CHAPTER II
THE ITALIAN EXPERIENCES: TWO EXPLORATORY NOVELS

(a) A Room With a View

If the stories were the phantasies displaying both the strength and weakness of a young artist struggling to bloom into a mature writer, his early novels depict Forster as a promising novelist with all the potentials of a genius. Forster wrote most of his short stories as complementary exercises to rehearse for works of greater magnitude. Just as the first story "The Story of a Panic" marks the beginning of the first phase of Forster's career as a writer, A Room With A View (1908) marks the advent of the second phase in his career. The discussion of this novel takes precedence over the other two earlier novels, Where Angels Fear To Tread (1905) and The Longest Journey (1907), for two reasons. It was the first novel that was conceived by Forster while he and his mother were enjoying a long holiday in Italy in 1901-02. Though he postponed its completion and publication till 1908, he had drawn the outlines and prepared notes for this 'Lucy novel' during this journey. It bears continuity with the themes and style of the short stories as well. The spirit of these stories and that of this novel is almost identical, because here too Forster celebrates the kind of life he cherished most in his early career.
The journey to Italy exposed the writer to new vistas of life as the Italian way of life overwhelmed him with its colours and gaiety. The free, uninhibited life of this country contrasted glaringly with the conventional, self-conscious and genteel mannerisms of the urbanised English life.

The 'Lucy Novel', as he mentioned it in his notes, is therefore, the first major test of his creative powers. He builds up the edifice of *A Room With A View* upon his real experiences at the Italian hotels.

The scene of the first part of the novel opens at a hotel 'Pension Bertolini' in Florence, and Forster sets Lucy and other characters doing the rounds of sight seeing, acting and interacting with one another. The catalyst that sets things going on their romantic course is the desire in the heroine, Lucy, to have in the hotel 'Pension Bertolini' a room which could give her a view of the Arno range of hills. Symbolically she is a girl without a view so far. Emerson, a middle aged tourist staying in the same hotel offers her both the view and the room she wants. She is unaware of the latent instincts and desires in her subconscious self and does not know what she actually wants from life and from the people around her. She cannot be faulted on this count, because her problem is the problem of every young person who has just entered the threshold of adult life. Moreover she is conditioned by the English respectability and culture of Windy
Corner, a suburb of Surrey. Although she belongs to a family where things proceed in an unpremeditated way, it is the environment of Windy Corner which instills in her some prejudices against free and spontaneous life. She is visiting Italy with Charlotte, her cousin, as her chaperone, who is a fussy lady of narrow mind and prejudiced views.

Basically, Lucy Honeychurch has an instinct to live an open, airy and sunny life, but her prejudices and constant fog of darkness and narrowness cast around her by Charlotte do not let the fresh air and open view come in. This results into a muddled vision. When, at 'Pension Bertolini', old Mr. Emerson offers her his own rooms which have a good view of Arno, she is both perplexed and embarrassed and cannot decide whether she should accept the offer or not. Charlotte's objection to the offer makes her confusion even more confounded and it is only after great persuasion from Emerson and Mr. Beebe the Church clerk that she hesitatingly shifts to the room vacated by Emerson and his son George.

The room although it has a good view, is again looked at with suspicion by Charlotte because it was occupied by George, the quiet but energetic son of Emerson. The suspicion against him lurks large in their minds throughout the novel. But ironically the more Lucy wishes to avoid an encounter with George, the more the circumstances push her into his fold. The next day when she goes to see Santa Croce in the company of another tourist Miss Lavish, Lucy is stranded alone.
in the crowds of the unfamiliar town. Without the guide-
book in her hand she is forced to have some adventure. The
adventure, rather misadventure, comes in the form of a
broad day-light murder, within an arm's length, of an Italian
by another over a tiff on some coins of money. The blood
soils her clothes and the photo-prints she had just bought
as the dying man bends towards her 'with a look of interest'
and collapses on the ground. The ghastly scene is too
shocking for her and she faints. By a typical Forsterian
coincidence, George appears there to give support to the
fainting Lucy. Bending against the railings of the bridge,
Lucy finds herself in a miserable mood. Meanwhile George
throws away her soiled photo prints into the river. When
she asks why he had thrown them, George says they were now
worthless art objects because they were covered with blood.

The throwing away of the photo-prints has symbolic
significance as George seems to say that life lived in art
is superficial while life lived in reality, even if surrounded
by blood-shed and murder, is more meaningful. Lucy's first
encounter with both George and the life in all its ferocity
opens her eyes to reality, but only temporarily. It will
need many more shocking encounters with George to finally
arouse her to accept the challenges of life and reach some
realization of her self which has remained elusive so far.

The next such encounter takes place a few days later.
Mr. Eager, a clergyman temperamentally opposed to Mr. Emerson, organizes a picnic to Fiesole, a scenic spot in the Orno hills. The party, originally, was to consist of Mr. Eager, Mr. Beebe (another clergyman), Lucy and Charlotte. Lucy agrees to join this picnic thinking there will be no danger of encountering George. But to her dismay and everybody's surprise, Beebe creates a muddle of sorts by inviting old Mr. Emerson, George and Miss Lavish just as they are about to leave for the picnic. The scene, brilliantly described is regarded as one of the most memorable episodes in Forsterian fiction. The spirit of joy and fun takes over everybody and, to Mr. Emerson's delight, the driver of Lucy's carriage begins to fondle his fiancée whom he takes along for his own fun. A Jane-Austenian comedy ensues. Mr. Eager objects to the lewd love-making of the driver to his fiancée while Emerson exhorts them saying "Leave them alone...do we find happiness so often that we should turn it off the box when it happens to sit there" (RUV, 69).

