"The Old, Old Battle of the Room": The Politics of Space in *A Room With A View*

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In *The Poetics of Space* Gaston Bachelard insists, "Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination" (xxxvi). Bachelard asserts that, in terms of literary and poetic texts, imagination augments the significance of rooms, houses, and even intimate crannies, investing these spaces with the author's personal concerns (xxxv). Space thus manifests an underlying language for a view of reality: they are metaphors revealing the imprint that a consciousness places upon the world. For E. M. Forster's novels, spaces function as central literary devices in the sense that they expose the behaviors and beliefs—the "partiality of the imagination"—of his characters and the public realms that determine them. Spaces especially evoke public identities and subtle struggles for power in *A Room With a View* (1908)—often considered one of Forster's most conventional novels. Focusing on this work, I explore the ways in which Forster seizes upon the political domination of space in order to expose British social habits, especially in terms of the values undergirding imperialism and oppressive gender politics. Yet the oppressive values underpinning British society in the first decade of the twentieth century are not only implicated in the novel's spatial politics: *A Room With a View* also raises a more fundamental opposition to a modern society's collective performance of subjugating the other through possessive, dominating structures of thought and behavior. This collective performance leads me to reflect finally on the place of the spatial within modernity[1] and its peculiar political manifestation, the modern nation-state.

The notion that imagined space "cannot remain indifferent space" not only challenges ideas of universal, disinterested perspectives (Bachelard xxxvi)—for every subjectivity is bound by space—but also this claim suggests that depictions of the spatial necessarily elicit the political. That is, such depictions evoke the structures and practices of power that arrange society (compare with Millett 23). This becomes apparent in many of Forster's novels as he centers his narratives on certain spaces, localizing the drama and binding it to a place. The prominence of Howards End in the eponymous novel is obvious, and the Marabar Caves also subtly function as the interpretive crux

of *A Passage to India*. These spaces ground their narratives within cultural and interpersonal realms that address larger issues. In *Howards End*, for example, Henry Wilcox's initial refusal to honor the wishes of his deceased wife regarding her home reveals, among many things, that family's attempts to retain social dominance. Furthermore, as Fredric Jameson suggests, if Ruth Wilcox represents the "genius loci" (spirit of the place) of Howards End, then Henry's neglect not only violates the "dear person" of his wife (56, 55), but also the Wilcox code of behavior even hoards the space that is able "to relieve life's daily grey" (*Howards End* 106). The family blindly views the home as a legal and financial problem, and they thereby reduce and manipulate the space as a commodified possession (73).

Sara Suleri Goodyear similarly observes that in *A Passage to India* the Marabar Caves obviate the notion of colonial friendship by functioning as a symbol of the "colonial homoerotic," the substitution of race for gender in the colonizers' attempts to sexualize their enterprise (153). Whereas these "extraordinary caves" represent a local space prized by Aziz and his friends (*A Passage to India* 6), the ironic reality is that they are not "provinces of [Aziz's] kingdom" but possessions of the British Empire (176). As orifices to be possessed and dominated, these caves also become sites for colonial acts of sexualized violence. Forster thus includes an ironic and subversive double entendre in the depiction of cultural spaces, especially as these otherwise innocuous social symbols are transfigured into signs of the imperial will to dominate the other. These passing observations demonstrate that *A Room With a View* is not unique in Forster's corpus regarding the political potential of space. It is, however, one of the subtler narratives among his works, for, as Jameson describes *Howards End*, there are "[p]ockets of philosophical complexity" that "are hidden away beneath its surface" (52).

In the opening scene of *A Room With a View*, the underlying presence of the project of empire is unmistakable. The portraits of "the late Queen and the late Poet Laureate" in the Bertolini evoke the reaches of the empire, particularly as it has disseminated British culture abroad (3). Lucy Honeychurch's first words complain of the proprietor's accent at the pension, identifying the entire space with the act of cultural propagation: "It might be London" (3). Although aspiring to move beyond the "rubbish that cumbers the world" (154)—that is, those simulacra that only "represented" reality (141)—Lucy initially experiences Italy through the cultural voyeurism of upper-class migration and tourism. In these experiences, foreign spaces serve as opportunities to recreate the empire abroad while also allowing its cultural ambassadors to inhabit otherwise "native" *topos*. James Michael Buzard is therefore correct in viewing Lucy as a participant in "an occupying force that has infiltrated its hosts' society but that remains detached and aloof from it" (159). Through this space of relocated British culture, the tourists of the Bertolini are voyeurs, collecting simulacra of foreign lands in order to possess their cultural icons.

