



JOURNEY TO ITALY:

Mass Tourism, the Victorian Age, & the Modern Novel

November 23, 2021

Office Hours this week

- Thursday is a holiday in the US and I will be away from internet access Thursday afternoon – Sunday.
- Therefore, I will only be available for Office Hours, **Beijing Time**:
 - Wednesday Morning, Nov 24, 8 – 10am
 - Wednesday Evening, Nov 24, 9 – 11pm
 - Thursday Morning, Nov 25, 8 – 10am
 - Thursday Evening, Nov 25, 9 – 11pm
 - Monday Evening, Nov 29, 9 – 11pm

E.M. Forster

- Edward Morgan Forster was a British Realist, Symbolist, and Modernist writer (1879 – 1970)
- He is most famous for his novels
 - *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905)
 - *A Room with a View* (1908)
 - *Howards End* (1910)
 - *A Passage to India* (1924)
- *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, like *A Room with a View*, is set in Italy.
- One of the key themes in Forster's work is class difference and how irreconcilable it seems.



A large, dark blue, irregular shape resembling a watercolor splash or ink blot is centered on a white background. The shape has a textured, slightly grainy appearance with some lighter blue and white splatters around its edges. The text "A Room with a View" is written in a white, sans-serif font across the middle of the blue shape.

A Room with a View

Discourse

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Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts, Bill Ashcroft, et al.

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Foucault - Discourse

- Modernists and, even more so, Postmodernists contend that truth and knowledge is plural, contextual, and (postmodernists) historically produced through discourses.
- Of discourse, Foucault states [*Archeology of Knowledge*, 1972]:
 - discourses are systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that **systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak**.
 - discourses are social processes of legitimating and power, emphasizing the construction of current truths
 - power is always present in discourse and can both produce and constrain the truth
 - discourse is controlled by objects, what can be spoken of; ritual, where and how one may speak; and the privileged, who may speak.

Creating reality through Discourse

- “The real event – whatever it was – had taken place, not in the Loggia, but by the river.” (36)
 - How does this sentence alter the ‘reality’ of the narrative for the reader?
- “He is really—I think he was taken by surprise, just as I was before. But this time I’m not to blame; I want you to believe that. I simply slipped into those violets. No, I want to be really truthful. I am a little to blame. I had silly thoughts. The sky, you know, was gold, and the ground all blue, and for a moment he looked like someone in a book.” (44)
 - How does Lucy’s description of the landscape reveal how her expectations and behavior have been altered by the Italy that was presented to her (discursively) in portrayals of the place before her visit? The same with her expectation of a lover?
- How can ‘power’ (as it produces and constrains truth) be seen as present in the portrayals of Italians (look, for example, at the second half of 41)? How, in turn, can these portrayals act as ‘constructions’ of subjects when it comes to the relationship between the text and its readers?

Creating Reality through Discourse

- Language (as discourse) doesn't just present or represent, it *creates*.
- This is an age-old idea when we look at it from a slightly different perspective:
 - Idealist vs. Materialist philosophy
 - Which came first? The thought of the universe, or the atoms of the universe? Do we come from an originating thought? Or do our thoughts come from billions of years of the physical and biological evolution of the universe?
- This idea will become increasingly important in 20th-century literature as authors confuse the hierarchy between literature and physical reality.
 - We can see this confusing of narrative hierarchies begin to be at work with the relationship between Miss Lavish's novel and the main plot (frame narrative) in *A Room with a View*.
 - The confusing of the hierarchy between literature (thought, language, discourse) and reality (physical, empirical, phenomenological) is important to pay attention to because it calls into question the role of literature (whether that is fiction, travel writing, or guidebooks (or any other kind of written word)) in producing (as opposed to reporting) reality.
- Why do you think it's important for me to highlight it in this course?

The Power of the Gaze (of the narrator)

- We looked last week at how women acted as muses for men. That is, their role in life was not to act or be an agent in their own lives or world events; rather, their role was to 'inspire' men to act. (24)
- We have considered in this course how a gaze can have the same disempowering and objectifying effect on both women and landscape (and the locals who inhabit it). Consider how this is true of the description of Florence on page 34.

“Italians Drive Them”

- Consider the title of Chapter VI.
- Consider the descriptions of the Italian driver and his girlfriend on pp. 36-39.
- Consider the explanation of the Italian driver’s behavior as he guides Lucy on pages 41 and 42.
- Now, think about the idea of Discourse:
 - “For Foucault, a discourse is a strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of statements within which the world can be known. The key feature of this is that the world is not simply ‘there’ to be talked about, rather, it is through discourse itself that the world is brought into being.”
- What do you think Forster’s goal is with this treatment of Italians (taking into consideration as well other treatments of Italians so far in the text) here? And what do you think the actual effect of his treatment of Italians might be on readers from 1908 to present day?

