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**A Room With a View: An Analysis of E.M Forster's Second Italian  
Novel and its Adaptations**

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## INTRODUCTION

*A Room with a View*, published in 1908 after a long period of gestation and revising, is one of the earliest and most famous novels written by Edward Morgan Forster. Conceived on the path of a previous work called *Lucy*, started in 1901 while the author was staying in Naples with his mother, this novel is one of the two Italian Novels the author wrote, together with *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905).<sup>1</sup>

*A Room with a View* can be considered a love Bildungsroman; it is set in Florence in the first part, where Lucy Honeychurch, the protagonist, is staying with her spinster cousin, Miss Charlotte Bartlett, and in England in the second half, precisely at Windy Corner in Surrey. The narration follows Lucy through her doubts between the respectability of a conventional marriage with her fiancé Cecil Vyse and her feelings for George Emerson, a rather uncommon individual. It narrates the entering of Lucy in the adult age and self-awareness until her honest final decision of becoming a woman in touch with her desires. In the end she will be able to make her unconventional love choice in an atmosphere of critique directed to the cultural and sexual repression characterizing Edwardian society, which was a heritage of Victorian age, where morality and status were more important than personal happiness and emotions.

Forster in this novel skillfully mixes travel writing and the marriage plot, which was typical of Jane Austen. My thesis, divided into three chapters, will aim at analyzing the novel in connection with its author under different aspects.

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<sup>1</sup> Page, Norman. *E.M. Forster* (1987). London: Macmillan. Cit, p. 18

The first chapter will deal with E.M Forster's life, how his upbringing, academic life at Cambridge, troubled love life and travels abroad are connected to his writing style. The second chapter will provide a closer analysis of the novel and I will highlight its main themes, including repression and freedom of thought, with an analysis of the characters focusing mainly on the leading ones: the tension between those which are able to change ideas and personality and those who are constantly riveted to their principles, even to the point of becoming ridiculous sources of grotesque. Then I will focus on the portrayal of the polar opposition between Italy, seen as an ideal place where both positive and negative passions can grow and develop naturally as an escape from conventions, and the sheltered atmosphere of Lucy's English hometown. In the final chapter I will discuss of the cinematographic adaptations of *A Room with a View* in their differences and similarities: the first and the most popular one directed by James Ivory in 1985, while the most recent one directed by Nicholas Renton, produced for the small screen in 2007. The first movie follows the original story in a closest way, while the second adaptation recounts the story through the effect of a flashback of the protagonist, telling her story in retrospective. In the end of my thesis I will draw a brief conclusion, underlining the importance of Forster's artistry in cinema and literature.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. E.M FORSTER'S 'LONGEST JOURNEY'

#### 1.1 Early life

Edward Morgan Forster was born in Melcombe Place, number 6, Dorset Square, London on January 1, 1879. His parents were middle-class bourgeoisie, in a society which was still strongly Victorian, where the bourgeoisie was the backbone of the Nation.<sup>2</sup> He was the only surviving child of Edward Morgan Llewellyn Forster, an architect of Irish origin who died of tuberculosis the year after little Edward's birth and Alice Clara, nicknamed Lily, Whichelo, from a numerous family with a story of artistic pursuits. Lily met Edward's father while she was working as a governess for his aunt, Marianne Thornton, who grew so fond and affectionate of her grand-nephew Edward, to the point of helping him financially, with her legacy of £8,000 which enabled him to attend Cambridge College with the possibility to become a professional writer.<sup>3</sup> The feeling was reciprocated, Edward thanked her with a biography in 1956.<sup>4</sup> Marianne was the daughter of Henry Thornton, who was very influential in early nineteenth century, being the focus of the so-called "Clapham Sect", whose most celebrated member was William Wilberforce, who was among the abolitioners of the slave trade.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Beaumann, Nicola. *A Biography of E.M. Forster* (1993). London, Sydney, Auckland: Hodder and Staughton, cit, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Gillie, Christopher. *A Preface to Forster* (1983). New York: Longman, cit, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> N. Beaumann. *A Biography of E.M. Forster*, cit, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> C. Gillie. *A Preface to Forster*, cit, p. 9

After the premature death of his father, who is reported to have been an unpractical and easily nervous man, Edward has always regarded with mixed feelings: in no Forster's novel can be found a good father; instead this figure is in almost all instances dead or not particularly relevant, or sexually despicable.<sup>6</sup> During his childhood Edward was intensely sheltered, spoilt and overprotected. Surrounded predominantly by women he lived in a condition of "earthly paradise" from the age of four to almost fourteen. Unusually intelligent and precocious, he could read, write and dance incredibly early.<sup>7</sup> His childhood was a wandering one as well, he moved residence to Rooks Nest, Hertfordshire which he used as a prototype for his novel *Howard's End* (1910) in 1883, where he was privately tutored by local schoolmaster Augustus Hervey.<sup>8</sup> At eleven he attended Kent House school in Sussex until the Forsters moved once again to Tonbridge in 1893, where he could attend Tonbridge public school, which will provide a model for Sawston School in *The Longest Journey* (1907) as a dayboy.

His departure from Rooks Nest was the most difficult one: as Forster once stated, if he had been allowed to remain there he would have probably married a woman, had children and fought the war.<sup>9</sup> In 1885 Edward toured Normandy with his mother in his first trip abroad. Emotionally dependent from his mother, who managed to live up to the unusual age of ninety, and used to a female-led upbringing, Edward's first experiences in school are painful and traumatic: young Edward felt shy, insecure around his male peers and incapable to fit in social life at school. Furthermore, while he was walking all by himself, a man exposed his genitals and persuaded the young boy to masturbate him. He reported the episode to the headmaster,

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<sup>6</sup> N. Beaumann. *A Biography of E.M. Forster*, cit, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> King, Francis. *E.M Forster* (1988). London: Thames and Hudson, cit, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Aa. Vv. *E.M Forster, Critical Assessments* (199-). Edited by J.H Stape. Mountsfield, East Sussex: Helm Information, cit, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> King, Francis. *E.M Forster* (1988). London: Thames and Hudson, cit, p. 16.

but the maniac was never caught.<sup>10</sup> A better and positively happy period, the discovery of a different conception of life starts in 1897, when at 18 Edward enters King's College in Cambridge.

## 1.2 Cambridge

At King's College, Forster lived in a set of rooms, W7, which were located on the top floor of Bodley's Neo Gothic building. He chose Classics for three years and History, where he met and worked under the direction of John Edwin Nixon and Nathaniel Wedd, who will suggest him to undertake a career in journalism, which became an activity he always kept, hand in hand with that of writer. It was always Wedd, who was an atheist, to unknowingly encourage a loss in Christian faith in Edward and introduced him to the reading of Ibsen.

As for Forster's academic results, between 1898 and 1900 he won college prizes for Latin compositions, participated in Walpole debating and Classical Societies, won another prize for an essay on English novelists, published in the *Cambridge Review* and *Basileona*, King's magazine.<sup>11</sup> He obtained a Second in both his fields of studies, and was awarded an Exhibition by the college.<sup>12</sup> During these years at Cambridge, Forster took part in different societies which were the focal point of social and intellectual life of the youth, the most important being the Apostles Society, which Edward joined during his last year, in 1901, through a fellow undergraduate and friend H.O Meredith. This society, founded in 1820 with the name of "The Cambridge Conversazione Society", was in its best moment at the time of Forster's arrival. Membership was by election and women were excluded. It included many famous names and his circle contained men of future distinction such as: Tennyson, Maynard

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<sup>10</sup> Furbank, Philip Nicholas. *E.M Forster, A Life, vol. I* (1977). London: Secker and Warbung, cit, pp. 37-38.

<sup>11</sup> K. Francis, *E.M Forster*, cit, p. 20

<sup>12</sup> Lamarra, Annamaria. *Invito alla lettura di Forster* (2003). Milano: Mursia, cit, p 35.

Keys, Roger Fry. He met the future members of the Bloomsbury Group Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Clive Bell. Virginia Woolf and Bertrand Russell joined a little later.

With these fellows Apostles Edward formed bonds that continued through all his future life and the tranquility with which the circle used to talk about every argument with no taboos may have helped him to make him understand his sexual identity and to accept it, even if sex was rarely addressed.<sup>13</sup> What he derived from the Apostles was the sense of belonging to an élite, which appealed to a young man who had been previously bullied and isolated, who grew without a father and who felt alienated by his condition of closeted homosexuality. When Forster finally left King's College, thanks to his aunt's legacy, he was in no obligation to find an occupation immediately. So, still uncertain about his future, at this point of his life, young Forster decides to tour Italy with his mother in a sort of Grand Tour.<sup>14</sup>

### **1.3 Travelling and Writing: from the First Journeys into Adult age and Maturity**

Between 1901 and 1902 the Forsters started their first tour of Italy. First, they went to Lake Como and spent ten days at Cadenabbia. Then they headed to Florence, the setting for *A Room with a View* was already starting to take form in Forster's mind. The Jamesean theme of the American in Europe was influential and was adapted into that of the Englishman encountering Italy. Finally, Edward and his mother moved to Milan, where their first day was spent in trying to change their rooms because of their unpleasant smell. This episode which will be mirrored in the opening chapter of *A Room with a View*, as well as the encounter with two old maidens, who provided the model for the Alan sisters. Cortona, Assisi and Perugia followed. The duo then travelled South, towards Naples and Sicily. In the same year, they

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, cit, p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*.

returned to England through Germany.<sup>15</sup> It's in this period that Edward's novelistic career started with his first short story, *The Story of a Panic*, as well as his teaching career with a Latin class in Working's Men College of London. Here he met again with H.O Meredith, with whom he has a long platonic story, similar to the one described in *Maurice* (published posthumously) between the protagonists Maurice and Clive. In 1903, Lily and Edward returned to Italy and to the Tyrol, before he alone headed to Greece on a cruise ship. In Olympia *The Road from Colonus* came into being. Forster's first publication, *Albergo Empedocle*, follows and then he began *A Room with a View*, only to lay it aside until 1907 for *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, also known as *Monteriano*.<sup>16</sup>

In 1905 he spent some time in Germany as a tutor for Countess Elisabeth von Arnim's children and *Where Angels Fear to Tread* was published. In 1906 Forster toured France, once again accompanied by his mother and met Syed Ross Masood, an Indian young man to whom he teaches. This meeting was crucial for his understanding and love for India where *A Passage to India* (1924), Forster's most popular novel is set.<sup>17</sup> Between 1907 and 1908 *The Longest Journey* and *Lucy's Novel*, later *A Room with a View* were completed. From 1909 and 1911 Forster published *Howard's End* and traveled again to Italy and France, this time with Masood, with whom he fell in unrequited love. In 1912 he traveled to India to join Masood for the first time, together with Cambridge friends R.C Trevelyan and G.H Luce, to find new materials and a new energy to write, as he was lamenting a writer's block.

Forster came to India with the mentality of the typical colonizer who saw British intervention as civilizing and benefic, but he soon realized the arrogance of the English

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<sup>15</sup> N. Beaumann. *A Biography of E.M. Forster*, cit, p. 97.

<sup>16</sup> A. Lamarra. *Invito alla lettura di Forster*. Cit, p 41.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

government and the ignorance of local customs and culture make Edward change idea.<sup>18</sup> His life became unexpectedly adventurous: he rode elephants and horses, slept in a tent, met the Maharajah and established a peculiar bond with the country.<sup>19</sup>

In 1913 *A Passage to India* was begun. At the beginning of First World war, Forster was 35 and intensely against the idea of enlisting to serve in the army. Plus, it destroyed his faith in old-fashioned political liberalism and awoke a sense of fear and anxiety for the future.

In 1915 Edward decided to enroll as a searcher in the Red Cross' Wounded and Missing Bureau and settled in Alexandria, Egypt until 1919. During this stay, he continued writing, the scholarly *Alexandria, A History and a Guide*, published in 1922 and for the *Egyptian Mail*. Grown confident from the relative tranquility and freedom of the homosexual community of the city, Forster finally lived out his first physical intense love story with an Egyptian tram conductor, Mohamed El Adl, which lasted, intermittently, until the Egyptian's death in 1922.<sup>20</sup>

In 1919, at the end of the conflict, Edward was in England once again, where he collaborated for the *Daily Herald*, writing a great number of articles and introducing Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, whom he met in Egypt, to the vast public. He also strengthened his friendship bonds with the Bloomsbury Group and especially with Virginia Woolf and met Thomas Hardy and Siegfried Sassoon.<sup>21</sup>

In 1921 dates the second visit to India, this time as Private secretary to Maharajah of Dewas State Senior, until 1922. The duties were not so different from a "companion". He played cards, read aloud to the Maharajah, supervised the gardens and received confidences.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, cit, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> C. Gillie. *A Preface to Forster*, cit, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> K. Francis, *E.M Forster*, cit, p. 64

<sup>21</sup> N. Beaumann. *A Biography of E.M. Forster*, cit, p. 297.

<sup>22</sup> C. Gillie. *A Preface to Forster*, cit, p. 37.

Once in England, his essays written in Egypt were published in 1923 under the name of *Pharos and Pharrillon*, by Hogarth Press, founded by Virginia Woolf. In 1924 Forster met Lawrence of Arabia and *A Passage to India* was completed. It was immediately a great success, because it was published in a moment of bitter critique of the British rule in India by the public opinion. Met with some criticism and polemic from one side, the novel received almost complete favorable opinions from many intellectuals and politicians.

From this point to 1932, a series of new journeys abroad make up the life of the writer: he visited Spain, once again France, Scandinavia, South Africa, South Rhodesia, Kenya, Uganda, Hungary, Rumania and Poland, as well as publishing *Aspects of the Novel*, following a cycle of conferences in 1927 and *The Eternal Moment and Other Stories* in 1928.<sup>23</sup> In 1930, another important love story, Bob Buckingham, a policeman, entered Edward's "journey" to remain throughout the rest of his life. In later years, Forster even took him and his wife on holiday and helped with the education of the couple's son Rob.<sup>24</sup>

In 1934 he was nominated president of the National Council for Civil Liberties, an association which in defense of civil rights and against the heavy censure of press, still common in England.<sup>25</sup> One year later, in Paris the International Writers' Congress is held during springtime and Forster participates as representative of his country. The Congress was organized by the most prominent communist French intellectuals of the time, including André Gide, Louis Aragon and André Breton. In that occasion, Forster too declared to be a convinced antifascist but not a communist, even if some ideas and intentions of this ideology are well meaning.<sup>26</sup> In this period he became closer friend of English writer Christopher

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<sup>23</sup> Aa. Vv. *E.M Forster, Critical Assessments*, cit, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> K. Francis, *E.M Forster*, cit, p. 83.

<sup>25</sup> A. Lamarra. *Invito alla lettura di Forster*, cit, p. 56.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, cit, p. 53.

Isherwood, whom he had already met in 1931 and together with Bob Buckingham, he visited him briefly in the Netherlands.

In 1936 the collection *Abinger Harvest* was published, followed by a libel proceeding he will lose, over one of the essays contained in it, "A Flood in the Office". Edward had a delicate prostate operation and spent time in Dover for recovery, surrounded by his mother, Isherwood, Joe Ackerley and Auden.<sup>27</sup> Public activity continues the following year when he was in Paris once again for the League of Nation's committee for intellectual cooperation. His popularity was never weakened despite the pause but was consolidated through a series of lucky radio broadcasts for BBC, which was an activity he began some years before.

