The World of E. M. Forster – E. M. Forster and the World

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Edited by

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and Anna Kwiatkowska

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INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD OF E. M. FORSTER – E. M. FORSTER AND THE WORLD

Fifty years after the death of Edward Morgan Forster his position in English literature and culture hardly requires an introduction or justification. Although at the time of his death Forster risked forever disappearing under the unfashionable label of an Edwardian writer, within months a sizeable body of his previously unpublished works, including the novel *Maurice*, started to appear, revealing a dimension of which few had been aware before. The resulting rediscovery of Forster and his oeuvre has never ceased. Forster still plays an important part in English-language culture; he remains a constant source of inspiration for new generations of writers, composers, directors, and other artists who respond to his works. He is also an inspiration and a challenge for still new generations of scholars.

The present book offers a selection of studies on the presence and legacy of Forster in English literature and social history. The double title of the publication is meant to reflect the duality of its contents. Discussed here are not only Forster's own works, but also the position he as an author, his oeuvre, and the values he stands for occupy within British and world culture(s) of today. Consequently, the book is divided into two parts—the first part presents new scholarly approaches to Forster's own works, whereas the second deals with the literary and non-literary works either inspired by Forster or otherwise related to his literary texts.

The book offers a variety of new interpretations of a selection of well-known and culturally established works of the writer viewed from contemporary study perspectives. It demonstrates how Forster's novels, short stories, and non-fictional writings influence, affect and re-shape the literary works of contemporary writers. It is addressed to students and specialists in British modern and postmodern literature as well as Forster's readers and researchers interested in either expanding their knowledge of the author or exploring new approaches to and readings of Forster's works.

Part I starts with the chapter written by Francesca Pierini entitled "'Such is the Working of the Southern Mind'. A Postcolonial Reading of E. M.

Forster's Italian Narratives". It takes us to the early writings of Forster, the so-called "Italian novels". Pierini attempts to reconstruct Britain's complex and ambivalent relation to the European south, which she sees as crucial in the process of building a British national identity. In Chapter Two, "Opposed but Inevitable: E. M. Forster's Reaction Against and Acceptance of 'Cultural Selection' in *A Passage to India*", Tarik Ziyad Gulcu attempts to read the novel through the lens of "cultural selection"—an echo of Darwin's natural selection—which he presents against a much broader selection of the works of Forster's contemporaries. In turn, Sławomir Kozioł in his essay "'You mustn't say anything against the Machine'. Power and Resistance in E. M. Forster's Short Story 'The Machine Stops'" approaches probably the most famous of Forster's stories, using the concepts developed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault.

Part II opens with Mihaela Cel-Mare's chapter "(Re)visiting E. M. Forster's Adaptations. A Transmedial Perspective on *Where Angels Fear to Tread*", in which the author departs from an analysis of Forster's original texts. Consequently, Cel-Mare concentrates on the stage (the work of Elizabeth Hart from 1963) and screen (directed by Charles Sturridge in 1991) adaptations of Forster's first published novel. Next, Anna Kwiatkowska in her chapter "What's Behind Their Umbrellas? Symbolic Consideration of Umbrella in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* and Katherine Mansfield's Selected Short Stories" also broadens the scope of the discussed literary texts. Kwiatkowska seeks to disentangle the mystery and multiple symbolic meanings of this seemingly mundane object both in Forster's novel and short stories of Mansfield. Turning to Chapter Six, Paweł Wojtas in his essay "Crippling Commitments: Charting the E(s)th(et)ics of Disability in Forster and Coetzee" also compares Forster's works with those of another writer, namely the South African Nobel Prize winner J. M. Coetzee. In particular, Wojtas focuses on Forster's *The Longest Journey* (1907) and Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Slow Man* (2005), revealing the hidden meanings of the respective protagonists' physical disabilities. Part II closes with Barbara Puschmann-Nalenz's chapter "E. M. Forster's *The Longest Journey* and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child*: Continuation or Opposition?". The author seeks to reveal the connections between Forster's favourite work and Hollinghurst's 2011 novel in terms of themes, motifs, and issues considered.

The present book was first conceived during the conference dedicated to Forster, held at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn and organised with the assistance of the University of Warsaw and the University of Trier under the auspices of the International E. M. Forster Society. We are very happy to see it published now just in time to

commemorate both the fiftieth anniversary of Forster's death and the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Society. We would like to thank all those who helped us both with the organisation of the conference and with preparation of this volume for publication. We hope that the studies included in the volume will stimulate further discussion about and research in the works of E. M. Forster.

Krzysztof Fordoński
Anna Kwiatkowska

Olsztyn and Warszawa, November 2020

PART I

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION OF E. M. FOSTER'S NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

CHAPTER ONE

"SUCH IS THE WORKING OF THE SOUTHERN MIND": A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF E. M. FORSTER'S ITALIAN NARRATIVES[1]

FRANCESCA PIERINI

This chapter is a discussion of E. M. Forster's "Italian narratives", a literary corpus that reveals all the complexity, ambivalence, and richness of Britain's relation to the European south, a relation undoubtedly instrumental to the building of a British national identity. Forster's narratives present, through the interplay of their characters, a vast array of approaches and attitudes towards Italian culture. By making use of a long cultural and literary tradition that depicts Italy as holding a unique constellation of counter-values, characteristics perceived at the opposite spectrum of British ideals, Forster builds narratives dominated by a back-and-forth game of revulsion and attraction towards the Italian other characterized by powerful and contradicting patterns. In this paper, I will contend that Forster's Italian narratives represent a moment of importance in the elaboration and consolidation of dichotomizing discursive patterns that rely on an age-old taxonomy of places more or less "current", rational, archaic, timeless and magical.

