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Document A

Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970)

A Room with a View (1908), Penguin Classics, 1986

Miss Lavish laid her hand pleasantly on Lucy's arm, as if to suggest that she, at all events, would get full marks. In this exalted mood they reached the steps of the great church, and were about to enter it when Miss Lavish stopped, squeaked, flung up her arms, and cried:

‘There goes my local-colour box! I must have a word with him!’

5 And in a moment she was away over the Piazza, her military cloak flapping in the wind; nor did she slacken speed till she caught up an old man with white whiskers, and nipped him playfully upon the arm.

Lucy waited for nearly ten minutes. Then she began to get tired. The beggars worried her, the dust blew in her eyes, and she remembered that a young girl ought not to loiter in public places. She descended slowly into the Piazza with the intention of rejoining Miss Lavish, who was really almost too original. But at that moment Miss Lavish and her local-colour box moved also, and disappeared down a side-street, both gesticulating largely.

10 Tears of indignation came to Lucy's eyes partly because Miss Lavish had jilted her, partly because she had taken her Baedeker. How could she find her way home? How could she find her way about in Santa Croce? Her first morning was ruined, and she might never be in Florence again. A few minutes ago she had been all high spirits, talking as a woman of culture, and half persuading herself that she was full of originality. Now she entered the church depressed and humiliated, not even able to remember whether it was built by the Franciscans or the Dominicans.

20 Of course, it must be a wonderful building. But how like a barn! And how very cold! Of course, it contained frescoes by Giotto, in the presence of whose tactile values she was capable of feeling what was proper. But who was to tell her which they were? She walked about disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic over monuments of uncertain authorship or date. There was no one even to tell her which, of all the sepulchral slabs that paved the nave and transepts, was the one that was really beautiful, the one that had been most praised by Mr. Ruskin.

30 Then the pernicious charm of Italy worked on her, and, instead of acquiring information, she began to be happy. She puzzled out the Italian notices—the notices that forbade people to introduce dogs into the church—the notice that prayed people, in the interest of health and out of respect to the sacred edifice in which they found themselves, not to spit. She watched the tourists; their noses were as red as their Baedekers, so cold was Santa Croce. She beheld the horrible fate that overtook three Papists—two he-babies and a she-baby—who began their career by sousing each other with the Holy Water, and then proceeded to the Machiavelli memorial, dripping but hallowed. Advancing towards it very slowly and

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35 from immense distances, they touched the stone with their fingers, with their handkerchiefs, with their heads, and then retreated. What could this mean? They did it again and again. Then Lucy realized that they had mistaken Machiavelli for some saint, hoping to acquire virtue. Punishment followed quickly. The smallest he-baby stumbled over one of the sepulchral slabs so much admired by Mr. Ruskin, and entangled his feet in the features of a recumbent bishop.
40 Protestant as she was, Lucy darted forward. She was too late. He fell heavily upon the prelate's upturned toes.

'Hateful bishop!' exclaimed the voice of old Mr. Emerson, who had darted forward also. 'Hard in life, hard in death. Go out into the sunshine, little boy, and kiss your hand to the sun, for that is where you ought to be. Intolerable bishop!'

45 The child screamed frantically at these words, and at these dreadful people who picked him up, dusted him, rubbed his bruises, and told him not to be superstitious.

'Look at him!' said Mr. Emerson to Lucy. 'Here's a mess: a baby hurt, cold, and frightened! But what else can you expect from a church?'

The child's legs had become as melting wax. Each time that old Mr. Emerson and
50 Lucy set it erect it collapsed with a roar. Fortunately an Italian lady, who ought to have been saying her prayers, came to the rescue. By some mysterious virtue, which mothers alone possess, she stiffened the little boy's back-bone and imparted strength to his knees. He stood. Still gibbering with agitation, he walked away.

'You are a clever woman,' said Mr. Emerson. 'You have done more than all the relics
55 in the world. I am not of your creed, but I do believe in those who make their fellow-creatures happy. There is no scheme of the universe —'

He paused for a phrase.

'Niente,' said the Italian lady, and returned to her prayers.

