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**Distant Desire: The Theme of Friendship
in E. M. Forster's Fiction**

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**To My Beloved Parents
and Dearest Sisters**

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Abstract

This thesis places Forster's fiction in the homosexual tradition of English literature and presents, for the first time, a full exposition of the homoerotic motifs in each of Forster's novels. Homoerotic desire has been only partially recognized in Forster's texts, but as the following chapters show the desire for male love is pervasive and affects the structure and techniques of Forster's writing.

Homoerotic desire in Forster's fiction attaches to the ideal of friendship and the theme of friendship is invariably connected with the metaphor of journey. Forster uses the metaphor of journey to transport his narratives beyond the confines of English middle-class values to a region where relations between men are acceptable.

A homosexual reading of Forster's texts has several implications for his work. Firstly, it emerges that Forster's novels are covert texts which convey the ideal of male love evasively, by strategies of deferment and delay. Secondly, the author's interest in another country, Italy or India, is not for the sake of those countries but allied to homoerotic desire. Lastly, for all the apparent dissimilarities between them, all of Forster's novels variously approach homoerotic desire; the themes of journey and friendship are common to all the novels.

The chapters of this thesis demonstrate the way homoerotic desire operates in Forster's narratives. This involves a close reading of the text and an alertness to the novelist's manipulation of language. The thesis reinterprets passages from Forster's novels that previously have either been overlooked or dismissed as obscure.

Forster's treatment of homoerotic love in all his novels, except Maurice, is problematic. The narrator's attempts to conceal the real tendency of his narratives creates a tension between the explicit statements and the undercurrents in his texts. The conflict is never resolved, but it gives the novels the odd, peculiar quality that is characteristic of Forster's writing. Forster occupies a unique, if dubious position, in English literature as a homosexual writer whose work has been entirely assimilated into the mainstream, heterosexual tradition.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in the thesis for the titles of Forster's novels:

AP A Passage to India

HE Howards End

LJ The Longest Journey

RV A Room with a View

WA Where Angels Fear to Tread

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Paradoxes of Desire

E. M. Forster is a homosexual writer. He discovered his homosexuality fairly early in life, and Furbank says it is almost certain that by 1900, while still at Cambridge, Forster 'knew perfectly well that he was homosexual by temperament'.¹ Some of Forster's close friends were privy to this information, but it was kept a well-guarded secret during the writer's lifetime. Forster's homosexuality became public knowledge with the publication of Maurice in 1971, a year after the author's death, followed by Furbank's biography of Forster in 1977. In these works, together with short stories and the Commonplace Book, the extent of Forster's homosexual output has really become clear.

Forster and the Critical Canon

Criticism on Forster falls into two categories - the first spate of books and articles that were written in ignorance of the author's homosexuality, and are based on heterosexual assumptions; and the second surge of interest that post dates the revelations of Forster's homosexuality.

Even early critics recognized the function of desire in Forster's texts. Frank Kermode, for instance, observes that in Forster's texts, 'love is the only mediator of meaning, because it confers and apprehends unity'.² But lacking the advantage of Forster's later works, Kermode is unable to explain the connection between love and unity. However, the initial responses to Forster's homoeroticism were uneasy. Noel Annan's review of Maurice is an attempt to defend Forster's position in literature by minimizing the fact of the author's homosexuality.³ Even where commentators do give credence to homoerotic desire, they tended to relegate it to certain portions of Forster's texts, such as Gino's torture of Philip in Where Angels Fear to Tread, Chapter Four and Chapter Twelve of A Room with a View, the relationship of Rickie, Ansell and Stephen in The Longest Journey, or the friendship of Fielding and Aziz in A Passage to India. Jeffrey Meyers' study is an example of this tendency to isolate homoerotic feeling.⁴ As late as 1978 Judith Scherer Herz analyses Forster's work in an anonymous framework of love. She says:

love is clearly the key word for Forster. More than any other, it binds together his writing, makes it a body, filled with a vital substance, both passionate and spiritual. Love is a theory, love is practice, and sometimes in the fiction, it is difficult to distinguish between them. Love creates, love, indeed, is the beloved republic, but even as abstraction, as idea, it speaks of the experience of touch, the contradictions of desire, the need to connect.⁵

Herz's analysis resembles Kermode's in that she desists from identifying the eroticism in Forster texts as specifically homosexual and therefore cannot adequately explain the contradiction and connections that are so prominent a feature of Forster's work. Moreover, Herz's comments are merely generalized statements that are not illustrated through Forster's texts.

It is curious that despite the highlighting of homoerotic themes in Forster's fiction, the early criticism of Forster still stands. That the author's homosexuality has not resulted to a reevaluation of his work, is testimony to the fact that the homoerotic aspect of Forster's narratives has not yet been thoroughly and convincingly established. Duke Maskell summarizes Forster's position in English literature:

He enjoys, securely, a reputation of the most insecure kind - that of a major figure - definitely that - who falls short - but clearly short - of true greatness. A reputation which might be expected to stimulate objections from all quarters stimulates them from virtually none. No one, apparently, wants to see him promoted into the ranks of the acknowledged masters and hardly anyone wants to see him pushed out of the canon altogether.⁶

Maskell's dissatisfaction is understandable because Forster's novels sit uneasily in the heterosexual tradition, and have mostly been judged for what they are not.

This thesis aims to correct some of the critical opinions on Forster - the habit of reading A Passage to

India primarily as a historical novel on the one hand, and Maurice as a homosexual one, on the other. Forster's homosexuality is not just a biographical or anecdotal matter, but crucial to his work. Forster's novels are all a product of the same oeuvre, and homoerotic themes are not occasional, but salient and integral to his fiction. The chapters trace the development of the theme of male love through each of Forster's novels and argue that everything in his narratives - the language, structure and technique - stems from that one predominant theme. Hence Forster's social and political attitudes, as well as his contribution as a novelist, must be measured against and related to the theme of homoerotic love. Homoerotic desire in Forster's narratives is subtle and concealed, and is elucidated by focussing on language, and recognizing its techniques of deconstruction, displacement and absences.

Therefore the following chapters offer a basic interpretation of Forster's novels, and categorically assert that any appreciation of Forster must take account of the homosexual nature of his texts. Forster's work is neither that of an inadequate, moralistic heterosexual writer, nor of a crippled homosexual one. His homosexuality is the source of his creativity, and each novel is a result of the negotiations between the author's personal desire and the public conventions. The gaps and fissures talked about in Forster's work often arise not so much from the author's difficulties with his subject as the readers' inability to deal with the texts.

In order to grasp the theme of homoerotic desire in Forster's texts, one needs to enter fully into the author's world where words and phrases are not used in their ordinary sense but have a specific meaning. The following chapters display isolated passages, which would otherwise have a different meaning, accumulate a peculiar charge in the context of Forster's narratives. Forster's novels, therefore, merit a large scale re-reading. Each of Forster's novels renders the theme of homoerotic love from a different angle so that the narratives exhibit continuity with differences. In each novel, Forster struggles with a different strategy for managing the homoerotic themes, and so each novel yields its unique problems.

Homoerotic desire was pressing upon Forster from the first time he tried to write. The earliest attempt at a novel, Nottingham Lace, had to be abandoned because he did not know how to proceed with his theme of male friendship. The artistic and emotional doubts arose again with the conception of the 'Lucy Novels'. In Where Angels Fear to Tread Forster found a vehicle for the homoerotic content of his narrative in the metaphor of journey; therefore, while at a superficial level the novel is a domestic comedy, within it is a structure of homoerotic desire fused with the metaphor of journey. The novel maintains the lighthearted tone of comedy except for the grim scene of the death of Gino's baby and Gino's sadistic torture of Philip. The desire for a brother, which is a minor theme in Where Angels Fear to Tread, becomes the central concern in The Longest Journey. In the second novel, the brother is a

vehicle of homoerotic desire, and the narrator most eloquently asserts the validity of relations between men against the competing claims of marriage. A Room with a View originated from the same materials as Where Angels Fear to Tread, and hence it retains the form of domestic comedy. In contrast to the hostility to marriage expressed in The Longest Journey, A Room with a View work towards the marriage of George and Lucy. But the narrator's attitude to marriage is grudging and homoerotic desire seeps into the texts in the descriptions of male passion. Howards End is Forster's most serious endeavour to write a heterosexual novel. Whereas in The Longest Journey, homoerotic desire is conveyed in the theme of brotherhood, in Howards End the main protagonists are two sisters. As in A Room with a View, Forster again concentrates on marriage and social issues. But the writer cannot quite get rid of the homoerotic element, and although the device of women protagonists cuts off the ideal of male love, the withheld desire obstructs the overt narrative at every stage. With Howards End Forster reached an impasse for by this time his own feelings had become too insistent to be ignored. There were two routes out of this impasse, both out of this halfway compromise - one, to express homoerotic desire directly, and the second to project it entirely. Forster attempts both those ways, the former in Maurice and the latter in A Passage to India.

The Role of Desire

Forster wrote in his 'Personal Memorandum' in 1935, 'I want to love a strong young man of the lower classes and be loved by him and even hurt by him. That is my ticket, and then I have wanted to write respectable novels'.⁷ This remark could be deliberate or unconscious, but Forster himself joined the writing of novels to his sexual proclivities. Indeed, he did not find a lasting sexual relationship until 1930, when he met Bob Buckingham; meanwhile he had to be content with simply writing novels.⁸ Consequently, his novels became the ground for the battle between respectable and homosexual.

Forster further postulates the link between art and sexuality also in an essay. He says in 'The Raison D' Etre of Criticism', that 'our comprehension of the fine arts' resembles a mystical union; in art 'as in mysticism, we enter an unreal state, and we can only enter it through love'.⁹ In a diary entry for 25 October 1910, Forster wrote down his resolve 'to work out:- The sexual bias in literary criticism, and perhaps literature. Look for such a bias in its ideal and carnal form. Not in experience which refines. What sort of person the critic would prefer ^{to} sleep with in fact.¹⁰ As these assertions indicate, Forster considered sexuality to be an essential component of creative and intellectual activity. He believed that an artist's or critic's sexual propensity had a bearing on their work, and this leaning could be discovered regardless of the refinements and polish. The issue of sexual bias is central to Forster's writing for all his novels, except Maurice are

apparently written, and have been read and promoted, primarily as heterosexual texts. Yet, as the chapters on each of the novels elaborate, Forster's narratives are steeped in homoerotic desire. Beneath the general language of love and personal relations, the theme of homoerotic love is hidden, implicit and muted.

Forster's narratives are embedded in the author's discourse on personal relations, and in order to understand the significance of these terms, love and personal relations must be defined in the context of the peculiarly Forsterian values. The essay 'What I Believe' is an elucidation of Forster's creed, where he categorically states, 'I believe in personal relationships'.¹¹ The stress on personal is important for Forster extols personal relations over any political or social doctrine. During the nineteenth century several eminent writers such as John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater and Edward Carpenter expounded theories that sought to integrate socio-political reform with personal life. Against that trend, Forster seeks to extricate personal relations from the public sphere, always asserting the supremacy of the personal, because he did not think that any socio-political order could ensure individual fulfilment in all its diversity.

In another essay 'Tolerance' Forster addresses this inclination to confound the personal with the political. The essay was written in 1941, during the Second World War, when Western civilization was dominated by the ambition to create a new world order in which men and nations would love one another. In this context Forster again tries to

disengage love from the political arena. He objects to the popular assumption that love is the 'spiritual quality', 'needed to rebuild civilization'. Forster is wary of propagating love as an ideology because, 'love is a great force in private life; it is indeed the greatest of all things; but love in public affairs does not work. . . . The fact is, we can only love what we know personally'.¹² The insistence on the 'personal' is important for it encompasses sexual, particularly homosexual love, which could not be incorporated easily within the social and political structures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He, therefore, wants to sever love from every social and political dogma and conceives of it as something anomalous, unconfoming, and a matter of personal choice - attributes that characterize homosexual love - rather than bound by any rules of equality and homogeneity.

Swinburne was one such poet-philosopher, inspired by an ideal of democracy based on love. Forster quotes the lines from 'Hertha', 'Even love the beloved Republic, That feeds upon freedom and lives', only to dissociate his own idea of love from the conventional notion of democratic love. Forster's praise for political democracy is qualified. He argues that, 'Democracy is not a beloved Republic really and never will be. . . . So two cheers for Democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough: there is no occasion to give three. Only Love the Beloved Republic deserves that'.¹³ The change of emphasis is obvious: with 'Love' and 'Beloved' altered to capital letters, love is

not just instrumental to, but itself the Beloved Republic. Hertha, the old Teutonic earth goddess, is the counterpart of Demeter. In Swinburne's poem, Hertha is the 'Triumphant Mother', the Life Force, 'working in each organism secretly and bringing each, through internal processes, from a lower plane to a higher plane. . . . Freedom is necessary to every organism to bring it to perfection'.¹⁴ While the symbol of freedom in Swinburne's poem is a female figure, Forster echoes Swinburne's phrase to hark back to an ancient idea of the Republic, espoused by Plato and founded on relations between men. In his speech in Symposium, Pausanias says that in Athens homosexuality was treated as a political matter, and he equates the prevalence of homosexuality with democracy. Homoerotic writers cherished Plato's concept of democracy based on male love; hence Edward Carpenter called his homoerotic poem Towards Democracy. Plato's ideal is indeed the Beloved Republic in the true sense, not the modern version of political democracy, for which alone Forster reserves his three cheers.

In his novels Forster frequently describes love and personal relations in conjunction with the ideas of crime and disease, which provided the framework in which homosexuality was understood in the nineteenth century.¹⁵ In The Longest Journey Agnes recoils from the thought that Stephen might be Rickie's brother, 'She could not feel that Stephen had full human rights. He was illicit, abnormal, worse than a man diseased' (LJ, p. 139). Rickie's mother and Robert run away to Stockholm from where Robert writes

to Mr Failing, 'The letter censured the law of England, "which obliges us to behave like this"' (LJ, p. 237). Mrs Elliot has to return to England when Robert is drowned and she is grateful for Mr Failing, 'the only person who had treated her neither as a criminal nor as a pioneer' (LJ, p. 241). Margaret, in Howards End, on hearing the news that Helen is in love, wants to rush to her sister's side, 'She must be assured that it is not a criminal offence to love at first sight' (HE, p. 8).¹⁶ At the end of the novel Helen wonders if it is 'some awful, appalling criminal defect' not to want to marry (HE, p. 335). Even within the heterosexual context, Forster presents personal relations that deviate from social norms in order to expose the rigidity and inhumanity of religious and legal codes.

Against narrow-minded and intolerant sexual attitudes, Forster argues for a spontaneous and passionate life. Forster's critique of English middle-class morality involves a plea for uninhibited relations between men. In the novels where the homoerotic theme is covert, the notions of crime and disease are loosely connected with characters who transgress against accepted values. It is only in Maurice that the author reveals what these stigmas actually denote. Maurice, driven to think of his homosexuality as pathological, consults a doctor in hope of being cured of it. The abnormality attributed to Rickie in The Longest Journey is eventually connected with Maurice's homosexuality. Forster, very cleverly switches the terminology from one context to another in that while he describes his heterosexual heroes, Rickie and Stephen, as

diseased and illegitimate respectively, he says of homosexual protagonist that, 'except on one point his temperament was normal' (Maurice, p. 124).¹⁷ Thus Forster brings the language and experience of homoerotic love to bear on his texts even when apparently concerned with heterosexual relations.

Beneath the discourse on personal relations Forster probes the more urgent issue of male friendship and brotherhood. Even at a glance, A Room with a View is dedicated 'to H. O. M.', The Longest Journey pays the writer's tribute, 'Fratribus' - to my brothers, A Passage to India commemorates 'Syed Ross Masood' and 'the seventeen years of our friendship', The Eternal Moment and Other Stories is Forster's gift 'to T. E. [Lawrence] in the absence of anything else'. These various acknowledgements mark the stages of Forster's own development in his intimacies with men.

Forster met H. O. Meredith in his second year at Cambridge in 1899. Meredith was the first man Forster fell in love with, and although their relationship did not go beyond kisses and embraces, to Forster 'it was immense and epoch-making'. Meredith became the model for Clive in Maurice.¹⁸ The dedication appended to The Longest Journey refers to 'Apostles', the members of 'The Cambridge Conversazione Society'. Homosexuality was freely discussed in the Society and Forster was elected to the 'Apostles' in 1901. The opening scene of The Longest Journey recreates a meeting of the 'Apostles'.¹⁹ Syed Ross Masood was the grandson of a distinguished reformer Sir Syed Ahmed Khan

who was the founder of the Muslim Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh. Syed Ross Masood entered Forster's life in 1906 when Forster was appointed to coach him in Latin. Masood was a large handsome man with a passion for friendship. His relationship with Masood was Foster's second major involvement after Meredith, although it was never fulfilled sexually. For Forster, Masood 'woke him up out of his suburban and academic life and showed him new horizons and a new civilization'.²⁰ Forster's visit to India in 1912-13 was inspired by his friendship with Masood.

Forster and T. E. Lawrence first met in 1921 at the home of the Emir Feisal in Berkeley Square, but their friendship did not develop until three years later when Forster wrote a long letter to Lawrence after reading Seven Pillars of Wisdom.²¹ In 1927 Forster sent a copy of unpublished Maurice to Lawrence, but he was afraid to read it in case he did not like it. Nevertheless, at Lawrence's request Forster sent him his homosexual short story, 'Dr Woolacott' and it won high praise from Lawrence.²² Looking forward to the publication of Forster's short stories, Lawrence wrote to him, 'if you dedicate anything to me I'll wear the first page of it as an identity disc'.²³ In response to Lawrence's letter, Forster wrote saying that he had decided to dedicate The Eternal Moment, '"To T. E., in the absence of anything else." The dedication can be given a wrong meaning, which you will enjoy doing, and I shall like to think of you doing it.'²⁴ As Forster's letter suggests, he had mastered the art of double meaning, and

even a dedication is not innocent but a coded substitute for a relationship that the two men were unable to have.

Forster's absolute commitment to friendship is contained, of course, in his famous declaration, 'if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country'.²⁵ The sentence is an affirmation of love for men above other allegiances. Homoerotic desire in Forster is expressed in the ideals of friendship and brotherhood, and as is shown in the next chapter, the words 'friend' and 'brother' often acted as euphemisms for a lover.

Friendship and Journey

The link between desire and journey is explicated by Edward W. Said in his definition of the concepts of 'filiation' and 'affiliation'. According to Said, the notions of home and place are integral to Western sensibility. The language of being 'at home' or 'in place' implies the relationship of filiation. Filiation entails kinship, and instils an 'aggressive sense of nation, home, culture, community and belonging'. Affiliation, on the other hand, arises 'from a failed idea or possibility of filiation to a kind of compensatory order' which is 'transpersonal', and sometimes subversive, 'such as guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class, and the hegemony of a dominant culture'.²⁶

Journey offers one mode of rejecting filiations and creating affiliations. For many Victorians and Edwardians travel to the Mediterranean was associated 'with blessed escape from a painful state of mind and an oppressive society'.²⁷ The journey to Italy and Greece gave many British writers a sense of release from social and religious taboos, and they found 'in the rich art and emotional life of the South an invitation to relationships based on sympathy and sincerity rather than on rules of conduct'.²⁸

While several writers found the trip to Italy or Greece liberating, the conflict between filiation and affiliation is most compellingly rendered in the homosexual predicament during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between 1885 and 1967 all homosexual acts, whether committed in private or public, were illegal under section 11 of the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, known as the Labouchere Amendment. The Vagrancy Act of 1898 made homosexual soliciting a legal offence.²⁹ Over this period homosexuality was associated with crime, disease and sin. The social and religious condemnation of male love prohibited its expression in Britain. Against this context of intolerance, homosexuals were forced to look outside English society for places and ideas more conducive to male friendship. Thus, within the general impulse to travel, there grew a tradition of journeys of homosexual writers which is traced in detail in chapter 2, and Forster's novels relate specifically to this tradition.

