

**“Classicism versus Mediaevalism in Victorian-Edwardian England:
E. M. Forster’s *A Room with a View* as an example”¹.**

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To R. Estapà, J. Hurtley, B. Usobiaga, C. Jofre,
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On the occasion of this conference³, when the S.E.E.C. (Spanish Society for the Classical Studies), honoured me suggesting I wrote a paper on “Classical Tradition”, having no better guarantee, as far as I am concerned, than my uninterrupted years of keen dedication to such an extensive topic, I considered several possibilities. The most prudent option was undoubtedly to choose the analysis of the so-called ‘explicit classical tradition’ in any author, time, literary or artistic movement, etc. The most risky one was to dare to lift the veil which, until now –that is to say, until my presumably “valuable” contribution to Philology- had prevented the discovery of an “implicit Classical Tradition”, which some excessively modest writer had put in a safe place. Finally, I had a wide range of less extreme options which, in my opinion, are not always given the attention they deserve. And then I thought of E. M. Forster (1879-1970) because of the mastery he showed in practically all the above mentioned cases⁴. Already familiar with the reading and study of the Greek and Roman Classics at Tonbridge school⁵, and having deepened his knowledge of them at King’s College, Cambridge⁶, he makes Classical Greece and Platonic love the cohesive nucleus of a passionate homoerotic exaltation in *Maurice*⁷; he hints at the

¹ This article was published in the Proceedings of the X Congreso Español de Estudios Clásicos (Xth National Congress of Classical Studies). Madrid: Estudios Clásicos, 2002, pp. 445-487.

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³ The above mentioned congress, Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, 1999.

⁴ As an introduction to his biography, his human and literary figure, etc. see, e.g.: Ackerley, J. R., 1970; Advani, R., 1984; Beauman, N., 1993; Beer, J., 1962; Brander, L., 1968; Cavaliero, G., 1979; Colmer, J., 1975; De Zordo, O., 1992; Ebbatson, R., 1982; Fadda, A. M., 1962; Furbank, P. N., 1978; Gardner, Ph., 1977; Gillie, Chr., 1983; Gransden, K. W., 1970; Kelvin, N., 1967; King, F. H., 1978; Macauley, R., 1938; McConkey, 1957; Martland, A., 1999; McDowell, F., 1982; Messenger, N., 1991; Oliver, H. J., 1960; Page, N., 1987; Rapport, N., 1994; Rose, F. M., 1970; Summers, C. J., 1983; *The transformation of English Novel ...* (1995); Trilling, L., 1967; Warner, R., 1960; Wilkinson, L. P., 1970. On his glossary: Borrello, A., 1972. On his bibliography: Kirkpatrick, B. L., 1965 and McDowell, F., 1976. On his chronology: Stape, J. K., 1993. On his letters: *Selected Letters*, 1983; *Report on the Correspondence ...*, 1990 and Lago, M., 1985. On Forster the humanist: Cox, C. B., 1963; Crews, F., 1962 and Hanquart, E., 1986. On Forster and Modernism: Medalie, D., 1991. On his connections to the Bloomsbury group: Johnstone, J. K., 1954. Interviews: *E. M. Forster Interviews*, 1993. On the films based on his novels: *The E. M. Forster Film Omnibus*, 1987 and Gilabert, P., 1998. Books containing articles on different aspects of his work: *Aspects of E. M. Forster*, 1969; Bradbury, M., 1966; *E. M. Forster: Centenary...*, 1982; *E. M. Forster: A Human Exploration*, 1979; *E. M. Forster. Contemporary...*, 1995 and *Studies in E. M. Forster*, 1977. Guide to his research: Summers, C. J. E., 1991. On *A Room with a View*: E. M. Forster. *The Lucy Novels*, 1977.

⁵ See Furbank, P. N., 1979, p. 43

⁶ Where he even taught. In any case, Furbank, P. N., 1979, p. 70, points out, among his reading material: Homer, Pindarus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Plautus, Cicero, Lucretius, Lucanus, etc. He also taught Latin at the Working Men’s College -adult education centre-, pp.173-6.

⁷ See Gilabert, P., 1994 y 1996.

literary commonplace of Arcadia in Mrs. Wilcox's 'anti-urban protest' in *Howards End*; he presents the tension between East and West again in terms of his particular concept of "form" in *A Passage to India* and *The Hill of Devi*; in 'Albergo Empedocle'⁸ he makes both a subtle and sarcastic parody of the feverish identification of some English tourists with famous characters of Classical times; he even exploits the "literary possibilities" of the optative mood of Greek verb in 'Ansell'⁹, etcetera¹⁰.

However, a great deal of Forster's literary work illustrates, almost to the point of perfection, in late XIXth and early XXth-century England –or, what has conventionally been referred to as "Victorian-Edwardian England"¹¹–, the clash between two sensibilities, one "Victorian", the other "liberal"¹² – *lato sensu* in both cases–, which is made explicit in one of his most renowned and admired novels: *A Room with a View*, published in 1908. Far from wanting to advance in the development of this paper, I think it should be seen as the allegory behind which hides –therefore *hypónoia*– the collision between England and Italy, north and south; the grey skies of the Atlantic and the bright skies of the Mediterranean; closed windows which protect from a hostile outside and windows which open to liberating views; introversion and extroversion; English temperament and Italian temperament; London and Florence; medieval or Gothic –Neogothic– and Renaissance or Classic. At first sight, these comparisons of national idiosyncrasies – or "idiobiologies", if I may use the term–, may appear too particular, but soon we will realise that under the particular lies one of the many Western voices which have always risen to defend the wide world of values represented by Greek and Roman Classicism. And, if this is so, if the final aim has a certain character of "Classical gospel", nobody will be surprised that the English novelist chooses in this case such a regular as well as intelligent distribution of classical references, turning them into milestones of a highly commended spiritual pilgrimage. As for me, be it only driven by the will to please those who are now so kindly listening to me –or reading me–, my sole aim is to be appraised as a commentator who, fortunately and thanks to a certain dose of common sense, tries not to let the commented text down, at least not more than it is humanly reasonable and, who knows if not more than what is academically inevitable. So let me begin.

Why a trip to Italy? Why a trip to Florence? Undoubtedly, the characters in the novel appear as clear followers of an age-old tradition, the *Grand Tour*, which constitutes one of the most interesting episodes of the European Classical Tradition –the English in particular–; that is, the long journey that many Northern Europeans made till reaching Italy –and in smaller numbers, Greece and the East– encouraged by the wish to recover a Classical ideal capable of regenerating their own countries both artistically and spiritually¹³. Yet, the success depended,

⁸ In *The Life to Come and Other Stories*, e.g. in Penguin Books, 1989.

⁹ *Ibid.* See Gilabert, P., 1998

¹⁰ It is worth pointing out, among others and to different degrees, the importance of Classical references in 'Cnidus', *Abinger Harvest*, 1934; 'The Torque', 'The Classical Annex' and 'Arthur Snatchfold' in *The Life to Come and Other Stories*, e.g., in Penguin Books, 1989. Or 'The story of a panic', 'The Other Side of the Hedge', 'The Celestial Omnibus', 'The Road from Colonus' and 'The Story of the Siren' in *Collected Short Stories*, e.g. in Penguin Books, 1954.

¹¹ Bear in mind that Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 to 1901, and King Edward VII from 1901 to 1910.

¹² However, for a thorough analysis of nuances, see, e.g., May, B., 1997 and, for the Edwardian period: Bernstein, G., 1986; *Edwardian England*, 1982; Hynes, S., 1991; Pemble, J., 1988; Priestley, J., 1970; Read, D., 1972 y 73; *The Edwardian Age...*, 1979; Thompson, P., 1977 and also Harrison, J. F. C., 1990.

¹³ Regarding the *Grand Tour*, see, e.g., among others: *A Literary Companion to Travel to Greece*, 1994; Black, J., 1997; Constantine, D., 1989; Cust, L., 1914; Eisner, R., 1993; Gilabert, P., 1996; *Grand Tour. The Lure ...*, 1996; Hibbert, Chr., 1987; Hitchens, Chr., 1987; Jenkins, I., 1983; Osborn, J. M., 1963; Saint Clair, W., 1972 and 1983; Stoneman, R., 1982; Tsigakou, F. M., 1985 and Winckelmann, J. J., 1987.

still in Forster's times, on whether the *tourists* would renounce their country of origin for a while. Such boldness is at first dismissed at the Pension Bertolini¹⁴, where Lucy Honeychurch and her cousin Charlotte Barlett, two nice old ladies named Alan, reverend Beebe, Miss Lavish, and the young George Emerson and his father are staying:

“ ‘It might be London’ –Lucy said. She looks at the two rows of English people who were sitting at the table... the portraits of the late Queen... the notice of the English church (23)¹⁵... the drawing-room... attempted to rival the solid comfort of a Bloomsbury boarding-house’ (28) or, like one of the old ladies assures Charlotte, ‘here you are as safe as in England; Signora Bertolini is so English’ ” (31).

Given the circumstances, it is not surprising that Miss Lavish, a most perceptive novelist, should declare:

‘One doesn't come to Italy for niceness¹⁶... one comes for life... Look at that adorable wine-cart! How the driver stares at us, dear, simple soul! (37)... Look at their figures! (English figures)... They walk through my Italy like a pair of cows... I would like to set an examination paper at Dover, and turn back every tourist who couldn't pass it'¹⁷ (39).

And, if life is to be found in Italy¹⁸, it is logical to think that some kind of death has been left behind¹⁹:

“The well-known –for Lucy- world had broken up, and there emerged Florence, a magic city where people thought and did the most extraordinary things²⁰ (particularly bear in

¹⁴ That is, the ‘Pensione Simi’ where Forster and his mother stayed in 1901, today ‘Hotel Jennings-Riccioli’, at 2, Lungarno delle Grazie.

¹⁵ All the passages correspond to the English edition by Oliver Stallybrass, *A Room with a View*. London: Penguin Books, 1990, and the numbers in brackets refer to it.

¹⁶ Besides, Miss Lavish is proud of her “answers”, which make her give new guests rather bold pieces of advice: ‘They must go to Prato. That place is too sweetly squalid for words. I love it; I revel in shaking off the trammels of respectability, as you know’ (27).

¹⁷ In fact, Miss Lavish also cross-examines Lucy, as she warns her –although nicely-: ‘Tut, tut! Miss Lucy! I hope we shall soon emancipate you from Baedeker –*Handbook to Northern Italy*-. He does but touch the surface of things. As to the true Italy –he does not even dream of it’ (36-7). And the truth is that, later ignoring her disorientation in Santa Croce, she starts to feel the positive effects of such an attitude: “Then the pernicious charm of Italy worked on her, and, instead of acquiring information, she began to be happy” (41).

¹⁸ On the role of Italy in Forster's work, see, e.g., Troisi, F., 1974.

¹⁹ And it is not only the end of his own familiar “Arcadia”, but also of the distance between social classes, which is shorter in Italy –the southern comradeship, especially between men, which so much seduces Forster: “Hitherto she had accepted their ideals without questioning –their kindly affluence, their inexploding religion... Life... was a circle of rich, pleasant people, with identical interests and identical foes... Outside it were poverty and vulgarity... but in Italy... she felt that there was no one whom she might not get to like, that social barriers were irremovable, doubtless, but not particularly high. You jump over them” (129-30).

