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In a paper delivered to Cambridge undergraduates in 1905, E. M. Forster shared an anecdote about the process of writing a story:

> Some years ago there was a competition in one of the domestic papers – I think it was in the *Gentlewoman*. The public was invited to write an original story length not to exceed two thousand words, and the best story was to get a prize. A certain young lady, who had already been honourably commended, for she had stuffed a pincushion, determined to compete. She started gaily, but found it more bother than she expected. It had seemed so simple – just a pen, paper, and a little thought – but really the pincushion was child’s play, besides being much more useful. The day for sending in approached, and of the two thousand words she had not written one. In her despair she cried, “I know what! I’ll make the story awfully sad and everyone shall die. They’re sure to like it then.”[1]

Besides the jibe at the fictional amateur, this anecdote raises several questions about writing which were to seep into Forster’s works. Does a financial ‘prize’ professionalise the amateur? Does the ‘sad’ ending solution suggest that there is an algorithmic method to generating a successful story?

Inheriting anxieties about writing as a form of work from Victorian labour ideologies, the ‘professionalisation of authorship’ met ‘the development of the mass fiction market’ in

[1] E. M. Forster, ‘Happy versus Sad Endings’, *The Creator as Critic and Other Writings*, ed. Jeffrey M. Heath (Toronto: Dundurn, 2008), 23-26 (p. 23). The exact date of the talk is contested (p. 324).

Edwardian England.[2] Several decades after these developments, Forster said with an air of nonchalance during a BBC radio broadcast in 1946 that, 'professionally, I am a writer'.[3] However, as I show in this article, this apparently easy equation of professionalism with authorship conceals much about Forster's relationship with literary labour during the early years of his career. As pointed out by his authorised biographer, P. N. Furbank, Forster saw 'one special weakness in his chosen way of life: he watched "Men go about their work," but, never having had a job himself, he was in no position to write about the working side of their life'.[4] Indeed, in his New Year's Eve journal entry in 1904, Forster lamented that 'I'm not good enough to do with regular work'.[5] If, increasingly (though certainly not exclusively, as we shall see), writing was understood to be a vocational pursuit, this was met by Forster with self-deprecation at best, and self-flagellation at worst, as he embarked upon his writing career.

Paul Delany has explored Forster's discomfort with being a member of the independent class, having been 'absolved by his inherited wealth [from his great-aunt] from the need to seek a useful career'.[6] However, though Delany provides fruitful discussion of how *not* working manifests in Forster's novels, he stops short of pushing the argument towards work itself. Jeffrey M. Heath and Evelyn Cobley have taken up this gap by focusing explicitly on labour theory. Heath makes a convincing case for Forster's acute awareness of industrialism, and examines how Forster 'guffawed' at the gospel of work of his Victorian predecessor, Thomas Carlyle, who propounded an impetus to 'lay aside your fiddles, take out your work implements'.[7] Cobley takes a more contemporaneous approach by situating the modern 'efficiency calculus' in the pages of *Howards End* (1910).[8] Yet there are limitations to both of these discussions of how labour anxieties surface in Forster's writing: in setting up a matrix of thought about leisure and work, neither considers Forster's relationship with his

[2] Sandra Kemp, Charlotte Mitchell, and David Trotter, 'Publishers', *The Oxford Companion to Edwardian Fiction* (2005) <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198117605.001.0001/acref-9780198117605-e-963#> [accessed 8 March 2019].
[3] E. M. Forster, 'The Challenge of our Time', *Two Cheers for Democracy*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), 54-58 (p. 54).
[4] P. N. Furbank, *E. M. Forster: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 138.
[5] E. M. Forster, *The Journals and Diaries of E. M. Forster,* ed. Philip Gardner (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), I, p. 130.
[6] Paul Delany, '"Islands of Money": Rentier Culture in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*', in *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 31:3 (1988), 285-296 (p. 285).
[7] Heath, 'Notes on the Broadcasts', *Creator as Critic*, pp.625-722 (p. 710); Forster, 'I Speak for Myself', *Creator as Critic*, pp. 310-312 (p. 311); Thomas Carlyle, 'The Present Time', *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1898), pp. 1-47 (pp. 10-11).
[8] Evelyn Cobley, *Modernism and the Culture of Efficiency: Ideology and Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 247.

own occupation. This article, in contrast, explores Forster's fictional portrayals of authors and their processes through the lens of labour. Through this historically grounded lens, I explore Forster's representational, rather than grammatical, strategies of writing on work: his juxtaposition of proactivity and inactivity, algorithm and artistry, research and inspiration. Asking whether creativity is denigrated or refined if authorship is professionalised, my claim is that Forster posits some writing as a form of factory-like industry, characterised by efficient production.