Forster's fiction is threaded through with motifs of journey and hints of journey can be gathered from the mere titles of his work. Where Angels Fear to Tread, The Longest Journey, A Passage to India, 'The Road from Colonus', 'Other Kingdom', 'The Other Side of the Hedge', 'The Celestial Omnibus', 'The Other Boat', are all phrases that suggest various instances of traverse and transit. In Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View the narrative focus turns alternately from England to Italy while A Passage to India dramatizes the confrontation and collision between two cultures. Although The Longest Journey, Howards End and Maurice are located in England, the three novels are nevertheless rich in the imagery of motion; they depict tensions between distinct worlds and the difficulty of bridging the gulfs. In the short stories, the notion of journey frequently acts to shift the plot not only spatially but also temporally, which lends an element of 'fantasy' to Forster's narratives.

The aspect of journey in Forster's fiction has been noted before, but mainly in its biographical significance - in terms of facts and details of the author's itineraries abroad. Thus Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View are together called Forster's 'Italian novels' because the idea for the novels was engendered during the author's tours of Italy; both novels are read in the context of Forster's expeditions to Italy, and the protagonists' adventures are interpreted insofar as they coincide with Forster's own trips to that country. Likewise, criticisms of A Passage to India have mostly hinged on debates on the

extent to which the episodes in the novel are an authentic account of Forster's stay in India.³⁰

The journey in Forster's narratives is not simply a rendering of the author's biographical travels, but is critical to the theme of homoerotic desire and male friendship. One critic who has touched upon the relevance of journey to homoerotic love in Forster's fiction is John Sayre Martin. However, Martin's reading of journey and homoerotic love in Forster is superficial. He describes Forster's journeys as romantic allegories, where the characters are 'in search of spiritual fulfilment'.³¹ However, Forster's novels are neither allegories nor spiritual as Martin suggests; rather, the event of journey is entwined with the ideal of homoerotic love.

The incidence of journey in Forster's fiction is connected with desire so that the rhetoric that emerges with the unfolding of journey is affective. Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View plead for a spontaneous and passionate life. In Where Angels Fear to Tread Lilia, Philip and Caroline go to Italy, each with different motives, but all three fall in love with Gino in turns. In A Room with a View, Italy provides a setting for George Emerson's affair with Lucy, but also liberates him for a bathing encounter with Freddy and Mr Beebe. In The Longest Journey, the protagonist's longing for a companion is fulfilled by the union with his brother. The epigraph of Howards End exhorts the readers to 'only connect' and the connection that the narrator urges is between 'the prose and the passion' (HE, p. 183). The novel portrays the

closeness between Margaret and Mrs Wilcox and then Margaret and Helen. A Passage to India ponders 'whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman' (AP, p. 5).³² Forster takes the situation of colonial India to explore the possibility of friendship between Fielding and Aziz. Finally, Maurice traces the development of Forster's homosexual hero from loneliness to a relationship with Alec.

The erotic bent of Forster's journeys is further conveyed by the allusions in his work. Where Angels Fear to Tread refers to Dante's philosophy of love in La Vita Nuova. While Dante's quest for new life was inspired by his adoration for Beatrice, Philip Herriton is redeemed by his love for Gino. The Longest Journey invokes Shelley's ideal of love in Epipsychidion. The passage from Shelley's poem quoted in Forster's novel (LJ, pp. 126-27) expresses the Romantic notion of love as set apart from social norms and relationships. In keeping with the Shelleyean ideal of love, Rickie in The Longest Journey rejects marriage in favour of the friendship and brotherhood of Ansell and Stephen. A Passage to India echoes Whitman's poem by the same title and his exposition of male love. Whitman celebrated male 'adhesiveness' and comradeship. The friendship of Fielding and Aziz has an intensity which cannot endure in the contemporary social and political climate.

The journey converges with homoerotic desire when the characters' travels result in the realization of male friendship. Thus the expeditions to Italy in Where Angels

Fear to Tread culminate, among other things, in the intimacy of Philip and Gino; the novel moves to a climax in the opera scene where Gino hails Philip as his 'friend', 'a long-lost brother' and all other issues subside in the text. The Italian travels in A Room with a View awaken both George Emerson and Lucy Honeychurch to the passions of men. Rickie Elliot's trajectory in The Longest Journey from Cambridge to Sawston and then Salisbury brings him to a union with his brother whom he had previously disowned. The characters' movements in Howards End yield the vision of friendship between Tom, a farm boy and Helen's illegitimate son. The colonial situation of the British in India in A Passage to India gives an added intensity to the issue of friendship between Fielding and Aziz. In Maurice the relationship of Alec and Maurice is based in England; the narrator accordingly dispenses with the metaphor of journey as the two male protagonists choose to live together in the English greenwood.

The fantastic journeys in Forster's short stories also contribute to the theme of friendship and brotherhood. The man in 'The Other Side of the Hedge' abandons the journey that everybody else is undertaking. He crosses over a hedge to step into a rural idyll which is 'nowhere' and is met by his long-lost brother. 'The Life to Come' is set 'somewhere in the forest'. Mr Pinmay is diverted from his Christian mission to civilize the savages and has an affair with the native leader Barnabas. The action of 'The Other Boat' takes place on a boat in the Red Sea, sailing from England

to India. The voyage is an account of the sexual encounter between Lionel March and the native Cocoanut.

Forster uses journey as a mechanism for introducing distances and perceives relations between men as a distant desire. Distance, paradoxically, becomes a method of attaining desire for it offers a means of circumventing personal sanctions and censorship in order to achieve forbidden love. Furbank observes that Forster 'achieved physical sex very late and found it easier with people outside his own social class, and it remained a kind of private magic for him'. Furbank continues, 'he never expected an equal sexual relationship. His chief feeling towards anyone who let him make love to them was gratitude. Intense gratitude led him to romanticise them, at least with one part of his mind, and by romanticising them he managed to keep them at a distance'.³²

A journey in Forster is an emblem of flight and signals the author's expectation of finding personal relations away from the English middle-class constraints. Forster takes a narrative that would be hampered in a certain context and transfers it elsewhere, whether it be to a foreign country or an Arcadia or a realm of fantasy. Consequently, journeys in Forster entail a break away from a particular social order and invariably point to the society left behind. The geographical shift becomes metamorphosed into a metaphysical passage, with the rites of initiation and regeneration contingent upon outward movement. As the following chapters illustrate, the act of crossing thresholds and changing vistas involves the

covenant of love, the ceremonies of friendship and brotherhood.

Distant Desire

In 'Notes on the English Character' Forster says that the major drawback of Englishmen is 'An undeveloped heart - not a cold one'.³⁴ Forster saw the English middle-class men as self-conscious and inhibited, and so the opportunity 'to love a strong young man' and 'be loved by him' exists outside the middle-class boundaries, with men from 'the lower classes'. Insofar as the ideal of homoerotic love lies beyond the structures of respectable society, distance in Forster, is inseparable from desire.

Desire, joined as it is with the dynamics of journey, engenders several paradoxes in Forster's texts. In his essay on Conrad, Forster mentions the 'constant discrepancies between his nearer and his further vision'. The obscurity in Conrad is due to his failure to reconcile his own world with those other lands that he travelled to, 'If he lived only in his experiences, never lifting his eyes to what is beyond them: or if, having seen what lies beyond, he would subordinate his experiences to it - then in either case he would be easier to read.'³⁵ A similar kind of contradiction exists in Forster's narratives too where the narrator accommodates the ideal of male love, not available in his immediate surroundings (his nearer vision), by recourse to journey into some remote space or

time (his further vision). However, Forster not only approximates desire by imposing distances, but also pre-emptly the fulfilment of homoerotic love.

The desire and the capacity for friendship are projected on, and ascribed to, the Other, which the characters must leave behind. In A Passage to India all distances are temporarily lifted and homoerotic desire is for once articulated directly. As Fielding asks for friendship with Aziz, the whole universe, animate and inanimate, religious and secular, rises in protest, and the sheer landscape throws up innumerable barriers between them. The distances are emotional as much as physical:

But the horses didn't want it - they swerved apart, the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which the riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there" (AP, p. 312).

The author uses the colonial situation as well as the geographical distance between them to part Fielding and Aziz. The separation of Aziz and Fielding, because of the political situation and the geographical distance between Britain and India, offers a convenient ending for male friendship, which the author cannot otherwise bring to a more successful resolution. Forster is too entrenched in his society to envisage lasting relations between men. Therefore, homoerotic love is an ever receding goal, the

desire for the unattainable which the author delineates by introducing, surmounting and again introducing, various distances.

The focus on homoerotic desire in Forster's narratives has several implications for his work. Except for Maurice, Forster's novels are evasive texts which refer to homoerotic desire obliquely - by means of indirection and delay. Distance is a mode of displacement. Where Angels Fear to Tread begins with the scene of Lilia's departure to Italy and in A Room with a View starts with a group of English characters in Italy; A Passage to India not only opens abroad, but the entire narrative is delivered in a foreign country. The spatial displacement incurs complex thematic displacements. Forster's protagonists are displaced characters, and the author relentlessly devises situation after situation showing the protagonists' distress in an alien environment. The characters' ordeals expose their emotional inadequacies and the trials abroad lead to an appreciation of passionate life and friendship between men. The praise of male friendship in one culture implicates a society that fails to concede intimacy between men. The Longest Journey traces Rickie's journey from 'Cambridge' to 'Sawston' and 'Wiltshire'. The three places correspond to the values of friendship, marriage and brotherhood respectively and each section displaces the previous one. Displacement in Howards End is abstract, although the narrative moves from London to the English countryside. Since the novel focuses on the contemporary English middle-class ethos, the author avoids mentioning

male friendship and concentrates instead on marriage and heterosexual relations. Relations between men are absent in Howards End; it is the women characters who embody the Forsterian values of personal relations. Nonetheless, the narrator's critique of society is vindicated by the vision of friendship between Tom and Helen's son at the end of the novel, located at a distance - in the future.

One consequence of displacement of desire in Forster's fiction is that the author's interest in the foreign country is romantic rather than socio-historical. Homoerotic desire was inconceivable in English middle-class society, so Forster projects it on to the Other, the remote, the unknown. Forster's transcultural novels are impelled by homoerotic desire, and in this sense, they are no different from those based in England. In a paper read before an Italian audience in November 1959, Forster confessed of Where Angels Fear to Tread that he knew 'very little of the class structure' or the 'economic problems' of Italy when he wrote the novel.³⁶ Similarly, A Passage to India is weak in its sense of political ferment. The central problems in the novel - Adela's accusation of sexual assault and the friendship of Fielding and Aziz - are sexual and emotional. As Adela withdraws her charge against Aziz, the question of what happened in the caves becomes inconsequential and the friendship of Fielding and Aziz supersedes the issue of rape. The main characters in the novel - Aziz, Godbole, Fielding, Mrs Moore and Adela - are remarkably free of political hostilities. It is unsurprising that Forster could not finish his novel in

India, because his depiction of India could hardly have corresponded with the realities of the country. He recalls of his second trip to India in 1921 that, 'between the India I had tried to create and the India I was experiencing there was an impassable gulf. I had to get back to England and see my material in perspective before I could proceed'.³⁷ England provided Forster a vantage point and the India Forster writes about is an imaginative construct. Forster's last novel, like the rest of his fiction, is an allegory of distance and desire, and dramatizes the oppositions between home and journey, marriage and friendship, domestic life and homoerotic love.

Whereas in the short stories Forster creates fantasy worlds, in the novels he gives his narratives a contemporary setting and immediacy, but the countries to which the characters are transported are fictional places that in many ways resemble the fantastic settings of the short stories. While the foreign culture is broadly identified as Italy or India, within the historical-geographical country 'Monteriano' and 'Chandrapore' are fictitious places. The foreign country in Forster's fiction is conceived as the Other, designed to offset the English character and identity. Italy and India represent the strange and exotic, the 'romantic' against the 'suburban'. The comparison of England to Italy and India is ultimately sexual, and the foreign country is described in sensual imagery of flowers and warmth. The lure of the other culture lies precisely in that it allows relationships between people of different classes and countries such as

Lucy and George or Caroline and Gino - relations which were taboo in a number of ways in England. Among the numerous relationships possible, the other country also concedes male intimacy. Thus the benefit of the cultural encounters is for the English characters alone. At the end of the Italian adventures in Where Angels Fear to Tread, Philip 'had reached love by the spiritual path', while Gino 'never traversed any path at all' (WA, pp. 141-42). Similarly, in A Passage to India, it is the English characters who are changed as a result of their experiences in India.

Marriage and Women in Forster's Fiction

The ideal of male friendship is posited most forcefully against the convention of marriage. Whereas there was a turn against marriage in modern fiction, marriage is deeply entrenched in Forster's fiction. In fact, this concern with marriage novels has led Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View to be read as domestic comedies, in the tradition of Jane Austen. However, Forster raises the issues of marriage and domestic life only to undermine them. While many novelists - Thackeray, George Eliot, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Hardy, Henry James, Gissing and Bennett - depict the breakdown of the convention of marriage, they still envisage passion and sexual relations in heterosexual terms. Forster's denunciations of marriage cuts along a different axis;

marriage does not survive in his novels and he demolishes it from a homosexual slant.

Acknowledging his debt to Austen, Forster said, 'I learned the possibilities of domestic humour. I was more ambitious than she was, of course; I tried to hitch it on to other things'.³⁸ John Sayre Martin compares A Room with a View, 'Forster's most Jane-Austenlike novel', with its precursor:

Where as Emma is morally and psychologically ready to marry Mr Knightley only when she has reconciled her aims with the society's and accepted its implicit guiding code, Lucy can marry George only by turning her back on Summer Street and, in effect, rejecting its standards. For Lucy, as for her creator, the satisfactions of the inner life are incompatible with a completely integrated relationship with the outer.³⁹

John Colmer distinguishes Forster's treatment of marriage from 'the structural and thematic function' of marriage 'in Jane Austen's domestic comedies, in the Victorian Condition of England novel and in the modern prophetic, symbolist novel as practised by D. H. Lawrence'.⁴⁰ But neither Martin nor Colmer identify homoerotic desire to be at the root of Forster's criticism of marriage.

Unlike Jane Austen's narratives, which evolve from a provincial sense of life and static community, Forster's fiction is, as we have seen, marked by an impulse to undertake a journey. While Forster novels provide a commentary on the manners and morality in suburban England, his narratives, even when they do not span two countries,

still include immense landscapes. Moreover, Jane Austen belongs to the society she satirizes, but Forster's position vis-a-vis his world is at the margins, for he both knew his society from inside and yet was distanced from it by temperament. Forster's 'Jane Austen-like' side, as a satirist of contemporary manners and morals, is offset by a vision of a passionate life glorified by Walt Whitman and D. H. Lawrence. Forster therefore puts himself on the frontier, whether it be between two cultures, or between reality and fantasy, and brings the stance of the Other and the fantastic to bear upon contemporary life and displaces it. Forster's narratives propagate an alternative lifestyle in the ideal of friendship. His protagonists, except for George Emerson, reject marriage, and with it the privileges of society. The friendship of men breaks away from domesticity - both from the dominance of a mother and the tyranny of a wife, for the freedom of outdoor life. The characters' journeys bring them to a new home that provides a sanctuary for friends. Thus Ansell lives with Stephen while Stephen's wife is relegated to the background; Helen comes to live with Margaret while Mr Wilcox is reduced to a sick old man.

John Beer comments on the social satire in Forster's narratives,

the stories have one aim in common: the presentation of some serious truth, within a body of fantasy, against the background of contemporary life. Again and again, one particular method is used for this. Domestic comedy provides the running plot but encloses some fantastic

incident which is intended, by allegorical significance, to give meaning to the whole story.⁴¹

Again, Beer does not disclose the nature of truth that Forster's stories contain, which of course pertains to the ideal of male friendship and brotherhood. Since homoerotic love has no scope in ordinary life, the author resorts to fantasy when depicting male intimacy. The opera scene in Where Angels Fear to Tread and the bathing in the lake in A Room with a View are such extraordinary moments disconnected from ordinary life.

Forster tries to assimilate homoerotic themes into domestic comedy, resulting in the explosion of both the form and content of the traditional novel. Oliver Stallybrass says of Forster's fiction, 'When we recall that the novels which meant most to Forster were The Longest Journey and Maurice, the sternness with which deep emotional experience has been transmuted into high, austere art is indeed striking'. He continues that Forster's stories 'have all, in varying degrees, transcended their origin'. There are two types of narratives in Forster, those where Forster seems to be cocking a more or less cheerful snook at the heterosexual world in general and certain selected targets - women, the Church, pedantic schoolmasters, town councillors - in particular; and those in which some of his profoundest concerns - love, death, truth, social and racial differences - find powerful and sombre expression.⁴²

While these two strains might exist apart in the short stories, they merge in Forster's novels and are gathered

into the theme of homoerotic desire. Forster sharpens and refines the ideal of male love against the issues of marriage and heterosexual relations.

Forster invests his fiction with heterosexual codes only to distort and parody them. Marriage in Forster, is an obsession of the English middle-class, and as such his novels make mockery of the idea of marriage. Caroline Abbott in Where Angels Fear to Tread tries to placate Philip who is furious at Lilia's engagement to Gino, and their conversation is comic. She tells Philip, 'marriages are made in heaven' to which he responds, 'Yes, Miss Abbott, I know. But I am anxious to hear heaven's choice. You arouse my curiosity. Is my sister-in-law to marry an angel?' (WA, p. 19). Similarly, in The Longest Journey Mr Elliot's announcement of marriage is held up to ridicule, 'I have taken a plunge, " he told his family. The family, hostile at first, had not a word to say when the woman was introduced to them; and his sister declared that the plunge had been taken from the opposite bank' (LJ, p. 22). The news of Lucy and Cecil's engagement in A Room with a View is received with embarrassment, 'Freddie was at his wittiest, referring to Cecil as the "Fiasco" - family-honoured pun on fiance' (RV, p. 95). Marriage is not a positive nor a repository of values in Forster's fiction. Forster's novels contain a series of engagements and marriages that are a delusion, such as Lilia's marriage to Gino, Lucy's engagement to Cecil, the marriage of Rickie's mother to Mr Elliot, Rickie's marriage to Agnes, Helen's affair with Paul, and Adela's engagement to Ronny.

Margaret's marriage to Mr Wilcox is a compromise and conditioned by her more serious need for a home.