²⁰ Forster gives the contrast all the “literary attention” it deserves: “There were letters for her (Lucy) –one from her brother... she recalled the free, pleasant life of her home, where she was allowed to do everything, and where nothing ever happened to her. The road up through the pine-woods, the clean drawing-room, the view over the Sussex Weald –all hung before her bright and distinct, but pathetic as the pictures in a gallery to which, after much experience, a traveller returns” (77). In other words, the new life she is beginning to experience will turn her previous one into a still life worthy of a “cultural

mind the row resulting in death that she witnessed in Piazza della Signoria)... Was there more in her frank beauty that met the eye –the power, perhaps, to evoke passions, good and bad, and to bring them speedily to a fulfilment?”²¹ (76).

Life, passion, and ultimately action, heritage of a city which is unique as far as the “restoration or renaissance” of Classicism is concerned, appear as the reverse of a sleeping world, England, where passions, good and bad, seem to be rapidly fainting. Indeed, in the *Abinger Harvest* edition of his essays, Forster, in ‘Notes on the English character’²², points out:

“For it is not that the Englishman can’t feel –it is that he is afraid to feel. He has been taught at his public school that feelings is bad form. He must not express great joy or sorrow... The Englishman appears to be cold and unemotional because he is really slow”²³.

As we see, it is not a very desirable background, but nothing can be the same again for one who ventures on Piazza della Signoria, for the people in Florence have succeeded in equipping themselves with the most appropriate mythical paradigms in order to keep apathy away, be it Andromeda’s liberator or the executor of the twelve labours, Hercules:

“The statues that relieve its severity suggest, not the innocence of childhood nor the glorious bewilderment of youth, but the conscious achievements of maturity. Perseus and Judith, Hercules and Thusnelda, they have done or suffered something, and, though they are immortal, immortality has come to them after experience, not before” (78).

However, not only the mythical references are clarifying, but contemporary facts are also a confirmation of age-old virtues:

“The Italians... They pry everywhere, they see everything, and they know what we want before we know it ourselves. We are at their mercy (54)... Italians are born knowing the way. It would seem that the whole earth lay before them, not as a map, but as a chessboard, whereon they continually behold the changing pieces as well as the squares” (88).

cemetery” or gallery –in any case, we should not forget the symbolic role attached to rooms and closed spaces throughout the whole novel.

²¹ Maybe that is why Mr. Emerson, who appears to behave as a true Italian, with a purely instinctive spontaneity, leaves Charlotte and Lucy speechless: “ ‘Why –you don’t accept our rooms-?’ , said the old man, with both fists on the table... Lucy, too, was perplexed; but she saw that they were in for what is known as ‘quite a scene’... Now the old man attacked Miss Barlett almost violently... was powerless in the presence of brutality” (25). Afterwards, Lucy will think about truth mysteries: ‘I think he would not take advantage of your acceptance... he thought of being polite... I find it difficult –to understand people who speak the truth’ (28). The Miss Alans are slightly more subtle: ‘No, he is not tactful; yet, have you ever noticed that there are people who do things which are most indelicate, and yet at the same time – beautiful?’ (31). And, finally George describes his father from his experience of living with him: ‘He is kind to people because he loves them; and they find him out, and are offended, or frightened’ (45).

²² ‘Notes on the English Character’, *Abinger Harvest*, 1936, pp. 5 and 6.

²³ Forster indulges himself in his irony on this matter; Mr. Emerson spontaneously offering his room is a good example of this: “ ‘I have a view’ ... Miss Barlett was startled. Generally at a pension people looked them over for a day or two before speaking, and often did not find out that they would ‘do’ till they had gone” (24).

In addition to this, we have already been told about their mastery in the art of promptly satisfying all sorts of passions; they have no equal in matching desire and action. Especially one should bear in mind that, as early as 1897, during his last year at Tonbridge, before entering Cambridge, Forster was awarded for two works: a patriotic poem in Latin entitled ‘Trafalgar’, and an essay in English entitled ‘The influence of climate and physical conditions upon national character’, where he claimed that “an Englishman is an Englishman, whether he is on the plains of South Africa or the mountains of Upper India, though his descendants live in these places for hundreds of years they will never in the slightest degree resemble Hottentots or Chitralis”,²⁴. Consequently, Forster joins those who strongly believe that national character and features remain unchanged throughout the centuries, as a product of the climate. The list is endless: H. T. Buckle, G. Eliot, G. Grote, H. Tozer, J. Gillies, G. G. Byron, W. Hazlitt; J. Addington Symonds, W. Pater, V. Woolf, etc., with the invaluable classical precedent of Aristotle (*Politics* 1327b, 29-33)²⁵. In other words, it is as if Forster saw Italians in general in the same light as the mythical protagonists of the *Grand Tour* saw the Southern peoples, Greek or Latin. Herewith, e.g. the comparison between a) some short passages from *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* by J. J. Winckelmann and b) *Where Angels Fear to Tread* by Forster himself:

A) “Ebenso wirksam muss sich auch der Himmel und die Luft bei den Griechen ... Eine gemässigte Witterung regierte durch alle Jahreszeiten hindurch... Wärme und Kälte gleichsam abgewogenen Himmel spüret die Kreatur einen gleich ausgetheilten Einfluss desselben... Ein solcher Himmel, sagt Hippokrates, bildet unter Menschen die schönsten”²⁶... Die heutigen Einwohner in Griechenland sind ein Metall, das mit dem Zusatz verschiedener andern Metalle zusammengeschmolzen ist, an welchen aber dennoch die Hauptmasse kenntlich bleibt... haben dennoch die heutigen Griechen viel natürliche Vorzüge der alten Nation behalten”²⁷. B) “Philip has seen that face before in Italy a hundred times –seen it and love it, for it was not merely beautiful, but had the charm which is the rightful heritage of all who are born on that soil” (41)²⁸.

Forster did not always like the Southern climate. As he himself admits: “My love of Scotch cold and chilliness has had gradually to thaw off me before I can like the South”. But

²⁴ Quoted by Beauman, N., 1994, pp. 67, 8; see also Furbank, P. N., 1979, pp. 47-8.

²⁵ Jenkyns, R., 1981, pp. 163-174, gives this matter full attention. Aristotle tells of how the inhabitants of the cold North of Europe can boast about having spirit but not intelligence. Therefore, they have remained free though deprived of a political organization. On their turn, the natives of Asia, very intelligent but poor in spirit, have ended up being dominated: “But the Greek race participates in both characters, just as it occupies the middle position geographically, for it is both spirited and intelligent; hence it continues to be free and to have very good political institutions, and to be capable of ruling all mankind if it attains constitutional unity” -translated by H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972: τὸ δὲ Ἑλλήνων γένος, ὡσπερ μεσεύει κατὰ τοὺς τόπους, οὕτως ἀμφοῖν μετέχει. καὶ γὰρ ἐνθυμον καὶ διανοητικόν ἐστιν. διόπερ ἐλεύθερόν τε διατελεῖ καὶ βέλτιστα πολιτευόμενον καὶ δυνάμενον ἄρχειν πάντων, μιᾶς τυγχάνον πολιτείας.

²⁶ Winckelmann, 1969, (Erläuterung), p. 78: “The action of the sky and the atmosphere was equally relevant among the Greeks. A temperate climate reigned throughout the seasons of the year... Cold and heat... compensated, the creatures show the influence of such a balance. According to Hippocrates, such a climate produces the most beautiful men”... “The present inhabitants of Greece are a metal which has slowly disappeared under layers of other metals, but the main component is still visible... The Greeks today have kept many of the natural qualities of the old nation”.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

²⁸ Penguin Books, 1976.

the “conversion” takes place and, during his stay in Rome he confronts the warm climate and the love of life of the south to what his great biographer, Furbank, refers to as “the ghosts and glooms, the self-denial and self-consciousness, of the Gothic north”: “When the body is feeble the soul is feeble. Cherish the body and you will cherish the soul. That was the belief of the Greeks: the belief in wearing away the body by penance in order that the quivering soul might be exposed had not yet entered the world”²⁹.

In short, the statues are there, in Piazza della Signoria, but the natives –the Italians, in this case, their passionate temperament, their beauty³⁰ and their love of action- are straightforward Classical Tradition, which one, inevitably or joyfully, has to take into account. Lucy will learn to love it –will learn to love them-, whereas her cousin Charlotte, anchored in Victorianism, detaches herself and prompts the “flight” to Rome, where the gap between the two grows bigger, “for the companion who is merely uncongenial in the medieval world becomes exasperating in the classical”³¹ (139).

Therefore, if the capacity to be, to act, to feel and ultimately to live has been the permanent result –since Classical Times- of the climate and the outer beauty, is there any doubt that “knowing and wanting to open the windows” in Renaissance Florence, that is to say, spiritually leaning onto a new world, entails a personal renaissance or classicism? Be it as it may, Lucy and Charlotte, once in their rooms with a view that the Emersons have kindly offered them, react in quite different ways in such a privileged situation: “When Lucy reached her own room she opened the window and breathed the clean night air... the lights dancing in the Arno, and the cypresses of San Miniato...” (34). The following morning she realises that: “It was pleasant to wake up in Florence, to open the eyes upon a bright bare room... with a painted ceiling whereon pink griffins and blue *amorini* sport in a forest of yellow violins and bassoons” (35). On the contrary: “Miss Barlett, in her room, fastened the window-shutters and locked the door, and then made a tour of the apartment to see where the cupboards led, and whether there were any oubliettes or secret entrances”³² (34). Thus, both ready, one for a sort of earthly and uranic Arcadia, the other for a medieval castle, it is needless to mention the contrast between their destinies.

In the meantime, the day of the inevitable touristic outing to Fiesole comes and the novelist is at its best:

²⁹ He says so in an article entitled ‘Kirchnerian Museum’ –later re-written as ‘Malconia Shops’- which Furbank, P. N., 1979, quotes on page 90.

³⁰ This passage from *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is particularly significant because it focuses again on Gino’s beauty against the beautiful Tuscan background: “ ‘He sat near her... with one foot in the loggia and the other dangling into the view. His face was in profile, and its beautiful contours drove artfully against the misty green of the opposing hills. ‘Posing!’ said Miss Abbott to herself. ‘A born artist’s model’ ” (118).

³¹ Charlotte herself admits belonging to Tunbridge Wells, where ‘we are all hopelessly behind the times’ (30). In any case, we can find an example of her anchorage –and other people’s- in past times, in one of the many anecdotes occurred during the later outing in Fiesole: “Miss Barlett had asked Mr. George Emerson what his profession was, and he had answered ‘the railway’. She was very sorry that she had asked him. She had no idea that it would be such a dreadful answer, or she would not have asked him... ‘The railway’ gasped Miss Lavish. ‘Oh, but I shall die!’ ”(85-6). Needless to comment on the irony of the novelist.

