an Anglo-English wife, a stereotype Adela tries not to embody. Her earnest wishes to see the real India, however, are interpreted as signs of

21 See Michel Foucault’s The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. I for his discussion of sexuality, power, and their regeneration through incited proliferations of knowledge on their behalf.

22 See Collingham for her discussion of the figure of the burra memsahib, “a pleasure-seeking, superficial and unrefined atmosphere of Anglo-Indian society . . . separated from their husbands during the hot
innocence and nuisance among the Anglo-Indian circle, however. When pressed by Adela’s pleas—“I’m tired of seeing picturesque figures pass before me as a frieze . . . I only want those Indians whom you come across socially—as your friends”—Mr. Turton, the collector, responds offhandedly, “Well, we don’t come across them socially . . . They’re full of virtues, but we don’t and it’s now eleven-thirty, and too late to go into the reasons” (26).

The bridge party—a planned event—given by the Turtons in honor of Mrs. Moore and Adela is a complete failure, further impressing upon Adela that any attempt at extending friendship outside one’s designated community of belonging is a doomed project from the start. “The Bridge Party was not a success,” the narrator tells us, “at least it was not what Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested were accustomed to consider a successful party” (39). Despite Adela’s wish to meet “those Indians whom [the Turtons] come across socially as friends,” the hosts re-enact the impossibility of genuine exchange between the English and Indians within the different spaces of the Bridge party. For example, the tennis courts reinforce colonial authority and its attendant divisions, rather than serving as a neutral playground: “when tennis began, the barrier grew impenetrable. It had been hoped to have some sets between East and West, but this was forgotten, and the courts were monopolized by the usual club couples” (47). Small talk is proven difficult for the ladies as well. Among the few Indian women in attendance, none sees the party as an opportunity to bridge the social gap between the two camps. As the narrator says,

Indeed, all the [Indian] ladies were uncertain, cowering, recovering, giggling, making tiny gestures of atonement or despair at all that was said . . . Miss Quested . . . tried to make them talk, but she failed, she strove in vain against the echoing walls of their weather and thrown together with young military men on leave in the Hills, gained a reputation for indulging in affairs” (179-180).
civility. Whatever she said produced a murmur of deprecation, varying into a murmur of concern when she dropped her pocket-handkerchief. (43)

However Adela tries to break the ice, however earnest her attempts to reach out to the other side of Chandrapore, her friendly gestures cannot penetrate the cold barriers of sociality the bridge party have erected. The party fails miserably, in Adela’s point of view, and she is ashamed of it. But for the Turtons and other British officials, the party’s failure to create the condition of possibility in which cross-cultural affinity may engender is, ironically, a sign of success. The party at the Turtons, I argue, is the antithesis of a cross-cultural friendship that Forster actively imagines in the novel. To the extent that both parties—the British and the Indians—are retreating back to what they think they understand of the other, to a place of race-based and culturally-specific belonging, to which the other has no access or recourse, both the colonizers and the colonized in Chandrapore are performing in front of Adela and Mrs. Moore a proximate distancing that, as Sara Ahmed argues, establishes “a national imaginary [through] . . . the proximity of those who are already recognisable as strangers” (95). This pre-emptive gesture that prohibits cross-cultural affinities from gravitating toward the non-identititarian, uneventful spaces of friendship, brings to light the reactionary impulses of normative belonging that must take place through a production of otherness, that must take away the potential spaces in which friendship might, by virtue of its affective presence, unsettles the foundation of a prescriptive and policed community.

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The afternoon tea party at Fielding’s residence is a turning point for Adela. An unprecedented invitation, it is cosmopolitan rather than bourgeois, recontextualizing rather than confirming the genteel ritual of Englishness. In bringing together Fielding, Aziz, Mrs. Moore,
Adela Quested, and Professor Godbole, a Brahman, the otherwise familiar routines of afternoon tea become strange and foreign, something to be experienced for the first time by the host and his English and Indian guests. Just as the colonial encounter at the mosque, this social exchange between different cultures—English and India—and beliefs—Christian, Hinduism, and Islam—is an aberration. As the novel tells us, “[a]s a rule no English woman entered the College except for official functions” (66). By virtue of his position as “the Principal of the little Government College,” Fielding should be classified as an agent of empire. Surprisingly, however, Fielding has “no racial feeling” and is without “the herd instinct” (65). This deposition of his, in many ways, creates the condition of possibility in which host and guests can experiment with new social dynamics that confound the distinctions of “colonizer” and “colonized.” The afternoon tea at Fielding’s residence, though a place within the colony, is in fact developing a spatiality—a feel of place—whose function and purpose is not tied to the reproduction of colonial power dynamics. More of a social space that is open to sensory experience and play, and less of a place that invokes colonial governance, the afternoon tea at Fielding’s calls for what Yi-Fu Tuan describes as “spatial skill,” which, “[i]n a broad sense . . . is manifest in our degree of freedom from the tie to place, in the range and speed of our mobility” (75). Since this space of a bachelor pad within, but not of, the colony, the host and his invited guests enact a sociality that flouts the dictates of the Victorian home. For the English gentleman’s house is a carefully prescribed space whose material comforts appeal to the ideal of bourgeois domesticity.  

The domestic setting and “spatial logic” of Fielding’s house, however, is anything but exacting or “rigorous.” For example, having shown up early, Aziz is invited right into Fielding’s bedroom, where the host is “dressing after a bath,” with his gentlemanly outfit incomplete

23 See Chase and Levenson for their discussion of the gentleman’s house, especially the idea that “the gentleman’s house [serves as] a disciplined squad of modern domestics [with] its own rigorous spatial logic. (165)
without Aziz’s collar stud. Surprised by the simple tastes and carefree nature of Fielding’s house, Aziz exclaims, “I always thought that Englishmen kept their rooms so tidy. It seems that this is not so. I need not be ashamed” (68). The intimate proximity between the English host and his Indian guest, and the absence of colonial authority within the house, reveal the everyday nuances of colonial encounter to which the novel attends. Indeed, as the afternoon tea goes on, the sociality that it has invoked takes an unexpected turn, whose spontaneity and unboundedness, as the novel later reveals, is both the harbinger of friendship and identity crisis.

Perhaps one of the most extraordinary things achieved at the afternoon tea at Fielding’s is that it serves no clear purposes at all. It is extraordinary not in an ironical sense, but in the sense that the afternoon tea gathering, having occupied an official colonial site (the university), is able to disregard a duty to produce knowledge through bodily and social etiquette on which colonial power depends. That the physical closeness and social exchange of the afternoon tea does not overtly endorse racialized notions of proximity and distance, too, is a radical gesture that should not be ignored. With so diverse a group of people in terms of experience and taste, of history and religion, their conversations move in every direction, follow no particular track or order, and prove nothing important. From a brief mentioning of post-impressionism, Aziz’s rendition of the Mogul Emperors, Professor Godbole’s eating habits as a Hindu, to a Urdu proverb about happiness following a conversation about mangoes, the party of five unlikely strangers manage to get along well. The sociality of these five friendly figures, sustained by good will and a kind of historical insensitivity or inaccuracy, represents an affective force—if nebulous and vague—aimed at proximity, a shared feeling of togetherness in the present. This stranger-oriented sociality, invoked within a colonial education institution, is more radical than what meets the eye, for in bypassing formality, the group, conscious or not, is also doing away
with the colonial authority felt through one’s behavior toward another. In trading politics for pleasure, the afternoon tea party opts for a strategic forgetfulness of the past in favor of things to come. What anchors the structure of feelings of the afternoon tea gathering is not so much historical or cultural specificity, but the improvisational performance of colonial encounter in the absence of knowledge and authority. If as Sara Ahmed tells us, “[e]motions . . . are not only about movement . . . [but] also about attachments . . . that which holds us in place . . . connects bodies to other bodies,” the friendly emotions infused at Fielding’s—though unspecific in nature—successfully turn an official place—the Government College of which Fielding is principal—into an experiential space (11).