By possessing reproductions of paintings in the Sistine Chapel, for example, one has thus "had" Italy. Yet, more emblematic of the habits of the empire, these cultural colonialists retreat to a transported haven of the empire while "all kinds of other things are just outside" (3). Forster thus fashions the Bertolini as a kind of colonial symbol, an imposed cultural space that distances the British tourists from the alterity of a foreign *topos*.

While the Bertolini offers a cultural haven for the British tourists, Forster also suggests that space becomes a venue for shaping and defining culture. For example, Lucy loses her Baedeker guidebook—an ironic emblem of the tourists' mediated voyeurism—and hesitantly joins the Emersons to visit the church of Santa Croce. George and his father take Lucy to see the frescoes of Giotto di Bondone in the Peruzzi Chapel, where they encounter "an earnest congregation, and out of them rose the voice of a lecturer, directing them how to worship Giotto" (26). This cultural doctrinaire is the Reverend Eager, who later maligns Mr. Emerson by claiming that he murdered his wife (63). The sordid history between the Reverend and the elder Emerson revolves primarily around the latter's refusal to baptize George. Yet this ideological antinomy does not underlie their conflict at Santa Croce, for Mr. Emerson avowedly does not recognize the Reverend until after the conflict (27). Instead, the clash centers on alternative readings of religious and cultural space at Santa Croce: Mr. Emerson contradicts the Reverend's positive appraisal of the church's religious foundations, claiming in contrast, "Built by faith indeed! That simply means the workmen weren't paid properly" (26). Emerson continues by rejecting Eager's assessment of the space's cultural emblems: "And as for the frescoes, I see no truth in them. Look at that fat man in blue! He must weigh as much as I do, and he is shooting into the sky like an air-balloon" (26).

Emerson's alternative interpretation of the religious and cultural space disrupts the Reverend Eager's "lecture" on the church (26). The clash in Santa Croce leads Eager to exclaim, "The chapel is somewhat small for two parties. We will incommode you no longer" (27). The Reverend then leaves with his silent and unsettled congregation, while Mr. Emerson pleas, "There's plenty of room for us all. Stop!" (27). Juxtaposing their alternative readings of the church's religious and cultural meaning, Forster shows that space houses disputations and struggles for the definition of culture. In the spatial politics of modernity, the cultural realm does not remain neutral. As Roland Barthes demonstrates in his early essay, "Dominici, or the Triumph of Literature," mythologies (which he later calls "discourses") appropriate the cultural realm for hegemonic power interests (43-46). As Barthes says, this struggle to define and appropriate culture presupposes "the transparency and universality of language"—a conviction that order depends upon hegemony and thus plural discourses inhabiting the same cultural space create instability (44). The antipathy to plural discourses appears in the case of Eager and Emerson's

conflict, for the Reverend refuses to allow their views of the church or Giotto's frescoes to inhabit the same space: Eager instead leaves to lecture on other cultural articles in Santa Croce. When Emerson follows him to apologize, the Reverend becomes "anxious" and "aggressive" (28). Housing their opposing definitions of culture in the same space, the Reverend's curt actions imply, is inconceivable and tantamount to disorder (28).

