"Where Is Your Home"? Spaces of Homoerotic Desire in E. M. Forster's Fiction

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Abstract: The text analyses the spaces of homosexual desire described in E. M. Forster's novel *Maurice* as well as in two of his short stories, "The Other Boat" and "Dr Woolacott." In *Maurice* the title character constantly experiences the dual, or rather changeable, nature of places witnessing (and dis- or encouraging) his pursuits of desire. In "The Other Boat" the relationship between Lionel and Cocoanut unfolds within the heterotopic space of a ship, while "Dr Woolacott" is an example of a story set in a space which is very peculiar, liminal, as only somewhere between daydreams and nightmares is the protagonist able to meet his phantom lover. It is noticeable that the protagonists of the mentioned narratives exist simultaneously in the official, codified social spaces and in "the secret places." The disruptive, forbidden type of desire portrayed in the discussed texts can exist only in the "othered" spaces, spaces which often determine the character's identities and fates, influence their perception profoundly but, at the same time, rarely seem permanent or certain.

Keywords: space, home, homoerotic desire, liminality, heterotopia

Searching for domestic spaces, which would allow peace, intimacy and self-expression, was one of the fundamental topics of E. M. Forster's literary works.[1] As noticed by Anne Hartree, Forster as a writer was focused on home as a concept which "knots together a complex of ideas about the self and its relations to the wider world" and can be defined as "a space at once personal, gendered and sexualized." The scholar adds that the author of *Maurice* tried to "locate, or at least imagine, a space where the relationships his characters struggle to establish can plausibly 'take root'" (Hartree 1996, 127). The two books by Forster, which I am going to refer to, were published posthumously because of their

1 Anne Hartree observes that E. M. Forster described searching for a "real home" as a "central narrative of his work," while commenting on *A Room with a View* (Hartree 1996, 127).

controversial subject. They describe the process of searching for an impossible home, i.e. a space allowing homoerotic desire, which could not be openly expressed for fear of serious consequences. This disruptive type of desire and the potential spaces in which it could at least partially unfold are depicted, e.g., in *Maurice*, a novel written between 1913 and 1914 and published in 1971, and in two short stories from the volume *The Life to Come: And Other Stories* – "The Other Boat" and "Dr Woolacott." The spaces presented in aforementioned literary texts are wild, dream-like, liminal, heterotypical and mostly temporary. Their nature corresponds with the character of the forbidden feelings, a scarcely manifested passion that "few English minds have admitted" (Forster 2015a, 91).

In *Maurice*, a peculiar Bildungsroman taking place at the beginning of the twentieth century, the eponymous protagonist could be characterised as an average member of English society. He does not belong to the gentry but instead comes from the middle-class, as his father, whom Maurice loses very early, was engaged in commerce. After living with his mother and sisters, the boy becomes a "mediocre member of a mediocre school" (Forster 2015a, 19). Before graduation, neither his personality nor his appearance seems unusual. He matures rather slowly and when Mr Ducie, one of his teachers, decides to talk to him in private in order to describe his future duties as a husband, he does not understand much from the lecture. Despite knowing "that the subject was serious and related to his own body," "he could not himself relate to it; it fell to pieces as soon as Mr Ducie put it together, like an impossible sum. In vain he tried. His torpid brain would not awake. Puberty was there, but not intelligence …" (Forster 2015a, 13). Being young and immature, Maurice "stood still in the darkness" and his school, in which the purity and innocence of boys were carefully protected, did not offer opportunities to change that state.

