

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF MALE-MALE RELATIONSHIPS
IN THE EDWARDIAN AGE: E.M. FORSTER'S *MAURICE*,
H.A. VACHELL'S *THE HILL*, AND PUBLIC SCHOOL
IDEOLOGY**

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A central element in Forster's defence of fully sexual relations between men in his novel *Maurice* (1913-14) is his rejection of public school ideology, in particular as regards the model of male-male relationships it enforces. By reading *Maurice* together with *The Hill* (1907), a popular public-school novel for boys within the context of gay and feminist analyses of discourses about sexuality in the early twentieth century, as well as critical studies of Edwardian education, the essay discusses Forster's criticism of the instability of this construction of male-male relationships, and his parody and subversion of such discourse in his affirmation of an alternative model.

Maurice, E.M. Forster's posthumous novel, was written in 1913-14, revised repeatedly (in 1919, 1932, and 1959-60; see Furbank 1979: 9-10) and finally published in 1971, to a highly mixed critical reception. Most of the early reviews collected in Philip Gardner's *E.M. Forster: The Critical Heritage* (1973), noted its "dated" character,¹ and recent criticism has argued, in more positive terms, that *Maurice* makes most sense if read in its Edwardian context. Thus, Robert K. Martin's 1983 study, for instance, related *Maurice* to the two models of homosexual identity proposed at the turn of the century by J.A. Symonds and Edward Carpenter, which he sees as opposed and represented respectively by the "Clive" and "Alec" sections of the novel (Martin and Piggford 1997: 19).²

¹ Only C.P. Snow and Paddy Kitchen suggest that *Maurice* might still be relevant to the members of a post-Stonewall age (436, 446). In contrast, Walter Allen argues that its interest "must be mainly historical" (443); V.S. Pritchett calls it an "Edwardian period piece" (447); and Cyril Connolly denounces that "the element of dating is fatal" (459).

² As John Fletcher correctly observes, Martin exaggerates the opposition between Symonds's "Platonic" and Carpenter's "democratic" versions of male love, since both admit a physical element and both refer to Walt Whitman's *Calamus* as a viable model (66-67).

One crucial way in which *Maurice* is essentially Edwardian is in its concern with the effects of a public school education, as it affects the conceptualisation of relations between men. From Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1971) onwards, the Victorian and Edwardian period has been seen as essential in the creation of the notion of homosexual identity, though the extent to which it is accurate to ascribe such a clearly defined origin to this notion has been questioned by later critics and historians, as Greenberg argues in *The Construction of Homosexuality* (1988). Yet Foucault's theory remains valid in its emphasis on the fact that sexual and gender identities are built by historically specific discourses within particular tensions and intersections of power. Victorian and Edwardian Britain is a particularly relevant site for the study of these processes in the sense that the new medical and ethical "knowledge" about "homosexuality" is diffused within a strongly homosocial society, thus threatening and bringing into question, perhaps to a greater extent than elsewhere, previously accepted emotional bonds, especially those between young men. In relation to this, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick affirms that

[i]n any male-dominated society, there is a special link between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power ...For historical reasons, this special relationship may take the form of ideological homophobia, ideological homosexuality, or some highly conflicted but intensively structured combination of the two. (1985: 25)

If this is so, the third option is an accurate description of the situation regarding male homosocial/homosexual relationships within some of the most significant centres of ideological production during the Edwardian period: the public schools.³ Perceived both as invaluable contexts for the development of strong homosocial connections between young men (the links that could be transformed into power through the "Old Boy network"), and as dangerous hotbeds of homosexual initiation, they were a particularly conflicting and contradictory illustration of the tensions surrounding Edwardian male-male bonds.⁴

If *Maurice* is taken as an Edwardian defence of the ethical validity of fully sexual relationships between men, a central element in this defence is Forster's rejection of the ambivalent discourse of public school ideology as regards these bonds. In spite of the fact that Foster's criticism of public school ideology appears explicitly in other works —most openly in his "Notes on English Character" (1920) and in *The Longest Journey* (1907)— so far, the relevance of this theme in *Maurice* has not been explored in detail.

