Edwardian Society, Homosexuality, and E. M. Forster’s Short Stories

Bachelor’s Diploma Thesis

Supervisor: doc. Michael Matthew Kaylor, PhD.

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Author’s signature
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Introduction

E. M. Forster is best known for his novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *A Room with A View*, *Howards End*, *A Passage to India*, and *Maurice*. His short stories, which were published after his death in a collection called *The Life to Come and Other Stories*, usually go unnoticed, and Forster was, and sometimes still is, criticised for not publishing them. He rather let them circulate among his friends; therefore, the stories never reached a wider audience. The purpose of this thesis is to delve into the historical gay dynamics in the Edwardian period and examine the way these dynamics are reflected in five selected E. M. Forster’s short stories. It also answers the question why he so vehemently refused to publish them even in the late twentieth century.

Firstly, a historical background is offered. It serves as a means of showing what was happening in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and familiarising the reader with the environment of the late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. To contextualise the short stories is of crucial importance. Without the knowledge, readers of *The Life to Come and Other Stories* cannot fully understand the nuances Forster put into his stories. This being said, the first chapter of this thesis supplies the material necessary for decoding Forster’s writing, or rather, for its proper reading.

Secondly, the thesis examines each of the selected short stories, namely: “The Life to Come”, “Dr Woolacott”, “Arthur Snatchfold”, “The Obelisk” and “The Classical Annex”. The reason why these five stories were chosen is the fact that they share common features and deal with homosexual themes. Every
story illustrates one major topic the homosexual men of the period had to deal with. These topics are analysed and then contextualised through the historical background.

Thirdly, the stories also contain recurring, minor topics, which are examined in the third chapter. The details help the readers identify otherwise obscure, unfinished or omitted elements and fill in the left-out meaning.

Finally, the whole analysis gives the answer to Forster’s refusal to publicly publish these short stories through a comparison of the topics and themes represented in the five short stories and a book that was meant for the public circulation, which is Boy written by James Hanley.
Chapter I – The Edwardian/Victorian Homosexual England

The term *homosexuality* firstly came into existence in the nineteenth century and it immediately joined the ranks of taboo words. This medical condition was only known to doctors, physicians and scientists, and works published on homosexuality were “largely restricted to an elite audience,” but even this audience had problems with obtaining the materials (Cook 77). The wider public, therefore, had no information whatsoever on this phenomenon that would be based on a scientific research and people were usually confronted with various myths, talks and gossip, upon which they built their own opinion, thus creating a distorted image of homosexuality.


Cities (in this case London) soon became places where homosexuals were concentrated. There were several factors that influenced this demography: anonymity, diversity of entertainment, and various opportunities for meeting other homosexuals. Cities offered protection of the crowd, rendering some of the homosexuals invisible, to some extent at least. On the other hand, even the most unsuspicious individual could not have relied on this camouflage. Queans and pansies—effeminate, cross-dressing homosexuals—were mostly the targets of the police and through those arrests the police developed their own system of recognising homosexuals in the crowd. Apart from the monitoring and surveillance of various places connected with gay activities, the police also used plainclothesmen, whose knowledge of the homosexual practices were invaluable for making arrests. The police, therefore,
“mapp[ed] the queer for public consumption” (Houlbrook 27) and “their experience produced a detailed cognitive map” (Houlbrook 23) to render the invisibility and protection of the city useless. One such map can be drawn from Isherwood’s comment on an MP Murdoch MacDonald, who brought a libel action against Forster: “But let us be charitable: perhaps he is being blackmailed by a Piccadilly poof and is at his wit’s end for cash” (Zeikowitz 55). This funny remark shows how a particular part of London was perceived.

The diversity of entertainment the cities offered, ranging from bars and cafés to swimming pools, parks, museums and theatres, was also an important factor for homosexuals, since “many saw no way to meet partners apart from entering the disreputable public realm” (Houlbrook 210). These were the places where gay men could regularly meet or admire others, although here was no sense of community\(^1\) in the way it is understood now. Every man “had his own map of the city [London]” (Cook 41), and although “there was a significant overlap and a shared knowledge of London” (Cook 41), each of them was more or less on their own. There were many groups of people who knew each other, but if one wanted to get into one of those groups he had to have a friend or an acquaintance who would introduce him into the group. The various places of entertainment offered space where one could have dropped their mask and be oneself—even more so if the place became a place with gay-customers only;

\(^1\) It is not possible to see this word in the sense in which it is understood now. There was no solid community whatsoever; the homosexuals had no notion of being united in any particular way. It is, therefore, important to keep in mind that when referring to the “community”, it means gay men in general, rather than a particular group that stands united in the pursuit of its goals.
several establishments, located in various places in London such as Soho, West End or Piccadilly, gained a reputation of businesses in which homosexual clientele was the majority, thus creating pleasant and relatively safe places where one could spend some time.

Those places along with some others also served as cruising grounds for gay men. A cruising ground is a public space, where men look for other men interested in what Forster himself termed “homosex”\(^2\) (Commonplace 18). These included: parks, urinals, museums, theatres and train stations. They were equally tempting as they were dangerous. Transgressing a public space for cruising was punished on the basis of committing gross indecency or sodomy and these places were under heavy surveillance. The punishments ranged from high fines to imprisonment. While cruising, a gay man looked for some “signals of movement, gesture, and gaze” (Houlbrook 46). In 1950s, Michael Schofield, a sociologist, carried a research on these meeting practices; 62 times the eye-contact was mentioned to be the most prominent signal, 36 times gestures were involved, intuition was included in 28 cases, 25 men provided answered that walk was the important feature, 14 times clothes were mentioned, and 8 people also suggested vocabulary to be the recognising element (Houlbrook 46). In addition to these, men also engaged in conversations and interactions “transforming requests for a light, directions, or the time into recognised approaches designed to ascertain whether another

\(^2\) Forster wrote that “[Henry James] in The Turn of the Screw is merely declining to think about homosex, and the knowledge that he is declining throws him into the necessary fluster” (Commonplace 18).
man were interested” (Houlbrook 47). It was through these interactions one could find a pick-up or a trade and satisfy their desires. Moreover, in 1920s, a vernacular language called Polari permeated into the gay society. It was “a mixture of lingua franca, Italian, Romany, and backslang originally associated with eighteen-century theatrical troupes” (Houlbrook 152). This made the conversations even more unintelligible hiding the participants from the public and at the same time revealing their true identities and desires.

Places became a very important marker; there were notorious places, where certain individuals could have been found, and these became one of the instruments the police used while trying to arrest someone. Parks, museums, theatres, forests as well as restaurants and cafés provided a map which one could use to navigate themselves with, either to participate in certain acts or to prevent them from happening.

I. II. Stereotypes of Gayness

The English society operated with different gay stereotypes on all levels—in the public, in front of the law, at police stations, and when cruising. Pansies and queans have already been mentioned in the previous sub-chapter. These individuals were cross-dressers, wore make-up on their faces, and used perfumes. They were the most targeted homosexuals; they were in the focus of public displeasure and violence, as well as arrests and fines, because they were too visible and transgressed the normative roles of male and female. The term

3 The term trade refers to a situation in which a rough working-class person is given money for having sex with a higher-class man.
itself, however, did not imply one was a homosexual, it rather “denoted particular gendered patterns of appearance and behavior” (Houlbrook 143). Queans and pansies were, interestingly, restricted to the working class. These effeminate men did not try, nor wanted to, hide; on the contrary, they were quite open with their sexuality and often roamed the streets wearing drag, while “[w]ealthier men . . . tended to [sic] more discreet” (Houlbrook 140).

It is worth mentioning that not only the cross-dressing, but also their regular attire attracted attention. It was common for them to wear colourful shirts, trousers or shoes with various accessories. Therefore, any deviance in standard male’s clothing ranging from “color, cut and composition” was regarded as suspicious, effeminate and homosexual (Houlbrook 145-6).

Another stereotypical figure that appeared in London was a working-class rough. This was the other extreme London had to offer. They were not de facto homosexuals; they “neither thought of themselves, nor were though of by others, as anything other than normal” (Houlbrook 169). They were the real men, masculine and tough, yet they also participated in homosexuality. However, these activities usually ended with marriage, thus “[b]efore they married many workingmen . . . entered into diverse relationships with other men, often while they had steady girlfriends” (Houlbrook 171). Most of the time, being paid for sex was a way to earn some extra money, though some of these roughs created a form of a relationship, which usually lasted until they got married, but sometimes even after the marriage.