The protagonist's life evolves after entering Cambridge. During his second year at the university, Maurice, always choosing intuition as his favourite decision-making tool, encounters some peculiar characters – among them Risley, "this queer fish," a homosexual who "might help him," although "how, he didn't formulate" (Forster 2015a, 33). In fact, Risley does help him, as knowing this flamboyant young lord results in meeting Clive Durham, a young gentleman, an intellectual and a future squire. Clive, interested in philosophy, music and antique culture, is much subtler than the protagonist. According to Forster, he is characterised by "delicacy that did not mean frailty" (Forster 2015a, 250). He is also a deep thinker who opposes particular social norms, especially those

concerning religion and the forbidden types of love. For Maurice and Clive, the respectable and conservative Cambridge University becomes a place where their mutual attraction can flourish. Despite the University being a place where social life plays an immensely important role, the two young men are able to share numerous intimate moments. Moreover, for a brief while they behave almost as a couple, as, despite the reproachful attitude of lecturers towards homosexuality, "in the world of their friends this attracted no notice" (Forster 2015a, 45). As "public spaces are … governed by unspoken understandings" (Browne, Lim, Brown 2007, 2), the young men are well aware of the unarticulated rules. However, despite the relative freedom, Clive from the very beginning forces the "platonic restraint" (Forster 2015a, 251). Despite being open to controversial theories and interested in intellectual rebellion, the man convinces Maurice that they should resign from any forms of physical closeness and rarely hesitates, even when the relationship between the young men in time becomes more intense. The peculiar moment when Clive and Maurice skip their lectures and go for a trip to the countryside during which they have their first (and last) kiss is, in fact, not "to be repeated." Their kiss is rather an aberration than an accepted social convention, and nature, which might be interpreted as an alternative hiding space, becomes a reminder of the fate awaiting Clive as a squire. According to Hartree, "failure of the motor-cycle, symbol of modernity, technology and change and its final abandoning amongst quintessentially English dog-roses" (1996, 132) can be seen as a symbol of the upcoming parting of the couple. The green, pastoral and idyllic countryside might symbolise the traditional public space which Clive has to inhabit (Hartree 195, 132). As a consequence of his rebellious behaviour, Maurice is expelled and has to leave Cambridge, thus bringing to a close the temporary freedom and transparency enjoyed by the boys at the University.

After that, their situation becomes much more complicated and their relationship slightly strained. They exchange letters and confessions of love; however, the only possible place where they can meet is Durham's family estate, Penge, located "in a remote part of England." When Maurice finally manages to visit it, he notices that both the house and estate "were marked, not indeed with decay, but with the immobility that precedes it" (Forster 2015a, 86). The look of the estate can be seen as a prefiguration: "the gate posts, the road … were in bad repair and the timber wasn't kept properly, the windows stuck, the boards creak" (Forster 2015a, 89). However, as Clive surprises Maurice with a room, providing

them relative seclusion and intimacy, the protagonist's hopes return. Indeed, the time that follows is partially blissful. Despite the rigid family and the prospects of the future looming over Clive, the two men have "as much happiness as men under that star can expect" (Forster 2015a, 98). Nevertheless, Clive still wants their love to be "passionate but temperate" (Forster 2015a, 98) and constantly maintains his distance towards physical contact. Moreover, knowing that his social position is at stake, and that in order to preserve it, he cannot escape his fate, that is, becoming a local politician, getting married and starting a traditional family, he starts to doubt the relationship. His rising concerns, made stronger during his illness, transform into certainty after a lonely trip to Greece. Once he returns, Clive claims that now he is interested in women only. Thus, the decaying image of Penge can foreshadow the upcoming decay of the men's relationship, but also illustrate Clive's detachment from desires which he is unable to understand, express or accept.

The spaces in which the relationship between the protagonists unfolds influence their emotions strongly. In Cambridge, they feel free and careless. On the other hand, Penge, Clive's ancestral property, symbolising the type of life he is supposed to lead, after some time starts to fill them with anxiety and odd premonitions, often manifested by Clive's physical weakness and Maurice's violent emotions. Clive, who is unable to focus on sensuality or to forget about conventions, can be seen as an embodiment of the British culture, its repressiveness and denial of sensuality and sexuality. He is extremely self-conscious and his sexuality is a source of inconvenience.[2] In one of his essays, Forster described the graduates of British universities as those who "go forth into it [the world] with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts … An undeveloped heart – not a cold one" (1996, 5). Paradoxically, intellectual development and maturing within the social system prevents Clive from acknowledging his instincts and desires. Although both Maurice and Clive often share social space, as they are both gentlemen, there are some differences between them. At first, slight class differences seem to help them in creating a love relationship, but later it becomes evident that shared fears and anxieties are important obstacles on the way to potential happiness. It also becomes ap-