Forster's discourse on love and personal relations includes an anti-marriage discourse, and with each novel, marriage and heterosexual love are progressively de-centred until Adela's engagement in A Passage to India, which is no more than a 'hallucination', 'that makes some women think they've had an offer of marriage when none was made' (AP, p. 228). Perhaps the most bitter repudiation of marriage comes from Mrs Moore who equates it to lust. She believes, 'that in particular too much fuss has been made over marriage; centuries of carnal embracement, yet man is no nearer to understanding man' (AP, p. 127). By 'man' Forster probably implies individual men as much as mankind.

A Room with a View is Forster's only novel that works towards the marriage of the protagonists and the manuscript drafts of the novel show Forster struggling with the conclusion that his story demanded of him. The Italian half of the novel was almost the first piece of fiction that Forster wrote but he was unable to finish it and Where Angels Fear to Tread and The Longest Journey were published before A Room with a View could be completed. Forster's anxiety had to do with his reluctance to endorse marriage. In a paper delivered to the Working Men's College Old Students' Club on 1 December 1906, Forster questioned the viability of marriage as a suitable ending for a novel. Taking a man and woman, 'their wedding is but the raising of the curtain for the play. The drama of their problems, their developments, their mutual interaction, is all to

come. And how can a novelist of today, knowing this, end his novel with marriage?'.⁴³ Forster communicated the pressure he was under to Robert Trevelyan in a letter of 11 June 1907, 'I have been looking at the "Lucy" novel. I don't know. It's bright & merry & I like the story. Yet I wouldn't and couldn't finish it in the same style. I'm rather depressed. The question is akin to morality'.⁴⁴ Forster had misgivings about the prospect of George's marriage to Lucy and in the manuscript George is killed in an accident, and thus spared from marriage. The plot was changed for the published version, as Forster wrote to Bob Trevelyan on 12 September 1907, 'Oh mercy to myself I cried if Lucy and George don't get wed'.⁴⁵

Although he tried to be flippant about it, Forster felt that in submitting to the convention of marriage he had detracted from the worth of the novel. In reply to Malcolm Darling's praise of the novel, he wrote in a letter dated 12 December 1908, 'I am so glad that you see I'm not a cynical beast. Not that you've suggested I was, but information to the contrary is extraordinarily difficult for me to convey. I can't write down "I care about love, beauty, liberty, affection, and truth" - though I should like to'.⁴⁶ The conclusion of A Room with a View continued to vex him, and fifty years later Forster recanted from the happiness granted to George and Lucy by writing an appendix to the novel, 'A View without a Room'.

Marriage is not a solution in Forster's novels because the author covets the union of men. Forster's ideal of personal relations attaches not to marriage but to

friendship and brotherhood, and male friendship is not complementary to, but contests the custom of marriage. The match-making, prudence, and considerations of class and money involved in contemporary middle-class matrimony are contrary to the nature of love. Gino marries Lilia for money, Agnes and Gerald have to wait till they can afford to be married, and Paul Wilcox cannot marry Helen because it would be impractical. Of all the social and religious institutions in Forster, marriage is perhaps the most oppressive and inimical to individual fulfilment. Hence the writer chafes against the social and literary conventions of marriage, and the desire for friendship is expressed against the sterility of marriage. In his novels, Forster upholds not Caroline's relationship with Philip or Gino, but the brotherhood of Philip and Gino; not Rickie's marriage to Agnes, but Rickie's attachment to Ansell and Stephen, not Aziz's relation with Mrs Moore or Adela; not Adela's relation with Ronny or Aziz, but the intimacy of Fielding and Aziz. As Hinz puts it, Forster's novels celebrate 'hierogamy', the mystical elemental communion of friends and brothers against the narrow idea of social wedlock.⁴⁷ Heterosexual relations conflict with and test the fidelity and affection between men, and the vision of male friendship ultimately supplants the notion of marriage. Lilia's marriage to Gino is substituted by Philip's friendship with Gino; Rickie's marriage to Agnes gives way to the friendship and brotherhood of Ansell, Rickie and Stephen; Adela's allegation of rape against Aziz strengthens the friendship between Fielding and Aziz.

Despite the hostility to marriage and women, Forster does not wholly invalidate heterosexual relations. Man-woman relationships endure in Forster's fiction because of their ability to procreate. Cynthia Ozick says that Forster alone perhaps of all homosexuals was willing to take the biblical injunction, 'Be fruitful and multiply', seriously.⁴⁸ Contrary to Ozick's assertion, the longing for children in Forster is not religious, but expresses the homosexual's loneliness and the wish to populate the world with men. Forster resolves the problem of continuity by proposing an 'illegitimate' order. The daughter of Rickie's illegitimate brother bears the name of their mother; Helen's illegitimate son is the heir to *Howards End*. Brotherhood in *The Longest Journey* begets progeny in that the birth of Stephen's daughter is due to Rickie, who dies in order to save Stephen's life. Similarly, in *Howards End* sisterhood breeds an offspring in that Margaret protects Helen and provides a refuge where her son is born. Forster reconciles homoerotic desire with reproduction imaginatively. As Judith Scherer Herz observes the 'images of fertility' in *The Longest Journey* 'are purely mythic' and 'the primary relationships in the novel remain intact'.⁴⁹ Forster's incomplete fantasy, 'Little Imber' presents a pseudo-scientific solution to the desire for fatherhood. The story forecasts the release of male sexuality which proliferates 'Romuloids and Remoids in masses':

| It was impossible to walk in the countryside without finding a foundling, or two together without finding a

third. The women were stimulated and began to conceive normally as of old, their sons got raped by the wild boys and buggered their daughters who bore sons, the pleasing confusion increased and the population graph shot up until it hit the jackpot. Males had won.⁵⁰

The boon of fertility is granted to a community facing extinction when two men accidentally make love, and thereafter uncurbed homosexual activity thrives alongside heterosexual relations. However, the concern with posterity does not devalue relations between men, because 'love' and 'personal relations' are still exemplified by friendship and brotherhood and marriage becomes something functional. Stephen thinks of marriage in impersonal way, as something impelled by forces beyond individual control. In Howards End Helen after she has had a child says that she will never marry, while Margaret who is married asserts she does not want children.

The emphasis on personal relations has led to the impression of Forster as a moralistic writer, but Forster's texts do not support conventional morality. Homoerotic desire counteracts Christian morality in that male friendship is not governed by the principles of constancy, loyalty or permanence. Forster derides any sense of guilt or sin in sexual desire, and exalts freedom in love. Heterosexual relations are marred by prudery and sense of shame, such as Paul's relation to Helen and Mr Wilcox's relation to Margaret. Forster is equally derisive of promiscuity in man-woman relations, as is obvious from the distasteful boasts of Mr Elliot and his friends in The

Longest Journey. There is ambiguity in Forster's stance over sexual relations. Because homosexual relations were illicit, they tended to be fleeting, but Forster accords love and sincerity to male sexual encounters so that they are not seen as promiscuous or sexual exploits to gain social advantage. In order to negate the value of marriage, Forster is also tolerant of adultery. Mr Elliot, Gino, George (in the appendix to the novel, 'A View without a Room'), Mr Wilcox and Aziz all commit adultery. In contrast, male passion is revealed as spontaneous and innocent. 'The Torque' is a short story of the love affair of a Christian and a Goth. The sexual union of the two men is extremely liberating, and completely wipes out Christianity from the village. Consequently, life has no constraints. Marcian, who came from the Christian family, became gay and happy as well as energetic, and no longer yearned nostalgically for the hills. Home sweet home was enough. His parents adored him, and he procured them a comfortable and amusing old age. His little sisters adored him, and in due time he took their virginitities. He never saw Euric again but could always send him messages - any young Goth would accept one.⁵¹

The word 'messages' obviously has an innuendo, and the association of distance and desire, the tensions between home and the hills, again occur in this paragraph.

Forster's portrayal of women characters is also symptomatic. Except for Lucy Honeychurch, Mrs Wilcox and the Schlegel sisters, and Mrs Moore, Forster's depiction of women is characterized by animosity, sometimes bordering on

sheer hatred. This dislike of women has a biographical aspect in that Forster grew up surrounded by women. He had a possessive mother, and his grandmother, Louisa Wichleo together with Forster's three maternal aunts pampered him as a child. His great-aunt, Marianne Thornton and her niece Henrietta Synott, Forster's father's sister, Laura Forster and even his mother's friend, Maimie Aylward, were some of the other female relatives he had. However, the hatred communicated by Forster's novels is ideological, directed not towards any women in particular but all womankind. Women in Forster are perceived from the homosexual standpoint, and arouse intense jealousy in their bid for male love.

Women such as Lilia, Miss Abbott, Agnes and Adela are adversaries of men and, as wife or fiancée, threaten relations between men. Hence, Forster emphasises that they are plain, unattractive and even frigid. Margaret and Helen are exceptions because they are vehicles of the author's homoerotic desire. Forster is slightly more tolerant of older women, who are sexually neutral. After reading Where Angels Fear to Tread, H.O. Meredith wrote to Forster that he had still to learn about treatment of characters that he disliked.⁵² Meredith's advice was well taken for Forster worked on the drafts of A Room with a View to temper his aversion for the Miss Alans, and even make them endearing. Forster added the incident of the violets associated with the Miss Alans to the final version of the novel which is not there in the manuscript drafts for the Lucy novels (RV, p. 114). He says of one of the Miss Alans that she was

always 'being charitable against her better judgement. A delicate pathos perfumed her disconnected remarks, giving them unexpected beauty, just as in the decaying autumn woods there sometimes rise odours reminiscent of spring' (RV, p. 35). Thus Forster modified the inquisitive and gossiping old ladies into rather charming characters.⁵³ Similarly, he gave to Charlotte Bartlett a surprising depth of passion. Forster nevertheless sees women as more rooted in social conventions than men. Philip makes fun of both Harriet's religion and Miss Abbott sense of social propriety. Cecil laughs at Lucy, Mrs Herriton and Charlotte Bartlett as they prepare to go to church on a Sunday morning.

Forster's male protagonists, on the other hand, broadly fall into two categories - those who belong to English middle-class society and those who epitomize the ideal of homoerotic desire. Philip Herriton, Cecil Vyse, and Tibby, along with the Wilcox men, Ronny and Fielding, are inhibited, self-conscious, men with whom the author partially sympathizes, and who are 'seduced' into friendship and homoerotic love. Gino, Gerald Dawes, Stephen Wonham and George Emerson embody the classical ideal of athletic beauty, the values of robustness and spontaneity after which the narrator hankers, while Leonard Bast and the Wilcoxes are men who have strayed from that ideal. Characters as diverse as Gino, Stephen, George, Aziz and Alec symbolize different types of ideals of masculinity found in the homoerotic tradition. However, they have one trait in common in that they are not English gentlemen.

Unhampered by the English middle-class constraints, these unrefined men are capable of love. It is this context that Rickie's remark to Agnes in The Longest Journey, that Ansell is not a 'gentleman', is relevant, and intended to be a compliment. Rickie apologizes to Agnes for Ansell's behaviour:

"Ansell - " Then he burst forth. "Ansell isn't a gentleman. His father's a draper. His uncles are farmers. He's here because he's so clever - just on account of his brains. Now, sit down. He isn't a gentleman at all." And he turned off to order some dinner

"What a snob the boy is getting" thought Agnes, a good deal mollified. It never struck her that those could be the words of affection - that Rickie would never have spoken them about a person whom he disliked. Nor did it strike her that Ansell's humble birth scarcely explained the quality of his rudeness. She was willing to find life full of trivialities (LJ, pp. 7-8).

Ansell's rudeness is not due to his lack of breeding, but arises from his adamant assertion of the autonomy of men from women. Scornful of social custom, Ansell exercises a philosopher's prerogative to deny Agnes' existence. In contrast to Ansell, Leonard Bast's aspiration for English middle-class culture signifies the degradation of the natural man in modern life. Mr Elliot, Mr Eager, Herbert Pembroke and Mr Ducie and Dr Barry are Forster's villains, the 'respectable' men who discredit friendship and passion.

Forster attacks the outmoded conduct of male chivalry towards women and favours women's emancipation, but his

arguments for equality between the sexes derive from a homoerotic perspective rather than a feminist one. Gino, George, Stephen, Maurice and Aziz are all unchivalrous in their attitudes to women. As it is explained in detail in the next chapter, the criticism of medieval gallantry in Forster relates to the concept of new chivalry between men and boys advocated by J. A. Symonds and Charles Kains-Jackson. In contrast to this archaic and ritualistic idea of new chivalry, Whitman propagated a more robust and working-class ideal of comradeship which was developed further in England by Edward Carpenter.⁵⁴ Indeed, most relationships in Forster are odd and unconventional because of the latent desire for homoerotic love. Lilia's affair with Gino, Gino's kinship with Philip, Philip's empathy with Caroline; the romance of Lucy and George, and Mr Beebe's compassion for George; Margaret's closeness with Mrs Wilcox, Helen's liaison with Leonard Bast, Margaret's marriage to Mr Wilcox; and the spiritual ties between Aziz and Mrs Moore, and Aziz's jealous fondness for Fielding - in all these cases, heterosexual relations lack intensity, while relations between men are endowed with passion.

Moreover, relations between men are not set within social structures but in deliberate defiance of social and political norms. Whereas marriage signifies social convention, friendship and brotherhood transcend the barriers of class and race. It is friendship rather than marriage that involves risk and adventure. As Donald Salter puts it, in Forster's fiction, 'the desire to be safe always excludes friendship and honesty'.⁵⁵ Philip's

relation to Gino and Rickie's relation to Stephen offend against social mores, while Fielding's friendship with Aziz is politically unacceptable. Although the term 'friend' occasionally applies to heterosexual relations, the word is curiously resonant when associated with men. The significance of a friend is hauntingly rendered in Maurice.

Alongside the antipathy to heterosexual relations, Forster manipulates marriage and women characters to disguise and convey homoerotic love. Forster's texts generate distance and displacement not only between places, but also between characters. Passion is seldom portrayed directly, and is usually distanced - vicarious and voyeuristic - in Forster's novels. Sexual relations are presented in triangles and scenes of passion have a third party onlooker. Philip is moved by watching Caroline nursing Gino; George and Lucy are stirred, each in his/her own manner, on witnessing the murder of the Italian man; Rickie gains sexual awareness when he stumbles upon Agnes locked in Gerald's arms; Mrs Wilcox's ghost watches over Mr Wilcox's courtship of Margaret; the friendship of Fielding and Aziz is assisted by Mrs Moore and Adela.

Triangular relations have residues of homoerotic love. Rictor Norton traces the corruption of homoerotic themes in the heterosexual tradition. One of the homoerotic motifs that has survived into heterosexual literature is the convention of ménage à trois in the Renaissance love lyrics where, 'Cupid is not so much a metaphysical blessing of a heterosexual union as a sensuously naked boy who actively participates in the plot'.⁵⁶ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has

examined triangular relationships from Shakespeare's Sonnets to twentieth-century literature in order to argue that women characters in love triangles serve in the traffic of men.⁵⁷ While Sedgwick's conclusions are feminist and Norton's apply to the homosexual tradition, both critics agree that triangular relations are originally homoerotic. Triangular relations in Forster are probably a conscious artistic technique for he was familiar with the convention and speaks of the love triangle in Dante, who professed love for somebody else in order to shield his love for Beatrice.⁵⁸ Similarly, triangular relations in Forster are a means of keeping passion blurred so that the narrative works simultaneously on both heterosexual and homosexual planes, and homoerotic desire erupts to the surface of his texts when the female character is removed from the relationships.

The Techniques of Desire

Homoerotic desire not only occurs in the themes of Forster's fiction, but determines his style and technique as well. Writers and critics have repeatedly remarked at the unexpected quality of Forster's fiction. Alan Wilde speaks of the elusiveness of desire in Forster's texts, 'Forster's love is in fact desire; desire, sexuality; and imagination, a form at least of love'.⁵⁹ As it emerges in The Longest Journey, imagination and poetry, like love and personal relations, are facets of the homoerotic theme in

Forster. Forster was dubbed the 'Taupe' in the Bloomsbury Group, by Lytton Strachey and Leonard Woolf:

partly because of his faint physical resemblance to a mole, but principally because he seemed intellectually and emotionally to travel unseen underground and every now and again pop up unexpectedly with some subtle observation or delicate quip which somehow or other he had found in the depths of the earth or of his soul.⁶⁰

Philip Gardner notes that an adjective most frequently applied to Forster's work and personality is 'elusive'. Virginia Woolf found Forster to be 'baffling and evasive'. I. A. Richards remarks that Forster 'is the most puzzling figure in contemporary letters'. He continues that Forster seems to take for granted that the reader shares 'his unusual outlook on life' which produces 'lamentable misunderstandings'.⁶¹ P. J. M. Scott says that Forster's work, 'is the unlikeliest art in the tradition of British fiction'. Scott's incredulity fairly sums up the critical responses to Forster: 'What almost disconcerts one, beyond mere gasping, is the way an artist with this tone of voice could spring like Pallas Athene so fully formed, clad, armed from the head of Jove'.⁶² Donald Salter gives a more accurate assessment of Forster's style when he comments that 'one feels in so many of Forster's novels a kind of transference at work, as though one were reading a different sort of story, but translated into socially acceptable terms'.⁶³ Judith Scherer Herz clarifies this method in terms of the author's desire: 'how much this sexual energy has been a component of Forster's fiction

from the start, and how much the strategies invented to contain it - not necessarily to disguise it - are an important part of his accomplishment as a novelist'.⁶⁴ Herz statement is apt except that in Forster strategies of containment of desire include strategies of disguise. Herz's notion of 'the double-plot' well illustrates the techniques by which homoerotic desire is embedded in Forster's fiction:

Forster was able to control and manipulate the tensions generated by the collision of the surface plot and the underplot. There is always another story beneath the surface of the story he is telling. Forster's ability to control the two in a complex range of attitudes and tones from ironic to lyric to comic to tragic was his greatest novelistic strength and should prevent us from accepting the now fashionable version of a Forster who, somehow more than others, was a victim of his difficult unconscious.⁶⁵

Herz is among the first critics to provide a constructive interpretation of homoerotic desire in Forster, but in her emphasis on Forster's conscious artistry, she discounts the problematics of homoerotic desire.

Forster's novels are highly-written and self-conscious narratives. The number of corrections and manuscript drafts of his work reveal that Forster finished his texts to sophisticate, refine and conceal the theme of homoerotic desire. For example, in revising Where Angels Fear to Tread, Forster excluded his apostrophe to the Italian lower class men from the finished text:

Let us have the truth, though it is the saddest truth in all world. O friends, dear friends of mine whom I have made in Italy! Cabmen, waiters, sacristans, shop assistants, soldiers, friars, porters at wayside stations, lighthouse keepers, boatmen at Syracuse, muleteers in the Sabines, stokers on Adriatic steamers! We have been friends for years I think when we first met, for life & we understood each other's gestures & talked or were silent as we chose. You told me everything, & I told you more than I shall tell my true & tried acquaintance here. Then we parted with warm handgrasp, wondering why we had been kept apart so long. And thank goodness! Oh thank goodness, I shall never see one of you again!⁶⁶

Likewise, A Room with a View was modified so as to shift the focus from George's relation with Mr Beebe to the love of George and Lucy.⁶⁷ Explicit homoerotic passages were removed from the final version of The Longest Journey. Forster is reported to have discarded a fantasy chapter about Stephen.⁶⁸ Although the beginning of this episode does not exist, a chapter labelled XIV in the manuscripts of The Longest Journey consists of a Lawrentian scene showing Harold (an earlier name for Stephen) wandering naked in a wood of pine trees.⁶⁹ The manuscripts of Howards End show that Forster tried to portray in detail Margaret's relation with Mr Wilcox and Helen's affair with Leonard Bast, but his attempts at describing heterosexual relations were half-hearted, and he dropped those scenes from the completed novel.⁷⁰ Forster perfected his technique with each novel so that in A Passage to India the theme of male

friendship is very effectively assimilated into the social and political issues of the novel.