Forster's early concerns about writing as a form of work manifest in two particular novels: in the oft-neglected *The Longest Journey* (1907), in which Rickie Elliot abandons an unsuccessful writing career for 'regular' work in a school while his aunt, Emily Failing, pens an introduction for her late husband's socialist essays; and in *A Room with a View* (1908), in which Miss Lavish, largely overlooked in criticism on this novel, travels to Italy and 'collects material' for a novel.[9] In the descriptions of writing processes in these novels, as well as a cluster of essays and journal entries that I discuss below, Forster makes a distinction between two types of writers. In his 1905 paper to undergraduates, quoted at the beginning, he sets out his terms, saying that he will 'pass over the inartistic writer […] who writes potboilers' and instead focus on the 'conscientious artist'.[10] Here, he establishes a problematic division of artist and potboiler;[11] yet his narrative identifications of the slacker and the labourer are both ironic and self-deprecating.[12] It is the work of the potboiler that is connected with laboriousness.

The potboiler's work is not the idealised form expounded by John Ruskin, the influential Victorian art critic and labour theorist, recalling that, in *Howards End*, Leonard Bast reads *The Stones of Venice* (1853) and resents the rich man 'piping melodiously of Effort and Self-Sacrifice'.[13] Indeed, by Forster's period of literary productivity, Ruskinian theories had been subsumed by Frederick Winslow Taylor's principles of efficiency, Friedrich Nietzsche's 'expression[s] of vitality', and Sigmund Freud's writings on

[9] Forster, *The Longest Journey* (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 86, 151; Forster, *A Room with a View* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 45.
[10] Forster, 'Happy versus Sad Endings', p. 24.
[11] The *OED* tells us that 'potboiler' refers either to the 'creative work produced solely to make the originator a living by catering to popular taste' or 'a writer who produces such work' <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/148774?rskey=Qe2BNA&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 28 February 2019].
[12] 'Slacker' is first recorded in 1898: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/181236?rskey=jebFAG&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 8 March 2019].
[13] Forster, *Howards End* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 42.

'cooperative labour'.[14] Instead, the work Forster ascribes to the potboiler is an industrial form: it uses efficiency to maximise production and profitability. It is curious that a potboiler, etymologically linked to pre-industrial artisanal labour, should find itself so characterised, but the recent 'emergence of the bestseller – a term coined in the 1890s' accounts for the potboiler's link to the mass market.[15] Along with the availability of six shilling single volumes from 1894, the bestseller meant that 'fiction was perhaps the most important sector of the leisure industry' in the twenty years preceding the First World War.[16] Hence, Forster's illustration of the potboiler, Miss Lavish, is sensitive to efficient commercial production in the Edwardian literary market.

In contrast, as Frank Kermode tells us, 'this was also a time in which technique of fiction was a matter of intense concern' because 'men wanted, as *artists*, to refine the instruments they had inherited' [emphasis added].[17] Examining these refined instruments against the potboiler, I first consider the inception of a piece of writing, contrasting inactivity and inspiration with proactivity and research. I then discuss the body of the writing process, comparing artistry with algorithmic methods. Forster's particular understanding of literary labour is contextualised by looking across at Henry James and Virginia Woolf, whose 1928 novel depicts its eponymous hero, Orlando, labouring over a single poem for centuries. I also set Forster's fictional authors alongside his Edwardian contemporaries, looking at H. G. Wells, and those we might consider to be potboilers: Emily Spender and W. W. Jacobs. The often disproportionate prescription of the potboiler term to female writers, both fictional (Miss Lavish) and real (Emily Spender), opens up questions of gendering in labour ideologies; culturally influential ideas about women and labour were indeed being theorised by writers such as the novelist and essayist Olive Schreiner, whose indexing of degeneration to inactivity captures an early twentieth-century anxiety that surfaces in Forster's own fictional instances of inactivity.[18] However, this article is more concerned with writing processes than gendered ideologies. Forster's descriptions of such processes probe the labour