#### **1.4 Later years**

At the beginning of Second World War, Forster was 60 and fervently intervened in favor of individual rights, being the main speaker in 1941 manifestation for freedom of speech in Conway Hall, Bloomsbury, the main target for the protest being BBC. The same year, his lifelong friend Virginia Woolf committed suicide and Forster delivered the Rede Lecture in Cambridge with her as the subject. Being a loyal adherent of PEN (the International association of Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists and Novelists), of which he was vice-president since 1939, he chaired the conference held in 1944 to commemorate the tercentenary of the publication of Milton's *Aeropagitica* and made a moving plea for secrecy in Public Affairs once the War was over.<sup>28</sup> By 1945, the conflict still ongoing, Edward was living permanently in West Hackhurst house, in the village of Abinger Hammer, Surrey, where he had been living since 1925 with his mother. On March 11 of the same year Lily died, after falling twice from the bed in which she spent most of her time and leaving her only

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, cit, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Aa. Vv. *E.M Forster, Critical Assessments*, cit, p. 11.

son desperate and shocked, deprived of the only stable, though codependent, relationship of his life. Family friend Florence Barger, whose house was bombed during the war, who had been living with the Forsters one year and a half declared that in those last anxious weeks, all the love and tenderness that Morgan felt for her was fully evident. Some years before, Forster had described to his friend Ackerly, even with some brutal words what she meant for him:

“Although my mother has been intermittently tiresome for the last thirty years, cramped and warped my genius, hindered my career, blocked and bugged up my house, and boycotted my beloved, I have to admit that she has provided the sort of rich subsoil where I have been able to rest and grow.”<sup>29</sup>

Still in grief, Forster was called in India to hold a series of conferences in Jaipur at the All-India Writer’s Conference.<sup>30</sup> On his return in England he made a terrible discovery: the lease of his house had already expired. Lady Farrer, the owner had ignored the situation because of the old age of Lily, but now that she was dead, the landlady only gave Forster one year to leave West Hackhurst. He was evicted from the nest he had been sharing with his mother for so long, enlarging his sense of solitude and eradication. In the first days of 1946, Edward moved to Cambridge once again, taking residence at one of his friend’s, Patrick Wilkinson, after receiving a Honorary Fellowship (he was already a Supernumerary Fellow since 1927).<sup>31</sup> Between 1947 and 1949 Forster paid two visits to the United States, called by his friend actor William Roerich. The first time to lecture at Harvard at the Symposium on Musical Criticism, the second to address the American Academy of arts and letters on the subject of “Art for Art’s sake”, accompanied by Buckingham.<sup>32</sup> The same year, he

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<sup>29</sup> Parker, Peter. *Ackerley, A Life of J.R Ackerley* (1989). New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, cit, p. 41.

<sup>30</sup> Aa. Vv. *E.M Forster, Critical Assessments*, cit, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> K. Francis, *E.M Forster*, cit, p. 100.

<sup>32</sup> A. Lamarra. *Invito alla lettura di Forster*, cit, pp. 58-59

collaborated with composer Benjamin Britten to the writing of the libretto for Melville's *Billy Budd*, which was performed in 1951, at Covent Garden, while Forster's *Two Cheers for Democracy* was being published.<sup>33</sup>

In 1953 another publication followed: *The Hill of Devi*. In the meanwhile, Forster accepted the award of the Companion of Honour by the Queen, after declining a knighthood only a few years before.<sup>34</sup> He was becoming richer and richer, his books were widely translated and were now famous in America. In 1960 Santha Rama Rau's dramatization of A passage to India plays in Oxford and London, while Forster participates as a defense witness in the trial for obscenity of David Herbert Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, in which the author at the end was found "not guilty".<sup>35</sup> In 1961 Edward was into the Royal Society of Literature as a Companion of Literature. He wrote *Little Imber*, his last story, and published his last review. In 1969 he was finally awarded an Order of Merit.<sup>36</sup>

### 1.5 Death and legacy

During the last decade of his lifetime, Forster had a number of illnesses that would have killed anyone with a constitution less resistant. At the age of eighty-two he had a heart attack and doctors pumped him an anti-coagulant, with the consequence that his thinned blood seeped into his stomach and he was rushed back to hospital to undergo urgent transfusions. A series of strokes followed, with increasing frequency. Speech, sight, as well as writing capacity was heavily compromised, so he had to dictate his new ideas to his friends.<sup>37</sup> His nineties were celebrated in a solemn but affectionate atmosphere among his friends and

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, cit, p. 59.

<sup>34</sup> Aa. Vv. *E.M Forster, Critical Assessments*, cit, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> A. Lamarra. *Invito alla lettura di Forster*, cit, pp. 60.

<sup>36</sup> Aa. Vv. *E.M Forster, Critical Assessments*, cit, p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> K. Francis, *E.M Forster*, cit, p. 110.

students in King's College. Forster died on June 7, 1970 in the house of Mary and Bob Buckingham, where he insisted to be brought. After cremation, his ashes were scattered over a rose bed in the house of the Buckinghams at Coventry.<sup>38</sup> In 1971 *Maurice* was published, followed by the collection *The Life to Come* in 1972. In 1980 the last posthumous publication: *Arctic Summer and Other Fiction*, edited by Elisabeth Heine, London, Arnold.<sup>39</sup>

The whole subject of Forster's sexuality acquired a new interest and was treated with attention by the critics after his death. The general view was that his suppressed homosexuality crippled and inhibited him as a writer, obliging him to find different metaphors to paraphrase his real-life preoccupations. That is why it had been said that he struggled a little with heterosexual depictions of love. That is probably what Katherine Mansfield meant by saying: "E. M. Forster never gets any further than warming the teapot. He's a rare fine hand at that. Feel this teapot Yes, but there ain't going to be no tea."<sup>40</sup> After his death one might have expected a decline in popularity; instead he became increasingly famous. He attained the reputation of great liberal sage of the inter and post war periods. His growth had to do with the consistency of his development, the freshness and youthfulness that never left his writings and the ability to sustain community with the reader without vulgarity and never adulterating his beliefs. Yet, in 1977 the *Times Literary Supplement* asked some of the writers of the time who was the most underrated writer and E.M Forster's name figured more than once.<sup>41</sup>

His literary success was expressed during the last twenty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the cinematic adaptations of Forster's novels. The movies which have come out are: A

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<sup>38</sup> N. Beaumann. *A Biography of E.M. Forster*, cit, pp. 371-372.

<sup>39</sup> A. Lamarra. *Invito alla lettura di Forster*, cit, pp. 30-31.

<sup>40</sup> Hanson, Clare. *The Critical Writings of Katherine Mansfield* (1987), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, cit, p. 28.

<sup>41</sup> K. Francis, *E.M Forster*, cit, p. 116.

Passage to India (1984, directed by David Lean), A Room With a View (1985, directed by James Ivory), Maurice (1987, once again by James Ivory), Monteriano-Where Angels Fear to Tread (1991, directed by Charles Sturridge) and Howard (1992, by Ivory).

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 A Room With a View: The Novel

The first part of the novel is set in Italy: the narration starts with a conversation between the protagonist Lucy Honeychurch, a young upper-middle class lady, who is touring the city of Florence, accompanied by her older fussy spinster cousin Charlotte Bartlett, acting as a chaperone. They are complaining about the rooms they were given in the Pensione Bartolini in Florence, where they both are lodging, because they were promised a view on the Arno River and instead were given courtyard-looking windows. Furthermore, the furniture and the fact that the owner is English makes the two ladies disappointed, as Lucy says, “It might be London”.<sup>42</sup>

During the supper, another guest, Mr. Emerson, interrupts their complaints and offers the two women to change their rooms with his and his son George’s, since both rooms possess a nice view and “Women like looking at a view; men don’t.”<sup>43</sup> At first, Charlotte thinks about refusing the untactful but generous request, fearing that accepting would put them in obligation and fearing that meddling with the unconventional Emersons would make them seem not respectable. Mr. Beebe, an Anglican clergyman whom the ladies had already met in England, where he works in Lucy’s parish in Summer Street, persuades Charlotte to accept the exchange, making her understand that there was nothing hidden in the gesture, just

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<sup>42</sup> Forster, E.M *A Room With a View* (2018). Edited by Wendy Moffat, New York: Penguin Classics, cit, p. 3. Henceforth, all quotations are from this edition and will be given in parenthesis in the text.

kindness. During that dinner, numerous guests give advice to Lucy regarding Florence, being the first stay in the city for the lady. After the meal, Charlotte discusses the Emerson with the clergyman and they both label them as socialists, with a note of disapproval.

The next day, Lucy decides to visit the Basilica of Santa Croce, together with Miss Eleanor Lavish, who is a novelist and another guest of the Pensione. She promises Lucy an adventure, to visit the “true Italy” (15), so she takes away Lucy’s Baedeker guidebook, telling her that it will be too superficial to only rely on it as a source. During their way to the church, they take a wrong turn and get lost in the city, only to find the right path a few hours later. Once they arrive in the square in front of the Basilica, Miss Lavish suddenly leaves Lucy alone and still without her Baedeker, to run after an old friend of hers, so Lucy decides to enter the church.

Inside Santa Croce, Lucy meets the Emersons again, while they are helping a child who hurt his foot on a tomb sculpture and the reader is told that despite they do not encounter the sympathies of many English guests of the Pensione Bartolini, Lucy speaks with them, finding them likeable. They admire the Giotto paintings and the tombstones and meet another vicar, Mr. Eager, who is escorting a group in a tour of the Basilica. Mr. Emerson discusses with him about religion. Then he speaks with Lucy, asking her to befriend his son, who is prey of existential sadness. In the end of the trip, she reunites with her cousin Charlotte.

In Chapter three the reader becomes acquainted with Lucy’s talent for music: she performs in front of Mr. Beebe, playing the piano in the pensione’s common room during a rainy day. He remembers when she once played Beethoven and admires the young woman’s taste and ability, but most importantly the emotion she puts in her execution, and labels her as promising, despite her mother’s disapproval, declaring that “It always left her daughter peevish, unpractical and touchy”(38).

When the rain stops, Lucy decides to go out alone to enjoy the last rays of sun, with the disapproval of Mr. Beebe.

One day, ironically, after thinking that nothing ever happened to her, Lucy witnesses a homicide in Piazza della Signoria, while she is visiting the square alone at twilight. After a quarrel between two Italian men, one is stabbed to death by the other, while a crowd surrounds the murdered, Lucy and George Emerson are watching the scene separately. Lucy faints and immediately George assists her until she recovers. Lucy remembers she had left some photographs she had bought previously on the murder site. As they walk along the Lungarno, George, who has recollected the pictures for Lucy, finding them all bloodstained, in an impulsive gesture throws them all in the water. Once he confesses it to Lucy, they start an intimate conversation while they walk back to their lodging, which leaves the young woman prey of some peculiar impressions about George. Uncertain of her feelings and unable to cope with the newborn attraction she is experiencing, Lucy decides to try to avoid George as much as she can, also to make Charlotte happy, since she almost despises the Emersons, and even more the father, after hearing clergyman Mr. Eager say he murdered his wife.

Lucy decides to participate in an excursion on the hill of Fiesole, above Florence, to see the spectacular view from the height. The group is composed by Mr. Beebe, Mr. Emerson, Miss Lavish, Miss Bartlett and the Emersons on two carriages driven by Italian young men. One of them is riding the carriage with a local girl, whom he claims to be his sister, but when he leans to kiss her on her mouth, she is required to leave the vehicle by Mr. Eager, who is scandalized. Wandering in the fields to admire the landscape, Lucy walks away from the party and then asks the driver in Italian where everyone is gone to join them.

He misunderstands her request in Italian and sends her to George, who after a while takes her in his arms, astonished by her beauty, and romantically kisses her on a terrace covered by blue violets, before being interrupted by an irritated Miss Bartlett, who is upset by her incapacity of being the perfect chaperone. During a conversation on what happened, Lucy promises her cousin not to tell anyone, especially her mother, of the insult George has paid to her. Before she can even meet again with George, the two women leave Florence for Rome. This is the first part of the novel ends

At the beginning of Part Two, Lucy spends some time with Mr. Cecil Vyse, an acquaintance of her family, sophisticated and wealthy though pretentious and snobbish. Lucy returns to her home Windy Corner, in Surrey, where her family lives and here, at Mr. Vyse's third proposal, she finally accepts to become his fiancée, trying to make him more tolerant with country people and still keeping her secret about her adventure in Florence. Suddenly, her path is crossed again by the Emersons when Mr. Eager announces that Villa Cissie, nearby, has been leased by new tenants. Despite the initial suggestion that those will be the Alan Sisters, who are two old maidens Lucy had already met in the Pensione in Florence, it turns out that George and his father will be Lucy's family new neighbours, because they had been told by Cecil of the availability of the villa. As soon as Lucy's brother Freddy encounters George Emerson, he immediately likes him. They meet when Mr. Beebe accompanies Freddy to acquaint him to the Emersons and he invites George to take a bath in a little lake in the woods, convincing even the clergyman to take off his clothes and join them. The three men enjoy themselves, slashing and running around like children, until Lucy arrives, followed by her mother and Cecil, who remains astounded.

Later, Freddy invites George to play tennis in his court and Lucy is obliged to share her space with both her fiancé and George. Cecil, who despises sports, refuses to play; instead he begins to disturb everyone's game by reading aloud from a romantic novel called *Under the Lodge*, annoying all the presents and leaving Lucy astounded by the similarity of the scene which is being read and the kiss George gave her in Fiesole.

When she realizes the book that Cecil is reading from was written by Eleanor Lavish, she becomes enraged at her cousin who must have shared their secret with the writer. George kisses Lucy once again, taking advantage of a solitary moment in the garden.

Furious and confused, Lucy lies to George in front of Charlotte and tells him that she never wants to see him again because loves Cecil and wants to get married to him. George retorts, stating that Cecil will never love her the way he does, he only sees her as an aesthetically pleasing object for the house, not as a real woman with her desires and her independence. The same evening, Cecil bitterly refuses once again to play tennis and finally Lucy sees him under a different light and thinks again about the words of George. She decides to break their engagement, speaking with Cecil exactly with the words George used and leaving Cecil full of respect for her. At first, she intends never to marry and she wants to go to Greece with the Alans, but before her departure, Lucy speaks with the Mr. Emerson, finding him casually at Mr. Beebe's and he honestly forces her to openly admit she is not in love with Cecil but with his son and convinces her to never lie again with a discourse on the courage to pursue truth even within difficulties.

The last chapter of the novel shows George and Lucy as a couple, finally happy, once again in Florence without the consent of Lucy's mother, in the Pensione Bertolini in a room with a view.

The reader, together with Lucy is informed that Charlotte Bartlett knew Mr.Emerson was at Mr.Beebe's the day they meet and she did not discourage her from going there anyway, knowing she would have never been happy and satisfied living a life of lies with a man she did not love. Lucy is now free from conventions.

## 2.2 Genesis

From his stay in Cambridge, Forster learned the habit of putting in question all the conventional ideas about truth and beauty. When he began to travel with his mother to see the countries whose literature he had been studying at University, the circles and the pensions the Forsters entered were almost entirely composed by members of the middle-class, with their usual rigid set of moral and aesthetic codes, providing him values for his domestic novels, finding Italian hotels a perfect viewpoint for *A Room With a View*.

The writing of the novel, however, did not come without a little struggle: there are two earlier versions, preserved in King's College, in three-quarter bound red morocco manuscript form, with the title *Autograph Manuscript of the Lucy and New Lucy Novels* of 200 sheets. Additionally, four leaves of the guard- book containing typed archivist's matter: the title page, an introductory note and a list of contents.<sup>44</sup> King's college scholar Elizabeth Ellem is responsible for the sorting, numbering and listing of Forster's papers after his death. The first *Old Lucy* was conceived during Forster's first stay in Florence in 1901 and was written in England between 1902 and 1903.

The action of the first version centers around a charity concert which takes place at Pensione Bertolini.<sup>45</sup> The characters are modeled closely on some real-life guests, and Forster was extensively attentive of architecture, art and local folklore. In the following version, *New Lucy*, the author added the two-part structure, one part set in Italy, the other in England, that will be kept in the final form. Forster working on the conflict between love and duty in this

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<sup>44</sup> Forster, E.M. *The Lucy Novels* (1977), edited by Oliver Stallybrass, London: Edward Arnold, introduction, cit, p. V.

<sup>45</sup> Colmer, John. *E.M Foster* (1975), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, cit, p. 42.

version sketched a tragic ending. Between 1905 and 1907, Forster laid the manuscript aside and when he returned to it, he was a more experienced writer. He eliminated the tearful ending where Lucy and George eloped on bicycles and George's sudden death, to turn to a more comedic spirit.<sup>46</sup>

Analyzing the two manuscripts more closely, *Old Lucy's* very first notes were written in a pocket size notebook which Forster carried with himself during his travels in 1901-1902 and can be dated precisely, because the author cites Miss Lavish, a character based on Emily Spender, a guest of a *pensione* in Perugia, where he met her on December 10, 1901; then he wrote some other passages with his left hand, when in 1902, Forster broke his right arm. H.O Meredith, Forster's close friend, to which *A Room With a View* is dedicated, appears as a character, called H.O.M, together with H.O. Meredith's mother. The chapters names are different from the latest version, and probably, chapter one and two were the last to be written.<sup>47</sup>

The people listed, are all more than probably, real-life people he met in Florence and elsewhere; phrases and incidents are likewise based on reality. Lucy's surname was changed various times: she was named Beringer in the first list of characters, then Protherhoe and Bartlett, as her cousin. In *New Lucy* he is surnamed Denton and Hoyt, before Honeychurch.<sup>48</sup> George Emerson is present, but at the time he was called Arthur. *New Lucy's* debut can be dated more precisely. In 1903 Forster began to use the other end of the notebook whose front contained a part of *Old Lucy* as a diary for his sketches, writing as a heading: "*The New Lucy Novel Dec.1903*". The 16<sup>th</sup> of December he notes he had the idea of a new novel getting

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, cit, p. 43.