Miss Bartlett and Lucy, however, feel quite embarrassed at the scene created by the two lovers and the two warring men. During the picnicking at the summit of the wooded hill the party which was never homogeneous, splits into three groups. Lucy, to avoid George's company joins Charlotte and Miss Lavish. But the two women, now intimate, decide that they should look for the two clergymen. Lucy asks the amorous cab-driver where the two 'good men' could be found. She says 'good men' because she cannot make the Italian understand
what ministers mean in Italian language. The cab-driver loads her to none else than George whom she was so desperately trying to avoid. As she treads upon violet-strown terrace commanding breath-taking view of Val d' Arno, she slips through the terrace and lands in George's arms, who plants a passionate kiss on her lips while the cab-driver exhorts them to show 'courage and love'. But the romantic moment is marred by Charlotte, who is seen standing 'brow against the view'. Lucy blushes for a moment and the picnic ends on a discordant note for her. Lucy had a chance to respond to the warm and open love of George, but partly due to her own reluctance and partly due to the intrusion of Charlotte, the unconscious desire to give herself away to love and life remains unfulfilled.

After the incident, Charlotte and Lucy decide to leave Florence abruptly for Rome to avoid further embarrassment. They are extremely panicked at the thought of this incident becoming a scandal as the matter is feared to be reported to others by the cab-driver who was a witness to the scene. Charlotte, a product of orthodox and conventionalised environment, is too big a shadow of medievalism to let Lucy have a moment of peace and truth. She casts an evil influence upon the otherwise romantic and spontaneous 'self' of Lucy with the result that whenever she tries to open out to the warmth of love, Charlotte would hurry her away from it. Lucy is too susceptible to the influence of others to take any independent
decision. Her weakness does not allow her to have a fuller grasp of her own self. Believing that it is a sin to surrender to the instincts of the body, she pretends to be indifferent to the uninhibited gestures of George. Her muddledom and self-deceit close for her the view of her own 'self'.

J.S. Martin aptly compares her nature to Charlotte's in the following words:

'Repressing a need for love and spiritual freedom, both women inevitably become hypocrites. Lucy, being younger, is more resilient; she has the capacity to grow and might yet be saved. Charlotte, on the other hand, is spiritually moribund.'

The second part of the novel shows Lucy engaged to the aesthetic prig Cecil Vyse of Windy Corner. Italy of course had given her a new view of life, but she was too confused by the muddles that took place there that she thinks the cozy warmth of her surroundings and its familiar people would be better things among which she could spend a secure and respectable life. She is happy to leave the memories of Italian experience behind her. At best this experience could give her occasional retreat into her adventure there. She never thinks the adventures were too strong and too real that they would follow her to Windy Corner. Once again the Forsterian irony comes in to play its trick. Cecil brings the father and son, Emerson and George to live at Windy Corner. A chance meeting with them at the National Gallery makes Cecil Vyse hire a house for them at Windy Corner. He never
thinks that this action of his would snatch away from him the thing he held most dear to his heart, i.e. Lucy. He considered Lucy a thing of fancy, a mysterious "Woman of Leonardo da Vinci; whom we love not so much for herself as for things that she will not tell us" (RWV, 95). He considers her as an object of art, not a human being. Cecil, in a way, is the representative of medievalism.

He was medieval. Like a Gothic statue...He resembled those fastidious saints who guard the portals of a French cathedral. Well educated, well endowed, and not deficient physically, 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. (RVW, 93).

Cecil Vyse is thus a man of false sophistication, decayed culture and dead art. He has known Lucy for years and never thought her worthy of his love, but it is against the Italian background of art and architecture that he 'falls in love' with her at Rome, Italy, he thinks, has worked some marvel in her. "It gave her light and - which he held more precious - it gave her shadow. Soon he detected in her a wonderful reticence" (RWV, 95). Obviously shadow and reticence for him is more important a virtue than spontaneity. Though he thinks he loves her, it is not her person but its shadow which appeals to him. He looks for 'charm' in her. He is a dilettante who talks to her of books,
pictures and poetry. Even when for a moment he submits himself to the cult of fresh air, his essential character is betrayed in what he says to Lucy:

"I connect you with a view—a certain type of view. Why shouldn't you connect me with a room?" (RWV, 113-14).

In a flash she understands that Cecil is right, that he is a room without a view, looking for shadows in the artificial light of a dim lamp. But she too does not know about her own nature, otherwise she could no more remain engaged to him. Momentarily she feels that she is a romantic kind of person when she says in the same scene, "I must be a poetess after all, when I think of you it's always as in a room. How funny!" (RWV, 114). Perhaps at long last she has begun to understand others though self-delusion still dominates her.

Her sense of comparison between Cecil and George begins to take definite shape and, subconsciously at least, she begins to associate George with nature, air, light and spontaneity. His unpremeditated enthusiasm and simplicity of behaviour glaringly contrasts with pretended sophistication, and stiff and snobbish personality of Cecil. Without knowing it herself, she is unconsciously drawn towards George.

One more instance of this contrast is seen in another memorable scene in the novel when Lucy in the company of her
mother and Cecil encounters George swimming with her brother Freddy and Beebe at the lonely pool in the woods. The three are found enjoying a bath in the pool. They are naked when they see the ladies coming towards them. Yelling and laughing they run for shelter to hide themselves. But George, before running away, greets them in a childlike manner. The ladies accompanied by Cecil are naturally shocked to see them in this state. Lucy, all embarrassment, tells her mother to hurry away while George greets them from a distance.

The scene shows George as an uninhibited child of nature. Compared to him, Cecil is a self-conscious snob who would deride this type of 'vulgar' act to justify his own hypocritical gentility.