[14] Morag Shiach, *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 6, 47, 54.
[15] Philip Waller, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 636.
[16] Kemp, Mitchell, Trotter, 'Publishers'.
[17] Frank Kermode, 'The English Novel, Circa 1907', *Essays on Fiction 1971-82* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 33-51 (p. 39).
[18] Olive Schreiner, *Women and Labour* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), p. 123.

of the potboiler against more artistic modes of writing, reflecting an Edwardian literary market full of products 'retailed to amuse', to borrow a phrase from Henry James.[19]

'Inspiration'

Describing a typical interview between reader and writer in the Society of Authors' magazine in 1912, Forster presents a series of questions about authorial inspiration: 'How do you set about them? How do they come? Do you plan out a book beforehand? Or do you make it up as you go along?'.[20] Over forty years later, he is indeed asked in an interview whether he writes 'every day, or only under inspiration', replying, 'the latter'.[21] In his novels, Forster describes this mysterious process of beginning a piece of writing. In *The Longest Journey*, periods of inactivity are punctuated by moments of inspiration; in *A Room with a View*, an idea is actively sought in an industrial process.

The processes of the potboiler must be more akin to industry than artistry for, as the etymology of the term suggests, a potboiler requires consistent production to sustain their livelihood. Forster uses the potboiler's modes of research to illustrate this. While Rickie Elliot foregoes a visit to Italy, where he had hoped that 'life would be', Miss Lavish undertakes an Italian research trip.[22] When the reader is introduced to her early in the novel, Forster immediately demonstrates her pot boiling alchemy of the mundane to the catastrophic: she retells a past 'evening of hers in Venice' as 'a real catastrophe, not a mere episode'.[23] Through the narrator's lukewarm reception of Miss Lavish's storytelling, Forster exemplifies the 'shameless creatures' that are 'literary hacks', who hyperbolise an incident for rhetorical effect when its retelling could be merely episodic.[24] For the potboiler who researches proactively, then, it seems that inspiration is abundant. Here, Miss Lavish continues to seek material proactively on the streets of Florence:

> The exact site of the murder was occupied, not by a ghost, but by Miss Lavish, who had the morning newspaper in her hand. She hailed them briskly. The

[19] Henry James, 'The Future of the Novel', *The House of Fiction*, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), pp. 48-59 (p. 48).
[20] E. M. Forster, 'Inspiration', *The Author*, XXII: 10 (July 1912), pp. 281-82 (p. 281).
[21] P. N. Furbank, F. J. H. Haskell, 'E. M. Forster', *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, ed. Malcolm Cowley (London: Mercury Books, 1962), pp. 25-33 (p. 30).
[22] *The Longest Journey*, p. 152.
[23] *A Room with a View*, p. 9.
[24] Ibid., p. 45.

> dreadful catastrophe of the previous day had given her an idea which she thought would work up into a book.
> "Oh, let me congratulate you!" said Miss Bartlett. "After your despair of yesterday! What a fortunate thing!"[25]

Miss Lavish's briskness in the face of spectral possibility establishes her position as the efficient worker, yielding results from the 'life' (or death) she finds.