<sup>47</sup> Forster, E.M. *The Lucy's Novels*, cit, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, cit, p. 19.

coherent: Miss Bartlett, Lucy, Miss Lavish, Mr. Eager all reappear. As new characters, George Emerson, his father, Lucy's father and mother, and Rev. Charles Beebe.<sup>49</sup>

Nothing survived of the first part of *New Lucy*. No fragment of the older version can be seen in *New Lucy*, since they contained reference of Mr. Arthur now replaced by George. It seems more likely that the first part was partially absorbed in *A Room With a View*, one example being Lucy witnessing the murder in Piazza della Signoria. Regarding part two, beginning from chapter twelve of the final version, the influence of *New Lucy* seems more present.<sup>50</sup>

It appears that the Italian chapters of *A Room With a View* were written at Kinglsey in the first part of 1904 and when in 1907 Forster finished the novel, he only abandoned the second half of *New Lucy*, written at Drayton Court. As the *New Lucy* part of *A Room With a View* begins with the twelfth chapter, it has been argued that it is precisely for that reason that the author named the chapter so peculiarly "Twelfth Chapter".<sup>51</sup> The improvement in *A Room With a View* in relation to *New Lucy* concerns the protagonist who becomes less shallow and Cecil, who becomes less unpleasant, making their characters more round, George Emerson remains alive, while the scene where his life is taken by a falling tree is no more present.<sup>52</sup>

The drafting was a lengthy process, but the final draft completion was a fast one: it took only seven months to finish the novel, which in the beginning was to be called *Windy Corner* and after 1905 reached the definitive title.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, cit, p. 89.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, cit, p. 92.

<sup>51</sup> Sarker, Sunil Kumar. *A Companion to E.M Foster* (2007), New Dehli: Atlantic, cit, p. 506.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*.

It was the biographer Nicola Beauman who wrote the most significant words to explain the intention behind Forster's endeavour:

“Morgan wanted, in a way, to write a romantic novel: not because he wanted the sales, but because he would have liked to subvert the convention. He would have liked to take the typical marriage plot and mould it into something new; or he would have liked his characters to live together without being married; or he would have liked them to exchange roles. It was his continuing fascination with the state of marriage, with the ‘glass shade’, that made him want to write about it; since he could not, for lack of firsthand insight, want to write a ‘straight’ novel, he chose to write a romantic comedy.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> N. Beaumann. *A Biography of E.M. Forster*, cit, p. 204.

## 2.3 Characters

*A Room With a View* is a novel that, to a modern reader, can seem too simple or naïf and its characters may be perceived as dull, but their journey is towards naturalness, and the topic of conventions in contrast with instincts can be considered universal, even for contemporary readers. Forster makes his characters reveal themselves completely, so that they all show all their sides: Lucy is a delicate and refined young lady, but she is prey of what society asks her, Cecil is a cultivated man, yet he is also incapable of seeing Lucy as a woman and not as a piece of art, Charlotte looks like the perfect Edwardian woman all devoted to convention, but, yet it is her who favours the final reconciliation of George and Lucy.

As a prefatory statement, the first “characters” to take into consideration are the room and the view of the title: Forster uses this motif to exemplify the shift from traditional Victorian ideals to freedom, to demonstrate the beauty of it. He indicates that indoor spaces symbolize restrictive social conventions, while outdoor spaces and views equal open-mindedness and innovative ideas, or in the words of Carl Lehnen: “If a room is associated with culture, the mind and limitation, then the view is associated with nature, the body and imaginative erotic freedom.”<sup>54</sup>

Since the beginning of the novel, the author associates progressive characters with views and traditional-minded ones with rooms. For instance, the first words uttered by Mr. Emerson are, “I have a view, I have a view,” (4) referring to his room at the Pensione Bertolini. When Lucy enters her room, the first thing she does is going toward the window and breathe the

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<sup>54</sup> Lehnen, Carl *Sex, Aesthetics and Modernity in the British Romance of Italy, 1870-1914* (2011), University of Illinois. Available on [https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/29441/Lehnen\\_Carl.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/29441/Lehnen_Carl.pdf?sequence=1)

“clean night air,” (12) but when Miss Bartlett enters a room, she immediately fastens the shutters and locks the door. Cecil, the embodiment of snobbery and pettiness, as well as conservativeness, is compared to a “drawing-room with no view”. (99) In Surrey, during the bath scene, George, Freddy and Mr. Beebe swim in a lake, a symbol of liberation from the norm. The room represents conventional constructions; men who judge and condemn, so the English cultured community of Florence and the view stands for merely the freedom they intimately aim to. As commented by C.F.G Masterman, a contemporary of Forster:

“The conflict among all the characters arises just from the fact that although their natural and accepted habit approves of the comfort of the Room, there is within all of them some wilderness that responds to the calling of the View.”<sup>55</sup>

### **2.3.1 Lucy Honeychurch**

In the beginning of the novel Lucy is an average Edwardian young woman: pretty and nice, but unoriginal and full of second-hand opinions so the understanding of herself and of her genuine desires and instincts will be, for her, a difficult journey. She is used to adapt herself to the environment and her feelings to the feelings of the others. In fact, she relies on the opinion of other people, without forming one for herself and this is exemplified in the text, for example, while she is visiting Santa Croce without her guidebook. As the narrator says:

“She walked about disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic over monuments of uncertain authorship or date. There was no one even to tell her which, of all the sepulchral slabs that paved the nave and transepts, was the one that was really beautiful, the one that had been most praised by Mr. Ruskin.” (19)

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<sup>55</sup> Masterman, C.F.G. “The Half-Hidden life” in Forster Critical Assessments (1998), cit, p.111.

Or in the words of Mr Emerson, who is a man whose life is devoted to truth: “I think that you are repeating what you have heard older people say.”(21) As Virginia Woolf suggests in her review of the novel, the reader waits for the moment in which, inspired by the influence of the Emersons and Italy’s beauty she will burst out in the splendor of her own unique beliefs, suspecting possibilities she never could have guessed.<sup>56</sup>

She visits Florence under the insisting chaperonage of her cousin Charlotte, who is incredibly prudish and over-conscientious. Charlotte’s education is not the right type of education for Lucy, she puts a sad and heavy conventionality in the otherwise pure and young naturality, a form of imprisonment which takes her to the point she only wants to “Give and receive some human love”. (71) Lucy is so manipulated by her cousin that she is able to refuse George, the man she really loves, believing the lies she tells herself, as exemplified in chapter 16 of the novel:

“Tampering with the truth, she forgot that the truth had ever been. Remembering that she was engaged to Cecil, she compelled herself to confused remembrances of George; he was nothing to her; he never had been anything; he had behaved abominably; she had never encouraged him. The armour of falsehood is subtly wrought out of darkness, and hides a man not only from others, but from his own soul.” (150)

The reader learns a lot about Lucy through the music she plays, for which she has a great passion. As Zohreh Sullivan maintains, “It is her own illogical element, it allows her to escape the wrappings of conventionality, as her awareness of touch of the piano keys leads makes a parallel for sexual touch and takes her beyond propriety to freedom.”<sup>57</sup> She reveals her true self through her music, showing sides that she would not show in a conscious manner, it

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<sup>56</sup> Woolf, Virginia. “Unsigned Review” in Forster Critical Assessments, cit, p.124.

<sup>57</sup> Sullivan, Zohreh T. “Forster's Symbolism: A Room with a View”, cit, p. 219.

Available on [www.jstor.org/stable/30225594](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30225594).

offers her a momentary escape, and, in the words of Francis Kermode, sets her apart from the ordinary world, the world of her mother. Beethoven is the most recurring author she plays, his Opus 111 in C Minor serves as a recurring motif for heroism and for Lucy's aspirations to the masculine world of action opposed to the feminine world of passivity. As she plays it during a rainy afternoon in the pensione Bertolini, Mr. Beebe sees her and remembers seeing her play in England, at "one of those entertainments where the upper classes entertain the lower." (29) She had played Beethoven and Mr. Beebe had been so charmed by the music that he asked someone to introduce him to her. The beautiful music makes Mr. Beebe curious about and interested in Lucy, but after meeting Lucy, Mr. Beebe had found her less interesting than her music playing would suggest, "Disjoined from her music-stool [she] was only a young lady with a quantity of dark hair and a very pretty, pale, undeveloped face" (29). He made a comment to Lucy's mother that "If Miss Honeychurch ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting both for us and for her" (30), which sounds like a prophecy, if one takes into consideration the whole plot.

She seems to be startled into reality for the first time in Florence, when she witnesses the murder of an Italian man in Piazza della Signoria, in chapter 4. She enters the Piazza bored with her life, if not discontent, exclaiming "The world is certainly full of beautiful things, if only I could come across them" (38) and "lamenting the fact that nothing ever happened to her. Suddenly, something does happen, a man is stabbed and vomits blood very near Lucy, who faints in the arms of George Emerson. When she recovers her senses, she seems very worried she has done something wrong, crossing, like the dying man, a spiritual boundary. Lucy's choice after the murder, is either to allow herself to absorb the experience and be transformed by it, or to reject it, which is a choice she makes for the great part of the novel,

for her fear of blood, sexuality and passion. The inadequacy of her responses to the incident (she remarks “How quickly these accidents do happen” (42), trying to belittle the murder) and to George put her into “A state of self-deception, hypocrisy and spiritual darkness, before she can turn to light.”<sup>58</sup> In fact, she wants to retreat to her old ways, before the incident, the blood and the embrace of her rescuer.

According to Silvia Ross, another symbol which is important to describe Lucy’s personality is in her very name, which comes from the Latin *lux*, meaning light, and is connected to sight in the hagiographic tradition. This is metaphoric of her coming out of the darkness and illumination on her way to freedom from her boundaries.<sup>59</sup> Ross follows the track of Bonnie Blumenthal Finkelstein:

“Lucy’s renunciation of George and her final acceptance of him are consistently presented as a movement into darkness and then again into light and we are reminded of the scene in the Piazza when Lucy stood in the darkness while the sun above made the palace tower look like a golden pillar.”<sup>60</sup>

Lucy’s enlightenment prospects are blocked by her cousin, but she herself can become an interrupter: in chapter 15 she frustrates Cecil’s attempt to read aloud the novel written by Miss Lavish and, as her mother complains “She has the habit of hurrying away in the middle of one’s sentence.” (127)

As maintained by Jeffrey Heath, Forster wants Lucy to have, in the end, a direct and uninterrupted “conversation” with George, but a symbol of denial of her real emotion can be seen by reference at her two-dimensionality: like a typical English lady she always has an eye

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<sup>58</sup> Z. Sullivan, “Forster’s Symbolism: A Room with a View”, cit, p. 219.

<sup>59</sup> Ross, Silvia, *Tuscan Spaces, Literary Construction of Place*, cit, p. 95. Available on <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/9781442698918>

<sup>60</sup> Blumenthal Finkelstein, Bonnie *Forster Women: Eternal Differences* (1975), New York: Columbia University Press cit, p. 76.

on the weather, she plans to live in a flat with a respectable man, leading a respectable but plain life. She needs to be taken out of this state and to become a round character. It is Italy that makes Lucy more dimensional, and awakens her soul, since it is here that she finds the world, beautifully and directly as it is, and herself. Italy works also on her character in concert with the Emersons, because they give her a sense of wider and unknown issues and make her aware of new ideas, as they continuously show her their world from their viewpoint.<sup>61</sup>

During the first half of the novel, the development of Lucy's character is intermittent, Forster takes her in and out of her frame, as she vacillates between a state of selfish indifference and a peculiar vitality: for instance, in chapter 2, she begins to bloom under the guidance of Mr. Emerson. He warns Lucy: "You are inclined to get muddled [...] let yourself go. Pull out from the depths those thoughts that you do not understand, and spread them out in the sunlight and know the meaning of them." (25) Avtar Singh points out that muddle is a recurrent expression of varied connotations in Forster that normally signifies some fatal obscuring of inner vision by the falsifying conventions of society.<sup>62</sup> Lucy, like George, is a young person in search for something big; she is tired of being chivalrously protected and of superficial speech. Emerson leaves aside small talk and speaks to Lucy directly and frankly about his son: he recommends her to befriend him and make him understand "That by the side of the everlasting Why there is a Yes" (26), beyond all questioning but as soon as Charlotte arrives, the reader can see Lucy relapse back in her usual dullness and when she is called a poor girl by George's father she answers, bitterly:

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<sup>61</sup> Heath, Jeffrey "Kissing and Telling: Turning Round in A Room with a View." *Twentieth Century Literature* (1994), volume 40, cit, p. 400; available on [www.jstor.org/stable/30225594](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30225594)

<sup>62</sup> Singh, Avtar *The Novels of E M Forster* (1986), Chennai: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, cit, p. 99.

"Poor girl? I fail to understand the point of that remark. I think myself a very fortunate girl, I assure you. I'm thoroughly happy, and having a splendid time. Pray don't waste time mourning over me. There's enough sorrow in the world, isn't there, without trying to invent it. Good-bye. Thank you both so much for all your kindness. Ah, yes! there does come my cousin. A delightful morning! Santa Croce is a wonderful church. (26)

She would like to let herself go, but she considers yielding to her desires as not ladylike as the reader can infer when she asks herself, in chapter 4, why were most big things unladylike. Although she has been deeply moved by the embrace in the piazza and the kiss among the violets in chapter 6, during the trip to Fiesole, decidedly unladylike activities, she still decides to repress herself. Unluckily, she only decides to open up to Miss Bartlett, who takes advantage of her sincerity, with the result that Lucy decides to never expose herself again without thinking twice.

As Jeffrey Heath writes, the novel has the quality of a psychological striptease, a calculated revelation of the self. While George guesses her feelings correctly, she does not acknowledge them. She censors her situation, thinking of it only as a beautiful picture, but doing so, she cannot achieve roundness until she relaxes her will, stops taking prudish refuge in the picturesque, and lets herself finally be seen as she is.<sup>63</sup> Lucy can become her own chaperone, but she has to stop pretending to be touchy and until she admits eroticism into her picture, she will continue to be superficial. She has been taught to be proper and to lie, to falsify feelings as she represses the emotions respectable people would disapprove of. Lucy subdues rushes in her blood, and can summon physical disgust on purpose, but Forster's aim in that point is showing that pretending feelings is tiring. This is why she becomes increasingly irritable as her engagement with Cecil goes on, to the point that Lucy finally ends the relationship with him in chapter 17, by saying that she wants for herself to choose what is

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<sup>63</sup> J. Heath "Kissing and Telling: Turning Round in A Room with a View." Cit, p. 404.

ladylike and right. She angrily says that she doesn't care about "a woman's place," (160) and that she "won't be stifled" (160).

The reader of *A Room With a View* remains sympathetic to Lucy, because he is aligned with her through the narrator focus, he shares her progression from ignorance to enlightenment. She is at one and the same time honest and dishonest, conventional but rebellious, physically sexy and delicate. Lucy goes back and forth in her decisions: first she defends Mr. Emerson, then she retreats and backs down. She speaks intimately with George and feels guilty afterwards and tries to escape to Rome to Cecil and his mother, leaves Cecil to marry George. All she has to do, before she can continue with her adult life, is to decide for one side or the other, to be Medieval or to construct her Renaissance.

