"The Hotel Case" Queering the Hotel in E. M. Forster's "Arthur Snatchfold"

Athanasios Dimakis
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Abstract: E. M. Forster's hotel literature has acquired increasing momentum within contemporary critical discourses on hotels in modernist mobilities, spatio-temporality, and geographies (Thacker 2003, Short 2019). In Forster's critically neglected and underrepresented short story "Arthur Snatchfold" (1928; published posthumously in 1972), the hotel and its surroundings come to resemble a space of queer possibility that functions as a homoerotically-charged Foucauldian counter-site. With the story progressively acquiring the semblance of a "hotel case" (1987, 108) through the assumption of an inferred, imagined, but never really lived, queer life within the hotel premises, all normative ways of codifying sexual identity in "Arthur Snatchfold" are challenged. To exist meaningfully and move ahead with the exploration of their sexualities, the story's sexual offenders have to resort to the green belt surrounding what the conventional morality perceives as "that deplorable hotel" (1987, 106). It is the hotel as a peculiar configuration that opens a range of possibilities for transgressive behaviours. This is also suggested in the failed attempts at policing the hotel premises. The hotel erotica in "Arthur Snatchfold" seems, by the same token, to be born out of the tension arising from the modernist urge to spatialize through the heterotopic transport of the protagonists from monochromatic domesticity towards the multihued hotel. In the immediate vicinity of the hotel and, in an illusory sort of way, within the plasticity of the hotel, the protagonists finally find refuge.
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Edward Morgan Forster's hotel literature has acquired increasing momentum and added significance within contemporary critical discourses on the importance of hotels in studies of modernist mobilities, spatio-temporality, and geographies. This essay explores the transgressive potential of the hotel that comes to resemble a Foucauldian counter-site in Forster's critically neglected

and underrepresented short story "Arthur Snatchfold" (1928; published posthumously in 1972). A straightforward account of the netting of a sensual young milkman by a respectable upper-class father and husband visiting from London, the story underlines the necessity of a physical (hotel) space for queer desire to flourish. Forster posits the hotel and its surroundings as the ultimate space of sexual possibility and erotic fulfilment in a story marked for its bold homoeroticism. I will explore the processes through which a, seemingly innocent, architectural figuration helps Forster queer British modernism. With the story progressively acquiring the semblance of a "hotel case" (1987, 108) through the assumption of an inferred, hypothesised, imagined but never really lived, queer life within the hotel premises, all normative ways of codifying sexual identity and affections in "Arthur Snatchfold" are challenged.

Having said that, the essay also directs attention to the hotel as a sexualized, heterotopic space that poses challenges to the fragile domestic ideal and its reassuring normalcy. I maintain that to exist meaningfully and move ahead with the exploration of their sexualities, sexual offenders have to resort to the green belt surrounding what the conventional morality perceives as "that deplorable hotel" exerting "such a bad influence" (1987, 106). It is the hotel as a peculiar configuration that opens a range of possibilities for transgressive behaviours in the story. In addition to that, the "'extraordinary case' connected with it" (1987, 107) in "Arthur Snatchfold," follows a reverse, unconventional trajectory that interestingly relocates gayness from the conveniently lax urban space of the metropolis towards a country hotel and its surroundings that come to resemble a queer Arcadia.

In the scant criticism on "Arthur Snatchfold" the overarching theme seems to be the exploration of social constructionism through the hallmarks of class and gender. The story, indeed, seems to affirm an immutable class difference. The representative of the elite remains impervious and unpunished, whereas the lower-class individual is ruthlessly scapegoated. The modernist uses of space and the centrality of the hotel in the queer superstructure of the narrative have not inspired any critical attention so far. Christopher Lane explores the material and class dynamics at play in a story known for its pessimistic finale. Belonging to the "series of fantasies that Forster refused to publish in his lifetime," he maintains that it ends "in possible treachery and ethical compromise," culminating in the ill fate of the socially inferior, lower-middle class lover (Lane 1997, 167). Richard Conway's blasé eroticization of the young man and the blatant disequilibrium of power made manifest in Arthur Snatchfold's

arrest and conviction, indeed, seem to suggest that the story presents a more "realistic conclusion to Maurice's sexual idealism" (1997, 178). Jeffrey Meyers appears to endorse what the narrator of the story seemingly posits as a superficial, shallow affair that cannot possibly offer much insight given the fact that it largely remains a hurried liaison (1977, 90–113). Bart Eeckhout primarily underscores the fallacies of the story in his exploration of non-normative sexualities in Anglophone literary modernism, suggesting that it "presents a case of problematical sociality" through the example of the single sexual encounter between Conway and Snatchfold and the subsequent, unilateral punitive actions against the latter (2015, 125):