Commenting on this famous bathing scene in the novel, Jeffrey Meyers remarks:

Bathing scenes in Forster's fiction are either a symbolic release from sexual inhibitions or a manifestation of sexual repression. In "The Point of It", a story with strong homosexual overtones, Micky and Harold 'had vowed out to the dunes at the slack, bathed, raced, eaten, slept, bathed and raced and eaten again,' Mickey was in roaring spirit. In Howards End Charles Wilcox and his friend Albert Russell, with considerably less abandon, go for a morning dip at Oniton followed by servants carrying their bathing costume. Margaret Schlegel observes their contretemps with amusement and her spontaneity is contrasted with their paralysis, for the 'athletes' run away from the life of the body as soon as they hear her voice.
The bathing scene where George, Freddy and Mr. Beebe are shown running and yelling, all naked, as children would do, obviously has homosexual implications too. The scene is based on Forster's Cambridge experience where, at the swimming club, Oscar Browning and his friends "bathed in a state of primitive nudity and some ran quite naked in crowds over the green grass" (GLD, 37). John Colmer comments on this particular scene in the following words:

Actually the comic-serious bathing scene serves its function of establishing the value of naturalness and spontaneous joy in *A Room With A View*, but the essence of its eroticism is homosexual...Lucy can hardly be expected to be as stimulated by the naked men as her creator nor as amused by the antics of the three men around the sacramental pool.

Tracing the traits of homosexuality in Beebe as portrayed in this scene, Jeffrey Meyers writes:

The 'Twelfth Chapter'...contains the naked bathing scenes whose strong homosexual overtones explain Beebe's character. Before the swim begins Beebe gives a thinly veiled plea for homosexual love by categorically stating, 'We despise the body less than women do. But not until we are comrades shall we enter the garden of Eden.' This is a dominant idea of Walt Whitman, whose considerable influence on Forster (and on D.H. Lawrence) goes for beyond *Passage to India*...An interesting analogue for Forster's bathing scene is the eleventh 'section' of Whitman's 'Song of Myself' in which twenty-eight naked men, exposing their parts in the sun, are entirely self-contained and
While George uninhibitedly shows himself as a spontaneous creature the ascetic in Cecil, on the other hand, suffers from too much inhibition that he cannot rise to the occasion even at the most important moments of intimacy with Lucy with whom he is engaged. Alone in Lucy's company in the garden one evening, he feels an urge to submit to passion and takes Lucy in his arms to kiss her. But because of self-consciousness he hesitates and asks her permission whether she would allow him the kiss. Lucy, who seems quite responding to the passion, is disheartened to hear this unmanly remark. The result is a mechanical type of embrace: "As he touched her, his gold pince-nez became dislodged and was flattened between them" (RW, 115). A moment which could prove to be a precious and life nourishing opportunity is lost by Cecil. Like Miss Raby of "The Eternal Moment", he too would repent for not 'giving himself away'. He fails to rise to a great occasion and the narrator comments: "Passion should believe itself irresistible....Above all, it should never ask for leave when there is a right of way" (RW, 116).

Contrasted to this cold, lifeless embrace of Cecil, George's response to passion is warm and spontaneous. When George and Lucy, after a game of tennis, hear Cecil reading an episode of a second-rate novel (written by Miss Lavish under a pseudonym) where the hero kisses the heroine in the
violin-strewn terrace at Fiesole, Lucy knowing that it was their own story, leaves the place and goes off to hide her embarrassment. George follows her and taking her in his arms kisses her passionately as if to commemorate their first encounter at Fiesole. Although Lucy is apparently offended she knows the difference between the embraces of the two men. George wants to bring her back to life, symbolically from Art (the novel) but once more Lucy lies to herself. Even though she rebuffs him never to indulge in an act like this, the fact is revealed to her like a lightning that Cecil is a selfish and pompous man, unworthy of her love. This is a significant development in her; at least she begins to recognize the truth about the general human nature if not exactly about her own 'self'. This knowledge makes her take her first independent decision: that she would not marry Cecil. When she meets Cecil to disclose her resolve, he too for the first time rises to the occasion, to face his final truth and self-realization. For the first time he sees her as a real woman, not as Leonardo's mystery painting. She becomes an independent woman with her own mind and will-power. "He looked at her, instead of through her, for the first time since they were engaged. From a Leonardo she had become a living woman, with mysteries and forces of her own, with qualities that even eluded art" (RUV, 163). Now he appreciates her as a living creature. Leaving all his selfishness and pretentions aside,
and displaying a rare aspect of his character, he summons courage to renounce what does not belong to him and accepts her decision calmly and resignedly:

On the landing he paused, strong in his renunciation, and gave her a look of memorable beauty. For all his culture, Cecil was an ascetic at heart and nothing in his love became like the leaving of it. (RVW, 186).

Lucy, even after this bold assertion of her personality, is not completely out of the muddle. She still does not know what her unconscious self aspires for. Although her refusal to marry Cecil indicates her willingness to part with the forces of medievalism, her resolve to remain unmarried throughout her life symbolises a muddle deep down in her being. It is a movement from one kind of hypocrisy to another kind of self-delusion. To come to her real self, “she must some day believe in herself” (RVW, 186). But believing in oneself implies the knowing and understanding of one’s desires and instincts and Lucy lacks the power to reach this truth against the confusing odds she faces. The narrative runs:

She gave up trying to understand herself, and joined the vast armies of the benighted, who follow neither the heart nor the brain, and march to their destiny by catchwords. The armies are full of pleasant and pious folk. But they have yielded to the only enemy that matters - the enemy within. They have sinned against passion and truth, and vain will be their strife after virtue. And as the years pass, they are censured. Their pleasantry and
their piety show cracks, their wit becomes cynicism, their un-selfishness hypocrisy; they feel and produce discomfort wherever they go. They have sinned against Eros and against Pallas Athene, and not by any heavenly intervention, but by the ordinary course of nature, those allied deities will be avenged. (RVW, 186).