³ For working purposes, and though well aware of the ambiguity of such categorization, in this essay I am using "homosocial" to describe links between men in which conscious awareness of desire and the body is minimal, and "homosexual" to describe those in which what Georges-Michel Sarotte (1978) calls "homogenitality" is either present in the form of sexual acts or consciously desired.

⁴ On Victorian and Edwardian public schools, see Girouard (1981), Eby (1987), Mangan (1988) Tidrick (1990) and Bristow (1991).

The centrality of this issue emerges more clearly by reading *Maurice* together with one of the most popular public school novels for adolescents of the Edwardian period: Horace Annesley Vachell's *The Hill: A Romance of Friendship* (1905). To begin with, this text has structural points of coincidence with *Maurice* in that it, too, presents two opposed patterns of relations between young men. In the case of *The Hill*, the narrative is centred on the struggle between John Verney, alias "Jonathan", and Scaife, alias "The Demon", for the friendship of Henry Desmond, alias "Caesar". The "romance of friendship" between Verney and Desmond is held up as the model of the highly idealised relation which the system favoured, and strong similarities to it can be detected in Clive and Maurice's platonic affair at Cambridge. In addition to these structural similarities, the relevance of the connection is stressed by the fact that, as Martin points out, Forster's 1907 journal features a reading list that sounds very much like a gay canon, which, together with "classics" such as Whitman or Shakespeare, includes "the more popular writers of the schoolboy romance" (Fletcher 1992: 66). Judging by the fact that by 1928 *The Hill* had been reprinted thirty-two times,⁵ Vachell can most certainly be considered a popular writer. Besides, Forster had written articles on two authors of similar "schoolboy romances": H.O. Sturgis and Forrest Reid,⁶ who additionally became a personal friend of Forster's and one of the early readers and critics of *Maurice* (Furbank 1979: 1.212; 2.19). Thus, whether or not Forster had read the particular instance of *The Hill*, it seems clear that he was certainly familiar enough with the genre, to have it in mind as a conscious aim for allusion, reversal or parody.

The opening chapter of *Maurice*, with its highly sarcastic rendering of the protagonist's one lesson in (hetero)sexual education at his preparatory school sets the pattern with the boy's angry reaction against his teacher: "Liar, coward, he's told me nothing" (20). This will be the first of many denunciations of the lies and silences which the system attempts to perpetuate. The theme is developed in the third chapter in a devastating one-paragraph summary of the protagonist's years at Sunnington, a "mediocre" public school, a summary in which the writer condenses many of his accusations against the system and presents Maurice as the typical product of these institutions.⁷ In the first place, the affirmation that Maurice was "not good at work, though better than he pretended" (25) reveals the strongly anti-intellectual bias that prevailed in these institutions, whose main objective was, by definition, the formation of character rather than academic excellence. Cecil DeGrotte Eby affirms that, in the early years of the twentieth century,

schools were producing boys who were not only ignorant but proud of it, because they had somehow come to believe that it was both ridiculous and unmanly to be anything but an athlete. (1987: 98)

⁵ According to the copyright page of the 1942 edition used for this paper.

⁶ Forster's articles on these writers appear in *Abinger Harvest* (1936); *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951) includes a further, and slightly more outspoken, article on Reid.

⁷ These accusations coincide with the analyses of the already cited modern students of the public school system, and particularly with the "anti-Victorian" attitude which characterized much of the Bloomsbury circle; see, for instance, Leonard Woolf's account (in Eby 1987: 68).

Typically, too, Maurice is presented as reasonably good at sport. As is well known, sport was a basic pillar of the system as an effective means of developing certain character traits: allegiance to "the team spirit", discipline, obedience, and self-control. In less positive terms, as is suggested by the writings of a number of ex-public school boys⁸ and by the analyses of modern historians and critics, through sport, as well as through other means, the pupils were above all drilled into conformity. Forster gives a vivid example in his account of Maurice's casual acceptance of bullying, one of the unofficial means to this end (25). Writers such as Asa Briggs and Eby point out that this conformity developed a dangerously uncritical attitude among men who were theoretically being trained as future leaders of the country (Briggs 1977: 161; Eby 1987: 107). In the novel, as we will see, Forster's concern is more with the personal effects of such enforced conformity, and with the protagonist's need to abandon the patterns of thought implanted by the system as regards male-male relationships.