Failures and the (Intimate) Spaces of Non-Representation

Less as an event and more an endurance of affective life with others, friendship, I argue, points toward the elsewhere in the future rather than looking backwards for orientation. The influence of friendship is filled with potential danger. Adela’s “collapse” in the Marabar Caves can be interpreted as a physical succumbing to an epistemological crisis. But especially, I want to argue that Adela’s collapse is an affective response to an India that is devoid of meaning. I also want to read the “collapse” as a bodily assertion of letting go, a shift of register from the epistemological to the experiential.

I read Adela’s desire to visit the Marabar Caves as evidence of her increasing resistance to impositions of western epistemologies—personal, cultural, and legal—that have been pressed upon Adela’s mind and body. Incredibly bored, by the Anglo-Indian community (unlike Elizabeth Lackersteen in *Burmese Days*), Adela is eager trade her ennui and feelings of nothingness for an enlightened, if physically demanding, journey to the Marabar Caves:
Most of life is so dull that there is nothing to be said about it, and the books and talk that would describe it as interesting are obliged to exaggerate, in the hope of justifying their own existence. . . . It so happened that Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested had felt nothing acutely for a fortnight. Ever since Professor Goodbole had sung his queer little song [at the afternoon tea at Fielding’s], they had lived more or less inside cocoons. (146)

That India must reveal its subaltern knowledge to her in some profound way, is what drives her expedition to the caves. Adela’s intellect, single-minded and empirically-inclined, is at odds with an aura of mysticism that India seems to project, at least it is what she feels: “She was particularly vexed now because she was in India and engaged to be married, which . . . should have made every instant sublime” (146-147).

The experience of the “sublime,” which she hopes the trip will provide, will not come to Adela, for there is nothing in particular for her to look at: the caves, one after another, look identical from afar, and up close they feel the same. At this critical juncture when friendly conversations are most needed, both Adela and Aziz cannot find an easy way to communicate or connect with each other. The pleasant conversations about India that they had at Fielding’s house two weeks ago over tea now take a serious turn, and Aziz and Adela find themselves disagreeing on the notion of universality and the role it might play in India’s future:

“Miss Quested . . . You keep your religion, and I mine. That is the best. Nothing embraces the whole of India, nothing, nothing . . .” “Oh, do you feel that, Dr. Aziz?” she said thoughtfully. “I hope you’re not right. There will have to be something universal in this country—I don’t say religion, for I’m not religious, but something, or how else are barriers to be broken down?” (160)
What neither of them realizes at that moment, is that miles and miles away from Chandrapore, the Marabar Caves decontextualize their attempt to define the human experience in historical or philosophical terms as they know them. “The echo in a Marabar cave is . . . entirely devoid of distinction,” the narrator tells us, “‘Boum’ is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it . . . utterly dull” (163). And inside one of these caves Adela gets disoriented, experiences an epistemic crisis, and faints.

If “the making of ‘the Orient’ is an exercise of power,” as Sara Ahmed argues, then Adela’s collapse in the Marabar Caves signals something else, something akin to an affective resistance to an exhausting ethnographic gaze that seeks to impose meaning onto India where there is none, rendering the continent knowable and conquerable (114). What Adela says to Aziz right before they venture into another cave—“‘I can’t avoid the label. What I do hope to avoid is its mentality. . . . some women are so—well, ungenerous and snobby about Indians, and I should feel ashamed for words if I turned like them’”—is an important context that critics seem to miss or downplay when analyzing Adela’s collapse and her deteriorating friendship with Aziz. This exchange between Aziz and Adela, before they are made to face each other again defendant and plaintiff in court, holds significant weight. It helps Adela to later question her identity as a European woman in the colony, and the designated places to which her body—as a sign of bourgeois domesticity and racial superiority—is bound. In many ways, Adela wishes to untangle herself from an Anglo-Indian community that seeks to control her is similar to Mrs. Moore’s intuitive grasp of a self-knowledge and intimacy with others that bears no name or legibility, as she thinks to herself, “that . . . though people are important, the relations between them are not, and that in particular too much fuss has been made over marriage” (149). The feelings of disorientation that contribute to Adela’s fainting, I argue, are in no small part inspired by her
belief that cross-cultural friendship. However difficult and counter-intuitive it may seem, Adela’s new orientation of selfhood and community, suggests her attempt to break away from Oriental fantasies of India for something more real, if un-representable.

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The “collapse” in the Marabar Caves marks a serious turn of the novel—it moves from friendly bantering between strangers to evidence of the heavy price one pays for entering into such an unpredictable sociality. The final parting scene between Fielding and Aziz, where the “echoes” of the caves are replaced by “the hundred voices” of India, offers little closure or relief. The reunion of old friends, complicated by a rising anticolonialism in India to which Aziz subscribes (or retreats), and by Fielding’s new status as a married man, is now fraught with tension, lacking the luster and good will of their first encounter. Their terse conversation during “their last ride in the Mau jungles” suggests as much:

“. . . we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then”—he [Aziz] rode against him furiously—“and then,” he concluded, half kissing him, “you and I shall be friend.” “Why can’t we be friends now?” said the other, holding him affectionately. “It’s what I want. It’s what you want.” (361-362)

The “failure” suggested in this scene, Ian Baucom argues, is “due . . . to [Forster’s] incapacity to locate friendship outside of [the] moment of crisis in which intimacy is offered as war’s alternative. Friendship atrophies in this text because it cannot survive the encroachments of the mundane” (132). Judging by the affective gestures of Fielding and Aziz, and the tone of their conversation, however, the scene allows hope or future reconciliation as well. Indeed, I argue that though Aziz and Fielding fail to communicate with each other in nationalistic terms, the failure itself nonetheless brings them closer together physically.
Fielding’s gestures towards Aziz—whispering into his ears, “half kissing” and “holding him affectionately”—evoke an intimacy, a lived experience of closeness that cannot be ignored or explained away. For despite its spastic and agitated nature, this final scene takes us closer to the an inarticulate friendship between Fielding and Aziz that, since the beginning of the novel, has exercised itself not in words but through everyday acts of epistemological failure. These failures, in vexing larger narratives of meaning and signification, draw the two men closer to each other physically and emotionally. An intimacy that feels the other but cannot articulate itself fully—such is the shared bond of Aziz and Fielding I argue—is at odds with what Elizabeth Povinelli refers to as “the intimacy grid” that places intimacy squarely in the sphere and narratives of legibility and legitimacy, into “[a] regulatory ideal [that] renders actual life irrelevant” (208). In failing to acquire meaning or evidence of their intimate friendship beyond the purview of a colonial, hegemonic epistemology, Fielding and Aziz’s relationship remain in the field of potentiality. The seeming unintelligibility of their friendship, I argue, is what keeps it un-coopted by the contents and contexts of colonialism and anticolonial nationalism. While their everyday moments with one another—such as Aziz’s offering his collar stud to Fielding or Fielding visiting the sick Aziz—do not rise to the level of an event, they do express a closeness, a comforting presence, on which their friendship is based. Aziz and Fielding’s gestures of closeness are akin to what Muñoz refers to as “ephemera”—a affective presence that “stands against the harsh lights of mainstream visibility and the . . . tyranny of the fact” (65).

In short, these acts embody an everydayness of friendship that fails to acknowledge or adhere to the importance of larger narratives of self and other, in terms of culture, politics, or sexuality, that are of a teleological nature. The affective presence of their friendship, instead, speaks to a desire of nearing one another that, in reaching one another, brings into motion a
certain surrendering to non-rational thinking—and to spaces of non-representation—that is key to its future unfolding.

If Adela’s entrance into the Marabar Caves exhausts her epistemological faculty, making her faint amidst the echoes of non-representation, Aziz and Fielding’s riding into “the Mau jungles” frustrates rather than facilitates any attempt to understand or put a label on their friendship. In the penultimate chapter, Aziz unexpectedly reunites with Fielding, along with his wife and Mrs. Moore’s younger son (the three are touring Mau, where Aziz now practices medicine). A rigid coolness and formality permeates this chapter, as neither Fielding nor Aziz feels compelled or capable to ameliorate the situation; instead, they retreat from each other, choosing to play the parts of the colonizer and the colonized.