³² Even one of the Miss Alans, to whom Forster assigns the role of triumphant heroines over narrow-mindedness, darkness and commodity in spite of their old age, can’t avoid a clear “relapse”: ‘I could hear your beautiful playing, Miss Honeychurch, though I was in my room with the door shut. Doors shut; indeed, most necessary. No one has the last idea of privacy in this country. And one person catches it from another’ (54).

“It was Phaeton who drove them to Fiesole that memorable day, a youth all irresponsibility and fire, recklessly urging his master’s horses up the stony hill... he was Phaeton in Tuscany driving a cab. And it was Persephone whom he asked leave to pick up on the way, saying that she was his sister – Persephone, tall and slender and pale, returning with the spring to her mother’s cottage, and still shading her eyes from the unaccustomed light... Phaeton at once slipped the left rein over her head, thus enabling himself to drive with his arm round her waist” (79).

In my opinion, there is more to this than the telling of an episode. The light of Tuscany and, in general, the “bright” cultural legacy of the Mediterranean, its spirit, almost as indomitable as the daring son of the Sun, can still save those who accept its guidance³³. It does not matter if that who approaches its cart hoping to climb on is a Persephone –most certainly England-, so far dazzled because of its medieval and Gothic darkness –its Hades or personal cavern-; what matters is to climb onto the flow of spring, to open the window, “to be open” and embraced by a light of today and always, a Classical light. On the other hand, Lucy-Persephone will face a few problems, since she will leave in search of Phaeton-George, a young Englishman already touched by the magic of Florence, and she will get his embrace. However, Charlotte, medieval and opaque to the light of Florence³⁴, will split them up in the same way as reverend Eager, more opaque if such a thing is possible, also separates the Tuscan vision of Phaeton and Persephone:

“Light and beauty enveloped her. She had fallen onto a little open terrace, which was covered with violets from end to end... George had turned at the sound of her arrival. For a moment he contemplated her, as one who had fallen out of heaven. He saw radiant joy in her face, he saw the flowers beat against her dress in blue waves. The bushes above them closed. He stepped quickly forward and kissed her. Before she could speak, almost before she could feel, a voiced called, ‘Lucy! Lucy! Lucy!’ The silence of life had been broken by Miss Barlett, who stood brown against the view” (88).

And yet, it is the man with perspective and experience that who delivers the true diagnosis, the elegy for the pitiful death of a better old world –Classical-, where passion has its place; it is George’s father who does not hesitate to reprimand reverend Eager vindicating the practice of a natural (physical) religion³⁵:

³³ However, when the novelist later chooses the circumstances that will allow George to notice Lucy’s embarrassment while Cecil reads an excerpt from Miss Lavish’s novel which reproduces the incident in Fiesole, he will make the “competent” Apollo supervise the light on the book: “The garden of Windy Corner was deserted except for a red book, which lay sunning itself upon the gravel path... The sun rose higher on its journey, guided, not by Phaeton, but by Apollo, competent, unswerving, divine. Its rays fell on the ladies... on Mr. Beebe... on George... on the red book mentioned above... But this book lies motionless... Lucy picked up the book and glanced at the title listlessly: *Under a Loggia*” (167-8).

³⁴ Forster does not waste the opportunity of underlining her crime, Charlotte’s and that of a whole educational system: “She had worked like a great artist... there was presented to the girl the complete picture of a cheerless, loveless world in which the young rush to destruction until they learn better –a shamefaced world of precautions and barriers which may avert evil, but which do not seem to bring good, if we may judge from those who have used them most” (99-100).

³⁵ After all, it was him who, besides organising the trip to Fiesole, boasted of knowing and appreciating the virtues of *Phýsis*: ‘In these days of toil and tumult one has great need of the country and its message of purity’ (71).

‘Do we find happiness so often...? To be driven by lovers –a king might envy us, and if we part them it’s more like a sacrilege than anything I know³⁶... It is not victory... It is defeat. You have parted two people who were happy... Look’ he pointed to the Val d’Arno... ‘Fifty miles of spring, and we’ve come up to admire them. Do you suppose there’s any difference between spring in nature and spring in man?’ (83-4).

To my view, two kinds of comments would be imperative: a) a strictly philosophical one and b) a philosophical-literary one. Concerning the former, we should bear in mind that Forster is very much akin to George Edward Moore, although he denied having read his *Principia Ethica* (1903). The same can be said about other agnostic friends of H. O. Meredith’s, his intellectual mentor at Cambridge. If Moore represents epistemological versus metaphysical realism –his strong defence of common sense³⁷–, and if his ethical creed stands upon an indefinable “good” that recommends to accept the most immediate, that is, personal affection and aesthetic pleasure³⁸, then Mr. Emerson’s appeal to the “fifty miles of spring of the Arno valley” and his apology of “the happy Phaeton and Persephone” certainly acquires a special dimension. As regards the latter, I will simply point out that Mr. Emerson sees it clearly: it calls for not being intimidated by men such as reverend Eager, blessed by their religion but slaves to sacrilege³⁹ against Nature, against Pan. Spring, primary instinct, and primitive man, be it the mythical Phaeton or the Tuscan man⁴⁰, constitute a holy trinity⁴¹. It goes without saying that once the gods are dead –though the real mourning is for the Victorian castration of natural impulses–, not all of them profess the minimum paganism required to guarantee a reasonable civic-mindedness⁴². Yet, in view of how the novelist summarises the failure of a day marked by

³⁶ Emerson wraps himself in Renaissance wisdom: ‘Have you ever heard of Lorenzo de’ Medici?’... (Eager) “ ‘Do you refer to Lorenzo il Magnifico, or to Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, or to Lorenzo surnamed Lorenzino’... ‘I refer to Lorenzo the poet. He wrote a line...: ‘Don’t go fighting against the spring’. Mr. Eager could not resist the opportunity for erudition. *Non fate la guerra al Maggio*” (84). (Stallybrass, O. reminds us, though, that the correct version of Lorenzo il Magnifico is ‘*Non fate guerra il Maggi*’ – Penguin Books, p.246).

³⁷ On G. E. Moore and the meaning of his philosophy, see, e. g.: Baldwin, Th., 1999; Cavarnos, C., 1979; Fratantaro, S., 1998. Granese, A., 1970; Klemke, E. D., 1969; Levy, P., 1979; O’Connor, D., 1982; Olthuis, J. H., 1968; Petri, G., 1986; Regan, T., 1986; Shaw, W. H., 1995; Sylvester, R. P., 1990 and White, A., 1958.

³⁸ Bear in mind the sixth chapter of the *Principia Ethica* in particular.

³⁹ It is not only Eager who commits a sacrilege; Charlotte thinks that the silence of a Tuscan Phaeton, that is, a man who is sensitive to the sacred nature of desire –he has seen George kissing Lucy–, needs to be bought with money: “ ‘He saw it all’. Tapping Phaeton’s back with her guidebook, she said, ‘*Silenzio*’ and offered him a franc” (92).

⁴⁰ It was indeed thanks to him that Lucy discovered the effects of spring when he lead her to George across the field in Fiesole: “In the company of this common man the world was beautiful and direct. For the first time she felt the influence of spring. His arm swept the horizon gracefully; violets, like other things, existed in great profusion there” (88).

⁴¹ The one Miss Lavish, fine literary reproducer of the Fiesole episode, seems able to capture and adore, not only in its literal sense, but also in its spirit: “Leonora sat pensive and alone. Before her lay the rich campaign of Tuscany, dotted over with many a smiling village. The season was spring... a golden haze... Afar off the towers of Florence, while the bank on which she sat was carpeted with violets. All unobserved, Antonio stole up behind her... There came from his lips no wordy protestation such as formal lovers use. No eloquence was his, nor did he suffer from the lack of it. He simply enfolded her in his manly arms” (179).

⁴² Although it might be enough if they practised the virtues of Christianity –at least the Franciscan one– which they allegedly do. Eager has “invited” Emerson to leave the Santa Croce chapel, where he is displaying his knowledge of Giotto before a group of visitors: ‘Were you snubbed?’ asked his son tranquilly. “ ‘But we have spoilt the pleasure of I don’t know how many people. They won’t come back’

interdiction and taboo, the consequences are devastating: “Pan had been amongst them –not the great god Pan, who has been buried these two thousand years, but the little god Pan, who presides over social contretemps and unsuccessful picnics” (90).

Consequently, far from Nature and the eruption of instincts, Lucy –herself and her symbolism- is at the mercy of another suitor. However, we soon see that Cecil Vyse is not the solution but the perfect example of an age-old problem:

“Cecil was medieval. Like a Gothic statue. Tall and refined, with shoulders that seemed braced square by an effort of the will... he resembled those fastidious saints who guard the portals of a French cathedral... he remained in the grip of a certain devil whom the modern world knows as self-consciousness, and whom the medieval, with dimmer vision, worshipped as asceticism. A Gothic statue implies celibacy, just as a Greek statue implies fruition” (106).

Forster was a regular visitor to the British Museum in order to admire, among other things, the Parthenon marbles, the so-called “Elgin marbles”. This highlights a clear contradiction: the museum visitors, all of them well-dressed, do not deny the beauty of the nudes. However, they will never imitate them under any circumstances because “nudity at the present day signifies the highest standard in art and the lowest standard of civilisation”⁴³. Besides, bearing in mind his Florentine and Italian experience in general –let us think of Michael Angelo’s sculptures, the David for instance-, the equations Gothic asceticism = celibacy and Greek sculpture = fruition⁴⁴ probably become as inevitable and valid as unworthy of further comments, except for the different type of background, -temple, cathedral or open nature, the former being Gothic and the latter more Mediterranean and classical- which must take them in. In this respect, Cecil himself has the intuition that, unfortunately, Lucy regards him as a man *intra domum*. In my opinion, this is highly significant and would justify the allegorical interpretation that I have been applying to a greater or a lesser extent:

(C) ‘I had got an idea... that you feel more at home with me in a room’. (L) ‘A room?’ ... (C) ‘Yes... I connect you with a view –a certain type of view. Why shouldn’t you connect me with a room?’ ... (L) ‘Do you know that you’re right?... When I think of you it’s always as in a room’ ... (C) ‘A drawing-room, pray? With no view?’ (L) ‘¿Yes, with no view’ ... (C) ‘I’d rather that you connected me with the open air’⁴⁵ (125).

Since I have just mentioned the Gothic cathedral –or rather architecture-, we should focus on what in fact may well be the topic of another essay: the tension between Gothic historicism⁴⁶

... ‘full of innate sympathy’... ‘quickness to perceive good in others’... ‘vision of brotherhood of man’... Scraps of the lecture on St Francis came floating round the partition wall” (45, 6). Only a few characters in the novel have noticed these virtues in Mr. Emerson. Once again, *Maurice* would be one of Forster’s texts where the tension Paganism / Christianity most clearly depicted with comings and goings, victories and defeats. See, e. g., Gilabert, P., 1994 and 1996.

⁴³ Quoted by Beauman, N., 1994, p. 143.

⁴⁴ However, bearing in mind that *A Room with a View* was published in 1908, it is surprising that the novelist dares to venture in “the female fruition of the male body”, seeking protection in a tone of maxim and in the hedonist character usually attached to the Greek, thus shaking Victorian sensibilities.