The conflict astounds Lucy, yet in the pivotal and deceptively named "Fourth Chapter" Forster begins to challenge the politics determining Honeychurch's naïve and mediated identity. Lucy's desire to "do something of which her well-wishers disapproved" leads her to observe a murder, which occurs within subtly sexualized space (46). In this scene, Lucy has recently purchased a variety of photographs and reproductions of famous pieces of art, seemingly in response to her desire "to drop the august title of the Eternal Woman, and go there as her transitory self" (46). The subjects of these reproductions thereby gain heightened significance in that they depict ethereal and idealized women: "There she bought a photograph of Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus.' […] She felt a little calmer then, and bought Fra Angelico's 'Coronation,' Giotto's Ascension of St. John,' some Della Robbia babies, and some Guido Reni Madonnas" (46-47). The overt comparison of Lucy to a goddess—not to mention Cecil's commodifying view of Honeychurch as a "woman of Leonardo" (102)—casts her in virginal terms. Yet this early scene compromises Lucy's metaphorically virginal status, initiating a transition from the mediated existence of upper-class space with its "muddle" of simulacra into the "real world" that denudes her inexperience. This transition occurs symbolically when George confesses that the photographs "were covered with blood" after the murder (50). The simulacra of virginity—such as the reproduction of Fra Angelico's "Coronation of the Virgin"—are no longer "untouched" as Cecil would have it (168). Instead, blood has been shed and these virginal images bear the signs of Lucy's first intercourse. She is no longer an ingénue to an unmediated exchange with the world. As Barbara Rosecrance has explored in some detail, the episode of the stabbing thus acts as Lucy's "symbolic loss of virginity" (91-3), although her emergence into sustained intercourse with unmediated life is a protracted process.

The architecture and other objects that populate this scene further sexualize the spatial, and Forster thereby taints Lucy's cultural transition through images that evoke masculine domination. The Piazza Signoria is populated with nude statues of Roman gods, most of which have dominated foes at their feet. Forster alludes to these images in the "marvels" of the Piazza Signoria (47)—incidentally, this is also "the site of some of the bloodier moments in Florence's history" (Martin 94). Even the central statue of Neptune, which was "half god, half ghost" in the twilight (*A Room with a View* 47), features a host of satyrs, nymphs, and, in particular, the subservient female sea-monster, Scylla. The tower and tacit presence of a congeries

of nude Greek gods suggest to Lucy that masculine subjects conquer the feminine, whether through demanding spatial prominence or thwarting them by physical domination. Although Forster prefaces this scene with Lucy's desire for "beautiful things," the space's objects subvert her desire by being domineering (46). They serve as evocations of power and not as aesthetic monuments. The end result, therefore, is that the plaza ceases "dancing before her eyes" and is transformed into a force of coercion: "she bent [her eyes] to the ground and started towards home" (47). Lucy sets out from the Bertolini because "she wanted something big" (45), and until the masculine symbols in the Piazza deter her, she increasingly "desired more" of an unmediated experience with reality (47).Yet Lucy's dejection as she "started towards home" exhibits her disillusionment with the possibilities of fulfilling her own "strange desires" within space dominated by images of patriarchy and transported British life (47, 46). Lucy is thus inhibited from being "alive," from fulfilling her modern pursuit of self-creation (46).

Forster earlier explores the underlying habits of gender politics through the "old, old battle of the room" between Lucy, Miss Bartlett, and the Emersons (175). The novel opens with an "intruder," Mr. Emerson, offering to change rooms with Miss Bartlett and Lucy (4). Charlotte's rationale is that "it would be a serious thing if I put [Lucy] under an obligation to people of whom we know nothing" (9). Miss Bartlett, albeit mistakenly characterizing the Emersons and being overly cautious, recognizes a latent possibility in her society: it is, in other words, fully possible for men to exploit women by indenturing them to space. Forster of course suggests that Miss Bartlett's circumspection causes her to become self-enclosed, but nonetheless she does not imagine this possibility *ex nihilo*. Miss Bartlett's hesitancy extends beyond the "ill-bred man" (4), as she later says after George kisses Lucy. Speaking to her young cousin, she insists, "you have lived among such nice people, that you cannot realize what men can be—how they can take a *brutal pleasure* in insulting a woman whom her sex does not protect and rally around" (86, italics mine). Exploitative behavior is latent in men, Charlotte says, and "civilization" only partly shelters women from their sadism. Her persistence in asking Lucy, "What would have happened if I hadn't arrived?" evokes her obsession with putting space between her niece and the opposite gender (86). Indeed, Charlotte discerns that being "under obligation" to men or having unmediated contact between the sexes can have serious consequences in her society, as Mr. Beebe reluctantly concedes (9).