In the space of “[t]he European Guest House stood two hundred feet above the water, on the crest of a rocky and wooded spur that jutted from the [Mau] jungle,” where ties of affection and affiliation are clearly marked, and where European guests do not usually mix with the locals, Aziz finds himself reluctant to bring closure his former life in Chandrapore—neither can he forget Mrs. Moore or nor can he easily forgive Adela. And Fielding, “giving up his slight effort to recapture their intimacy,” seems “more official . . . older and sterner” (337). All this preceding the final scene in the Mau jungles, I argue, is what prompts Aziz and Fielding subliminally to reanimate their friendship elsewhere, as if by instinct, both understand that they need to invent a new social space where there is none, to find home for an intimacy, theirs, that has rejected all places and prefixes representational. Even if Fielding’s “half-kissing” and holding Aziz is met with the rising landscape of India, which responds to these affects—“in their hundred voices,”—“‘No, not yet . . . No, not there,'” the lived experience of their intimate friendship is felt, and Aziz does not say a word (362). No celebration, no contradiction, not
unlike the indistinguishable echoes in the Marabar Caves, is where their friendship takes root. Failure or not, Aziz and Fielding’s reunion is reminiscent of the debate between Mahmoud Ali and Hamidullah over the possibility of friendship, for here the two friends once again return to the now-or-then, or here-or-there, of friendship. The final scene does not question the existence of friendship so much as it quibbles over the timing and possible location of its present and future.

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In folding friendship—as an affective persistence in time and space—into the reading of Passage, I have in this chapter envisioned friendship less as a direct resistance to colonialism or normative sexuality, than as an exploration of how bodies, embodied lives, and their spatial relations exercise self-orientation and disorientation in ways that deviate from patterns of the past, deferring rather to the optimism of the not-yet-known, and without always having to conform to established modes of intimacy and sociality imposed upon them. Looking at the cross-cultural friendships in the novel as a network of intimacies sustained by the strangers of empire, I have illustrated that the emotions and lived experiences born out of everyday colonial encounters, and the places that bear witness to them, are far less amenable to the maintenance of colonial power than official accounts of colonialism would have it. If the goal of historicizing the colonial past is not so much to study chronology or causes and their effects, but to better recognize the changing faces and sites of power, we must take into account affects and social relations through which power regenerates itself as the real and the normative.

That friendship is patient and sensitive to the emergence and everyday care of potential affective ties, and that friendship allows for small-scale and context-specific analyses of colonial relations, are important claims I have made in my reading of Passage. Or, as Mrs. Moore puts it,
“though people are important, the relations between them are not . . . centuries of carnal embracement, yet man is no nearer to understanding man” (149). The idea that friendship both gives and takes time away from colonial relations is a concept that I try to bear out in this chapter. The time given to Mrs. Moore, Aziz, Adela, and Mr. Fielding to cultivate friendship with others, for instance, is time taking away from performing normative colonial relations. If events, as Elizaebth Povinelli calls them, “are things that we can say happened such that they have a certain object being” (13), the colonial friendships in Passage occupy the liminal space the eventful and the uneventful. It is in this middle range of affects and spatial dynamics where Forster allows cross-cultural affinities to accrue their inchoate meaning.

In Chapter Four, I will further discuss how various non-representational tendencies of friendship challenge human-centric assumptions of subjectivity, space, and intimacy in J. R. Ackerley’s My Dog Tulip. In that final chapter, friendship is situated in the relational dynamics between a homosexual man and an unspayed Alsatian sheepdog, whose everyday life together in London (during the 1940s and 1950s) embodies an ethos of cross-species friendship, one contests easy assumptions of ownership and domestication, of the (in)visibility of subjecthood and subjugation, and of an uneven access to private and public places that hinges upon strategic erasures of the agency of the ultimate Other, the nonhuman.
Friendship; Or, Representing More-Than-Human

Subjectivities and Spaces in J. R. Ackerley’s *My Dog Tulip*

“Dogs read the world through their noses and write their history in urine. Urine is another and highly complex source of social information,” writes J. R. Ackerley in *My Dog Tulip* (47). Published in 1956, *Tulip*, a memoir, chronicles the sixteen-year companionship of Ackerley, a gay writer working for the BBC, and Tulip, a female Alsatian, unspayed for most of her life. Together, this dyad shares an apartment in London, spending most of their time in the city negotiating their co-presence in the urban landscape. Nor does it get easier in the countryside. In a letter to his friend Herbert Read, dated October 3rd, 1950, Ackerley took pains to detail the accommodation that Tulip might require, should he accept Read’s invitation to visit Yorkshire:

I would love to come and see you this year, and love, of course, to bring my bitch . . . it would be alright, of course, if she had access to the garden in the night—or if you could give me a camp bed somewhere on the ground floor or in an outdoor. But otherwise I fear your beautiful house would be in danger during our first night—tho’ I must say she is jolly considerate usually in selecting linoleum for her operations, or the oldest and darkest mat. (Quoted in Braybrooke, 83)

This letter, among others Ackerley had written in response to (humans-only) invitations, encapsulates not only a commitment to human-animal companionship that often disrupts the accepted forms/flows of sociality, but also an appreciation for animal emotion—“She is jolly considerate”—whose complex nature is sometimes overlooked or, worse, ignored. In grappling with social discrimination that underwrites most private and public spaces, then, Ackerley is also questioning biased notions of subjectivity that preclude a dog’s access to spaces that are
otherwise friendly and sociable to humans. The question, “When is subjectivity envisioned/embodied in ways that allow some but not all shapes of body to occupy socially constructed places?” is perhaps difficult for Ackerley or Tulip to answer with certainly. But rather than resort to silence, both man and dog, in tones apologetic or insistent, legible or loud, engage the question as their daily lives unfold in the memoir.

In *The Companion Species Manifesto*, Donna Haraway argues that human and animal lives are not separate but constitutive of each other. Regarding the contact zone of humans and animals as that of nature-cultures, Haraway claims, “animals ‘hail’ us to account for the regimes in which they and we must live” (17). The linkages—or, rather, the intersectionalities—between nature and cultures provide a useful means to map sociality between lives, and the places in which they cohabitate and share resources. Considering human and animal lives this way helps resist presuppositions of the centrality of the human, whereby other modes and needs of animate life, becoming less intelligible and grievable, are largely ignored. *Tulip*, I argue, consistently puts pressure on established ideas about subjectivity and its relation to human and animal lives, charting out new spaces within the autobiography in which to deliver man and dog from the tenacious logic of an owner-pet dialectic, wherein the auto-logical human subject sees himself or herself in the reflection of animal flesh. Throughout *Tulip*, Ackerley’s concerns and Tulip’s needs are represented as entwined together. In the process of interpreting and negotiating these needs, both man and dog enter into a contact zone that is neither human nor natural, but relational and reciprocal. Indeed, this lifelong friendship between Ackerley and Tulip, I will go on to argue, represents selfhood and companionship in more-than-human ways. Cross-species friendship, in placing emphasis on interaction and mutual regard rather than singular (ontological) existence, has the potential to unsettle established understandings of the different
feelings, mental processes, and expressions of the self that have hitherto defined human and animal lives in hierarchical ways.

From Animality to Amity: “Unfriending” Rights-Bearing Subjectivity

To what extent can a friendship between man and dog, as portrayed in Tulip, afford means to unmake both the pet and the owner? In what ways can an ethos of friendship catapult us beyond categories and distinctions, where notions of subjectivity and space are given permission to play themselves out in non-humancentric and non-normative ways? While my overall argument does not focus on philosophy or ontology per se, Derrida’s uneasiness with the human/animal split—what he refers to as the “rupture” or “abyss”—is germane to my analysis of Tulip as regards the ethics of textual representation. At issue is the way some beings are brought into relation with the process/potential of “becoming-subject,” while all others are relegated to the realm of the object, the receiver or target of human action.