In the confusion, partly to avoid Cecil and George, partly to escape from the suffocating atmosphere created by people like her mother, Charlotte, Freddy and Beebe, she decides to make another tour abroad, this time to Greece, in the company of two old ladies of the locality. But old Mr. Emerson intervenes and through his straightforward manner of speaking plainly tells her that she lacks the courage to face life squarely. Lucy has liked and admired him from the time he gave her the viewy rooms at 'Pension Bertolini'. Now he gives her another view, the true view of life. The conversation between the two makes Emerson realize that in the heart of her hearts she loves his son, George. At once he clears the fog enveloping her. the muddle confusing her soul. Very curtly he says:

I only wish the poets would say this, too: that love is of the body; not the body but of the body. Ah! the misery that would be saved if we confessed that! Ah for a little directness to liberate the soul! Your soul, dear Lucy! I hate the word now, because of all the cant with which superstition has wrapped it round. But we have souls. I cannot say how they came nor whither they go, but we have them, and I see ruining yours. I cannot bear it. It is again the darkness creeping in, it is hell....Dear girl, forgive my prosiness; marry my
boy. When I think what life is, and how
seldom love is answered by love — Harry
him; it is one of the moments for which
the world was made. (RWW, 216).

In this thematically central piece of the book, Lucy
is led to the awareness of her true self. So far she has
been too much intrigued by passion which sometimes looked
true and sacred but on other occasions seemed to her sinful
and vulgar according to the definitions of her society and
its conventional approach. Now she understands that love and
passion are not metaphysical abstract terms rather they are
'of the body'. There is always a physical side of love. It
concerns the soul or the self too, but the 'self' is not an
entity independent of the body. It is through the physical
body that we can recognise and reach the soul, and if we
deny the body its due or bypass it, by suppressing the basic
drives and desires, our 'self' is bound to elude us.

Alan Wilde, commenting upon this speech of Emerson
underlines its significance in the following words:

Love, passion, honesty; directness and
the soul: Lucy does not completely
understand, but somehow she does begin
to see the bottom of her own soul. She
is frightened, but she is saved: clear-minded, honest with herself once
more, she is again ready to love or to
live as a whole and integral individual.

Evidently Forster, as a commentator and narrator,
through the central character Lucy, is, in fact, searching
for his own truth i.e. his own 'self'. Lucy is the fictional
self of her creator. Her muddles and her self-realization are Forster's. She, like him, is on a sight-seeing spree of a new country. Italy leaves its indelible impressions upon both her and her creator. Both are in search of a 'view' and both are overwhelmed and stirred by the energetic, forceful, sometimes fierce, life of Italy. The charm of the Italian people, their spontaneity and their hearts bubbling with enthusiastic, sometimes riotous, feelings nourish Lucy and her creator, physically, mentally and spiritually. Mr. Emerson, though an Englishman, is virtually an Italian at heart, embodying all the virtues of that warm and sunny land. Italy, through him, gives Lucy too the true view of life bringing her out of the 'room'. The cocoon of her conventionalized 'self' cracks, placing her bodily and spiritually on the true course of passion and salvation.

Commenting upon struggle involved in this search in the novel, John Calmer aptly remarks:

Throughout the novel Forster succeeds in suggesting the conflict between the unconscious and the conscious in Lucy, as she struggles to maintain propriety in all her actions; in this respect and in her simple passion for truth, she resembles Adela of A Passage to India.

Besides Lucy, George, also plays an important role in bringing about Lucy's self-realization. Despite the deep authorial aspirations he symbolizes, this character has not been sufficiently developed. He looks like a shadow
of his father old Mr. Emerson. Passionate, yet he sounds too mechanical to engage Lucy or the reader into his thoughts and feelings. He looks more of a body than a balanced and composite personality. It seems as if he has been created only to highlight the significance of passions of the body for Lucy. His father, Emerson, on the other extreme does not have any physical side to his personality and seems to complement the too physical George. We have been seldom told of his physical make-up. He is more a voice and spirit than a body. Had Forster integrated George and his father into a single character, the result perhaps would have been more satisfactory from characterization point of view.

Lucy, as the most convincingly conceived and developed character, embodies the authorial self in the form of her limitations, aspirations, muddles and repressions of the bottled up passions. Her prejudices against the physical aspects of basic desires and drives and her gradual overcoming of these prejudices demonstrate the fundamental shift in her attitude to life. The struggle she has to contend within her self corresponds to a similar conflict raging within Forster's own personality. The novel underlines the grim battle between the opposing forces within and around Lucy and her creator.
(b) Where Angles Fear To Tread

Where Angles Fear To Tread is in a sense a companion piece to A Room With A View because both these novels bring out the contrast between the conventional English life and the crude but vigorous life of Italy. While the former reveals the gradual realization of the self by the main character Lucy, in the latter Philip Harriton is shown undergoing a similar, slow but steady quest for his self. Italy once again serves as a charmed land which enthralled and enthuses with life anybody who visits it. Of course this charmed land cannot transform the people who would not let its light and air enter their souls, otherwise Cecil Vyse and Charlotte Bartlett would also have been saved by its grace. But it does cast its spell on anyone who is even slightly disposed to the spontaneity and liveliness of this country. Obviously E.M. Forster was so much influenced and impressed by the magic touch of Italian life that he based both of his first two novels on his experiences in this country.