Until recently, it was difficult to find postcolonial readings of Forster's Italian narratives.[2] While the reason for this is quite straight-forward from

[1] This article was originally published under the same tile, i.e. "Such is the Working of the Southern Mind: A Postcolonial Reading of E. M. Forster's Italian Narratives", in *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 16 (2017–2018): 27–54, and is reprinted with the kind permission of the editors of the journal.

[2] The short stories which may also be referred to as "Italian" include "Albergo Empedocle" (1903), "The Road from Colonus" (1904), "The Curate's Friend" (1907), "Other Kingdom" (1909), "The Story of the Siren" (1920) and "Ansell" (1975). The corpus of Forster's narratives set in Italy includes an unfinished novel, *Arctic*

the historical perspective (there has been a political and military British occupation of India, whereas there has never been one of Italy), it fails to take into account, in my opinion, a crucial point: the relation between literature, art, entertainment, and long-lasting colonial values. Although I certainly do not consider the political and military occupation of India to be an element of secondary importance, and I do not wish to propose an a-historical reading of Forster's work based on abstract notions of what may be and may not be ascribable to a "colonial approach", I do believe that it is important to continue to propose a reading of Forster's Italian works that puts them in relation to empire and the civilizing mission of the time.

Therefore, I have found extremely useful the works of those authors who have been the forerunners in offering a reading of Forster's Italian works contextualized within the climate of empire. I am referring to the works of Peter Morey, Lauren M. E. Goodlad, and Suzanne Roszak. Goodlad's remark that "while postcolonial scholars have understandably focused on *A Passage to India* (1924), few critics have read the 'Southern' qualities attributed to Italy in the first completed novel (*Where Angels Fear to Tread*) as anticipating the orientalist South Asia depicted in the last",[3] has encouraged me to follow this particular direction, and the work of Roszak, in particular, has corroborated many of my own thoughts on the author's appraisal of Italian culture. The following general statement by Morey, on the importance and function of colonial discourse analysis, has also inspired me to further pursue my own inquiry into this particular aspect:

> In place of the confident idea of literature and culture as an adjunct of moral education, postcolonialism's concern with representation and history has given us a more dispassionate critical perspective on the writings of empire, known as colonial discourse analysis, which seeks to trace the connection between individual texts and this wider corpus of colonialist values. Most postcolonial criticism of Forster attempts some form of colonial discourse analysis and usually centers on *A Passage to India*.[4]

In accordance with an analysis centred on colonial discourse, I believe that the focus of this inquiry should not be on the individual author and his

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Summer. On this work, see Raffaella Antinucci, "A Book on Chivalry: Questioning the Gentlemanly Code in Arctic Summer", *E. M. Forster Revisited*, a special issue of *Merope* XXIV, no. 61–62 (January–July 2015): 114–143.

[3] Lauren M. E. Goodlad, "Where Liberals Fear to Tread: E. M. Forster's Queer Internationalism and the Ethics of Care", *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 39, no. 3 (2006): 308.

[4] Peter Morey, "Postcolonial Forster", in *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster*, ed. David Bradshaw (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 256.

supposed endorsement of imperial values, but on the *episteme*[5] of the time, which sustained the possibility, from a British perspective, to subsume the rest of the world and to categorize it into a nomenclature of countries and places that were more or less rational, governable, civilized, vulgar, heroic, and more or less instrumental to the personal growth and spiritual development of the (British) outsider.[6]

In other words, I will not be studying or commenting on Forster's political standing, or on the literary value of Forster's short stories and novels, but on the ways in which these works have embodied a particular socio-historical mentality centred around representations of less civilized others. I believe that this mentality is made very much explicit in Forster's Italian works, and not only in *A Passage to India*, and that colonial discourse analysis is a fundamental tool to understand any attempt at "taming" the other by assigning it to a specific spatiotemporal location, whether this is done within a strictly colonial context or outside of it.

What makes this type of analysis particularly challenging, in this case, is that Forster employs a series of dichotomies and discursive clichés at the same time as he makes an original, fresh, and partially successful attempt at overcoming them. As such, he writes *of* the paradigm of representation of Italy, simultaneously *from* the paradigm, and *against* it. Forster has made an extremely creative and interesting use of an inherited taxonomy of cultural values reflected in the geo-political paradigm of narration that assigns to Italy the role of the pre-modern other of Northern Europe, and the task of returning to Northern Europeans some of the "good old traditional values" they have lost on their way towards modernity. And yet, I do not believe that Forster's work endorses a single or simplistic aesthetic or political project, nor do I think that it is in any way a transparent reflection of an abstract "colonial attitude" towards Italy. There is, however, at work in Forster's narratives, an "arrangement of values" that has endured shifts of political and cultural hegemony and is still observable in the contemporary archive.

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[5] The *episteme* is a historically distinguishable style of reasoning based on a historically situated a priori.

[6] If I do not enter the debate on whether Forster endorsed colonialist values or was a forerunner of a postcolonial kind of approach to the other, it is because I believe that he was writing within the rules of his own archive; he could satirize the social world he knew so well, and he could see, undoubtedly more clearly than many of his contemporaries, the hypocrisies, insincerities, and contradictions of this world, but he could not entirely repudiate the forces and constraints that made up his thought, his work, and were ultimately constitutive of his own subjectivity.