The figure of the animal, and the roles it plays in the human imagination in the realms of sociality, justice, and citizenship, have inspired and informed recent scholarly work being conducted under the umbrella of animal studies. In turn, this work has been brought to bear on the practices of writing—including questions of what constitutes a narratable subject and a narratable lived experience. What constitutes a speaking subject? Do non-human animals, possessing language and using it, have the right to self-advocate? Questions such as these, however utopic they may seem to some, have spawned debates concerning the rights to and the ethics of representation vis-à-vis non-human animals, in a manner that partially parallels debates about the status and self-representation of women and subaltern subjects. As Kari Weil asks in her book Thinking Animals, “Can animals speak? And if so, can they be read or heard? Such questions have deliberate echoes of the tile of Gayatri Spivak’s seminal essay in postcolonial
[and feminist] theory, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’” (4). Is language—or the possession of rational discourse—a reliable means to differentiate human and non-human agents at all, as Mel Chen questions in her recent work Animacies (7)? The palimpsestic nature of human and non-human animal worlds, and how their overlaps and slippages play out discriminatorily in gender-specific and sexual ways in response to power and normativity, have mobilized a host of post-human or more-than-human analytics through which to challenge the underpinnings of humanistic and pro-rights discourses. Arguably, these discourses, in identifying and protecting certain human interests but not others, have done epistemic violence to groups and individuals situated outside their purviews—women, the colonized, sexual inverts, animals, and the list goes on. Donna Haraway in When Species Meet has sought to correct “the premise that humanity alone is not a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies” (11). Her attention to such dependencies contributes to the “the ethical turn” in animal studies, which, as Kari Weil states, is an attempt to better “articulate a posthuman (or posthumanist) ethics—ethics toward an unknowable or ‘incalculable’ other . . . that . . . look beyond the Kantian foundations of the ethical in human subject” (17-18).

In particular, recent scholarship on the human/animal divide has built upon Derrida’s The Animal that Therefore I Am. Locating in western philosophy a bias against animals and animality in the imagination and reproduction of the rational human subject, Derrida raises concerns over an invidious schema that always already posits in animal life the status of the Other, an unassimiliable difference: “[W]hat is proper to man, his subjugating superiority over the animal, his very becoming-subject, his historicity, his emergence out of nature, his sociality, his access to knowledge [?]”(45). Describing Derrida’s theorization of the animal as “concrete” and “ethicopolitical,” Matthew Calarco, in Zooographies, acknowledges Derrida’s effort in
pushing “the question of the animal” beyond assumptions of the (human) subject that often reduce the importance of “all being deemed to be nonsubjects, especially animals,” and their relation to philosophical inquiry and the ethics of sociality (133-36).

The human-animal distinction, Calarco claims, “can no longer or ought no longer be maintained,” [emphasis his] in order to avoid the pitfalls of a form of categorical reasoning that denotes, demarcates, but does not deconstruct human-animal relations (3). Arguing that the “surrendering” of categorical reasoning can take place only in moments and spaces of “genuine encounter with what we call animals,” Calarco highlights the need to reframe shared properties and relations between human and non-human lives in terms beyond animality (4). In pursuing this strategy, in part by shifting from animality to amity, from entrenched hierarchies separating humans and animal to Derrida’s theorization of cross-species modes of friendship, we can better imagine and sustain ethical relations among different embodied lives, while avoiding the pitfalls of anthropomorphism and human exceptionalism. Friendship, unlike romantic love, emphasizes the ongoing reciprocal relationship between two or more self-elected subjects, while distancing itself from the impulses to objectify and possess; these characteristics are what make friendship a useful tool in unpacking the power dynamic involved in more-than-human relations, in which the human subject is prone to speak on behalf of the animal other/object. Rather than reinforce the established order of things, friendship gestures toward what is to come. In privileging “the perhaps” over the proven, for example, Derrida argues that friendship, in “disjoining a certain necessity of order . . . [creates] the risk of an instability” that is necessary for change (29). The way in which friendship—or amity between different kinds of entities—emphasizes an ethics of on-going relationality over the insistence upon identity or categorical distinctions, I argue, allows us to reconsider the grounds on which we grapple with established notions of human and animal.
Urine as a Way of Knowing

From the outset, *Tulip* is wary of established categories and assumptions that underpin stubborn binary systems of difference; the need to see Tulip as a friend, not an animal object, is repeatedly addressed by Ackerley. “[T]he great thing about this book,” writes Elizabeth M. Thomas, in the Introduction to *Tulip*, “is that by presenting Tulip in all her matter-of-factness it preserves her mystery. . . . Tulip is an individual, as unknowable as she is familiar” (xi-xii).

Ackerley’s speculations on the meanings behind her every move and gesture, I argue, show that Tulip’s subjectivity can only be approximated and (at best) partially contained by the written word. Her consciousness and needs are thus located both within and outside the text. Tulip, in fact, is quite capable of asserting her independence and enjoying freedom and agency. Her demand for human respect is made abundantly clear, as Ackerley recounts: “I could do with her whatever I wished—except stop her barking at other people. In this matter, she seemed to say, she knew better than I. . . . She spoke sharply and loud, and she had a good deal to say, though what precisely her mind was I did not know” (6). This inaccessibility is significant: the respect and relative freedom Tulip enjoys is not a reward for her obedience, as is commonly granted the case. Rather, her interiority and her rights to self-representation are from the beginning acknowledged as an *a priori*. Also acknowledged is Tulip’s status as a speaking subject that barks to express herself and writes in urine to preserve what she wishes to communicate to others. As Ackerley puts it, Tulip

has two kinds of urination, Necessity and Social. . . . For social urination, which is mostly preceded by the act of smelling, she seldom squats, but balances herself on one hind leg, the other being withdrawn or cocked up in the art. The reason for this seems obvious; she is watering some special thing and wishes to avoid touching it. It may also be that in this
attitude she can more accurately bestow her drops . . . The expression on her face is
business-like, as though she was signing a check. (48)

Urine, what others may see as bodily waste, is, as Ackerley recognizes, a viable way for some
beings to apprehend and navigate the world they inhabit, and to record lived experience through
means other than the written word. The world of the somatic, the history trickling out in bodily
fluids, the way Tulip marks her conscious thoughts on objects, grass, and solid pavement, etc.—
all these experiences and practices are represented in Tulip as acts of conscious thought and
communication. “Urine . . . is a language, a code, by means of which [dogs] not only express
their feelings and emotions, but communicate with and appraise each other,” writes Ackerley,
and “Tulip is particularly instructive in this matter when she is in season” (47). Not everybody
sees it this way, of course: for when Ackerley showed E. M. Forster the manuscript of Tulip, the
senior writer managed only to say, “‘I expect to be disgusted—but it is not a reaction I take
seriously’” (quoted in Braybrooke, xxix). 24 Nonetheless, to see Tulip’s urine as something more
than just urine, to fancy a world in which dogs sniff and men follow after them, is to re-imagine
the world in which we live. As I will presently explore in more detail, Ackerley’s investment in
cross-species friendship helps resist and revise conventional notions of self and space by turns.
By regarding Tulip as an equal companion, and not simply a dog, Ackerley is able to shift away
from human-centric—and hetero-normative—views on subjectivity and its designated social
location(s), and in the process envision a viable means through which human and animals may
perform “companion species” in a just, and more-than-human, mode of sociality within the print
and physical spaces of liberal governance.