Miss Bartlett

- We read last week that Literary Modernism “broke the implicit contract with the general public that artists were the reliable interpreters and representatives of mainstream (“bourgeois”) culture and ideas, and, instead, developed unreliable narrators, exposing the irrationality at the roots of a supposedly rational world.”
- We’ve seen this week that “Modernists and, even more so, Postmodernists contend that truth and knowledge is plural, contextual, and (postmodernists) historically produced through discourses.”
- I would like to consider the treatment of Miss Bartlett with these aspects of Modernism in mind. That is:
 - How does the narrator see Miss Bartlett? Good/bad? Smart/dumb? Honest/dishonest?
 - Is the narrator’s treatment of Miss Bartlett consistent throughout? If not, how/where not?
 - How does the treatment of Miss Bartlett show us that his novel is not only realist, to a great degree, but also modernist in some of its narrative devices?



Introduction: Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour

Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour

- “The assumption that a traveller engaged in **translating the foreign into discourse** will set himself or herself the task of producing an effect of pleasure by **imposing on the topography of foreignness** a demand for some form of dramatic departure from the familiar and the mundane.” 2
- “In acclaiming the foreign as gratifyingly dissimilar from the familiar, travel writing employs a range of concepts of **otherness.**” 4
- “The Gothic novels of the 1790s enthusiastically exploit the hyperbolic potential of immoderation in the warm **South**: Ann Radcliffe’s *Sicilian Romance* informs the reader that the lives of the Marquis de Mazzini and Maria de Vellorno ‘exhibited **a boundless indulgence of violent and luxurious passions.**’” 5
- “Travel writings [are] [...] closely concerned with the traveller-narrator’s own rhetorical strategies [...]: the task of finding the forms of language to **translate the topography into discourse** is a recurrent object of discussion. Travel writings usually acknowledge, too, **that travel entails the construction of particular myths, visions and fantasies, and the voicing of particular desires.**” 5
- Travel writing is often, at once, imaginative (wish fulfillment) and practical (instructive to future travelers), “The intersection of these two claims produces a network of rhetorical and theoretical strategies for understanding and appropriating the foreign that I term an *imaginative topography* or *imaginative geography.*” 6

Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour

- “The narrative of the Grand Tour is punctuated by ‘sights’. [...] While travellers pay deference to an established itinerary [of sights...], from at least the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, [they] intermittently chafe against the constraints of the accepted itinerary, and suggest their own revisions.” 18
 - “One of the most famous such proposals for revision is Yorick’s declaration, in Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey*, that the main ‘thirst’ that ‘has led me from my own home in France – and from France will lead me through Italy’ is a thirst not for ‘pictures, statues, and churches,’ but for knowledge of the female heart.” 19
- “The importance of writing itself as an instrument of appropriation.” 25
- This book is “concerned with changes in the formation of concepts of pleasure in writings about the Grand Tour, and in the desires and demands imposed upon the topography of the Tour in order to extract pleasure from it.” 34
- “The concepts of gender become entangled with the idea of travelling to Italy in search of pleasure and benefit. The sources of **authority** to which **the speaking subject** is able to lay claim, **when appropriating the foreign** as a source of pleasure, are determined, in part, throughout the period of the Grand Tour, by the versions of masculinity, femininity, manliness, and effeminacy that **play a part in the positioning of the speaking subject in relation to the objects of commentary.**” 34

Reading Questions

- Consider the title of Chapter VIII, particularly as it relates to earlier texts we have read (Romantic and Gothic) and their renewed interest in the Medieval (literature, art, and architecture) as opposed to or together with the Enlightenment interest in Classical and Renaissance cultural productions.
- Based on the description of Cecil on p. 52 (and 63), why do you think Forster chose this as the title of Chapter VIII? And what does it have to do with the previous description of George Emerson on pp. 27-28?
- Why do you think Forster chooses to distinguish between Cecil and George in this way? How is it, perhaps, relevant to the historical changes we've seen across this course?
- How does Cecil's (via the narrator) description of Lucy relate to Lucy's own (via the narrator) meditation on womanhood on p. 24?
- Taking into account the kite metaphor of pp. 56-7, why do you think Mr. Beebe is disappointed by Lucy's engagement?
- Consider the title of Chapter IX in the context of what I have been presenting in class as the relationship between the male tourist's gaze on women and on the landscape in Italy.
- On p. 63, Sir Harry references the effects of new technology on the English countryside. What is his opinion of these changes? Why?
- What do you make of the conversation between Lucy and Cecil about 'a view' or 'no view', especially as it may connect with the titular reference to a 'view'?
- How does the kiss between Cecil and Lucy and George and Lucy compare? How does it compare in the reality of the story as well as in the discursive choices made to describe (or not describe) it? Why do you think it should be this way?
- Many of you have noted an impending rebellion in Lucy. It is noted on p. 68. How is this rebellion described? Is it as you expected? Why or why not?
- Some of you have noted the relationship between the way Lucy plays music and the expectation (by Mr. Beebe and the reader) that it will affect the way she *lives*. Consider the last paragraph of p. 74 and this expectation as her choice of music relates directly to her agency in her relationship with her fiancé.
- What is the role of Italy in creating or recreating Lucy? Why do we not see the place as creating or recreating George or Cecil?