There is indeed something of an idea from 'life' in Miss Lavish, who 'was actually a Miss Spender', as Forster tells Furbank and Haskell in their 1953 interview.[26] Forster met the novelist and suffragette Emily Spender in an Italian pension in 1901, where she would give out her novels to fellow guests.[27] It is likely that one such novel was *A Soldier For a Day* (1901), which contains a catastrophe from 'the local newspaper', much like the one Miss Lavish wields in her hand. Spender records 'the fact of suicide by drowning of a girl of twenty', who wrote to her lover in a letter that 'haunted him ever since, like a musical refrain: "I loved you, and you have destroyed me!"'.[28] With all the scent of a real-life tragedy augmented by a love story, the *London Standard*'s verdict on *A Soldier For a Day* was that it was 'somewhat a *worn-out* theme for a plot' [emphasis added].[29] Yet this vocabulary inadvertently points to the labour behind the production; the over-worked, 'worn-out' researcher behind the 'destroyed' hyperbole. These 'worn-out' themes were so because they were popular, and therefore profitable, leading to Forster's descriptions of Miss Lavish laboriously hunting for her next idea. Glancing backwards at early drafts of *A Room with a View*, the well wishes began slightly differently: '"Oh let me congratulate you!" said Miss Bartlett. "I am so very glad that you have found your *chance*. What a very fortunate thing."' [emphasis added].[30] As we see from the published version above, Forster omits the word 'chance'. While Miss Lavish's idea is inspired by an ephemeral moment in the piazza, she has not happened upon this event in a moment of coincidence. She has engaged in literary research as part of a commercial process.

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[25] Ibid., p. 44.
[26] *The Paris Review Interviews*, p. 31.
[27] M. C. Rintoul, *Dictionary of Real People and Places in Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 852.
[28] Emily Spender, *A Soldier For a Day* (London: F. V. White & Co., 1901), p. 5.
[29] 'Novels of the Day', *London Standard*, 3 May 1901, p. 4 <https://newspaperarchive.com/london-standard-may-03-1901-p-4/> [accessed 5 March 2019].
[30] E. M. Forster, *The Lucy Novels: Early Sketches for* A Room with a View, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 40.

Elsewhere in Forster's writing, however, 'chance' does reward the writer whose mind is stimulated by inactivity. In December 1910, he recorded that 'for a solid hour & half have done nothing […] shall I force myself to begin a book & trust to inspiration dropping in some time?'.[31] In *The Longest Journey*, Emily Failing's writing process depicts exactly this, though it is Rickie who has generally been considered the artist of the novel – Laurence Brander, for example, paints an unsympathetic portrait of 'Aunt Emily, who devotes her energies to securing fame for her dead husband'.[32] Her periods of 'doing nothing' are punctuated by moments of trusting to inspiration:

> After long thought she wrote on the paper in front of her, "The subject of this memoir first saw the light at Wolverhampton on May the 14th, 1842." She laid down her pen and said "Ugh!" A robin hopped in and she welcomed him. A sparrow followed and she stamped her foot. She watched some thick white water which was sliding like a snake down the gutter of the gravel path. […] Then she wrote feverishly, "The subject of this memoir first saw the light in the middle of the night. It was twenty to eleven. His pa was a parson, but he was not his pa's son, and never went to heaven." There was the sound of a train, and presently white smoke appeared, rising laboriously through the heavy air. It distracted her, and for about a quarter of an hour she sat perfectly still, doing nothing. At last she pushed the spoilt paper aside, took a fresh piece, and was beginning to write "On May the 14th, 1843," when there was a crunch on the gravel.[33]

The acceleration and deceleration of the passage contrasts with Miss Lavish's brisk motion, in her desperation to emulate the pace of the newspaper press and put the murder into print. Mrs Failing is stimulated by inactivity three times: following 'long thought'; after watching a snake of water while the ink from her pen does not flow; and after 'doing nothing'. These periods give rise to moments in which she writes 'feverishly'. Yet Forster is careful to separate this activity – her experiment with the pun of 'parson' and 'pa's son' – from work. Outside, the smoke from the industrial symbol of the train rises 'laboriously' (a pre-emptive image of the industry in which Margaret reluctantly invests in *Howards End* before it

[31] Forster, *The Journals and Diaries*, II, p. 18.
[32] Laurence Brander, *E. M. Forster: A Critical Study* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), p. 111.
[33] *The Longest Journey*, p. 86.