⁴⁵ Let us contrast it, however, with Mr. Emerson’s reaction when Freddy Honeychurch, who has asked George to swim in the sacred lake, tells him of the convenience of a later formal visit: ‘You do well to bathe. Yours is a glorious country, Honeychurch!’ ... (F) ‘I must... I have to – have the pleasure of calling on you later on’ ... (E) ‘Call, my lad? Who taught us that drawing-room twaddle? Call on your grandmother! Listen to the wind among the pines! Yours is a glorious country’ (146).

⁴⁶ See, e.g.: Clarke, B., 1969 and Prior, E., 1974.

on the one hand and on the other, Greek, Roman⁴⁷ and Renaissance historicisms. Peter Collins, a great specialist in this field, shows a complex view that is difficult to simplify in *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture (1750-1950)*⁴⁸. However, it is basically rooted in Voltaire's *Essay on General History and Customs (1754)*, a third of which is devoted to the Middle Ages. This destroyed the long-standing belief that this period had been a cultural desert between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, whose architectural theories had been marked by a rejection of medieval architecture. In turn, Montesquieu pointed out the medieval origins of the English constitution, which he regarded as a model of political freedom which France lacked. Then came the great rise of the Gothic novel from 1785 to the early decades of the XIXth. century⁴⁹ with *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* by Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) as one of its most relevant representatives. Phobic, mysterious and fascinating atmospheres were amongst its main features. Thus, we find towers, tunnels, dungeons, hallways and, of course, narrow windows that do not let the light in and which make it difficult to gain access to the outside, "to the views". In addition to this, the architecture of Gothic mansions is at its height in England, which becomes a grotesque parody of the Middle Ages, with cresting and battlements. Moreover, Romanticism becomes a synonym of "mediaevalising" literature. In conclusion, it is a long period of imitation of past styles or architectural historicisms: on the one hand, Greek, Roman and Renaissance as a product of the *Grand Tour* and on the other, Gothic and Neo-gothic (Westminster, built after the 1834 fire or the Law Courts in 1867) for the afore-mentioned reasons and associated, in England, to the defence of a national and religious identity. This long period puts in images an aesthetic and ideological struggle which survives in the impossible dialogue between the two sides, the Classical and the Medieval, which the main characters in *A Room with a View* represent.

In fact, the only relationship that the medieval Cecil can conceive is "feudal": that of protector and protected⁵⁰. He had no glimpse of the comradeship after which the girl's soul yearned"(173). Or in George's words:

'I find him protecting and teaching you... to be shocked, when it was for you to settle whether you were shocked or no... He's the type who's kept Europe back for a thousand years. Every moment of his life he's forming you... and you...listen to his voice instead of to your own... But I do love you... I want you to have your own thoughts' (186-7).

As it becomes clear, the key word is "comradeship", absent for centuries from all kinds of relationships, such as that between man and woman, devoid of reflection, shared decision-making and natural spontaneous "sharing and doing" with the friend. Europe has witnessed this sad spectacle for over a thousand years. We should remember that the theorists of Classical pederasty, led by some texts by Plato and high doses of misogyny⁵¹ had already made *éros* and

⁴⁷ See, e.g.: Allsop, B., 1965; Crook, J. M., 1995; Richardson, A. E., 1982; Stillman, D., 1988; Summerson, J., 1980 and Worsley, G., 1995.

⁴⁸ Collins, P., 1998 and see also Dixon, R., 1988; Jenkyns, R., 1981 and Turner, F. M., 1981.

⁴⁹ On the Gothic novel, see, e. g.: Frank, F., 1987; Hennessy, B., 1978; Kilgour, M., 1995; Roberts, B., 1980; Tracy, A. B., 1981 and Varma, D., 1987.

⁵⁰ So much so that Lucy is even afraid that Cecil behaves in the same way with a man, George, who will visit them today: " 'George Emerson is coming up this afternoon. He is a most interesting man to talk to. Only don't -' She nearly said, 'Don't protect him' " (173). On the other hand, it would be easier to understand how Cecil tries to protect the ladies before George's nakedness, Freddy and Reverend Beebe swimming in the sacred lake: " 'Come this way immediately', "commanded Cecil, who always felt that he must lead women, though he knew not against what" (151).

⁵¹ For a general view of misogyny in Greece, see, e.g., Madrid, M. 1999.

philia an exclusive privilege –at least until Plutarch wrote the *Eroticus*⁵² - of male relationships⁵³. I want to emphasise this because, as will be seen later, the model that Forster suggests in order to improve the relationships between man and woman is that of comradeship between men, which since Classical times up to the present had proved effective –particularly in the south. The contradiction seems obvious, but the fact that our novelist wrote *Maurice* to vindicate the dignity of homosexual love does not prevent him from wishing that husband and wife gain access to the normal exercise of friendship, of genuine familiarity strongly hindered, among other factors, by the “Victorianisms” of the period and otherwise.

However, until this wish comes true, the medieval Cecil –anachronisms aside and *mutatis mutandis*- could well be considered a disciple of Denis de Rougemont, who following Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Victorian Pre-Raphaelites, understands courtly love as a pure, ascetic

⁵² ‘So it is ridiculous to maintain that women have no participation in virtue. What need is there to discuss their prudence and intelligence, or their loyalty and justice, when many women have exhibited a daring and great-hearted courage which is truly masculine? And to declare that their nature is noble in all other relationships and then to censure it as being unsuitable for friendship alone –that is surely a strange procedure. They are, in fact, fond of their children and their husbands; their affections are like a rich soil ready to receive the germ of friendship; and beneath it all is a layer of seductive grace. Just as poetry adds to the prose meaning the delights of song and metre and rhythm, making its educational power more forceful and its capacity for doing harm more irresistible; just so nature has endowed women with a charming face, a persuasive voice, a seductive physical beauty’ (769 B-D -translated by W. C. Helmbold. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969; *idem* regarding all the quotations of the *Eroticus*).

⁵³ Let us remember that, in Pausanias’ speech in the *Symposium*, the followers of Aphrodite Pandemos are thought to have a purely carnal inclination (181b-c): ‘Now the Love that belongs to the Popular Aphrodite is in very truth popular and does his work at haphazard: this is the Love we see in the meaner sort of men; who, in the first place, love women as well as boys; secondly, where they love, they are set on the body more than the soul; and thirdly, they choose the most witless people they can find, since they look merely to the accomplishment and care not if the manner be noble or no. Hence they find themselves doing everything at haphazard, good or its opposite, without distinction: for this love proceeds from the goddess who is far the younger of the two, and who in her origin partakes of both female and male. But the other Love springs from the Heavenly goddess who, firstly, partakes not of the female but only of the male; and secondly, is the elder, untinged with wantonness: wherefore those who are inspired by this Love betake them to the male, in fondness for what has the robuster nature and a larger share of mind’ -translated by Lamb, W. R. M. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983; *idem* regarding all the quotations of the *Symposium*. Aristophanes (191e-192b) claims that: ‘Men who are sections of the male pursue the masculine, and so long as their boyhood lasts they show themselves to be slices of the male by making friends with men and delighting to lie with them and to be clasped in men’s embraces; these are the finest boys and striplings, for they have the most manly nature. Some say they are shameless creatures, but falsely: for their behaviour is due not to shamelessness but to daring, manliness, and virility, since they are quick to welcome their like. Sure evidence of this is the fact that on reaching maturity these alone prove in a public career to be men. So when they come to man’s state they are boy-lovers, and have no natural interest in wiving and getting children, but only do these things under stress of custom; they are quite contented to live together unwedded all their days’. Finally, in Diotima’s speech (208e-209), we are said that: ‘Now those who are teeming in body betake them rather to women, and are amorous on this wise: by getting children they acquire an immortality, a memorial, and a state of bliss, which in their imagining they for all succeeding time procure. But pregnancy of soul –for there are persons, she declared, who in their souls still more than in their bodies conceive things which are proper for soul to conceive and bring forth’. In view of such a distribution of roles, it becomes obvious that the woman is indeed granted a breeding function, but also a bodily hyperdimension which “brutalises” her and invalidates her as a true company or comrade with whom one should make decisions. How could she ever exercise politics in a virile way with her “natural” physical and mental weakness -Pausanias *dicit*?

experience, a product of a so-called dependence from Cathar heresy⁵⁴, which ends up placing the beloved onto an uncomfortable and unwanted pedestal⁵⁵ and the lover at a fateful distance. Certainly, even though he boasts that *inglese italianato é un diavolo incarnato* and proudly claims he is not an “athlete” (116-7)⁵⁶ –probably against those non-metaphysical Greeks who, starting with their bodies, did pay tribute to nature⁵⁷–, he will undoubtedly fail in his physical approach to others. George says so: ‘He should know no one intimately, least of all a woman... He is the sort who are all right so long as they keep to things –books, pictures- but kill when they come to people’⁵⁸ (185). And Lucy says so too as a result of her first actual experience in this sense:

“As he approached her he found time to wish that he could recoil. As he touched her, his gold *pince-nez* became dislodged and was flattened between them. Such was the embrace... it had been a failure. Passion should believe itself irresistible. It should forget civility and consideration and all the other curses of a refined nature. Above all, it should never ask for leave where there is a right of way” (127).

Given that I have just mentioned Classical pederasty, whose *télos* was to raise the *erastés* and the *erómenos* to ideal Beauty or Good, I will mention that Cecil will finally admit that his great mistake was to see in Lucy something like the opportunity to start climbing a ladder of platonic abstraction: ‘It is a question between ideals, yours and mine –pure abstract ideals’⁵⁹ (193), or as he told reverend Beebe when he announced his engagement to Lucy:

“ ‘There was simply the sense that she had found wings... I can show you a beautiful picture in my Italian diary: Miss Honeychurch as a kite, Miss Barlett holding the string. Picture number two: the string breaks’... He cursed his love of metaphor; had he suggested that he was a star and that Lucy was soaring up to reach him?” (112).

He has been doomed by the unconscious application of the palinode of Plato’s *Phaedrus*⁶⁰ - unconsciously in the character’s mind, not in the novelist’s-, but he is also doomed

⁵⁴ See, e.g. Paz, O., 1993.

⁵⁵ For a wide overview of courtly love, which precisely stresses the diversity of attitudes towards love against what Denis de Rougemont claims in his revised and enlarged version, 1983, see, e.g., Singer, I., 1987.

⁵⁶ Or as he later tells Freddy when the latter begs him to play tennis: ‘I am no athlete. As you well remarked this very morning, there are some chaps who are no good for anything but books’ (188).

⁵⁷ Though, leaving Cecil aside, we find a good athletic spirit in many Victorians, whose Greek inspiration Jenkyns, R. (1981) deals with on pages 210-26.

⁵⁸ Lucy will later answer Cecil back with this very same thesis: ‘You’re the sort who can’t know anyone intimately... you’re always protecting me... I won’t be protected... To shield me is an insult. Can’t I be trusted to face the truth but I must get it second-hand through you?’ (191).