2 Even after marrying his wife, "She welcomed him on future nights. But it was always without a word …. He never saw her naked, nor she him. They ignored the reproductive and the digestive functions. … His ideal of marriage was temperate and graceful, like all his ideals, and he found a fit helpmate in Anne, who had refinement herself and admired it in others" (Forster 2015a, 164).

parent that while Maurice fantasizes about living outside the class and cultural norms, Clive cannot imagine leaving the world of rules and risking his precious position. Meanwhile, Maurice, despite being often characterised as a snob and suburban tyrant focused on his status as well as particular duties, limitations and expectations related to it, finds accepting the reality much more challenging. When Clive decides to get married and finally feels "safe from intimacy" (Forster 2015a, 163), the protagonist feels allowed to visit Penge after a long break. It is noticeable that Maurice's passions become incomprehensible to Durham, who loves his wife "tenderly" and finally feels well received by the "beautiful conventions" (Forster 2015a, 164). According to him, Maurice still wanders "beyond the barrier" of these conventions, with "the wrong words on his lips and the wrong desires in his heart," condemning himself to loneliness and living with "arms full of air" (Forster 2015a, 164).

Nevertheless, when Maurice arrives to Penge, in "odd and bitter mood," the way he perceives the estate becomes unequivocally negative: "The sense of dilapidation had increased. Through the pouring rain he had noticed gate posts crooked, trees stifling, and indoors some bright wedding gifts showed as patches on a threadbare garment" (Forster 2015a, 166). His impressions prove that he finds the place in which the last acts of his affair with Clive took place dull and deteriorating. The subsequent scenes confirm that, in Maurice's eyes, both his relationship with the man, now involved in local politics, and the reality the latter lives in are barren. He finds most of the social activities futile and the company dreary. The hopelessly leaky roof, resulting in water dripping into basins and saucers is an image which might represent the futile efforts of both men not to lose their bond completely. For Maurice the type of contact offered by Durham cannot be sufficient. Disappointed with the suburban culture he grew up in, as well as with the world of gentry, Maurice again starts intuitively searching for other, unknown spaces. While contemplating nature, the protagonist thinks of darkness – "not the darkness of a house which coops up a man among furniture, but the darkness where he can be free!" (Forster 2015a, 190). He leans on the windowsill twice, and each time cries: "Come!" into the night and into the rain. After the second time, during which Maurice is "half-asleep," and dreams of "love – nobility – big spaces where passion clasped peace, spaces no science could reach but they existed for ever, full of woods some of them" (Forster 2015a, 191), Alec Scudder, the gamekeeper previously noticed by the protagonist, appears. The circumstances in which this intimate encounter takes place

are meaningful; the night and early morning constitute a liminal time frame and the window in which the lovers meet is a liminal locality.[3] It is obvious that Alec's visit is about to change Maurice's life irrevocably. Just as Clive becomes an emblem of the strict, repressive and decaying traditional culture of the upper classes, the boy is an embodiment of the dreamt-of forests as well as desire in its simplest form, not disturbed by cultural norms and limitations.

Unfortunately, Maurice and Alec are not able to ignore their radically different social backgrounds. In spite of Maurice's initial efforts to forget about it, they both notice that the very presence of Alec in his room at night is scandalous, not only because of the possibility of "unmentionable" acts but also because of his status in the social hierarchy. Nonetheless, Maurice, although irritated and worried after the subsequent telegrams from Alec, whom he suspects of blackmail, yearns for the young man. While angry at himself and convinced that "he had gone outside his class and it served him right," he felt that "his body yearned for Alec despite him" (Forster 2015a, 206). Finally, looking for the "safety in darkness," he decides to believe that "the forests and the night were on his side" (Forster 2015a, 214) and that he has to abandon his family and job, leave behind not only the space of his family home, but also his social status. Then, he tries to tackle the serious and persistent issue related to the fact that Scudder, too, "was embedded in class" (Forster 2015a, 227) and, moreover, he had an opportunity for social advancement that came from his relocation to another continent.[4] However, the protagonist manages to persuade Alec to stay with him.[5]