I will articulate my observations on this topic around the following conceptual nuclei I borrow from Roberto Dainotto's work *Europe (in Theory)* (2007). I see, in the pages of Forster, an elaboration of all three of Roberto Dainotto's "conceptual knots", pertaining to the elaboration of a "theory of Europe" during the modern centuries. These include depictions of the south of Europe in terms of climatology ("The Story of a Panic", 1911), of the white man's sense of guilt for the loss of traditional values that come with modernity, brought to the south by the northern nations ("The Eternal Moment", 1928), and of the Hegelian approach to the other, whose exotic characteristics have to be sensibly incorporated by the modern subject, in order for him or her to reconnect with a precious but potentially dangerous existential dimension (*A Room with a View*, 1908). Finally, perhaps to conclusively prove the elusiveness and subtlety of a great author, there is, in Forster, the failure of this Hegelian attempt, told in a sad tale of irreconcilable difference (*Where Angels Fear to Tread*, 1905).

Climatological Theories of the South: "The Story of a Panic"[7]

In this short story, we may discern the intricacies of English class dynamics, the problematic encounter with the natives, the self-depiction of the British as bearers of a superior culture, the supernatural potential of an authentic Italian experience which reveals itself to the few capable of understanding it and embracing it, but also the issues that I do not have, unfortunately, the possibility to discuss within the present context but are just as significant, such as the emergence of modern mass tourism and the rise of the art of photography. More relevant to these pages is the fact that in this work some of the tropes and dichotomizing constructions that are traditionally present in colonial relations can be recognized.

In accordance with climatologic theories, Italians are depicted as less rational and, in the unimaginative and self-righteous attitude of the bourgeois British traveller to Italy that Forster acutely depicts, they are naturally prone to rebellion, dishonesty and indolence, and better respond to authoritative commands. The South has made them cowardly, weak, and greedy, and the easiness with which they express affection through physicality is ascribed to the natural order of things, opposed to the cultural and the civilized.

[7] An earlier version of this discussion appeared in the article "Anglo-American Narratives of Italian Otherness and the Politics of Orientalizing Southern Europe", *Culture and Dialogue* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing) 3, no. 2 (2013): 53–69.

Dainotto explains that for Montesquieu, the fracture between the European nations of the north and those of the south was understandable in scientific terms. Montesquieu believed that people's capacity to taste and, consequently, to feel pleasure, was strictly related to climate. This characteristic was less developed in colder climates, where people had "little sensibility to pleasure; in temperate countries, one has more; in warm countries, their sensibility is exquisite".[8]

According to climatologic theories, a higher sensibility to pleasure was strictly connected to the tendency to transgress legal authority and a consequent need for despotic forms of government. People of warm climates were driven by a powerful urge to satisfy their desires, and therefore needed to be restrained by a more direct and brutal form of power. On the contrary, cold climates encouraged individual strength, courage, and solidarity among individuals. Where only passions ruled, people were less rational, prone to fear and cowardice: "One should therefore not be surprised if the cowardice of the peoples of warm climates has almost always made them slaves, whereas the courage of the peoples of cold climates has kept them free. It is an effect that derives from its natural cause".[9]

From this argument derives the figure of the "feeble, cowardly, vengeful, lazy and passive character unable to fight for his or her freedom that Montesquieu swears to have found in hot climates".[10] Therefore, climatology, a construct that had already a long history by Montesquieu's times, was of central importance in lending scientific credibility to the rhetorical dichotomy of the courageous northerner and the cowardly southerner.[11]

This description, I find, corresponds to the characterization of Gennaro, the Italian fisherman of the story. Gennaro is a caricature of a simpleton, cowardly and sly, employed by Forster to mock and parody the certain way British bourgeois classes travelled abroad. Precisely by pursuing this aim, Forster offers an eloquent portrayal of what were the common biases and prejudices with which northern Europeans travelled to southern Europe.

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[8] Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Roger Caillois (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), vol. 2, 476. Quoted in Roberto Maria Dainotto*, Europe (in Theory)* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 58.

[9] Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, 523. Quoted in Dainotto*, Europe (in Theory)*, 58–9.

[10] Dainotto*, Europe (in Theory)*, 59.

[11] Montesquieu believed that the perfect weather can be found in England, Holland, Germany, Belgium, and France: "You will find, in the climates of the north, peoples who have few vices, many virtues, and much sincerity and candour. As you move toward the countries of the south, you will believe you have moved away from morality itself". Quoted in Dainotto*, Europe (in Theory)*, 61.

In "The Story of a Panic", Forster uses the Italian setting and summons Greek mythology at once to contrast the reticence and inhibition of English behaviour. Social relations among the English travellers, governed by empty formalism, are placed in stark contrast with the values of spontaneity, impulsiveness, and unconstrained behaviour conveyed by Gennaro.

Although Forster does mock and criticize the British, the dichotomy between the rationality and modernity of England, on the one hand, and the backwardness of Italy, on the other, remains completely intact in his writings. Forster describes a complex conflict, but the complexity is all on the side of the British, while Italians are given a symbolic and fixed function, which he uses as a plot device. Italy is thus a narrative expedient that "functions as an occasion for getting beyond 'the muddle' of English social convention and traditional cultural values. It is a site for identifying what it might really mean 'to live.'"[12] Italians exist, in short, to help the British overcome their excessive focus on decorum and rationality, and rediscover emotional and sensual pleasures.

Gennaro is naturally awkward and bad-mannered; his lack of culture, exemplified by his inability to speak English, forces the visitors to lower themselves to his level of ignorance. Linked by their lack of culture, by their somewhat bestial natures, the child (Eustace) and the "primitive other" (Gennaro) share an uncomplicated approach to social intercourse that deeply irritates and worries the narrator.