⁵⁹ Funnily enough, reverend Beebe, much more human and earthly in his theses, chooses a Pauline justification of the ideal of chastity. However, the degree of cultural Platonism which underlies her is clearly a different matter: “Girls like Lucy were charming to look at, but Mr. Beebe was, from rather profound reasons, somewhat chilly in his attitude towards the other sex, and preferred to be interested rather than enthralled” (53). “His belief in celibacy... now came to the surface and expanded like some delicate flower. ‘They that marry do well, but they that refrain do better’ ” (207) (Cf. Saint Paul, *1C. 7: 8-10*: “Even so, I tell bachelors and widowers that it is better for them to stay like me, but if they cannot get continence, they shall get married: better get married than burn”).

⁶⁰ 244a-257b. In fact, the first part of *Phaedrus* –until the end of the palinode- and the *Symposium* e. g., form the basis of what could be called Clive’s Greek discourse on *éros* in *Maurice* –see Gilabert, P., 1994 and 1996. Maybe this is why J. Ivory and Hesketh-Harvey, scriptwriters, decided to represent part of the

by his admiration of a “monster” of Renaissance such as Leonardo da Vinci. Da Vinci was said to have an anti-platonic reaction, since in his idea of the world and thanks to a fine sense of sight which allows the contemplation of its beauty, the body as “prison of the soul” ceases to exist – contrary to what Ficino claims- and death even implies pain caused by their separation. Yet, at the same time, his will to draw opposed poles together, his addiction to *chiaroscuro*, makes him the undisputed master of mystery and ambiguity, disregarding even the “rude” John Evangelist⁶¹:

“Soon he detected in her a wonderful reticence. She was like a woman of Leonardo da Vinci’s, whom we love not so much for herself as for the things that she will not tell us. The things are assuredly not of this life; no woman of Leonardo’s could have anything so vulgar as a ‘story’ ”⁶² (107-8).

As on many other occasions, Forster has hit home: the tragedy of Lucy, that of the august and respectable Victorian woman⁶³ in particular, or the woman in general, has been to witness how she was deprived of her history. She was forced to live in the gynaeceum since Greek times –not everything which is Classical is approved of-, she was doomed to the humanly and culturally suicidal exercise of “the absence in the presence”, that is, to be there and not “bother”, to being and to not being at the same time.

Nevertheless, the one who can best explain to Lucy this historic outrage against the Victorian Medieval woman and, in this case, also Classical, is no other than the circumspect Charlotte. This proves how Forster combines elegant literature and merciless denouncing to the point of perfection:

“Why were most big things unladylike? Charlotte had once explained to her why. 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 themselves⁶⁴. Indirectly, by means of tact and a spotless name, a lady could accomplish much. But if she rushed into the fray herself she would be first censured, then despised, and finally ignored... There is much that is immortal in this medieval lady. The dragons have gone, and so have the knights, but still she lingers in our midst. She reigned in many an early Victorian castle, and was queen of much early Victorian song. It is sweet to protect her in the intervals of business, sweet to pay her honour when has cooked our dinner well. But alas! The creature grows degenerate. In her heart also there are springing up strange desires. She too is enamoured of heavy winds, and vast panoramas, and green expanses of the sea... Men, declaring that she inspires them to it, move joyfully over the surface, having the most delightful meetings with other men, happy, not because they are masculine, but because they are

reading of the palinode in their film version, in particular the one dealing with “the flux of passion” of which Zeus, in love with Ganymedes, talks about, 225a-d, whereas in the novel, Deacon Mr. Cornwallis only says: ‘Omit: a reference to the unspeakable vice of the Greeks!’, p. 50, Penguin Books.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Chastel, A., 1982 or, for a more general perspective, Bramly, S., 1990 and Clark, K., 1958.

⁶² Or, as when he tries to draw Lucy away from his “vulgar” world: “In January he would rescue his Leonardo from this stupefying twaddle” (163). Once the compromise is broken, though, Cecil will open his eyes: “He looked at her, instead of through her... From a Leonardo she had become a living woman, with mysteries and forces of her own” (191).

⁶³ On the Victorian and Victorian-Edwardian woman, see, e.g.: *Victorian Women ...*, 1981; Castero, S. P., 1982 and Lewis, J., 1991.

⁶⁴ Lucy’s mother seems to faithfully follow these ideas, judging from her opinion on Miss Lavish’s literary activity: “Nothing roused Mrs Honeychurch so much as literature in the hands of females. She would abandon every topic to inveigh against those women who (instead of minding their houses and their children) seek notoriety by print. Her attitude was: ‘If books must be written, let them be written by men’ ” (158).

alive. Before the show breaks up she would like to drop the august title of the Eternal Woman, and go there as her transitory self⁶⁵ (60-1).

With such a curriculum, when not even eternity is a synonym of life but of permanent suffocation, it does not surprise us that Lucy should not be “in favour of the Medieval lady” (128-61) and that, attempting a shy revolution, she should feel inclined to buy something in Florence that her friends disapprove of. A postcard of *The Birth of Venus* by Botticelli, of Classical inspiration, seems to ease her at first, but her Victorian subconscious –or her fear of a simple reprimand⁶⁶- drives her to correct such a daring act by acquiring others: *The Tempest* by Giorgione... a few frescoes from the Sistine Chapel... *The Coronation* by Fra Angelico... *The Ascension of Saint John* by Giotto, etc. (128-47). In conclusion, Lucy –herself, and once again what she symbolises-, before leaning onto the “vast panoramas” full of light and truth, Mediterranean and Classical –where, by the way, the naked beauty was venerated⁶⁷-, will have to get rid of her own reserve of Medieval obscurantism⁶⁸, that is, her own understandable confusion⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ For a view on the role of women in Forster’s novels, see, e.g., Elert, K., 1979.

⁶⁶ The text says literally: “She bought a photograph of Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*. Venus, being a pity, spoiled the picture, otherwise so charming, and Miss Barlett had persuaded her to do without it. (A pity in art of course signified the nude)” (61).

⁶⁷ It is worth remembering Winckelmann again, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung...*, 1969, p. 8: “In Griechenland aber, wo man sich der Lust und Freude von Jugend auf weihete, wo ein gewisser heutiger bürgerlicher Wohlstand der Freiheit der Sitten niemals Eintrag getan, da zeigte sich die schöne Natur unverhüllet zum grossen Unterrichte der Künstler. Die Schule der Künstler war in den Gymnasien, wo die jungen Leute, welche die öffentliche Schamhaftigkeit bedeckte, ganz nackend ihre Leibesübungen trieben. Der Weise, der Künstler gingen dahin: Sokrates den Charmides, den Autolykos, den Lysis zu lehren; ein Phidias, aus diesen schönen Geschöpfen seine Kunst zu bereichern... Das schönste Nackende der Körper zeigte sich hier in so mannigfaltigen, wahrhaften und edlen Ständen und Stellungen, in die ein gedungenes Modell, welches in unseren Akademien aufgestellt wird, nicht zu setzen ist”.

⁶⁸ Lucy is not “in favour of the Medieval lady”, but for a time she suffers wondering whether she can expect enough “chivalry” from George so as to silence the: “It struck her that it was hopeless to look for chivalry in such a man... he was trustworthy, intelligent, and even kind... But he lacked chivalry” (65). On the other hand, Charlotte’s reaction is thoroughly coherent: ‘O for a real man! We are only two women... O for your brother! He is young, but I know that his sister’s insult would rouse in him a very lion. There are still left some men who can reverence woman’ (96).

⁶⁹ Although invading a field which is totally alien to Classical Tradition, it is worth pointing out that Forster resorts to music –basically pieces by Beethoven and Schumann-, in order to mark another passionate contrast –apart from the Italian one- in reference to which Lucy’s life, still dull, proves false and unbearable: “It so happened that Lucy, who found daily life rather chaotic, entered a more solid world when she opened the piano... Passion was there... it slipped between love and hatred and jealousy... And she was tragic only in the sense that she was great, for she loved to play on the side of Victory... Some sonatas of Beethoven are written tragic ... and Lucy had decided that they should triumph... Mr. Beebe was wondering whether it would be *Adelaide* or the march of *The Ruins of Athens*, when his composure was disturbed by the opening bars of *Opus 111*” –sonata 32 in C minor- (51-2). Beebe thinks that, ‘if Miss Honeychurch ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting’ (52). ‘Then we shall have her heroically good, heroically bad –too heroic, perhaps, to be good or bad’ (111). In the film version of *A Room with a View*, James Ivory chose Beethoven’s *Sonata n° 21, Opus 53* (1803-4), Mozart’s *Sonata en A minor KV 300D (310)* (1778) and, instead of Schumann for the scene of the debut at Cecil’s mother’s, he chose Schubert’s *Sonata en A minor, Opus 164* (1817). As a funny piece of information on Beethoven and Mozart’s “Greek” simplicity, see Jenkyns, R., 1981, p. 173.

Mr. Emerson will be the master of ceremonies throughout this initiation journey. He shows himself both ahead of his time and natural –that is, son and disciple of *Phýsis*-, as regards comradeship between the sexes, and his opening towards the free experience of emotions. As concerns the former, he confidently corrects Beebe:

‘I tell you that they shall be comrades... The Garden of Eden... which you place in the past, is really yet to come. We shall enter it when we no longer despise our bodies... In this –not in other things- we men are ahead. We despise the body less than women do. But not until we are comrades shall we enter the Garden’⁷⁰ (145).

In fact, the respectable woman has always been regarded as lacking self-control and being devoid of reason –*lógos*-. She has also been accused of being naturally inclined to pleasure and to provoking lust. As far as Classical thinking is concerned, we just need to recall some memorable passages of the Platonising *De opificio mundi* by Philo of Alexandria or the Protogenes’ speech in Plutarch’s *Eroticus*⁷¹ in order to illustrate this. She has been forced to

⁷⁰ So far, reverend Beebe cannot even imagine it: ‘How d’ye do?... Come and have a bathe’ –he refers to Freddy’s invitation-... ‘That’s the best conversational opening I’ve ever heard. But I’m afraid it will only act between men. Can you picture a lady who has been introduced to another lady by a third lady opening civilities with ‘How do you do? Come and have a bathe’? And yet you will tell me that the sexes are equal’ (145).