Hartree notices that the places in which Maurice lives or which are visited by him at various stages of his life, such as the public school, Cambridge,

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3 Liminality, a term coined by Arnold van Gennep, referred to the middle stage of a rite of passage and peculiar, ambiguous states accompanying it. Liminality was later described in a more complex way by Victor Turner and became a popular concept among scholars specialising in literary studies, as it helped to enhance the interpretations of transitory, in-between states and spaces. The state of "in-betweenness" often result in disrupting the order (e.g. the gender order) as well as dissolution of identities. Thus, liminal spaces are potentially dangerous; however, they also facilitate the creative process and allow subversion and change (Cole 1985, 9–10).

4 Despite his personal preferences, Alec understands the consequences of staying in England: "Indeed, he liked the woods and the fresh air and water, he liked them better than anything and he liked to protect and destroy life, but woods contain no "openings," and young men who want to get on must leave them. He was determined in a blind way to get on now" (Forster 2015a, 219).

5 He, e.g., introduces himself with Alec's surname during a conversation with Mr Ducie in the British Museum. According to Hartree it might be interpreted as "a subversive marriage enacted at the heart of the nation" (Hartree 1996, 135).

"the country house with its shooting and estate-village cricket match, suburbia, London and the British Museum …" encode the "images of 'dominant Englishness,'" which might prove that Forster tried to "reclaim these spaces" for queer desire as well as prove that the typical, "Oxbridge" type of masculinity represented by Maurice could also be related with homosexuality (Hartree 1996, 129). However, after acknowledging their bond, both the protagonist and his lover know that they have to "live outside class, without relations or money, they must work" (Forster 2015a, 239). This stage of transition might in their case become "fixed," as in some situations the "suspended character of social life takes on a more permanent character" (Thomassen 2009, 15). As outcasts, their future will be based on crossing conceptual borders and inhabiting marginal spaces. When Alec resigns from his emigration plans, Maurice claims that England belongs "to them, her air and sky were theirs" (Forster 2015a, 239). However, even if happy in the greenwood,[6] in exile they have to leave everything behind, become liminal subjects, inhabiting metaphorical night, escaping any potential witnesses of their love. When Maurice says goodbye to Clive, who again symbolizes everything he wants to abandon, the latter notices that "his friend … was essential night" (Forster 2015a, 242).

A ship to another continent, which in *Maurice* was "carrying away death" (Forster 2015a, 238), as Alec decided not to leave England, provides a peculiar space within which the events presented in a short story titled "The Other Boat" take place. A forbidden relationship which develops between two protagonists of this narrative could not happen on land, as the young men differ from each other profoundly: one of them is a British officer from the upper class, the other one a businessman using unfair commercial practises, whose identity is slightly unclear.

The story begins with a description of a few children playing on a ship heading to England. Young Lionel March and his siblings want another child to join them. Cocoanut Moraes, who is one of the subalterns, does not belong to "the Ruling Race" and whose status is unknown but it quickly becomes evident that

6 Forster was determined to create a happy ending: "A happy ending was imperative. I shouldn't have bothered to write otherwise. I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows" (Forster 2015a, 250). However, the absolute wilderness, idealised by Maurice, was less and less accessible in the pre-war times described in the novel. Thus, Forster places his protagonists in an almost non-existent space. According to Krzysztof Fordoński, the author creates "a homosexual haven of his own making"; in the scholar's view, if the lovers are ready to accept the "price," their homosexuality "can exist here and now" (Fordoński 2010, 90; 106).

he is a strong-willed and imaginative boy. The unobvious mutual attraction developing between Cocoanut and Lionel is noticeable from the very beginning. Moraes blurs the border between reality and the creations of his imagination. And his imagination is impressive, allowing him to always able to persuade other children to take part in his games. Although his racial identity should predestine him to be the white children's servant or subordinate, he acts as an unobvious leader. His behaviour is observed by the adults with hostility.