### 2.3.2 The Emersons

The reader is probably on the Emersons' side throughout the novel, as myself am, because they always mean what they say, and they genuinely care for truth and for Lucy's psychological maturation, as she is made to understand that she must tell what is true from what is false before it is too late. Mr. Emerson was created, according to Nicola Beauman in the image of Edward Carpenter, a man admired by Forster, a social pioneer who believed in equality for women and open expression of homosexual love. First through his published works, and later as a friend, Carpenter was to Forster a beacon of spiritual and sexual liberation who guided him toward a deeper understanding of himself.<sup>64</sup> For Lucy, Mr. Emerson is the "Kind old man who enabled her to see the lights dancing in the Arno" (12), who encourages her to follow her heart's and her body's desire, explaining that love pertains

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<sup>64</sup> S.K.Sarker *A Companion to E.M Forster*, cit, p. 556.

also to the body. This advice she must heed, as Forster makes sure, in breaking from the fettered world of Windy Corner and choosing truth over deceit.<sup>65</sup>In chapter 19 he tells Lucy:

“You must marry, or your life will be wasted. You have gone too far to retreat. I have no time for the tenderness, and the comradeship, and the poetry, and the things that really matter, and for which you marry. I know that, with George, you will find them, and that you love him.” (189)

George is the son of a man who always says exactly what he means, and old Emerson wants to teach this to Lucy. For example, when he acts as guide in Santa Croce, at the beginning of the novel, he comments on Lucy pretending to be touchy and repeating what she heard by older people. His loud comments drive the indignation of people, as George says, he tries to be kind because he genuinely loves humankind, but he comes out as frightening or offending without meaning it. The reader perceives that Mr. Emerson is a good man, but there are certain things which are not fully clear about his character. For instance, he comments to Lucy he has brought up George without religion, but he is profoundly religious, he speaks the language of religion, but in his own non-dogmatic, unconventional way.<sup>66</sup> During a conversation he has with Mr. Beebe in chapter 12, Emerson states “The Garden of Eden [...] We shall enter it when we no longer despise our bodies.” (12), the clergyman not only disagrees, he does not understand the metaphoric language Mr. Emerson is using to reach beyond conventional religiosity to express his own beliefs on what is sacred. The only difference between him and Mr. Beebe is that Mr. Emerson acknowledges physical passion. He is clearly a positive character, if not the most positive of all: he is the spokesman for equality between men and women and acceptance of bodily life.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Penguin Random House “A Room With a View Reader’s Guide”(2019), available on <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/296528/a-room-with-a-view-by-e-m-forster-introduction-by-wendy-moffat-notes-by-malcolm-bradbury/9780141183299/readers-guide/>

<sup>66</sup> P. Gardner, “The Half-Hidden Life” in *E. M. Forster The Critical Heritage*, cit, p. 114 .

<sup>67</sup>B. Blumenthal Finkelstein, *Forster Women: Eternal Differences*, cit, p. 71.

George was brought up to be a practical man, instead of a medieval esthete and in the novel the reader can see clearly the opposition between Renaissance and Medieval characters.

In fact, according to Krzysztof Fordoński:

“The characters of the novel can be divided into two groups according to their attitude to those oppositions. Such characteristics or references to those divisions can be traced in the text of the novel, e.g. Cecil is described as medieval while George as Michelangelesque.”<sup>68</sup>

Exposing his thoughts on Cecil, indeed he comments that he is the kind of man who has been “Keeping Europe back for a thousand years.” (154)

At first, George comes across to the reader as sorrowful and sad, by the first description his father provides Lucy with, in chapter 2. George soon changes, from a shy young man into a man who experiences female attractiveness, first in Piazza della Signoria, then in Fiesole, he starts to become aware of love and feelings until the kiss in chapter 6. He is described as resembling his mother, both physically and psychologically: “But he is his mother’s son. Her eyes were his, and she had that forehead that I think so beautiful, and he will not think it worthwhile to live” (185). The reader gathers some information about his past in chapter 19, when Mr. Emerson talks to Lucy at the rectory. When he was 12 he caught typhoid and he had not been baptized, since his father did not want it and wanted him to go “back to the earth untouched” (185). Mr. Eager explained his disease to his parents as a punishment of God. His mother fell ill and died soon after.

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<sup>68</sup> Fordoński Krzysztof “The Symbolic Meaning of Water in A Room with a View by E. M. Forster” (1999), in “Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on English and American Literature and Language: Tradition and Postmodernity. English and American Studies and the Challenge of the Future” cit, p. 4. Available on [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271075143\\_The\\_Symbolic\\_Meaning\\_of\\_Water\\_in\\_'A\\_Room\\_with\\_a\\_View'\\_by\\_E\\_M\\_Forster](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271075143_The_Symbolic_Meaning_of_Water_in_'A_Room_with_a_View'_by_E_M_Forster)

He's clearly looking for meaning in life, symbolized by the "enormous note of interrogation" (12) Miss Bartlett finds in the room which was his. By focusing exclusively on the whys, he has allowed them to fill his vision completely. He inquisitively tries to understand a world he should merely accept as it is. In the words of Mr. Emerson, "The things (of the universe) won't fit" (25), so George lives in a personal hell of misunderstanding, he's discontented and confused. George, as well as Lucy, needs to be freed from his search for meaning, which he will find. As Elena Raicu points out, he is the only other character, beside Lucy, who is subject to an important evolution throughout the story. From an anxious youngster, an introvert and a laconic speaker, always brooding on the things of the universe, he grows into a man aware of his feelings, of the path he wants to take, able to speak out his thoughts and fight for his chance to happiness.<sup>69</sup>

George is described as kind and loving toward his father, for instance in chapter fifteen when he puts "his arm round his father's neck". He is protective to Lucy too: in Piazza della Signoria he lifts her when she faints and he later picks up the photos, only to throw them in the Arno not to let her see the blood on them, because she cannot overcome the shocking view. Blood may assume here a symbolical meaning in a way that is similar to the novel *Sons and Lovers* (1913) by Lawrence, in which love symbolizes sex and passion, the sources of life and joy. George has also a modern view on the relationship between a man and a woman, since he believes in equality. He tells Lucy:

"This desire to govern a woman- it lies very deep, and men and women must fight it together before they shall enter the Garden [...] I want you to have your own thoughts even when I hold you in my arms." (155)

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<sup>69</sup> Raicu Elena, "A Room with Two Views: An Insight into the 1985 and 2007 Film Adaptations of E.M Forster's Novel" (2015) in *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens*, available on <https://journals.openedition.org/cve/2302>

This perfect relationship in which a man and a woman are equal and in love with each other with respect can remind the reader and reminds me once again of D. H Lawrence and of the novel *Women in Love* (1920). George declares his love to Lucy in chapter 19 when he exclaims: “You may not have noticed that I love you”. As it often happens to men, he becomes aware of his feelings after having experienced physical attraction and having reached a sexual maturity. Lucy on the contrary, like the majority of women, does not understand in the first place she loves George, even if she is kissed twice. Or maybe she does, but she surely has to fight against and deny her mother’s values and education before she can admit she is in love with George.

While he has lived many years without a mother, Lucy has lost her father too, so she lacks a male model in the family and she has to substitute it with Mr. Emerson, who in guiding her, seems to act as a father figure, and partially with Mr. Beebe. George’s only model is his father, who is a very unconventional and sincere, loves his son and understands him without intruding in his decisions. Thanks to this very positive model, George gains emotional maturity quite easily and rather soon. Probably Forster knew Freud’s new theories on the phases of human sexual development and on the Oedipus complex which the child overcomes thanks to a positive model of the same-sex parent.

Nature is powerful and overwhelming every time George has a sensual experience or accepts swimming half-naked in the lake, as if luxuriant natural spaces were a metaphor for his running vibrant youth.

I agree when she writes that George’s personality can appear complex and yet simple, somber and impassive, and yet innocent like a boy in his anxiety and happiness, laconic and yet capable of delivering impressive speeches on love in his own simple, straightforward

language.<sup>70</sup> Mr. Emerson tells Lucy to understand all of this about George and to help him understand himself as well. It is not until the moment he shares with Lucy among the violets, that George stops thinking and spontaneously acts. He lets himself go and enjoy the moment and finally finds room for a Yes instead of his “everlasting Why” (26). This is a beginning, but he can succeed only if Lucy reciprocates, which she fears to do, because it will bring her at the end of her comfort zone, as mentioned before, to defy the moral codes of her time. So, for fear of her feelings, she decides to go to Rome and to be betrothed to Cecil, who is the very contrary of George, as I will show in the next paragraph about him.

But by the end of the novel, George and Lucy have fought their way to achieve a state of plenitude and fought against themselves. In turning to each other, and in returning to Italy, they have allowed themselves to be illuminated by the sunny figure of Mr. Emerson, who has made them follow good sense, to spread out their wings to reach their own personal happiness. They have broken free of the psychological frames which encaged them.<sup>71</sup> In a final moment of universal reconciliation, the playful lovers speak of the past and the future, and of Miss Bartlett's mind. George is no longer a mute, autumnal figure, rather, in an ordinary room in the Pensione Bertolini he carries Lucy to look from a window which does not frame nor separate them but looks upon all the metaphorical view of consciousness they have acquired. George first embraces Lucy and takes her to the window, then they lean to contemplate the river in similar postures suggestive of an eternal comradeship Lucy had tried to deny, so now, no longer typical tourists, they embody archetypal figures of love, in front of the stunning landscape of Florence. As J. Heath maintains, they will pass, but their love will

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> J. Heath “Kissing and Telling: Turning Round in A Room with a View.” Cit, p. 403.

never.<sup>72</sup>”A passion of gratitude fills George’s mind and their union satisfies both of them” (193).

### 2.3.3 Cecil Vyse

Cecil, Lucy’s fiancé, is almost always a figure to be mocked by the reader, and the author expresses it. But, first thing first, it is to understand that he is the typical product of his society, with its class snobbish attitude, condescendence and arrogance. He boasts to Mr. Beebe the fact that he is a gentleman, so he does not have to work for a living, in contrast with Mr. Emerson, who is a journalist and his son who works in the railways. He lives in London, where he is proudly surrounded by his books and comes to Windy Corner, as commented by Benjamin Mangrum, like a man of the Empire, to summon space into order, to enlighten the uninformed.<sup>73</sup> In other words, much like the colonial justification of the administration of foreign space for the sake of educating its dominions, Cecil enters the Honeychurch home as if he were a god-like colonizer who rearranges feminine space. But despicable as he might be, as Judith Scherer Hertz has it:

“Much of what happens in the second part of the novel happens through and around him. It is his mockery, his patronizing condescension, and bloodless amusement at other people’s words and actions, both the silly and the serious, that create the turns of plot and [...] send his bride to be into the arms of his unsuspected rival.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p.429

<sup>73</sup> Mangrum, Benjamin “The Old, Old Battle of the Room: The Politics of Space in A Room With a View” (2011) in *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies* Vol. 17, cit, p. 85. Available on [https://www.academia.edu/18031667/The\\_Old\\_Old\\_Battle\\_of\\_the\\_Room\\_The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Space\\_in\\_A\\_Room\\_With\\_a\\_View\\_The\\_Journal\\_of\\_Commonwealth\\_and\\_Postcolonial\\_Studies\\_17.1\\_Spring\\_2011\\_80-92](https://www.academia.edu/18031667/The_Old_Old_Battle_of_the_Room_The_Politics_of_Space_in_A_Room_With_a_View_The_Journal_of_Commonwealth_and_Postcolonial_Studies_17.1_Spring_2011_80-92)

<sup>74</sup> Bradshaw, David *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster* (2007) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, cit, p. 144.

Cecil's reason for loving Lucy, and Lucy's main reason to leave him is that he loves her not for herself as a real woman, but as an aesthetic work of art, as she was another piece to be collected. He is interested not in her reality, but in her suggestiveness, not in her real inner life.<sup>75</sup> The narrator comments: "She was to him like a woman of Leonardo Da Vinci's, whom we love not so much for herself as for the things she will not tell us." (83) And he is described in the novel as medieval. As pointed out by Barberà, he can only conceive his relationship with Lucy feudally, as protector and protected, he could not give Lucy the comradeship she looks for.<sup>76</sup> Cecil just likes to speak to her about art, poetry, books, just for the taste of speaking and lacks the complete picture about Lucy, as well as sexual appetite towards her, he appears indifferent and detached from her as a physical person. Zadie Smith suggests that Forster's novel contain voyeuristic characters:

"A specific philosophic type is meant here: this is the man whose life-reading skills are as good as we might hope them to be, but who chooses only to read, to observe, but not to be involved. They are the novel's flaneurs. They invariably think of themselves as "students of human nature", and they are condemned by both authors as Aristotle properly condemns them, as people inured to the responsibilities of proper human involvement."<sup>77</sup>

Smith includes Cecil in this group, suggesting even a further idea, to which I am not particularly convinced, of a repressed homosexuality in him.

What is sure is that their engagement is very cold and institutionalized, and Lucy's brother realizes it, since in chapter 8 he calls Cecil "fiasco", which in Italian means failure, rather than

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<sup>75</sup> Meyers, Jeffrey *Painting and the Novel* (1975), Manchester, Manchester University Press, cit, p. 43.

<sup>76</sup> Gilabert Barberà, Pau "Classicism versus Mediaevalism in Victorian-Edwardian England: E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View* as an example" (2008), University of Barcelona, cit, p. 10. Available on <http://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/bitstream/2445/12155/8/Forster%20Room%20eng%2012155.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> Smith, Zadie "Love Actually" in *The Guardian*, 1 Nov. 2003, available on <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/nov/01/classics.zadiesmith>

fiancé and, as Heath points out, Cecil's denial of immediate and bodily experience, his closure to life, will reduce Lucy "From a window with a view into a room with a blind."<sup>78</sup>

He compares Cecil to Dante, anxious for sublime thoughts with no place for the mundane and prosaic. This vision leads a man to behave chivalrously to a woman to be worthy of the high thoughts she inspires in him, as it happened to Dante with Beatrice. But, is it a real compliment to the woman herself? Lucy needs intercourse with a person, not a courtly relationship. It is clear that Cecil is guilty of this fault: like a courtly lover, he looks through Lucy rather than at her and, like another Miss Bartlett, he forbids her to experience.<sup>79</sup> Lucy rebels when she sees that his protection is, in reality, a golden prison, and she, using George's words, reproaches this to Cecil:

"You wrap yourself up in art and books and music, and would try to wrap up me. I won't be stifled, not by the most glorious music, for people are most glorious, and you hide them from me". (160)

This burst of sincerity seems, at first, to improve his figure: "He looked at her, instead of through her, for the first time since they were engaged. From a Leonardo she had become a living woman." (160)

But Cecil, soon after, falls again in his error and speaks of her again as a work of art, when he feels "her face was inartistic" and failing to "be Leonardesque" (109). As he learns, that there was someone else in Lucy's mind, Cecil turns cynical, even though at the end of the novel he retires a wiser man and the reader almost sympathizes with him for a moment, showing in him an unexpected streak of nobility while he is being refused.

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<sup>78</sup> J. Heath "Kissing and Telling: Turning Round in A Room with a View." Cit, p. 416

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

The difference between him and George is very stark: he lacks the young Emerson's instinctive quality and virility, it is sufficient to contrast his tentative and awkward request to kiss Lucy in chapter 9 and the impulsive kiss George gave Lucy in Fiesole, or to look at the bathing scene that reveals George:

“As a half naked, uninhibited, natural man, whereas Cecil remains always clothed, mostly seen in a room and [...] in the sexual accounting of the novel he is constantly on the negative side.”<sup>80</sup>

George's vitality is at odds with Cecil's sterility: the man beyond social convention can attain a fullness denied to those who submit to them.

Cecil and Lucy are locked, while they are in a relationship, in tortured confrontation without being connected: they fail to perceive the world in one another; instead, they remind of something else, Lucy reminds of a painting, and he reminds of “A Gothic statue” (81), as he is described in chapter 8, aptly called “Mediaeval”. Although Lucy eventually breaks her boundaries and embraces life, during the period of their engagement she and Cecil both give more value to abstractions than to humanity.

#### **2.3.4 Charlotte Bartlett**

Lucy's prim cousin and chaperone Charlotte is a complex character too. She begins by inhibiting Lucy, but at the end she makes possible her union with George. Lynn Walhout Hinojosa comments:

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<sup>80</sup> Bristow, Joseph *Against Effeminacy: The Sexual Predicament of E.M Forster's Fiction* (1995), New York: Columbia University Press, cit, p. 72.

“It is precisely Charlotte the real exegete of Lucy’s plot, a causal agent. Instead of the Christian God coordinating spectacular coincidences and events, it might be an aging spinster who has the power to direct history”.<sup>81</sup>

Charlotte sees George kissing Lucy at Fiesole, and she later tells Miss Lavish all about it, despite vowing to keep it secret. Miss Lavish bicycles through Summer Street where she meets the Emersons again. Then Charlotte writes Lucy a letter that conjures up her memories of George as it discusses the coincidence of Miss Lavish meeting him.<sup>82</sup> Charlotte, though exasperating in her mannerisms, results not completely contemptible. Indeed, the reader parts with a certain compassion for her and her ridiculous obligations she submits to in her everyday life. And although the novel lays the ground for her change, the effect remains surprising for the fact that she is not completely at the mercy of the frigid propriety she seems to represent since the beginning of the story.