But this is not to say that the two novels are variations of the same theme. While A Room With A View may be called a holiday novel written in comic spirit, Where Angles Fear To Tread is a novel having sombre, even tragic implications for its characters. While a sense of fulfilment of love and fruition of life were the leitmotives of the former, a grim struggle to come to grips with life is the undercurrent
of the latter novel. The earlier novel made Forster realise his potentials as a writer and like his heroine Lucy brought him close to his own 'self'. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is another attempt to see if he could face the more serious questions posed by life. The vital problems of life and the questions concerning its existence weighed supreme on Forster's mind so much so that he suspended writing the 'Lucy Novel' to complete *Where Angels Fear to Tread* first.

There is difference of opinion among critics as to who is the hero or heroine of the novel. Some critics say it is Lilia Harriton who plays the pivotal role in the novel. Others are of the view that it is Gino, the Italian, who should be taken as the chief character. A small minority of critics consider Philip Harriton as the protagonist. It seems more reasonable to take the last view as the right one because no other character in the novel plays as pivotal a role in the plot as Philip does. Indeed he is the character that most resembles its creator in temperament and sensibility. His gradual conversion from a self-conscious, snobbish prig into a sober, enlightened gentleman symbolises Forster's own aversion to conventionalized and stereotyped life-style of the self-conscious English society, showing at the same time that even an average English man or woman was capable of purging oneself of these crudities of character.

Philip Harriton is a lawyer by profession and his
amused detachment from life marks his attitude towards men and matters of the world. Whatever goes on in the world around him is seen by him from an aesthetic angle. He draws satisfaction from the fact that he is not involved in the chaos that abounds in the universe and life, but he is not aware that 'passion' and 'involvement' are also basic ingredients of life if it is to be lived fully and wholly. Like Cecil Vyse he does not realize that fulfillment of the basic instincts and intuitions of the body is more important in life than mere aesthetic appreciation of beauty. For him, Art imprisoned in art galleries is the life. His contact with real life is essential for his self-realization and as in the case of Lucy this realization dawns upon him slowly and only after a great struggle with what may be called the fundamentals of life, namely passion, love and truth.

The plot of the story struck Forster's mind during a chance encounter with a group of English ladies in a hotel in Italy during his journey in 1901-02. Recounting this incident he writes in an unpublished typescript:

Where Angles Fear to Tread rests on a piece of effrontery. In a hotel lounge one day - at Siena or that sort of place - I overheard an English lady who had married an Italian far beneath her socially and also much younger, and how most unfortunate it was. This sorry bit of twaddle stuck in my mind. I worked at it until it became alive and grew into a novel of contrasts.
On the one hand was the English suburbs with the gray inhibited life that I knew only too well, and on the other hand was Monteriano, a romantic hill town which I established in Tuscany on the basis of San Gimignano.

Lilia Harriton, Philip's widowed sister-in-law, goes to Italy from Sawston, England, for a change after the death of her husband. Her mother-in-law, Mrs. Harriton, was not in favour of this visit but Lilia is so braggish and unconventional that she has her way and Miss Abbott accompanies her to Italy as a chaperone. Philip, who had already been to this charmed land, helps Lilia in her journey by telling her detailed accounts of the places and hotels she should visit. He is himself so much haunted by his memories of Italy that he reassures his mother about Lilia's visit there by saying:

I admit she is a philistine, appallingly ignorant, and her taste in art is false. Still, to have any taste at all is something. And I do believe that Italy really purifies and ennobles all who visit her. She is the school as well as the playground of the world. It is really to Lilia's credit that she wants to go there. (Luff, 22).

The passage reveals not only Italy's influence upon Philip but also his view of Lilia who, he says, is both insensitive and ignorant. But he believes in Italy's power to transform any person with minimum of 'taste' however false. While he is so enthusiastic in sending Lilia to Italy to experience 'real life' and to live among 'real people' of
Italy, he is, after her departure, taken aback on hearing the
news of her engagement with an Italian young man of low
station. The following lines describe his dismay:

He was in a painful position. For three
years he had sung the praises of the
Italian, but he had never contemplated
having one as a relative. He tried to
soften the thing down to his mother, but
in his heart of hearts he agreed with her.
(WAFF, 31).

His mother, Mrs. Harriton, is a devious lady, too much
a repressor of freedom, a representative of the convention-
ridden provinciality of Swanton. She is too conscientious to
let her respectability be compromised at any cost. Secondly,
we find Philip here in his true colours. Although he has
been a worshipper of the beauty of Italy and its art and
culture, he is too timid to physically touch the reality of
this land and, symbolically, the reality of life. Subconsciously,
'in his heart of hearts' he is, like Forster himself, dominated
by the influence of his mother, and cannot escape the Swatonian
snobbish values and respectability that he inherits from her.
The whole story is a dramatization of this dilemma in Philip's
mind. Consciously he wants to celebrate life as he sees it in
his Italian model, but unconscious and hidden forces within his
being don't let him reach out to the realities of life and the
consequent struggle leads him to a muddle from which there seems
to be no escape.

To retrieve the respectability of the family, he at once
starts for Italy at the behest of his mother. "I will do all I can," said Philip in a low voice. It was the first time he had had anything to do" (WAFT, 31). Philip however does not believe in 'doing'. He is an aesthetic hypocrite like Cecil for whom life is just a passive spectacle. He cannot realize his true self unless he steps down from the spectator's gallery and involves himself in the drama of life. "Some people are born not to do things. I am one of them. I never did anything at school or at the Bar" (WAFT, 134), he brags.

As soon as Miss Caroline Abbott receives him at the railway platform at Monteriano in Italy, he asks her all the details about Gino Carella, the man whom Lilis proposes to marry. When told that he was not a noble 'Conte' or 'Marches' but a son of dentist, Philip gives a cry of disgust. "I cannot think what is in the air...if Lilis was determined to disgrace us, she might have found a less repulsive way" (WAFT, 38), he bemoans.