24 Neville Braybrooke notes that Chatto & Windus accepted the manuscript on condition that "obscene"
passages be removed from Tulip. Ackerley refused and instead successfully submitted the manuscript to
Fredric Warburg (xxix).
In *Stray Dogs*, John Gray opines that “the calls of birds and the traces left by wolves to mark off their territories are no less forms of language than the songs of humans. What is distinctively human is not the capacity for language. It is the crystallisation of language in writing” (56). However, it is unclear, judging from Tulip’s idiosyncratic urinary expressions, whether the act of writing—the ability to record the present for the future—is in fact unique to humans. Indeed, the amount of textual space dedicated to Tulip’s sociality, as approximated by Ackerley, is significant in an otherwise relatively slim autobiography. Instead of tracing the consciousness and development of one autological or autobiographical subject, as is common with the genre, *Tulip* brings complexity and unsettledness to what constitutes the (auto)biographical subject in the first place. In the memoir, Tulip is conscious of being surrounded by an environment made up of others—human or animal—as suggested by her constant sniffing. The fact that she is compelled to produce something in response to what has come before (i.e., by dropping urine on objects) suggest, among other things, a will and capacity to mark her presence in time and space.

In the chapter “Liquids and Solids,” for example, Ackerley exposes the reader to Tulip’s bodily “waste” and movements, as a way to resist the monopoly of the written word in capturing lived experience and recording history. Tulip’s sense of smell, and her somatic responses to that which she smells, open Ackerley to a different mode of perception and a different way of registering the world in which we live that rely more on material contact and interaction than on abstract positionality or spatial relations originating from and apprehended by the subject’s eye/I. “She has two kinds of urination, Necessity and Social,” writes Ackerley, reminding the reader that what humans often consider dirty or “waste” is for dogs a part of their expressivity and social interaction (47). Where the written word would be inappropriate to capture and record,
Tulip’s urine—and sometimes blood—visits; where the eye does not acknowledge or learns to avert its gaze, the nose follows with persistence. Sniffing, as a mode of communication and knowledge production, challenges the singularity and superiority of human’s preferred modes of perception over others, the eye over the nose or other body parts.

Indeed, Tulip “attends socially to a wide range of objects” that often escape notice because of their supposed irrelevance or insignificance. “The commonest group,” as Ackerley tells us:

are the droppings, both liquid and solid, of other animals. Fresh horse dung has a special attraction for her and is always liberally sprayed. . . . buns, bones, fish, bread, vomit—unless it is food she wishes to eat. Dead and decaying animals are carefully attended to. . . . Once she spared a few drops for a heap of socks and shoes left on the foreshore of the river by some rowing men who had gone sculling. (49)

Ackerley’s observations of these everyday occurrences, where Ackerley’s eyes follow the legible traces of interest and importance registered by Tulip’s nose, introduce the reader to a way of life that is not predetermined and organized by human expectations, a way of experiencing life in time and space that, by including spontaneity and scent, yields new, unpredictable patterns of intelligibility, a hitherto unglimpsed orders of things. Ackerley writes: “Following her antics with the utmost curiosity, I used to wonder what on earth she was up to . . . [but] I came to the conclusion that she was simply expressing an appreciative interest . . . much as we underline a book we are reading” (49-50). Tulip’s nose and urine, in short, allow her to apprehend the world and record it in ways that are unfamiliar and only partially accessible to Ackerley. Ackerley's willingness to be guided by Tulip’s perceptions of the world, and his efforts to represent in human terms that which he does not yet understand, work to unsettle the human/animal hierarchy that doggedly refuses to acknowledge the animal’s status as a speaking subject deserving the
right to self-representation. If Tulip’s way of making sense of time and space is chaotic and somatically-driven, Ackerley does not seem to be fazed by it. His willingness to experience life outside human discourse, and to be guided by canine instinct, is what allows him to see the limits of human perception.

In *Queer Ecologies*, analogously, Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson caution against the sense of infinity—and orderly design—that a finite, interested human perspective seeks to evoke. By suppressing other modes of apprehension, and denying the diversity of creatures’ representations of the world, a small number of human perspectives win and make meaning of that reductive world by default. To question “the distinction between animal and human,” then, is to begin to “carve out a space to rethink the possibilities of inhabiting the material world,” write Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson (31). Ackerley and Tulip’s abilities to maintain an equitable friendship, in which the agency and expressivity of the dog are not eclipsed by that of the man, can be seen as a space-generating effort, by which alternative understandings of living are allowed to play themselves out without following the script imposed by society. “The autobiographical animal,” to borrow the term from Derrida, may be? a more-than-human concern after all. If “feeding, food, nursing, breeding, offspring, care and keeping of animals, training, upbringing, culture, living and allowing to live by giving to live, be fed, and grown” are all narratable units of lived experience that can be mapped out in an autobiographical sense, as Derrida claims, Tulip is no less autobiographical than Ackerley himself, as is made apparent in the copious details that Ackerley includes about Tulip’s everyday life, the trials and errors of her reproductive journey, her growing old with Ackerley, etc. (29). Ackerley’s acknowledgement of Tulip’s interiority as equal to, though different from, his own, is the pre-requisite for and foundation of their meaningful cross-species friendship. The
human/animal divide, when mediated by friendship, is not as unbridgeable as it might otherwise seem. Every time Ackerley replaces the word “species” or “dog” with “friendship” or “companion,” as regards his relationship with Tulip, he is consciously resisting a pet-owner dialectic that must categorize the man as superior to the dog, the written word and rational thinking over urine and instinct, thus pre-empting any meaningful interaction between the two species that might call into question the illusory grounds on which subjectivity and the narrating self are thought to be uniquely human.

Problems with Space: What Is It? Whom Does It Serve?

Ackerley’s commitment to honoring Tulip’s subjectivity, agency, and freedom, and his determination not to violate the core principles of their friendship, however, proves to be difficult to enact. For if Tulip attempts to set right the expectations of human and canine, making clear the potential of friendship to unmark disciplinary territories like the animal clinic or sexual reproduction, the book has to work against built-in inequalities that are part and parcel of the experience of subjectivity as it unfolds in such spaces. The various ways in which normative notions of privacy and publicity are structurally biased, and resist alternative formations of affection and agency, are made abundantly clear in the book. In fact, the entire narrative arc of Tulip—from the dread of visiting the vet, to pleasurable rituals such as going out for walks or roaming free in city parks, to finding a mate for Tulip, to the inconveniences and challenges small and insurmountable that thrust themselves upon the dyad on a daily basis, to Tulip’s declining health and ultimate departure—all of this reminds us that the everyday practice of a more-than-human friendship is fraught with internal miscommunication and external pressures. Without perseverance and strategy, Ackerley suggests, such friendship cannot survive the regimes of the normal within the city.
The city—as a series of physical and socially-constructed places—has always been unevenly accessible to human and non-human lives. Marginalized groups, lacking public relevance and legitimate claims to visibility, are relegated to the fringes of respectable metropolitan spaces, enjoying little or no right to protected mobility. This spatial discrepancy as experienced by different groups and modes of life, highlights, according to Michael Warner, “means of production and distribution . . . [and uneven] social conditions of access [that] . . . presuppose forms of intelligibility already in place” (73). The urban landscape, in many ways, reproduces asymmetrical relations by giving access to private and public spaces to certain bodies while denying such access to others by rendering them illegible or “unintelligible.” In Tulip’s case, the fact that her body language and the sounds she makes are deemed undecipherable is what relegates her—and her right to domestic and public spaces—to the periphery of human concerns.

Indeed, socially sanctioned intolerance and violence toward animals are vividly portrayed in Ackerley’s memoir. Whether it be the animal clinic, the sidewalk in front of shops, getting on or off the bus, or visiting someone’s else home, Ackerley and Tulip are everyday confused and stymied by the uneven and arbitrary distribution of spaces where nonhuman subjectivity is allowed or disallowed, as well as by the invisible hierarchies and rules that control those spaces. These socially constructed obstacles facing more-than-human relationships and companion species, and the restraint they place on the visibility and mobility of those who are deemed “not normal” or “less-than-human,” are so ingrained that they appear natural and beyond justification. The compromises both Ackerley and Tulip must make to avoid unnecessary difficulties reveal a set of discriminatory practices of defining space, and of granting access to space, that presuppose within an imagined community an insider-outsider divide. The willful forgetting of space as
both social and natural, as Susan Opotow and others have claimed, is responsible for a narrow understanding of identity based on personhood rather than the place-specific nature of all lives. This narrow understanding of identity, one that favors claims of personhood over fair use of space as a natural right, contributes to the daily struggles of Ackerley and Tulip—a more-than-human dyad—whose co-presence exceeds the bounds of personhood and is therefore not worthy of protection (at least legally speaking).