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Document B

John Ruskin (1765-1884)
Mornings in Florence (1881)

[...] but first, look at the two sepulchral slabs by which you are standing. That farther of the two from the west end is one of the most beautiful pieces of fourteenth century sculpture in this world; and it contains simple elements of excellence, by your understanding of which you may test your power of understanding the more difficult ones you will have to
5 deal with presently.

It represents an old man, in the high deeply-folded cap worn by scholars and gentlemen in Florence from 1300—1500, lying dead, with a book in his breast, over which his hands are folded. At his feet is this inscription: "Temporibus hic suis phylosophye atq.
10 medicine culmen fuit Galileus de Galileis olim Bonajutis qui etiam summo in magistratu miro quodam modo rempublicam dilexit, cujus sancte memorie bene acte vite pie benedictus filius hunc tumulum patri sibi suisq. posteris edidit."

Mr. Murray tells you that the effigies "in low relief" (alas, yes, low enough now—worn mostly into flat stones, with a trace only of the deeper lines left, but originally in very bold relief,) with which the floor of Santa Croce is inlaid, of which this by which you stand is
15 characteristic, are "interesting from the costume," but that, "except in the case of John Ketterick, Bishop of St. David's, few of the other names have any interest beyond the walls of Florence." As, however, you are at present within the walls of Florence, you may perhaps condescend to take some interest in this ancestor or relation of the Galileo whom Florence indeed left to be externally interesting, and would not allow to enter in her walls.

20 [Footnote:

"Seven years a prisoner at the city gate,
Let in but his grave-clothes."
Rogers' "Italy."]

I am not sure if I rightly place or construe the phrase in the above inscription, "cujus
25 sancte memorie bene acte;" but, in main purport, the legend runs thus: "This Galileo of the Galilei was, in his times, the head of philosophy and medicine; who also in the highest magistracy loved the republic marvellously; whose son, blessed in inheritance of his holy memory and well-passed and pious life, appointed this tomb for his father, for himself, and for his posterity."

30 There is no date; but the slab immediately behind it, nearer the western door, is of the same style, but of later and inferior work, and bears date—I forget now of what early year in the fifteenth century.

But Florence was still in her pride; and you may observe, in this epitaph, on what it was based. That her philosophy was studied *together with useful arts*, and as a part of them;
35 that the masters in these became naturally the masters in public affairs; that in such magistracy, they loved the State, and neither cringed to it nor robbed it; that the sons honoured their fathers, and received their fathers' honour as the most blessed inheritance.

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Remember the phrase "vite pie bene dictus filius," to be compared with the "nos nequiores" of the declining days of all states,—chiefly now in Florence, France and England.

40 Thus much for the local interest of name. Next for the universal interest of the art of this tomb.

It is the crowning virtue of all great art that, however little is left of it by the injuries of time, that little will be lovely. As long as you can see anything, you can see—almost all;—so much the hand of the master will suggest of his soul.

45 And here you are well quit, for once, of restoration. No one cares for this sculpture; and if Florence would only thus put all her old sculpture and painting under her feet, and simply use them for gravestones and oilcloth, she would be more merciful to them than she is now. Here, at least, what little is left is true.

50 And, if you look long, you will find it is not so little. That worn face is still a perfect portrait of the old man, though like one struck out at a venture, with a few rough touches of a master's chisel. And that falling drapery of his cap is, in its few lines, faultless, and subtle beyond description.

And now, here is a simple but most useful test of your capacity for understanding Florentine sculpture or painting. If you can see that the lines of that cap are both right, and
55 lovely; that the choice of the folds is exquisite in its ornamental relations of line; and that the softness and ease of them is complete,—though only sketched with a few dark touches,—then you can understand Giotto's drawing, and Botticelli's;—Donatello's carving and Luca's. But if you see nothing in *this* sculpture, you will see nothing in theirs, *of* theirs. Where they choose to imitate flesh, or silk, or to play any vulgar modern trick with marble—(and they often
60 do)—whatever, in a word, is French, or American, or Cockney, in their work, you can see; but what is Florentine, and for ever great—unless you can see also the beauty of this old man in his citizen's cap,—you will see never.

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Document C



A photo taken by Tony Kyriacou, Rex Pictures, London, of a group of people watching Lai Chih-Sheng's Life-Size Drawing, 2012, at an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, **Art About The Unseen** (1957-2012).