Gino Carella is a 'round' character if George Emerson of A Room With a View is to be taken as a 'flat' character. Forster's definition of flat and round characters in his Aspects of the Novel is an appropriate yard-stick to judge these two characters. The flat characters, according to him, are two dimensional, like a photograph. Their complexities if any, lie on the surface. But round characters are not
straight. They have contours which indicate their depth, the third dimension. If they are not 'round' initially, they are capable of rotundity and have the capacity to grow up and spring surprises. "Why do the characters in Jane Austen give us a slightly new pleasure each time they come in, as opposed to the merely repetitive pleasure that is caused by a character in Dickens?" Forster asks and goes on to answer, "...the best reply is that her characters though smaller than his, are more highly organized. They function all round, and even if her plot made greater demands on them than it does they would still be adequate" (AN, 79). Forster's characters, barring a few minor characters like George Emerson, Mrs. Honeychurch, Mrs. Vyse and Harriet Harriton, are highly organized and 'round'.

Gino is in a way a reincarnation and extension of George of *A Room With a View*. If George embodied the spontaneity, passion and vigour of Italian life in his English personality, Gino is Italy itself, in all its crudity, ferocity and liveliness. He is a well built youth, un-intellectual and unsophisticated, a symbol of masculinity. Forster, throughout his fiction, is particularly fascinated by masculinity in characters most dear to his heart. The reason obviously lies in his basic, though subconscious, homo-sexual nature. This also explains why most of his characters behave coolly and passively whenever they are supposed to respond warmly to matters relating to love and sex.
This also explains why Gino's relations with Lilia are never given a depth of emotional understanding. No doubt it looks paradoxical that the writer who so much emphasizes the importance of physical and bodily love, who never tires of eulogizing the significance and indispensability of passion in life, should become irritatingly cool and incapable of genuine feelings when he comes to the reality of relations between opposite sexes. On the other hand his treatment of homosexual relations as shown by his stories in the collection Life to Come is exceptionally convincing and equally skilful.

Philip's warning to her against the cunningness of Gino notwithstanding Lilia declares that she has already married Gino. As soon as she settles into her married life, Philip's warning proves prophetic. She discovers that she had been taken for a ride for her money. Being older than Gino in age she tries to dominate him, ordering him not to keep company with low-caste men. Being a rich woman she holds Gino in awe for some time but his real nature comes to fore very soon and he begins to defy her, "...though I am young, am at all events a man, and know what is right" (WAFT, 54). A clash between the feminine and the masculine forces ensues and poor Lilia gradually sees her fate sealed in the wretched house of Gino. The narrative runs:

The advance of regret can be so gradual that it is impossible to say, 'Yesterday I was happy, today I am not'. At no one moment did
Lilia realizes that her marriage was a failure, yet during the summer and autumn she became as unhappy as it was for her nature to be. (WAFT, 60).

Gino, now trying to assert himself in the house, incidentally betrays his infidelity to her and the horrified Lilia one evening decides to flee to England. But she misses the last carriage to the station and slowly 'climbs back' to her captivity. The tortures at the hands of Gino make her resign to her fate and she dies one day, giving birth to Gino's son.

The second part of the novel once again shows Philip going to Italy to rescue, not Lilia, who is already dead, but her son. If the first rescue mission proved a disillusionment for him, the latest mission promises to be his salvation. The journey, again at the behest of his mother, is undertaken in the company of his stupid and religiously fanatic sister Harriet. Caroline Abbott sensing the mood of the Herritona, and taking upon herself the blame of Lilia's marriage with Gino, has already reached Monteriano to retrieve the child from Gino's clutches. The rescue party assembles in a hotel and discuss ways and means to make their mission successful. But Philip, as always, does not show any missionary zeal in retrieving the child as he more or less feels indifferent to the expedition's outcome. His sense of abandon provides him with a detachment and he still considers life as a 'mere spectacle'. This time, he sheds both his old sentimental
passion and anxiety for the family honour. "He might be a puppet's puppet, but he knew exactly the disposition of the string" (WAFT, 90). Intelligent and brilliant though he is, he does not even now understand the basic principle of life: that life is 'living', an involvement and not a passive sight to be gazed at from a distance. The heat and light of Italy once again cast their spell over him. Having nothing particular to do on the first evening of their arrival they visit an opera theatre. Harriet makes a lot of fuss, but is persuaded to reluctantly join them. "So this strenuous day of resolutions, plans, alarms, battles, victories, defeats, truces, ended at the opera" (WAFT, 107), concludes the narrator.

At the opera, Philip recalls how he had visited the same theatre years ago. The thoroughly done up theatre now fascinates him:

So rich and so appalling was the effect that Philip could scarcely suppress a cry. There is something majestic in the bad taste of Italy; it is not the bad taste of a country which knows no better; it has not the nervous vulgarity of England, or the blinded vulgarity of Germany. It observes beauty, and chooses to pass it by. But it attains to beauty's confidence (WAFT, 107-08).

The opera scene is structurally central to the novel because it is here that Italy comes to its most natural self and effects Philip's conversion. The unmixed feelings of the Italian audience overshadow the guilt-ridden emotions
of the English party at this occasion of mirth and celebration of life. The assembly of people is bent upon enjoying the unrestrained and riotous singing of the opera-dancer Lucia. The audience sways and sings to the melodious tunes of the orchestra, as if it was drunk mad.

Violent waves of excitement, all arising from very little, went sweeping round the theatre. The climax was reached in the mad scene, Lucia, clad in white, as befitted her malady, suddenly gathered up her streaming hair and bowed her acknowledgments to the audience. (WAFT, 109-10).