Before the reader gets in touch with her better side, she seems to embody an unpleasant petty unselfishness, which is manipulative: she obtains what she wants by instilling sense of guilt in others. Her primary characteristic is making people uncomfortable, playing the role of the “prematurely aged martyr” (71). Miss Bartlett is absolutely prudish in the regards of sex, for example in chapter 1 she does not want to exchange her room with the Emerson because she finds something wrong in occupying a room vacated by a man. In the end she accepts, but she leaves Lucy the smaller of the Emerson’s rooms just because it belonged to the elder Mr.Emerson, rather than to George.

To her, beauty and delicacy are what counts and the great enemy is man: when Charlotte asks Lucy how she would have replied to the “insult”(69), as she calls it, of being kissed by

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<sup>81</sup> Hinojosa, Lynne Walhout “Religion and Puritan Typology in E.M Forster’s A Room With a View” (2010), *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 33. Cit p. 92. Available on [www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jml.2010.33.4.72](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jml.2010.33.4.72)

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p. 91.

George, Lucy does not know, because, Blumenthal Finkelstein suggests, Charlotte does not let her form her own judgment, if she, who is an authority figure to Lucy equals a kiss with an insult.<sup>83</sup> Without her, the reader feels that Lucy would have been able to react personally and not properly, as her cousin would like to manipulate her into. Charlotte yearns for the return of chivalry, for a real man who would defend Lucy's honour,<sup>84</sup> but the problem is that George is a real man, and not a knight. Her view is like Cecil's, it is medieval; Charlotte's ideal of reverencing women precludes passionately loving them and precludes any active role in their part. As she explains to Lucy: "It was not that ladies were inferior to men; it was that they were different. Their mission was to inspire others to achievement rather than to achieve themselves." (37)

For much of the novel, Charlotte seems to have power over Lucy, and this disciplinary influence is not ethical: good teachers do not clip the wings of their pupils. After the kiss in Italy, Lucy imagines that she and Charlotte will have a talk in which together they would interpret her sensations, instead, Charlotte interrupts her and is worried about avoiding the moral and social scandal that potentially could ensue. The narrator calls this "A grievous wrong" (73); Charlotte ignores Lucy's sincerity and craving for sympathy and instead presents to her the world as cheerless, where the youngsters rush to their own destruction until they learn. A world of barriers and precautions which may avoid evil, but which does not bring any good either. When Charlotte and Lucy argue after the second kiss, Lucy finally resolves to talk to George, but then realises that this was "What her cousin had intended all along" (153).

In the last chapter, George and Lucy discuss the events and they come to the realization that Miss Bartlett had arranged Lucy's last meeting with Mr. Emerson in Mr. Beebe's study

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<sup>83</sup> B. Blumenthal Finkelstein, *Forster Women: Eternal Differences*, cit, p. 74.

<sup>84</sup> K. Martin Robert, Piggford George, *Queer Forster* (1997), Chicago: University of Chicago Press cit, p. 68.

on purpose, because she knew he was there, and she went to church anyway. George reflects on Charlotte's character: "That your cousin has always hoped. That from that very first moment we met, she hoped, far down in her mind, that we should be like this-of course, very far down." (195)

In this moment, the readers, as well as the protagonists, are forced to come to terms with the fact that even Charlotte Bartlett has a heart. Charlotte's rapid change at the end is a little bewildering and can only be explained by saying that Charlotte maybe wanted George and Lucy to get together all along. The optimistic view is that if there is hope for Miss Bartlett to change for the better, there is hope for everyone.

### **2.3.5 Mr. Eager**

Reverend Cuthbert Eager is a snobbish and hypocritical English clergyman who lives in Florence. As he is "Italianized", he should represent the freedom and open-mindedness of Italy, but he is on the contrary definitely conventional and, in the words of Claude Summers "The most thorough going villain"<sup>85</sup>. He does not like the non-conventionality of the Emersons from the beginning, to the point of spreading a false gossip about George's dead mother: Mr. Eager declares to Charlotte and Lucy that Mr. Emerson murdered her "In the sight of God" (51), when this is far from being true.

Eager appears as a main character in two episodes: he is the responsible for the separation of the young Italian coachman and the lady he was kissing pretending to be his sister who drives the English party up the hill of Fiesole, nicknamed as Phaethon, the reckless son of the sun god who mishandled the chariot of the sun and perished, and Persephone, who is the goddess of spring. Mr. Eager is against the thought of the girl riding next to the driver, but the

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<sup>85</sup> Summers, Claude "The Meaningful Ambiguity of Giotto in A Room With a View", vol.30 cit, p. 165.

ladies intercede on her behalf. The driver and his girl flirt in the driver's seat and the clergyman rides giving his back to them, not to see the young couple. Mr. Eager talks of Italian artists and villas as they make their journey uphill. The coach bumps and after a particularly violent lurch, Mr. Eager turns just in time to see the driver and the girl kissing, becoming increasingly furious until the young woman gets down.

He is proud of his separation of the lovers. Of course, being a man of Church, he perceives his determination to expose them as a righteous act. The Victorian (and Edwardian) ideal of the chaste woman was also a Christian ideal. Consequently, Mr. Eager's point of view towards premarital relations and sex is not surprising, his actions promote the values of the period. The Church enjoyed a period of power during the 19<sup>th</sup> century so the clergyman takes his authority for granted, assuming that his stance on the matter will be recognized as correct and followed.

Mr. Eager is a man who tries to frame vibrant real life under the cloak of cultured and fitting behaviour.<sup>86</sup> He comes across as a man too absorbed in his own notions of propriety and convention to see that his action has set two people apart who were doing no harm to him as a person. In his thought they harm the beliefs that he embraces as a Churchman. If he had not succeeded in separating the lovers, his authority as a Reverend would have been undermined. Mr. Eager's actions could be seen as an attempt to secure and preserve this order.

Mr. Eager affects an intellectual air: Lucy's first meeting with him is at Santa Croce while he lectures a group of tourists Giotto's frescoes and is interrupted by Mr. Emerson. He is, as Cecil, a "medieval" character and his speech in the church is a proof of that, other than a

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<sup>86</sup> J. Heath "Kissing and Telling: Turning Round in A Room with a View." Cit, p. 399.

résumé of Ruskin's views, particularly expressed in *The Stones of Venice*.<sup>87</sup> He declares, speaking to the tourists about Santa Croce: "How it was built by faith in the full fervor of medievalism, before any taint of the Renaissance had appeared."<sup>88</sup> Mr. Emerson heartily disagrees, being skeptical of the praise and romanticizing of the past and comments, practically, that at that time "Workmen were not paid enough."<sup>89</sup> Mangrum comments: "The clash centers on alternative readings of religious and cultural space at: Mr. Emerson contradicts the Reverend's positive appraisal of the church's religious foundations."<sup>90</sup> Emerson continues by rejecting Eager's assessment of the space's cultural emblems: "And as for the frescoes, I see no truth in them. Look at that fatman in blue! He must weigh as much as I do, and he is shooting into the skylike an air-balloon."<sup>91</sup>

Emerson's alternative interpretation of the religious and cultural space disrupts the Reverend Eager's "lecture" on the church. The clash in Santa Croce leads Eager to exclaim that the chapel is too small for two parties. The Reverend then leaves with his silent and unsettled congregation, while Mr. Emerson pleads that there is enough space for everyone.

He manifests himself as a member of Victorian England by showing class-snobbery. When, in chapter 5, he speaks of Mr. Emerson's humble origins as a mechanic and his work as a journalist for the Socialist press, he does it with seemingly triumphant air. He also expresses doubt that working-class people visiting Florence, however pleasing he would find it to see them there, would make much of their stay. He is implying that, because of their low

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<sup>87</sup> Stape, J.H. *E.M. Forster: critical assessments. 2, The critical response: early responses 1907-44, the short fiction, Forster's criticism, miscellaneous writings* (1998), cit, p.162.

<sup>88</sup> E.M Forster *A Room With a View*, p. 22.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> B. Mangrum "The Old, Old Battle of the Room: The Politics of Space in *A Room With A View*", cit, p. 82.

<sup>91</sup> E.M Forster *A Room With a View*, p. 22.

education, they would not be able to understand, let alone appreciate, any cultural and intellectual significance of the city.

### 2.3.6 Mr. Beebe

Beebe is the Anglican new rector of Lucy's parish of Summer Street in England and he seems to scrutinize if not supervise the development of the relationship of George and Lucy throughout the novel. From being a guest of the Pensione Bertolini to his new place as rector "He acts as the conduit of almost all successful social interaction and relationship and it is only at the end that these skills leave him, to the dissatisfaction of the reader."<sup>92</sup>

He is physically described in the first chapter as "stout but attractive" (5), bald, with great social skills. Lucy speaks of him as nice, prone to laugh and see good in everyone. Mr. Beebe has the capacity to put everyone at ease, fill silences and deal with delicate situations. Judith Scherer Herz writes that he is:

"Introduced at the start as a genial, enabling presence, one who recognizes folly and seems, on the whole, on the side of truth and youth [...] but he will become as much antagonist as friendly interpreter."<sup>93</sup>

In fact, the moment Lucy leaves Cecil, Beebe appears happy she made "a glorious riddance" (190), but he is crushed when he realizes that Lucy will marry George and Forster writes that "His face [...] turned suddenly inhuman" (167). In the words of Hanna Rochlitz:

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<sup>92</sup> Rapport, Nigel *The Prose and The Passion: Anthropology, Literature and the Writing of E.M Forster* (1994), cit, p.106.

<sup>93</sup> D. Bradshaw *The Cambridge Companion to E. M.*, cit, p.141

“In his rejection of Lucy, Mr. Beebe is seen to turn distant and hostile towards the human being whom he had first patronized appreciatively [...] and have subsequently hoped to enlist [Lucy] in the cause of celibacy, with her youthful energies to be contained in his ideal of a domesticated existence.”<sup>94</sup>

He is described as having great tolerance for young people. According to Rapport, Mr. Beebe sees in youngsters the potential to shape one's life, before society can do it. He knows adults in Victorian and Edwardian times live a life of only preconstructed manners and Beebe seems excited by Lucy's potential to live outside the schemes of English respectable society. He gives the impression of being conscious of the limitations of his own English groundedness and of his profession, so what he does is imagining to fly free with Lucy.

It is the unexpected final transition which is the most surprising one in the entire novel and the most baffling one for the reader. Lucy and George return to Florence as a couple, but Mr. Beebe never “recovers”: he never forgives Lucy, he never regains interest in her and never stops to influence people at home against the newly married couple, as one can read at the end of the novel.

His specialty seems to be dealing with maidens, to become acquainted with their secrets and confidences. As worded by the author: “All his life he had loved to study maiden ladies; they were his specialty, and his profession had provided him with ample opportunities for the work.” (31) Nevertheless, he is also described as “Chilly to the other sex” (31), preferring to associate himself with older ladies. He is still unmarried, and like Forster, is surrounded by many women, from his old mother, to Lucy's widowed mother, to his parishioners and his thirteen-year-old niece Minnie. It is not, I think, that he desired Lucy physically, he just desired what she stood for. Lucy is the very reverse of the women whom the clergyman is surrounded by, but now that she is married, his opportunity of profound conversation with her is lost forever.

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<sup>94</sup> Rochlitz, Hanna “Sea-Changes, Melville-Forster-Britten, The Story of Billy Budd and its Operatic Adaptation” (2012), cit, p. 375.

And, he feels, marriage will pull her to the ground, like the other conventional women, too and miss her holistic view of the world.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> N. Rapport *The Prose and The Passion: Anthropology, Literature and the Writing of E.M Forster*, cit, p.110.

## 2.4 A View on England and Italy

Until the mid-19th century only the most well-off British tourists could afford visiting Italy, but with the arrival of mass tourism Italy became accessible also to middle class people. This phenomenon coincides with an excursion organized in 1841 by Thomas Cook from Leicester to Loughborough. He was a simple Baptist typographer, but he is now considered the father of tourism for all classes. The trip in the Derbyshire he organized was attended by more than 500 lower class people for the cost of only one shilling and consecrated the switch from the traditional Grand Tour for the wealthy to the style of holiday which is still practiced nowadays.<sup>96</sup>

The economic power of the British increased as a result of the Industrial Revolution, and the Napoleonic wars. Generally speaking, travelling around Europe was not considered an adventure anymore. European cities were explored, the sights catalogued, and the inhabitants of the cities preferred by tourists started to recognize tourism as a source of income and were therefore prepared. Hotels, pensions, restaurants and souvenir shops thrived and the increasing number of English tourists created also a kind of economic dependency in those countries. Moreover, many shipping and train lines made connections easier.

Aneta Lipska argues that in the 19th and early 20th century the relationship between England and Italy was marked by the attempt of the former to define itself. So, because England is an insular country, English people used to define their national identity in opposition to the continental countries like, which was used as a reference point, due to the popularity of the aforementioned Grand Tour as a part of the education, which started to be

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<sup>96</sup> Zuelow, Eric *A History of Modern Tourism* (2015), London: Palgrave Macmillan, cit, p. 63.

popular during the previous century.<sup>97</sup> The official aim of the Grand Tour was cultural formation, even though the traditional itinerary did not include the attendance of cultural or academic institutions. According to Krzysztof Fordoński

“It was more about travelling for the satisfaction of curiosities and personal interests, to enrich one’s knowledge in the broadest sense of the term, to meet people, to get in contact with different languages and cultures.”<sup>98</sup>

In the words of McAllister, the notion of Englishness at the time was constructed by either “Exclusion or identification” with the concept of being Italian.<sup>99</sup> At the time, Italy served as a benchmark against which the English could define their superiority, prestige and moral quality, in this way they could assume a patronizing stance, in a missionary attitude, similar to that towards British colonies, despite England having absolutely “No control over Italy.”<sup>100</sup>

Forsterian characters attempt to make Italy suit their needs of identification and moral salvation, like in *A Room With a View*.

Even if there are moments of vis-à-vis encounters between the English and the Italians, one example being the encounter with the coachman during the trip to Fiesole in chapter 6, they are not successful to make English people comprehend them, they always end up claiming superiority even if Italy is the cradle of the culture they wanted to know. The English imperial ideology permeates Forster’s Italian novels, but these books in my opinion betray a

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<sup>97</sup> Lipska, Aneta “Othering the Mediterranean. E.M Forster’s Italian Novels: a Levinasian Perspective” in *Politics, Rivista di Studi Politici* (2016), cit p. 93. Available on [https://rivistapolitics.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/06\\_politics\\_5\\_lipska.pdf](https://rivistapolitics.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/06_politics_5_lipska.pdf).

<sup>98</sup> Fordoński, Krzysztof “The Eternal Moment, Italy in the Early Fiction of Edward Morgan Forster” cit, p. 264.

<sup>99</sup> McAllister, Annemarie. *John Bull’s Italian Snakes and Ladders: English Attitudes to Italy in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (2007). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, cit, p. 2.

<sup>100</sup> Buzard, James. *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (1993). Oxford: Clarendon Press. Cit, p. 19.

recognition of the impossibility of limiting the world within the frame of one's limited knowledge and pointing to a need for an alternative relationship.

Moreover, as John Pemble points out, another reason for patronizing Italy was that English people used to consider themselves descendants of the Romans. For that reason, they liked to take the role of protectors of the Roman heritage, to the point of purchasing and appropriating valuable works of art.<sup>101</sup> The complete image in the mind of the British was that of England as a political, economic and imperial power whereas the vision of Italy was that of a picturesque nation, yet backward and politically unstable.

Although travelling was still sometimes uncomfortable, women like Lucy, Miss Bartlett and the Miss Alans started to travel without the protection of men. Victorians and subsequently Edwardians particularly esteemed their English households, where women played their proper role: they were expected to behave as virtuous, genteel ladies, devoted to their husbands and family. At that time, travels to the South were considered to be a potential threat to their values. It was considered dangerous for women to travel without a male chaperone to the Mediterranean area, since it was assumed that their virtue would be attempted by southerners, whom they tended to comprehend on the basis of a number of contradictory stereotypes:

“Noble Savages and the Wild Men [...] effeminate yet potent seducers, dirty peasants yet sophisticated artists, simple and childlike yet cunning and manipulative, morally bankrupt yet primarily innocent”.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Pemble, John. *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (1998). Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. Cit, p.64

<sup>102</sup> McAllister, A. *John Bull's Italian Snakes and Ladders: English Attitudes to Italy in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, cit, p. 2.