The third stereotype which could be found in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain was the stereotype of an aristocrat or an upper class
person. It was typical for them to possess an estate or a luxurious place of their own, decorated with various exotic pieces of furniture. They were able to provide a private space, hidden from even their own families, as a biographer Alan Crawford suggested. It was “a normal part of Victorian respectability . . . to have rooms and habits . . . that were separate from, and not to be questioned by, his household and family” (qtd. in Cook 31). The importance of aristocracy is even more prominent, since they were the ones who dictated the fashion for the gay community. The homosexuals “mimicked the affected manners of the aristocracy” and “it was fashion and extravagance, the high life of the capital, that came to be associated with . . . homosexuality” (Cook 39).

The aristocratic way of life became a significant marker in Britain; “darkened, perfumed rooms were repeatedly evoked in court and described by the press” (Cook 56). The aesthetics of rooms and their decoration soon became an issue threatening the typical Victorian household. It was a “challenge to normative domesticity: an attack on marriage . . . and a threat to the nation’s youth” (Houlbrook 110).

Moreover, it was the aristocracy who gave the image of a proper bachelor. Indeed, they were definitely not the only bachelors in London, since “[e]ach year thousands of single men came to London from provincial Britain” (Houlbrook 112), but the aristocrats were those, who had money and could, therefore, dictate the appearance of proper housing and the look of a bachelor. In this connection, every single man who failed to conform to the Victorian standards, was immediately deemed suspicious and, in fact, homosexual.
In the aristocratic circles the class-transgression was the most prominent in comparison to other social classes. This search for someone inferior in class was very common for homosexuals, and, on the contrary, shunned by heterosexuals. The class differences “were interpreted as making their partners less manly. Sedentary white-collar occupations were womanlike compared with physical labour” (Houlbrook 175) and the “toughness invested in the working-class body denoted a real man, rendered closer to nature by his class” (Houlbrook 211). Class transgression therefore had a very important role in man-man sex. These encounters would have been regarded very differently—and negatively—if there were no class differences. By having sex with a lower class person this, to some extent, saved the face of both participants. Yet, this phenomenon also had negative connotations in terms of broader social understanding. “[R]ough lads’ and uniformed men were reported ‘ministering’ to higher class men” (Cook 38); the class transgression inevitably led to the breach of the city’s districts and the upper-class was threatened by the influx of lower-class men looking for a potential trade.

The last stereotype to be discussed here is the figure of what Houlbrook calls “[a] respectable homosexual” (197). For these gay people it was typical to have two faces; having a face with which they perfectly fitted into the Victorian world, being prominent and respected citizens of London, and another one they wore when they cruised, importuned or traded. The two lives were “in a persistent tension” and this “identity was unstable and problematic” (Houlbrook 209). The instability and disputableness arose in most of the cases when a respectable homosexual did not possess an access to or a means of
meeting other homosexuals and satisfying his own desires. If he lacked “informal friendship networks meeting in each other’s homes or exclusive commercial venues” (Houlbrook 209) the only way for him to socialise was to “enter the disreputable public realm” (Houlbrook 210). The conflicting principles of having a good reputation and visiting these places of vice shaped and changed both lives the person had created. This identity was very important, though, and it was in one’s best interest to keep it alive as long as possible.

The status of a respectable homosexual brought certain benefits, such as the possibility of having their sentences shortened and less severe if found guilty at court, as Houlbrook shows in one example: “While Champain was convicted, the length of his sentence was reduced—having regard to his excellent character” (Houlbrook 208). It was not only the reduction of the severity of the punishments that were encased in this particular stereotype; there was also an element of public protection. The respectable homosexual was virtually the only type of gayness the public was able to tolerate and to some extent defend and apologise.

The stereotypes did have their place in the city and they were also used for the orientation in the emerging sub-culture. They not only made the perception of the sub-culture easier, but they also brought a subtle foregrounding of certain features that, if one was aware of the stereotypical figure, denoted desirable possibilities.

I. III. Private Public and Public Private

With the development of London in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries arose a problem concerning one’s private and the public realms. In
other words, the understanding of what is private and what is public changed dramatically and the delineation was not always clear since “[t]he orderly conceptual division between public and private . . . was compromised by places which seemed to fall between the two – the West End hotels and restaurants” (Cook 41). By bringing the things that were supposed to happen in privacy out of their bedrooms, the homosexuals violated the public space by their activities. In Victorian Britain, this was seen as something unacceptable and such behaviour was, therefore, prosecuted. However, the prosecution was not always an easy task. Since the boundaries between public and private were no longer clear cut, the police and the courts sometimes struggled to find the correct way of treating the arrested. An example to illustrate the situation may be hotels and baths.

Hotels were “an ambiguous mixture of cultural blindness and commercial laissez faire” (Houlbrook 122). Moreover, there was “the established practice of sharing rooms to save money”, therefore “two men attracted little, if any, attention” (Houlbrook 122). This suggests that the police had no means of arresting the participants unless they were told to do so by the staff in the hotel, but they rarely disclosed their customers in order to secure money. There was even a practice of “cheaper hotels [to] often knowingly let rooms for the night—or even for the hour—to unmarried couples or prostitutes and their clients” (Houlbrook 123), something that gay men could exploit as well.

Baths followed a similar pattern, yet the number of participants was greater. They were “a commercial space in which men felt safe enough to have sex relatively openly—a public space which was, in effect, private”
(Houlbrook 94). One could stay as long as he wanted to, and it was also a place where seeing a naked body was normal. The acts “took place in the cubicles themselves, creating a distinctive microgeography predicated upon the movement between public and private space” (Houlbrook 99). The feeling of being safe along with the possibility of seeing other men naked and engaging with them in a sexual act rocketed the baths’ fame among homosexual men, and they became almost a symbol of the private-public transgression.

As hinted above, the obscurity of these places was only breached when someone from the inside informed the police or any other body that could have forced a change, thus creating a private space in otherwise public establishment. The activities happening not only in hotels and baths, but also in parks, urinals, museum and train stations were contradictory to what was considered to be “the essential English character, [which] cohered upon the interconnected qualities of reticence, privacy, and domesticity” (Houlbrook 109).
Chapter II – Literary Analysis

With the historical background established, this thesis now moves towards the analysis of the five selected short stories by E. M. Forster. In each sub-chapter of this section, the major topic of the given story is discussed. Furthermore, if necessary, the relation of the topic to the historical background is specified or explained. The topics described are as follows: identity and religion, fantasy and passivity, a stranger, identical male and female desires, and the Greco-Roman heritage versus Christianity.

II. I. “The Life to Come” – Identity and Religion

This short story introduces a Roman Catholic missionary Paul Pinmay who tries to convert a tribe of fierce natives and who has a sexual intercourse with the young chieftain called Vithobai. Paul preaches “about this god whose name is Love” (Forster, The Life 67) and he does not take into account that the people to whom he preaches the teaching may not understand the message. Consequentially, while Paul regrets the act, Vithobai is pleased and keeps visiting the missionary in order to have sex, because “God orders [him] to love [Paul] now” (Forster, The Life 71) only to be refused and rebuked. Eventually, Vithobai—baptised Barnabas—contracts a consumption and rapidly declines. In the final scene, he gives Paul the last chance to be with him, whereas the missionary insists on their joint repentance. With his final breath Vithobai stabs Paul and then deliberately ends his life by jumping off the roof.