Both Philip and Caroline Abbott enjoy the scene where the stage and the theatre, performer and the audience, become jovially involved in the action of the drama. People, in their excitement, throw some bouquets at Lucia, and she, equally enthusiastically responding to them, flings them back at the audience. One bouquet incidently strikes Harriet at her chest, and, indisposed to the whole scene as she already is, she furiously rises from her seat and creates a scene of her stupidity shouting loudly that she is leaving the theatre immediately. As Philip rises to hand the bouquet to a man in the box, he is greeted with open arms by none else but Gino. Pulling him by the arm, Gino and his friends invite him to the box and though surprised by the friendship of the alien people, he shares the rest of the enjoyment of the opera with them.

"...again he would be enchanted by the kind, cheerful voices,
the laughter that was never vapid, and the light caress of
the arm across his neck" (UAFT, 112). Caroline Abbott,
likewise, becomes heady with music "and that night when she
opened the window her room was filled with warm sweet air.
She was bathed in beauty within and without, she could not go
to bed for happiness" (UAFT, 112).

Italy, through the fantastic opera scene, finally
forces Philip to shed, even if momentarily, his hollow
esthetic attitude to life and induces him to the reality of
life on the ground. The Shelleyan approach to life gets
transformed by Dante's land and the detached bird-like "self"
in him comes flapping into direct contact with the earthly
fragrance of exuberant life. From now on Philip stops being
a passive spectator watching the comedy of life. He begins
to respond positively to the friendly gestures of Gina, his
enemy till now. Although Harriet is hell bent upon getting
the child at any cost, Philip revises his strategies afresh
and plans to make his mission successful by intelligent
persuasion. Before he executes his own plans, Harriet,
disenchanted by his slow tactics, kidnaps the child and the
party leaves Monteriano in the darkness of the evening by
a carriage for the station. But in the rush of things, the
carriage turns turtle and the child is killed on the spot while
Philip's arm gets fractured.

Accepting his moral responsibility for the child's
death, Philip goes back to Gino's house to seek his forgiveness. Gino, who had the child as his dearest thing in the world, pounces upon him like a beast of prey. Screwing Philip's already broken arm, Gino sits upon his throat to strangle him to death when Caroline Abbott intervenes and mediates between the two, saving Philip from the mortal clutches of Gino. It takes her some time to pacify Gino and she successfully establishes the bond of friendship between the two men.

Philip who like Lucy has been deceiving himself, that he is superior to others, that he could laugh at the triviality that people call life, approaches his 'real self' only when he is forced to step down from his ivory tower and meet people on the ground, for it is here on the hard soil that life blooms, nourishes and bubbles with vigour, passion and zest and not in the painted pictures, dead statues and historical ruins. So far he was a worshipper of the dead beauty, but the living realities of life bring him closer to the understanding of his self. Lately, perhaps under the magical Italian sun, Philip begins to see some mysterious qualities even in Caroline Abbott, whom he had so far considered only a 'simpleton'. Now she seems to possess powers that lift her above the common womanhood. As she comes to save his life from the jaws of death, she attains the status of something more than a goddess:
Her eyes were open, full of infinite pity and full of majesty, as if they discerned the boundaries of sorrow, and saw unimaginable tracts beyond. Such eyes he had seen in great pictures but never in a mortal. Her hands were folded round the sufferer, stroking him lightly, for even a goddess can do no more than that...Quietly, without hysterical prayers or banging of drums, he underwent conversion. He was saved.

(NAFT, 192).

But the conversion, as we will see, is not total. It is a partial transformation, for his ivory tower of a detached spectator has only been shattered. He has realized that life cannot be only a picture to be contemplated. It is something that requires us to act, to 'do' something. He is stripped of snobbishness and meets simple people like Gino on equal ground. Shedding his notions of class casteism, he sets himself free from his genteel Sawstonian values. In future his mother's evil influence would never cause a muddle in his life. But still he lacks one important ingredient of life: passion. He has not shed his self-consciousness too, for on the journey back to England, he declares his love for Carolina Abbott very reluctantly. This lack of spontaneity, still mars his chance of embracing full life.

Caroline, on the other hand, though a far more improved person by the Italian experience than she had ever been, also cannot free herself of the dead past as she discloses a startlingly new fact to him: that she has all along been in
love with Gino. It took Forster to write *A Room With A View* to reconcile these unresolved elements in the man-woman relations. The novelist picks up Lucy at the cross-roads where he leaves Philip. As we have seen in *A Room With A View*, Forster dwells on the same theme of recognizing the value of passion and spontaneity in his characters before they come to terms with their true selves. Philip resembles Cecil Vyse who believes that love and beauty can be best appreciated through the pictures and statues of great artists. Both indulge in the fallacy that life lived in arts is beautiful while the truth is that life demands not only an esthetic approach but also participation and passion. Caroline Abbott is the victim of the same fallacy when she says that she has been in platonic love with Gino, to whom she has not disclosed this fact even once. She, like Lucy, still lives in a world of make-believe and is to undergo another round of tortuous struggle before she can understand that one cannot love something past but rather one has to summon enough courage to break the myth of past 'visionary' moments to enjoy the passion and love in the present.

The cynical onlooker in Philip is driven to admit that life, after all, is not just a spectacle. "Life was greater than he supposed but it was even less complete" (WAFT, 155). The incompleteness can to some extent be made up if he could open out his self to Caroline, which he does soon after. But it is
perhaps too late, or perhaps too early, because Caroline still clings to her illusory passion for Gino. She is not yet ready to come out from her sentimental shell for like Lucy she does not yet know that love is not just a platonic mode of reaching the lover through spirit, it is 'of the body'.