Ten years later the boys meet on board the ship *S.S. Normannia* when Lionel, as a young officer, travels from England to India. In a carefully composed, trivial letter to his mother he mentions accidentally meeting the boy who "got called Cocoanut because of his peculiar shaped head" and adds that "he has now turned into an equally weird youth, who has however managed to become influential in shipping circles" (Forster 2015b, 171). The young officer suggests that they do not spend much time together, claiming it would be unnatural and inappropriate as the other man has "more than a touch of the tar brush" (Forster 2015b, 171). Lionel, on the other hand, "was what any rising young officer ought to be – clean-cut, athletic, good-looking without being conspicuous … success has not spoiled him, nor was he vain of his personal appearance" (Forster 2015b, 172).

Captain March behaves in a predictable way; he plays bridge, although he has "wretched luck" (Forster 2015b, 172) and spends time with other respectable passengers, who treat him as a young promising Englishman. However, there is a secret part of Lionel's life on the boat; he has an affair with Cocoanut, which becomes evident once he goes down to his cabin, shared with Moraes. On deck, he acts as a regular member of the upper class. However, down in his cabin, he is engaged in an affair which could easily ruin his life. Cocoanut awaits him: "A brightly coloured scarf lay across him and contrasted with his blackish-grayish skin, and an aromatic smell came off him, not at all unpleasant. In ten years he had developed into a personable adolescent, but still had the same funny-shaped head" (Forster 2015b, 173). Moraes is very emotional; he constantly expresses his feelings in an exaggerated way, often cries and watches Lionel adoringly. March, on the other hand, acts firmly in his company. His gestures are heavy and he behaves as a conqueror. Their relationship is shaped by strict rules: "They couldn't associate on deck with that touch of the tar brush, but it was a very different business down here" (Forster 2015b, 173). However, Lionel, seemingly stronger and better positioned in the ship's social

hierarchy, worries more about the potential dangers and constantly admonishes the other man. Cocoanut plays with their situation; he calls Lionel Lion of the Night, probably referring to the only time when the lovers can enjoy their moments of freedom. Although Lionel perceives himself as the winner of the chase, in reality he is strongly influenced by his complex lover, as Cocoanut exhibits strength which is not physical in character, strength which often gives him an advantage over Lionel. Thus, both men feel fulfilled and victorious, while in fact they become painfully entangled in a peculiar arrangement: "There they lay caught, both of them, and did not know it, while the ship carried them inexorably towards Bombay" (Forster 2015b, 174).

Lionel's fascination with Cocoa results from, among other things, the man's exotic "otherness." Growing up within a restrictive culture, he is confounded by Moraes' openness towards sensuality as well as his gender ambiguity. His lover embodies the Orient, which, according to Sara Ahmed, "is not an empty place; it is full, and it is full of what is "not Europe" or not Occidental, and which in its "not-ness" seems to point to another way of being in the world – to a world of romance, sexuality and sensuality" (2006, 90). The scholar claims that:

> In a way, orientalism involves the transformation of "farness" as a spatial marker of distance into a property of people and places. "They" embody what is far away. Thus "farness" … follows the line of a wish. … the Orient is sexualized, although how it is sexualized involves the contingency of "the who" that encounters it.… The Orient is not only full of signs of desire in how it is represented and „known" within the West …, it is also desired by the West, as having things that "the West" itself is assumed to be lacking. (Ahmed 2006, 90)

Cocoanut playfully comments on his significant role in Lionel's life: "Lion, he don't know nothing at all. Monkey's got to come along to tell a Lion he's alive" (Forster 2015b, 180). He also skilfully introduces the other man to sensual pleasures. Lionel begins to discover elements of life previously unknown to him and for the first time reflects on his body and his identity:

> Yes, this was the life, and one that he had never experienced in his austere apprenticeship: luxury, gaiety, kindness, unusualness, and