The major topic in this short story is one’s own identity, which is bent and altered by rules that were more or less forcibly imposed on the individual
(or as a matter of fact on a whole group of people). At first, Pinmay preaches emotionally, focusing on the love of God, not considering that his words may be misunderstood, since he “knew little of the language and still less of native psychology” (Forster, *The Life* 66) and he thinks that “human nature is the same all over the world” (Forster, *The Life* 66). There is an apparent disregard for those on whom the new religion is imposed—for Pinmay, it is not important whether the message is understood properly, but that he spreads it. After the sexual act is over and the news about the acceptance of Christianity arrives, Pinmay realises what he has done and starts praying, because, as it is revealed later, his achievement was “fruits [which] were as bitter [as the sin]” (Forster, *The Life* 77). What Pinmay has created is a set of rules that artificially modified the native culture—resulting in adoption of technology and other features of civilised society—and distorted their perception of themselves. After the conversion, as there is no longer a tribal chief, his status “decreased as the community developed and new men pushed their way to the top” (Forster, *The Life* 77), Vithobai loses his status and much of his land. He is rooted out of his original position and given a new role; a role that has been promised to him to be loving, yet that is denied to him, too. Since he cannot return to his original role, because of the progress the society has made, and at the same time he cannot grasp his new identity as Barnabas due to the fact that he cannot find any reconciliation with the clash between what has been promised and what he imagined, his person is shattered. “I repent, I do not repent,” and later “I forgive you, I do not forgive, both are the same. I am good I am evil I am pure I am foul, I am this or that, I am Barnabas, I am Vithobai. What difference
does it make now?” clearly illustrates this shattering of identity (Forster, *The Life* 79). Vithobai enters into what could be called a nonviolent resistance. He lets Paul think that he is a true Christian, but at the same time reminds him of the fact that he still can return to his former self. He actually demonstrates that several times when being refused by the missionary. Moreover, he loathes his new identity:

> Mine are this little house instead of my old great one, this valley which other men own, this cough that kills me, those bastards that continue my race; and that deed in the hut, which you say caused all, and which now you call joy, now sin. How can I remember which it was after all these years, and what difference if I could? (Forster 80)

He retrospectively realises everything that has been denied to him and of what he has been stripped of, which consequentially leads to his refusal of the acquired, imposed identity, by killing Pinmay. After the murder he “raised his arms over his head, sunlit, naked, victorious, leaving all disease and humiliation behind him” (Forster, *The Life* 82) and with them, he also denies the identity that has been imposed on him.

Forster uses an example of religious conversion to create an analogy with the homosexual identity. The various legislative acts that were passed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were supposed to change the behaviour of homosexual men, thus creating an artificial new identity. The rules altered the natural behaviour of gay men and forced them to conform to these rules, which resulted in finding other routes for the satisfaction of their needs. This
short story raises an issue of personal struggle—should one be themselves or should they succumb to the laws, threatening their identity? They could either accept the imposed rules of the society and become invisible or embrace their true self and continue living in the danger of being persecuted, punished and imprisoned.

The religion as a theme served not only as a means for metaphorical expression of homosexual identity, but Forster also used it to create humorous effects in the story. He created a “cynical orgy” (Forster, *The Life* 70), turning the religion upside down. Instead of restraining the morals, it became a means of engaging in a sexual intercourse. After their baptism “[the natives] were disposed to gaiety” and “Barnabas laid his outer garment aside, and said, ‘My brother in Christ, oh come quickly,’ and stroked Mr Pinmay’s flushed face” (Forster, *The Life* 70). The phrase “come to Christ” became a code phrase for Vithobai and is used several times to invite Paul to have sex. The religion crystallised into an apology; the religion was the reason for Vithobai to engage in sex with men, because “God orders [him] to love [Paul] now” (Forster, *The Life* 71), or rather, he now possesses a religion that not only allows, but also requires and dictates, to love other men, which is the exact opposite of what Christianity wants people to do.

II. II. “Dr Woolacott” – Fantasy and Passivity

“Dr Woolacott” tells a story of a young invalid Clesant, who spends most of his time in his great house or its surroundings resting, since he suffers from “what they call functional [disease]. Nothing organic” (Forster, *The Life* 84). He meets a stranger, who claims to be his employee. Clesant, although ordered by
doctor Woolacott not to talk with people for he must not get overtired, engages in a conversation and after a while, the stranger leaves only to return and find Clesant in the gun-room. They continue their conversation while getting more and more intimate. However, the stranger’s continuous requests of “sack[ing] Woolacott” (Forster, *The Life* 90) make Clesant irritated and he, eventually, asks the stranger to leave. As the stranger opens the door, they both see people approaching the gun-room and since there is no other exit, the stranger hides in the cupboard. Clesant is struck by a seizure from too much excitement, which ultimately results in his death.

The whole story is a fantasy of a young man who is almost bedridden and who knows that he will never find love; “it never occurred to him that he could provoke desire” (Forster, *The Life* 89) and he “know[s] [he] [is] not attractive” (Forster, *The Life* 94). He therefore conjures a man so that he can have at least a small piece of happiness in his life. Yet he goes too far in believing that the phantom is real and, eventually, he is not able to discern the reality from the dream:

    He does not exist. He is an illusion, whom you created in the garden because you wanted to feel attractive.

    “...I will never excite myself again, but he does exist, I think.”

    “No.”

    “He may be death, but he does exist.”
“No. He never came into the gun-room. You only wished that he would. He never sat down on the sofa by your side and made love.” (Forster, The Life 94)

Clesant enjoys his fantasy, because he will never be able to experience the real adventure. A small chat with a strange would not hurt him, yet he realises his fragility as in: “I’m afraid I mustn’t entertain you myself” (Forster, The Life 86) and “[e]xcuse me if we don’t talk any more. It’s so bad for my heart” (Forster, The Life 87). Nevertheless, he did not manage to resist his visitor, because “[h]e was attractive—fresh as a daisy, strong as a horse” (Forster, The Life 87) and this inability—or refusal—results in having too much excitement, which inevitably leads to his demise. He knows he “did something wrong” and the response is “[i]ntimacy” (Forster, The Life 94). It was not only the sexual act though; the stranger tells Clesant that “[they]’ve found each other,” “[he]’d do anything for [Clesant]” and “[he]’d die if [he] could for [him]” (Forster, The Life 90). It is not only the sex, it is also the romantic longing and love that was Clesant’s sin for which he has to be punished, because romantic, loving relationship was regarded as even more dangerous and degenerative than sole sexual acts with no emotions involved (Kaylor 216).

This being said, the concept of passivity accompanies the above mentioned issue. Clesant “must do as Dr Woolacott tells [him]” (Forster, The Life 84). He is supposed to lie and not to get overtired or excited, in other words, his activities are restricted to observation and indirect participation, while the other members “fitted out and in, pursuing their affairs,” (Forster, The Life 85) as he is “[t]hroned on the pedestal of a sofa”
At first, he follows the advice Woolacott gave him, but he becomes rather bored, since he “knew nothing about them, although they were his guardians and familiars; even their sex left no impression on his mind” (Forster, The Life 85). When this passivity is broken, Clesant begins his journey towards “little clouds . . . moving against the course of doom and fate” (Forster, The Life 85). It is the moment when he firstly engages in a conversation with his fantasied employee. He continues to increase his activity, ranging from a conversation through “mov[ing] into his [the stranger’s] arms” (Forster, The Life 89) to “dragg[ing] himself up and across the floor” and the final “open[ing] [of] the cupboard” (Forster, The Life 92), before he collapses. The actions he undertakes violate the passivity only to increase the effect of the fantasy resulting in Clesant’s decline.

II. III. “Arthur Snatchfold” – A Stranger

The plot of this short story revolves around Sir Richard Conway, a young business man, who is spending the time at his business partner’s house—Trevor Donaldson. He is bored, but this changes when he meets a milk boy in the garden. Conway is interested in the young man and he comes up with the idea of meeting the milk man again by waiting for him near a forest path early in the morning. He talks to him, but their conversation is rather empty. The talk, however, leads to a sexual intercourse after which Conway gives the milk boy some money. Soon after Richard departs and returns home. In the last part of the story, Conway meets his business partner after several weeks. Donaldson informs Conway that the police apprehended certain Arthur Snatchfold for having sex with another man and accepting money. He was promised to be
released if he would tell them with whom he had sex. Arthur diverts their attentions towards a local hotel, thus protecting Conway’s identity.

The strangeness and the unknown is the main topic in here. Conway is fascinated by the fact he knows only a little about the milk boy. “Where had he gone off to now? . . . What was his name? Was he a local?” (Forster, *The Life* 99). These examples show that Conway is very much interested in the boy and it is the strangeness that makes Arthur so tempting. “[T]he dull costly garden . . . improved [when] [a] man had come into it . . . He had on a canary-coloured shirt. . . . That was what the place wanted.” (Forster, *The Life* 98). Furthermore, the milk man was “proper to the colour scheme” (Forster, *The Life* 98) suggesting that no ordinary man or someone from the house could have made the appropriate effect; the garden simply needed a stranger. The unknown is further facilitated by the greeting “[g]ood morning, nice morning” (Forster, *The Life* 98). The milk boy uses no class-differentiating markers, he speaks in a way “as if they were equals” (Forster, *The Life* 98). Moreover, Arthur does not acknowledge Conway’s status by omitting the word sir “and the omission flattered him [Conway]” (Forster, *The Life* 98). Thus, Arthur has concealed his own class—he is a milk boy, but at the same time he did not acknowledged Conway as his superior, which made Richard interested in Arthur even more.