> A kind of enduring sociality *is* thus created between Conway and Snatchfold, but it is a retroactive, politically sterile, publicly invisible, and paradoxical one for which the less powerful partner has been severely punished. And it is further complicated by the fact that Forster wrote this sexual fantasy for private delectation only. … [H]e did not feel he could publish such a story of surreptitious same-sex bonding during his lifetime. (2015, 125)

The story also stands out in that it reshapes and redirects the conventional designation of (stereotypically Mediterranean) foreign locations as Forsterian "homosexual havens" (Fordoński 2010, 90). Having initiated a "back to England" moment of return, Forster creates "a homosexual haven of his own making" within the confines of Britain (Fordoński 2010, 90). Stephen da Silva reads "Arthur Snatchfold" as belonging to the set of stories that "explicitly thematize 'immature' homosexuality" (1998, 245) while also claiming that they, in fact, in spite of their inherently flawed nature, have great "potential to do anti-homophobic work" (1998, 266). In his introduction, Oliver Stallybrass humorously maintains that "Arthur Snatchfold" belongs to the sequence of Forster's "serious" (1987, xv) homosexual stories that lack frivolity in that "the horrors of a vapid, pointless, sham-rural weekend in uncongenial company" are evoked to an extent enough "to drive anyone to a roll in the bracken with the milkman" (1987, xvi). I maintain that the modernist hotel poetics and aesthetics help better articulate these horrors, especially if we are to explore the laden semiotics of hotel life in British and Continental modernity as opposed to the pervasive ethos of post-Victorian, heteronormative domesticity.

More specifically, a single sexual encounter between the considerably older, urban businessman, Sir Richard Conway, and the youthful country milkman, Arthur Snatchfold, results in the latter's arrest and conviction for gross indecency; a fate Conway narrowly escapes. Having enjoyed the pastoral vision of the milkman bringing milk to his countryside hosts, Richard keenly observes the charming young man. Richard's contemplation of the statuesque embodiment of the legacy of classical homoeroticism amidst the rich flora of the Donaldsons' estate and garden constitutes one of Forster's most homoerotically charged passages. Its sexual force amounts to tension. Queer desire transforms what Forster depicts as a banal, grey, and uneventful, provincial weekend where "what was wanted was colour" (1987, 97) into a queer erotica of unprecedented narrative and sensorial stimulation and force:

> Of course what was wanted was colour. Delphinium, salvia, red-hot-poker, zinnias, tobacco-plant, anything. Leaning out of the baronial casement, Conway considered this … The visit, like the view, threatened monotony. Dinner had been dull. His own spruce gray head, gleaming in the mirrors, really seemed the brightest object about. (1987, 97)

The diametrically opposed colourful rendering of Richard's desire for the magnetic, polychromatic hues and tints of the milkman, who suddenly emerges within the monochromatic banality of a dismal household that cannot possibly accommodate queerness, only accentuates the inherent irony. Richard's warm, fervent anticipation of the pleasures of a multicoloured queer future, while striving to identify with a fuller sense of being, is aptly rendered in distinctly life-affirming, prismatic, luminous terms:

> He looked at the dull, costly garden. It improved. A man had come into it from the back of the yew hedge. He had on a canary-coloured shirt, and the effect was exactly right. The whole scene blazed … his shirt golden on the grass beside him. Ruddy brown to the waist he would show now. (1987, 98)