In spite of initially constituting a broader and emotionally freer scene for Maurice, Cambridge will prove to be similarly bound to public school ideology, as the final outcome of the Clive-Maurice romance will show: the university, too, is presented as a territory ruled by ambivalent discourses as regards homosociality and homosexuality. Though a wider range of physical demonstrativeness and emotional bonding is seemingly acceptable between male friends, the underlying discourse remains homophobic, as will be seen in the denial of the body that both institutions deem vital within such relations.

In *The Hill*, which belongs to an essentially propagandistic genre stemming from Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1858), and thus naturally presents a far more positive vision of public school ideals, the validated relation, that between Verney and Desmond, is consistently depicted in terms of spirituality and sublimation. In this context, sport—which, apart from the didactic functions outlined above, provides one of the few authorised outlets for physical expression between men—is employed to back one of the moments of maximum closeness between the two youths. After a triumphant football match, Desmond and Verney meet on the way back from the field, and the latter reveals his jealousy of Scaife and his admiration for Desmond. A moment of high intensity follows:

[Desmond] stared for a moment at John [Verney]'s face—not an attractive object. Blood and mud disfigured it. But the grey eyes met the blue unwaveringly. Desmond flushed. (69)

The disavowal of any physical component—which a few lines later will be made explicit by describing the moment as one in which "soul meets soul unfettered by flesh"—is initiated by presenting Verney's face as unattractive and marked by the suitable signs of violent masculinity, thus distancing both the possibility of physical attraction to beauty and the "feminine" element associated with the

⁸ Notably, George Orwell's well-known essay "Such, such were the joys" (1946) and Roald Dahl's *Boy* (1984).

emerging discourses of "intermediate sex" homosexual identity.⁹ Attention is concentrated on the eyes, traditionally the "windows of the soul" and thus the least material part of the body. With all this support, and within the context of a friendship aimed at mutual improvement, the scene receives approval in the most exalted terms, as a meeting "upon the shining highway of heaven" (69).

In contrast to this highly spiritual presentation, the rival for Desmond's attentions, Scaife, is given a disturbingly vivid physical presence: described as "very good-looking, ... being dark, almost swarthy of complexion, with strongly-marked features and rather coarse hands and feet" (9), there are repeated, almost obsessive allusions to his handsomeness throughout the text, particularly to his "bold", "fine", "dark and piercing" eyes. Scaife's kind of beauty, associated with darkness and swarthy features, is loaded with Romantic connotations of evil, un-Englishness and exoticism, and made even more suspect by the tell-tale indication of class suggested in the "coarse hands and feet".

Besides this constant emphasis on his physical appearance, Scaife is explicitly connected with bodily pleasures in a way radically opposed to the ideal of self-control central to public school mentality: "he never denied his splendid young body anything it coveted" (79). As may well be supposed, the conventions of the genre keep Scaife's indulgences within the acceptable terms of fiction for adolescents: drinking, gambling and breaking bounds. This is the extent of the "corruption" of Desmond that John Verney consciously fears from Scaife; however, the nicely proto-Freudian account of Verney's nightmares, in which "Scaife and John fought for [Desmond's] body, while he looked on" (39) suggests a deeper anxiety. Similarly, the uncalled-for disavowal in the Housemaster's address to his pupils after the discovery of the gambling parties in which Scaife and Desmond take part draws attention precisely to the implications that are being denied in it: "Thank God, this is not one of those cases from which every clean, manly boy must recoil in disgust" (157).

This disavowal constitutes a prime example in support of Foucault's theory that from the eighteenth century, Western discourse was notable for inducing, rather than repressing, specific kinds of knowledge about sex, and that schools, as concentrated sites of power relations, were also "saturated" areas for the creation of modern "perversions" (1998: 20, 38). In fact, the overt interest in controlling and policing adolescent sexuality in Victorian and Edwardian public schools had long gone together with an implicit assumption of, and tolerance towards, schoolboy homosexuality, even when equivalent acts between adults were subject to social condemnation, as well as legal persecution under the famous Labouchère amendment of 1885.¹⁰ As is shown by his wry observation that "undergraduates,

⁹ Greenberg (1988) provides a useful summary of medical and psychological theories along this line, stemming from Karl Ulrichs and Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and adapted to their purposes by Magnus Hirschfeld, J.A. Symonds and Edward Carpenter, among others.