Since Conway knows so little about the milk man, Arthur is reduced to a fantasy. He is no longer a person, but a mere it. Strangers and the unknown are much easier to fulfil the roles one puts them in, which is much harder to do with a person one knows. Strangers possess unlimited possibilities, since one
does not know what they can expect from them. By this reduction, Conway is able to imagine:

spend[ing] the whole of Sunday with it [Arthur], giving it a slap-up lunch at the hotel, hiring a car, which they would drive alternatively, treating it to the pictures in the neighbouring town, and returning with it, after one drink too much, through dusky lanes. But it was sheer nonsense, even if the vision had been agreeable to the programme. (Forster, *The Life* 99)

When they meet again in the forest, their conversation is empty and rather vague, almost having a quality of pornography. The question “[y]ou are the morning delivery, eh?” is answered by “[l]ooks like it . . . I’m not the evening delivery anyway, and I’m not the butcher nor the grocer, nor’m I the coals” (Forster, *The Life* 102). When Conway says: “You live around here, I bet,” he is asked: “What if I do?” (Forster, *The Life* 102), and when Richard asks about the milk boy’s age, he replies: “Ninety, same as yourself” (Forster, *The Life* 103). Arthur is avoiding any kind of a direct response in order to partly protect himself from unwanted exposure, partly to excite Conway even more. After several other questions, “Conway was entranced” (Forster, *The Life* 103). There is a sense of excitement and pleasure from the sexual encounter surrounding the unknown and uncertain as well as a possible danger of being discovered, which thrills Conway so much.

The strangeness in this short story is, however, destroyed in the instance of Conway being told the milk boy’s name. At first, he is only intrigued by the fact that the boy has given himself up for Conway’s sake. The moment he
learns that the young man’s name is Arthur Snatchfold, he completely changes his attitude towards their encounter in the forest. He even “consider[s] giving himself up and standing his trial” (Forster, *The Life* 112), but he relinquishes the idea as it would ruin him and would not help Arthur anyway. But he now realises what he has done to the boy in exchange for only a few moments of joy; it seems he almost regrets committing the act because it put the boy in harm’s way. Once he heard the name “he wrote down the name of his lover, yes, his lover who was going to prison to save him” (Forster, *The Life* 112). The milk boy is no longer a stranger and he becomes something more than a person with whom Conway had sex. The strangeness and the unknown, therefore, are not only the unlimited potential which brings the pleasure, safety and, possibly, danger, but also an emotional distance that prevents both participants from falling in love with each other, which is very important for those, who only seek “a little fun” (Forster, *The Life* 112).

II. IV. “The Obelisk” – Identical Male and Female Desires

This story differs from the rest because there is a married couple involved. Hilda and her husband Ernest are travelling and they decide to go and see a local obelisk. However, they do not know the way and so Hilda goes and asks two sailors, who are at the shelter with them, yet the two do not answer. The couple then finds a noticeboard showing the way to the obelisk, so they decide to go after all. After some time, the two sailors join them. They introduce themselves as Tiny and Stan; Tiny is big, rather simple and “always ready to play the fool” (Forster, *The Life* 120), while Stan is well-educated and intelligent. Hilda immediately falls in love with Stan, who is as intelligent as her
husband, but in addition to his intelligence, he is also muscular and manly, whereas Ernest is small and rather feminine. Hilda and Stan separate from Ernest and Tiny. She cannot resist the sailor’s charm and so they hide in bushes and have sex. Then they decide there is no point of walking to the obelisk and they return to the shelter. But Ernest and Tiny are already waiting for them there. They all claim to have seen the obelisk and upon agreeing that there is no point in trying to figure out how they missed each other, the couple goes to a souvenir shop where they discuss the amazing obelisk. Then Hilda alone learns that the obelisk has fallen and it is not possible to see it anymore which means that Ernest could not have seen the obelisk either.

The obelisk is a phallic symbol; something Forster had clearly shown in the depiction of how the obelisk disappeared: “It’s fallen right over into the landslip upside-down, the tip of it’s gone in ever so far, rather laughable” (The Life 128), all representing a penetration by a penis. The whole journey to the obelisk is metaphorically a journey to a penis, for both Hilda and Ernest. Seen from the female perspective, the reader has to guess what happened to Ernest, but Forster left no doubt about it:

For if she couldn’t have seen the Obelisk he couldn’t have seen it either, if she had dawdled on the way up he must have dawdled too, if she was lying he must be lying, if she and a sailor—she stopped her thought, for they were meaningless. (The Life 129)

The stream of thoughts and the analogies attest that Ernest had sex with Tiny in the same way Hilda did with Stan. The female perspective and the longing for a strong man are thus equated with the desire of homosexual men.
This raises several questions: if the two acts are identical, why is one allowed, or rather tolerated, while the other is punished and forbidden? Why one of them can be visible and openly discussed, whereas the other must stay hidden, if the two are identical, only the sexes of the participants differ? Forster was troubled by these questions as well, as he stresses in a letter to his friend Forrest Ried on 13 March 1915:

Are these ‘perverts’ good or bad like normal men, their disproportionate tendency to badness (which I admit) being due to the criminal blindness of Society? Or are they inherently bad? . . . I [answer], that they are the former. The man in my book [Maurice] is, roughly speaking, good, but Society nearly destroys him. He nearly slinks through his life furtive and afraid, and burdened with a sense of sin. (Unpublished Letter, Queen’s University, Belfast)

The husband and the wife are unhappy in their marriage; Hilda does not like the way she is treated, she “feel[s] worthless, and . . . humiliated” (Forster, *The Life* 116), moreover, she does not find her husband attractive. He is “very [sic] very small; it was like marrying a doll,” (Forster, *The Life* 113), with a bulgy forehead, little hair (Forster, *The Life* 115) and “pink and pear-shaped face” (Forster, *The Life* 116). He also does “his other little things” (Forster, *The Life* 124). These examples show that there is little for her to like about her husband except for his intelligence. Ernest, on the other hand, has also nothing to cherish: Hilda does not “talk quite as she should” (Forster, *The Life* 113) and she is “tall enough to make them look funny as they
walk down the esplanade” (Forster, *The Life* 113). On both sides there is a lack of interest for the other and the sexual experience with Stan allows Hilda to draw “strength from the fact that she had deceived him [Ernest] so completely” (Forster, *The Life* 128), while he “looked handsomer than usual, and happier, and his lips were parted in a natural smile” (Forster, *The Life* 129). The experience gave them both “a new freshness” (Forster, *The Life* 128) and allowed them to continue their relationship, while both now have pleasant memories to live with.

II. V. “The Classical Annex” – Greco-Roman Heritage\(^4\) versus Christianity

“The Classical Annex” recounts a story of a curator of a museum at Bigglesmouth, who learns that there were several breakages in the ancient Greek and Roman wing. As he goes to investigate the breakages, he himself also damages one statue. He stays in the museum alone to prepare the broken objects for repair. As he is working on the preparations, suddenly a fig-leaf comes off a nude athletic/gladiatorial statue. He puts the leaf back at its place and returns to his original work; at the same time the leaf loosens again, now almost hitting the curator and then the nude statue starts falling on him. The curator jumps into an Early Christian sarcophagus and makes a sign of a cross. At that instant, everything is immobilised. He decides to close the museum and, if the investigation reveals a supernatural presence, to exorcise it. He then

\(^4\) What is meant by the Greco-Roman heritage is the cultural treasures from ancient Greece and Rome. Since these two were the cradles of the human civilisation, they cannot be denied their existence and they should be a part of the modern society with everything that comes along with them, including nakedness, sexuality, and depiction of male and female private parts.
leaves the museum and retreats home, only to discover that his son Denis went to the museum to find him. As he returns, he hears strange sounds and a childish giggle and he finds his son having sex with the living statue.