> delicacy that did not exclude brutal pleasure. Hitherto he had been ashamed of being built like a brute: his preceptors had condemned carnality or had dismissed it as a waste of time. (Forster 2015b, 180)

As previously mentioned, the unusual relationship between the characters could not, most probably, take place anywhere else than on the ship, during a long journey. This peculiar setting provides the protagonists with the possibility of becoming "morally relaxed" (Forster 2015b, 180), overcome racial, class and sexual barriers, experiment with their identities.[7] While analysing Nordic folkloristic literature, Christer Westerdahl notices that ships and boats were always related to rituals connected to the dichotomy of land and sea. Westerdahl claims that boats often acquired "the quality of a liminal space" (2010, 277). Moreover, the scholar mentions that the space of the boat was often extremely dangerous, but ritual magic could help in avoiding the risks. This magical type of thinking seems to characterise Cocoanut, who "who said weird things sometimes" (Forster 2015b, 175), and had a habit of murmuring incomprehensible words in order to protect himself and his lover. Intuitive and careful, he was the one understanding that only in particular time and place they were able to reach the state of bliss, and that this state is only temporary. He tries to prolong the liminal moments, but to no avail:

> They have never been so content with each other before and only one of them realized that nothing lasts, that they might be more happy or less happy in the future, but would never be exactly thus. He tried not to stir, not to breathe, not to live even, but life was too strong for him and he sighed. (Forster 2015b, 178)

The ship, which constitutes a space allowing Lionel and Cocoanut to develop their relationship, was also used as a significant example by Michel Foucault in one of his lectures. While discussing space as a general concept, the philosopher noticed that people live in sets, or rather clusters of relations which deline-

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7 The mischievous behaviour of Cocoanut, as well as Lionel's confusion, can be interpreted in the context of the concept of threshold as a "space of play": "The "space of play" becomes a threshold; therefore, a frontier for transformation, when the identities that take part in it are open and their boundaries are flexible, and, as long as the rules of the game are respected, dwelling the *Circle* has the magic potential of creating social and cultural transformation" (Muzzonigro, Boano 2013, 14/71).

ate and describe particular sites. According to him, there are two types of spaces which "have the curious property of being in relations with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (Foucault 1967, 3) The first type are utopias,[8] and the second – heterotopias. Foucault claims that they exist "probably in every culture, in every civilisation" (Foucault 1967, 3) and are

> real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it might be possible to indicate their location in reality. (Foucault 1967, 4)

The philosopher distinguishes ships as the ultimate example of heterotopia, "heterotopia par excellence," as "the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place" (Foucault 1967, 9), which travels from one port to another and visits the farthest colonies. However, the ship described in Forster's short story is not precisely "the greatest reserve of the imagination," so poetically depicted by Foucault. Despite the possibilities it creates, it is still a place governed by strict colonial rules, where the representatives of the repressive English culture wield power. While Cocoa constantly ignores or underestimates the hostile circumstances, Lionel is painfully aware of their potential consequences. Moraes, who is constantly playing with the notion of identity,[9] from time to time behaves in a child-like manner. This is noteworthy as, according to Foucault, children know the "other spaces" very well; they love games based on pretending and often create their own make-believe heterotopic spaces in order to play (Johnson 2016, 2). The imagination which from the early age distinguishes Cocoa from others, together with his shrewdness, allow him to use the heterotopian possi-

8 Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces (Foucault 1967, 3).
9 "He had picked up his education, if that was the word for it, in London, and his financial beginnings in Amsterdam, one of the passports was Portuguese, the other Danish, and half the blood must be Asiatic, unless a drop was Negro" (Forster 2015b, 180).

bilities of the ship and craft a space in which the relationship can exist outside the colonial norms. However, his tendency to play games is not only child-like. While observing him playing games with Lionel, in business and on board, one has to notice that they are not innocent.