¹⁰ Lord Alfred Douglas was not alone among his contemporaries in defending Oscar Wilde in public on those very terms, by arguing that "Oscar Wilde's aberrations were simply and exactly what might be described as 'the usual public school business,' neither more nor less. One cannot really enter into details, but anyone who

unlike schoolboys, are officially normal" (75), Forster is well aware of this paradox. J. A. Symonds, in the context of his own emphasis on the innate character of homosexual orientation, also observes the inherent contradiction between his contemporaries' fear of homosexuality as a "contagious" condition, and their willingness to expose young boys systematically to a situation in which "mutual indulgences" were frequent (2000: n.p). Paradoxically, these institutions appeared to be one of the few remaining contexts where homosexuality could still be defined in terms of specific acts, rather than of identity. All this poses an additional complication as regards the Edwardian idealisation of highly charged "romances of friendship": they could either be read in terms of what Lillian Faderman called "the last breath of innocence" (1991: 279), or in terms of a dangerous behaviour whose ethical and social status was highly unstable. As Sedgwick notes, a large component of the effectiveness of homophobia depends on ensuring that "no man must be able to ascertain that his bonds are not (that he is not) homosexual" (1985: 88-89). Thus, to a large extent "what counts as sexuality", in Sedgwick's terms (1985: 2), or perhaps what counts as love, in the case of *Maurice*, is always subject to redefinition, both by external discourses and by private adaptations or rejections of these discourses.

As I have suggested, the relationship between Clive and Maurice is presented in very similar terms to Desmond and Verney's "Romance of Friendship", yet with the significant difference of taking place under the explicit designation of love and with the protagonists' awareness of its transgressive character, that is, within a pattern of rejection of the terms acceptable within public school discourse. Clive's open declaration initially provokes an almost automatic rejection in Maurice (56), a rejection which, as Steiner points out, "precisely mimics the style of muscular Christianity" (1973: 476). In full accordance with orthodoxy, Maurice's reaction sets homosexual love in opposition to true Englishness —his main argument for its rejection seems to be "'Durham, you're an Englishman. I'm another'"— and condemns it to silence: "it's the worst crime in the calendar, and you must never mention it again" (56). Yet soon, spurred by this encounter, Maurice will make himself able to put the unspeakable into words, and reject the "lies" of his boyhood (58).

Once this breakthrough has taken place, the relationship develops, like Verney and Desmond's, on "idealistic and peculiarly English" lines (219). Both novels coincide particularly in the description of Maurice and Verney's respective visits to Clive and Desmond's homes. *The Hill*, not for the first time, falls into semi-biblical language when the narrator declares that on his visit "it seemed to John [Verney] that his cup brimmed, that everything he desired had been granted unto him" (123). "Something of exquisite beauty arose in the mind of each at last, something unforgettable and eternal" (*Maurice* 86). Of course, here the significant difference is

has been at a public school will know what I mean" (Douglas 1940: 121). The journalist W.T. Stead, soon after Wilde's trials, wrote that "if all persons guilty of Oscar Wilde's offences were to be clapped in gaol, there would be a most surprising exodus from Eton and Harrow, Rugby and Winchester, to Pentonville and Holloway" (in Meyers 1977: 9).

that the scene in *Maurice* leaves space for a conscious awareness of the body, however muted, introduced by Clive's transgressive kiss in their shared study and continued in the mutual admission of attraction to each other's "beauty" in their intimate conversation on the first night (82-86). Yet Clive himself introduces restraints on two separate occasions even then, toning down Maurice's verbal enthusiasm and refusing to kiss him again. Clive's "censorship" of the body links up, by a different route, with the public school idea of self-control and restraint, a control which is often achieved not by sublimation only, but by condemning certain feelings to the realm of the "unspeakable", as the final outcome of the novel will show: the very last sentence depicts Clive as "devising some method of concealing the truth from Anne" (215). While Foucault is right in arguing that the relationship between power and sexuality is more complex than simple repression, it is nonetheless true that in many specific cases power is exerted, as in this instance, through the bonds between the illicit, the nonexistent and the unmentionable (1971: 102).