For example, Ackerley often has to endure the fear of cars and bicycles running over Tulip. He recounts two instances:

One day . . . [a] dog was obediently crouching in the gutter of Tooting Broadway, a truck, drawing into the curb, ran over it and broke its back . . . While we were thus harmlessly engaged in the otherwise empty road, a cyclist shot round the corner of the Star and Garter Hotel towards us, pedaling rapidly. . . . I don’t suppose I should have noticed this persona at all if he had not addressed me as he flew past: “Try taking your dog off the sidewalk to mess!” . . . “What’s the bleeding street for?” . . . “Bleeding dogs!” (33)

These two incidents evoke a world in which dogs and other non-human animals are vulnerable bodies made doubly vulnerable by the lack of legitimate access to streets or sidewalks. When the cyclist yells at Ackerley “What’s the bleeding street for?” he inhabits the position of the interrogator by virtue of his being a “normal” citizen, and seeks to reduce Tulip and Ackerley, by association, into illegitimacy. Dogs and permissive dog owners, to the cyclist’s mind, are a potential nuisance, a distraction, an obstacle to dodge or, if the risk is low, to run over. This kind of blatant violence, as described in Tulip, reveals the collective, if unsystematic, force asserted by the city and the normal citizen to restrict Tulip's and other dogs’ bodily movements. The vulnerability of the dog in public spaces, and the air of vulnerability shrouding the human
companion by association (i.e. they are *both* subject to human scorn and censorship in public), attest to unequal access to mobility within the public sphere, as experienced by those whose bodily presence is regarded as a nuisance, an unseemly, unwholesome sight subject to scorn or removal. The marginalization of the abnormal or sub-normal, in fact, is an ongoing process. Thus, Ackerley recounts how “I gaze with incredulity at the folly displayed by local councils in the posters and enameled signs they put up all over the place, regardless of expense. Putney is loaded with these signs, clamped to the stems of lamp posts or screwed into walls” (38). The diverse ways in which the public sphere favors one preferred form of visibility over all others, and the ways it pre-empts and restricts the mobility of the underclass, speak to a state governance of subjectivities and bodies literally by giving them access only to certain places and only at specific times. Indeed, as Michael Warner argues, the concerted effort of the nation-state to encroach upon society by asserting its will—by means of advice or regulations—into the social fabric constitutes “the alignment of the state and the social,” a blending of coerced governance and liberal sociality which “monopolizes the conditions of intelligibility” (220). “[T]he posters and enameled signs” to which Ackerley refers not only hinder the mobility of human and non-human lives, but also cultivate a culture of apathy toward those who deviate from what is prescriptive (normal) and properly legal. Situated outside bourgeois normalcy, Ackerley and Tulip, as separate entities and as a unit, must frequently contend with deep-seated discriminations that are built into public places and facilities hostile to those who fall outside the social imaginations of sameness and propriety.

In “The Two Tulips,” Ackerley confesses his fears of taking Tulip to the vet, a fear stemming from what Ackerley knows about Tulip’s unpredictability in confined spaces, and his own unwillingness and inability to side with those whose job is to subdue her, coaxing her into
compliance or by sheer human cunning and force. He recollects the horror the dyad has experienced during a previous visit to the animal clinic:

The vet . . . laid his syringe upon the table, rang the bell, selected a strip of bandage from a hook on the wall and made a loop in it—all without a word. . . . [then] he abruptly noosed her nose, with what was plainly the dexterity of long practice, drew her jaws tightly and roughly together, turned the ends of the tape round her throat and knotted them behind her ears . . . I was indeed, in no position, or even mind, to question whatever methods this busy and helpful man might think fit to exercise over my animal the control I lacked . . . the sight of Tulip’s horror-stricken face and the squawk of pain and despair she uttered before her powers of speech were cut rudely short. (14)

This vivid description of abuse, if shocking by today’s standards, was in fact common childrearing practice during the Victorian period, where children, especially boys, were often subject to the tyranny of their fathers, whose authority at home was supreme and unquestionable. Thus, as John Tosh notes, “at the end of the spectrum from the absent father stood the tyrannical father, so dear to the hearts of the debunking post-Victorians. . . regular and painful punishments to his children [was a] means of bolstering a man’s domestic authority” (95). This representation of paternal authority, and its impact on a child’s psyche, is echoed in Ackerley’s subsequent autobiographical work My Father and Myself, in which Ackerley’s father is referred to as “the banana king” who made his fortune in the Caribbean, and “a ‘weekend’ father . . . who did not perfectly earn his way into my childish heart” (101-2). This asymmetry between father and son, and the nervousness and resentment that it had generated in Ackerley, may explain his fear of subjecting Tulip to the care of the vet, who by virtue of his profession and knowledge, has enormous authority over the dog and Ackerley. Having been brought up during the final years of
Victorian reign, Ackerley himself received little insight into the workings of intimacy, in which respect, as he explains in *Father*, he had much “in common with many English children of our class . . . [whose] education in such matters had been totally neglected” (104). This sort of childhood, in which paternal authority is imprinted upon the child, has shaped the adult Ackerley, who, in seeing Tulip disobey him again in front of the vet, overcompensates for his disempowerment as a child by becoming the patriarchal figure himself: “Suddenly yelling ‘Stop it, you brute!’ I biffed her on the nose. The blow was harder than I intended. Tulip gave a little cry of pain and rubbed her nose with her paw” (18). Ackerley’s frustration at the animal clinic and the subsequent act of violence toward Tulip, reveal the invidious logic and abuse of power that haunts personal and social relationships across a range of contexts, including those involving cross-species companionship.

The disharmony between Ackerley and Tulip shown in the animal clinic, and Ackerley’s subsequent use of force in that space, points to the lingering impact that established relationship dynamics—lover-beloved, parent-child, and owner-pet, for example—can have on expressions of care and companionship. Hailed by authority—embodied by the male vet—the cross-species affinity between Ackerley and Tulip is forced to name itself, and to render its relational identity/category legible in the disciplinary space. Temporarily succumbing to this social pressure, Ackerley resorts to a rights-based language that expresses his (human) care for Tulip in terms of power and possession. The confined space of the animal clinic, not entirely unlike the disciplinary family under the rule of the Victorian father figure, produces similar effects in the adult Ackerley; in assuming power over Tulip, Ackerley makes the same mistake his father has made. After this unfortunate episode, Ackerley recoils from the animal clinic, as he writes, “My ambition in life [now] was to keep Tulip in such a state of health that she need never visit a vet
again. She would not, if she could help it” (15). Fortunately, this dyad will eventually meet Miss Canvey, a veterinarian who is kind and listens to animals’ body languages. Her gentle approach to both Ackerley and Tulip, in many ways, helps reconfigure the animal clinic from a space of discipline to that of nonintrusive care. “Dogs aren’t difficult to understand. One has to put oneself in their position,” as Miss Canvey puts it (20). In doing so, Ackerley eventually guides himself and Tulip out of an impasse of ideological difference--and into the spaces of nature-cultures in which they roam.

In overcoming various disciplinary restraints placed on Tulip in private and public spheres, Ackerley must also be vigilant against bourgeois sentimentality as well, lest normative desires of the human imprint or superimpose themselves on Tulip, especially in the arena of sexual attraction and reproduction. Indeed, understanding what is required for the welfare of his canine companion eventually enables Ackerley to understand himself, attesting to the mutually constitutive and corresponding nature of human and animal lives. Concerns about animals, and about the treatment of animals by humans, are inquiries that reach the core of humanity as well, however far-fetched and attenuated the linkages may seem at first. As Matthew Calarco claims,

"the question of the animal" . . . convey[s] that the issues raised under this rubric are fundamentally open questions, questions that open onto related philosophical and political concerns. . . . the question of the animal is but an opening onto a much larger and much richer set of issues that touch more broadly on the limits of the human. (6)

Ackerley's struggles with finding love and companionship as a gay man may have contributed to his desire to find Tulip a proper mate, a pedigree of the same caliber as hers. In *Father*, Ackerley confesses the difficulty of being a homosexual in London in the early parts of the twentieth century: “The Ideal Friend was never so nearly found . . . as I interpret my life now, I
devoted most of my leisure in the succeeding fifteen years to the search for him, picking up and
discarding innumerable candidates” (170).