The shortest of the five stories is mainly preoccupied with the issue of the treatment of the Greco-Roman heritage in the contemporary Christian view. The Classical Annex is neglected and “[i]t was by far the least attractive room in the museum—stuffy, badly lit, and not too clean” (Forster, *The Life* 147). Furthermore, “[t]here never was any public in the Classical Annex” (Forster, *The Life* 146), which only shows that the visitors (and even the staff of the museum) are not interested in the ancient Greece and Rome whatsoever. Even the broken artefacts “must have been broken for days” (Forster, *The Life* 147). Simply, the ancient classical cultures have no place in people’s lives. Moreover, it is not only the lack of interest, but also a fear of what the cultures represent and a fear of danger. Regarded as demoralising, the statue of the gladiator was given the fig-leaf, because “the employees at Bigglesmouth were easily upset” (Forster, *The Life* 147), and even the two statuettes—a Tanagra statuette, which represents a woman, and an Etruscan man—

“[n]ow . . . lay together, and, queerer still, appeared to have stuck,” (Forster, *The Life* 148) and as the curator “bent down to separate them, he heard a string snap, and the fig leaf whizzed across the room,” (Forster, *The Life* 148). There is “an obscene change in the statue’s physique. . . . [T]he fig-leaf [was] now all too small,” (Forster, *The Life* 148). Everything from the Classical Annex seems to be filled with a demoralising impulse for having sex.
This predatory craving for sex is not only demoralising, but also dangerous, because the fig-leaf almost hits the curator and “[i]t might have killed him” (Forster, *The Life* 148). Moreover, “[t]he nude had cracked off its pedestal and was swaying to fall on him,” (Forster, *The Life* 148). The only thing that saved the curator was him “ma[king] the sign of the Cross” (Forster, *The Life* 148), the faith and Christianity being the only things that can fight this “obscene breath from the past” (Forster, *The Life* 149). In the darkness of the museum, he hears “the sound of a kiss. Gladiatorial feints, post-classical suctions, a brute planning his revenge” (Forster, *The Life* 150) along with his son’s laughter. Denis had been made submissive by the athlete, which was dangerous for him, therefore, his father “stepped into the Christian sarcophagus and made the sign of the Cross” (Forster, *The Life* 150) again to stop the indecency.

Yet the “worthless late Roman work . . . represent[ing] an athlete or gladiator” (Forster, *The Life* 147) after this incident “became quite a feature at Bigglesmouth” (Forster, *The Life* 150). The sexual act changed the quality and importance of the statue, now presumably representing two wrestlers. It is therefore one’s interpretation and point of view what influences the meaning of the art, the Christianity always offering the moral and innocent interpretation disregarding the true nature of the art as in: “Look ‘ow the elder brother’s got the little chappie down. Look ‘ow well the little chappie’s taking it,” (Forster, *The Life* 150), which comments on the two people fighting rather than having sex. Thus, one cannot truly understand the beauty of the classical
heritage if they inspect it with a different point of view stripping it of all its qualities.
Chapter III. – The Recurring and Minor Topics of the Short Stories

With the major topics analysed, the thesis now moves to an analysis of the minor topics; that is, to the topics that appear in every selected short story, or at least in most of them. These topics are the interconnecting elements and further illustrate and contextualise the gay dynamics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Minor, in this case, does not mean less important or less significant, but simply denotes that these topics are not the main issues Forster dealt with in his stories, although some of them can appear as the major topics, the example being the issue of strangeness. While in “Arthur Snatchfold” it is a major topic, it is also a recurring feature of all the remaining stories, but weakened and not that prominent. In other words, Forster simply did not deal with a single issue in his short stories and he let some of the issues co-operate to create a more authentic and realistic depiction of homosexual behaviour. This chapter deals with the following: the cross-class transgression and the relationship of superior to inferior, the creation of a private space in the public environment, locations and settings, clothing and, finally, a stranger and strangeness.

III. I. The Class and Relationships of Superior to Inferior

The transgression of social rules in this perspective is probably the most discussed topic in the stories, constantly brought to one’s attention, although never being written about as one of the major topics. It is based on the meeting of stereotypical figures which creates a social tension. This class transgression is very well illustrated in “The Obelisk”. Homosexual intercourse,
as was already hinted in Chapter I. II., usually occurred between people with different social backgrounds. This is represented by Ernest, who is middle or upper-middle class, having sex with the foolish and “terribly common” Tiny the sailor (Forster, The Life 126), who cannot even pronounce the word ‘obelisk’ correctly. Hilda could not imagine sex with such a brute and therefore she turns her attention to Stan, who is “much better type—an educated voice and a gallant bearing” (Forster, The Life 116) and “of good family” (Forster, The Life 121). Stanhope is much closer to her class than Tiny, making him much more acceptable as a sexual partner. Ernest, on the other hand, is not concerned and does not have to be with this class problem, since homosexuality commonly transgressed this notion.

“Arthur Snatchfold” also stresses the importance of this issue. Conway is an aristocrat and, due to his business, a very rich one. Arthur is a local boy, who delivers milk. The violation of the class norms has an important impact: nor Conway’s, nor Arthur’s sexuality is questioned. Conway even asks multiple times about Arthur’s girlfriend, while he himself is “addicted to [the female sex], but permit[s] himself an occasional deviation” (Forster, The Life 101). Encounters among higher and lower positioned people in the social stratum does not imply one’s sexual orientation. But, although Conway is familiar with lower class people as he has his “occasional deviation”, he cannot have a heterosexual relationship with someone, who is not his class or at least close to it. After returning home he “had a very full life, and it included an intrigue with a cultivated woman, which was gradually ripening” (Forster, The Life 108). This suggests that extramarital homosexual relationships could occur and were to
some extent tolerated, while marrying someone, who was not socially equal, was not acceptable.

The class-transgression in “Dr Woolacott” is not as strong as in the two above-mentioned stories, but it is also present. Clesant, in his fantastic craving for experience images a farmhand—someone he would otherwise never be interested in. When they meet for the first time, Clesant has to point out that he is the one socially superior: “I’m the squire, I want you a moment, it’s all right” (Forster, The Life 83). He must signal that he allows for the class transgression to happen and by doing this, he also gives a signal that he is interested in something more than the farm-worker’s presence. The farmhand, in his turn, also gives a recount of his social standing and while his background is not of the lower class, he confirms that “he himself had always taken after his mother’s family, and preferred country life” and “was determined to ‘get down into the manure’” (Forster, The Life 88). He, in this manner, explains how he can possess nice clothes while being a working-class person, at the same time confirming his status of being inferior to the squire.

The remaining two stories are not concerned with the issue of class-transgression, or rather, it is not a class-transgression per se. In “The Life to Come” there is a missionary and a chieftain of a native tribe—thus it is very hard to talk about any class differences; therefore, the nuances have to be altered, yet it still remains a matter of superiority and inferiority. The same alteration can be applied to “The Classical Annex”, where there is a statue of an athlete—also referred to as Priapus (Forster, The Life 149), who was an ancient god of fertility, represented by enormous, erected phallus—and a boy.
Again, in both stories, the reader is presented with homosex of the superior (in case of “The Life to Come” it is the missionary, and in “The Classical Annex” it is the god) with the inferior (Vithobai and Denis, respectively), and “The Life to Come” follows a similar note as the other three stories when Pinmay marries “one of the medical missionaries, a lady who shared his ideals, and whose brother had a mining concession above the village” (Forster, The Life 73). Again, Pinmay cannot have a heterosexual relationship with someone who is inferior to him, but rather someone of a good social background. In “The Classical Annex”, however, the issue of marriage or any other heterosexual relationship remains unresolved; the actual homosex is rather desexualised rendering it to be a wrestling contest rather than a sexual intercourse.

III. II. Privacy in Public

All the short stories are concerned with the issue of creating a private space in the public; it is the invasion of public spaces with the acts that—according to the social norms—should be restricted to one’s bedroom. Therefore, the characters create their own micro-space where the sexual act can happen.

This is represented in “The Life to Come” by “a small native hut” that is “hidden among the undergrowth of [the] wild region” (Forster, The Life 65). The forest is a place where meeting someone is unlikely, yet it can still be accessed by anyone entering it. Thus, finding a little more privacy in the hut results in the fact that “God alone saw them after that” (Forster, The Life 68). When Pinmay and Vithobai meet again in the chieftain’s house, Vithobai says:
“Christ awaits us in my inner chamber” (Forster, *The Life* 71). Pinmay, who is no longer inclined to a sexual intercourse, naturally refuses, but one of the reasons for him to do so is the lack of privacy as well. Vithobai invites him to his bedroom, but Paul has taken “two colleagues who had recently arrived” with him (Forster, *The Life* 71). Being seen entering Vithobai’s bedroom is simply unacceptable and it violates the feeling of privacy; in other words, they are not able to recreate the sensation of privacy and security, therefore, they cannot engage in sex.