However Forster's self-control and artistry do not necessarily negate the role of the unconscious. Homoerotic desire in Forster is creative as well as unconscious. When asked how far he was aware of his own technical cleverness, Forster is reported to answer, 'People will not realize how little conscious one is of these things; how one flounders about'.⁷¹ At another time, Forster admitted that he had felt excited while writing of Philip's torture by Gino without knowing why.⁷² Forster's narratives, for all his emendations, vacillate between the conscious and realistic and the unconscious and fantastic. Indeed, to a large extent, the peculiarities, the 'elusiveness' of Forster's fiction arises from the author's style of half-revealing and half-suppressing the theme of homoerotic desire. Forster, with great ingenuity, maintains the semblance of a traditional novel, yet at the same time, his narrative is strewn with codes and scenes that silently disclose the theme of homoerotic love underlying his texts. Furbank recalls Forster as somebody with a 'secret':

It had to do with the fact that, to a rather special degree, he lived the imaginative life and, whether in company or in solitude, was attending to imaginative impressions. He did this consciously, feared to lose the power of doing so, and rebuked himself for slackness in it. It was, to him, the rule and aim of his existence and was entwined with his sense for what - for want of a better word - he called 'life'. He felt as if, on occasion, he

could see through to 'life': could hear its wing-beat, could grasp it not just as a generality but as a palpable presence.⁷³

Foster's homosexuality endowed him with an alternative sense of reality so that the customary emphasis is inverted, with imaginative life having a bearing on concrete existence. Forster necessarily found the real life, that did not endorse homosexual relations, as untenable; thus fantasy and imagination in his work enclose a homoerotic vision and displace reality. It now becomes understandable why for Forster a 'friend' has more reality than the country which he was prepared to betray. The Longest Journey and Howards End challenge the clear-cut distinction between reality and imagination, and life without imagination is shown to be rigid and impoverished. The random and the irrational surpass the real in A Passage to India and it is Forster's most powerful dramatization of his sense of the mystery and the enigmas of life.

The unique nature of Forster's fiction is owing to homoerotic desire latent in his narratives. Nathaniel Wedd had encouraged Forster to become a writer because he believed that Forster possessed a 'special and unusual apparatus'.⁷⁴ Looking back on his initial attempts at writing in Nottingham Lace, Forster reflected that, 'The apparatus was working, not inaccurately but feebly and dreamily, because I wasn't sure it was there'.⁷⁵ The 'apparatus' refers to the peculiar and distinctive capacity that Forster developed of blending realism and social satire (his Jane Austenian tone), with imagination, fantasy

and homosexual passion (his Whitmanesque and Lawrentian strands). Already in his first piece of fiction, Forster was experimenting with a new style. He wrote to Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson regarding Nottingham Lace on 15 December 1901:

I am very discontented with the novel. I've tried to invent realism, if you see what I mean: instead of copying incidents & characters that I have come across, I have tried to imagine others equally commonplace, being under the impression that this was art, and by mixing the two methods have produced nothing. I think I shall have a try at imagination pure and simple.⁷⁶

Forster could not 'invent realism' nor find a realistic mode to convey the theme of homoerotic love. He resolved the problem in that in a society where heterosexuality is the norm and belongs to the realm of 'reality', the author and readers gain access to homosexuality through 'imagination'. Imagination thus becomes a form of stylistic journeying by which Forster is able to move from realism to romance. The fourth and twelfth chapters of A Room with a View, which dramatize the murder of an Italian man and the bathing incident respectively, illustrate the success with which Forster created scenes of wild abandonment alongside the more mundane issues of domestic comedy. Thus, as Alan Wilde says, imagination for Forster is 'a form at least of love'.⁷⁷ Elizabeth Heine describes the salient features of Forster's writing in her appreciation of The Longest Journey:

Here Forster's transference of musical forms to literature and his adoption of the shapes of mythic narrative foreshadow the techniques of James Joyce and T.S. Eliot. . . . All that is lacking for full 'modernity' is the break from conventional prose into something like stream-of-consciousness writing, and the discarded 'fantasy' chapter shows Forster struggling to reach such a mode.⁷⁸

Forster relies on rhythm or leitmotifs, such as classical allusions, which gather resonance during the narrative, to transmit homoerotic desire. Otherwise, for most part, the desire for male love remains unspoken in Forster's novels.

Forster's imaginative capacity accounts for the unpredictability of Forster's fiction. Furbank comments that:

For all the tameness of his outward existence, he was able, imaginatively, to respond to the 'greatness' of life. When his friends read his first books, what surprised them was their vigour and largeness. They had expected a book by him to be as they had pictured Forster himself: charming, old-maidish, a little ineffectual: and up to now he had had no reason to think them wrong. . . . So far he had not felt 'important'. Now he did so having trusted the imagination. Italy, which he had been slow to love, had at last done a great thing for him. It told him that one could live in the imagination; and he knew now for certain that he was a writer.⁷⁹

As Furbank suggests, Forster's friends expected Forster's books to be like Jane Austen's, but they found instead strains of passionate intensity that were more akin to the

writings of Whitman and D. H. Lawrence. Imagination gave Forster an outlet for passion in stark contrast to repressive reality. His anxiety to be realistic led him only to write inadequately in Nottingham Lace, and the book breaks off because he could not even fantasize at that point. Imagination provided a means of liberation and all of Forster's novels have their origin in fantasy or escapist journeying. Forster began to write better and more easily as he gained confidence to give imagination a free rein. With this early assertion of the validity of imagination, the balance that Forster strikes between reality and fantasy in his novels is deliberately precarious. Virginia Woolf felt that Forster's novels fell short of the standards of great fiction because of the author's failure to blend the realism and poetry of his narratives.⁸⁰ Imagination for Forster is not continuous with reality as it is for Virginia Woolf, but pierces through it. Forster uses imagination to displace and deconstruct reality and therefore the synthesis between the two is inconceivable.

Because the imaginative in Forster is more real than reality, the traditional categories of fantasy and actuality, prose and poetry are blurred in his fiction. Forster satirizes the preconceptions about literature through his author persona Rickie in The Longest Journey. The opposition between prose and poetry has larger connotations; prose signifies the ordinary and practical whereas poetry stands for the exceptional and passionate. Agnes mistrusts Rickie's reliance on imagination. Rickie

finds solace in Mr Jackson's company because, as he tells Agnes,

"He cheers one up. He does believe in poetry. Smart, sentimental books do seem absolutely absurd to him, and gods and fairies far nearer to reality. He tries to express all modern life in the terms of Greek mythology, because the Greeks looked very straight at things, and Demeter or Aphrodite are thinner veils than 'The survival of the fittest', or 'A marriage has been arranged', and other draperies of modern journalese."

"And do you know what that means?"

"It means that poetry, not prose, lies at the core".

"No. I can tell you what it means - balderdash."

His mouth fell. She was sweeping away the cobwebs with a vengeance. "I hope you're wrong," he replied, "for those are the lines on which I've been writing, however badly, for the last two years."

"But you write stories, not poems" (LJ, pp. 174-75).

The distinctions Forster is trying to draw are clear - poetry, Greek myths and passion, in contrast to prose, social conventions and domestic life. Interestingly, the Greek way of life is posited as simple and straightforward whereas modern life has been unnecessarily complicated by marriage, among other things.

Poetry in Forster is inseparable from desire so that it led D. H. Lawrence to ask impatiently, 'Will all the poetry in the world satisfy the manhood of Forster, when Forster knows that his implicit manhood is to be satisfied by nothing but immediate physical action? He tries to dodge

himself - the sight is pitiful'.⁸¹ What Lawrence could not guess was that Forster's emphasis on poetry and his emotional dodging were related to homoerotic desire and for that reason physical action was difficult.

Forster's texts are poetic also because he treats language as symbolic rather than transparent. References to Greek myths, rural life, poetry and imagination, simplicity and truth, friendship and brotherhood, are motifs that recur in Forster's novels with increasing complexity from Where Angels Fear to Tread to Maurice. In all of Forster's novels except Maurice, the narrative operates on two levels - the apparent sequence of events that entail a heterosexual plot, and homoerotic allusions embedded in the text that subvert the conspicuous thrust of the narrative. Duke Maskell has criticised the poetic and erotic language in Howards End and A Passage to India, and he argues that Forster's 'symbolism' and 'style', his metaphors and discourse do not work.⁸² Forster's rhetoric is indeed hollow, but not due to the middle-class fatuity that Maskell imputes to the writer, but because Forster's metaphors are displaced and disconnected from their meaning.

It is instructive that in writing an obviously homosexual novel Maurice, which he presumably realized he could not publish, Forster dispenses with the strictures on personal relations and marriage and also the techniques of distance and displacement. As the discussions of each novel will show, the codes and symbols left suspended in the previous texts finally culminate in homoerotic theme of

Maurice. Forster's women characters and portrayal of heterosexual relations do not convince because the author's best energies are expended on his male protagonists. Forster himself realized the breach in his texts, and hence the epigraph to Howards End entreats the reader to 'only connect' and the Forster's narratives resist satisfactory interpretation unless placed within the homosexual tradition of English literature.

The Failure of Language

The struggle with covert desires helps to understand Forster's writing in its aspects of silence and failure. Forster's novels often exhibit the writer's disillusion with his medium. Silence is an index of the difficulty of speech and unmentionable themes. In Forster's short story, 'The Siren', the Siren symbolizes passion that has vanished under the sea. The narrator believes that the Siren will not return in his lifetime, but is sure that 'Silence and loneliness cannot last forever. It may be a hundred or a thousand years, but the sea lasts longer, and she shall come out of it and sing'.⁸³ The siren is feminine in the story, but it is also a slang term for a homosexual, and thus the writer allegorically portends an acceptance of homoerotic love even though it may be in infinity.

Meanwhile, for all his harping on friendship and personal relations, Forster's novels won acclaim for their social and political dimensions. The public response to his

novels made Forster realize the arbitrariness of language. A Passage to India reflects Forster's awareness of the limitations of language; words in the novel only generate echoes, 'If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same - "ou-boum"' (AP, p. 140). In the Marabar caves, Mrs Moore felt that something 'settled on her mouth like a pad' which strangled the 'poor little talkative Christianity' (AP, pp. 138 and 141). With her faith shattered, Mrs Moore retreats into a permanent silence. When Adela wants to consult her about what happened in the caves, Mrs Moore's reaction is unduly harsh, '"Say, say, say," said the old lady bitterly. "As if anything can be said! I have spent my life in saying or in listening to sayings; I have listened too much. It is time I was left in peace' (AP, p. 190) Forster incorporates pauses and silence in his narratives to sustain equivocation. This technique is perfected in A Passage to India where hardly anything is ever cleared up.

Having broached the theme of friendship from different angles in his novels, Forster lapsed, after A Passage to India, into silence at least as far as publishing fiction was concerned. Forster's silence implies his rejection of language as a means of communication; his own novels had inevitably been read as a heterosexual texts, in spite of their central theme of friendship. Forster is reported to have said that he stopped writing novels because he had nothing more to say.⁸⁴ A Passage to India expresses the writer's consciousness of the futility of language:

Most of life is so dull that there is nothing to be said about it, and the books and talk that would describe it as interesting are obliged to exaggerate, in the hope of justifying their own existence. Inside its cocoon of work or social obligation, the human spirit slumbers for the most part, registering the distinction between pleasure and pain, but not nearly as alert as we pretend. . . . it's no more than that really, and a perfectly adjusted organism would be silent (AP, p. 125).

Words signify a discontentment with life, and yet they are a poor substitute for the experience they attempt to approximate. Although Forster exalted music over language for communicating emotions, even music cannot always give vent to feeling. In 'Dr Woolacott', Forster writes that the sound of the violin was, 'Always breaking off':

A beautiful instrument. Yet so unsatisfying . . . leaving the hearers much sadder than if it had never performed. What was the use (someone asked) of music like that? Better silence absolute than this aimless disturbance of our peace.⁸⁵

Neither words nor music provided Forster with a relief from his suppressed emotions; no wonder, then, that Forster increasingly preferred silence to any form of expression.

Forster's novels also manifest a fascination with failure. Success is the yardstick of men like Herbert Pembroke and the Wilcox men, and the writer calculates the personal and emotional cost of success. Herbert Pembroke, 'for all his fine talk about a spiritual life he had but

one test for things - success: success for the body in this life or for the soul in the life to come. And for this reason Humanity, and perhaps such other tribunals as there may be, would assuredly reject him' (LJ, p. 166). The Hall family in Maurice have the easy life of the English middle-classes, 'It was a land of facilities, where nothing had to be striven for, and success was indistinguishable from failure' (Maurice, p. 10). The trite notions of success held by people such as Mr Pembroke and the Hall family make them soulless.

Failure is most appealingly rendered in The Longest Journey. Ansell, undaunted by the failure of his first dissertation, writes a second one knowing that, 'It was worth while to grow old and dusty seeking for truth though truth is unattainable, restating questions that have been stated at the beginning of the world. Failure would await him, but not disillusionment' (LJ, p. 177). Rickie dies assured that he has been a failure. The sense of failure overshadows all of Forster's novels, so much so that he could not cope with the success of Howards End and it blocked him as a writer. Virginia Woolf reports that on finishing A Passage to India, he felt it to be a failure.⁸⁶ Forster's own assessment of his work was shrewd. He wrote to Virginia Woolf, 28 June 1927, protesting against her review of his novels, 'My novels will be either almost-successes or failures: - probably in the future almost-successes, because experience enables one to substitute cleverness for force with increasing verisimilitude'.⁸⁷ Forster conceded his novels to be 'almost-successes' in

that he was able to carry out the deception of his readers into accepting his texts as unambiguously heterosexual, but these novels were a failure insofar as they were perceived to be no more than that. As Forster well recognized, his success as a writer arose ironically from his own personal failure to articulate his most profound feelings in his novels.

Conclusion

Furbank says that Forster was one of those who had 'only one novel to write' and 'for this reason he was content to use and re-use many of the same plot-materials: for instance the jaded traveller unable (for what reason he cannot tell) to respond to the scenes he or she has come to visit; or the picnic or party of pleasure invaded by pleasure forces'.⁸⁸ All of Forster's novels rehearse the theme of friendship and brotherhood, and the ideal of homoerotic love accompanying that theme. Homoerotic desire is submerged in Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View and combined with the form of domestic comedy. In the two novels, the superficial heterosexual romance is interspersed with scenes of homosexual passion. In Where Angels Fear to Tread, Gino sends picture-postcards to Irma 'from your lital brother' and the relation of the brother is severely contested in the novel. A Room with a View points to a potential friendship of Freddy, George and Mr Beebe. The Longest Journey was conceived as a 'story of a

man who discovers he has an illegitimate brother'.⁸⁹ The brother is illegitimate, and by implication, so is the relationship of brotherhood. The novel is a Bildungsroman, and the protagonist's development entails the union with his brother. The need for a friend and brother is displaced in Howards End. Written as a condition-of-England novel, Howards End concentrates on social issues. Homoerotic desire nevertheless enters into the text in terms of the narrator's consciousness of what is absent in the novel. The theme of friendship is combined with the universal and metaphysical issues in A Passage to India. The novel's refrain, 'Come, come, come, come, come, come' (AP, p. 72), is both a call to Krishna and voices a longing, a waiting for the Friend 'who never comes yet is not disproved' (AP, p. 97). In this novel, the author's emotional despair is projected on to nihilistic dimensions. Maurice charts the growth of the protagonist from Platonic relationship to an unidealized acknowledgement of his homosexuality.

Forster approaches homoerotic love not directly but by mediation, either via marriage and heterosexual relations, or through the Other, remote and exotic - in the context of another class and country. Forster tries to adapt homoerotic desire to heterosexual themes and genres, but the hidden theme of homoerotic desire inevitably explodes the values of heterosexual life. In Forster's narratives, homoerotic desire is juxtaposed against values that deny intimacy between men, and the narrator holds the oppositions together by a series of controlled distances - by making a journey from the respectable world to the

another place, by putting distances between characters, in the disjunction between the physical and spiritual, the outer and inner, the seen and unseen, and social reality and sexual fantasy. As a result Forster's novels delineate not the compatibility, but the tensions, between the homosexual and heterosexual world views. Amidst countless schisms, the author argues for wholeness and integration whereby homoerotic desire may be harmonized with heterosexual life.

Forster arrives at the ideal of homoerotic love tortuously, by a detour which is relevant for what it collapses en route. The structures of marriage and domestic life must be disintegrated - or escaped from - before a space can be made for homoerotic love. The protagonist, and with him the reader, must learn from mistakes and come to homoerotic desire by a process of trial and error. Desire is initially confounded with, and then disentangled from, the concepts of marriage and heterosexual relations. One effect of homoerotic desire in Forster's fiction is that his narrative is subversive of the society he describes. While apparently seeming to share the conservative, middle-class concerns of marriage, home and relationships, Forster's novels actually destroy domestic stability and heterosexual relations.

It is significant that Forster's novels were being promoted in England at a time when Lawrence's work was being banned. Forster's achievement lies in his ability to maintain duplicity at length as in the narratives of his novels. Forster is the last major English novelist steeped

in classical learning, and the classics contributed to the theme of homoerotic love. Forster's fiction derives both from heterosexual and homosexual literary traditions. While Forster's links with the mainstream literature have been well established, his position in the homosexual tradition still needs to be documented. The next chapter traces the homosexual tradition in literature and links the themes and motifs in Forster's fiction to this tradition.

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85. 'Dr Woolacott', The Life to Come, p. 93.
86. The Diary of Virginia Woolf, edited by Anne Olivier Bell, 5 volumes (London: Hogarth, 1977-84), IV, p. 43.
87. Cited by Furbank in E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume Two, p. 145.

88. Ibid., pp. 132-33.

89. Cited in the 'Author's Introduction' to The Longest Journey, p. lxvi.

Chapter 2

Background to Homosexual Literature in the Nineteenth Century

In order to decode the homoerotic themes in Forster's fiction, his novels and short stories must be read in the context of nineteenth century homosexual literature. This chapter outlines the homosexual literary tradition from which Forster's narratives evolve.