Returning to *The Hill*, a rather different pattern of expression/repression seems to be in operation in another of the central moments of intimacy between Verney and Desmond: the scene in which John Verney sings before the school, establishing through his voice a close spiritual connection with his friend:

To Desmond, that trill was the answer to the quavering, troubled cadences of the first verse; the vindication of the spirit soaring upwards unfettered by the flesh.... At that moment Desmond loved the singer —the singer who called to him out of heaven, who summoned his friend to join him, to see what he saw —the "vision splendid". (96)

The whole scene is narrated in similarly exalted, "excessive" language; rather than silencing the emotion generated by the mutual feelings of the two boys, the narrator devotes more than two full pages (95-97) to its creation. Joseph Bristow is quite right in relating the episode to an orgasmic experience, with its rising tension and ecstatic climax, and in commenting on its tell-tale insistence on the rejection of eroticism and the flesh (1991: 87). Yet the device through which the scene is kept efficiently under control is not so much this rejection, which is always in danger of bringing to notice what it strives to exclude, but the introduction of an element which successfully aligns the relationship with orthodoxy and authority. Before turning his gaze on Desmond, Verney has been singing with his eyes fixed on the face of an elderly "great soldier", a guest on Speech Day, and the military man's admiration of Verney's song acts as the greatest validation of its hidden meaning. Furthermore, the private emotion aroused by the song is finally dissolved within the public emotion created by the singing of the school anthem (97). Thus, the spirit of the boys' friendship and the ideals of the system are made to coincide.

If it is possible to tolerate, integrate and praise such a high level of emotional intensity; if, within other modes of Edwardian discourse —though not within didactic public school fiction such as *The Hill*— there is even a relative degree of tolerance for genital relations between young men; if certain systems, as Sedgwick

argues, are capable of integrating male homosexuality and homosociality into a smooth continuum, the crucial issue would seem to be, in general terms, why certain forms of adult homosexuality, such as Maurice's relationship with Alec, receive such social disapproval.

Broad answers have been offered by feminist and gay thinkers like Andrea Dworkin and Leo Bersani, who relate such condemnation to the fear of feminization which attaches in particular to specific sexual acts between men, and who note that societies on the continuum model, such as Ancient Greece, are much more likely to accept man-boy sex than sex between two male adults, as the subordination established by age and power replaces the "natural" subordination of gender (Dworkin 1977; Bersani 1987).¹¹ Related to this issue is the fear that permanent, egalitarian adult relationships will be defiant of authority insofar as they refuse to participate in the economic and reproductive structures of patriarchy. It is this fear that will provide the most convincing explanation for the condemnation of such bonds as Alec and Maurice's.

Returning more specifically to the novels that concern us, *Maurice* shows that the implicit consensus as to the limits of male-male relationships within the Edwardian public school pattern—for all of its official denial of the body—is not so far removed from that of Ancient Greece. As has frequently been observed, apart from the heavily Classical syllabus, structural aspects of these schools—such as the emphasis on athletics, the competition between houses, or the subservience of younger to older boys—were closely modelled on Greek institutions aimed at the initiation of adolescent males (Murray 1981: 164). When Clive, after the notorious Greek Translation class in which the professor commands a student to "Omit: a reference to the unspeakable vice of the Greeks", observes to Maurice that "to omit it is to omit the mainstay of Athenian society" (50), he is most certainly being subversive in bringing the hidden terms of the continuum to light. The reappearance of the charged term "unspeakable" underlines the value of Clive's influence in leading Maurice away from the omissions and lies of public school discourse, in the same way as he has earlier prompted Maurice to diverge from a religious belief that is not personal but transmitted by "your parents and guardians": in other words, to put individual thought before conformity, thus reversing the tenets of his early education (49).

Yet there will be limits to Clive's subversiveness, limits closely related to the acceptance of a Classical model for his version of male love. Once Cambridge is left behind, both Clive and Maurice abandon the last environment in which there is space for the ambivalence of what we could term "liminal homosexuality". As full adults, and in Clive's case as a potential representative of power as a future MP, the same terms cease to apply. It is within this context that Clive's abrupt conversion to heterosexuality becomes intelligible. In spite of the narrator's language of "fate" and

¹¹ For a study of the construction of "homosexuality" in Ancient Greece, see Cantarella (1991); also Miles (1991), Dworkin (1994), and Badinter (1994) for broader feminist analyses of the role of ritual homosexuality within male rites of initiation and transmission of power.