In “Arthur Snatchfold”, the circumstances are similar to those in “The Life of Come”. The intercourse also happens in a forest, yet the forest is in the private possession of Donaldson, though it “stretches up to the hotel, so he [Arthur] could easily bring people in” (Forster, *The Life* 109), moreover, there are private and public paths in the forest (Forster, *The Life* 109), which suggest that the wood is used by some of the citizens of the village and, at the same time, by the owners. Conway and Arthur hide “deeper in the wood, where the fern was highest” (Forster, *The Life* 103) and it is there, where they create their own private space. Being seen by the local policeman, the private space is compromised. Their failure in establishing a safe private space eventually leads to Arthur being arrested and sentenced.

“Dr Woolacott” is rather vague in the interpretation of the private-public transgression, since the act is committed in Clesant’s house. The violation of a public space, however, does occur. The farmhand meets Clesant in the gun-room, which is a place where “the rest of his household ha[s] tea [in] . . . too” (Forster, *The Life* 85). The other inhabitants “flit out and in, pursuing their
affairs like birds” (Forster, *The Life* 85). The gun-room is in fact a public space, so Clesant and the helping hand could be revealed in any moment. The creation of privacy happens—at least metaphorically—when both of them are together in Clesant’s sofa where he is resting. By entering into the Clesant’s intimate zone, they create a micro-space in the house where they can have sex.

“The Classical Annex” is another example of the failure in creating a private space. Denis, entering the museum, only relies on darkness since “[n]one of the lights were on” when the curator arrives (Forster, *The Life* 150). In fact, he does not try to hide whatsoever. This leads to the discovery by his father and that, in turn, results in the curator’s resignation.

“The Obelisk”, in comparison to “Arthur Snatchfold” and “The Classical Annex”, shows a more successful attempt; in fact, there are two attempts of making a private space, the one that the reader is shown (Hilda and Stanhope), the second—even more skilful—being Ernest and Tiny. Hilda and Stan choose to hide “among the bushes” (Forster, *The Life* 122) and Stan’s ability to detect the danger helps them to have sex safely. Since it is not known, where, how or when Ernest and Tiny have sex, it is not possible to arrive at any conclusions, yet this omission can also mean that the two were simply able to avoid detection even better than Hilda and Stan.

III. III. Locations

As far as the locations are concerned, they are much less prominent in the stories than they were for gay community in reality as was hinted in Chapter I. I. But Forster himself stressed the significance of such places: “There is no forest or fell to escape to today, no cave in which to curl up, no deserted
valley for those who wish neither to reform nor corrupt society but to be left alone” (“Note” 240). Thus, at least in three of the stories the locations are very important\(^5\), namely “Arthur Snatchfold” and “The Classical Annex,” the significant places being the hotel and the museum, respectively. Moreover, two of the five stories share the same location where the intercourses happen, those being “The Life to Come” and again “Arthur Snatchfold,” the common place is the forest.

The hotel, as was already suggested, transgressed the public-private sphere and in “Arthur Snatchfold” it is used to distract the police—and everyone else looking for Conway—and to save Richard from ever being considered a suspect. Arthur purposefully exploits the fact that hotels were connected with men-to-men sex, yet the police “knew already that it was someone from the hotel” (Forster, \textit{The Life} 111). By reinforcing their suspicion, he helps Conway to remain hidden. The curiosity of this situation is that everyone seems to be aware of the fact that the “village is particularly unfortunate, owing to that deplorable hotel. It has had such a bad influence,” (Forster, \textit{The Life} 106-7) and “that hotel d[oes] look too flash—it . . . attract[s] the wrong crowd” (Forster, \textit{The Life} 107). Just the sole presence of the hotel in their village immediately means that it is the only place where “the wrong crowd” could be gathering and that it is because of that place the village has to deal with these “[i]ndecenc[ies] between males” (Forster, \textit{The Life} 107). Moreover, Donaldson

\(^5\) The importance of these places springs from the fact that they allowed gay sex; Forster reflects the well-known practices in his stories, thus making the locations significant for queer reading and identification.
makes a comparison of the situation in the village with the great city when he says that: “I assumed in my innocence they were confined to Piccadilly” (Forster, *The Life* 107). By making this comparison he again stresses the idea that the hotel is an evil place.

The function of the museum in “The Classical Annex” is very similar to the hotel from “Arthur Snatchfold”. The ancient Greek and Roman exhibition is not a place where a lot of people gather, since “[t]here never was any public in the Classical Annex” (Forster, *The Life* 146); moreover, it is “the least attractive room . . . stuffy, badly lit, and not too clean” (Forster, *The Life* 147). Given the scarcity of people going in there and its unwelcoming appearance, the Classical Annex is a place that, similarly to the hotel, attracts people such as Denis, the curator’s son. Although his father thinks “Denis was unlikely to go [in the Classical Annex],” (Forster, *The Life* 150) it is the exact opposite of what Denis does. The reason being statues and artefacts depicting naked men. It is another cruising ground, since there are only a few people in the exhibition and those are very likely to be interested in the naked statues there. The museum—and more importantly the Classical Annex—is, therefore, a place where people like Denis can meet and have sex.

The forest is the last location to be discussed. It appears in the two short stories, “The Life to Come” and “Arthur Snatchfold”. The two forests are very different though. While the forest in “The Life to Come” allows only “God alone [to] s[ee] them [Paul and Vithobai]” (Forster, *The Life* 68), thus offering an ultimate protection from the mortal realm, the wood in “Arthur Snatchfold” has no such capability, even if they “[are] lying deeper in the wood, where the fern
[is] highest” (Forster, *The Life* 103), Arthur and Conway are eventually seen by the policeman. This contrast suggests that while one can be relatively safe while cruising in the forest, they can never be sure whether someone else is not watching. Thus forests can be the ultimate place for a sexual intercourse, while, at the same time, be very dangerous to cruise in.

III. IV. Clothing and Apparel

Another feature of Forster’s short stories is the clothes the characters wear. For Forster it is important what clothes his characters have in the same way it was important for the homosexual community of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, in his letter to Isherwood from 28 January 1937, Forster wrote: “new clothes wanted. I ought to have at least [three] suits” (Zeikowitz 66). The fascination with clothing is also reflected by Isherwood’s 26 August 1934 letter to Forster after he met “a young Hungarian in a very smart flannel suit” (Zeikowitz 38). In every short story, one or two descriptions, clues or mentions can be found—again to facilitate the existing gay dynamics in the short stories.

“The Life to Come” deals with clothing in a rather entertaining way, since it is the state of being more unclad than clad. Yet the extravagancy is created by different perceptions of others’ culture. Therefore, when Vithobai and his tribesmen “laid [their] outer garments aside” (Forster, *The Life* 70), they are rebuked by the missionary and he immediately orders them not to “come before me again until [you] are decently clad” (Forster, *The Life* 70). Vithobai himself is wearing only a little: “[a] cincture of bright silks [that] supported his dagger, silver armlets, and a silver necklet, closed by a falcon’s head which
nestled against his throat” (Forster, *The Life* 71). The bright colours, the various exotic accessories along with his nakedness evoke an extravagant appearance not very distant from the extravagancy of the aristocracy or queans.

“The Classical Annex” addresses the issue in a similar manner as “The Life to Come”: firstly, it is the nude statue of gladiator, whose fig-leaf detaches, rendering the statue completely naked and then it is Denis who has “practically nothing on but his football shorts” (Forster, *The Life* 149). The element of nakedness again creates the sense of extravagance, so when the two meet, they, through their attire, signalise their intentions.