In the following passage, the narrator grades his language so as to better explain the notion of class distinction to Gennaro. This is done in the context of a lesson on the proper use of Italian:

> When I heard him clearing the table I went in, and, summoning up my Italian, or rather Neapolitan—the Southern dialects are execrable—I said, "Gennaro! I heard you address Signor Eustace with 'Tu'. … You are not right. You must use 'Lei' or 'Voi'—more polite forms. And remember that, though Signor Eustace is sometimes silly and foolish—his afternoon for example—yet you must always behave respectfully to him; for he is a young English gentleman, and you are a poor Italian fisher-boy".
>
> [---]
> An honest English fisherman would have landed me one in the eye in a minute for such a remark, but the wretched down-trodden Italians have no pride. Gennaro only sighed, and said: "It is true".[13]

[12] Ann Ardis, "Hellenism and the Lure of Italy", in *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster*, ed. D. Bradshaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 71.
[13] E. M. Forster, "The Story of a Panic", in *Collected Short Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1954), 23.

The narrator comments on the feeble and inherently weak nature of Italians, the indignity of their lives as victims.[14] He feels more at ease in Italy than in England to express himself in a snobbish, paternalistic, and aggressive way. He believes he has to display a certain brutality in his speech to make himself understood and obeyed by the Italian simpleton. This behaviour could be plausibly motivated by the already mentioned widely-shared belief in the propensity and responsiveness among Southern Europeans towards despotism.

In the story, English fishermen are portrayed as simple but honest and dignified, whereas Italian ones are imagined as spineless, vicious, and unreliable. In the end, Gennaro's negative traits are set in direct contrast with the qualities (strength, honesty) that supposedly constitute "English-ness". In the following scene, Gennaro holds on to his bribe, childishly and excessively, a moment before dying:

> "The ten lire are mine", he hissed back, in a scarcely audible voice. He clasped his hand over his breast to protect his ill-gotten gains, and, as he did so, he swayed forward and fell upon his face on the path. He had not broken any limbs, and a leap like that would never have killed an Englishman, for the drop was not great. But those miserable Italians have no stamina. Something had gone wrong inside him, and he was dead.[15]

Gennaro is killed by his greed, weakness, and lack of courage. He is dishonest until the end, and his death offers a final opportunity for the narrator to ridicule him. Gennaro dies vulgarly and stupidly: falling on his face from a modest height, and clinging to his money, proving once and for all to the narrator, and to the reader, the weakness and corruptible nature of southern people. Italians are described as vicious, dishonest, and weak not

[14] Ashis Nandy helps us understand the narrator's contempt for his victim, his disdain for Gennaro's passivity and indifference through the following observation on Rudyard Kipling: "Kipling distinguished between the victim who fights well and pays back the tormentor in his own coin and the victim who is passive-aggressive, effeminate, and fights back through non-cooperation, shirking, irresponsibility, malingering and refusal to value face-to-face-fights. The first was the 'ideal victim' Kipling wished to be, the second was the victim's life young Kipling lived and hated living". Gennaro clearly embraces his condition of victimhood with passivity and cowardice. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 69.

[15] Forster, "The Story of a Panic", 33.

so much in absolute terms, but in a continuous comparison with the English.[16]

Gennaro's poor acquaintance with the rules of behaviour among social classes makes him uncivilized and coarse, but at the same time puts him in a privileged position to communicate with Eustace, who is still young, innocent, and relatively uncorrupted by British civilization. Eustace, in turn, can easily communicate with Gennaro not only by virtue of his youth and lack of education, but also because of a natural weakness of character.

Forster's satire, in this story, is indeed directed towards the British, not the Italians. The point of his critique, however, is the blindness of the British bourgeoisie to the values that Italy represents. Although Forster reworks the dichotomies he uses (civilized behaviour vs. natural behaviour, manners and conventions vs. spontaneity, culture vs. nature, and so on) in favour of the Italians, he keeps such dichotomies whole.

In a particularly telling passage of the short story, the narrator remarks on the "southern avarice" as a trait constitutive of the land and its people. The garlicky breath of Gennaro simultaneously signals poor hygiene, proximity to nature, and poor moral qualities:

> It is astonishing how the most dishonest of nations trust us. Indeed they often trust us more than we trust one another. Gennaro knelt up on his sack. It was too dark to see his face, but I could feel his warm garlicky breath coming out in gasps, and I knew that the eternal avarice of the South had laid hold upon him.[17]

The presence of Gennaro, in a room too dark for him to be seen, is conveyed by the smell of his breath. Gennaro is a victim of the south, a lesser creature of avarice and greed.

At the end, the narrator expresses his view of Italy in the following terms: "Such is the working of the Southern mind".[18] This statement, typical of colonial discourse, assumes the existence of a "Southern mind" which, in its essence, makes itself available to the rational understanding of the narrator:

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[16] The dishonesty of Italians (and their political institutions) is a common trope in British literature set on the continent at least since the novel of manners and the Gothic novel, in which Southern Europe used to be depicted as the old world of decadent court culture and as a site where political institutions still relied on religious ones, making them appear as backward and feudal to the British. British society, on the other hand, represented the new world, ruled by the dynamic, strong, and genuine values of the bourgeois classes.

[17] Forster, "The Story of a Panic", 29.

[18] Forster, "The Story of a Panic", 32.