'decline[s] with […] steady dignity'), in a lightly ironic description of a by-product of labour, while Mrs Failing sits still.[34] This carefully-paced pattern of inactivity and inspiration can be found in another of Forster's treatments of the start of the writing process, in an article aptly named 'Inspiration': 'they write a few sentences very slowly and feel constricted and used up. Then a queer catastrophe happens inside them. The mind, as it were, turns turtle, sometimes with rapidity, and a hidden part comes to the top and controls the pen'.[35] In contrast to Miss Lavish, who experiences that 'past evening of hers in Venice' as a 'catastrophe' ripe for storytelling, here Forster's 'catastrophe' occurs from within. Tracing this pattern of inactivity and inspiration, Virginia Woolf exercises the same pacing in her description of Nick Greene in *Orlando* (1928), who 'held a pen in his hand, but he was not writing […] and then, very quickly, wrote half-a-dozen lines'.[36] This common pattern establishes the complexity with which Forster and his contemporaries viewed artistic writing. 'Inspiration', though catalysing spurts of creativity, is never far from periods of 'doing nothing'.

'The artist is not a bricklayer'

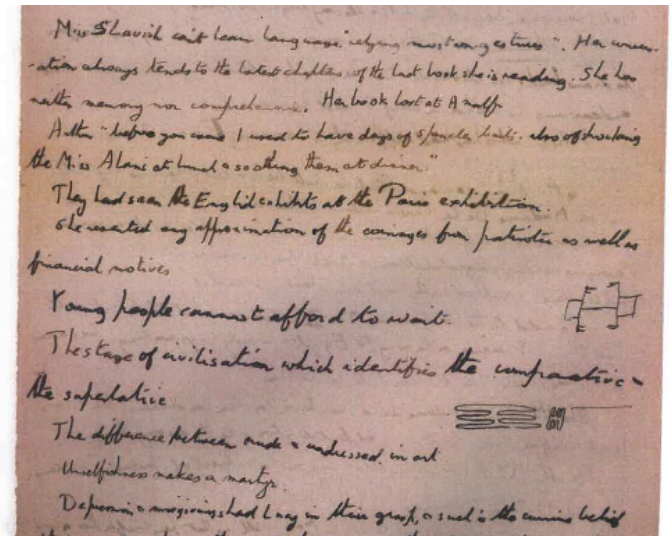

Figure 1:Doodles among drafts of the 'Lucy' novel. By kind permission of the Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge.

Taking up these anxieties regarding creative spurts and doing nothing in a 1919 journal entry, Forster imagines with dread a life of 'always working, never creating'.[37] Importantly, he

[34] *Howards End*, p. 12.
[35] 'Inspiration', p. 281.
[36] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 15.
[37] Forster, *The Journals and Diaries,* II, p. 57.

regards the two as mutually exclusive, an outlook that illuminates his fictional renderings of writing processes. Having written her opening sentence, Mrs Failing 'began to caricature' her ward, Stephen, sat opposite.[38] Although this papery connection between caricature and prose fuses two forms of representation, Mrs Failing's absent-minded creativity prompts a reading of the caricature as a distracted form of doodling. This migration between distraction and writing, something to which Forster himself was prone (see Figure 1), opens up a moment of artistic breathing space that widens the perceived gap between 'working' and 'creating'.[39] Again, it is interesting to compare this process with the brisk motion of Miss Lavish, who, back in the piazza in Florence, 'marched cheerfully to the fountain and back, and did a few calculations in realism', concluding that 'the two men had quarreled over a five-franc note. For the five-franc note she should substitute a young lady, which would raise the tone of the tragedy'.[40] Miss Lavish's method is more pragmatic than artistic. Her quick march and mathematical precision invoke the efficiency of mass production, curbing creativity in her industrial spirit. This is reinforced by Forster's mention of 'realism', the Edwardian 'documentary machinery [that] was so efficient at presenting social data'.[41] Woolf employs the language of labour in one of her polemics against realism, 'Modern Fiction' (1921), in which she argues that 'so much of the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness of life' is 'labour misplaced'.[42] Miss Lavish's calculations, therefore, exemplify the misplaced labour that Woolf condemns. Nevertheless, she pockets the 'five-franc note' by deftly substituting in a 'young lady' with the efficiency of an industrial process – the product, here, being a literary 'tragedy'.