The treatment of clothing in “Dr Woolacott” revolves around the farm-hand’s apparel; it is possible to learn that he wears “[t]he pleasant purple-gray suit, the big well-made shoes and soft white collar [which] all suggested a sensible country lad on his holiday, perhaps on courtship” (Forster, *The Life* 91). Only from the look at the farmhand’s appearance it is possible to deduce that his intention is not only to impress. When he enters the gun-room and says: “Thought I’d surprise you, thought I’d give you a turn” (Forster, *The Life* 86), Clesant can guess the farmworker’s intentions due to his clothes the moment he steps into the gun-room, even more so when Clesant is told that the farmhand “now and then, just for the fun of the thing, he takes [the clothes] out [of the suitcase] and dresses up” (Forster, *The Life* 88). “The thing” is as vague as it is self-explanatory. The farmhand uses the clothes to attract attention of other people, of other homosexuals in particular.
As far as clothing in “Arthur Snatchfold” is concerned, the extravagancy of Arthur himself is eventually used against him. He wears his “canary-coloured shirt” while “being proper to the colour scheme [of the garden]” (Forster, *The Life* 98) basically all the time—again the reason is to attract attention of those who might be interested in sex with him. Yet the way he is clad also attracts unwanted attention of the local policeman since he “saw a bright yellow shirt through the bracken” (Forster, *The Life* 109) and “[h]e had particular reasons for keeping a watch on its wearer” (Forster, *The Life* 110). The yellow shirt thus becomes a symbol of availability and, at the same time, a sign of homosexuality and perversion.

The symbol of a yellow piece of clothing is also represented in “The Obelisk”, but in this story, it is much less prominent than in “Arthur Snatchfold”. It is Ernest, who wears “shoes [that are] so small and yellow” (Forster, *The Life* 115). By referring to “so yellow” shoes, Hilda may actually mean that Ernest is very effeminate and almost as if he was no real man at all. The shoes, Hilda’s description, and the line of her thoughts and the end of the story are the elements that actually reconstitute what happened with Ernest and Tiny, if they have not seen the obelisk either.

III. V. Strangers and Strangeness

This topic was already discussed in Chapter II. III. as a major topic in “Arthur Snatchfold”, but Forster deals with it in the rest of the stories as well, be it through unusual encounters with fantasies or ancient gods (“Dr Woolacott” and “The Classical Annex”), through an accidental sex while on one’s way to do or achieve something (“The Life to Come” and “The Obelisk”),
or through a trade in a forest ("Arthur Snatchfold"). This sub-chapter, therefore, focuses not only on the representation of strangers, but also the meaning of strangeness; not in the sense of being unfamiliar with, but rather of being supernatural and fantasy-like. Some of the stories also illustrate what happens if one eliminates the strangeness.

In “The Life to Come” the strangeness is represented by two different cultures that share no similarities. Moreover, the unknown is facilitated by the fact that Pinmay actually refuses to learn anything about Vithobai’s tribe. Not knowing and the attractiveness of the strange eventually lead to the sexual intercourse between Paul and Vithobai. Paul does not know the meaning of the red flowers Vithobai brings with him and the chieftain, on the other hand, misinterprets the Catholic teachings. As both men learn about the culture of the other person, their personalities change. Paul transforms into “a disillusioned official” who “had preached that the Kingdom of Heaven is intimacy and emotion, now reacted with violence” (Forster, The Life 70) and later “[h]e was no longer an open-hearted Christian knight but a hypocrite” (Forster, The Life 71) and, at first, he remembers “how intelligent the boy [Vithobai] was and how handsome,” (Forster, The Life 68), which then alters into a memory of “the cold voice of the somewhat scraggy and unattractive native” (Forster, The Life 76). Vithobai, on the other hand, is quite stable in his attitude towards Pinmay, but his whole personality undergoes a significant change from a chieftain who possessed enormous amount of land and power, into a convert with only a little property and virtually no power over his people. By learning about the other
civilisation, Vithobai’s identity shatters. Knowing each other, therefore, brings discontent and evokes changes.

“Dr Woolacott” works with strangeness on a higher level, the whole story being strange due to the fact that it is a fantasy of a young invalid. There is a lot of obscurity in the story’s composition and, at the same time, the characters are also blurry and indefinite. The whole plot is jeopardised in the instant of Clesant’s collapse and his dialogue with the disease, which claims that there was no man in the gun-room with him and that the whole adventure was a mere fantasy. The story, however, does not give a clear answer, since there are instances which Clesant cannot know, yet he does, such as Dr Woolacott’s words when he was a military doctor in France during the war. The strangeness and obscurity, therefore, works even on the level of the narrative, not only on the level of characters. There is very little description of both Clesant and the farm-hand. Since it is the boy’s fantasy, it is natural that there is little description of Clesant. He, of course, does not need to materialise himself in the story since it is his fantasy; the farm-hand, on the other hand, is described at least to some extent. Yet the process of learning and knowing about the other also produces a similar effect as in “The Life to Come”. While they enjoy each other’s company at first, as the process of getting acquainted reaches its climax, the farmhand reveals his hatred for Woolacott and starts blaming Clesant: “I counted on you to help, but you prefer to let me down, you pretend at first you’d join up with me—you’re no good” (Forster, The Life 91). Clesant is shocked by this sudden rush of anger and wants to part with the farmworker. As they both reveal something about themselves, they, at the same time,
destroy images they had about each other. In other words, one can no longer occupy the position the other set him in, because, due to the amount of information, they no longer fit that position.

“The Classical Annex” operates with the strangeness similarly as “Dr Woolacott”. There is a supernatural being that is involved in the plot. The strange and the unknown is treated as dangerous and inimical; they are “impish . . . powers of darkness” (Forster, The Life 149), which can only be defeated by something the curator knows the best and that is his religion. When he “ma[kes] the sign of the Cross . . . the Classical Annex and all its contents bec[o]me instantly still” (Forster, The Life 148). The strangeness also naturally attracts Denis, so that he finds his way to the Classical Annex and has sex with the nude statue.

“The Obelisk” contrasts the effect of strangeness on homosex and heterosex. While men-to-men sex requires a certain degree of anonymity—there is no description of it whatsoever and Ernest only “pester[s] the men with questions about their work,” (Forster, The Life 118) he does not need to know anything else, he is not interested in Tiny’s background. On the contrary, Hilda needs to find as much as possible about Stan before she engages in sex with him. The information does not spoil their relationship, it instead reinforces it and eventually Stan “slipped his left hand into his breast. She knew what he meant: the match was there, the symbol of their love. He would never forget her. She had lived, She was saved” (Forster, The Life 127). This confirms that a stranger is necessary for homosex, yet completely unacceptable for heterosexual relationship.
This chapter explored the various minor topics in E. M. Forster’s stories, the topics being class transgression and superiority, creation of private space in public environment, locations, clothing as a means of a demonstration of one’s sexuality and, finally, a stranger and strangeness, and showed the way in which they facilitate the gay reading and understanding.

Chapter IV. – The public and private readership: Forster versus Hanley

The last chapter answers the question asked in the “Introduction” of this paper, which is: Was Forster rightfully criticised for not publishing his short stories? Some critics such as Rictor Norton, have attributed this to a form of cowardice on Forster’s part, noting “the curious bold-yet-cowardly paradox of the homosexual imagination, similar to E. M. Forster’s suppression [of Maurice and the stories in The Life to Come]” (“Cocteau’s”). Conversely, others have been more sympathetic to the publishing difficulties Forster faced, as with P. H. S., who writes in a review: “though variously admired by such people as J. R. Ackerley, T. E. Lawrence, Forrest Reid, Siegfried Sassoon and Lytton Strachey, [the stories in The Life to Come] were debarred from publication by their overtly homosexual content” (“The Times” 12).

To answer the question, the paper briefly describes another book called Boy, written by James Hanley. The reason for this book was chosen is the fact that it treats a similar topic of homosex, as Forster’s short stories do, but with one important difference—Hanley’s Boy was published and was intended for the general public. This chapter illustrates how much different the two pieces of literature are and establishes why Forster could not publish his short stories even if he wanted to. Firstly, the general characteristics of a sexual act
represented in *Boy* are mentioned; secondly, a comparison between the various intercourses in Forster’s and Hanley’s works is offered, and, finally, the thesis moves to the conclusion, answering the question.

The very first sexual experience of Arthur Fearon, the main character from the book, happens in a boiler-room when he is abused by his mates:

The five boys were grouped about Fearon, whose feet they had tied together with a piece of yarn. His coat and vest and shirt had been taken off. At his head, though he could not see it lay a jar of shale oil. . . .

“Wow boys! He’s woke [*sic*] up at last. Now we can proceed.”

. . .

“Now,” began Hughes: “We proceed to receive into the ancient order of honoured scalers and much-wallopers, a new member. Name, Arthur Fearon. Age, fifteen. Fearon, answer all the questions put to you. . . .

“Have you ever had your trousers pulled in a boiler?” . . .

“Have you ever seen your sister washing herself in the bath?”

. . .

“Have you ever seen a fly?”