> If orientalism, as Said describes it, has a structure, this resides in its tendency to *dichotomize* the human continuum into we-they contrasts and to *essentialize* the resultant 'other'—to speak of the oriental mind, for example, or even to generalize about 'Islam' or 'the Arabs.' All of these Orientalist 'visions' and 'textualizations,' as Said terms them, function to suppress an authentic 'human' reality.[19]

"The Story of a Panic" displays a complex and ambiguous geo-political vision. Forster displays a very self-reflective relationship with his social world of constraints and privilege. This dialectic relation is at the very core of his works and allows him to create a multitude of plausible and complex characters. Searching for a possible alternative to his social world, he attributes to Italy many characteristics opposed to those generally associated with his social class. In other words, Forster's Italians are a reservoir of what is repressed or excluded in and by the British social milieu he examines.

The White Woman's Burden and the Effects of Civilization: "The Eternal Moment"

I will read "The Eternal Moment" in the light of a second key-concept Dainotto discusses in relation to the conceptualization of Europe during the modern centuries: the white man's sense of guilt for the loss of traditional values that come with modernity, brought to the south by the northern nations.[20] Miss Raby embodies and expresses the sense of guilt that comes from seeing a less developed community contaminated by modernity and its capitalistic ways. In the course of the story, as we will shortly see, Miss Raby will explicitly compare Italy to England's Eastern colonies, and take upon herself the task to atone for what civilization has done to Vorta.

Miss Raby feels (and she actually is, according to Forster's narration) singlehandedly responsible for the changes that have been taking place in Vorta. The town has lost its innocence and purity because of the economic success that came as a consequence of the commercial success of her novel. Miss Raby, in the following passage, laments the changes that, in her eyes, have brought about a loss of "pastoral values":

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[19] James Clifford, "On Orientalism", in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 258.

[20] For a reading of "The Eternal Moment" that in spite of adopting an altogether different perspective (the unexpected results of tourism and intercultural exchange), presents several points of convergence with my own, see Krzysztof Fordoński's "Tourism as a Destructive Force in E. M. Forster's Early 'Italian' Fiction", *Linguistic Academy Journal of Interdisciplinary Language Studies* 2 (2012): 21–34.

> A village must have some trade; and this village had always been full of virility and power. Obscure and happy, its splendid energies had found employment in wresting a livelihood out of the earth, whence had come a certain dignity, and kindliness, and love for other men. Civilization did not relax these energies, but it had diverted them; and all the precious qualities, which might have helped to heal the world, had been destroyed. The family affection, the affection for the commune, the sane pastoral values—all had perished while the campanile which was to embody them was being built. No villain had done this thing: it was the work of ladies and gentlemen who were good and rich and often clever—who if they thought about the matter at all, thought that they were conferring a benefit, moral as well as commercial, on any place in which they chose to stop.[21]

Miss Raby deplores the effects of "civilization". The town used to be a dignified place of innocence and honest work. Civilization has clearly made Vorta weak and corrupt; its inhabitants ambitious and hopelessly vulgar. Feo is the chief example of this metamorphosis. As a young boy of humble origins, he used to be gifted with honesty and genuineness, whereas now, in Miss Raby's eyes, he seems to have lost all of his natural dignity by aspiring to a higher social position. He has become scheming, sly, and vulgar:

> It was absurd to blame Feo for his worldliness—for his essential vulgarity. He had not made himself. It was even absurd to regret his transformation from an athlete; his greasy stoutness, his big black kiss-curl, his waxed moustache, his chin which was dividing and propagating itself like some primitive form of life.[22]

Feo's physical characteristics of greasiness, stoutness, and darkness seem to have been summoned to convey a sense of unpleasantness. The adjectives "greasy" and "waxed" confer on his appearance a general quality of uncleanliness and sliminess. The description ends and culminates in the threatening (propagating) presence of primitive life. Feo used to be handsome, but is now worldly and vulgar, greasy and repulsive.

In Miss Raby's perspective, the "natives" can only be morally ruined by civilization, or, better said, there must be at least a degree or an initial phase of moral corruption before civilization can show its positive face. Forster says this clearly of Miss Raby: "She was not enthusiastic over the progress of civilization, *knowing by Eastern experiences* that civilization rarely puts her best foot foremost, and is apt to make the barbarians immoral and vicious before her compensating qualities arrive".[23] On an ideological and

[21] E. M. Forster, "The Eternal Moment", in *Collected Short Stories*, 205.
[22] Forster, "The Eternal Moment", 212.
[23] Forster, "The Eternal Moment", 200. Italics added.

socio-political level, the relation between Italy and the world of British colonies could hardly have been made more explicit by the passage.

In the story, the "natives" do not have any say in the matter of the commercial development of their own town. When an Englishwoman from the upper classes decides to make their small town famous by publishing a novel, all they can do is surrender, grow economically, and become hopelessly vulgar. In short, agency is on the side of the British, while the Italian is reduced to a passive object. As such, uneasiness is expressed every time Italians try to "rise" socially, refuse to stay "in their places", or aspire to become wealthy, as this goes against their "natural role", assigned to them by the British.

We learn, from this story, that it was possible (although probably not common) for a British woman of Miss Raby's social position to ask to be given an Italian child. Miss Raby means to ease her guilt by teaching the child the goodness of wealth and civilization, the very same elements she deems responsible for the decline of the town. In the narration, her gesture is clearly symbolic.