To begin with, a distinction must be drawn between 'homoeroticism' and 'homosexuality'; 'homoeroticism' refers just to an inclination and may or may not include sexual acts, while 'homosexuality' specifically refers to sexual behaviour. Although the word 'homoerotic' is dated, it is appropriate for the diffuse desire for male love that permeates most of Forster's texts. Only Maurice and some of the short stories, where love between men is consummated, can be truly described as homosexual. However, the terms 'homoerotic' and 'homosexual' are used interchangeably in this thesis.

Male Friendship as a Homoerotic Ideal

Homosexuality is not a fixed concept but involves historically changing definitions of relations between men.

In nineteenth century literature, homoerotic love overlaps with the subject of male friendship. The word 'homosexuality' was not coined until 1869 (by the Swiss doctor, Karoly Maria Benkert) and it did not gain currency in English until the 1890s.¹ Meanwhile homoerotic desire was transmitted through the theme of male friendship. In medieval literature, the theme of homoerotic love coincided with the topic of friendship. John Boswell explains that:

During the early Middle Ages the type of 'passionate friendship' familiar to the early church was common and comprised the subject matter of much clerical writing, including almost all of the love poetry of the period. In a society in which there was strong pressure for celibacy, particularly among theologians and regular clergy, and in which communities of celibates occupied the same small space - sometimes the same beds for life, it is hardly surprising that literature celebrating passionate, if not erotic, friendships would gain a powerful hold on the imagination. The loving relation of teacher and student in religious communities was very much a medieval ideal, despite its obvious parallel to Greek homosexuality, and many of the greatest teachers of the period were known especially for the intensity of their love for their students.²

Boswell quotes excerpts from Alcuin's (735-804 A.D.) poetry and correspondence written to his clerical friends in Charlemagne's court, and states that:

It is virtually impossible to translate the affection suggested by the series of diminutives at the end of the

lines of this poem: the Latin words 'pusiole,' 'filiiole,' 'puerule,' evoke a wealth of associations secular and religious, erotic and spiritual, paternal and lover-like. They are part of a tradition of erotic address between men which has no standard terms of relation and has thus elicited the ambiguities of the Greek 'lover, inspirer, hearer,' the Roman 'friend, brother, dear,' the monastic 'brother, son, friend, beloved brother,' and many other terms of endearment for relationships without real parallel in heterosexual contexts.³

As heterosexual values gained ascendancy, sexual passion was splintered from friendship and confined to man-woman relationships of marriage and adultery. In the heterosexual culture, friendship was generally assumed to be nonsexual and it became customary for writers to create nostalgic memories of their youthful, innocent friendships - Shelley in 'An Essay on Friendship' (1822), Disraeli in Conningsby (1844), Leigh Hunt in his Autobiography (1850), Tennyson in 'Break, Break, Break' (1842) and In Memoriam (1850). Thus several cults of male friendship were prevalent in the nineteenth century, ranging from the extravagant, hyperbolic expressions of friendship to tacit sexual relations between men.

In homosexual writing the word 'friend' acquired a duplicity and could be used both to cover and deploy homoerotic feeling. Brian Reade, in the 'Introduction' to his anthology of homosexual literature, comments that the writers in his selection, 'avoid using the word "sexual" and keep to the word "friendship" for attachments between

persons of the same sex'. He adds that 'this indeed was done when homosexual males were legally persecuted.⁴ Rictor Norton, deploring the practice of tampering with classical texts, speaks of 'mistranslations such as "friend" for "pederast" (paidikos)', and in Jowett's translation of Plato, of the '"beautiful boy" (kalos) as a milder "fair youth," and "the love of boys" (pederastis - "pederasty" or "paederasty" depending upon one's typographical sensibilities) as "friendship" - thus effectively obscuring the intergenerational aspects of Platonic paedogogy'.⁵

Accordingly, Walter Pater concludes his essay on the Renaissance with curiously evocative words:

While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend.⁶

The reference to friend masks homoerotic passion and, at the same time, is resonant with bygone intensities. Lionel Johnson's poem 'A Friend' appeared in the May 1893 number of The Spirit Lamp and Timothy d' Arch Smith affirms that 'the poem blended very well with the rest of the contributions, for the word "friend" was beginning to develop a secret inference, similar to "shame" and "comrade"'.⁷

Homosexuality and male friendship were fused together in Oscar Wilde's scandal, of which W. T. Stead complained to Edward Carpenter, that 'A few more cases like Oscar

Wilde's and we should find the freedom of comradeship now possible to men seriously impaired to the permanent detriment of the race'.⁸ The relation of friendship to homosexuality seems to have vexed D. H. Lawrence too, as portrayed in the intimacy of Birkin and Gerald in Women in Love.

In Forster's fiction, male friendship is a corollary of homoerotic desire. He wrote to T. E. Lawrence, 'I think of a remark of mine which you once approved . . . It was about love, how over-rated and over-written it is, and how the relation one would like between people is a mixture of friendliness and lust'.⁹ In his comment Forster marginalizes love entirely and dissociates sex from heterosexual relations; he proposes instead a homosexual version of relationships that combines friendliness with sex.

Cognate with the idea of a friend are the notions of a brother, a comrade, and the dream for a son. Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter combined homoerotic love with the vision of brotherhood and comradeship. Forster does not subscribe to the mystical or political doctrines of Whitman and Carpenter, but explores the theme of brotherhood at a personal level in The Longest Journey. The father-son motif in male relations can be seen in Whitman's letters to Peter Doyle which begin, 'Dear Boy', 'Dear friend', 'Dear boy and Comrade', 'Dear Pete - dear son', and George Merrill's letters which address Carpenter as, 'My dearest dad'; Oscar Wilde, in his letters to Lord Alfred Douglas, H. M. Hyde

and Louis Wilkinson, calls them, 'my dear boy'; Forster's letters to Masood sometimes begin, 'Dearest boy'.¹⁰

Homosexuality and Literature

Homoerotic themes in literature reflect the social and religious attitudes to male love. Homoerotic desire and the ideal of male friendship have antecedents in a long and ancient tradition going back all the way to Plato. Homoerotic love in Plato is associated with philosophy. Plato describes love as a desire, a lack, an appetancy towards something higher and better. Love is a response to the good and the beautiful. The love of one man for another, stimulated by corporeal beauty, is treated in Symposium and Phaedrus as the starting point of a joint philosophical effort to apprehend the ideal.

Plato's adulation of male love can be understood in the context of contemporary sexual practices when homosexuality was the norm. As K. J. Dover says,

It is easy to see why Socrates should handle a doctrine of eros predominantly in homosexual terms: in his ambience, intense eros was experienced more often in a homosexual than in a heterosexual relationship, and it was taken absolutely for granted that close contact with a beautiful, grateful, admiring young male was a virtually irresistible temptation: it was after all the prescribed role of women to be inseminated whereas popular sentiment romanticized

and applauded the chastity of an eromenos and the devotedly unselfish erastes.¹¹

Other early Greek writers besides Plato - Aristophanes, Xenophon, Aristotle and Plutarch - whatever their points of difference with Plato and with one another, all show an unquestioning acceptance of homosexuality. John Boswell points out that,

There are in fact no explanations in any classical literature for homosexual desire, which everyone apparently considered ubiquitous and entirely ordinary. Aristophanes, who ridiculed every aspect of human behaviour, often made fun of prominent gay Athenians but nonetheless characterized homosexual desire as a 'natural necessity' like heterosexual desire, eating, drinking and laughing. Xenophon expressed the opinion of most Greeks of his day when he commented that homosexuality was part of 'human nature'.¹²

Homosexuality in the nineteenth century was defined by Christianity and law. In contrast to Plato and the other early Greek writers, there arose the Christian ascetic ideal, exemplified by the fathers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, who believed like Plato, that a vision of the eternal could be obtained, but only through the rejection of the physical, although this interpretation of Christianity must be qualified by mentioning Denis De Rougemont who argues that the dualism between the physical and the spiritual is originally Manichean and not Christian.¹³

Boswell chronicles the influence of religion on homosexuality and asserts that from Plato's time till the early twelfth century was an era of 'openness' and 'tolerance', when homosexuality had not been affected by the Christian Scripture. Friendship between men was known to flourish in clerical relationships as expressed by St Augustine (354-430 A.D.) in his Confessions, though he deeply regretted the sexual passion he felt for his friend, 'Thus I contaminated the spring of friendship with the dirt of lust and darkened its brightness with the blackness of desire'.¹⁴ The tightening of social liberalism occurred from the late twelfth to the fourteenth century, a period of religious and secular codification which resulted in the loss of freedom. The most significant condemnation of homosexuality appears in St Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), 'whose Summa theologiae became the standard of orthodox opinion on every point of Catholic dogma for nearly a millenium and permanently and irrevocably established the 'natural' as the touchstone of Roman Catholic sexual ethics'.¹⁵ Aquinas abhorred homosexuality as a violation of nature, an act against reason and an impediment to the propagation of human race. After Aquinas there are no substantial changes in the attitude to homosexuality and even Freud regarded it as pathological.

Jeffrey Weeks traces the development of legal impositions on homosexuality. According to Weeks there was no concept of the homosexual in the law prior to the nineteenth century:

The 1533 Act of Henry VIII, which first brought sodomy within the scope of statute law, superseding ecclesiastical law, adopted the same criterion as the Church: all acts of sodomy were equally condemned as being 'against nature', whether between man and woman, man and beast, or man and man. The penalty for the 'Abominable Vice of Buggery' was death. This keynote Act, re-enacted in 1563, was the basis for all homosexual convictions up to 1885.¹⁶

The death penalty for buggery was unofficially abandoned after 1836, and finally abolished in 1861 in England and Wales and in 1899 in Scotland, 'to be replaced by penal servitude of between ten years and life'. However, these changes were pointers not to the loosening of law but its becoming more rigorous. A clause, the 'Labouchere Amendment', added almost casually to the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, made 'all homosexual acts short of buggery, whether committed in public or private' illegal. The Vagrancy Act of 1898 further declared homosexual soliciting to be a criminal offence.

Many cases were tried for homosexuality during the late nineteenth century, 'from Boulton and Park in 1870, to the Dublin Castle scandal of 1884, the Cleveland Street scandal of 1889-90, and culminating in the most sensational of all, the three trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895'. The Wolfenden Report in 1957 is a landmark in the campaign for the reform of laws on homosexuality, leading to 1967 Sexual Offences Act by which homosexual activity in private between mutually consenting adults was no longer illicit in

England and Wales, except for men in the army and the navy.¹⁷

Homosexuality as an Underground Theme

Forster's novels were all written in the aftermath of Oscar Wilde's prosecution and before any of the law reforms took place. This explains the deviousness of homoerotic themes in Forster's fiction, and the techniques of concealment that the author applied to disguise homoerotic desire in his narratives. Most of homosexual literature in the nineteenth century is calculated to deceive the reader. Rictor Norton mentions the kinds of equivocation exercised by homosexual writers:

The leitmotifs of homosexual literature form a complex tangle of Gordian knots, whose careful unraveling results in a richly rewarding series of discoveries. Male homosexual love is expressed in western literature through a maze of veils and half-truths, of subconscious ambiguities and deliberate obscurities, of symbols that conceal and allegories that reveal, of varying degrees of recognition, repression, denial, regret, affirmation, and joy and celebration.¹⁸

The homosexual writers became adept in using marriage and heterosexual relations to advance homosexual themes. Ian Young in his history of the homosexual novel writes:

Proust, in Remembrance of Things Past, of course, had felt obliged to switch the sex of some of his characters,

leaving only the less savoury aspects of his homosexuality intact. But Mann's Death in Venice, Gide's Corydon and The Immoralist, Edkhoud's Eskal-Vigor, Broch's The Death of Vergil were less dishonest. It is doubtful whether they could have appeared in England.¹⁹

Graham Jackson in 'The Theatre of Implication: Homosexuality in Drama', says that

William Shakespeare, a contemporary of Marlowe, toyed with homosexuality in Twelfth Night and As You Like It, where sexual identities are swapped as quickly as cloaks and jerkins. . . . The ambivalence in many of Shakespeare's character's perhaps qualifies him as one of the first playwrights to show a marked homosexual sensibility. Certainly his sonnets reveal such a sensibility.²⁰

Similarly, Ian Young in 'The Poetry of Male Love' points out that, 'Many of Byron's poems are typical examples of this dissimulation. Some of his love poems, such as "The Cornelian," are obviously addressed to males; in many the gender of the beloved has been changed'.²¹ The germ of Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? is homosexual sentiment which the playwright adapted into a drama of the two married childless couples. The figment of a child acts as a catalyst for tension between the characters. Anne Paolucci observes of Albee's play that, 'There is almost an Augustinian conviction in Albee's insistence on what sex in marriage is not'.²²

Homosexual writing in the nineteenth century forms a prolific underground tradition, appropriating every genre and mode of expression available. The homosexual motifs

that Forster inherited were derived from three main strands - that of classical literature, Christianity, and the modern ideal of comradeship espoused by Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter. There was a revival of interest in classical art and literature in the nineteenth century which led to the appraisal and revision of the Victorian understanding of classicism. Greek studies in England in the nineteenth century were transformed by German scholarship. Greek sculpture was first made accessible through literature, in the works of Johann J. Winckelmann, Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Art in Painting and Sculpture (1755) and History of Ancient Art (1764). Greek literature was disseminated into English letters through the works of Goethe, Schiller, A. W. Schlegel and Wagner. Schlegel's lectures on drama, translated into English in 1815, gave a fresh interpretation of Greek tragedy.²³ The spread of classical ideas, imbued with German romanticism, was especially congenial to the homosexual writers who adapted these influences to their own ends.

While several classical writers contributed to homoerotic literature, Plato's influence was by far the most considerable. Plato was incorporated into the homosexual tradition not only directly but also through other English writers such as Shelley, J. A. Symonds and Walter Pater. The homosexual tradition is connected to the Aesthetic and Decadent Movements in the writings of Pater, just as it is connected to Shelley and the Romantics in the work of Symonds and Edward Carpenter.

Classicism, Romanticism, Aestheticism and Decadence were various reactions to moribund Christianity. While some homosexual writers looked to alternative movements for an antidote to Christian morality, others sought to rejuvenate Christianity and chose their paradigms of homoerotic love from the Bible.

Whereas classical texts and the Christian scripture generated archetypal motifs of homoerotic love, Whitman and Carpenter propagated a modern and radical view of homoerotic love based on socialism, male brotherhood and comradeship. Their vision of male love led to the idealization of the unrefined masculinity of working class men.

The nineteenth century school story also provided the writers with a contemporary genre for homoerotic narrative. In contrast with the radicalism of Whitman and Carpenter, the school story expresses a conservative ideal of homosexuality, based on chivalry rather than comradeship.

It became customary for homosexual writers in the nineteenth century to form relationships with men from lower classes, whether in the name of chivalry or comradeship. Affairs with boys or men of lower class were easy and had a flavour of romance. The motives that stimulated inter-class relationships between homosexuals, also engendered relations between men of different races, only with increased thrill and opportunity. France and Italy, and then Greece, were popular rendezvous for homosexuals. Therefore the travel narrative constitutes another genre in homosexual writing. To the English mind in

the nineteenth century, Greece became conflated with the image of the East or the Orient. Hence the homosexual journey to Italy, Greece or the East is often entwined with a discourse on Orientalism - the tendency to regard the foreign country as the remote, the exotic and the Other to the English culture.

Jeffrey Weeks, in his inquiry into homosexuality, observes that one must 'distinguish between homosexual behaviour, which is universal, and a homosexual identity, which is historically specific'.²⁴ The universal idea of homosexuality could temporarily merge with the historical-individual homosexual identity, as displayed in Oscar Wilde's speech at the Old Bailey. In his own defence, Wilde appealed to the universal concept of homoerotic love upheld by Plato and Shakespeare:

'The Love that dare not speak its name' in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there is between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. . . . It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as 'the Love that dare not speak its name', and on account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope and glamour of life before him. That this should

be so, the world does not understand. The world mocks at it and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it.²⁵

Wilde's performance was emulated by Robert Graves a generation later; hauled over the coals by his headmaster at Charterhouse for an affair with a choirboy three years younger than himself, Graves spoke of the nobility of his friendship, 'citing Plato, the Greek poets, Shakespeare, Michelangelo and others who had felt as I did'.²⁶ In Forster's Maurice on the other hand, the universal formulas of homoerotic love are not desirable any more and cumber the protagonist's homosexual identity. It is by shedding the influences of Plato, Symonds and Tchaikovsky that Maurice is able to fulfil his homosexual passion.

Some of the recurrent themes in homosexual literature are discussed below. However, homoerotic motifs occur on three levels - (1) as universal archetypes, (2) the way those prototypes were absorbed and transmuted into a particular culture, and finally, (3) how each writer further modified stock themes from the collective consciousness, and made them characteristically his own.

The Platonic Ideal of Homoerotic Love

The concept of romantic love in Western culture originates from Plato but Plato's idea of love is not always thus interpreted. Platonic love is often seen as opposed to rather than entailing some of the essential elements of romantic love. Such an interpretation of Plato

is exemplified by C. S. Lewis who, in The Allegory of Love writes that the belief in love 'as a noble and ennobling passion . . . is a legacy from courtly love.'²⁷ The distinction that C. S. Lewis draws between carnal and spiritual love in his argument against Plato is simplistic, and his reading is countered by Jean Hagstrum who asserts that the 'relations between eros and agape are profound and subtle, and the two cannot be ultimately separated'.²⁸ This is evident from Plato himself, who refused to make Eros either god or man and felt that he must be daimon. Plato shows an awareness of the complexity of the nature of love; he does not undermine Eros, rather sees it as an energy which stimulates the dialectical ascent to the world of Forms.

Physical love is part of the Platonic scheme. The control and transcendence of sexual pleasure is important to attain the vision of beauty; nonetheless, both Symposium and Phaedrus contain an exaltation of bodily pleasure. In his definition of good society in the Laws, Plato restricts sexuality but in the two major dialogues on love there is nowhere a denial of the body. The two most remarkable features of Platonic love then are: that though the ultimate aim of love is transcendence into the world of ideas, it remains rooted in the physical and the carnal; and that this love, which is a significant step to the supernal, is homoerotic and not heterosexual, though the term 'Platonic' is now frequently applied to the man-woman relationship.

Some of the finest expositions of homoerotic love in classical literature come from Plato. In Phaedrus, Socrates speaks of love as divine madness inspired by the deities, Aphrodite and Eros, so that it is an experience that happens without our conscious design. He describes this experience, that of the soul responding to a beautiful object, in terms of the emotions felt by the lover (erastes) for his beloved (eromenos). The response is something in the eromenos rather than the individual eromenos himself, but the description is erotic and blurs distinctions between the physical and the spiritual. When the lover is confronted with beauty in another man, 'which is the expression of divine beauty':

at first a shudder runs through him, and again the old awe steals over him; then looking upon the face of his beloved as of a god he reverences him, . . . And as he warms, the parts out of which the wing grew, and which had been hitherto closed and rigid, and had prevented the wing from shooting forth, are melted, as nourishment streams upon him, the lower end of the wing begins to swell and grow from the root upwards; and the growth extends under the whole soul - for once the whole soul is winged. During this process the whole soul is in a state of ebullition and effervescence, - which may be compared to the irritation in the gums at the time of cutting teeth, - bubbles up, and has a feeling of uneasiness and tickling; . . . and she receives the sensible warm motion of particles which flow towards her, therefore called emotion, and is refreshed and warmed by them . . . (Phaedrus, 250).²⁹

It is a metaphysical experience that Socrates is describing but if one remembers that the philosophical enterprise involved a love relationship of an older man with young boys who advanced from pupil to friend, then this becomes also a vivid description of puberty, conveyed in rich and concrete imagery. The spiritual and the sensual are similarly integrated in Socrates' account of the tumultuous emotions that love produces within the soul. In the myth of the charioteer and the black and the white horses, the erotic response is described as a complex of sexual impulse and religious awe, and the soul is moved at once by joy and pain, adoration and desire, modesty and aggression (Phaedrus, 254).