Although the episode between the Emersons and Miss Bartlett only implies the possibility of manipulation,[2] several other episodes actually depict patriarchal manipulation of space. For example, before Cecil Vyse appears in the novel, the narrator describes him as a god who orders space according to his own image. Freddy, the desultory brother who is "only a boy" and thus not yet a full "man" (104),[3] cries "Look out!" before "The curtains parted"

and light illuminates the room (100). Stylized as a *fiat lux*, Cecil's entrance indicates the patterns of behavior that typify his actions for the remainder of the novel, and this initial scene of calling space into enlightened order further evokes the imprint of empire on his character. More specifically, Cecil's behavior develops from a spectrum of distinctive performances that shape his culture. Like the project of empire, Cecil's agenda among the Honeychurches is to summon space into order, to enlighten the antiquated, un-modern, and uninformed. In other words, much like the colonial justification of the "institution and administration" of foreign space for the sake of educating its dominions (Begam and Moses 3), Cecil enters the Honeychurch home as if he were a god-like colonizer who rearranges feminine space.[4] He speaks it into order through a fiat and disdains the "darkness" surrounding the lives of the Honeychurches (100). This is not to say that Cecil *is* a colonialist as much as a citizen of empire who naturally draws from the same continuum of social behaviors that support expansionism. Vyse wishes to reshape and educate Lucy's family by instituting his own "broad" society (127), thereby imprinting his image on their consciousness. Obviously, Cecil's desire to possess Windy Corner and administrate it from London is a consequence of the potential value he has found in the Honeychurches' home: the space is an embodiment of "the life that he desired" (104). Like Mr. Lucas in Forster's story "The Road from Colonus," Cecil's relation to Windy Corner aggressively suggests, "the place shall be mine; I will enter it and possess it" because it is mysterious and gainful in its unordered potential (*Celestial Omnibus* 147). Lucy later exposes Cecil's aspirations when she breaks off their engagement. She complains that Vyse "would try to wrap up me" (198), fearing the acquisitive consequences of a relationship with him.

Similarly, Lucy cannot separate Vyse from closed spaces, particularly drawing-rooms "with no view" (123). The fact that "[f]or all his culture, Cecil was an ascetic at heart" further explains his association with closed spaces (200-01), for his drive to possess Windy Corner and educate Lucy in his "broad" society evokes a distinctly modern aspect of his behavior. As Max Weber argues in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, modern capitalism is distinct from its earlier forms through the fact that the laborer often gains nothing "from his wealth for himself personally, except that irrational sense of having 'fulfilled his calling' well" (84). That is, as is evident in Cecil, the confined and ascetic dimensions in the politics of modern possession evoke a sense of social obligation—one that determines domestic and national space according to ideals of efficiency and order. Lucy's insight thus exposes the place of Cecil's deportment within the colonial spectrum of behavior: he requires space to inhabit because he is driven by a rationalizing obligation.[5] Lucy therefore identifies Vyse with the "drawing-room" because it contrasts with the freedom of "open air" and "all kinds of other things just outside" (3). Vyse's acquisitiveness, in other words, cannot dominate apart

from space.

Cecil's relation to Windy Corner, although not an act of imperialism *per se*, nonetheless recalls a performance common to his society in which order is brought to a foreign place through spatial arrangements. Colonialism depends in part upon ordering the physical, governmental, and cultural space of the Commonwealth according to Britain's image. The colonial administration of power participates in a social performance of controlling space in order to realize (at least putatively) a societal ideal. Shaping the physical terrain of "the other," as Brayshay and Cleary demonstrate, is a part of creating an environment (5-10)—a devised space that attempts to reconfigure consciousness. This (re)creation and definition constructs national and gender identities, and its concomitant set of social values further justified the Empire's growth-rate of approximately one hundred thousand square miles per year in the nineteenth century (Clarke 14). As a component to exerting power, the act of acquisition is therefore an integral part of the grammar of empire: expansionism depends on a social structure of both foreign and domestic control exerted over spaces, cultures, and ultimately "the other."

Yet Forster attempts to ridicule the grammar of empire, subverting its claims to power, interrogating it as a determining experience, and undermining its ideals of benevolence. For example, Lucy and Minnie Beebe's nonsensical and arbitrary sport, bumble-puppy, suggests that even innocuous and recreational enterprises can mask violent projects. Freddy and Lucy have named the tennis balls in bumble-puppy, and, although these titles initially seem nonsensical, their allusions are provocative. Mr. Beebe renames the "Beautiful White Devil" with the Latinate title, "Vittoria Corombona," or the less laudable "White Devil" (129). The learned Mr. Beebe's alternative name for the tennis ball may allude to John Webster's *Vittoria Corombona*, a play that "presents some person or persons who are not what they seem, devils transformed into angels of light" (Brown, Introduction, il-l). In addition to the fact that "Vittoria" is Italian for "Victoria"—a correlation that makes the object a possible double entendre of "white devil" and "Victorian devil"—the "Vittoria Corombona" tennis ball also alludes to the popular proverb that "the white devil is worse than the black" (Webster 7, n. 1).[6] If so, Forster couches a subversive reminder within an otherwise absurd game, as if this scene were a *mise-en-abyme* of folly that burlesques appearances and exposes realities.