Guidebooks would not only educate female travellers on touristic attractions and works of art, but also provide information on security and sanitation as well as advising, as I have said, against intimate contacts with local men. In a way, then, as Lipska points out, those books served the purpose of “Shielding the tourists once they had crossed geographical boundaries between the familiar and the foreign.”<sup>103</sup>

The longer Lucy stays in the country, the more involved she should be in the life of its inhabitants, but her own relationship with Italy is not at a national level, it is mostly about the personal level. She does not come in real contact with Italy as a country. The Forsterian vision of Italian society and politics has been thus described by Elena Gualtieri:

“The sense of distance that separated the Edwardian tourist from contemporary Italy also translated itself into a certain indifference to the political realities of the country, racked with social conflicts and political instability.”<sup>104</sup>

*A Room with a View* is an inward travel, it is about the protagonist’s desire for truthful life that she starts to find in Italy and fully realizes in England after George’s speech in chapter 16. Rooms and views recur in the novel, two worlds and two symbols, as I have already mentioned. The old-fashioned and traditional proper behaviour is always linked with the indoor darkness and England, the latter represents a close contact with nature, Lucy’s wishes and her more modern way of thinking, expanding her personal horizons with the light of the view and of Italy too. The view and the lack of it symbolize two opposite moods and behaviours. The term view recurs in many parts of the novel: at the beginning, in chapter 1, Lucy and Charlotte are disappointed not to have a room with a view on the Arno. On the

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<sup>103</sup> Lipska, A. “Othering the Mediterranean. E.M Forster’s Italian Novels: a Levinasian Perspective.” Cit p. 93.

<sup>104</sup> Gualtieri, Elena. “From A Room with a View to the Fascist Spectacle: Bloomsbury in Italy” in *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens*, n. 62 (2005), cit, p. 101.

contrary Mr.Emerson claims he has a view, which means metaphorically that he has a broad vision on the world, humankind and nature. Lucy likes observing the monuments, the river and the hills while she is in Florence, but she also likes to gaze “at the cloudless sky” (105), to observe the “pine-clad promontories descending one beyond the other into the weald” (106) when she is in England. The word view is used in chapter 10 to mean the perspective of her eyes and the peaceful atmosphere of Lucy’s familiar landscape.

Any view implies watching. Forster appeals to sight, as well as to the other senses, but the term view has a special symbolic importance and possibly for this reason the author used it in the title. When Lucy is back to England, she has “new eyes” (103) because “Italy was offering her the most priceless of all possessions-her own soul.” In Italy people enjoy “equality [...] and the sun” (103) and the experience of them help Lucy overcome the stuffy rules of her snobbish social milieu. “Her senses expanded, she felt that there was no one whom she might not get to like, that social barriers were irremovable, doubtless, but not particularly high” (103).

George frees himself from the British social conventions and narrow-mindedness sooner than Lucy. Their happy meetings take place mostly outdoors, where nature is wild and free. On the contrary, Lucy’s meetings with Cecil are for the majority indoors, where there is no view. Cecil agrees with the conditions of his society and family and is not spontaneous and satisfied, even when he kisses Lucy. And yet, in chapter 17, Cecil understands that Italy has changed Lucy into a “true woman” (162) and recognizes he was “bound up in the old, vicious notions” (162) while she was all the time “splendid and new” (162). Therefore, Cecil undergoes a maturation in this last meeting and even tanks her for showing him a new model of woman and even repents for not having had the possibility to “be given a chance to improve” (161).

He recognizes that he used her as an example of his silly notions of what a woman should be. He lacked a correct *view* (my emphasis) on the human relationship between a man and a woman who are a couple in which equality is granted and no one prevails.

In Florence, Lucy seems not able to overcome English conventionality, superficiality and snobbery, at least at the beginning. For example, in Santa Croce, in chapter 2, a Baedeker in her hands, she suddenly has it taken away by Eleanor Lavish. At first, without it, she does not know what she is supposed to think about the place: her unquestioning reliance on guidebooks creates a particular vision of the country and the refusal to judge for oneself, as it was still typical of English tourists in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. Without her Baedeker, Lucy seems deprived of guidance but also of a shield against all the dangers of the unfamiliar place and unforeseen meetings. The result is that she seems confused.

Very often English tourists relied heavily on the information given by the most famous guidebook of the time, the Baedeker, which is often mentioned in *A Room with a View*. At that time, it was the most influential guidebook, along with the Murray<sup>105</sup> and Forster is clearly mocking this heavy dependence and the attempt of this book to catalogue the beauties of foreign countries to translate them into the dull language of the late-Victorian and Edwardian period. And yet Forster himself more than probably probably used to rely on the Baedeker while he was travelling to Italy and Greece.

As James Corby points out, the defect of this guidebook was that, even if the preface informs the readers that the aim of the book is to make them independent in the judgment of

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<sup>105</sup> Watson, Nicola. *Literary Tourism and Nineteen-Century Culture* (2009), London: Palgrave Macmillan, cit, p. 107.

what they see, as well as warn them against extortion and begging, it did not allow tourists to experience a country in their personal way.<sup>106</sup> As Mieke Schuller comments:

“A country consists of more than its monuments, churches and castles, and it cannot be explored by learning the dates of life of some important philosopher, clergyman or sovereign. It was and still is necessary to develop a feeling for the nuances of a country and its people in order to feel the way the inhabitants identify with their country, or to understand why certain and social, political, and cultural structures have developed”<sup>107</sup>

On the contrary, the Baedeker valued more pragmatism over emotion and personal experience.

The murder of the Italian man stabbed to death in chapter 4 enlightens Lucy because she understands it as an example of Italian people’s behavior. For a moment, she is fully immersed in the life of Florence. Nevertheless, she is worried because she has lost her Alinari’s photos while rushing “into the fray” (37). Furthermore, Lucy is angered because she is afraid that, by fainting, she might have left uncovered her true self crossed some boundaries of propriety and exposed herself too much. In Italy she will learn some lessons which cannot be found in the Baedeker.

Lucy faces the real Italy when she meets George who, with his “naturalness”, allows her to experience the joy of life. In fact, he is not a typically English young man oppressed by social conventions, he appears to be spontaneous and sincere, that is the reason why at first Lucy and other English guests of the Bertolini have mixed opinions about him and his father.

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<sup>106</sup> Corby, James. “E.M Forster: muddling through Italy” (2015) in *OAR@UM, University of Malta*. Cit, p.174.

<sup>107</sup> Schuller, Mieke “E. M. Forster's A Room with a View: The Attitude of English People Abroad” (2001) available on <https://www.grin.com/document/44789>. Cit, pp. 3-4.

To try and protect herself against vulnerability, she accuses George of being unrefined, showing a traditional English attitude towards Italians and people who do not cope with proper manners. George and Lucy in the end get married and are content to be in Italy again. She has accepted George with his spontaneous behaviour, but she still has never really exposed herself to truly Italian people, apart from the coach driver and the Signora Bertolini and she never becomes Italianised. The demonstration is that, as Lipska points out, when she returns to Italy she continues to act like an English tourist: she and George lodge in the Pensione Bertolini, which is always crowded with English people, so Lucy, in this perspective, remains a stranger.<sup>108</sup>

Forster's Italian novels leave no doubt about the consequences of the encounter between the English and the Italians: his characters never experience Italy outside their preconceived ideas; they somehow always maintain the status of tourists. Forster's English do not even try to conform to Italian customs, because they consider their own English ideals unarguably superior. English tourists in real life went so far with their inflexibility as to insist on lodging in places that reminded of their home country. It is a striking fact that already at the beginning of the novel, the reader might think that the story takes place somewhere in England. Only the name of the Pensione Bertolini, and the mentioning of the Signora indicate that the place is in Italy. The pensione is only inhabited by English tourists, and furnished in a typical English style, the rooms overburdened with symbols of England; as Schuller writes, "Nothing reminds the tourist of being in Florence."<sup>109</sup>

Different characters are introduced to illustrate different viewpoints and behaviours, but most of the English tourists described in *A Room with a View* are more or less presented as

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<sup>108</sup> Lipska, A. "Othering the Mediterranean. E.M Forster's Italian Novels: a Levinasian Perspective" cit pp. 96-97.

<sup>109</sup> Schuller, M. *E.M Forster's A Room With a View: the Attitude of English People Abroad*. Cit, p. 4.

unpleasant people with old views, besides the Emersons. This is because that they do not fit into the Italian environment, due to their affected manners. By describing them, the author reveals much about English Edwardian mentality, and he is bitterly critical of these fellow countrymen, clearly taking the distance from them and siding with Lucy, George and his father.<sup>110</sup> It is curious to note, however, that Italian characters are presented rapidly and with little to no depth, to the point of not even having a name, or are given a mythologic pseudonym like Phaeton and Persephone.

Tourists often did not fit into the Italian ways, as Italians led a life that was not as repressed by social rules as English social life and this is vividly described by an everyday scene in Florence: “An electric tram came rushing underneath the window. [...] Children tried to hang on behind, and the conductor, with no malice, spat in their faces to make them let go”.<sup>(35)</sup> The English, often characterized by their inability to express their true feelings were not in the right state of mind to experience a Mediterranean country like Italy in its entirety, Italians were known for their impulsiveness and strong emotionality, but the majority English tourists did not recognize this English stiff and formal behavior as a defect. On the contrary they put special emphasis on the maintenance of their habits and the use of their rigid middle-class conventions, especially when their fellow countrymen were abroad. They were anxious to serve as advertisements for their national virtues and to demonstrate their superiority, to the natives.<sup>111</sup>

In *Notes on the English Character*, Forster writes specifically about the slowness of feeling as an English characteristic: he states that the English are always essentially middle class, they are formed by an education system that produces

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

<sup>111</sup> Schuller, M. *E.M Forster's A Room With a View: the Attitude of English People Abroad*. Cit, p.4

“Well developed bodies, fairly undeveloped minds and undeveloped hearts [...] largely responsible for the difficulties of Englishman abroad. An undeveloped heart, not a cold one.”<sup>112</sup>

This is the crucial point, it is important to understand that Forster wanted to show a critical view, but he also recognized that the English could feel, but they never let themselves go completely, because they were too afraid to do so. The only scene in which some of the characters let themselves go is the scene at the Sacred Lake where Mr. Beebe, Freddy and George have a bath. Forster describes the natural setting in detail, like “they only heard the fair wind blowing the bracken and the trees” (118). The three men stripped naked and started to play in the pond and outside it, even kicking their clothes as if they were a ball. George is shameless even if he is naked and he says hello to Lucy when she walks through the area with her mother and Cecil.

George’s happy disposition is in harmony with the place where he is. There is no contrast between his naked body and the plants, the pine-wood, the lake; he appears to be one with nature and he has finally reached awareness and maturity. He seems to accept his body as well as his feelings. It is as if he was in the “Garden of Eden” (117). Forster describes George’s wet hair, his muscles and his Michelangiolesque appearance, he looks very attractive, so the reader can infer his appreciation: we know that Forster was romantically attracted to men, so he exalts male bodies.

Mr. Emerson, who is a freethinker, believes that people had to discover nature and simplicity because if people can have a sincere contact with nature, they can better accept their own bodies but also their own desires, wishes and consciousness.

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<sup>112</sup> Forster, E.M “Notes on the English Character” in *Abinger Harvest and England’s Pleasant Land* (1926), London: Andre Deutsch. Cit p. 3.

Forster shows how the English female protagonist grows up and reaches maturity and to the full understanding of herself and the modern role of women, she understands they can have their own thoughts and they are entitled to intellectual freedom, just as men are, with the help of Italy in a process which reminds of Henry James' protagonists and his "international theme" of the encounter between America and Europe. Both writers have in common the fact that their protagonists's visit to Italy is a life-changing experience. Some of them for the negative, because they are unable to adapt to their new situations, so they die unhappy (Lilia in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *Daisy Miller* and *Roderick Hudson*). In in the case of Lucy, on the contrary, it is a change for the better. Forster chose a small Italian town called Monteriano in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and Florence for *A Room With a View* as a setting, whereas James always situated the plot of his books into well-known Italian cities like Rome as in *Daisy Miller* and Venice in *The Wings of the Dove*.

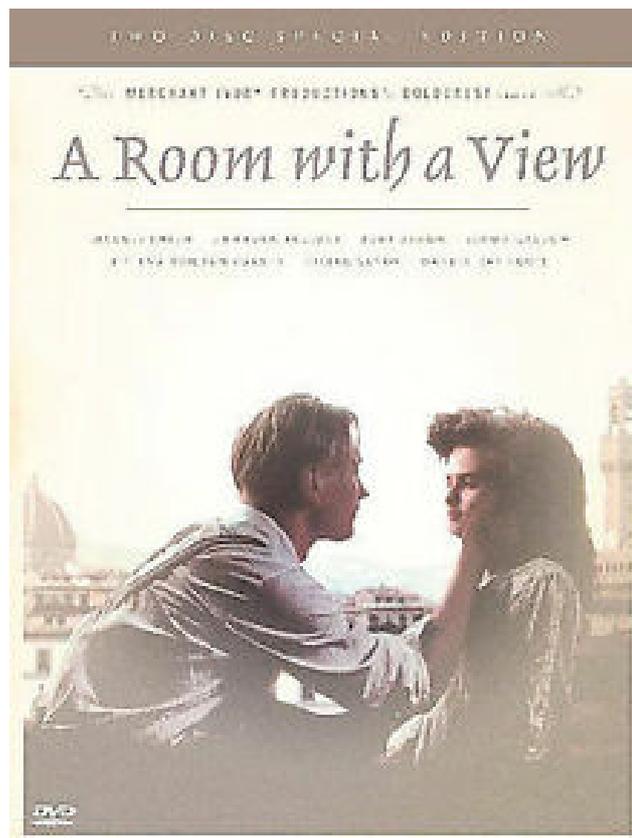
The beauty of the Italian landscape and architecture is portrayed by both authors, Dante Alighieri and Renaissance history are often mentioned throughout their novels. Forster used Italy to ironise about the English society of his time and its weaknesses and in this perspective I found a change of style between the first part of *A Room With a View* and the second, set in England, decidedly more mocking in tone and sometimes funny, as the scene in chapter 15 where Cecil insists reading a book while the other characters are trying to play tennis. Italy represents, in Jamesean and Forsterian novels a means of acquiring experience of the world and new views. However, Italy is portrayed as a country with different habits from America and Great Britain, but James does not use as strong a criticism as Forster.

A predominant characteristic of the Italian characters is that they marry for money (Gino in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Amerigo in *The Golden Bowl*).

Finally, Forster uses Italian words and sentences from time to time, in order to create a more credibly Italian atmosphere, while Henry James prefers to use more frequently French than Italian to show some characters' effort to look refined, for which French in his view could be more suitable than Italian.

## CHAPTER THREE: FILM ADAPTATIONS

### 3.1 Merchant-Ivory's *A Room With a View* (1985)



In the course of the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century cinema industry saw the rise of what Claire Monk calls “A loose string of popular costume films set in Britain's-and more usually England's recent past”<sup>113</sup>, usually adapted from popular novels. In particular, five Forster’s novels have been adapted for the big screen, *A Passage to India* (1984), *A Room With a View*

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<sup>113</sup> Monk, Claire. “The British 'Heritage Film' and Its Critics.” *Critical Survey*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1995), cit, p. 116. Available on [www.jstor.org/stable/41555905](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41555905).

(1985), *Maurice* (1987), *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1991) and *Howard's End* (1992).

Those film adaptation were object of great debate, above all for the exploitation of the English cultural heritage, to the point of being mockingly labelled “heritage movies”, with an “often retrograde or nostalgic view of British culture and politics.”<sup>114</sup> They are associated to the period in which they were shot, and to Margaret Thatcher's restructuring of the nation and conservative policies. As Cairns Craig maintains: “The dominance and success of the heritage films in the past ten years is symptomatic of the crisis of identity through which Britain passed during the Thatcher's years.”<sup>115</sup> This period was famous for polarising responses in the seventh art: from one side a number of modernist films that unveil the ceremonial trappings of British heritage in the style of Derek Jarman and on the opposite side those celebratory costume dramas.<sup>116</sup>

Despite the popularity of the anti-heritage critics, surprisingly *A Room With a View* was an incredible success in the USA at the box office and has become an agreed international colossal. As a side note, it has to be noted that Forster's novel were never adapted to the screen while the author was still alive, because of his personal resistance to their filming, which is the reason why the first adaptation came ten years after his death.