Arguably, Ackerley seeks to fill this emotional void by finding Tulip a mate (or by finding Tulip, no?). However innocuous Ackerley’s wishes may seem to be, at this juncture Tulip’s agency is
at risk of being undermined by an anthropomorphic and biological knowledge that insists on
viewing sexual reproduction as a normal—if not the only—purpose, in animal life. In the
chapter “Trial and Error,” Ackerley chronicles his mistakes in imposing human understandings
of sexuality and reproduction onto Tulip, and the frustrations, for Tulip as well as himself, these
mistakes cause. Ackerley is initially preoccupied with fulfilling Tulip’s role as a purebred
Alsatian. Influenced by Victorian discourses on biology and evolutionary theory, Ackerley gives
into the logic of species survival and sexual reproduction. He writes: “Soon after Tulip came into
my possession I set about finding a husband for her. She had had a lonely and frustrated life
hitherto; now she should have a full one” (63). In subjecting Tulip to a narrative of normative
love, Ackerley has forgotten that Tulip, his friend, should have some say in the matter, if not the
ability to reject the proposal altogether. Not surprisingly, because of their lack of
communication, the quest to find the perfect mate for Tulip turns out to be a confusing and
exhausting fiasco. The naïve Ackerley believes that “[t]he prospect of mating her presented no
other serious problem . . . Slender though my knowledge was . . . [Tulip] came into heat twice a
year . . . [and] mating was accomplished at the peak, in the second week” (63); yet Tulip’s
sexuality proves to be more intractable than any anatomy textbook or dog-breeding manual
would suggest. Anxious to find Tulip a perfect match, Ackerley befriends, through his vet, the
Blandishes from Sheen, a suburb north of London. The middle-aged couple owns Max, “a
heavy, handsome dog with the grave deportment of the old family retainer,” and the three of
them together constitute a perfect portrait of domestic felicity, where Mrs. Blandish is sweet-natured and where Max is obedient and ready to please (65). This seemingly auspicious beginning is to end miserably, however, with Tulip chasing the sire “down a passage into what appeared to be the pantry with his tail between his legs” (68). Repeated attempts by Ackerley and the Blandishes to bring about the union were foiled by Tulip’s playful tactics or unruly aggression. The privacy and domestic comfort that Ackerley has not been able to enjoy but that he has wished to secure for Tulip serve as barriers to communication, creating a battle of wills. The concerns over bloodline and lineage, and the romantic ideas associated with them, are human baggage that Ackerley has unintentionally transferred to Tulip.

This transfer or projection of sexual and genealogical anxiety onto Tulip runs its course in the next chapter, “Journey’s End,” where after numerous failed attempts to mate Tulip, Ackerley has finally sensed “the danger of translating human emotions into beastly beasts” (91). One day, after another failed attempt, Ackerley and Tulip return to a country bungalow in Ferring, which his cousin has rented for the winter. Tulip decides that she wishes to mate with Dusky, “in whom Scottish sheep-dog predominated . . . [with] disconcerting dissimilar eyes, one brown, one pale blue” (120). In stark contrast with the ideal picture Ackerley has in mind, Tulip at last exercises her libido on a non-Alsatian; nor does this interracial couple, if you will, execute the love scene well. As Ackerley recounts,

He was too small to manage. She obligingly squatted, and suddenly, without a sound, they collapsed on the grass in a heap. . . . They lay together, their paws all mixed up . . . until Tulip thought she would like to get up, and found she could not. She tried to rise. The weight of Dusky’s body, united with her own, dragged her back. She looked round
in consternation. Then she began to struggle. I called to her soothingly to lie still, but she wanted to come over to me and could not, and her dismay turned into panic. (121)

The incongruities and struggles of this “love scene” contradict the smooth façade of domesticity that is the underpinning of bourgeois respectability, a perspective on home life projecting outward to assimilate others into conformity. The coercive nature of normative sexuality and reproduction, refracted through Tulip and Dusky’s act, caricatures the idea of companionate love that is interwoven with Victorian ideals of domesticity. The blood, sweat and tears that go with the production of normative sexual desires, and the imposition of normal sexual knowledge onto human and animal bodies alike, can be viewed as part of the biopolitics which Michel Foucault traced out decades ago in The History of Sexuality. Foucault cautions against “the progressive formation (and also transformations) of that ‘interplay of truth and sex’ which was bequeathed to us by the nineteenth century, and which we may have modified, but, lacking evidence to the contrary, have not rid ourselves of” (57). The interlocking of sex, knowledge, and the normal, and their collective impact on Ackerley’s assumptions and attitudes, is so tenacious and all-encompassing that it comes to shape the lives of nonhumans as well as humans. This normalization of sexual knowledge is so entrenched that Ackerley does not recognize its negative consequence until he sees in Tulip’s gaze a look of “horror and appeal.” As he exclaims, “Heavens! I thought, this is love! These are the pleasures of sex!” (122). Tulip’s insistence upon exercising her libido only when she feels ready, and her refusal to sexually reproduce according to a human schedule or a make-believe narrative of matrimony, has opened Ackerley’s eyes to the absurdities and incongruities of the ideals of romantic love and sexual reproduction that are intricately tied to dominant notions of normalcy and kinship.

The Queerness of More-Than-Human Living
If the cross-species friendship between Ackerley and Tulip has allowed the man to respect Tulip’s interiority and status as a speaking subject, it has also taught him to dissociate their companionship from human-centric and hetero-normative claims about species and sexual differences. In treating subjectivity as a more-than-human construct, Ackerley gradually allows himself to be guided by Tulip’s sense of the world, and her way of writing it, whether or not he can understand the modes of sense making she performs. This affinity and mutual regard between the two companions also mobilizes in Ackerley new ways of inhabiting the city in which humans and animals can coexist in a more just and equitable way.

The physical presence of this cross-species dyad brings out the incongruities of pro-human or pro-family regulations that seek to undermine and under-represent the heteroglossia of different subjectivities and lived experiences that unfold within urban spaces. In *Space, Place, and Sex*, Lynda Johnson and Robyn Longhurst emphasize the need to “decenter normative notions of sexuality” when analyzing gendered and sexual subjectivities, as well as their relation to the conception of space and the everyday performance of spatial dynamics (13). “Places and bodies,” according to Johnson and Longhurst, “are not just ‘linguistic territories’ . . . [but] have an undeniable materiality that cannot be bracketed out when considering the relationship between people and place” (16). The modes of “materiality” performed in private and public places, the physical performances that call into question how actual places are made abstract in the service of particular ideologies, are potentially subversive, and vulnerable to spontaneous change and alterity. Michael Warner, for example, has argued that marginalized individuals and groups, in response to the discriminatory practices of everyday life, have divined ways to exercise agency and use their “pathologized visibility” as leverage to resist/revise hetero-normative imaginings of subjectivity and its relation to space. For despite its hetero-normative
tendencies, the city, Julie Abraham argues in a similar vein, has always been a heterogeneous mix, a totality that resists easy identification: “The village or small town is repeatedly described as a ‘knowable’ community; the city, by contrast, is the place of not knowing” (47). Within such a contested space whose symbolic meanings and social interactions are always in a state of flux, Ackerley and Tulip go from one street to the next, crisscrossing here and there as they bring an element of play and mockery to demarcated places. Or, to put it another way, as a material force living in the present, the Ackerley-Tulip dyad has the potential to free physical places from their supposed linkages to past ideologies and discriminatory rituals. If, as Michael de Certeau claims, the city is no city without its pedestrians, who form part of “a spatial order . . . [that] organizes an ensemble of possibilities,” the presence of the city—with all its normative and disciplinary functions—is diminished when no one is willing to perform or witness city life (98). In this sense, Ackerley and Tulip, regardless of their relatively unprotected status in society, nonetheless possess the ability to perform as pedestrians, who bring a subversive spontaneity to carefully marked places that discriminate against alternative forms of visibility and mobility. Indeed, just as Tulip is concerned with unsettling distinctions between human and canine lives—for example, by portraying the extent to which a cross-species friendship can undo the logic of the normal in disciplinary spaces like the animal clinic or in the sphere of sexual reproduction—the book also explores how alternative “styles of embodiment,” again to borrow Michael Warner’s terminology, suggest ways to unmark carefully-demarcated social spaces to which homosexuals, animals, and other disfavored or non-normative kinds do not otherwise belong. In revealing the built-in, but imperfect, inequality of the urban landscape, and the creative means to outwit or overcome it, Tulip reminds us that it is possible for alternative embodiments of subjectivity and community to thrive within the bourgeois metropole, with these different forms
of (inter)subjectivity having the chance to outlive and reveal as outmoded its discriminatory practices.