We witness in Miss Raby a tension between two myths very much at work in British perceptions of Italy: that of the civilizing mission, on the one hand represented by Miss Raby's desire to save the child by bringing him back to civilization where he can be properly educated, and that of the good savage on the other, represented by the Feo of her memories. In this case, the white woman's burden goes hand in hand with a guilty conscience, which has its origin not so much in her bringing civilization to this Italian town, but rather in her being responsible for shattering the child-like delusional state of ignorant bliss within which the noble savage—the Feo of her memories—lived.[24] Between the young Feo, the father Feo, and the son,

[24] Rana Kabbani explains the notion of the white man's burden in the following way: "The image of the European colonizer had to remain an honourable one: he did not come as exploiter, but as enlightener. He was not seeking mere profit, but was fulfilling his duty to his Maker and his sovereign, whilst aiding those less fortunate to rise toward his lofty level. This was the white man's burden, that reputable colonial *malaise* that sanctioned the subjugating of entire continents". Kabbani detects the hierarchical accommodation of the Orient and Southern Europe in a single universal hierarchy of exoticism, when she quotes Friedrich Schlegel: "In the Orient we must look for the most sublime form of the Romantic, and only when we can draw from the source, perhaps will the semblance of southern passion which we find so charming in Spanish poetry appear to us occidental and sparse". Schlegel could hardly have made more explicit the cultural nature of the divide between the East and the West: when the West will know something more exotic than the South of Europe, the South of Europe will be considered occidental. Rana Kabbani,

we have a representation of the three stages of the civilizing process: innocence (the young Feo), followed by a violent coming-of-age resulting in a loss of morality (the father Feo), and finally a thorough embodiment of civilization (which is what awaits the son after possibly being educated in England).

Forster's narration suggests that Miss Raby is not meant to be a thoroughly negative character. Although she is not the heroine who manages, after struggling with herself, to reach beyond her social position and undergo a profound and positive transformation (she is too whimsical, egoistic, and superficial to undergo such a metamorphosis), she is not completely condemned either. Forster depicts her as someone with good intentions who does not know how to act upon them correctly or is not strong-willed enough to do so. Wilfred Stone argues that "the reader is never allowed to think well of Feo, but he has an even harder time (contrary to the author's intentions) thinking well of Miss Raby".[25] We do not like Miss Raby because of her overconfident assumption of social and existential superiority, but it is very possible that this was not the case over a hundred years ago; it is possible that the portrayal of Miss Raby as clumsy but fundamentally good-hearted was mostly credible and current for the readership of the time.

When Miss Raby offers Feo money in exchange for his youngest son, Feo is not scandalized in the least, but asks himself "if he could persuade his wife to give up the little boy and, if he did, how much they dare ask from Miss Raby without repulsing her".[26] Feo is meant to be unpleasant and dishonest throughout; therefore, it is clear that complexity and density of character are all on Miss Raby's side. When Miss Raby reveals her thoughts and feelings so openly to Feo, Colonel Leyland is angry and hurt that "she had exposed her thoughts and desires to a man of another class. Not only she, but he himself and all their equals, were degraded by it. She had discovered their nakedness to the alien".[27]

Mr Tytler and Miss Raby both attempt at positing themselves on the side of civilization through their dealings with an uncivilized—or at least much less civilized—other. Forster mocks these attempts to a great extent, but he does so in a narrative which features Italians as mere narrative devices, mere blue screens against which the peculiarities of the British ethos can be

Europe's Myths of Orient (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 6 and 29 (for Schlegel's quote).

[25] Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E. M. Forster* (Stanford: Stanford University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 139.

[26] Forster, "The Eternal Moment", 219.

[27] Forster, "The Eternal Moment", 221.

highlighted. Forster is thus able to mock his British characters by contrasting them with the Italian ethos, but his voice never seems to allow for a second layer of mockery—a meta-mockery as it were—which would have questioned the use of Italians in his own novels as a plot device.

In Forster's Italian short stories I see at work a fundamental contradiction that generates challenging narratives framed by an ideological mystification. On the one hand, Forster is directing a sharp critique towards British bourgeois society and its social constraints, British expatriates, and mass tourism. On the other hand, by making use of Italy as the cultural polar opposite of England, as a trope for salvation through its immediacy to life, he pays a compliment to Italy at the same time as he consigns it and confines it to this particular role. By investing Italy with the task of improving the British bourgeois classes, he makes of it a tool for England's self-definition and aggrandizement.[28]

The Modern Conceptualization of the Primitive Savage: *Where Angels Fear to Tread*

In this novel there is a modern characterization of the primitive savage, represented by the Italian antagonist of the story, Gino. Alive and energetic but coarse, intelligent but greedy and unrefined, prone to aggressiveness and capable of an animalistic form of violence, Gino's personality, still untamed by civilization, at the same time attracts and repulses the British protagonist of the novel. At times idealized for his innocence and simplicity, at times disparaged for precisely the same reasons, Gino is associated with the simpleton Gennaro of "The Story of a Panic" and the sly Feo of "The Eternal Moment" by virtue of his weak moral character.

Gino is also the most complex of Forster's Italian characters; certainly there is a novel depth to his personality, a complexity which distinguishes him from both Gennaro and Feo and does not make him univocally unpleasant and corrupt: only one part of him is, but there is also a distinctive power about him, which is essentially engendered by two "primal" factors: his sexual attractiveness and his aptitude for paternal love.

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[28] The result is encapsulated in the passage below by Suzanne Roszak: "While rightfully noting Forster's internationalism and his social progressivism, readers rarely comment on the Italian novels' primitivist understanding of Italy, their dichotomous vision of the relationship between North and South, or the way that this vision subtly reinforces England's central position within the global order". Suzanne Roszak, "Social Non-Conformists in Forster's Italy: Otherness and the Enlightened English Tourist", *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 45, no. 1–2 (January–April 2014): 168.