⁷¹ A) *De opificio mundi* LV, 155-6: “Having set up these standards in the soul, He watched, as a judge might, to see to which it would tend. And when He saw it inclining to wickedness, and making light of holiness and godly fear, out of which comes the winning of immortal life, He cast it forth, as we might expect, and drove it from the pleasance, giving the soul which committed offences that defy the healer’s skill, no hope of a subsequent return, inasmuch as the reason given for their deception was in a high degree blameworthy. This we must not leave unexplained. It is said that in olden time the venomous earthborn crawling thing could send forth a man’s voice, and that one day it approached the wife of the first man and upbraided her for her irresoluteness and excessive scrupulosity in delaying and hesitating to pluck a fruit most beauteous to behold and most luscious to taste, and most useful into the bargain, since by its means she would have power to recognize things good and evil. It is said that she, without looking into the suggestion, prompted by a mind devoid of steadfastness and firm foundation (ἀπὸ γνώμης ἀβεβαίου καὶ ἀνιδρύτου), gave her consent and ate of the fruit, and gave some of it to her husband” - translated by F. H. Colson & G. H. Whitaker. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956. B) *Eroticus* 750C-751B: ‘In a normal state one’s desire for bread and meat is moderate, yet sufficient; but abnormal indulgence of this desire creates the vicious habit called gluttony and gormandizing. In just the same way there normally exists in men and women a need for the pleasure derived from each other; but when the impulse that derives us to this goal is so vigorous and powerful that it becomes torrential and almost out of control (πολλήν καὶ δυσκάρηκτον), it is a mistake to give the name Love to it. Love, in fact, it is that attaches himself to a young and talented soul (εὐφυοῦς καὶ νέας) and through friendship (διὰ φιλίας) brings it to a state of virtue (ἀρετήν); but the appetite (ἐπιθυμία) for women we are speaking of, however well it turns out, has for net gain only an accrual of pleasure in the enjoyment of a ripe physical beauty (ἀπόλαυσιν ὥρας καὶ σώματος) ... The object of desire is, in fact, pleasure and enjoyment (ἡδονὴ καὶ ἀπόλαυσις); while Love, if he loses the hope of inspiring friendship, has no wish to remain cultivating a deficient plant which has come to its prime, if the plant cannot yield the proper fruit of character to produce friendship and virtue (φιλίαν καὶ ἀρετήν). If, however, such a passion (πάθος) must also be called Love, let it at least be qualified as an effeminate and bastard love (θηλιν καὶ νόθον), that takes its exercise in the women’s quarters as bastards do in the Cynosarges... there is only one genuine Love, the love of boys (παιδικός). It is not ‘flashing with desire’, as Anacreont says of the love of maidens, or ‘drenched with unguents, shining bright’. No, its aspects is simple and unspoiled (λιτὸν... καὶ ἄθρυπτον). You will see it in schools of philosophy (ἐν σχολαῖς φιλοσόφοις), or perhaps in the gymnasia and palaestrae (γυμνάσια

eliminate her sensuality –or, at least, to conceal it- and Victorianism takes this to its ultimate consequences. As it happens, Forster thinks that the uninhibited image of three naked men –one of them a clergyman-, swimming in the sacred lake and –maybe in an unconscious way- purifying themselves from the nausea produced by the somatic nature of their own self, is the best vantage point from which to watch a better horizon, shared at last by men and women and lived in “body” and soul, in spirit and in “flesh”.

“Mr. Beebe watched them, and watched the seeds of the willow-herb dance chorically above their heads (149)... That evening and all that night the water ran away. On the morrow the pool had shrunk to its old size and lost its glory. It had been a call to the blood and to the relaxed will, a passing benediction whose influence did not pass, a holiness, a spell, a momentary chalice for youth” (152).

Yet, this bath between comrades has sometimes been interpreted as a sort of baptism to free themselves from homoerotic drives⁷². Apart from the fact that the enigmatic and unidentified “aromatic plant” (148) that grows in the sacred lake’s shore seems a clear tribute to the *calamus* of Walt Whitman, Eric Haralson, for instance⁷³, puts forward a series of reasons, powerful in my opinion, for such an interpretation, this time based on the particular configuration, both intellectual and of state of mind, of his three protagonists. In any case, as concerns Forster, the emphasis is on a comradeship that beats the rigid division of social classes he had to experience in his life. The friendship that binds two characters belonging to different social classes and of different nationalities such as Philip and Gino in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, or the love that binds the lives of Maurice Hall, a stockbroker’s son, and Alec Scudder, a gamekeeper, in *Maurice*, are examples of the kind of inter-class homoerotic utopia, of Carpenterian fatherhood in its case⁷⁴, that presents a possible model transferable to other fields. In conclusion, a comradeship that must also overcome that of The Apostles⁷⁵, the *Societas Fratrum*, the Society par excellence of Cambridge, active since 1820, of which Forster became a member in 1901. Such remarkable people as H. Sidgwick, G. E. Moore, H. O. Meredith, L. Strachey, G. L. Dickinson, etc. were also among its members. Free discussion, intellectually rich

καὶ παλαίστρας), searching for young men whom it cheers on with a clear and noble cry to the pursuit of virtue when they are found worthy of its attention. But that other lax and housebound love (ὕγρον... καὶ οἰκουρὸν), that spends its time in the bosoms and beds of women (ἐν κόλποις... καὶ κλινιδίαις), ever pursuing a soft life (τὰ μαλακὰ), enervated amid pleasure devoid of manliness and friendship and inspiration (ἡδοναῖς ἀνάνδροις καὶ ἀφίλοις καὶ ἀνενοουσιάζουσις), it should be proscribed, as in fact Solon did proscribe it. He forbade slaves to make love to boys or to have a rubdown, but he did not restrict their intercourse with women. For friendship (φιλία) is a beautiful and courteous relationship (καλὸν καὶ ἀστεῖον), but mere pleasure (ἡδονή) is base and unworthy of a free man (κοινὸν καὶ ἀνελεύθερον). For this reason also it is not gentlemanly or urbane to make love to slave boys: such a love is mere copulation, like the love of women’.

⁷² Concerning homosexual fantasy, now linked to the Mediterranean, see, e.g., Aldrich, R., 1993.

⁷³ “Thinking about Homosex’ in Forster and James”, in *Queer Forster*, 1997, pp. 59-73 and, specially, 66-70. See also Fone, B. R. S. “Arcadia and the Homosexual Imagination” in *Essays on Gay Literature*, 1985, pp. 13-34, specially, 25-7; Kaur Bakshi, P., 1996; Martland, A., 1999.

⁷⁴ For example, think of “Homogenic Love”, 1894. Besides, it is already commonplace to remember what Carpenter wrote to Forster after reading the manuscript of *Maurice*: ‘I was so afraid that you were going to let Scudder go at the last –but you saved him & saved the story’, *Selected Letters* 1: 223. Thus, once the social barriers have been pulled down and love is triumphant, it is ideal to dedicate the novel to “A Happier Year”, p. 5 Penguin Books. Come what may, Carpenter’s personal experience and the one in *Maurice* have quite a lot in common, since Carpenter left Cambridge to live in a little farm in the North of England with a working-class lover.

⁷⁵ On this society, see, e.g., Allen, P., 1978.

and open to all matters, including homosexuality, did not prevent Forster from noticing that its members were “class-bound”, quite symptomatically in an unharmed way⁷⁶.

To finish this section and to place it more directly within the Italian and Classical scope we were referring to, I would like to mention another one of the articles he wrote in Rome entitled ‘Via Nomentana’, where he idealises that friendship that “flashed forth for a moment in David and Jonathan but first shone... in Ancient Greece, proclaiming to barbarians that human affection need not be confined to the home circle or extended to the harem”. As he was crossing a bridge on his walk, he saw two men of about twenty in the distance:

“... whom the Romans called ‘*iuvenes*’, the Greeks ‘*epheboi*’... They had their arms round one another’s necks, as English youths have, and were not mawkish, and when they unlocked, and sparred and charged into one another, as Hooligans do, they were not Hooligans... but to me they are Orestes and Pylades, always young, always beautiful, always together, always giving the truest blessing –the blessing of those who know not that they give”⁷⁷.

Fortunately, this perception did not prevent Forster from saying, on various occasions, that the chosen model, the Classical, should definitely free itself from its main defect: the social isolation of women. Otherwise, men and women would neither be comrades, as they were not in Classical times, nor enter the New Eden⁷⁸ together.

But we had left Lucy immersed in confusion. She needs to overcome it at once if moral youth must be won back for good, not only for a while. However, considering the degree of Lucy’s apathy, the battle that Mr. Emerson will have to fight will not be an easy one:

“She gave up trying to understand herself, and joined the vast armies of the benighted, who follow neither the heart nor the brain...they have yielded... to the enemy within. They have sinned against passion and truth... They have sinned against Eros and against Pallas Athene... Lucy entered this army when she pretended to George that she did not love him, and pretended to Cecil that she loved no one. The night received her, as it had received Miss Barlett thirty years before” (194).

What was an intuition at first can now be confirmed. Lucy is not the only protagonist of the drama, but a large army of anti-pagans who refuse to have universal values. The “dark” and the “nocturne” sin against a wise spirit of fight and against the natural will to substitute our own

⁷⁶ See, e. g., Bristow, J. “Fratrum Societati: Forster’s Apostolic Dedications”, in *Queer Forster*, 1997, pp. 113-136.

⁷⁷ Quoted by Furbank, P. N., 1979, pp. 90-1.

⁷⁸ The reflections of Lilia, Gino’s English wife, in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* clearly prove this: “Italy is such a delightful place to live in if you happen to be a man. There one may enjoy that exquisite luxury of socialism –that true socialism which is based not on equality of income or character, but on the equality of manners. In the democracy of the *caffè* or the street the great question of our life has been solved, and the brotherhood of man is a reality. But it is accomplished at the expense of the sisterhood of women. Why should you not make friends with your neighbour at the theatre or in the train, when you know and he knows that feminine criticism and feminine insight and feminine prejudice will never come between you! Though you become as David and Jonathan, you need never enter his home, nor he yours. All your lives you will meet under the open air, the only roof-tree of the South, under which he will spit and swear, and you will drop your h’s, and nobody will think the worse of either. Meanwhile the women –they have, of course, their house and their church... It is all very sad. But one consolation emerges –life is very pleasant in Italy if you are a man” (53-4).

weaknesses by the acceptance of “otherness”⁷⁹: they do sin against Eros and Pallas Athene, though they think that these two august and classical names belong to remote times, when human beings were leading a wrong course.

However, as was to be expected, Mr. Emerson, who has found out both Lucy’s love for her son and her unhealthy contention, will not give in:

“ ‘Take an old man’s word: there’s nothing worse than a muddle in all the world... Ah for a little directness to liberate the soul! Your soul, dear Lucy!... I see you ruining yours. I cannot bear it. It is again the darkness creeping in’⁸⁰... Yet as he spoke the darkness was withdrawn, veil after veil, and she saw to the bottom of her soul... ‘Give George my love –once only. Tell him, ‘Muddle’ ’⁸¹... ‘Now it is all dark... but remember the mountains over Florence and the view’⁸²... ‘Yes, for we fight for more than Love or Pleasure: there is Truth. Truth counts’... ‘You kiss me’, said the girl. ‘You kiss me. I will try’... he had robbed the body of its taint... he had shown her the holiness of direct desire... It was as if he had made her see the whole of everything at once” (222-5).

Throughout his work, Forster often attacks the metaphysical “outbursts” inherent in Platonism⁸³. However, for that same reason, it becomes obvious that Plato and his dialogues are there, in a wide mental reserve of references and cultural images to refer to repeatedly and whenever needed. I am saying this because it is difficult not to suspect that, in one way or another, the myth of the cavern underlies Lucy’s trapped soul, imprisoned by darkness and in need of liberation, in the same way as the outside light that welcomes the privileged and blinded Platonic prisoner⁸⁴ would underlie the Florentine views and the progressive withdrawal of veils. One may object that what awaited that Platonic new inhabitant of freedom was a kind of uranic adventure which was opposed to the “holiness of direct desire” or to “the vision of the –not dark-

⁷⁹ I am thinking of the Socratic definition of *éros* in the *Symposium* 200e: ‘Is not love –*éros*- in the first place the desire for anything and, secondly, for what it happens to be lacking?’ (ἔστιν ὁ Ἔρως πρῶτον μὲν τινῶν, ἔπειτα τούτων ὧν ἂν ἔνδεια παρῆ αὐτῶ;).