Plato's doctrine of eros is primarily homoerotic, and heterosexuality is treated as a somewhat inferior preference. Aristophanes' myth in Symposium distinguishes between different types of love and gives priority to homosexuality. According to the myth, man was originally round and 'had four feet, one head with two faces looking opposite ways, . . . four ears, two privy members and the remainder to correspond'. The sexes were also originally three in number - man, woman and androgynous (Symposium, 189). Zeus punished man for his pride and split him into two halves, which is the human form we retain today. Ever since, man is always looking for his other half because of the ancient desire 'implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, and healing the state of man' (Symposium, 191). The sexual inclination of man however depends upon the sex he originally belonged to, so that

Aristophanes emphasizes the essence of the man and the woman as against the mixed androgyny. Since the ideal love relationship is possible only between men, love in Plato is not related to marriage which is consigned to an altogether different sphere. Intercourse with a woman serves no purpose beyond procreation and has no philosophical or moral worth. The lover who has long forgotten his vision of beauty is compared to the 'brutish beast' who at the sight of his beloved 'rushes on to enjoy and beget' (Phaedrus, 250).

Plato therefore became the writers' stronghold for exalting homoerotic love and one branch of the homosexual tradition sprang from Plato's philosophy. Discovering Plato became an important stage in homosexual awakening. Phillis Grosskurth records of Symonds' life, 'On that memorable night when he was eighteen and had sat up until dawn in the house in Regent's Park reading the Phaedrus and the Symposium, the true nature of his emotions seemed to be revealed to him and given a poetic, idealistic sanction'.³⁰ Symonds' response to Plato was by no means exceptional and is replicated by Clive Durham in Maurice, 'Never could he forget his emotion at first reading the Phaedrus. He saw there his malady described exquisitely, calmly, as a passion which we can direct, like any other, towards good or bad. Here was no invitation to licence' (Maurice, pp. 61-62).

Plato's philosophy, however, did not help to resolve the paradox of friendship and homosexuality, but instead intensified it. Passion between men in Plato borders on

sexual feeling, yet stops short of consummation. Plato prescribed continence and many Victorian writers, anxious to live up to the Platonic ideal, boasted of homosexual love as being pure and transcending sexual appetite. But on the other hand, writers such as Symonds, Carpenter and Forster had to move out of their respective intellectual circles and the constraints of Platonic ideal, to satisfy their sexual needs. After years of abstinence, Symonds turned to male prostitutes in London, Carpenter sought intimacy with working-class men, and Forster found a lasting companionship with a policeman, Bob Buckingham.

In Forster's novel, Clive Durham and Maurice establish a Platonic friendship accepted in the hallowed grounds of Cambridge. Their friendship culminates with the youthful idealism of the university life. Maurice cannot deny his craving for a sexual relationship despite the teachings of Plato and his companionship with Clive. Therefore it is the uncouth gamekeeper, Alec Scudder, untouched by Plato's philosophy, who gives Maurice the physical comfort he seeks. Maurice rejects Plato's ideal of homoerotic love as unbearably exacting in modern life, and he outgrows Clive's tutelage as well as the latter's Platonism. It is no coincidence that Maurice's relationship with Clive is intellectually rewarding but sexually impoverished, while his relationship with Alec is without any refinements whatsoever. The Maurice-Alec affair is governed by physical instincts alone and is thus stronger.

Some of the other themes that were borrowed from Plato by nineteenth-century writers are the myths of androgyny

and Pan. Aristophanes' myth of androgyny in the Symposium appears as the hermaphrodite in Swinburne's poems and the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley. F. W. Rolfe or 'Baron Corvo' called his homosexual novel The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole (1934) and the book has the epigraph from Symposium, 193: 'The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole is called Love'. Forster's novels plead for wholeness which can be attained by integrating homosexual relations into life.

Pan motifs appear in heterosexual and homosexual literature throughout the nineteenth century. Plato mentions Pan in Phaedrus, 263, though the first reference to Pan is in 'the Homeric Hymn to Pan . . . uncertain in date and authorship'.³¹ The god of the woods and shepherds, Pan also strikes terror in people's hearts and is a symbol of lechery. Edward Carpenter in Towards Democracy argues for a return to 'the despised one on hobbling hoofs'.³² Forster evokes Pan in all these different versions. The allusions to Pan occur in A Room with a View, The Longest Journey, 'The Story of Panic', and as the satyr in 'The Curate's Friend'.

Classical literature offered a wealth of homosexual themes and genres. Rictor Norton claims that the three literary genres, 'most closely associated, with the Renaissance, originate in the homosexual Hylas Ritual':

the entire pastoral tradition (with its rural setting (the sacred precinct), meandering streams (the pool of Hylas), singing-matches (ritual combat), and elegiac laments and lovers' complaints (the lament); the Ovidian erotic mythological tradition, with its host of androgynous males

and its emphasis upon metaphoric transformations near pools of water; and the friendship tradition, with its belief that the love of man and youth is a higher form of affection than the 'phrensie' of loving women, and its belief in the Narcissus-like phenomenon of 'one soul in bodies twain'.³³

Aristophanes, Theocritus, Virgil and Ovid, together with Plato, acted as invaluable sources for homosexual motifs. Strato's Musa Paidike, the twelfth, paederastic book of the Greek or Palatine Anthology was translated by several homosexual writers in the nineteenth century.³⁴ The homosexual writers looked to ancient art and literature for a sense of their past and to seek sanctions for love between men.

Influence of the Classics

The two chief proponents of classicism in the homoerotic tradition were J. A. Symonds and Walter Pater. Symonds demonstrated how classical lore could be used for techniques of evasion. For example, as Brian Reade notes, 'For John Addington Symonds the word Arcadian meant homosexual and little more'.³⁵ The nineteenth century popularized the cultural contrasts between north and south; A. W. Schlegel talked of Greek drama as Winckelmann had done with Greek sculpture, speaking of the influence of climate on art, thus generating the north-south oppositions which were absorbed into homosexual literature. The north-

south symbols are exploited by Symonds, in Studies of the Greek Poets (1873) and Sketches in Italy and Greece (1874) and Pater in Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873), 'The Age of Athletic Prizemen' (1874), and Plato and Platonism (1893). The metaphors of north and south sometimes came together, as in Pater's comparison of the English schools with Lacedaemon in Plato and Platonism. Symonds, too, saw a resemblance between 'the wrestlers and the runners, true-born Athenians, fresh from the bath and crowned with violets, chaste, vigorous' and 'in England . . . the fields where boys bathe in early morning, or the playgrounds of our public schools in summer, or the banks of the Isis when the eights are on the water, or the riding-schools of young soldiers'.³⁶ Against the general trend, Edwin Emmanuel Bradford employed the north-south imagery to sing in praise of English boys rather than the Continental ones:

Is Boy-Love Greek? Far off across the seas
The warm desire of Southern men may be:
But passion freshened by a Northern breeze
Gains in male vigour and in purity.
Our yearning tenderness for boys like these
Has more in it of Christ than Socrates.³⁷

Like Symonds, Pater bequeathed to the nineteenth century writers a unique interpretation of Plato. Pater made the past come alive by giving a free rein to his imagination. Marius the Epicurean (1855), Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873), Imaginary Portraits (1877) are Pater's exercises in looking at antiquity

through unfamiliar eyes. His Plato and Platonism was written in the wake of Benjamin Jowett's Dialogues of Plato, which were translated into English in 1871. Pater's essays differ from Jowett's conventional sort of scholarship of Plato in that they are frankly subjective. Pater's conclusions, moreover, are underlined with homoerotic desire:

Now Plato is one for whom the visible world thus 'really' exists because he is by nature and before all things, from first to last, unalterably a lover. . . . and as love must of necessity deal above all with visible persons, this discipline involved an exquisite culture of the senses.

Just there, then, is the secret of Plato's intimate concern with, his power over, the sensible world, the apprehensions of the sensuous faculty: he is a lover, a great lover, somewhat after the manner of Dante.³⁸

Pater's narratives reveal the psychological complexity of his communing with the Greeks - the excitement at the thought of naked gymnasts exercising in the rural settings of the classical world produces epithets of 'blood', 'passion', 'stains', 'whiteness', 'youth', 'innocence', 'transparency', and these feelings of carnality are quelled by the religious polemics of repose, peace, calm.

In the nineteenth century, the impassive beauty of Phidias' statues gave way to a taste for sensual beauty; Praxiteles' Cnidian Venus, modelled on a courtesan, became a favourite embodiment of physical beauty and seductiveness. Pater and Symonds, promoted Grote's thesis

that myths were not amenable to rational dissection and both writers believed classical mythology to be a corrective to Christianity and positivism. Both Pater and Symonds evoke the image of the Cnidian Venus. Symonds, referring to the Italian Renaissance, had commented that, 'In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, at Venice, Florence, and Rome, it seemed as if the Phallic ecstasy might possibly revive, as if the animal nature of men might again be deified'.³⁹ Pater's essays, 'Demeter and Persephone' and 'The Study of Dionysus', published in 1876, dwell on the rituals and drunkenness of the worship of Dionysus.

Forster shared with his contemporaries this interest in classical writers. In 1899 he had read, 'Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Plautus, Cicero, Lucretius, Lucan'.⁴⁰ He edited the Aeneid in Dent's Classics' series in 1905 and refers to Grote's History of Greece (1846) in Maurice and the Greek Anthology in 'Anonymity: An Inquiry'.⁴¹

Forster wrote an essay on 'Cnidus' in 1904 and The Longest Journey alludes to the Cnidian Venus and Hermes of Praxiteles. Mr Beebe says in A Room with a View that he does not wish to go to Greece, 'The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel for me. There the contrast is just as much as I can realize. But not the Parthenon, not the frieze of Phidias at any price' (RV, p. 177). Forster offsets the homosexual allusion to Michelangelo against the frigid sculpture of Phidias.

Forster wrote of Symonds in his Commonplace Book and he was involved in the publication of Symonds' memoirs. During his first Italian tour Forster wrote to Dickinson, 15 December 1901, that 'Perugia would be nicer, I think, if Symonds had not written an Essay on it'.⁴² Forster's Italian novels as well as the short stories, 'The Eternal Moment' and 'Albergo Empedocle', hinge on the north-south contrast. In his 'English' novels, he transposes Greek ideals on to the English landscapes of Cambridge and Salisbury in The Longest Journey, and Oniton (the fictional name for Clun) and Hertfordshire in Howards End. Gerald Dawes and Stephen Wonham personify Greek as well as British qualities. Gerald Dawes had 'the figure of a Greek athlete and the face of an English one. He was fair and clean-shaven, and his colourless hair was cut rather short. . . . Just where he began to be beautiful the clothes started' (LJ, p. 35).

Forster read Pater's Marius the Epicurean in 1905, and, Furbank says, 'had disliked its hushed, defunct tones'.⁴³ Forster wrote of Pater in his diary, on 2 May 1905, that, 'There is an absence of vulgarity which is something fatal', and for him 'any death is wonderful: dead or wounded flesh gives Pater the thrill he can never get from its healthiness'.⁴⁴ But in later years Forster compared Pater with Plato to the advantage of the former. He wrote to his aunt, Laura Mary Forster, 1 January 1917,

I have put in 'your' Milton passage and next to it a passage from Pater - that in which he describes the longings of Marcus Aurelius for the Ideal City that lies

even farther from his grasp than it had from Plato's, because (unlike Plato) A. conceived of it as including tenderness and pity; virtue, wisdom, and beauty were not enough.⁴⁵

Robert K. Martin discusses Pater's heritage to Forster, 'It was Pater, in "A Study of Dionysus", who pointed out the relationship between Demeter and Dionysus (both wine and grain being harvest symbols - as in Christian myth) . . . It was also Pater who indicated that Dionysus took the place of Persephone as the lost child of Demeter'.⁴⁶ Pater felt that 'the central myths of Greece which can be re-enacted in modern England are those of Dionysus and Demeter, the priest-consort and the earth mother; and that what these myths convey, in only barely concealed form, is a homosexual romance'.⁴⁷ The Demeter-Dionysus myth forms a leitmotif in The Longest Journey. Pater's idea that the modern world might be populated with Greek deities is echoed in The Longest Journey by Rickie Elliot who writes stories about spirits and dryads in the English countryside. He confesses to Agnes, 'I got in such a state that I believed, actually believed, that Fauns lived in a certain double hedgerow near the Gog Magogs, and one evening I walked round a mile sooner than go through it alone' (LJ, p. 71).

Another theme that Forster and other homosexual writers took from Pater is the motif of the death of young men, which occurs in Marius the Epicurean and, as Martin points out, also has associations with A. E. Housman's 'athlete dying young' and with Melville's Billy Budd.⁴⁸

Pater believed art to be a product of sensations, imagination, fantasy and emotions rather than being primarily intellectual and objective. Pater's writing, brimming with ideas of hedonism, epicurean withdrawal and aesthetic contemplation, inspired the writers of the Aesthetic and the Decadent Movements, such as Swinburne, Simeon Solomon, Lionel Johnson, Wilde and Arthur Symons.

Forster came into contact with the aesthetes in 1897, during his first year at Cambridge when he met Oscar Browning. Browning had been Johnson Cory's pupil at Eton and knew Pater, Swinburne, Simeon Solomon and Wilde. Forster's views on aestheticism are contained in his essays, 'The Ivory Tower', and 'Art for Art's Sake'.⁴⁹ Forster criticizes the aesthetic outlook in the pretensions of his characters - Philip Herriton, Cecil Vyse, and Mr Elliot. The subject is treated at length in The Longest Journey; 'Procul este, profani!' is the aesthete's remark on being introduced to the dell at Madingley, whereas for Forster beauty is found not in seclusion but in the abundance and chaos of life. Aestheticism and the sense of humour cultivated by his characters are intellectual postures and poor substitutes for love and personal relations.

Forster dissociates his theme of friendship from Oscar Wilde's type of upper-class, urban promiscuity of men. Philip Herriton, Cecil Vyse, Mr Elliot, Tibby Schlegel, Clive Durham and Ronny Heaslop are intellectual, rational men, whom the author satirizes. Cecil Vyse, in A Room with a View is devoted to the study of beauty and the 'Comic

Muse'. But Cecil's gods are sterile and he is a reminder of the 'medieval', the 'Gothic', the post-classical as opposed to the pagan, 'A Gothic statue implies celibacy, just as a Greek statue implies fruition' (RV, p. 87). Cecil is a product of the English middle class, a man with an 'undeveloped heart', 'Well educated, well endowed, and not deficient physically, he remained in the grip of a certain devil whom the modern civilization knows as self-consciousness, and who the medieval, with dimmer vision, worshipped as asceticism' (RV, pp. 86-87). Cecil's greatest fault is that he cannot express emotion.

In their prerogative to rebel against oppressive structures, the homosexual writers belong to a larger reaction against Victorian orthodoxies. The homosexual tradition forms part of the wider intellectual antithesis heralded by Romantic poets and idealist philosophers. As Jeffrey Weeks says of J. A. Symonds, Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter, 'All three writers can, in their different ways, be identified with a rejection of Victorian utilitarianism, determinism and materialism'.⁵⁰ Therefore Shelley, who combined classical scholarship with his doctrine of free love and social radicalism, became a prime receptacle of homosexual affiliations. Shelley translated Plato's Symposium in 1818. Shelley called his translation, The Banquet, and supplied a commentary titled, 'A Discourse on the Manners of the Ancient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love'. The complete text of The Banquet was first printed privately in 1931, but an expurgated version with the commentary appeared in Mrs Shelley's compilation

of Shelley's Essays, Letters from Abroad, &c. (1840). Shelley denied the sanctity of marriage and validated extramarital love, both of which premises are important to homosexual writers, but his vision of love remained heterosexual. Platonic doctrines in heterosexual literature were transformed into the code of Petrarchan and Courtly love, though in Shelley's long love poem, Epipsychidion, the Platonic ideal runs parallel with Dante's vision of love.

Shelley was assimilated into the homosexual tradition by Symonds and Carpenter. Symonds wrote a study, Shelley, in 1878; Carpenter's Iolaus: Anthology of Friendship (1902) contains excerpts from Shelley's 'Essay on Friendship'. Towards the end of his life, Carpenter collaborated with George Barnard on a work, The Psychology of the Poet Shelley (1925), arguing the bisexual nature of Shelley. There also exist Carpenter's manuscript notes on 'Shelley and the Democratic Movement' (1896).⁵¹

Forster's thoughts on Shelley are contained in his Commonplace Book and his fiction exhibits the influence of Shelley's Platonism. While A Passage to India invokes Krishna, and Forster's Italian novel, Where Angels Fear to Tread alludes to Dante, the guiding spirit of his English novel The Longest Journey and short story, 'The Celestial Omnibus' is Shelley. In 'The Celestial Omnibus' a little boy is intrigued by a sign to a 'blank alley' that reads 'To Heaven'. He is told that the signpost has been put there by 'some naughty young men', 'one of them wrote verses, and was expelled from the university and came to

grief in other ways'. The boy risks his parents' wrath, and takes a trip on the celestial omnibus. He learns that Shelley is one of the 'Company' of the drivers who transport people across the 'rainbow bridge', over the pathway of dreams and music, to heaven.⁵²

Homosexuality and Christianity

For many writers in the nineteenth century, grappling with their homosexual identity necessarily entailed a religious crisis, and often resulted in the displacement of homosexual feelings to the religious plane. John Henry Newman, Richard Hurrell Froude and Frederick William Faber sought solace by reverting to an older faith of the Roman Church through the Oxford Movement. The Roman Church, with its vows of celibacy and monastic system, was more attractive to homosexuals than the Protestant Christianity. As Brian Reade comments, 'It is not difficult therefore to understand the transition from the repressed homosexuality of certain Tractarians to the emphasis on Christ, not the Virgin Mary'.⁵³ Pater, too, had wanted to take orders, but 'from the paths of the Oxford Movement he strayed, or rather crossed over, to the Renaissance'.⁵⁴ Wilde too brought to the Aesthetic Movement all the fervour of religious faith. Christianity is never far away from his aestheticism as can be seen in his stories 'The Happy Prince' and 'The Selfish Giant', or in his poem De Profundis. John Francis Bloxam's story 'The Priest and the

Acolyte', published in the Chameleon (1894) and John Gambril Nicholson's novel The Romance of a Choir-Boy (1916) belong to the genre of religious homosexual writing for they combine homoerotic love with devotion to the church. Some Uranian themes taken from Christianity are the story of the martyrdom of St Sebastian, the friendship of Jonathan and David, Christ and John and the line from 2 Samuel, 'Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women'.