Realist labours and plot conventions, however, play no part in Rickie's artistic experiments with fantasy:

> There, among spoons and corks and string, he found a fragment of a little story that he had tried to write last term. It was called "The Bay of the Fifteen Islets", and the action took place on St John's Eve off the coast of Sicily. A party of tourists land on one of the islands. Suddenly the boatmen become

[38] *The Longest Journey*, p. 90.
[39] King's College Archive Centre, Cambridge, The Papers of Edward Morgan Forster, EMF vol. 8/14, folio 2v.
[40] *A Room with a View*, p. 45.
[41] Maria Di Battista, 'Realism and Rebellion in Edwardian and Georgian Fiction', *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 40-55 (p. 40).
[42] Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 6-12 (p. 8).

> uneasy, and say that the island is not generally there […] but - But what nonsense! When real things are so wonderful, what is the point of pretending?[43]

The descent into a fantasy world is met with a jolt back into 'real things' – this being an extension of the novel's schematic philosophies regarding 'objectivity and subjectivity'.[44] Struggling to retain 'artistic integrity', Rickie chastises himself for 'pretending', anticipating Agnes' scepticism about making 'a living by pretending that Greek Gods were alive, or that young ladies could vanish into trees'.[45] A remedy is offered by an editor who does not object to 'imagination' but, on receiving Rickie's writing, suggests that it is channelled into a 'really good ghost story' – a genre that chisels the fantastic into the formulaic.[46]

Edwardian ghost stories were profitable literary pieces. W. W. Jacobs' 'The Monkey's Paw' (1902) provides a popular example, filled with the melodrama of three wishes gone awry and concluding with the victim dropping in 'a senseless heap, to the floor'.[47] Jacobs was later condemned by H. G. Wells, who dubbed him 'content merely to serve the purpose of the slippered hours' of light reading for the 'weary giant' who does not want to be challenged by unconventional literature.[48] Forster, Furbank tells us, also attempted to write a ghost story, 'The Purple Envelope' (1904), but it 'never found a publisher, and he came to the conclusion that he was "too refined to write a ghost story"'.[49] Later, in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Forster outright 'rejects fantasy', partly 'because fantasy is found to be too "easy"' (a haughty claim in light of 'The Purple Envelope', perhaps).[50] Miss Lavish, who adopts an 'easy' formulaic method, takes part in commercial production, while Rickie, the artist, flounders. While the narrator of *The Longest Journey* clearly ventriloquises Agnes and the publishers' opinions about 'nonsense', Forster suggests that the conscientious artist cannot be an engine of production in the face of an 'easy' writing task.

Hence, Rickie's artistic writing subverts the expectation of his commercially-minded prospective publisher, while Miss Lavish's process conforms to the 'worn-out theme[s]' that might produce a bestseller. She fills in her 'barest outline' for her novel with 'a deal of local

[43] *The Longest Journey*, p. 60.
[44] *The Longest Journey*, p. 3.
[45] John Colmer, *E. M. Forster: The Personal Voice* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 66.
[46] *The Longest Journey*, pp. 121, 151.
[47] W. W. Jacobs, *The Monkey's Paw* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1983), p. 17.
[48] H. G. Wells, *An Englishman Looks at the World* (London: Cassel and Company, 1914), p. 150.
[49] Furbank (1979), p. 121.
[50] David Medalie, *E. M. Forster's Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 73.

colouring, descriptions of Florence and the neighbourhood', and plans to 'introduce some humorous characters'.[51] We can only assume that the description of the neighbourhood will include the precise distance she measures between the murder site and the fountain. There is, Forster suggests here, something algorithmic about writing a potboiler; the labour takes places in the research, brisk motion, calculation, and high turnover, which necessitates speed and efficiency. Such a formulaic approach to profitable writing recalls the contemporary proliferation of authors' manuals, which received harsh attention from the more experimentally inclined. Clayton Hamilton provides a notable example in his *Materials and Methods of Fiction* (1909), of which both Forster and Woolf were 'scathing in their criticism'.[52] Hamilton instructs his readers on a simple structure for a plot: '1. The Complication; 2. The Major Knot; 3. The Explication'.[53] Miss Lavish's writing follows a similar formula to meet consumer expectation. It seems, then, that alongside the development of mass production, there is nothing novel about Miss Lavish's novel.[54] Playing the role of the commercially-minded editor, Agnes encourages Rickie to adopt this more prescribed method, suggesting that he 'ought to put that part plainly. Otherwise, with such an original story, people might miss the point'.[55] Wells – at whom Forster 'stare[s]' across a restaurant in 1905 – argues something similar: 'a short story is, or should be, a simple thing; it aims at producing one single, vivid effect'.[56] The effect of Rickie's artistry, therefore, is that something unprofitable is produced, inviting anxieties that artistry is a self-indulgent shirking of 'regular work', as Forster calls it.