In “The Turn of the Screw,” the final chapter of Tulip, Ackerley demonstrates the need to break the rules in order to uphold Tulip’s right of access to the public sphere. Knowing that the bus drivers in London are routinely unsympathetic to large breeds, Ackerley would patiently wait for the conductors whom he knows are kind enough to let Tulip on the bus, so that Tulip and he can play in the Wimbledon Common, untrammeled by busy pedestrians and city warning signposts. Getting to this place is especially important when Tulip is in heat and in need of open space. He remembers every vivid detail of their outings (and the potential obstacles they must avoid):

Every now and then I see a small bead of blood trickle slowly and stainlessly down the white underside of her drooped tail and fall to the floor. This manifestation of her condition I conceal from the conductor. . . . It is not a situation in which the English are notoriously quick with sympathy. . . . The time of his bus suits me; he was good enough to accept an Alsatian as passenger when I made preliminary inquiries a week ago; we have been travelling regularly with him since, and wish to go on doing so while his spell of duty lasts. For London bus conductors . . . can refuse to carry dogs and often do, even when their buses are empty and likely to remain so. (152)

Large breeds like Tulip are everyday subject to the random scrutiny of humans, similar to the way Ackerley is subject to the scorn of heterosexual citizens. Rather than admit defeat, however, Ackerley has learned to outwit the system and pick his battles. Despite the structural violence, the systematic inequity, that pervades social life, individuals still have the ability and means to dodge or overcome it. For all the buses that refuse to take Ackerley and Tulip, for example,
there is always one that takes them in. This kind of empathy among strangers is as much part of the urban experience as is the lack of concern shown by anonymous strangers. What Ackerley and Tulip have regularly achieved in traveling from their apartment to the Wimbledon Common, with the help of benevolent bus drivers, is among other things an act of civil disobedience that turns clearly-marked places (the bus in this case) into a contact zone of human and animal lives. By successfully infiltrating the humans-only bus, Ackerley and Tulip are able to enjoy a greater degree of social mobility, and a quicker access to urban green space that is beneficial for Tulip’s psychological and physical needs.

Ackerley’s commitment to protecting Tulip’s mobility and right of access to public space reflects his own experiences of being homosexual. Though his sexuality is never explicitly addressed in *Tulip*—as it is in the case in *Father*—Ackerley does mention the recent death of a young man whose body was found Wimbledon Common. The urban green space “where the silver trees rise in the thousands from a rolling sea of bracken, [where] Tulip turns into the wild beast she resembles” is, ironically, a site of premature endings and unfulfilled desires for many a young man. Ackerley ruminates over the sad news:

So deep did he burrow into his green unwelcoming shroud that it was many days before his body was found, his empty phial beside him. . . . Again the choice was made. Who made it? Carrying his rope with him from Kingston at night, he moved up through the dark woods, clambered here and dropped off into space. . . . Ah, perfect but imperfect boy, brilliant at work, bored by games, traits of effeminacy were noticed in you, you were vain of your appearance and addicted to the use of scent. Everyone, it seemed, wished you different form what you were, so you came here at last and pushed your face into a swamp, and that was the end of you, perfect but imperfect boy. (*Tulip* 172)
Intermingled with the sad fate of the “perfect but imperfect boy,” Tulip's adventures serve to remind Ackerley of the pleasures as well as the perils that come with every movement and possibility within the cityscape. For Tulip, who benefits from Ackerley’s insistence and cunning, the city is a playground, though not without its inconveniences; for the “effeminate” young man who died in the woods alone, however, the city remains a cruel and unforgiving space. If “The Turn of the Screw” chronicles the small victories and chance triumphs of a cross-species companionship, it also serves to witness the uneven and arbitrary public sphere that renders life a struggle for visibility and acceptance for so many who happen to be different from what is considered normal. “While it would be false to equate the two,” as Mel Chen reminds us, “relations between the two epistemological regions of queer and animal abound. The animal has long been an analogical source of understanding for human sexuality” (102). The suicide of the “perfect but imperfect boy” in Wimbledon Common highlights the sense of defeat, and the need for escape, that many homosexuals living in England at the time must have felt, including Ackerley himself. Thus, in *Father Ackerley* recalls in detail the feelings of being lost and trapped:

> This obsession with sex was already taking me, of course to foreign countries, France, Italy, Denmark, where civilized laws prevailed and one was not in danger of arrest and imprisonment for the color of one’s hair. . . . at the same time—a delayed conclusion—what was the good of making friends in other countries? One wanted them in one’s own, [and] one wanted them in one’s home. . . . how, in that enormous, puritanical and joyless city [London], could one find the Ideal Friend? (173-74).

As the image of the “Ideal Friend” vitiates over the years, Tulip’s robust sense of being, and her love for open air and play, becomes a source of strength that keeps Ackerley optimistic and
caring. Situated outside the privatized, hetero-normative domesticity on which imaginations of public life are based, both Ackerley and Tulip, on account of being gay and canine, respectively, have to learn to stay afloat amidst waves of legal discrimination and social intolerance that threaten to overwhelm them at any moment.

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In *Father*, published some eight years after the passing of Tulip, Ackerley writes, “. . . looking at her sometimes I used to think that the Ideal Friend, whom I no longer wanted, perhaps should have been an animal-man, the mind of my bitch, for instance, in the body of my sailor” (282). Make-believe as the figure is, this fusion of man and beast to approximate the image of ideal friendship is telling. For such a wish seems to resonate with Donna Haraway’s imaginings of an “I becom[ing] with dogs . . . [an] I . . . drawn into the multispecies knots that . . . are tied . . . and retie[d] by their reciprocal action” (35). Ackerley's image can also be aligned with Mel Chen’s evocations of a world of “queer animality,” in which alternative “social and cultural formations of ‘improper affiliation’” may thrive in “intimacies, beings, and spaces located outside of the heteronormative” (104). In wishing for a mind like Tulip’s, as opposed to a human’s, Ackerley openly prefers the mind of an animal capable of cross-species friendship over a discriminatory human mind, for reasons that I have explored in this essay. In extending friendship to Tulip, and in honoring it the best way he knows how, Ackerley has learned to overlook a host of manufactured differences that break asunder the ties that in actuality bind human and non-human animal lives meaningfully together.

In emphasizing less how animality brings continuity to human and animal lives, and more on how everyday reciprocities of friendship afford means of connecting different life worlds, I have sought to counter human-centric understandings of subjectivity and the right to space. The
particular strength of *Tulip*, as a memoir, lies in its representation of how cross-species friendship involves quotidian life choices that coalesce into an ethics of reciprocity and regard. Rather than making a bid to transcend human and animal differences, *Tulip* suggests how affection and affinity can thrive despite—or perhaps because of—differences that the dominant order translates into identity-based and categorical distinctions
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