"nature" —and here it may be relevant to point out, as Lytton Strachey did, that the difficulty of separating the narrator's views from the characters' is one of the flaws of the novel (Furbank 1979: 2.16)— there are strong hints that the change is rather a matter of "compromise" (108, 110), of social adaptation, similar, as Fletcher notes, to Maurice's father's transition "without a crisis from illicit to licit love" (1992: 133). It is surprising, in fact, that several critics read Clive's conversion as a structural weakness, when Clive is simply following the evolution expected of him, an evolution implicit in the classical concept of *paidasteria*.

Such bonds, in Edwardian Britain, are allowed a place only in the mythic past, and in this too there is a strong element of coincidence between both works. In *The Hill* the narrator, addressing Verney directly, anticipates the friendship's future destiny as the most vivid and unforgettable of his memories: "Fifty years hence, maybe, you will see Caesar's curly head and his blue eyes full of fun and life, and you will hear his joyous laughter" (125).

John Fletcher's article perceptively draws attention to a similar paragraph at the end of *Maurice*, where after his friend's final departure Clive is left with an acute sense of loss and a memory that will pursue him "to the end of his life": "Out of some eternal Cambridge his friend began beckoning to him, clothed in the sun, and shaking out the scents and sounds of the May term" (215).

If the only conceivable future is heterosexuality, the one alternative mode of integration of such bonds is setting them definitively in the realm of the spirit by death. This is what happens at the end of *The Hill*, when Desmond joins the army and dies heroically in South Africa, leading a charge up a hill "as if he were running for a goal" (235). The Headmaster's sermon on friendship further seals Verney and Desmond's link into orthodoxy by linking death in war, youth, and purity in precisely the obscene way that would soon be refuted by the poets of the Great War.¹² It is not by chance that Clive, approaching his conversion, falls into similar language and considers death "a clean and clear" experience, only to be rebated by Maurice's deliberate "'Then I'd rather be dirty'" (101).

By ending in death, and fixing love between men in the realm of youth, *The Hill* falls into a pattern detected by numerous students of "gay fiction", from at least Hans Mayer (1977) to Gregory Wood's chapter on "The tragic sense of life" in his recent *A History of Gay Literature* (1999). The difficulties of imagining a viable future, due to the scarcity of anti-homophobic constructions of adult male homosexual identity, are more complex than the demand for "positive role models" in literature. As is well known, Forster was aware of this difficulty, yet determined in *Maurice* "to grant to one's creations a happiness actual life does not supply" (in Furbank 1975: 8). The "happy ending" has been criticised fairly consistently in terms of psychological verisimilitude ever since Lytton Strachey wittily observed that Alec and Maurice's relation, based on "curiosity and lust", would only last six

¹² Most concisely, perhaps, in Ezra Pound's line "Died some, pro patria, non dulce et non decor" ("Hugh Selwyn Mauberley").

months (Furbank 1979: 2.16). Beyond these considerations, my final aim here is to point out how reversal and parody of public school discourse is used to validate Maurice's relationship with Alec, a relationship which is presented as adult, fully sexual, permanent and subversive.

In general terms, Alec's working class origins —he is a butcher's son— set him outside the system of transmission of power and ideology represented by the public school/University system, while his confidence in his own dignity emphasises his refusal to be subjected and objectified by it (198). By presenting him as an outsider, it is also implied that his attitude to sex will be guided by different codes. Victorian and Edwardian working-class sexuality has received less critical attention than bourgeois behaviour and ideology, as Sedgwick pointed out (1985: 175), yet recent studies such as Rictor Norton's (2000) seem to confirm Foucault's theory that as a whole the discourses of sexuality generated within the middle and upper classes did not pervade working class mentality and behaviour to the same extent (1998: 153-55). In this sense, Alec seems to be as comfortable with his "natural" desire for women as with his instant physical attraction to Maurice (189, 200). His sexuality is constructed as neither sublimated, problematic, nor exclusive, thus countering both the medicalized versions of inescapable identity and the public school pattern of adolescent tolerance / adult prohibition.