Some of the critics are not convinced of the novel's ending which does not admit the consummation of love between Philip and Caroline Abbott. Alan Wilde, for example, is dismayed at the loose ends not having been satisfactorily tied:

There is something disquieting about the entire last episode. Neither Philip's feeling for Caroline nor here for Gino rings true; both of them seem somewhat academic in their passion, for all their protestations of love.8

According to Wilde, Forster has not solved the most difficult problem yet: the problem of an artist's tendency to filter life through an aesthetic screen. To a degree Philip learns what is real life, but he is never fully able to connect with it. "The habit of idealizing and of seeing life as an artistic spectator prevents the final step of his education,"9 concludes Wilde.

John Colmer, similarly expressing his reservation over the last episode, remarks:

When Caroline confesses to Philip at the end of the novel that she had been in love with Gino from the beginning... she seems to muddle the two kinds of salvation: Spiritual and prudential... "I who was worshipping every inch of
him, and every word he spoke. And
that saved me."

Saved her from what?...There is something
very muddled here.10

Why does Forster not grant his characters the fulfilment
of genuine sexual desires along with a commitment to life? The
fact is that at this stage (Forster was only 26 in 1905 when
the novel was published) the young novelist was passing
through early phase of self-realization. He was still trying
to establish his grasp upon life through zeroing in upon his
own selfhood. This quest was to continue in his later novels.
The young novelist, like his protagonists Philip, Rickie,
Margaret and Fielding, was to witness many stages of self-
education. No writer can pour whole of his self into a single
book. Forster too had to synthesise innumerable aspects of
his conscious and unconscious personality through the series
of his novels. When one novel failed to give him the sense
of fulfilment he felt the urge to write another.

Philip, like Forster, is dominated by his mother's
influence. Forster, partly under the influence of his mother
Lily, too abandoned normal sex life in favour of homosexuality
and lacked both sexual instinct and passion towards the female
sex. He translated his unmanageable incapacities into his
fiction and saw the normal man-woman relations through the
screen of his aestheticism, especially at this earlier stage
of his career.
It is interesting to see that Philip is curiously attracted to the blatantly masculine, easy going and irresponsible Gino. When Caroline Abbott discloses to him that she has been in love with Gino, Philip hears himself murmuring "Rather! I love him too" (WAFT, 159). Philip's love for Gino carries homosexual implications. Colmar quotes an expunged manuscript passage which was not incorporated in the novel. It describes Philip's tribute to the Italian friends who came into his contact through Gino or by chance encounters. Philip says in this passage:

O friends, dear friends of mine whom I have made in Italy! cabmen, waiters, sacristans, shop assistants, soldiers... We have been friends for years. I think when we first met... you told me everything, and I told you more than I shall ever tell my true and tried acquaintance wondering why we had been kept apart so long. And thank goodness, I shall never see one of you again.11

Similarly commenting on the subtlety of the homosexual love between Philip and Gino Carella, Jeffrey Meyers remarks:

Gino's temptation of Philip who distrusts emotion is subtle and complex, for both men have a homosexual element in their nature, and their sodomasochistic connection builds up to a crescendo of pain through a series of hints and touches... At the opera Philip is enchanted by the light caress of Carella's arm across his back; in the cafe Gino lays sympathetic hand on Philip's knees when Philip tells Gino of the baby's death he touches him on the shoulder for consolation; and when Gino twists his arms and he strikes Gino down, Philip passes his arm around him and is filled with pity and tenderness.12
Forster's stories in *Life to Come* and Furbank's evidence in his biography indicate that a Forsterian homosexual generally seeks his outlet of sexual urge through chance encounters with people of low class, partly for fear of social restrictions and taboos and partly because the identity of such acquaintances easily merges into the sea of humanity.

It is interesting to note that almost all Forster's homosexual characters have a remarkable knack of establishing contact with strangers. In *Maurice* too the hero establishes homosexual relations with the gamekeeper of his friend Clive.

The friendship resulting from homosexual contact with these people is sometimes so genuine for him that the joy, once past, haunts him for a long time. And because there is little chance of meeting such people again in the lifetime, the sense of separation and loss becomes even more acute giving the moment of happiness a special significance. There are instances in Forster's life when he re-established contact with such people and changed it into lifelong friendship. One such person is Mohammed el Adi of Egypt who met him during his 1917 visit to Egypt and whose death in 1922 was a profound personal grief for Forster. Forster frankly expresses his preference in unambiguous terms: "I want to love a strong man of lower classes and be loved by him and even hurt by him." Highlighting the significance of this kind of preference and the attendant sense of guilt Colmer writes:
The notion of imaginative transposition of homosexual into heterosexual relations also throws light on the sense of guilt and remorse that so frequently accompanies the eternal moment in Forster's fiction, previously so puzzling to most readers. For someone who was forced by convention to celebrate heterosexual love when his chief insight lay elsewhere, the idea of the eternal moment was specially attractive.

The view is supported by an unsigned review in *The Times Literary Supplement* titled "A Chalice for youth". Emphasizing the condition of homosexuality in Forster the reviewer writes:

Forster may have disliked and resented his condition - it seems clear that he did - but it was as central to his art as to his sexual being; to say that he was homosexual is to define not only his private nature, but the nature of his imagination.

Forster's peculiar attitude to sex, as discussed above, is basic to our understanding of his art. Each of his novels and most of his stories bear homosexual overtones of his creative imagination, and, as we have seen, both the Italian novels provide sufficient clues to his gradual recognition of his homosexual nature. He wrote *Maurice*, exclusively to give vent to his repressed self. The next two autobiographical novels illustrate this point thoroughly as the direct encounter with the forces within his self is felt poignantly by the author.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

8. Wilde, op. cit., p. 25.
10. Colmer, pp. 54-55.