The most prominent, successful and famous of them were those made by the producer-director team James Ivory and Ismail Merchant: *Maurice*, *Howard's End* and *A Room With a View*. Ivory was born in Berkeley, USA, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1928. He studied cinema at the University of Southern California where he graduated in 1957. In 1961 he founded the Merchan-Ivory Production, working together with Ismail Merchant, with whom he entertained a lifelong relationship, which ended in 2005 with the death of the latter. The pair

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<sup>114</sup>Landy, Marcia. “Filmed Forster” in *The Cambridge Companion to E.M Forster* (2007), cit, p. 235.

<sup>115</sup>Craig, Cairns “Rooms Without a View” in *Sight and Sound* (1991), cit, p. 10

<sup>116</sup>M. Landy. “Filmed Forster” cit, p. 236.

also started in 1963 a thirty-year collaboration with the English screenwriter Ruth Praver Jhabvala, who died in 2013. By the trio's account, the script of *A Room With a View* was a hybrid of an earlier script she had written and that Ivory rejected, and a second script written by Ivory.<sup>117</sup>

The cast for this adaptation is certainly made up of the most famous English actors of the time, and of the present and it runs as follows:

Charlotte Bartlett: Maggie Smith.  
Lucy Honeychurch: Helena Bonham Carter.  
Mr. Emerson: Denholm Elliott  
George Emerson: Julian Sands  
Cecil Vyse: Daniel Day Lewis  
Rev. Beebe: Simon Callow  
Rev. Eager: Patrick Godfrey  
Eleanor Lavish: Judi Dench  
Miss Alans: Fabia Drake and Joan Henley  
Freddy Honeychurch: Rupert Graves

With a budget of 3 million dollars, the film was, as I said, a success, gaining 34 million dollars at the box office in the US and Canada, over 60 million worldwide<sup>118</sup> and numerous awards: three Oscars out of eight nominations, for the Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Costumes and Best Art Direction. Ivory also won a BAFTA Award for Best Film, Maggie Smith and Judi Dench won one too for Best Actress. Brian Ackland-Snow won Best Production Design and finally Jenny Beavan was awarded for Best Costume Design. Maggie Smith was awarded also a Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actress. Among many other prizes, *A Room With a View* won the Donatello Prize in Italy for Best Foreign Language Picture and Best Director.<sup>119</sup> Despite the Edwardian setting, as June Perry Levine points out, the story clearly appealed much to the contemporary watcher as well as the contemporary

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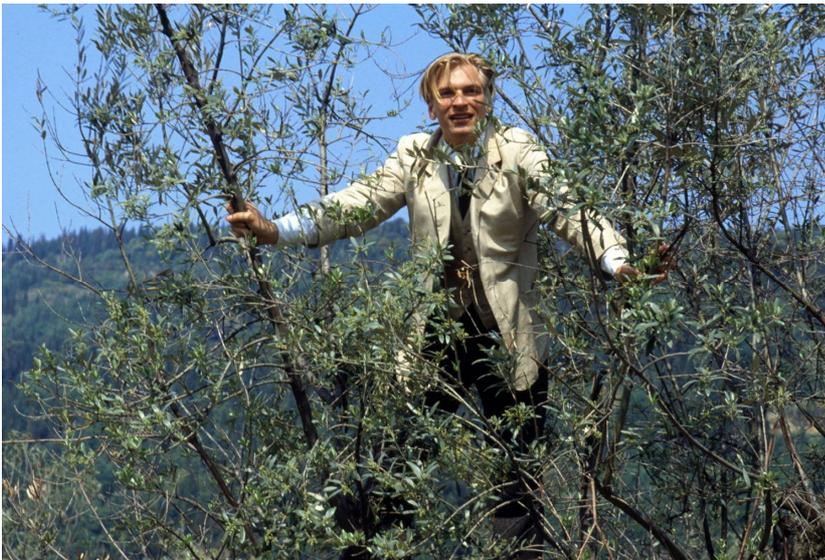
<sup>117</sup> C. Monk, "The British 'Heritage Film' and Its Critics."Cit, p. 119.

<sup>118</sup> Emmet Long, Robert The Films of Merchant-Ivory (1997) New York: Harry N.Abrams Publishers, cit, p. 145

<sup>119</sup>[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091867/awards?ref\\_=tt\\_ql\\_op\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091867/awards?ref_=tt_ql_op_1)

reader.<sup>120</sup>

The film length is of one hour and fifty-seven minutes and, passing on to the cinematographic techniques, the first thing to notice is the use of the time made by the director: the time of the novel cannot forcefully correspond to the time of the movie. As Elena Raicu comments: “ various episodes are combined in order to condense the complex action into fewer scenes.”<sup>121</sup> For instance, at the beginning of the film, Lucy meets the Emersons at Santa Croce (it is Charlotte and not Lucy who follows Miss Lavish with a Baedeker in her hands) and immediately after she is in the Piazza della Signoria to witness the murder, in the exact same day. Another example is the omission of chapter 5, “Possibility of a pleasant outing”.



Some scenes, on the contrary, which are not present in the novel, have been functionally added. In Fiesole George is seen up a tree where he shouts the words: “Beauty, espoir, liberty, trust, joy, love”

(31:58-32:41) and immediately after he falls to the ground, in a “mock heroic”<sup>122</sup> tone, very different from the novel, in which George appears to be never the object of ridicule. Another added sequence shows, at the end of the film, another young woman chaperon ed by another

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<sup>120</sup> Levine, June Perry. “Two Rooms with a View: An Inquiry into Film Adaptation” in *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1989), Cit, p. 1. Available on [www.jstor.org/stable/24780527](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24780527).

<sup>121</sup> R. Elena. “A Room with Two Views: An Insight into the 1985 and 2007 Film Adaptations of E.M Forster’s Novel.”

<sup>122</sup> J.P. Levine. “Two Rooms with a View: An Inquiry into Film Adaptation.” Cit, p. 79

older woman in the pensione Bertolini, complaining at the reception because they were not given rooms with views, closing an imaginary circle began with Lucy and Miss Bartlett.

Another scene, which is not present in the novel shows Charlotte lying on her bed with her hair loose and wearing her night-gown with a satisfied look on her face. She is reading a letter from Lucy with the technique of the voice-over, which is employed three times, always while reading letters. Lucy tells her that she is in Florence and happy with George, “dramatizing George’s theory that Charlotte had always hoped for their marriage”<sup>123</sup> and showing the romantic side of the stiff Miss Bartlett who is on the side of her cousin at last.

This secret romanticism is also displayed in another added scene, where Charlotte is having a conversation with Eleanor Lavish about an English woman who went to Italy and married a man that was ten years younger in the town of Monteriano, a clear reference and homage to *Where Angels Fear to Tread*.

The script of the film *A Room With a View* follows closely the novel, the dialogue is well-written and the tone of the novel is maintained. As Levine suggests, the added “lines are so true to character and so familiarly Forsterian that one is surprised not to find them in the novel”<sup>124</sup> and the ironic and romantic elements remain always well-balanced. During the most crucial dialogues, Ivory uses the technique of directing the camera to the speaker and stopping the movement to stress the importance of the moments the spectators are witnessing. The film adopts “ornate mock-Victorian chapter titles from the novel to structure its own chapters”<sup>125</sup>. Although those headings are not present throughout the movie, they mark the most important moments: the final chapters from 16 to 19, in which the plot arrives at its dénouement, are all presented in the film with the aforementioned headings. Moreover, there are no decorative

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, p.76.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, p.71.

<sup>125</sup> M. Landy. “Filmed Forster” cit, p. 243.

titles with the adjective medieval included. The director probably thought that this adjective, present in the title of chapter 8 and 20 could be misunderstood by those members of the audience who did not know the book and the real meaning of this concept. There is a long digression of the narrator, speaking about the medieval lady, in chapter 4; the explanation of the concept is complex and quite philosophical, too philosophical for a mainstream movie.

The scenes are shot with an attention to the symmetry and meaning of the elements in the camera, as well as with extraordinary aesthetic elegance. For instance, during the scene in which Lucy and George are speaking beside the Arno river, the actors



speak and move within a symmetrical composition: Helena Bonham Carter and Julian Sands are framed inside two big pillars and an arch “intimating the tone of the narrator comment by camera work.”<sup>126</sup> The scene of the murder in Piazza della Signoria is foretold with a five-shot montage that includes menacing elements such as a low-angle of Cellini’s *Perseus Holding Medusa’s Head* and a close-up of the dagger in the hand of the murderer coupled with another close-up of the teeth of a statuary dog.

The original music score, composed by Richard Robbins, follows the movements of the characters and suits the atmosphere, scene by scene. For example, in the murder scene the dreadful effect is reached with the use of chord instruments that enhance the suspense, while

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<sup>126</sup> J.P. Levine. “Two Rooms with a View: An Inquiry into Film Adaptation.” Cit, p. 72.

the second kiss between the protagonists is accompanied by a “jaunty Habanera.”<sup>127</sup>By the way, the most important sections of the narrative are accompanied by Puccini’s music: the film opens with the aria “O Mio Babbino Caro” from *Gianni Schicchi* and this piece of music returns again at the end, while Charlotte is reading Lucy’s letter from Florence. For the first kiss in Fiesole, which takes place in a wheat field studded with poppies, another Puccini aria has been chosen, which is “Chi il Bel Sogno di Doretta” from *La Rondine*. Both arias are sung by New Zealand opera singer Kiri Te Kanawa with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

The other original pieces composed for the film are:

The Pensione Bertolini  
Lucy, Charlotte And Miss Lavish See The City  
In The Piazza Signoria  
The Embankment  
Phaeton And Persephone  
The Storm  
Home, And The Betrothal  
The Sacred Lake  
The Alan Sisters  
In The National Gallery  
Windy Corner  
Habanera  
The Broken Engagement  
Return To Florence  
End Titles

The casting seems particularly apt, the actors and their performances are close to what one can imagine during the reading of Forster’s novel and they are very attentive to speak with the received pronunciation.<sup>128</sup> Critic Vincent Canby wrote about Helena Bonham Carter that she “gives a remarkably complex performance of a young woman who is simultaneously reasonable and romantic, generous and selfish, and timid right up to the point where she takes

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p.74.

<sup>128</sup> M. Landy. “Filmed Forster” cit, p. 245.

a heedless plunge into the unknown.”<sup>129</sup> Her Lucy results innocent and childish (being a young woman of 19 herself): when she is upset, she puts on a pouty mouth and frowned look; but she appears also light-hearted and playful, only occasionally matronly.<sup>130</sup>Her physical



appearance corresponds enough to the description made of her by Forster in chapter 3 “A young lady with a quantity of dark hair and a pale, undeveloped face” (29), especially for Bonham Carter’s flowing curls.

Playing the piano is not only Lucy’s main hobby, but also a real passion and there are four scenes in the movie where this aspect can be seen. In Florence she plays the piano on a rainy afternoon, she is wearing a white dress and on the right Mr. Beebe is sitting in half-darkness, listening to her playing Beethoven. She looks fully involved in the music and in her feelings. Also Forster says that: “Lucy, who found daily life rather chaotic, entered a more solid world when she opened the piano. It symbolizes Lucy’s passion, feelings and hidden romantic soul. Every time she is annoyed, angry or frustrated, she resorts to her music to fully express herself freely. A completely different scene is the second, where she is playing at Cecil’s house in London, while many guests are listening to her performance. She is wearing a much more formal and decorated dress, since she is playing the role of Cecil’s respectable betrothed. She looks like the lady he wants her to be and reminds of James’ Isabel Archer of *The Portrait of a Lady* after she marries Osmond. Here too, she is playing Beethoven. It is noteworthy that Helena Bonham Carter could not play the piano, but was coached to play it convincingly on purpose, for the film.

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<sup>129</sup> Canby, Vincent. “The Screen, Room With a View” in *The New York Times* (7 March 1986). Available on <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/07/movies/the-screen-room-with-a-view.html>.

<sup>130</sup> R. Elena. “A Room with Two Views: An Insight into the 1985 and 2007 Film Adaptations of E.M Forster’s Novel.”

There is a third scene which does not correspond to any episode in the novel. Lucy and Freddy are both sitting at the piano in Windy Corner, their mother and Cecil are in the room and Mrs. Honeychurch has a letter by Charlotte in her hands. They start playing together, but then Lucy pays attention to her mother's words about Miss Bartlett's problem with the boiler. Freddy goes on playing and singing by himself a funny song. Cecil looks annoyed and goes out of the room. Later Lucy justifies him, saying that he has a musical personality, so he cannot like silly songs. The last scene shows Lucy playing the piano at Windy Corner. The camera focuses on the music sheets and the metronome, which also makes a regular sound for a while. She plays and sings a song that sounds like a Renaissance tune. Mr. Beebe is in the same room with Miss Alans' letters informing about their plan to go to Greece.

Ivory probably had two different aims in using four scenes like these. When Lucy plays in Florence the director zooms on her hands and her countenance, to communicate the strict link music has with her interior world. In the following scenes, which are set in England, Ivory maybe wanted to highlight the way of life of the upper-middle class. When she plays at the Vyses' house her performance is quite formal and the camera focuses on Cecil and her mother's satisfied expressions, because they like showing Lucy's ability and elegance to their friends. Convention and decorum prevail. On the contrary, the last two scenes are much more spontaneous. Lucy gradually learns to be true to herself, free and to use music more as an enjoyment and less to relieve stress.



Daniel Day Lewis' Cecil conveys perfectly the idea of the uptight and sexually repressed Edwardian dandy, giving also insights on his personality and idiosyncrasies with his way of playing the part and his gestures: for example, in the scene of the almost ridiculous kiss between him and Lucy, the spectator can see him preoccupied with his glasses getting stuck. Moreover, his embarrassment can be seen also in the famous scene of the bath at the Sacred Lake, one of the few displaying male nudity in the 1980s. The stark contrast between the nudity of the Reverend, Freddy and George and the perfectly clothed Cecil perfectly exemplifies his character both in the novel and in the movie.

Merchant-Ivory's film emphasizes the character of George, "it gives George more time on the camera, it emphasizes his free spirit, his affection for his father, and even his love for Lucy and the effect that it has on him."<sup>131</sup> He is more present on the screen than he is in the novel and Julian Sands' performance appears fitting in the author's description of him as the David of Michelangelo, since he is very handsome and charming. The physical attraction



between him and Lucy, and physicality in general is more present in the film than in the novel. This version of the film, as well as Renton's 2007 adaptation, interprets the kiss in Fiesole as a passionate kiss on the lips, even if Forster, in various occasion, makes the reader understand it was

a more a chaste kiss on Lucy's cheek, as in chapter 11, 13 and 15. In the film by Renton Lucy goes further, she declares she even enjoyed it, exclaiming: "Insult me? Is that what he did? Actually, I rather enjoyed it" (37:00-37:09). In the lake scene she appears almost flirty when she tells her fiancé: "We used to swim here with nothing on" (48:11-48:13).

As Levine points out, the character of Mr. Beebe appears greatly simplified in the film adaptation: where in the novel he turns inexplicably cynical after the engagement of Lucy and George, in the movie his personality is always quite jovial, without a trace of the shadowy vibe in the ending, and he plays no part in the plot's final resolution.<sup>132</sup> Miss Bartlett, on the other end, is analysed more carefully in the film. Apart from the scene I mentioned above, where Charlotte reads the letter, the script makes an important change in her favour: Lucy in chapter 19 enters the parsonage and has a long dialogue with Mr. Emerson who makes her understand she has to make the right choice for herself, In the film there is a conversation between Miss Bartlett and Mr. Emerson before Lucy's arrival where she tells him about the broken engagement before Lucy's arrival. When Lucy comes out to enter the carriage where her mother and Charlotte are waiting for her, she exclaims that Lucy has something to tell, in a way that she seems almost of complicity. On the contrary Charlotte does not say anything in the novel.

All the clothes and the hairstyles of the actors are a window to their character's personality and status. As Elena Raicu points out:

"Smart, elegant, proper [...]indicating the importance of decorum and also stressing the difference of class (see Cecil and the Emersons at the national gallery) and those between official and high society moments (the engagement party or the dinner party at the Vyses) and leisure activities (playing tennis), which require comfortable clothes and between day activities and diner time."<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> J.P. Levine. "Two Rooms with a View: An Inquiry into Film Adaptation." Cit, p. 74.

<sup>133</sup> R. Elena. "A Room with Two Views: An Insight into the 1985 and 2007 Film Adaptations of E.M Forster's Novel."