His lover's suspicious behaviour and actions, whose nature he is, at times, unable to understand, worry Lionel. Another reason of his anxiety is the fact that, although Cocoanut manages to arrange intimate space they can share at night unnoticingly,[10] he still faces the other temporary inhabitants of the ship daily and has to participate in their forms of entertainments. The sahibs and memsahibs are outwardly racist and Lionel, whose own "colour prejudices were tribal rather than personal, and only worked when an observer was present" (Forster 2015b, 174), suddenly finds taking part in these conversations difficult. Trapped in conventions and trying to conceal his transgressions, he is obliged to scoff at his cabin-mate, which results in a surprising feeling of being "in the wrong and almost a cad" (Forster 2015b, 175). Despite not being particularly reflective, Lionel notices, nonetheless, that each time when he analyses his "transgressions," his mother (whom he calls Mater) appears in his mind. Lionel's mother, "blind-eyed in the midst of the enormous web she had spun" might be seen as a figure epitomising the prudish British laws, rigid morality and imperialistic worldview. Although she does not accompany her son on the "other boat," her phantom presence is at times overwhelming. As Lionel maintains contact with his mother via letters, he feels obliged to partly confess to her and mentions meeting Cocoanut. Probably sensing the homoerotic impulse present between her child and Moraes even in childhood, she did not approve of their contact. Haunted by the echo of his mother's command from the past ("play properly"), Lionel exists in fear. He falls in love with Cocoanut but at the same time he distrusts him. As a result, the officer becomes overcome by conflicted emotions when the other man begins sophisticated emotional games. Suspecting his lover of blackmail, Lionel, hurt and shocked, leaves the space arranged by Moraes, who tries to "work with the stars" (Forster 2015b, 182), and confuses the young captain with his quizzical remarks. He then goes up and joins the other members of the British upper

10 While discussing some of liminal spaces, Homi Bhabha notices that "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 1994, 5).

class sleeping on deck, i.e. "the folk to whom he belong" (Forster 2015b, 192). He reminds himself that "he had been born one of them, he had his work with them, he meant to marry into their caste. If he forfeited their companionship, he would become nobody and nothing" (Forster 2015b, 192). Afraid of losing his identity as a result of continuing his homoerotic interracial relationship, Lionel meditates on the powers shaping his life: society, the army and, finally, his mother and decides that without them he would "perish." Thus, he decides to break up with Cocoa immediately. Moraes, expecting it, provokes him. Angry and confused, Lionel kills the man in a passionate, sadomasochistic act of love and then, despaired, jumps into the ocean. It is the last act of the "offence against decency" which could only take place within the space of the ship. The Mater, an epitome of the "Ruling Race" restrictiveness, allowed rules to be broken on another ship in the past, and was somehow overpowered by her future rival, the effeminate Cocoanut. However, as it is foreseen by Moraes in one of his vision, the Mater's hold is strong and, even though Lionel, more or less consciously, rebels against her rule by fulfilling his desire towards Cocoa, he is not able to choose the space of the unknown and resign from his previous life. Nor is he able to continue it. Both lovers seem to see death as the only solution, following the moment of climax. Ultimately, the last gesture belongs to Cocoanut, whose body, after being thrown into the ocean, moves "contrary to the prevailing current" (Forster 2015b, 196), in a disorienting way, introducing disruption for the last time and perversely reminding after Edward Said that all geographies are "man-made" (1978, 5).

Another short story finishing with death is "Dr Woolacott." Its protagonist is Clesant, a citizen of "that other place," "the night-side of life" described by Susan Sontag (1978).[11] The main character is a young squire, chronically ill and frail, whose doctor, the eponymous Woolacott, recommends avoiding all forms of excitement. The very first thoughts of Clesant mentioned by the narrator are: "There is no reason why I should not live for years now that I have given up the violin" (Forster 2015b, 83), thus it is quickly emphasised that his current life revolves around resigning from passions. He can participate in reality only partially: "From where he lay, he could see a little of the garden and a little of the park, a little of the fields and of the river and hear a little of tennis; a little of everything

11 According to Sontag, "illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick" (1978).

was what was good for him, and what Dr Woolacott had prescribed" (Forster 2015b, 83). Resigning from all types of desire can be seen as an enormous price for prolonging life; however, Clesant is ready to pay it.