It is Richard's erotic frenzy for Arthur that transforms the story into a narrative of queer desire. The neglected centrality of the hotel in "Arthur Snatchfold"

concerns the fact that, in a typically Forsterian fashion, it is mostly in emancipatory hotel rooms and lobbies that stories will be written, desire will inevitably thrive, and escape from the constraints of the heteronormative matrix will take place. A radical point of differentiation in Forster's short story concerns the fact that action primarily takes place in the circumference of the hotel rather than its premises. When the policeman sees Arthur and Conway having sex in the green belt surrounding the hotel, Conway escapes and the ensuing scandal is avoided. Arthur is eventually betrayed by his conspicuous yellow shirt. Thus, while the younger lover becomes a scapegoat being apprehended for "[i]ndecency between males" (1987, 107), he self-sacrificially conceals the senior's identity and spares him from policing and punitive measures having transposed him from the lush gardens to the demonized hotel itself, a space that evades policing and the normalizing potential of homophobic laws (110).

As such, this marginalized, subversive narrative of an imagined but not lived hotel space functioning heterotopically ephemerally shatters the provincial homophobic inertia and domestic normativity. I maintain that the hotel and its vicinity in "Arthur Snatchfold" function as Foucauldian heterotopias. The critically neglected existence of the pregnant heterotopic schema employed in Forster's story violently disrupts the established order. The heterotopia explored is also underscored by the very location of the British hotel, which is located elsewhere, far from the metropolitan heart of London.

In Michel Foucault's "Of Other Spaces," morally challenging or controversial acts that unsettle the puritan ethos are, often, situated in hotels. The paradigm of the ritualistic deflowering in honeymoon hotels for example, serves to underscore their function as counter-sites or "crisis heterotopias" (1986, 24–25):

> [T]he first manifestations of sexual virility were in fact supposed to take place "elsewhere" than at home. For girls, there was, until the middle of the twentieth century, a tradition called the "honeymoon trip" which was an ancestral theme. The young woman's deflowering could take place "nowhere" and, at the moment of its occurrence the train or honeymoon hotel was indeed the place of this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers" (1986, 24–25).

Having been posited as "the place of this nowhere," one of the existing "heterotopias of crisis" (Foucault 1986, 25), the example of the honeymoon

hotel is followed by that of the intensely sexualized American motel and the additional challenges that it poses to the reassuring normalcy of the fragile domestic ideal:

> This type of heterotopia … could perhaps be found in the famous American motel rooms where a man goes with his car and his mistress and where illicit sex is both absolutely sheltered and absolutely hidden, kept isolated without however being allowed out in the open. (1986, 26–27)

Seeming to oscillate between the Foucauldian reading of heterotopias of crisis, whereby the first layer of rupture with puritan ethos occurs, and heterotopias of deviation, whereby more radical, non-normative approaches are accommodated, queer hotels better articulate this tension. While Foucault does not include queer hotels in his scant list, which, however, includes rest homes, as well as psychiatric hospitals, retirement homes, and prisons, it is his assertion that the heterotopias of deviation are those in which "individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (1986, 25). The vain attempts at policing the hotel in "Arthur Snatchfold" and the assumption that the queer sex offenders must be contained within the hotel showcases the identification of the hotel as a counter-site of crisis and/or deviation, a place of subversion and otherness, a place that accommodates the marginal and poses moral challenges. In the translation of Foucault's "Of Other Spaces" deviation and deviance seem to be used interchangeably. With "heterotopias of deviation" being defined as places in which "individuals whose behavior is deviant" are placed (1986, 25), the sociologically charged meaning of deviance, in its implied violation of cultural or moral norms, is loosely correlated with the less radical departure from conventions that deviation seems to suggest.

Thus, the quest for this impossible place of deviation/deviance within the stereotypically shallow parochial setting starts very early on during Richard's contemplation of the surroundings of the Donaldsons' residence in the opening sequence: "A man had come into it from the back of the yew hedge.… *That* was what the place wanted – not a flower bed, but a man, who advanced with a confident tread" (1987, 98). Richard's initial, topographic deviation from the confines of the domestic trajectory of the Donaldsons' estate and his urge to get near the hotel incur sexual deviance. Being a widowed father of two daughters,

Richard falsely assumes that "[p]leasure's been left out of our packet" (1987, 98). The narrator's *faux*, lighthearted take on Richard's cheeky queer agenda later becomes graver. It soon becomes a precarious, libidinal, impudent flirtation, whereby "the smaller pleasures of life" must be approached (1987, 103). It takes two-and-a-half pages to finally witness Richard's full-fledged sexual crisis as per the omniscient narrator's emphatic assertion:

> He believed in pleasure; he had a free mind and an active body, and he knew that pleasure cannot be won without courage and coolness.… The female sex was all very well and he was addicted to it, but permitted an occasional deviation. (1987, 101)

This is exactly the point where Forster's short story seems to function proleptically. It seems to anticipate later theoretical formulations in clearly suggesting that spatial deviations – like Richard's clandestine exit from the domestic realm of the Donaldsons' towards the emancipatory circumference of the hotel – can also induce moral ruptures in social structures, leading to full-blown deviance. It is the hotel that enables Richard's deviation discursively and narratively. This becomes evident in Arthur's assertion that Richard must, by definition, be a hotel resident for their flirtation to make any sense at all:

> "Stopping back in the 'otel, I suppose?"
> "No. Donaldson's. You saw me there yesterday."
> "Oh, Donaldson's, that's it. You was the old granfa' at the upstairs window."
> "Old granfa' indeed. . . . I'll granfa' you…" (1987, 102)

The fact that Arthur happens to be a milkman hypersexualises the scene, accentuating the intensity of its blatant homoerotica. In the classical world so dear to Forster, milk was also identified with the masculine element. It is often associated with the consistency and qualities of semen. Milk is defined by Aristotle as a sensual element fundamentally related to sexual procreation. In *History of Animals*, Aristotle correlates milk with sperm (1984, 826). Given the fact that milk also happens to be an organic fluid associated with coitus and reproduction, Forster most certainly contemplates its sexual politics here while also, perhaps, evoking the legacy of Greek Love. The ensuing libido-ridden

sex scene is daring and life-affirming. In his recollection of Arthur's "thrusting thrashing strength," Richard finds that "there was plenty to praise" (1987, 103). Feeling Arthur's "heavy body on him," Richard appears to be "genuinely admiring and gratified" (1987, 104). Pleasure is finally attained: "Nice boy, nice shirt, nice everything" (1987, 103).

Richard and Arthur's love making within the heterotopic buffer zone of the neutral green belt surrounding the hotel is also marked for its heterochronic dimensions: "[P]resently the sensation for which he had planned so cleverly was over. It was part of the past. It had fallen like a flower upon similar flowers.… It was over there too, part of a different past" (1987, 103). The originally hinted homoerotic fulfilment is finally achieved when the protagonists' conventional space and time become radically disrupted and they both surrender to a heterotopic and heterochronic remaking of their conventional *topos* and *chronos*. The dense chronotopic quality of the passage seems to evoke a distant, classical perhaps, past where (and when) homosexuality was naturalised and accepted. This is also implicated in Foucault's assertion that a strange heterochrony seems to be woven in any heterotopia—coming to resemble a "space … which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs" (Foucault 1986, 23). Following the short heterotopic and heterochronic interlude that accommodates their mutual desire, Arthur's alarm violently transports them to the limitations of present place (and time): "We could get seven years for this, couldn't we?" (1987, 104). However, as it turns out, Arthur's prison time will only amount to a total of six months. This exaggeration is interesting in that it makes the existing climate of fear and panic more palpable. In 1927, homosexuals were stigmatized and, at times, completely ruined due to the criminalisation of sex between men across Britain. Written three decades prior to the report of the Wolfenden Committee decriminalizing private homosexual activity between consenting adults over the age of 21 (Waites 2005, 88), "Arthur Snatchfold" evokes the atmosphere of homophobic blackmail and punitive laws.