Gino's calm acceptance of human feelings, his unsophisticated character, and his uncomplicated approach to life put him in direct contrast to Philip, the British protagonist. The novel certainly sets up an explicit comparison between bourgeois England and Italy mirrored by the contrast between the characters of Philip and Gino. Philip is characterized by a series of unpleasant traits: pedantry, lack of intuition, and cowardice in ordinary matters. All this intellectual density is counteracted by Gino's direct personality which is, however, at times ambiguous, as it fluctuates between a positive talent for life and an animalistic and violent energy.[29] Essentially, Gino's character is not as thoroughly defined as Philip's, and remains instrumental to a possible change in the souls and behaviour of the British visitors. Gino's positive and negative aspects (his positive energy, on the one hand, his coarseness, greed, and aggressiveness, on the other) related to the tension between sexuality and paternal love, clearly belong to a characterization of the primitive other, as they both speak of a personality untamed by civilization. Hence, Philip is at the same time attracted to and repulsed by Gino,[30] simultaneously described, in the following passage of the novel, as dirty, greasy, unpleasant, but nevertheless attractive:

> The face of Signor Carella [Gino] was twitching too much for Philip to study it. But he could see the hands, which were not particularly clean, and did not get cleaner by fidgeting amongst the shining slabs of hair. His starched cuffs

[29] "Primitive" people are often idealized for their supposed innocence and sometimes disparaged for precisely the same reason. Their scarce familiarity with civilization and cultivated moral virtues results in general deviousness and a propensity to lie. The simpleton Gennaro, the vulgar dentist's son, and the sly Feo are connected by their propensity to lie and cheat, by their impulsiveness, meanness, and by their basic and uncomplicated feelings. John Stuart Mill explicitly attributes this sort of characteristics to the peoples of Southern Europe, whom, in the following passage, are associated to the people of "the East": "This kind of cruelty is not mere hardheartedness, absence of pity or remorse, it is a positive thing; a particular kind of voluptuous excitement. The East, and Southern Europe, have afforded, and probably still afford, abundant examples of this hateful propensity". The quote is reported in David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 160.

[30] In D. H. Lawrence's writings on Italy there is a similar pattern of attraction and repulsion, a typical trope of colonial representation. In *Twilight in Italy* (1916), for instance, Lawrence describes the Italian character Faustino in terms strongly reminiscent of those used by Forster (Philip) to describe Gino Carella: "All the while his beauty, so perfect and so defined, fascinated me, a strange perfection about him. But his movements, whilst they fascinated, also repelled". D. H. Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy* (London and New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2015), 125.

> were not clean either, and as for his suit, it had obviously been bought for the occasion as something really English—a gigantic check, which did not even fit…. And Philip had seen that face before in Italy a hundred times—seen it and loved it, for it was not merely beautiful, but had the charm which is the rightful heritage of all who are born on that soil. But he did not want to see it opposite him at dinner. It was not the face of a gentleman.[31]

In this passage, a tension between the myths of civilization and of the noble savage is at work. The noble savage is first criticized from the point of view of civilization, which is here associated with a certain standard of cleanliness, and after Gino is gently but unequivocally mocked for aping British social habits, the positive aspects of his savage nature are finally pointed out: he is beautiful, charming, in existential symbiosis with his heritage and the soil, etc. However, Philip closes by admitting that despite the positive aspects of the savage, civilization still has to win: one would never accept such a person sitting at a proper British dinner.

Philip has much to learn from Gino when it comes to the naturalness of emotions and the immediacy and physicality of love, but the downside of these qualities is vulgarity, coarseness, and brutality. Gino's avarice (the "avarice of the South", which, in "The Story of a Panic", belongs to Gennaro) and uncouthness constantly threaten (and make up) his charm. Philip does not know how to resolve the contradictions which Gino personifies, and we do not know how much Forster himself is struggling with the same contradictions, or if he is merely "using" them to better illustrate Philip's snobbism and ineptitude for life.

In any case, I do not see such polarized characterizations of England and Italy as neutral literary devices. In this regard, I fully share Roszak's disagreement with a reading of Foster's Italian novels as narratives encouraging "humbleness" in British travellers, and aiming at "rais[ing] questions about England's supposed primacy within the global order"; "asking their characters and their readers to recognize the limits of their understanding and to absorb the rich body of knowledge that the Other may choose to teach them".[32]

Italian people do not "choose" to teach the British anything. Thoroughly unaware of the pedagogic task that has been assigned to them, they act as simple-minded but potentially treacherous creatures, at all times oblivious to the effect of their behaviour on the British visitors. In Forster's narratives, they clearly inhabit a pre-modern world in which they picturesquely behave in the same mindless way they have always behaved. The task of

[31] E. M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 24.
[32] Roszak, "Social Non-Conformists", 169.

philosophically speculating on the "northern character", on the "southern one", on the conflict between the two, and on what they might have to offer to each other, is left in the hands of the British characters. Italians are obviously unconcerned with these grave issues and live life as it comes.