“Hundreds,” replied Fearon promptly.

“I didn’t mean one of those flies,” replied the hare-lipped one.

. . .

“Each boy you pass will expect you to bow to him.” . . .

“NOW!”
Immediately, they tore his shoes off. Then they covered his body with the shale oil, afterwards sprinkling the itchy cotton all over him. After that they stood two on one side and three on the other and the streams crossed each other. . . .

“They didn’t make you swallow the damn stuff, did they?”

“No. They didn’t make me swallow the stuff. But they made me do something else.” (Hanley 56-8)

The sexual act resembles an initiation into the work of a scaler. The rapists are having fun, but it is not fun because of having sex, rather because of the fact that they—as Fearon’s seniors—can humiliate the new worker. The sense of dominance and mastery over someone inferior definitely reflects in their behaviour. Moreover, Fearon refuses to participate in this initiation and tries to escape. This becomes a common feature of all his sexual intercourses with men; he always tries to avoid or escape it. He regards the sailors he sails with as “dirty bastard[s]” (Hanley 78). Eventually, he is sick of all of them. The only people with whom he can have sex are the Alexandrian female prostitutes. He finds them attractive and appealing, but he cannot stand men’s presence any more.

Hanley gives a recount of sexual abuses which Fearon feels uncomfortable in. He does not approve of them, not only when being forced in them, but also when he is left alone. That is one of the marked differences; in Forster, everyone who engages in the sexual intercourse agrees with it and enters it voluntarily. In none of the cases there is a rape or sexual abuse. It is true that some of the characters, for example Paul Pinmay, regret it afterwards,
yet there is no disapproval before the actual intercourse happens. The second
difference that can be observed is the fact that, to some extent, the abuses of
Fearon are humiliating or are meant to humiliate him. Both the boys and the
sailors always force their wills on him and constantly remind him his
worthlessness, be it via the initiation ceremony or constant remarks about
Fearon’s incapability of doing things correctly and being a nuisance. He is only
fifteen and he scarcely meets with a word of compassion. This is very different
from what can be read in “Arthur Snatchfold” for instance. The milk boy asks:
“You all right?” (Forster, The Life 103) after the act is finished and then he
wants to know “whether he had been a success” (Forster, The Life 103). “The
affair had been trivial and crude, and yet they both had behaved perfectly”
(Forster, The Life 104) furthermore suggests that their behaviour was proper
and that they did not do any mistakes nor they offend anyone. Finally, when
Conway learns Arthur’s name, he starts referring to the milkman as “his lover
who was going to prison to save him” (Forster, The Life 112). From these two
examples, it clear in what way the two stories differ—one is about sexual
abuse, humiliation and worthlessness, while the other is full of mutual respect,
understanding and care for the other.

*Boy* was an accepted book even though there were multiple omissions in
the text in the issues intended for the public. Even *Boy* had to be expurgated so
that it could be printed. The rape and abuse was “far more socially acceptable,
at least for the general public” (Kaylor 216), but the “outcome of a loving
relationship . . . was more dangerous” (Kaylor 216). This suggests that if *Boy*
with his overt depictions of sexual abuse had to be expurgated so it could be
published, the romantic qualities and voluntariness in Forster’s stories would never have been accepted even with the sexual scenes omitted or obscured. The criticism of Forster for not publishing his short stories is unjustified, because he simply could not have published and would never have been allowed to publish them due to the themes depicted.
Conclusion

The thesis dealt with some of E. M. Forster’s short stories in *The Life to Come and Other Stories*. It offered a historical background which highlighted several key issues in nineteenth and twentieth century England such as important places and practices of the gay community, the stereotypical homosexual figures, and the problems of distinguishing public and private spaces. This historical probe served to provide necessary information to proper reading of Forster’s short stories. Without this information, it would be much harder for the reader to follow the literary analysis.

The second part of this paper focused on five short stories written by Forster, namely “The Life to Come”, “Dr Woolacott”, “Arthur Snatchfold”, “The Obelisk” and “The Classical Annex”. It discussed several major topics reflected in the stories such as one’s identity and religion, fantasy and passivity, a stranger, identical male and female desires, and the Greco-Roman heritage, respectively.

In Chapter III it then moved to explain recurring minor issues, which are reflected in all the stories (or at least in some of them). These issues were important for further contextualisation of the short stories into the historical background and they facilitated the gay reading. The topics covered were: class and superior to inferior relationships, privacy in public, locations, clothing, and strangers and strangeness.

The last chapter discussed the criticism of Forster, and through a comparison with a work that was released for the general public it showed, why this criticism was ungrounded and unjustified.
Works Cited


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Resumé česky:

Tato práce se zabývá analýzou povídek E. M. Forstera vydaných po jeho smrti ve sbírce *The Life to Come and Other Short Stories*. Zatímco někteří kritici tvrdí, že Forster mohl svoje povídky publikovat, tato práce skrze analýzu jeho povídek poukazuje na některé motivy, kvůli nimž by byla publikace buď velice obtížná, nebo zcela nemožná.

Nejprve je čtenáři předložena historická sonda do devatenáctého a dvacátého století, kde jsou zkoumány homosexuální dynamiky tehdejší Británie. Čtenáři je umožněn pohled na témata jako např. místa, kde se homosexuálové potkávali, a praktiky, jakých k těmto setkáním používali, stejně jako způsoby policie k předcházení, popřípadě trestání tohoto chování. Dalšími tématy jsou: stereotypy homosexuality – „pansy“ a „quean“ stereotyp, „rough“ stereotyp zobrazující pracujícího muže nižší třídy, stereotyp aristokrata a nakonec stereotyp „váženého homosexuála“ (a respectable homosexual) – a problematika veřejného/soukromého prostoru reprezentovaná hotely a lázněmi.

Na faktuální část práce pak navazuje samotná literární analýza, která se zabývá hlavními tématy pěti vybraných povídek: „The Life to Come“, „Dr Woolacott“, „Arhtur Snatchfold“, „The Obelisk“ a „The Classical Annex“. Hlavní tématy jsou: identita, představa a pasivita, neznámá osoba, identičnost mužské a ženské touhy a řecko-římské dědictví.

Analýza se následně věnuje tématům, jež se objevují ve všech nebo alespoň ve většině z těchto pěti povídek. Tato nejsou stejně prominentní jako hlavní tématy, ale dále zvýrazňují gay čtení a porozumění. Zkoumána je
zejména: transgrese sociální třídy, soukromí na veřejnosti, lokace, oblékání a neznámí a neznámo.

Poslední částí je samotné zkoumání rozdílu mezi tvorbou určenou pro veřejnost (Hanleyův *Boy*) a tvorbou vymezenou pro soukromou distribuci (*The Life to Come and Other Stories*), což zároveň slouží jako argument, proč Forster nechtěl a ani nemohl vydat tyto povídky během svého života.
The Abstract in English

This paper deals with an analysis of E. M. Forster’s short stories published after his death in a collection called *The Life to Come and Other Stories*. While some literary critics claim that Forster could have published his short stories, this paper, through the analysis of his short stories, highlights some of the themes that would make the publication very problematic if not wholly impossible.

Firstly, the historical probe of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in which the gay dynamics of the contemporary Britain are examined, is offered. The reader learns about the topics such as the places where homosexuals were meeting and the practices they used during these encounters, as well as the practices the police used to prevent such behaviour; other topics being the homosexual stereotypes—pansy and quean stereotypes, a working-class rough, an aristocrat, and, finally, a respectable homosexual stereotype—and the problems connected with public/private spaces as represented by hotels and baths.

The factual part of the story is then followed by the literary analysis, which deals with the main topics in the selected five stories, namely: “The Life to Come”, “Dr Woolacott”, “Arthur Snatchfold”, “The Obelisk” and “The Classical Annex”. The major topics are: one’s identity, a fantasy and passivity, a stranger, identical male and female desires, and the Greco-Roman heritage, respectively.

The analysis then moves towards the recurring topics, which appear in all the stories, or at least in most of them. These topics are not as prominent as
the major ones, but they further facilitate gay reading and understanding. The examined issues concern: class transgression, one’s privacy in public, locations, clothing, and a stranger and strangeness.

The final part of this paper focuses on the difference between a piece of literature aimed at the public (Hanley’s *Boy*) and a work intended for a private circulation only (*The Life to Come and Other Stories*); the difference works as an argument for Forster’s unwillingness and inability to publish his stories while he was alive.