Moreover, the film, like the novel employs an ample range of references to painting, sculpture and architecture. *A Room With a View* displays many Italian and English landscapes as well as a selection of historical and architectural sites for its setting,



shot in long and medium distance.<sup>134</sup> Besides Piazza della Signoria, the Bertolini, Santa Croce, Summer Street and Windy Corner, there are many aerial views of the Arno and of the buildings on the Lungarno. Florence is seen in the distance from the hills with Brunelleschi's Dome. Ivory offers close-ups of Ponte Vecchio, the monuments of Duke Ferdinand I, Dante Alighieri, the Bardi Chapel the Fountain of Neptune and Paolo Uccello's *Battaglia di San Romano*. He uses the Basilica Santissima Annunziata and the



Ospedale degli Innocenti as background, the whole “backed by Robbins’ original music [...]creating a true Italian atmosphere.”<sup>135</sup>As Marcia Landy comments: “A moving camera situates the characters in relation to interior landscapes, giving the scenes the quality of a painting tableau, grouping characters in various poses”<sup>136</sup> in highly saturated colours.

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<sup>134</sup> M. Landy. “Filmed Forster” cit, p. 244.

<sup>135</sup> R. Elena. “A Room with Two Views: An Insight into the 1985 and 2007 Film Adaptations of E.M Forster’s Novel.”

<sup>136</sup> M. Landy. “Filmed Forster” cit, p. 244.

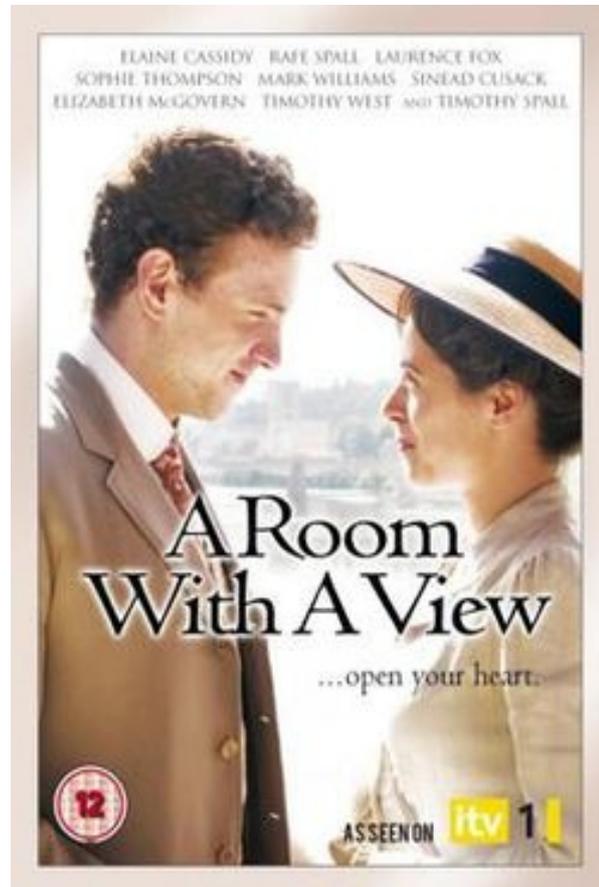
As for the real settings, Villa di Maiano in Fiesole has been used to shoot the scenes at the pensione Bertolini, Windy Corner is the private home of the film critic John Pym, and it is situated in Foxwold, Pipers Lane, west of Sevenoaks, Kent. The Sacred Lake was created in the grounds here. Lucy's engagement party was filmed in Emmetts Garden, a couple of miles from Brasted, again in Kent. Summer Street turns out to be Chiddingstone, a street of Tudor houses off the Edenbridge-Tonbridge road at Bough Beech, about 10 miles from Sevenoaks. Reverend Beebe's church, St Mary's, is opposite those houses. The sitting room, where Mr Emerson persuades Lucy to tell the truth about her feelings is a room in St Mary's rectory. The home of Cecil, finally, is the Linley Sambourne House, 18 Stafford Terrace, London.<sup>137</sup>



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<sup>137</sup> <https://www.movie-locations.com/movies/r/Room-With-A-View.php>.

**3.2 The TV adaptation of A Room With a View (2007) in relation to Merchant-Ivory's film.**



This second British adaptation of Forster's novel is much less famous and celebrated than its 1985 counterpart. In 2007 Nicholas Renton directed it as a television production, teaming up with Welsh screenwriter Andrew Davis, who is known for writing the scripts of the cinema adaptation of classical English novels, including *Middlemarch* by George Eliot or *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen, all for the TV.

With a running time of 93 minutes, 25 minutes shorter than Ivory's movie, and produced by IWC media, it was broadcast for the first time on the British channel ITV on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2007. Curiously featuring a real-life father and son for the roles of Mr.Emerson and George, the cast comprehends:

Lucy Honeychurch: Elaine Cassidy  
George Emerson: Rafe Spall  
Cecil Vyse: Laurence Fox  
Mr Emerson: Timothy Spall  
Mr Eager: Timothy West  
Miss Lavish: Sinéad Cusack  
Mrs Honeychurch: Elizabeth McGovern  
Mr Beebe: Mark Williams  
Charlotte Bartlett: Sophie Thompson  
Freddy Honeychurch: Tom Stewart

The director was nominated for Panavision Spirit Award for Independent Cinema at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival in 2008.<sup>138</sup> This adaptation of the film is contemporary and up-to-date : Laura Mackie, ITV director, commented that this adaptation "Captures the spirit of Forster's most memorable novel, but delivers it in a fresh, engaging way for a



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<sup>138</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1025103/awards?ref\\_=tt\\_awd](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1025103/awards?ref_=tt_awd).

modern audience."<sup>139</sup>

The first sensible difference is in the timing of the story; the events are narrated in flashbacks in the post World War I period, as Lucy returns to Florence ten years after her first visit. Forster's original story is not clearly dated, but it was presumably contemporary to its date of issue, in 1908. Renton's film dates the present in 1922 and the past recalled by Lucy ten years before, in 1912. This adaptation centers mainly on the protagonist, who assumes here,



as Elena Raicu points out “The role of a focaliser”.<sup>140</sup> In fact, all the story is presented only through Lucy's flashbacks, so that her point of view is always the prevailing and dominant one. The film wants to emphasize Lucy's interior liberation and her becoming aware of her own sexuality; her recollections take place when she has already experienced marriage and the loss of her husband George. Indeed, Nicholas Renton added many new scenes, connected with his focus on Lucy's sexual maturity. The first takes place in the



Bertolini's: George gets out of the bathroom wearing only a towel around his hips, Lucy is

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<sup>139</sup> Hemley, Matthew “Timothy Spall and son to star in Forster classic for ITV” in *The Stage* (30 May 2007). Available on <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/newsstory.php/17009/timothy-spall-and-son-to-star-in-forster/>.

<sup>140</sup> R. Elena. “A Room with Two Views: An Insight into the 1985 and 2007 Film Adaptations of E.M Forster's Novel.”

next to him and their sensual kiss is interrupted by the arrival of Charlotte. Also, the scene at the lake shows the men's naked bodies very openly, even more openly than Ivory's version. Another very explicit sex scene takes place at the pensione Bertolini, after the marriage of Lucy and George, while this is absent in both the novel and Ivory's version. One more shocking sequence takes place near the end: George's dead body on the battlefield during the First World War shows that Andrew Davis meant an addition to the historical setting and also to the dramatic effect of the movie.

Raicu points out that George and Lucy's happy marriage lasted 50 years, according to Forster's short sequel *A View Without a Room* (1958). According to the same sequel, George was a fervent objector of the war.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, Nicholas Renton did not accept



Forster's suggestion. Another added scene features Lucy going back to Florence and meeting the coach driver she had met ten years before. He speaks a much better English now, and they go to Fiesole's open field together, where they have a picnic and, in the final scene, the camera focuses on them holding hands. This shot insinuates a future love story between the two.

I think that this scene suggests a different Lucy from the one Forster created, because she seems ready to start a relationship with a man of a lower class, even inferior than George's, whose preoccupation about his status is even more explicit in this adaptation. He probably represents Italian seductive vitality, which charms Lucy. Which future can this relationship

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

have? In my opinion, Lucy's sentimental involvement is absent, in favour of a more erotic desire.

Raicu maintains that Elaine Cassidy's performance seems less spontaneous and more formal than Bonham Carter's one because she was 27 when the film was shot, while Bonham Carter was only 19. Probably Forster had a very young lady in his mind when he wrote the novel, as a Bildungsroman<sup>142</sup> so the performance of the latter looks more like the idea the reader has of Lucy Honeychurch.

Renton also adds a few scenes that take place in Rome, in the Vyses' house and garden. There is even a pleasant view of Saint Peter's Dome that Cecil and Lucy see through the keyhole at the Villa del Priorato dei Cavalieri di Malta on the Aventine Hill. Forster only says



that Lucy and Charlotte went to Rome, but none of his scenes is actually set there.

George too is a different character in Rafe Spall's performance: in my opinion he lacks Julian Sands' charm, delicacy and is a stronger and more sensual man. The other characters in this adaptation are almost presented as having only one dimension, without much psychological insight: "Charlotte is plaintive and almost nothing more, Mr. Emerson is outspoken but lacks greatly in kindness [...] Freddy is an idler."<sup>143</sup> Some characters have been abolished like Sir Harry, the owner of Cissie Villa and Minnie, Mr. Beebe's niece. She is

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

present and looks very nice in Ivory's film, especially when playing tennis in the Honeychurch's garden.

The filming locations chosen by the director are Florence, Holmbury St. Mary in Surrey to film the scenes at the Emerson's cottage and Lascombe House, Puttenham, Surrey to film Windy Corner.<sup>144</sup> In my opinion, the outdoor scenes in England are much less stressed than in



Ivory's movie, because what matters to Renton is Lucy's interior world. On the contrary, the camera focuses on many statues in Florence, especially the *David* by Michelangelo, to show that Lucy is getting into contact with male nudity and her reactions to it. For example, when she approaches the stall where she buys some artistic photos, she

has a look at a photo of this statue, but then she puts it back on the stall and chooses others that the audience do not see. In Forster's novel, on the contrary, Lucy buys her photos at



Alinari's shop, which is still today a famous location where art photos are sold.

The atmosphere of Renton's movie is also given by the music played by Lucy at the piano. The scenes in which she plays are quite long and show the

importance that music has for her. An expression of her interior world and, in my opinion, as I

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<sup>144</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1025103/locations?ref\\_=tt\\_dt\\_dt](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1025103/locations?ref_=tt_dt_dt).

said, a way to relieve herself of her anxiety and stress. The soundtrack by Gabriel Yared contributes to rendering the same atmosphere. In the end of the film, when George's corpse is on the battlefield the sound of bombs and the war can be heard in the background to amplify the dramatic effect.

Renton used the camera to stress his interest in Lucy's interior world and many close-ups on her face contribute to this view. I think the overall effect is less beautiful from the aesthetic point of view than Ivory's movie because the costumes, the furniture and the places where the action happens are far less attractive, elegant and accurate.

The theme of decorum and social appropriateness is very important in Forster's novel and well developed in Ivory's film. On the contrary it is in the background of Renton's adaptation, because what matters to him is Lucy herself and less a criticism of social, 'medieval' behaviour.<sup>145</sup> That is why Cecil, represented by Laurence Fox, looks more like a dandy than the upper-class stiff gentleman represented by Daniel Day Lewis, who seems almost to mock his own character, which Fox does not do. Irony and the mocking tone lack in Renton's movie and therefore it is less similar to Forster's tone, especially in the second part of his novel where he sets the events in England whose rigid manners and Edwardian propriety he wanted to criticise.

It is not superficial to understand the relation between a movie and its audience, because whenever a director makes a film, he has his audience in mind. Ivory made a very elegant film, well-acted and faithful to the novel, within the stream of a genre that was greatly appreciated by the public. Moreover, his film was greatly awarded by film critics and is still celebrated. Renton's TV version was addressed to a different public, with different tastes. The

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<sup>145</sup> R. Elena. "A Room with Two Views: An Insight into the 1985 and 2007 Film Adaptations of E.M Forster's Novel."

TV viewers of 2007 were of course not the same as Ivory's 1985 cinema audience, but especially Renton's filming technique and Davis' screenplay were meant to satisfy television spectators and had fewer ambitions from the artistic point of view. TV viewers usually like stronger emotions, more dramatic or sensual effects in a shorter time. So, of course, the aesthetical painting-like accuracy of Ivory's film cannot be present in a TV product in the same way.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is necessary to point out the great significance of this novel by Forster highlighting its importance when inscribed in its contemporary time and in future literature. I have chosen to analyse this novel since it is about female emancipation, a subject which is greatly debated also today, as small or great stereotypes and injustices still cross the path of the female sex. First of all, *A Room With a View* is the story of emancipation from Edwardian prescribed models of femininity, represented by Charlotte and by Mrs. Honeychurch, Lucy's mother.

The protagonist's struggle is that of freeing herself from such constraints, this inherited charge, and she suffers to do so because she probably feels wrong, as all young people when they act different from their parents and relatives and feel guilty about it. She finds it difficult to accept her new identity of a woman who lives and acts according to her desires, emotions and view of the world. It is a social as well as an emotional emancipation, since Lucy decides to marry a man not only unconventional, but also of an inferior social extraction, and this side is present both in Ivory's film and in Forster; on the other end Renton focuses also on the sexual emancipation.

It is a travel to Italy, but most of all in the interiority of Lucy, who, helped by the beauties of Italy and the spontaneity of George, finds the courage to get out of her 'muddle'. Forster "Appreciates the opportunities that travel provides for new kinds and dimensions of contact among English travellers of different classes. He also values the transformative potentialities of cross-class, cross-cultural contacts between 'natives' and English men and women."<sup>146</sup>

As I said, Italy plays a very important role on the psyche of Forster's characters. *A Room*

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<sup>146</sup> Ardis, Ann. "Hellenism and the Lure of Italy" in *The Cambridge Companion to E.M Forster*. Cit. p. 6. 84

*with a View* makes use of Italian settings and has roots in Forster's life experiences. The long visit to Italy which Forster and his mother paid in 1901 was the most productive journey of his life, his early stories and two of his first three novels came from this trip. More importantly, though, are the qualities of tone, characterization and theme, which are almost shared with *Where Angels Fear to Tread*: "Both take place in England and Italy and emphasize the effects on English travelers of the Italian experience; their chief concern is with upper middleclass Englishmen and women"<sup>147</sup>. Forster himself said that his encounter with Italy was truly inspiring and fueling for his creative powers. Page comments:

"What he had been freed from -in spirit if not in body- were the constraints and inhibitions imposed by English middleclass society, with its indifference to art, its suspicion of pleasures, its cramping notions of 'good form' and its rigid class barriers; what Cambridge had begun, Italy completed"<sup>148</sup>.

Aldrich analysed many important characters in English literature who toured Southern Europe and who were influenced by the Mediterranean area. Although there are several reasons for those visits such as to see classical ruins, art, experience an exotic land or simply escape from England, there was also a sexual purpose in those voyages suggesting that "Cultural interest and sexual longing went hand in hand, and in the Mediterranean the British could try to satisfy both appetites"<sup>149</sup>.

For Forster Italy was the land in which forbidden things became possible and the character

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<sup>147</sup> Lavin, Audrey. *Aspects of the novelist: E. M. Forster's pattern and rhythm*. (1995) New York: Peter Lang Publishing. Cit. p. 13.

<sup>148</sup> Page, Norman. *E.M. Forster* (1987). London: Macmillan. Cit. p. 18

<sup>149</sup> Aldrich, Robert. *The seduction of the Mediterranean: writing, art and homosexual fantasy* (1993) London: Routledge. Cit. p. 69

of Lucy, indeed, she finds in Italy both great art and sexual and emotional liberation. Italy stands definitely for passion against materialism and conventionality.

If not for sure a product of feminism or inscribed in the feminist movement, Forster's sensibility appears not in contrast with 20<sup>th</sup> century stream of writing that understands and validate female points of view and emphasize their needs and desire not to be treated as a mere angel of the house and breeder of children, but as thinking and feeling creatures with the same rights as men. Being part of the Bloomsbury group, Forster's works are inscribed in a tradition that criticized the Edwardian period in its social, political, artistic and sexual constrictions.

Forsterian influence still has traces nowadays, since his *Maurice* is one of the first novels which openly treats homosexual love, was a forerunner of gay and lesbian studies and a pillar of queer theory. Moreover, his most celebrated novel, *A Passage to India*, can perfectly be read in the light of later Orientalistic discourse in Edward Said's perspective of colonialism as affirmation of European identity and control over 'natives', in colonized territories. Forster is not only a writer of love stories; he also pays attention to foreign countries and classical cultures. He wrote of modernism, feminism, queer theory: to sum up, he was a prolific author whose life took almost one century and greatly influenced successive works.

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