While resting in the garden, the protagonist meets a young agricultural worker. Despite some initial vehemence, he starts conversing with the boy and describes his condition with a smile, introducing himself as a "chronic invalid" (Forster 2015b, 84). He also explains to the supposed farmworker that he can never be "intimate with people" (Forster 2015b, 84). Meeting the stranger puts him in a surprisingly good mood and influences his perception of the surroundings. Both the garden and, later, the gun room in which he spends the afternoon, seem more pleasant. The gun room, which in the past was dominated by hunting-related artefacts, trophies and weapons, is now adjusted to the needs of an ill person. Although numerous groups of people enter the space he occupies, Clesant is not interested in them; he barricades "himself in the circle of his thoughts" (Forster 2015b, 85). He is filled with "languorous yearning," thinks of his violin and the peculiar materiality of these dreams of music results in the stranger entering his consciousness. This same young boy appears in the room and the atmosphere changes. Clesant laughs and feels that "the whole room seemed to join in" (Forster 2015b, 86). The protagonist, fascinated with his guest, recognises desire in the "curious and pleasurable sensation" (Forster 2015b, 87) that has overcome him. While listening to the boy's story and experiencing his touch, the young squire notices that the room "began to fill with the golden haze" (Forster 2015b, 88). Seeing his own body, previously subjected only to medical practises, as an object of desire, shocks him. However, the radiance passes when the boy starts criticising Woolacott and claiming that "he never makes anyone well" (Forster 2015b, 90). Following the disagreement, the farm-worker heads to the door, but he is interrupted by "the normal life" (Forster 2015b, 93) of the household entering the gun-room. The boy, worried, insists that he must not be seen and hides in the cupboard. As a result of the emotional strain, Clesant becomes weak and delirious. When his servants check the cupboard he mentions, it is empty. The potential lover appears to be a phantom.

Lying in bed with fever, isolated from the normal life of the household and waiting for Woolacott's visit, the squire finds himself in the liminal state between consciousness and unconsciousness, a "dreamscape" in which he can again meet the ephemeral ghost, invisible to the others. In this peculiar liminal

"third space," the "alien territory" (Bhabha 1994, 56), in this case dominated by the uncanny, he at first conducts a confusing monologue – or a dialogue – with his illness, cruelly reminding him of his state, and then becomes ready to receive his phantom guest, the deceased boy, an embodiment of death. When they talk, the household perishes and the whole earth disappears. The doctor is close but Clesant decides to embrace the boy and, thus, to embrace the excitement, passion and, in consequence, death. The illness, this threshold between health and death, which was supposed to be Clesant's home for years, vanishes. Only in this state, in which he seems settled, is he able to meet the phantom lover. However, fulfilling his homoerotic desire is possible only after accepting death – death becomes the ultimate space allowing this fulfilment.

Each of the analysed literary texts is focused on the homoerotic type of desire, not accepted in the depicted world. Protagonists of the texts enter unobvious spaces in which they experience their craving and try to fulfil it. In *Maurice* the eponymous character constantly experiences the dual, or rather changeable, nature of places witnessing (and dis- or encouraging) his pursuits of desire. Although the ending of the novel is positive, its protagonists are left in a moment when they escape the structure of society, which becomes "temporarily suspended." Accordingly to the cultural norms of their epoch, they had to avoid visibility while settling as a couple; thus, E.M. Forster claims that "Maurice and Alec still roam the greenwood" (Forster 2015a: 250). In "The Other Boat" the relationship between characters can only unfold within the heterotopian space of a ship, as the colonial reality prevents it from lasting on land. "Dr Woolacott," on the other hand, is a story set in a space which is very peculiar, liminal, as only somewhere between daydreams and nightmares is the protagonist able to meet his phantom lover. It is noticeable that the protagonists of all these narratives exist simultaneously in the official, codified social spaces and in "the secret places." The disruptive, forbidden type of desire portrayed in the discussed texts can exist only in "othered" spaces, spaces which often determine the characters' identities and fates, influence their perception profoundly but, at the same time, rarely seem permanent or certain.

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