The connection between queer desire and hotel aesthetics and politics is made most explicit in the second part of "Arthur Snatchfold," which entirely shifts the focus of attention to the hotel. Since domesticity cannot accommodate queer desire, it is the hotel that functions as the supreme localiser of the liberal mores of modernity in the parochial milieu. Some weeks after Richard and Arthur's sexual encounter, Richard and Trevor Donaldson sit opposite each other at a glossy London club. Following the exchange of pleasantries and Trevor's dialectic mon-

ologue – a rant on the lethargic countryside as a place of ennui – Richard comes to term with the repercussions of his frivolity set against the backdrop of the hotel:

> "Of course our village is particularly unfortunate, owing to that deplorable hotel. It has such a bad influence. We had an extraordinary case before us on the Bench recently, connected with it."
> "That hotel did look too flash – it would attract the wrong crowd." (1987, 106–107)

It comes as little surprise that Richard also surrenders to the discourses comfortably demonizing the hotel as a hangout for "the wrong crowd," in other words, the root of all social evil (1987, 107). Designated as the ultimate corruptor in Trevor's naïve moralistic sermons on propriety and social order, the hotel is purported to have the capacity to compromise the integrity of the assumingly immaculate locals, who are portrayed in distinctly Wilderian terms in Trevor's puritan pastoral. Trying to negotiate the distance between convention and non-conformity, sexual orthodoxy and homosexuality, as well as reality and fantasy in this case, Richard insists on wanting to clarify Trevor's "reference to that 'extraordinary case' connected with the local hotel" (1987, 107). Perfectly aware of the fact that hotel spaces offer a, hitherto untried, gender freedom and allow for the flourishing of sexual difference through the array of disruptive identities that they shelter, Trevor finally erupts:

> "I knew such things existed, of course, but I assumed in my innocence they were confined to Piccadilly. However, it has all been traced back to the hotel, the proprietress has had a thorough fright, and I don't think there will be any trouble in the future. Indecency between males."
> "Oh, good Lord!" said Sir Richard coolly. "Black or white?"
> "White, please, it's an awful nuisance…" (1987, 107)

The racist, homophobic admonitions and the functioning of power through panoptic practices and a condition of permanent visibility disclose a consistent disciplinary programme that the lax hotel shelter threatens. Having finally realised the degree of his own susceptibility to Trevor's inadvertent coercion and homophobic blackmail by means of patronising and catechism, Richard

seemingly endorses the scathing remarks in the safety of his bourgeois cockney club. The pre-Wolfenden Britain and the consistent criminalisation of homosexuality are beautifully evoked in the passage whereby the homosexual intercourse that Richard and Arthur enjoy is comfortably misidentified as a "hotel case" (1987, 108):

> "How did the hotel case end?" he asked.
> "We committed him for trial."
> "Oh! As bad as that?"
> "Well, we thought so. Actually a gang of about half a dozen were involved, but we only caught one of them. His mother, if you please, is president of the Women's Institute, and hasn't had the decency to resign! … This man made an awfully bad impression on the Bench and we didn't feel that six months, which is the maximum we are allowed to impose, was adequate to the offence." (1987, 108–109)

When Trevor identifies the crime scene as "the little wood … which stretches up to the hotel," Richard begins to come to terms with the sad reality of Arthur's apprehension (1987, 109). Upon hearing that the convicted homosexual was ironically "betrayed by the shirt he was so proud of" he becomes more alarmed finally managing to identify the colourful signifier of Arthur's queerness (1987, 109). Trevor's references to the watchful "local bobby," a "policeman who keeps his eyes open," and the officer's repulsive visual acuity while "keeping a watch" on the "wearer" of the flamboyant, flashy shirt, showcase the relentless literal and metaphorical surveillance over queer communities (1987, 108–109). The passage simultaneously combines voyeurism, panopticism, and homophobic blackmail. It points to the ethically challenging issues of surveillance and the moral extensions of a surveillant's power that have a distinctly Foucauldian resonance. The visual problematics explored in this passage are further sustained through references to the policeman being "genuinely startled" or "scarcely" able to "believe his eyes," enthralled as he is by the spectacle he beholds (1987, 109).