Two episodes are particularly significant in terms of the specific employment of public school discourse. There are strong elements of parody and inversion of the public school narrative in Forster's rendering of the cricket match between the Park and the Village in which both Alec and Maurice take part after their first night together. The language of effort, Englishness and male bonding typical of the almost compulsory sport scenes in public school novels is ironically used to accommodate the two men's "illicit" affair:

Maurice played up too. His mind had cleared, and he felt that they were against the whole world, that not only Mr Borenius and the field but the audience in the shed and all England were closing round the wickets. They played for the sake of each other and of their fragile relation —if one fell, the other would follow. (176)

The passage plays on the slippage which, according to Sedgwick, can so easily take place between highly sanctioned homosocial situations —notably sport— and highly reprobated homosexual ones, "with only a slight change of optic" (89); in this case, however, the ambiguity is employed not to police the limits of the former, as in Sedgwick's already quoted argumentation, but to vindicate the latter. Thus, in Forster's "queering" of the topic, sport becomes a means for the expression of desire and the body, not for control and sublimation. Similarly, the "white flannels" so characteristic of sport as part of the exclusiveness of public school ritual make Alec look "like a gentleman or anyone else" (177), thus emphasising the breakdown of the very class distinctions the system was concerned with preserving.

The same language is again evoked and parodied in Maurice's heroic tone just before his final reunion with Alec: "England belonged to them" (209). This reunion marks for the two lovers the beginning of a new way of life which is radically different from the public school model of male love, not only in its admission of sexuality, but in its vision of itself as adult and permanent; in the words of Edward Carpenter's 1896 work, as "Love's Coming of Age". In fact, their partnership is compared to heterosexual marriage: explicitly, in Maurice's justification before Clive, in which he argues that his relationship with Alec is comparable to Clive's with his wife (214), and implicitly in the scene in which Maurice, during his interview with Alec in the British Museum, meets his old teacher Mr Ducie, the author of the unenlightening lecture on sex with which the novel opens. The meeting proves to be an ironic fulfilment of Mr Ducie's promise to meet Maurice and his wife "this day ten years hence" (20, 195), as well as the ultimate proof of Alec's final appraisal of Maurice's education: "You was taught what wasn't the case" (172).

The most serious accusation that can be made against the work as a whole is that by making Maurice's rejection of his society's views on love between men take the form of becoming "an outcast" Forster shows his inability to tackle the possibility of social acceptance for the form of homosexual love he defends, an inability which seriously limits the extent of his criticism (Mitchell 1973: 440). Yet the novel does offer a serious and consistent denunciation of the ambivalence of Edwardian ideology as regards the model of male-male relationships transmitted within the public school system. As I have argued, this model values intense emotional links between young men as long as physical desire is silenced, sublimated or repressed, as the relationship between Verney and Desmond in *The Hill* shows, or alternatively, it implicitly tolerates specific sexual practices among adolescents as a "passing phase". On those terms, these relations ultimately offer no threat to the continuance of the institutions of patriarchal power, and in fact they can be transformed into the acceptable homosocial bonds that serve as a means for the transmission of this power. In this sense Desmond's death in war—the sacrifice of a man for his fellow men in the context of one of the most highly valued patriarchal institutions—is presented as a suitable culmination.

In spite of the fact that Maurice and Clive's bond includes certain transgressive elements in relation to this pattern, notably its awareness of itself as "love", and its awareness of the contradictions and hypocrisies which sustain the system's conceptualisation of homosociality and homosexuality, ultimately it will also be reabsorbed into the very same power structures through Clive's "conversion", which returns it to the realm of memory, transience and youth. In contrast, the bond between Alec and Maurice, with its open acknowledgement of bodily desire, its transgression of class boundaries, and its conception of itself as adult and permanent is presented as the culmination of Maurice's abandonment of the public school mentality, and thus as the key to his affirmation of life, physicality, expression, and rebellion, opposed in a typically Forsterian manner to death, abstraction, repression, and submission. Forster's purpose in writing *Maurice* as a potentially liberating story dedicated "To a Happier Year" links up very clearly, as I hope to have shown, with

the hope he expressed in an imaginary breaking-up address to a public school (in Furbank 1979: 1.48): the hope that, outside the narrow limits of the public school mentality, "there's a better time coming".

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