More importantly, this interpretation overlooks the epistemic effects of Forster's employment of Italy as a narrative device, and the over-emphasis on and reiteration of

> the purported difference of both rural and urban Italian spaces and their inhabitants—their charming timelessness or anti-modernity; their dangerous natural beauty; their primal, animalistic violence; and their unabashed coarseness—thus fetishizing and often patronizing the 'primitive' Italian nature that inspires social experiment. The Italian novels also assert an implicit value judgement in the way in which the English characters transcend their less enlightened selves at the expense of the novel's Italians, whose lives are subordinated to the inner development of the tourist, generating a problematic hierarchy of which the narratives communicate little awareness.[33]

I believe that this hierarchy simply did not come across as problematic at the time. It was possibly a corollary of the current episteme and its archive, one that made possible the empire and that was in turn generated by it. I believe that Forster based the depiction of his narrative contexts on a widely spread understanding of what was the place that England occupied in the world in relation to other cultures, what other countries had and lacked in relation to England, and what they stood for in the world taxonomy. This does not make of Forster a conventional writer in any way, as he made a highly creative and unconventional use of these tropes, even trying to question some of them. Nevertheless, Forster, as everyone else, belonged to a specific historical era and employed his time's taxonomy of values, at times challenging them, at times adhering to them.

Forster very effectively questions the approach of British travellers to Italy, mocking their assumptions and expectations, and, even more significantly, tries to challenge, especially in the novel we are presently discussing, the British idealization of Italy as a realm of aesthetic beauty that would have transcended all forms of conflict between British social classes. However, the point at which Forster's critique stops is at the conventional division of Italian and British realms of existence along the

[33] Roszak, "Social Non-Conformists", 170.

lines of a series of dichotomies between the modern and the pre-modern, the intellect and the senses, rationality and passion, etc.[34]

Interestingly enough, critics have often downplayed the role assigned by Forster to Italians by subsuming it under well-meaning adjectives such as "earthy".[35] The British bourgeois who travels to Italy, as Miss Abbott does, "to champion morality and purity, and the holy life of an English home", or as Philip does, "as an emissary of civilization and as a student of character", is seldom put in relation to the wider political reality of the empire which produced the civilizing mission.[36] Forster undoubtedly satirizes such characters, but he does so for their incapacity to learn from Italy, to cultivate their hearts, their instincts, and their passions, or because they cannot seize the opportunity, which Italy offers, to get to know themselves a little better, not because he thinks that there is anything there (in Italy) which could ever really challenge them intellectually.

Claude J. Summers writes that "the underlying sadness of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* stems from its apprehension of the atomized self, of the near impossibility of connecting the intellect, the soul, and the body, either in a balanced individual or in complementary relationships".[37] "Just as the three great attractions of Monteriano's piazza[38] symbolize the intellect, the soul, and the body", Summers argues, "so do Philip, Caroline, and Gino also represent these parts of an entire person".[39] "Throughout the book", he adds, "Gino is associated with unconscious sexuality and physicality".[40] These are the very elements that British culture, according to its own perception, has lost on its way to modernity and progress. The British male hero represents the intellect, the British female heroine represents the emotional realm, and the Italian man represents physicality. Rana Kabbani explains the meaning and consequences of such a perspective:

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[34] Elisabetta Girelli makes a similar point when she observes that "while denouncing traditional British notions of Italy as a fabrication, the narrative relies on an essential Italian-ness to provide a mirror for the problems of British-ness, effectively giving the films, like the novels, a double shell structure: an unacknowledged construction within the construction". "Beauty and the Beast: The construction of Italianness in *A Room with A View* and *Where Angels Fear To Tread*", *Studies in European Cinema* 3, no. 1 (2006): 28.

[35] Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain*, 162.

[36] Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, 102, 121.

[37] Claude J. Summers, *E. M. Forster* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1983), 40–41.

[38] The three attractions are the Palazzo Pubblico, the Collegiate Church, and the Caffe' Garibaldi.

[39] Summers, *E. M. Forster*, 40.

[40] Summers, *E. M. Forster*, 41.

> To take the privileged male of the white race as a norm for universal humanity is no more than a politically interested figuration. It is a trope that passes itself off as truth, and claims that woman or the racial other is merely a kind of troping of that truth of man—in the sense that they must be understood *as* unlike (non-identical with) it and yet *with* reference to it.[41]

In other words, the triad male/intellect, female/emotions, and the racial/or cultural "other"/body is hierarchically organized, with the latter two terms presented as declinations of the first, perceived as normative. Consequently, references to the Italian "positive" values of physicality and sensuality based on this pre-organized hierarchical order necessarily contain an element of condescension.

Where Angels Fear to Tread shows a political and moral stance which was hardwired in the society of the time, and not exclusively directed to the far-away colonies. By keeping the intellectual realm for themselves, the British travellers tried to recover emotions and physicality by traveling to places where these aspects of the human experience still existed.

In conclusion, it appears that Italy can be valuable only insofar as it complements the British over-reliance on rationality and modernity. Italy's purpose is to enable a further emancipation of the British, this time not from the pre-modern and the traditional, but from the radical aspects of modernity-as-alienation. This dialectic—from tradition to modernity-as-alienation, and from modernity-as-alienation to a de-alienated modernity that has partially reconnected with the pre-modern and the traditional—is powerfully present in *A Room with a View*.

The Appropriation of the Other by the Self: *A Room with a View*

A Room with a View (1908) epitomises the third key notion illustrated by Dainotto: the Hegelian approach to the other, whose exotic characteristics must be sensibly incorporated by the modern subject in order for him or her to reconnect with a precious but potentially unsettling existential dimension. In the novel, the Hegelian parable is accomplished successfully: the protagonist of the novel, Lucy, a proper young girl of the British bourgeoisie, learns the importance of acknowledging a more "primal", therefore, according to a Romantic ideal, a necessarily more truthful dimension of existence.

If in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* the encounter with Italian culture is direct, tangible, and burdened with the presage of ill-fated consequences, in

[41] Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient*, 517–518.