Richard soon realises his own susceptibility to homophobic blackmail as he perfectly fits the description of the "old man in pyjamas and a mackintosh" who escapes arrest having taken advantage of the policeman's "stupid error of judgement" (1987, 109). On the surreal grounds of having "abundant evidence

of a medical character," Arthur is apprehended while Richard escapes (1987, 109). The ensuing scene transports all action within the adjacent hotel itself:

> [O]ur policeman then went on to the hotel, but it was far too late by that time, some of the guests were breakfasting, others had left, he couldn't go round cross-questioning everyone, and no one corresponded to the description of the person whom he saw being hauled up out of the fern. (1987, 110)

Unsettling the private-public binary, the hotel distracts the policeman and the police cannot restore order within the hotel grounds. Rather, the hotel is demonised for the alleged complicity of its residents in the violation of accepted moral standards. Despite having raided the hotel, the police officer is farcically disempowered by the polyvalence and indefinability of the space he accesses. Anti-gay legislation is challenged in the open-minded hotel lobby that showcases the (relocated) novel, cosmopolitan ethos of the lax metropolis. Caroline Field Levander and Matthew Pratt Guterl point to the potential of hotels for all sorts of transgressions by virtue of being dynamic, liminal spaces where anything can literally happen:

> The hotel room is thus a production site – one of many – for the modern sexual self. And hotels work, generally, to create and confirm contemporary notions of sex and sexuality, and to make possible, at the same time, a planned, if carefully delimited, escape from the normal rules, especially, but not only, for men. There are, then, no "misdeeds" in a hotel room; no one really behaves badly there, and this tends to be the case because of the fluidity and seeming infinite flexibility that … is literally built into the hotel's architectural and social logic. (2015, 49)

Criticism on hotel literature also directs attention to the ambivalent intersection of surveillance or disciplinary control with the emancipatory aura of modernist hotels as one example of the aporetic discourses that modernist hotels generate. In discussing the policing of Oscar Wilde's hotel life, Barbara Black maintains that this could be roughly summarised as "a journey from hotel to prison back to hotel again" (2019, 160). The unfortunate sequence is, of course,

immortalised in John Betjeman's 1937 poem "The Arrest of Oscar Wilde at the Cadogan Hotel," which engages with the most notorious attempt at policing the interior areas of the (queer) hotel on account of its transgressive potential (1971, 18–19). Wilde was apprehended by police in hotel room 118 on April 6, 1895, while contemplating fleeing to continental Europe. A decade earlier, Joseph Roth's 1928 feuilleton "The All-Powerful Police" recounts the processes through which a hotel resident can notice the interwar susceptibility of the hotel premises to fascist imperatives that were gaining ground in Italy and continental Europe in general. Roth finds the attempts at policing by hotel proprietors and staff regrettable. The passport rituals at hotel receptions whereby visitors are granted entry to the inaccessible interior curtail freedom of movement and serve to enforce a totalitarian police state (2015, 81). Roth laments the fact that his Rome hotel porter has seemingly undergone a paradoxical transformation demanding the surrender of passports and threatening to summon the police (2015, 81–82).

Also written in 1928, Forster's "Arthur Snatchfold" seems to offer a contrasting, differential point of view. The British hotel, unlike its continental counterparts, is less susceptible to the repercussions of the interwar tension and the rise of fascist ideologies. The inchoate, rudimentary attempts at policing homosexuality in a hotel in "Arthur Snatchfold" are rendered completely futile. The policeman's overall reluctance points to this. By reinforcing the suspicion of police officers that the British hotel must be necessarily connected with the indecent act of queer sex, Arthur conceals Richard's identity. Despite having been assured that "he would be let off" if he helped the locals "make the major arrest" (1987, 111), the village boy acts self-sacrificially and goes to Assizes alone, sparing Richard. His haphazard police interrogation again demonises the hotel and Arthur Snatchfold's cries appear to further fuel the widespread suspicion and prejudice surrounding the common identification of hotels with the sheltering of homosexuality and a rich repertoire of morally challenging acts:

> "But all he could say was what we knew already – that it was someone from the hotel."
> "Oh, he said that, did he?" From the hotel."
> "Said it again and again. Scarcely said anything else, indeed almost went into a sort of fit. There he stood with his head thrown back and his eyes shut, barking at us, 'Th'otel. Keep to th'otel. I tell you he come from th'otel.'" (1987, 111)

Thus, the hotel challenges the frequent glorification of the proper rituals of hospitality through its ambivalent function as an anteroom, the antechamber for fully-fledged deviance, a space where sexual unorthodoxy can be first achieved – paradoxically in an exclusively imaginary sort of way in this specific story – within the emancipatory hotel place. It is in this elsewhere and within or around the *laissez-faire* aura of a hotel that the criminal offence and moral crime of gross indecency committed should ideally take place for its perpetrators to escape unscathed.