⁸⁰ In fact, in her struggle to fight her feelings towards George, Lucy still prefers to blame him: “He had behaved abominably; she had never encouraged him”, but the novelist acts as radiographer of her confusion: “The armour of falsehood is subtly wrought out of darkness, and hides a man not only from others, but from his own soul” (181). Thus, I understand that those who protect themselves by building a wall of darkness around them, do not see the outer light, do not see the man, but so deep are they in darkness that they cannot even see their inner self.

⁸¹ The advice is not trivial, since George has also had to overcome many obstacles. Charlotte discovered an enigmatic question mark in his room (34) and his father has often seen him in “hell”, feeling “unhappy” despite having been brought up “free from all the superstition and ignorance that lead men to hate one another in the name of God” (46). But George witnesses the murder in Piazza della Signoria, holds Lucy in his arms, finds out that something has happened to the dead and the living, and later near the river –a classical symbol of life- and with Lucy beside him, he says that probably “he will want to live”. George has stopped sinning against Eros and Pallas Athene.

⁸² In other words, but keeping its semantic meaning: ‘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’ (47).

⁸³ Remember, e. g. how Maurice attacks Clive’s Platonic “addiction” when he announces his romance with Alec: (M) ‘I am in love with your gamekeeper’ (C) ‘Most grotesque’... (M) ‘I’m flesh and blood, if you’ll condescend to such low things’... ‘I have shared with Alec’... ‘All I have. Which includes my body’. (C) ‘The sole excuse for any relationship between men is that it remain purely platonic’. (M) ‘He’s sacrificed his career for my sake... I don’t know whether that’s platonic of him or not, but it’s what he did’ –Penguin Books, 1972, pp. 212-3.

⁸⁴ See 514a-518b in book VII of Plato’s *Republic*.

bottom of the soul”, but Forster is a master in the free use of Classical Tradition. What is more, I would not at all discard that this time, Pan –the great god Pan- had turned up at last. Lucy, already sensitive to the forces of Nature, to the purity of universal desire, of its *éros* and the cosmic one, has seen ‘the whole of everything’ straightaway, in a daring identification of Desire-god Pan-Totality-Nature- whose only Classical precedent, though late (I century AD), would be the Stoic philosopher Lucius Anneus Cornutus, Lucanus and Persius’ master and apparently an advanced follower of the *enodatio nominum* so loved in the Stoa⁸⁵.

Indeed, Forster is an enthusiastic defender of light and views as a means to keep darkness away, though resisting the ravages of idealism⁸⁶ to the point of finding truth, as we have seen, at the bottom of the soul-cavern, not outside. Therefore, the only thing left for him to do is polish the edges of Mr. Emerson’s personality, which logically –*Heraclito sensu*- enjoys the transit, the flow of life:

‘The things of universe. It is quite true. They don’t ’... he said: ‘*From far, from eve and morning/And yon twelve-winded sky, / The stuff of life to knit me / Blew hither: here am I*. ‘George and I both know this...We know that we come from the winds, and that we shall return to them; that all life is perhaps a knot, a tangle, a blemish in the eternal smoothness. But why should this make us unhappy? Let us rather love one another, and work and rejoice. I don’t believe in this world-sorrow... by the side of the everlasting Why there is a Yes⁸⁷ –a transitory Yes if you like, but a Yes’ (47-8).

Consequently, it does not matter if it is the water of Tales, the air of Anaximenes, the four roots of Empedocles, or the fire of Heraclitus and the Stoics –to mention just a few examples prior to Classical thinking. In my opinion, what matters is to perceive in Forster-Emerson the will to take roots in the world and its matter, the will to accept it and enjoy it in its eternal death and resurrection, the will to drive the tedious and medieval *memento mori* out of minds and hearts. At the same time, I would emphasise the arrival of father and son in the world blown by the winds, almost in the same way as Botticelli’s Florentine Venus arrived in her shell blown by the Zephyr and the Aurora⁸⁸ –though Forster takes the first *stanza* of poem 32 of *A Schropshire Lad* (1896) by Housman⁸⁹ as a reference. Emerson is one of those who find Giotto’s *Ascension of Saint John* ridiculous –‘Look at that fat man in blue! He must weigh as much as I do, and he is shooting into the sky like an air-balloon’⁹⁰ (44)-, and he soon reminds his son that he will

⁸⁵ Daring in its identification of the mythical god Pan with ‘Totality’; however, as for the universal presence of desire, consider for instance Eryximachus’ speech in the platonic *Symposium*. In any case, see *RE*, supplement 8, col. 949-1008.

⁸⁶ On the tension idealism / reality in Forster’s work, see, e.g., Martin, R., 1974.

⁸⁷ Stallybrass, O. relates the ‘everlasting Why’ and the ‘transitory Yes’ to two chapters of Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* which begin with ‘The everlasting No’ and ‘The Everlasting Yes’, Penguin Books, p. 241.

⁸⁸ George resorts again to the impulse of the twelve winds putting it on a level with destiny, in order to explain to Reverend Beebe why he had come so close to the Honeychurchs: ‘It is fate. Everything is Fate. We are flung together by Fate, drawn apart by Fate... The twelve winds blow us –we settle nothing’ (147).

⁸⁹ According to Stallybrass, O., Penguin Books, pp. 240, 1.

⁹⁰ This attitude is opposed to that of reverend Eager, who was against Phaeton’s enthusiasm for Persephone –thus enemy of “the spring of man”-, and now a champion of anti-humanism: ‘Remember... the facts about this church of Santa Croce; how it was built by faith in the full fervour of mediaevalism, before any taint of the Renaissance had appeared. Observe how Giotto in these frescoes... is untroubled by the snares of anatomy and perspective. Could anything be more majestic, more pathetic, beautiful, true?’ (43). On Giotto and the conception of his art, see, e.g.: Bellosi, L., 1981; Flores, F., 1995; Fremantle, R., 1975 and Tomei, A., 1998.

never rise to heaven because ‘You and I ... will lie at peace in the earth that bore us, and our names will disappear as surely as our work survives’⁹¹ (44).

Enemy of the sky and in favour of the earth, strict censor of the excesses of Platonism and metaphysics in general⁹², and follower of a natural or *physical* paganism, Mr. Emerson succeeded in getting Lucy’s support. Undoubtedly, she was the one who suffered most⁹³, since not very long before, she was trying to drown love as if it were “the world’s enemy”, even though it was the “love which our bodies exact and our hearts have transfigured” (181). However, he did not give in because, deceived by all kinds of theoretical maximalisms, he truly believes that his diagnosis is a result of impartiality, of weighing, with freedom and critical spirit, the Classical Humanism which has tried to understand men in their physical-spiritual dimension and promoted their dignity throughout the centuries, from plural perspectives and overcoming sad parentheses of brutality:

‘That’s what I mean. You love George! You love the boy body and soul... It isn’t impossible to love and to part... You can transmute love, ignore it, muddle it, but you can never pull it out of you’⁹⁴. I know by experience that the poets are right: love is eternal... I only wish poets would say this, too: that love is of the body; not the body, but of the body’⁹⁵ (222-3).

Forster gives its novel a happy end. He entitled its last chapter “The end of the Middle Ages”. He could not do otherwise. George and Lucy have managed to “open the windows in the wall” and contemplate the views beyond it, beyond the medieval wall of continence of feelings that, turned into a sign of national identity, has been standing in England for much longer than history demanded of other peoples. And they decide –of course- to go back to Florence in their honeymoon, to the banner of Renaissance Humanism. It was George who, with his father’s invaluable help as a great humanist⁹⁶, first felt the influx of its classical knowledge permanently anchored in its piazzas, monuments and museums, in its men and women, its hills and its light. There, he learnt to behave according to the truth and that is why Lucy has come back to him. It

⁹¹ An image of this “earthly creed” can be found in the conversation between George and Lucy’s mother, which would stand out as an inevitable true call for acceptance of good and evil, of lights and shades in the human world: ‘There is a certain amount of kindness, just as there is a certain amount of light... We cast a shadow on something wherever we stand, and it is no good moving from place to place to save things; because the shadow always follows. Choose a place where you won’t do harm... and stand in it for all you are worth, facing the sunshine’ (170).

⁹² Although he must have struggled against the dangerous habit of abstraction, since George had learnt some lessons from it, as he himself tells Lucy: ‘I never notice much difference in views... My father... says that there is only one perfect view –the view of the sky straight over our heads, and that all these views on earth are but bungled copies of it’ (177).

⁹³ At least judging from the harshness in the words she uses to describe her life: ‘Waste! That word seemed to sum up the whole of life. Wasted plans, wasted money, wasted love’ (216).

⁹⁴ How different is his confidence from the hypocrisy with which the Honeychurch reacted to the engagement of Lucy and Cecil!: “So it was that after the gropings and the misgivings of the afternoon they pulled themselves together and settled down to a very pleasant tea-party. If they were hypocrites they did not know it, and their hypocrisy had every chance of setting and of becoming true” (114).

⁹⁵ It is worth remembering that *The Way of all Flesh*, 1903 (143), is among the books that reverend Beebe finds at the Emerson’s home.

⁹⁶ Here is a brief example: ‘I taught him... to trust in love. I said: ‘When love comes, that’s reality... Passion does not blind. No. Passion is sanity, and the woman you love, she is the only person you will ever really understand’ (217).

seems fair that now, as husband and wife,⁹⁷ she will look for the sanction of a view that widened her horizons⁹⁸: “He carried her to the window, so that she, too, saw all the view” (228). Even so, joy goes beyond this indescribable pleasure because George also knows how to discover the true human dimension of Charlotte and the role she has played in the dawn of his happiness:

“ ‘I’ll put a marvel to you. That your cousin has always hoped. That from the very first moment we met, she hoped... that we should be like this... The sight of us haunted her... it burned... She is not frozen, Lucy, she is not withered up all through. She tore us apart twice, but in rectory⁹⁹ that evening she was given one more chance to make us happy’ ... Youth enwrapped them; the song of Phaeton announced passion requited, love attained. But they were conscious of a love more mysterious than this. The song died away; they heard the river, bearing down the snows of winter into the Mediterranean” (230).

Phaeton and the “spring of life”, formerly in bad condition due to reverend Eager’s antihuman intolerance, have been avenged and have asserted themselves at last. Ice, snow, coldness, asceticism, the north, that is, the Middle Ages, withdraw and fire, light, heat, the south and the Mediterranean come forward with their Classical values. It corresponds to the Arno, the “river of life” as Heraclitus calls it, to guarantee the changing process, the transit to a better world where men and women may leave their castles and closed rooms, the false privilege of a castrating domain, in order to come out in search –this time indeed- of a true romance.