While some writers submerged their sexual guilt in the rituals of the Catholic Church, writers such as Symonds and Carpenter believed Christianity to be pernicious to sexual fulfilment. But as Sheila Rowbotham writes of Carpenter and the nineteenth century socialists, 'If they rejected Christianity they continued to struggle within a religious idiom'.⁵⁵ Carpenter's socialism was bound up by a mystical vision of unity and harmony in the universe.

Forster rated his emancipation from Christianity as 'the second grand discovery' of his youth, the first one being the discovery of his homosexuality.⁵⁶ Forster exposes the limitations of Christianity in his fiction, but as the manuscripts of A Room with a View reveal, he had initially conceived of a friendship between George and the unorthodox clergyman, Mr Beebe.

Richard Ellmann has examined the 'reestablishment of Christianity, this time as an outer panoply for an inner creed' in the Edwardian writers.⁵⁷ Comparably to D. H. Lawrence, although to a lesser extent, Forster employs religious and moral language to render passionate

experience. Always conscious of the inadequacy of language, he writes in A Room with a View, 'our phrases of approval and of amazement are so connected with little occasions that we fear to use them on great ones. We are obliged to become vaguely poetic, or to take refuge in Scriptural reminiscence' (RV, p. 87). Consequently, Forster resorts to religious imagery to portray the initiation of his characters into friendship and brotherhood. The scene in Where Angels Fear to Tread, where Philip and Gino drink milk from the same jug, is an enactment of the sacrament of brotherhood; Freddy, Mr Beebe and George bathing in the 'Sacred Lake' in A Room with a View, and Rickie and Stephen playing in water in The Longest Journey represent baptismal scenes. Chapter 28 of The Longest Journey illustrates Forster's use of religious language. Forster reverses the Biblical injunction and asks instead, 'Will it really profit us so much if we save our souls and lose the whole world?' (LJ, p. 227).

Forster believed that religion should be robust and hearty and he does not use religious language in a conventional sense. He recoiled from the artificial, religious allegory of Laurence Housman's All Fellows, written in the mode of Christian chivalry. He found Housman's wallowing in symbols of Christianity, the images of the suffering, the blood and the passion of Christ, distasteful and morbid. He wrote to Bob Trevelyan that All Fellows 'is an awful work'.⁵⁸ Forster posits the liberating forces of fantasy, paganism and the Indian religions against the punitive morality of Christianity.

The Ideal of Male Love in Whitman and Carpenter

Unlike the classical and biblical sources, the works of Whitman and Carpenter provided a contemporary definition of male love. Whitman's Leaves of Grass (1855) poem was unusual in its tone of freedom and for striking a positive note on homosexual relations. The 'Calamus' section of letters to Peter Doyle exults in 'manly attachment'. Whitman expresses a vision of democracy and comradeship based on the virility of all men and proposed manly adhesiveness as opposed to heterosexual amateness. Symonds, Carpenter and Ellis came together on account of their shared admiration for Whitman.

Edward Carpenter was hailed as 'England's Walt Whitman'.⁵⁹ Carpenter was first introduced to Rossetti's edition of Whitman by H. D. Warr in 1869. Carpenter visited Whitman in New Jersey in 1877 and wrote Towards Democracy under the influence of the American poet. Carpenter's prose-poem was written over several years - the first edition in 1883; the second in 1885; the third in 1892; and the completed version in 1905. Towards Democracy is akin to Leaves of Grass and Havelock Ellis dismissed Carpenter's work as 'Whitman and water'.⁶⁰ Carpenter's account of Whitman is available in his autobiography My Days and Dreams (1916). Carpenter gave a talk on 'Some Friends of Walt Whitman', in December 1922 (published under the same title in 1924), to the British Society for the Study of Sex

Psychology, where he defended Whitman against the attacks of Symonds.

Whereas Symonds tended to disclaim the caricature of the homosexual as an effeminate person, Carpenter affirmed precisely that image of himself. Symonds constantly emphasized his 'masculinity'; Carpenter, in recollections of his childhood, confesses that he felt more at ease in the company of his sisters and their activities, than in the occupations that his brothers had chosen. Carpenter in My Days and Dreams remembers yearning for affection and tenderness and in Case VI of Sexual Inversion, he speaks of himself as having been 'with a highly loving and clinging temperament'.⁶¹ Carpenter was torn by religious crises and relinquished his Orders at Cambridge in 1874. He decided to lecture instead for the University Extension Scheme, a programme devised to reach education to women and working men. Carpenter's homosexuality impelled him into a career of total radicalism. His early sexual loneliness awakened him to the causes of oppression and control and taught him to identify individual and social alienation. Carpenter defined a vision of new life that combined socialism with sexual freedom. Carpenter believed in social regeneration through the working classes, 'The thick-thighed, hot coarse-fleshed, young bricklayer with the strip around his waist' and 'the oil-besmeared figure of a stoker'.⁶²

The themes of male friendship and brotherhood are central to Forster's fiction. The bathing scene in A Room with a View is reminiscent of Whitman's 'Song of Myself' (ll. 199-216). The title of A Passage to India echoes

Whitman's poem by the same title. Forster's diary entry, 16 June 1908, a few days before the first written mention of Howards End, says, 'I opened Walt Whitman for a quotation, & he started speaking to me. That the unseen is justified by the seen; . . . No more fighting, please, between the soul & the body, until they have beaten their common enemy, the machine'.⁶³ In 'Dante' Forster compares Whitman and Dante, and reflects on the conflict between the body and the soul that characterizes the modern civilization. Forster says,

Most modern thinkers realize that the barrier eludes definition. It is there but you cannot put your finger on it, be you theologian or biologist. It is there, but it is impalpable; & the wisest of our age, Goethe for example, and Walt Whitman, have not attempted to find it, but have essayed the more human task of harmonizing the realms that it divides.⁶⁴

Some of the authors Forster had read in 1907 included 'Sturge Moore, A. E. Housman, Symonds, Pater, Shakespeare, Beddoes, Walt Whitman, Edward Carpenter, Samuel Butler, Fitzgerald, Marlowe'.⁶⁵ Forster echoes Carpenter in his desire 'to love a strong young man of the lower classes and be loved by him and even hurt by him'.⁶⁶ In a broadcast talk on Carpenter on 25 September 1944, he explained the cause of Carpenter's rebellion against society, 'With him it was really a case of social maladjustment. He was not happy in the class in which he was born. . . . He did not revolt from a sense of duty, or to make a splash, but because he wanted to'.⁶⁷ In Where Angels Fear to Tread and

The Longest Journey, the phrase 'new life' relates both to Dante's La Vita Nuova, and Carpenter's Towards Democracy, and each novel culminates in the vision of male comradeship. Tony Brown traces the influence of Carpenter in A Room with a View. He points out that the Emersons challenge the English middle-class conventions and their alternative vision is similar to Carpenter's in Love's Coming-of-Age (1897); also, the pastoral community of brotherhood in 'The Other Side of the Hedge' (1904) is akin to that portrayed in Carpenter's essays and Towards Democracy.⁶⁸ The conception of Maurice owes to Forster's visit to Carpenter and George Merrill at Millthorpe in September 1913.⁶⁹

Forster wrote to Carpenter from Alexandria in 1917 and in his letters to Florence Barger in the same year he recommended Carpenter's autobiography My Days and Dreams to her.⁷⁰ However, Forster rapidly outgrew the teachings of Whitman and Carpenter and he believed that in Maurice he had taken the theme of homosexual love further than either of his predecessors. In an entry in his Commonplace Book, December 1929, Forster criticizes the 'thin whistling rhetoric' of Edward Carpenter's poems. Forster quotes Gerald Heard's summarization of Carpenter, 'An echo. Walt Whitman was the first who blew through that hollow reed. Morris, J. A. Symonds - there you have the whole. He knew nothing, he couldn't think', and adds, 'The verdict of history, I suppose, and our so called knowledge of the past is made up of such verdicts'.⁷¹ As Forster was aware, the various expositions of homosexual love were dated and his

own description of the relationship between Maurice and Alec Scudder in Maurice was attacked as untenable (See the chapter on Maurice).

Homoerotic Narrative in the School Story

A genre particularly suited to homosexual love affairs in the nineteenth century was the school story. While homosexuality was banned in society at large, it flourished easily in certain institutions, all male groupings such as the army, ships at sea, the prisons and the English public school.

The nineteenth century school story encompassed a predominantly male world, with women and home life peripheral to it. The surge of school stories in the nineteenth century is explained by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff:

Like the pagan deities who have shrunk in peasant mythology to be elves and pooks and suchlike mannikins, these creatures, banished from the polite reading of the Victorians, reappeared instantly in that grotesque microcosm of life which the Victorians invented for one of their tightest repressions, the School Story.⁷²

The success of Thomas Hughes' Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857), was followed by a spate of homoerotic school stories. Hughes' novel is not homoerotic, but writers after him used the narrative of the school story to highlight male friendships. Dean Farrar's Eric, or Little by Little (1858), H. O. Sturgis' Tim (1891), John Gambril Nicholson's

A Story of Cliffe School (1895?), Ashley Clarke's Jaspar Tristram (1899), Scott-Moncrieff's 'Evensong and Morwesong' (1908) in New Field, II, are examples of school stories with a homoerotic strain.

The schools were also places for classical learning, and considering the role of classical literature in homosexual discourse and identity, it is unsurprising that a majority of the apologists of homoerotic love in the nineteenth century, should have been either schoolmasters or clergymen. Carpenter's views on school education in The Intermediate Sex (1908) inspired Dr Cecil Reddie, the founder of Abbotsholme and the 'New School Movement'. At Abbotsholme, the boys, 'were taught that the human body was a thing of natural beauty, they bathed naked and were overlooked by a myriad of plaster casts of nude boys which filled the school buildings, even surmounting the memorial altar in the school chapel'.⁷³ With the introduction of sports in education, the schools and universities seemed even more strikingly similar to a Greek palaestra. Gascoigne Mackie's verses Charmides, or 'Oxford Twenty Years Ago' (1898) are a flashback of the poet's friendship with a boy when at Oxford. Charmides was another nineteenth century homosexual motif from classical literature Plato's first dialogue is called Charmides, after a beautiful youth renowned for his moderation, and Wilde wrote a poem by that title in 1881. Edward Perry Warren's novel A Tale of Pausanian Love (1927) and Evelyn Waugh's Brideshead Revisited (1945) are twentieth century treatments of the subject of friendships at Oxford.

Therefore, some writers turned the school story into a homosexual romance. Brian Reade says of H. O. Sturgis' novel, that Tim is 'the story of a romantic affair', but 'in the story are allusions to sentiments for which the English language seems no longer right'.⁷⁴ The expression of love and sentiment, particularly among men, was disapproved of in the English middle-classes, in their emphasis on empire building and social and political control. Sheila Rowbotham indicates the link between dominance and emotional repression:

The connection between withholding emotion, a kind of thrift of the senses, and manliness created an obsessive fear of love between men, which appears with particular intensity in the last quarter of the century. Sentiment, which had been acceptable in the nineteenth century was regarded in a new light.⁷⁵

The homoerotic school story differs from the normal school story such as Thomas Hughes' novel in being sentimental, and emphasizes relationships and affections of boys rather than their toughness and loyalty to school and country. As Rowbotham suggests, the homosexual school stories differed from the traditional ones in that they portrayed emotional intensities between men. Forster spent two very unhappy years, from 1893-95, at Tonbridge School which he depicted in the 'Sawston' section of The Longest Journey. As it is evident in The Longest Journey and Maurice, Cambridge provided Forster with happier memories of friendship with men. Parts of Forster's narrative in The Longest Journey and Maurice are in the genre of the

homoerotic school story, although both novels are critical of the educational institutions they describe.

Carpenter defended the homosexual temperament by playing down the sexual side of their relationship so that, 'the defect of the male Uranian, or Urning, is not sensuality - but rather sentimentality'.⁷⁶ In keeping with other homosexuals, Forster too affirmed the validity of the emotional and sentimental. Furbank affirms that Forster's ambition, since his earliest work, had been to write of 'passion and magic and sentiment', knowing that 'for one writing under the shadow of Flaubert and the fin-de-siecle, this was an unfashionable aim'.⁷⁷ However, he was aware that sentimental writing was no longer popular and feared that his themes might be anachronistic. In a letter dated 28 October 1905, Forster wrote to Robert Trevelyan of his first novel, Where Angels Fear to Tread, 'What I want, I think, is the sentimental, but the sentimental reached by no easy beaten track - I cannot explain myself properly . . . In fact my equipment is frightfully limited, but so good in parts that I want to do with it what I can'.⁷⁸ Forster found it difficult to achieve his aim not only because sentimental texts were unpopular, but also because in his fiction sentiment relates to emotions of men. In a letter of 12 May 1907, he wrote to G. L. Dickinson, 'All I write, is to me, sentimental. A book which doesn't leave people either happier or better than it found them, which doesn't add some permanent treasure to the world, isn't worth doing . . . This is my 'theory', and I maintain it's sentimental - . . .'.⁷⁹ Forster did not compromise his commitment, and

in novel after novel, he uses his talent to delineate love and friendship between men.

Forster's novels focus on the theme of personal relations and inner life, but for all his harping on a passionate life, he was unable to give an outlet to homoerotic desire. Hence the odd quality about Forster's work, where the author's discourse is not manifested either through the characters or the plot. Forster's failure to conceptualize passionate relationships earned him the reputation of being old maid-ish and spinsterly. Forster is not squeamish, but passion is diffuse in Foster's fiction and the narrator approaches sexual encounters evasively. Sheila Rowbotham's assessment of Forster's work is shrewd; she says that,

Forster's concealment of the physical aspect of male love gives a strangely hemmed-in intensity to his writing. Perhaps in the end it congeals his creativity. The strain of carrying physical passion within, revealing only in a hint, a touch, a caress, a glance, a slight movement, is both considerable and debilitating.⁸⁰

The sense of restriction is evident only in those novels where the author was under pressure to hide the homoerotic feeling in his narratives. Nevertheless, Forster's urbanity of tone does not preclude obscenity although, significantly, it is attributed to characters who are not from the English middle-class, such as the working class Mrs Aberdeen telling Agnes about Rickie's bleeding nose, or the Indian Aziz talking to Fielding about Adela's breasts. Forster complained of Henry James characters that, 'They

are incapable of fun, of rapid motion, of carnality and of nine-tenths of heroism. Their clothes will not take off, the diseases that ravage them are anonymous'.⁸¹ Forster's characters do take their clothes off except that only the male protagonists are seen naked as in the bathing scene of A Room with a View. In contrast to the novels, most of Forster's short stories are explicit and revel in the sexual contacts between men.

Inter-Class Affairs

Homosexual literature is not only an offshoot of Romanticism but also of romantic fiction. Gay novels, Ian Young says, are 'among the last remaining examples of Romantic literature' in that they are concerned with 'the struggle to discover, create or sustain personal values and choices in the face of social hostility or indifference - or with the consequences of the failure of that struggle'. A homosexual novel delineates 'alienation, individualism versus social conformity, the interplay between value and act, the worth of personal relationships, the meaning of sex, and not the least, the nature of love'.⁸² One of the most potent ways of embodying the conflict between individual and society is through class differences. So a pervasive motif in homosexual writings, which also gave poignance to the school story, is what d' Arch Smith calls the 'Prince and Pauper' theme.⁸³ As Carpenter wrote to Forster of Maurice-Alec relationship, that 'though

improbable', it 'is not impossible and is the one bit of real romance - which those who understand will love'.⁸⁴ In moving from their own milieu to a lower class. the homosexual writers not only transgressed against social norms but were also able to break free of inhibitions.

Interclass relations became almost imperative to homosexual love. J. A. Symonds and Oscar Wilde consorted with men from lower ranks; Rolfe and Lord Alfred Douglas were partial to telegraph boys; Edward Fitzgerald established friendship with Joseph Fletcher, a Lowestoft fisherman, his 'Posh'; Henry Scott Tuke painted portraits of Falmouth fisher-lads; Whitman's relationship with Peter Doyle, and Edward Carpenter's with George Merrill are well known examples of friendship in this mould.⁸⁵

The homosexual writers, in reacting to social division, reveal their own class consciousness. Charles Kains Jackson and his group of friends defined homoerotic love in terms of the aristocratic ideal of 'chivalry' whereas Whitman and Edward Carpenter described male love in terms of the working class socialistic ideal of 'comrades'. The various ideals, of course, are congruent in being rationales for male love. Carpenter's proclamations of democracy chime with the sentiments of brotherhood and fellowship in the Oxford Movement, on the one hand, and with the code of honour of New Chivalry, on the other. Brian Reade notes the 'quiet combination of Platonic and Neo-Gothic ideals' in the work of F. W. Faber and 'the confluence of the Romantic and Tractarian chivalry' in the ideals of J. A. Symonds.⁸⁶ D' Arch Smith says that 'Cory's

brand of passive inversion ran parallel but not counter to the 'muscular' and aggressive masculinity which was the ideal product of the public school regime'.⁸⁷ He explains that,

'Chivalry' was a new word for a new conception in Uranian circles, one that ran parallel to Carpenter's democratic ideals and appealed to the more right-wing and reactionary members of the group such as Rolfe who was indeed to start writing a counterblast to Carpenter's 'perfidious' creeds, Towards Aristocracy. The irreligious, socialistic dogmas of the prose-poem offended his Catholic beliefs and he wrote to a friend that although he found 'some perfectly sumptuous verses' in it, his opinion of its doctrine was 'damnisssimable'.⁸⁸

While the homosexuals scorned class barriers and asserted brotherhood and comradeship between men, their claims were mostly theoretical. Homosexual relations involved their own kind of hierarchy and customs. D' Arch Smith comments that the argument of the homosexual writers against social division was sound, but 'its fault lies in the fact that it was never advocated by the Uranians that the position be reversed and a relationship be as easily established between a labourer and a blue-blooded boy'.⁸⁹ The homosexual relations in the school stories, Eric or Little by Little, Tim and Jaspar Tristram, are in the chivalric mode of the young, weak, boy protected by his older and stronger friend. However, the relationships of the boys in these stories are an extension of society at

large and both authors conform to social conventions in that the union of friends is not allowed to take place.

In Forster's novels, middle-class attitudes are antithetical to homoerotic love. The working class characters in Forster provide an alternative to middle-class values and bring sexual licence. The Longest Journey and Maurice encompass class differences, but these are superseded by the intellectual companionship of the protagonists. Ansell objects to Rickie's friendliness with Hornblower not from social snobbery, but because Rickie 'wants to link us to the beefy set' (LJ, p. 19). The social gap between Maurice and Alec seems wider than that between Clive and Maurice because the former pair do not even have the same intellectual background.

Homoerotic desire in Forster's novels plays havoc with social hierarchies; class considerations attach to marriage and domestic life whereas friendship overturns those social structures. It is with a vengeance that Forster's heroes are without social grace - Maurice discovers that Alec is a butcher's son; similarly, the narrator mocks Philip as he finds out that Gino is a dentist's son. Forster deliberately creates his male protagonists as socially unacceptable so that the relationship with them is purely on the grounds of love and friendship. George Emerson is a railway clerk, Stephen Wonham is a farmer's son, and Leonard Bast is a clerk in an insurance company. Aziz is a doctor but he has no social standing.