Forster's coming-of-age piece of queer fiction *Maurice* (published posthumously in 1971), also underscores the necessity of a physical hotel space for queer homoeroticism to flourish. Having first lost themselves within "a strange hotel," the book's closeted homosexual lovers manage to finally escape (2005, 203). It is in the Bloomsbury hotel scene[1] that Maurice and Alec are finally divested of their closeted public selves and reconcile with their private queer desire. In his "Textual Notes," Philip Gardner dates Forster's writing of the hotel chapter in Maurice to January 1952, based on Forster's correspondence with Christopher Isherwood and Forster's expressed ambivalence about it (see Forster 1999, 294). Functioning as a counter-site, this liminal space accommodates the protagonists' transgression and is juxtaposed with the poisonous intersection of the ideal of domesticity with blatant homophobia. The puritan ethos inhabiting the "stuffy little boxes" of the desolate suburbia attests to this (2005, 212). Wayne Koestenbaum's discussion of the role of the hotel as homosexual shelter seems to perfectly describe Forster's unnamed Bloomsbury "casual refuge" in *Maurice* (2005, 203), as well as Oscar Wilde's "notorious" sexual life in various hotels: "A hotel summons a psychic state – a mood of apartness-as-refuge" (Koestenbaum 2007, 81). To this end, in his discussion of hotel homosexuality, Koestenbaum suggests that queer hotels "extend welcome to those …, who haunt margins" (2007, 97).

Indeed, in this "strange" hotel, which is part of the malleable, adaptable heart of London, Forster's protagonists become anonymous hotel guests. Likewise, the hotel becomes an urban buffer zone which accommodates the new-fangled emotions of their illicit love and halts their incessant mobility. In its daring and subversive treatment of the hotel, Forster's work seems to foreshadow the prevalence of queer or gay-friendly hotels in contemporary urban cultures. Blissfully

1 I would like to thank Prof. Claire Monk for her rich insights on the dating of the hotel chapter from Maurice.

immersed in light, they are simultaneously sheltered from the rain and vagaries of the weather and, most importantly, from conventional domesticity and reproductive, generational family time as they resort to the heterotopic universe of the hotel; the par excellence space of modernist mobility. The trance-like quality of the passage attests to the function of hotels as queer shelters:

> Light drifted in upon them from the outside world where it was still raining. A strange hotel, a casual refuge protected them from their enemies a little longer.… This was 'oliday, London with Maurice, all troubles over, and he wanted to drowse and waste time, and tease and make love." (2005, 203)

In *Moving through Modernity*, Andrew Thacker brings forth the peculiar spatial dimensions of modernist literature and its incessant mobilities across fluid, ephemeral places and spaces (2003, 1–12). The respective lived and imagined hotel erotica in *Maurice* and "Arthur Snatchfold" seem, by the same token, to be born out of the tension arising from the modernist urge to spatialise. The "gendered experience of particular spaces" observed by Thacker in his discussion of Jean Rhys also seems to apply here (2003, 204). Similarly, Sir Richard Conway's literal and metaphorical heterotopic transport from the propriety and stale domesticity of his cockney suburbia and from the grey, monochromatic household of the Donaldsons' to the hedonistic, multihued vicinity of the liberating hotel grounds and, in an illusory sort of way, within the hotel space itself suggests that he can only meaningfully exist heterotopically. Being a perennially out-of-place queer man, he feels perfectly at home within counter-sites that take him away from the constraints of the legacy of Victorian domesticity such as the green belt surrounding the hotel and the hotel itself. Away from the hotel Richard feels homeless, gray, and spectral. Right next to the hotel he becomes youthful and colourful again. The inherent irony in Richard's assertion then begins to make sense: "That hotel did look too flash" (1987, 107). The flamboyant glimmer of the "flash" hotel ironically attracts "the wrong crowd" (1987, 107). The ambivalent entwinement of the material, the physical with the abstract or metaphorical suggests that the flashness of the hotel functions as a sensory invitation that points to the existence of a demarcated zone for homosexual activity.