After the game of bumble-puppy, Cecil Vyse reveals that he has procured more "desirable" tenants for the Cissie Villa (134). It appears that Cecil is like the "white devil," and his dissembled interests appear under the guise of a benevolent concern for an appropriate arrangement of the neighborhood. Lucy's previous "interference" (130), as it comes to be construed, is corrected by Cecil's putatively superior judgment. Her immediate conclusion from this "snub" is that Vyse "took a malicious pleasure in thwarting people" (132)—a conviction that fulfills Miss Bartlett's earlier warning that men "can

take a brutal pleasure in insulting a woman" (86). This manipulative act is ostensibly Cecil's "punishment" directed against Sir Harry Otway, the owner of the Cissie Villa, for being a "snob" who desires upper-class women to lease the house (135). Yet Lucy correctly perceives Cecil's political maneuvering as a "disloyal" subversion of her own "work" (135). Indeed, the opposition between her work and his interests, between "ideals, yours and mine," as Cecil says, suggests that their antinomy centers on Lucy's desire for freedom and self-creation while Vyse values his own authority and order (200). Cecil insists that the Emersons would better suit the neighborhood, and thus he has manipulated habitable space in order to establish hegemony before his return to London. Vyse reveals as much when he ominously suggests to his fiancé, "before long you'll agree with me" (135).

What is reminiscent of empire in Vyse's spatial politics becomes fully embodied later in Forster's fiction through Henry Wilcox's manipulation of Howards End. Forster again employs the theme of the "old, old battle of the room" in the depiction of the Wilcox family's exploitation of the estate. Henry's refusal to grant the home to Margaret Schlegel violates his deceased wife's wishes, but the Wilcoxes (excluding Ruth) also embody a more mature version of Cecil Vyse's rationalizing obligation. Paul Wilcox, for example, enlists in the services of Britain's empire, embarking "out to his duty" in a foreign land (82). Margaret explains, "He doesn't want the money, it is work he wants, though it is beastly work—dull country, dishonest natives, an eternal fidget over fresh water and food" (82). Margaret's encomium reaches its climax when she depicts Charles's service in a national light: "A nation who can produce men of that sort may well be proud. No wonder England has become an Empire" (82). The connection between the Wilcox family's support of England's imperial efforts—e.g., Henry's "big business" in rubber, which depends largely on the industry in India (78)—and their treatment of domestic space reveals an integral component of British national identity. That is, as Margaret asserts, without the Wilcoxes there "would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about in, no fields even. Just savagery" (126-27). England's civilization depends upon the Wilcoxes' obligation to bring order, efficiency, and enlightenment to a savage land.

Vyse is certainly not as conspicuously colonial as Henry Wilcox, yet the similarities between the two suggest that Forster's characters lie on a continuum. *Howards End* conspicuously recalls the imperial underpinnings of the nation that has "produce[d] men of that sort" (82), yet—from Lucy to Miss Alan, Mr. Beebe to George Emerson—Forster's novels suggest that every citizen of empire cannot escape such a pervasive cultural performance. Margaret's exclamation, "No wonder England has become an Empire" is thus applicable not only to the Wilcoxes, who overtly support the imperialist project, but also to Cecil Vyse, who inadvertently embodies its habits (82). Even the empire's domestic, ascetic upper class contributes to the creation

of its spatial politics and national identity.