Forster's division of artistry and work engages with a debate rife in late Victorian writing on labour. In 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), Henry James refers to fellow writers as 'labourers in the same field'.[57] The 'field', more than just a sphere of activity, here takes on the connotations of one that is ploughed by 'labourers'. As a reader of James (unlike Agnes, who struggles to 'tackle' one of his 'long affair[s]'), Forster departs from the theories of his predecessor, apparent in the reactions to *The Longest Journey*'s Mr Pembroke's notion of

[51] *A Room with a View*, p. 45.
[52] Rukun Advani, *E. M. Forster as Critic* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 132.
[53] Clayton Hamilton, *Materials and Methods of Fiction* (London: Grant Richards, 1909), p. 67.
[54] The *OED* invites us to compare novel (n.) with novel (adj.), from Latin etymon *novella/novellus*, meaning 'new' <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128758?rskey=HX3G73&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 10 March 2019].
[55] *The Longest Journey*, p. 71.
[56] Forster, *The Journal and Diaries*, I p.140; Wells, p. 152.
[57] Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction', *The House of Fiction,* ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), pp. 23-45 (p. 24).

writing as 'work and drudge'.[58] The narrator remarks that Rickie 'never retorted that the artist is not a bricklayer […] for art is not drudgery'.[59] Offering up the response that Rickie 'never retorted', Forster steers his narration towards the realm of the didactic. Since Forster himself 'guffawed' at Carlyle's gospel of work, as discussed earlier, 'drudgery' takes on exclusively negative connotations here, widening the distance between the artist and the labouring potboiler.

In comparison, when Miss Lavish has finished relaying her writing process to Lucy and Charlotte, the 'cousins wished success to her labours'.[60] Returning to the early drafts of the 'Lucy novel', this comment is not to be found.[61] Forster evidently made some revisions regarding Miss Lavish's writing, with a published version that is grounded within the language of work. This is of a piece with Virginia Woolf's preoccupation with laboriousness, as we saw in 'Modern Fiction'. In her later work, Orlando adds 'a line or two with enormous *labour* to "The Oak Tree, A Poem"' [emphasis added], hinting with this vocabulary that Orlando is not a natural artist.[62] Similarly, Wells complains of critics who 'attempt to exact a laboriousness of method' in the writers they critique.[63] Forster makes such discourses manifest in the fate of Rickie's writing career. He becomes a teacher at 'Sawston not to intrigue but to labour', the advantage, according to Agnes, being that he 'would have three months in the year to yourself, and could do your writing' in the school 'holidays'.[64] Realising the fear of 'always working, never creating', Forster creates some temporal distance between Rickie's labours, assigned to term-time, and his art, assigned to 'holidays'. Nevertheless, working to support one's art was not unusual. In the May 1912 edition of *The Author*, one Violet Glade advocated this practice: 'no one would call Spenser, or Thomson, or Wordsworth, or Matthew Arnold amateur authors. And yet each of these pursued some other vocation as help to a livelihood - Spenser and Thomson, secretaryships, Wordsworth, distributor of stamps, Matthew Arnold an inspectorship of schools'.[65] An angered response from a Herbert W. Smith one month later argued that 'Alexander Pope performed in a masterly manner at his desk, but he certainly demanded something rather more mundane than the glow of achievement as his guerdon; and Dr. Johnson […] declared that "no man but a