Free from the anxiety of confusion, Lucy refused to travel to Greece and Constantinople with the Miss Alans –a trip which was supposed to help her find herself-, but their kind presence and a courage unthinkable in women their age, become the heroines who keep the challenge of a not yet attainable “world beyond” alive. Reverend Beebe had long ago surrendered to their charms and used their example against the indolence of the young ones:

‘Isn’t it wonderful? Isn’t it Romance? Most certainly they will go to Constantinople... They will end by going round the world... Isn’t Romance capricious! I never notice it in you young people; you do nothing but play lawn-tennis, and say that Romance is dead, while the Miss Alans are struggling with all the weapons of propriety against the terrible thing. ‘A really comfortable pension at Constantinople!’ So they call it out of decency, but in their hearts they want a pension with magic windows opening on the foam of

⁹⁷ Therefore, Lucy has reached happiness following traditional paths, quite different from the ones she had determined to follow in times of confusion: “She could never marry... she must some day believe in herself. She must be one of the women whom she had praised so eloquently, who care for liberty and not for men; she must forget that George loved her” (193-4). We conclude, then, that Forster does not believe that marriage is “the problem” provided it implies a bond of true comradeship.

⁹⁸ So much!, For instance, so as to make Lucy learn to appreciate the beauty of her own country, even comparing it to Italian models: “Ah, how beautiful the Weald looked! The hills stood out above its radiance, as Fiesole stands above the Tuscan plain, and the South Downs, if one chose, were the mountains of Carrara. She might be forgetting her Italy, but she was noticing more things in her England. One could play a new game with the view, and try to find in its innumerable folds some town or village that would do for Florence. Ah, how beautiful the Weald looked!” (175).

⁹⁹ This is, by the way, one of the episodes where Forster chooses to question the reader, since he finds the contention of feelings implausible and absurd –at least, according to “reasonable” people: “When she talked to George... his voice moved her deeply, and she wished to remain near him. How dreadful if she really wished to remain near him! Of course, the wish was due to nerves, which love to play such perverse tricks upon us... It is obvious for the reader to conclude, ‘She loves young Emerson’. A reader in Lucy’s place would not find it obvious. Life is easy to chronicle, but bewildering to practise, and we welcome ‘nerves’ or any other shibboleth that will cloak our personal desire” (161).

perilous seas in fairylands forlorn!¹⁰⁰ No ordinary view will content the Miss Alans' (197).

Therefore, no medieval castle can seduce them, no dungeon can trap them. Daring and lucid, they are true heiresses of the most distinguished protagonists of the *Grand Tour*. Attentive followers of the intellectual avant-garde of their time, they do not avoid the Hellenic challenge:

“They alone will visit Athens and Delphi, and either shrine... that upon the Acropolis, encircled by blue seas; that under Parnassus, where the eagles build and the bronze charioteer drives undismayed towards infinity. Trembling, anxious... they did go round the world. The rest of us must be contented with a fair, but a less arduous, goal. *Italiam petimus*¹⁰¹: we return to the Pension Bertolini” (226).

I think that if leaps in time were possible to the extent of imagining Winckelmann as a regular reader of Forster, this last comment would have sounded very offensive to him. The infinite or eternal world beyond towards which the charioteer of Delfos guides us, marked as well by the blue sea that surrounds the Acropolis, is reserved for the long-distance runner. He has a tenacious spirit and an open mind, capable of venturing not only into the vast Greek culture –what is already “cultivated”-, but also into the immense possibilities of a constant questioning of everything, its great legacy. Be it God or the devil, Greece is there¹⁰², challenging as usual, and those who do not dare to approach it can indeed join the group of Cecil and the more short-sighted Beebe –besides, contradictory in his admiration for the Miss Alans:

‘I haven’t been to Greece myself, and don’t mean to go, and I can’t imagine any of my friends going. It is altogether too big for our little lot. Don’t you think so? Italy is just about as much as we can manage. Italy is heroic, but Greece is godlike or devilish... (Italy) is big enough in all conscience. The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel for me. There the contrast is just as much as I can realise. But not the Parthenon, not the frieze of Phidias¹⁰³ at any price’... ‘You’re quite right’, said Cecil. ‘Greece is not for our little lot’¹⁰⁴ (197-8).

So far, and in my pursue of Classical, I have traced the spiritual pilgrimage suggested by Forster in *A Room with a View*. The reader can be open to its gospel or, naturally enough, put forward a series of predictable arguments : a) there are dark corners in the human spirit, windows closed to light and happiness, repeated “winters of man” that north and south have shamefully shared and still do; b) we know that there are many more parameters apart from the ascetic one

¹⁰⁰ Stallybrass, O. relates ‘magic windows opening on the foam of perilous seas in fairylands forlorn’ to ‘magic casements’ and ‘fairy lands’ in Keats’ ‘Ode to a Nightingale’, Penguin Books, p. 253.

¹⁰¹ Stallybrass, O. finds all the parallels in the *Aeneid*, Penguin Books, p. 256.

¹⁰² E. M. Forster’s work is a constant and free exploitation of its resources; or at least it was on a personal level, since it is well known that “moral Victorianism” expanded long enough for some of his works to go unpublished until after his death. On the role of Greece in his work, see, e. g. Papazoglou, F., 1995.

¹⁰³ Undoubtedly, a similar attitude to the one Lucy disapproves of in her mother, who prefers to shelter from the rain in a shop, rather than in the British Museum: “ ‘Let’s turn in here’. ‘Here’ was the British Museum. Mrs Honeychurch refused. If they must take shelter, let it be in a shop. Lucy felt contemptuous, for she was on the tack of caring for Greek sculpture, and had already borrowed a mythological dictionary from Mr Beebe to get up the names of the goddesses and gods” (212).

¹⁰⁴ However, despite the fact that they have never travelled to Greece, the Emersons, symptomatically, are readers of Byron (143).

with which to assess medieval love; c) action, experience and suffering, with or without a legacy of relating statues, impose themselves throughout the centuries, including the Middle Ages and the Victorian era, as part of a certainly varied historic flow, though impossible to stop; d) the lucid vindication of the transitory I of man, of the winds that blew it and will also snatch it, had to measure itself against Renaissance Platonism and its persisting idealism; e) Greece and Italy – or a fair vision of its historic and cultural legacy- are very different and much more complex than the “innocence of man”, etcetera.

All in all, Forster’s two Italian novels, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View*, are the summary of uninterrupted centuries of physical and cultural rediscovery of Greece and Rome. We can start from the most august England of the first half of the XVIIIth- century and its veneration of Virgil and Horace, later to arrive at the *Greek revival* which would allow us to go back to the true origin of western knowledge. *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (1980, paperback 1981) by R. Jenkyns, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* by F. M. Turner (1981) and *The Platonic Experience in Nineteenth-Century England* by P. Cruzalegui (2006) are three excellent monographic works that, though focusing on the Victorian universe –the latter on its Platonic side-, do not allow, in my opinion, a general approach to the topic. Of course, the three of them echo the long process I was referring to and put forward the great protagonists of the *Grand Tour*, the three expeditions -Wood, Stuart & Revett, Chandler, etc.-, the Society of Dilettanti, the impact of the arrival of the Elgin Marbles, the *Gusto Greco* or *The Grecian Style*, the growing interest in the most democratic period in the history of Athens and its unquestionable political and cultural achievements, etc. And the result is there, that is, a tension between different sensibilities, a) Gothic-medieval and b) Classical, which creates a good number of invectives and formal declarations¹⁰⁵: A) ‘Any living soul in London likes triglyphs?’ (J. Ruskin¹⁰⁶ -1819-1900, who claims that British boys like to draw what they see in medieval churches and castles, but they were never caught drawing the Parthenon pediments). ‘There is no need of visiting... Greece and Egypt to make discoveries in art. England alone abounds in... antiquities of surpassing interest’ (A. W. N. Pugin¹⁰⁷ -1812-1852. For him, the very church of Saint Peter in Rome was pagan: ‘If only that dome would collapse!’¹⁰⁸). ‘Gothic work... does depend far less upon perfection of execution... in the very perfection of Greek... art there is... something deterrent’ (Day-Lewis, C.¹⁰⁹ -1904-1972). B) ‘De Greeks were Godes’ (H. Fuseli – 1741-1825-, contemplating the Parthenon marbles). ‘Greeks –were- glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind’ (P. B. Shelley¹¹⁰ -1792-1822). ‘We are all Greeks’ (P. B. Shelley). ‘In contemplating Greece our gaze... is fixed on Pericles rather than Epaminondas’ (M. Arnold¹¹¹ -1822-1888). ‘The battle of Marathon even as an event in English history, is more important than the battle of Hastings’ (J. S. Mill –1806-1873). ‘Greece is- the mother-country of thought and art and action’ (A. C. Swinburne¹¹² 1837-1909). All civilised nations are ‘colonies of Hellas’ (claimed J. Addington Symonds¹¹³ -1840-1893). ‘Middle Ages seemed darker and older than ‘the brilliant and well-defined periods of Greece and Rome’’) (W. Hazlitt¹¹⁴ 1878-1830). ‘Whatever... is modern... we owe to the Greeks.

¹⁰⁵ The following quotations come from Jenkyns, R., 1981, pp. 1-20 and Turner, F. M., 1981, pp. 1-14 and for their specific reference, I am literally reproducing the information they provide.

¹⁰⁶ *The Stones of Venice* I, ch. 2 paragraph 12; *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, paragraph 24.

¹⁰⁷ *Contrasts*, 2nd ed., 1841, p. 17.

¹⁰⁸ *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* XII, ed. C. S. Desdain, 1962, pp. 221, 326.

¹⁰⁹ *Instances of Accessory Art*.

¹¹⁰ *Hellas*, preface.

¹¹¹ *Complete Prose Works*, ed. R. H. Super, Ann Arbor, 1960-77, V, p.285.

¹¹² *The Swinburne Letters*, ed. C. Y. Lang, New Haven, 1959-62, III, p. 56.

¹¹³ *Studies of the Greek Poets*, ch. 25.

¹¹⁴ ‘On Antiquity’, Howe XII, p. 253.

Whatever is anachronism is due to medievalism' (O. Wilde¹¹⁵ 1854-1900). 'Some of the problems which are still agitating our minds were settled by the Greeks, others, if not settled, were at least discussed with a freedom and acuteness now unattainable. Others, again, were solved in strange violation of our notions of morals and good taste; and when such a people as the Greeks stand opposed to us, even in vital principles, we cannot reject their verdict without weighing their reasons' (J. P. Mahaffy, Anglo-Irish *scholar* of the Trinity College in Dublin, 1874)¹¹⁶.

In conclusion: Greece as the muse of inspiration of the Latin people; Florence as the real Phoenix of the Greek and Roman world; English people who travel to Italy and Greece in order to free themselves from their endemic medievalism. All this proving, at the same time, that for some, experiencing Classical Tradition is neither a trivial matter nor a fine varnish layer, but a risky though unavoidable yes to most of what has defined and still does the human being as such.

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