Reading Forster's *A Room With a View* with the experience of empire in mind challenges the interpretation—endorsed by Edward Said, among others (186-90)—that the modernists ultimately reinforce the discourse of empire. Forster embeds his critique of this extensive social project within a romantic narrative of Lucy Honeychurch's emergence from life as an ingénue into self-creation. Yet in the process Lucy's story also evokes the relation of the modern British nation to the spatial, and her arrested development suggests that, according to Forster, external arrangements imposed upon the *topos* of Lucy's self-creation will inevitably be a force of inhibition. Lucy, like the lands under British administration, cannot *become* as long as the shape of the room she inhabits and her view of the world are determined for her. This ideological subversion of the imperial project suggests that Forster, too, may be placed among recent reinterpretations of other literary modernists—including Woolf, Lawrence, and Conrad—who maintain a complex but critical relationship to empire.[7]

Central to Forster's critique of the discourse of empire is his recognition in *A Room With a View* that deep ambiguities inevitably exist within the politics of modern space. The final scene of Lucy and George's honeymoon, for example, occurs in the Bertolini (237), and the novel is thus bookended by a transported British haven. Forster's intentionality in evoking the politics of space throughout the novel indicates that this scene must be read as a suggestion that even George, who traditionally represents Forster's opposition to conventionalism (Martin 91), cannot avoid the distinctly modern double bind. That is, all British citizens, whether Liberals or Unionists, Cecil Vyse or George Emerson, live within the space of empire. This unavoidable situation reveals that the modern era is a totalizing phenomenon—one that a Romantic retreat into an edenic society or ideal human relations cannot thwart. Forster's realization of this modern double bind is not "ironic" and "desperate," as Said says (189), but grounded to the limitations of *topos*. Forster suggests that Lucy and George find beauty and happiness *within* the empire—for they cannot abstract themselves from the particularities of place—and thus, as the narrator says, they are "fighting to reach one another" despite the borders, predetermined identities, and "muddle" that surrounds them (241, 55).

It becomes evident in these reflections that place, for Forster's characters, is imagined through and appropriated by an obligation to modern rationality—a treatment of the spatial that is symptomatic of larger patterns of thought in the phenomena of modernity. As Toulmin argues, the modern project of discovering a secure foundation for knowledge was "not aimed at epistemology alone," but also, and more subtly, it sought "to build up a fresh cosmology from scratch" based on its peculiar obsession with an abstract and ubiquitous grammar (83). According to the agenda of the philosophers and

political theorists of modernity, the arrangement of space ought to be a material reflection of an incontrovertible and universal logic. This philosophical and social obsession gave rise in the seventeenth century to centralized nation-states, which purport to organize and govern extensive amounts of space in order to achieve a greater amount of efficiency, protection, and productivity. The underlying logic of this distinctly modern arrangement of power—that is, the modern nation-state—is to impose a formal structure of order that purports to be universally valid. Despite the diversity among Enlightenment philosophers regarding the capacity of the state to impose order in general (e.g., Jean-Jacques Rousseau), Toulmin argues that the Newtonian concept of the need for centralized force to institute a universal logic within society predominates in modern states (105-17). In this conception, the state exists to impose a formal structure of order, a "universal language" that determines the meaning and material (or spatial) arrangements of human society in order to achieve a logical mode of existence (106).

In such an imaginative view of space, political arrangements—whether interpersonal or national—are founded upon the conviction that power and manipulation are necessary to achieve the rational potential of humanity. Shaping human-inhabited space is a central component to the grammar that defines individual consciousness and interpersonal relations. Furthermore, because the lives of human beings are interdependent, the structures of their relationships must be rationalized (in the Weberian sense) to be productive, and their identities must also be reasonable to achieve its fullest potential. This project of constructing nations—and ultimately the globe—based on a universal grammar ironically took on various forms depending upon the empire. French and British colonialism imposed distinct orders, both of which contrast sharply with the American forms of expansionism that later emerged after the Second World War. If these varying attempts to shape foreign space demonstrate anything, they undoubtedly prove that what emerges from modernity are rationalit*ies*, not a single universal logic. Therefore, even if much of colonialism is driven by an *auri sacra fames*, the modern versions of empire also manifest a unique obligation to rationalize the world, fulfilling the imperative to structure reality according to a comprehensive logical absolute.