[58] *The Longest Journey*, p. 72.
[59] Ibid., p. 15.
[60] *A Room with a View*, p. 45.
[61] *The Lucy Novels*, p. 41.
[62] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 67.
[63] Wells, *An Englishman Looks at the World*, p. 151.
[64] *The Longest Journey*, pp. 163, 151.
[65] Violet Glade, 'Is It Worth It?', *The Author*, XXII: 8 (May 1912), pp. 221-22 (p. 222).

blockhead ever wrote except for money.'"[66] Smith's polemic was met with a 'Hear, hear!' from an Albert Kinross in next month's edition, adjacent to the final column of Forster's 'Inspiration' article.[67]

Forster's relationship with writing for money, however, was more complex than the unnuanced opinions in these epistolary debates. Delany has pointed out that 'Forster had a lifelong preoccupation with the morality of living on unearned income'.[68] We see something of this preoccupation in his New Year's Eve journal entry of 1907, in which he reports that he had 'invested £85 in B. A. G.s - £25 to follow in March. Payments for L[ongest]. J[ourney]. not till March. Then also £31 for Epsom lectures, and in October £100 for novel'.[69] In the novel for which Forster received this £100 advance, the aesthete Cecil Vyse declares that 'all modern books are bad', the diagnosis being that 'everyone writes for money in these days'.[70] As we have seen from the etymology of 'potboiler', Cecil is not wrong that literature provided financial opportunity. Marie Corelli, as Rickie tells us, 'makes a thing out of literature', despite being 'a woman of deplorable talent'.[71] However, although the new six-shilling novel made book trading potentially lucrative, Cecil's statement is not entirely accurate. Frank Swinnerton's 1933 examination of the book trade reported that, for many Edwardian writers, including Arnold Bennett at the start of his career, 'a housemaid is better remunerated'.[72] Forster chooses the snobbish aesthete to deliver this platitude about 'modern books', made all the more affected by the fact that Cecil is the one who borrows Miss Lavish's novel from a library.[73] And though she would think herself more artistic than industrious, Miss Lavish's potboiler sidesteps Cecil's criticisms when viewed through the lens of its efficient processes. The inartistic quality of the product aside, the 'artist who writes potboilers' is an industrial figure, whose consumers are found even in the spurious highbrow.

[66] Herbert W. Smith, 'The Hazard of the Pen', *The Author*, XXII: 9 (June 1912), pp. 249-50 (p. 249).
[67] Albert Kinross, 'Correspondence', *The Author*, XXII: 10 (July 1912) (p. 282).
[68] Delany, p. 285.
[69] Forster, *Journals* I, p. 158.
[70] *A Room with a View*, p. 146.
[71] *The Longest Journey*, p. 15; 1886 review in the *Spectator*, quoted in William Stuart Scott, *Marie Corelli: The Story of a Friendship* (London: Hutchinson, 1955), p. 263.
[72] Frank Swinnerton, *Authors and the Book Trade* (London: Hutchinson, 1933), p. 16.
[73] *A Room with a View*, p. 139.

'Ends always give me trouble'

To revisit the 1953 interview, Forster was asked to 'describe any technical problem that especially bothered you' while writing, to which he replied: 'ends always give me trouble'.[74] Struggling to conclude his novels satisfyingly, it is clear that Forster did not see writing as a simple matter of 'just a pen, paper, and a little thought'. Indeed, Swinnerton declares that 'authorship is the hardest work above ground'.[75] Yet, as we have seen, the equation of the writer with the worker was not a simple one for Forster. What emerges in his writing is a heavily ironic presentation of the potboiler. The object of jokes and scorn from both Forster and the Edwardian literary community – Violet Glade worries that money makes them 'under temptation to write poor unworthy stuff' – there is nevertheless something of the industrial labourer in the writer who consistently produces commodities.[76] Proactivity and efficiency characterise Miss Lavish's writing. In contrast, Forster's representations of artistic writers, usually held afloat by private income, are poignantly introspective. Periods of inactivity and 'nonsense' surround the activity of the conscientious artist. Contributing to contemporary anxieties regarding literature and labour, Forster's dichotomy of artist and potboiler is what leads to the notion that his simple statement, 'professionally, I am a writer', is more complex than it first appears.

[74] *The Paris Review Interviews,* p. 27.
[75] Swinnerton, p. 18.
[76] Glade, p. 222.

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