In the immediate vicinity of the hotel and, in an illusory sort of way, within the hotel, Richard and Arthur are ready for the final transgression, their com-

plete severance from the sexless, uneventful life that the Donaldsons and their provincial domesticity embody. Subverting Trevor's naïve, moronic conceit in believing that queer activities and identities "were confined to Piccadilly," the provincial hotel modernizes the Arcadia and its false claims to "innocence" (1987, 107). Next to or inside the counter-site, the "other space" that they aspire to inhabit, all etiquette and decorum are forever challenged.

The provincial British hotel described here ignites queer desire and its nature is, by definition, more dynamic and disruptive than the one suggested in Foucault's discussion of the deflowering of honeymooners. While the heterotopic potential of literary hotels has been traced before (Mattern 2018), this has not been the case with "Arthur Snatchfold." The hotel sequence becomes the climactic point in the story's arrangement of "other" spaces of modernist mobility also marked for their heterotopic potential. These spaces include the train that takes Richard all the way from the metropolitan heart of London to Trevor Donaldson's garden of temptation and back, as well as the cars that transport the entourage of respectable "business allies" to the nearby golf course to indulge in sports and discuss their "common interest in aluminium" (1987, 97), a blatantly masculine element and sure material extension of their old, complacent, heterosexual virility. In his book chapter "Through Modernity: Forster's Flux" (2003, 46–79), Thacker affiliates the heterotopic mode with Forster's oeuvre when resorting to the imagery of the motorcar in *Howards End* (1910): "Perhaps the motorcar in the novel is another heterotopia: a real site but one which will not stay put, a 'placeless place' that constantly unsettles an acceptable spatial ordering of modernity" (2003, 29).

While facilitating his peregrinations, the vehicles and machinery of modernity do not amount to much in Richard's case. His homosexual fulfillment is, for the most part, hotel-sponsored. This is also suggested in the modernist phantasmagoria evoked in Richard's trance-like, chimerical thoughts in a passage where, starting with the hotel, all the insignia of modernism parade. Hotels, cars, cinemas, the framework of automobile modernity, the signifiers of incessant mobility, and the promise of elsewhere, accommodate his sense of being a, forever out of place, bisexual or homosexual man daydreaming in colour or technicolour:

> He would have liked to meet the vision again, and spend the whole of Sunday with it, giving it a slap-up lunch at the hotel, hiring a car, which they would drive alternately, treating it to the pictures

> in the neighbouring town, and returning with it, after one drink too much, through dusky lanes. (1987, 99)

Having been demonized as a place where "the 'mores' … tend to break down" (Hayner 1928, 784), the "deplorable hotel" (Forster 1987, 106) at the heart of the story functions like a corrosive agent violating moral boundaries. Through its daring heights and subversive appeal, Forster's hotel scene seems to foreshadow the importance of queer hotels in postmodernity, for the heroes seem to resort to hotels where anything can happen given the absence of any significant social or normative control as suggested in Norman Hayner's "Hotel Life and Personality":

> *Personality patterns in the hotel environment*. – Although a certain formal etiquette—a kind of mechanical correctness – tends to develop in the better class hotels, the "mores," that part of our tradition that is thought to involve the general welfare, tend to break down in the hotel environment. Among the heavy offenders for stealing hotel property are listed "men and women who in their own communities command respect, but who, on going to a hotel, take a "moral holiday." (Hayner 1928, 784)

From the pleasure of sexual consummation to the story's bitter outcome, "Arthur Snatchfold" posits the hotel as a heterotopia of crisis and/or deviation, a place where anything can happen, a place of infinite possibility. Through the assumption that the protagonists are free to go "wild in the hotel," Forster seems to emphatically assert that they happen to be, "contra public moral outrage," in "the right place" (Levander and Guterl 2015, 49). Living in the vicinity of the hotel or dreaming of living within the heterotopic realm of its walls, Arthur and Richard can finally let their urges run wild. Within these same walls they can finally defy policing and homophobic control. When "Arthur Snatchfold" deceives the police officers falsely directing them to the hotel premises he seems to be perfectly aware of this: 'Th'otel. Keep to th'otel. I tell you he come from th'otel'" (Forster 1987, 111).

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