The erroneous agenda of shaping space according to an all-encompassing ideal order suggests finally that underlying the modern relation to space is a disdain for particularity, a prejudice against local identities and meanings. The project of arranging space according to a ubiquitous rationality depends upon the actual existence of a common, accessible standard of meaning applied to each *topos*. The colonial management of the spatial is undermined in so far as local arrangements assert an alternative rationality or grammar for meaning. Empire, in contrast, asserts itself as a determining discourse, manipulating space in an attempt to shape consciousnesses as much as to

exploit the resources of a foreign land for its national and domestic interests. The untenability of an absolute order does not of course obviate all other alternatives except a retreat into individual autonomy, for such a response depends upon a Cartesian skepticism that creates its own significant crises. Instead, grammar and place are interdependent, and thus rationality and meaning exist in a dialectic between the particularities of *topos* and the deliberations of the self (cf. Taylor 465). Even as Forster's "liberal imagination," to borrow Lionel Trilling's now classic phrase, lauds the virtue of self-creation, his novels also demonstrate the reality that human beings must "[fight] to reach one another" in the midst of competing discourses and imposed orders (241). Indeed, the novel's "mysterious" and even poetic conclusion suggests that literature, for Forster, makes it "just possible" for such a space to be "attained" (242).

Notes

1. The complexity of modernity is becoming increasingly clear, and many of its critics are now referring to modernities in an attempt to deal with its national and philosophical differences. Himmelfarb, for example, distinguishes between the emphasis in the French Enlightenment on rationality and the moral philosophy of the American and English Enlightenments. Toulmin proposes that the history of Western culture "falls into a series of periods in each of which different ideals of reason and rationality were dominant" (199). Gaonkar's volume likewise offers several articles that highlight the rampant plurality of modernity. While these critics differ widely on the conclusions they draw from their distinct accounts of modernity, they raise an important caution. That is, when speaking of the "modern" one must be aware of its specificity, such as a particular segment of *British* society during the first decade of the twentieth century. I am, therefore, not referring to the entire trans-cultural and historical phenomenon of modernity.
2. Admittedly, one could read George's presence on the terrace in Fiesole and his unsolicited kiss of Lucy as an instance of an exploitative act, yet George's contrast with Cecil Vyse clearly obviates such an interpretation. Cecil views Lucy "as a piece of art," a commodity to possess, and not as a "living woman" (198). George, in contrast, is a passionate but non-possessive figure. In the final scene, he confesses, "I acted the truth," in contrast to the men, such as Cecil and Mr. Beebe, who manipulate and obtusely theorize about women (240). Similarly, Forster depicts George's father as "a saint who understood" during his final interview with Lucy in the drawing room (236), ultimately rendering the Emersons as priests of passionate, "liberal"—to borrow from Lionel Trilling—sympathies.

3. A potential component to Cecil's demotion of Freddy to a sub-masculine state is the subtle, ambiguous possibility that he (Freddy) may be homosexual. His friendship with Mr. Floyd, for example, entails frequent and mischievous withdrawals to private places (160, 180). The bathing scene at the Sacred Lake similarly evokes the homoerotic (148-52), although one could as convincingly argue that these scenes demonstrate customary behavior before current homophobic sympathies and not homoerotic innuendo. If Forster envisions Freddy as homosexual, however, then Cecil's "masculine" domination not only extends over women but also over men whose gender identities diverge from his own.
4. Identifying Windy Corner as "feminine space" is less overt than Wickham Place in *Howards End*: Margaret refers to the Schlegel's home as "irrevocably feminine" (34). Yet Windy Corner is akin to "Nature's own creation" (203); it is the location of folly (110), and Windy Corner also represents a space that "deserved protection" (95). Although the Honeychurch home is not directly identified as "feminine," it nonetheless represents a conquerable space that lacks Cecil's "broad" society and putatively requires *his* attention.
5. I use the phrase "rationalizing obligation" following Weber's argument that ordered, ascetic structures of productivity paved the way for modern capitalism (76). Cecil embodies such rationalism by his desire for seriousness, regulation, and even productivity (e.g., his participation in leasing the Cissie Villa).
6. The racial undertones of this proverb are clear and reprehensible. As Forster likely appropriates this proverb (if not Webster's play) in the name of the tennis ball, he seems to refer to the reversal of expectations involved in the "white devil" proverb. This allusion certainly serves as a pertinent component to an exploration of the author's racial views, however.
7. Similar re-readings of the modernists may be found in Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses's *Modernism and Colonialism*, which includes a chapter on Forster's *A Passage to India* (136-61).

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