Class in Forster is superfluous to love, and as will be seen in Howards End, the class issue really provides a

ground for a comprehensive critique of society that stifles homoerotic desire. Society in England is class bound, therefore the characters escape to a foreign country or some other idyll. The narrator says in A Room with a View, 'in Italy, where anyone who chooses may warm himself in equality, as in the sun, this conception of life vanished'. Italy awakens passion in Lucy and 'she felt that there was no one whom she might not get to like, that social barriers were irremovable, doubtless, but not particularly high. You jump over them just as you jump into a peasant's olive-yard in the Apennines, and he is glad to see you' (RV, p. 110). The passage indicates the slippage in Forster's narratives from the heterosexual to the homoerotic plane. The analogy of crossing class barriers with jumping over into an Italian peasant's olive-yard applies not so much to Lucy as to male protagonists. Yet, for all his metaphors of social harmony, Forster was unable to 'overleap class' and make a transition to classless society which he thought essential to relations between men; homoerotic desire, therefore, remains unfulfilled in Forster's novels except in Maurice where the lovers retreat into an imaginary greenwood.⁹⁰

All of Forster's novels broach the subject of chivalry and comradeship, though Forster mediates his themes through heterosexual relations. Forster's heroes - Gino, George, Stephen, Aziz and Maurice - are unchivalrous men. Where Angels Fear to Tread, A Room with a View, Howards End and Maurice propose a new chivalry instead of the etiolated chivalry of men to women. Lilia's marriage to Gino fails because of the old form of chivalry is dead, 'that the

struggle was national; that generations of ancestors, good, bad or indifferent, forbade the Latin man to be chivalrous to the northern woman, the northern woman to forgive the Latin man' (WA, pp. 50-51). Harriet condemns Gino because he has been 'unchivalrous to a woman' and Philip defends Gino's behaviour, 'It's no more a supreme test than anything else. The Italians never were chivalrous from the first' (WA, p. 78). George is not concerned with Lucy's presence when the Italian man is murdered, 'But he lacked chivalry; his thoughts like his behaviour, would not be modified by awe' (RV, p. 44). Cecil, in contrast, is inadequate due to his chivalry, 'He had no glimpse of the comradeship for which the girl's soul yearned' (RV, p. 154). Mr Emerson arouses chivalry in Lucy, 'not the worn out chivalry of sex, but the true chivalry that all the young may show to all the old' (RV, p. 200). The chivalry of the young to the old recalls the homoerotic relationships in Plato. Margaret, in Howards End, protests against the patronizing chivalry of the Wilcox men.

The concept of chivalry is linked with male comradeship. In A Room with a View Freddy invites George for a bathe in the pool and Mr Emerson says, 'In this - not in other ways - we men are ahead. We despise the body less than women do. But not until we are comrades shall we enter the Garden' (RV, p. 126). Women are not equal to men in comradeship, but even men must learn to be comrades before they can attain paradise. In Howards End the novel's theme of connection culminates in a vision of male comradeship, 'connect - connect without bitterness until all men are

brothers' (HE, p. 266). The Longest Journey and Maurice combine the ideal of comradeship in the school story narrative. Maurice progresses from the chivalric to the socialistic ideal of comradeship.

Homosexuality and Journey

Stephen Adams discusses the relevance of journey in homosexual fiction and says that in contrast to the present slogan of 'coming out', 'in the past "going away" was the more likely starting point in the homosexual's assertion of his or her identity.'. Thus 'the image of a journey away from conventional society gives a characteristic form to the novels that deal with passage from self-concealment to self-expression'.⁹¹ Homosexual literature, according to Adams, by its very nature is restricted to a few genres, a generalization which does not hold true either for Forster or the nineteenth century writers:

In a period when homosexuals must fight for the right to form relationships at all, they are not likely to be accorded the luxury of ordinariness by being represented, say, in the comedy of manners with its scrutiny of domestic life - except perhaps as caricatures. Frequent recourse to the picaresque reflects the form into which homosexual experience is commonly forced. Apart from the fiction of Gore Vidal and Baldwin in which social protest is shaped around journeys and missions of their heroes, writers as different as Christopher Isherwood and John Rechy,

illustrate by their use of 'travelogue' frameworks the vagrant and exiled status of the homosexual. If the picaresque is one way of accommodating the extraordinary quality of homosexual life and the imperative to set out for 'another country', other novelists less preoccupied with social realism and direct protest involve us in a different kind of journey away from everyday life - to the private worlds of individuals trapped within their compulsions and sexual obsessions.⁹²

In his search for a viable lifestyle, the homosexual in the nineteenth century became an inveterate traveller to far away places, remote history and secluded regions of the psyche. The mental passage is frequently reinforced by an external journey. The social attitudes and laws on homosexuality were more lenient on the Continent than in Britain. Italy and France provided asylum to and became favourite resorts for homosexuals from England. Byron found sexual freedom on the Continent and chose to live in exile in Greece. Symonds managed his work in England from Davos for 'Switzerland represented for him the only hope of self-effectualization'.⁹³ Lord Henry Somerset fled to Florence in 1879 when his wife threatened to expose his liaison with Harry Smith. From there he issued Songs of Adieu in 1889, about the events that had occurred ten years earlier.⁹⁴ Wilde, having served his prison sentence, migrated to France. Somerset Maugham settled in a villa in the south of France. Norman Douglas and C. K. Scott-Moncrieff are other expatriate homosexual writers. T. E. Lawrence's

participation in the Arab Revolt is another example of an estranged sensibility.

Forster's characters are visitors to Italy or India and their geographical travels are bound up with metaphysical journeys. Philip's excursion into Italy is emphasized by lines from Dante. Gino recites the opening verse of the *Inferno* to Philip at their first meeting:

Midway this way of life we're bound upon,

I woke to find myself in a dark wood,

Where the right road was wholly lost and gone (WA, p. 24).

Philip's trip to Italy takes him to an unknown destination, and indeed, it is by abandoning the familiar track that he finds friendship with Gino. Rickie Elliot's intangible passage and the title of the novel, The Longest Journey refer to Shelley's Epipsychidion. The lines from Shelley's poem express the inadequacy of conventional relationships in personal fulfilment:

I never ^{was} attached to that great sect,

Whose doctrine is that each one should select

Out of the world a mistress or a friend,

And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend

To cold oblivion-though it is the code

Of modern morals, and the beaten road

Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread

Who travel to their home among the dead

By the broad highway of the world- and so

With one sad friend, perhaps a jealous foe,

The dreariest and the longest journey go (LJ, pp. 126-27).

Shelley's poem was written to justify his love for Emilia Viviani and is an eloquent plea for passion and intimacy in relationships other than marriage. Mrs Elliot and Robert in The Longest Journey go away to Stockholm to fulfil their illicit love affair. Jeffrey Meyers says that, 'Forster sometimes had to go to Stockholm to find the sexual license denied to him in England'.⁹⁵ Lasker Jones in Maurice, when he cannot cure the hero's homosexuality, advises him to emigrate.

With Edward Carpenter, G. L. Dickinson, Forster and J. R. Ackerley, their homosexual quest extended to India. The journey theme in Forster's last novel alludes to Whitman's poem 'Passage to India'. Whitman celebrates the opening of the Suez Canal but the scientific achievement sparks the poet's imagination to other possibilities:

Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
The young maturity of brood and bloom,
To realms of budding bibles. . . .
Passage to more than India! (ll. 165-169 and 1.224).

Forster's short stories highlight the metaphorical aspect of his journeys. The road in 'The Other Side of the Hedge' represents the walk of life and it is by leaving the path on which everybody else is running that the man discovers his brother. The boy in 'The Celestial Omnibus' goes to heaven and experiences beauty, passion and all the experiences that everyday life belittles. When he returns home, the boy is punished for talking nonsense about the celestial omnibus. His father sarcastically calls him 'the

great traveller' which the boy is in fact for the ride in the omnibus is no mean feat. Mr Bons who deigns to accompany the boy does not survive his journey. The outward voyage in 'The Other Boat' provides an occasion for the sexual escapade of Lionel March and Cocoanut.

The theme of homosexual journey as exile inevitably produced feelings of treason, voiced in Forster's assertion that if he had to choose between betraying his country and betraying his friend he hoped that he would have the guts to betray his country. Jean Genet, speaking of his lover, records, 'Stilitano might have betrayed his country and I mine out of love for Stilitano'.⁹⁶ This combination of homosexuality, journey and the betrayal of one's country is evident again in Julien Mitchell's dramatization of Guy Burgess' life in Another Country (first produced in 1981 and first published in 1982).

Travel to another country brought relationships with men of another race. Inter-racial affairs held the same attractions as inter-class friendships. Going abroad served a practical purpose:

Travel to foreign places may lead not only to new friendships, but to friendships of a different order, habits or inhibitions dissolving among unfamiliar customs or under a different sun. An example of this occurs in Thomas Mann's Death in Venice when the austere, self-disciplined, German author becomes enchanted by the Polish child, Tadzio. In a wider, less morbid context, it is the theme of Henry James' The Ambassadors. Sometimes the emphasis will lie more on new scenes and customs than on

the observing, and perhaps resisting, heart. Colonel T. E. Lawrence does not approve of the extremes to which his Arabs went, but his disavowal has emotional undertones. Many native peoples put, or used to put, a delightful trust in their white visitors . . .⁹⁷

Symonds' *In the Key of Blue* (1893) is a collection of essays on a journey with Augusto and the beauty of the Venetian man against various backgrounds. Symonds is said to have sent Charles Kains Jackson a young Swiss to prove to him the handsomeness of that race. Influenced by Symonds, Rolfe or Baron Corvo wrote Stories Toto Told Me (1883) in memory of the boys he had met in Italy. Ernst Haeckel's A Visit to Ceylon (1883) is a panegyric to the beauty of a Singhalese youth. Carpenter was on the same trail when he visited Ceylon (1890-91), and in From Adam's Peak to Elephanta: Sketches in Ceylon and India (1892) he praises the half-naked bodies of Cinghalese men. Carpenter knew John Moray Stuart-Young who migrated to Africa and wrote poems on a Liberian half-caste boy, Ibrahim.

Forster's first sexually consummated love affair was in Alexandria, with Mohammed el Adl, 'a young, slightly negroid-looking Egyptian'.⁹⁸ His love for Syed Ross Masood finds an expression in the friendship of Aziz and Fielding in A Passage to India. Of the short stories 'The Life to Come' portrays the affection between an English missionary and a young African chief, and 'The Other Boat' between an English soldier and a boy of a mixed birth.

Orientalism in Homosexual Writing

One strand of travel in the nineteenth century took the form of 'orientalism', the propensity of seeing the foreign country as the exotic Other to England. Whilst the English Grand Tourist visited France and Italy, Greece still remained a remote country. Once travel to Greece became easier, the East took on the connotations of the mysterious and the inaccessible. Richard Jenkyns elaborates on the process by which the north-south metaphor gradually expanded into the east-west dichotomy. Jenkyns quotes from The Stones of Venice and says, 'Ruskin, in fact, associates the south with the east; the very name Gothic, he says, implies a degree of sternness "in contradistinction to the character of Southern and Eastern nations"'.⁹⁹ To Byron in The Giaour, 'the balminess of the Greek climate had seemed as much oriental as southern: the islands were "Edens of the Eastern wave. . . . Far from the winters of the west"'.¹⁰⁰ Jenkyns continues that,

Flecker, who was in the British consular service at Syria and Beirut, grew keenly conscious of how strange the Greeks can appear from an Asian vantage point. Greece and Italy become the inscrutable occident, the mysterious west; the Pope is transformed into the Caliph of Rum. In Hassan, an orgy of camp orientalism, Flecker indulges himself with these ideas. . . . Flecker reverses the usual process by orientalizing Plato and Aristotle.¹⁰¹

Flecker's 'particular brands of Hellenism and orientalism went naturally together: both classical antiquity and the

mysterious east provided suitable settings for escapist fantasy'.¹⁰² William Jones' Asiatic Researches (1799), Edward Pococke's India in Greece: or, Truth in Mythology (1852) and Max Mueller's 'Oxford Essays' (1856) were works that studied the oriental origins of Greek myths.

The north-south and east-west polarities were manipulated by homosexual writers because, 'Ancient Greece had produced the literary treatments of homosexuality and Italy was where it was practised at the present day; in either case the imagination dwelt upon the Mediterranean world. Greece and Italy came together in Sicily . . .',¹⁰³ Symonds' Sketches in Italy and Greece is a homosexual text in orientalism. A German count, Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden, lived in the Sicilian village of Taormina from where he sent nude photographs of local youth for Joseph William Gleeson White's magazine, the Studio. Von Gloeden's photographs inspired Theodore William Graf Wratislaw's poem 'To a Sicilian Boy' in the Artist (1893) included in his suppressed book of Uranian verse Caprices: Poems (1893).

Some of the Oriental sources for homosexual motifs are Edward Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam (1859), Sir Richard Burton's translation of The Arabian Nights (1885), and the religious homoeroticism of Sufi poetry, particularly the verses of Hafiz, though these translations were invariably censored. To this were added the Bhagavad Gita and the motif of Krishna from the Indian literature.

Carpenter's story Narrayan (1899) deals with the friendship of two Indian youths. Thomas Mann's The Transposed Heads: A Legend of India (1941) is another

homoerotic tale based on the Indian story Haya Vadana meaning 'Half Horse'. It is a story of friendship and love of two men mediated through a woman they both love.

Forster's short story, 'The Story of ^aPanic' is set in Ravello, 'The Road from Colonus' in Greece, 'The Story of the Siren' and 'Albergo Empedocle' in Sicily. Mr Wilcox, in Howards End, tells Margaret that he tips waiters everywhere he goes:

"Then the fellows know one again. Especially in the East, if you tip, they remember you from year's end to year's end."

"Have you been in the East?"

"Oh, Greece and the Levant. I used to go out for sport and business to Cyprus; . . ." (HE, p. 149).

In The Longest Journey, Agnes enters Rickie's room at Cambridge, 'On the table were dirty teacups, a flat chocolate cake, and Omar Khayyam, with an Oswego biscuit between his pages' (LJ, p. 9). Rickie's marriage fogs his mind, 'behind the yearning there remained a yearning, behind the drawn veil a veil that he could not draw', and the veil is an oriental metaphor.

Forster first went to India in 1912 with Dickinson and Bob Trevelyan and in preparation of his trip, he read Sakuntala and the Gita. Forster visited India twice thereafter, in 1921 and then for three months in 1943. His accounts of India are contained in Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1934), The Hill of Devi (1953) and a group of essays 'The East' in Abinger Harvest, one of which, 'Hymn Before Action' (1912), is on the Gita. Forster wrote

articles on India to the end of his career - on Hinduism, Tagore, reviews of Kipling's work and of books on Indian architecture and sculpture. He reviewed W. G. Archer's The Loves of Krishna and the 'Introduction' of the book refers to 'Krishna the adored lover'. In A Passage to India Aziz invokes memories of the Persian-Arabic culture of the Mogul emperors, while Godbole chants a hymn to Krishna and begs him to 'come'.

Conclusion

The themes of friendship and brotherhood in Forster's novels and short stories are drawn from a well-founded tradition of homosexual literature prevalent in the nineteenth century. Forster's concern for personal relations must be understood in the context of contemporary social and sexual mores and the repression of homosexuality. The following chapters offer a homosexual reading of Forster's narratives and examine the effect of homoerotic desire in each novel.

1. Weeks, Coming Out, p. 3.
2. Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 188.
3. Ibid., p. 193.
4. Sexual Heretics, p. 1.
5. 'Ganymede Raped: Gay Literature - The Critic as Censor', The Male Homosexual in Literature: A Bibliography, 2nd edition (1975; rpt. N J & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1982), p. 278-279.
6. The Renaissance. Studies in Art and Poetry, 6th edition (1873; rpt. London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1920), p. 237.
7. Love in Earnest. Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1889 to 1930 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 53.
8. Coming Out, p. 21.
9. Letter dated 16 December 1929, cited in Letters to T E Lawrence, p. 72.
10. Weeks refers to the relationship of Whitman and Peter Doyle, and Carpenter and Merrill in Coming Out, p. 79; see also Walt Whitman: The Correspondence, Volume II: 1868-1875, edited by Edwin Haviland Miller, 3 Volumes (New York: New York University Press, 1961-69). For Oscar Wilde, see The Letters of Oscar Wilde, edited by Rupert Hart-Davis (1962; rpt. London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1963), and for Forster see Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, Volume One.
11. Greek Homosexuality (London: Duckworth, 1978), p. 162.
12. Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality, p. 49.
13. Passion and Society, translated by Montgomery Belgion (1940; rpt. London: Faber, 1956), p. 65.
14. Cited by Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality, p. 135.
15. Ibid., p. 318.
16. Coming Out, p. 12.
17. Ibid., pp. 12-20 and 176.
18. The Homosexual Literary Tradition: An Interpretation, p. iii.

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25. Cited by H. M. Hyde, The Other Love : An Historical and Contemporary Survey of Homosexuality in Britain (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 1.
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28. Sex and Sensibility: Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 3.
29. All quotations from Phaedrus and Symposium are from The Dialogues of Plato, translated by B. Jowett, 8th edition (1871; rpt. New York: Random House, 1937). The name of the dialogue and paragraph numbers are indicated in parenthesis after the quotation.
30. John Addington Symonds: A Biography (London: Longmans, 1964), 267.
31. Patricia Merivale, Pan the Goat-God (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 1.
32. Towards Democracy (Manchester: Swan Sonnenschein, 1911) p. 20.
33. The Homosexual Literary Tradition: An Interpretation, p. 128.
34. See Timothy d' Arch Smith, Love in Earnest.
35. Sexual Heretics, p. 8.
36. Studies of the Greek Poets (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1873), p. 400 and p. 408.

37. Cited by d' Arch Smith, Love in Earnest, p. 3.
38. 'The Genius of Plato', Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures (1893; rpt. London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1920), pp. 134-135.
39. Studies of the Greek Poets, pp. 241-42.
40. E. M. Forster: A Life , Volume One, p. 70.
41. In Two Cheers for Democracy, pp. 77-86.
42. Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, Volume One, p .51.
43. E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume One, p. 132.
44. Ibid.
45. Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, Volume One, p. 248-49.
46. 'The Paterian Mode in Forster's Fiction', E. M. Forster: Centenary Revaluations, pp. 99-112, pp. 107-108.
47. Ibid., p. 102.
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49. 'Ivory Tower', appeared in London Mercury, XXXIX, 1938, pp. 119-30 and 'Art for Art's Sake', is published in Two Cheers for Democracy, pp. 87-93.
50. Coming Out, p. 49.
51. See A Bibliography of Edward Carpenter, Sheffield City Libraries (Sheffield: 1949), p. 19.
52. 'The Celestial Omnibus', in Collected Short Stories of E. M. Forster.
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54. Ibid., p. 19.
55. Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis (London: Pluto Press, 1977), p. 43.
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64. Albergo Empedocle and Other Writings by E. M. Forster, p. 155.
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73. Love in Earnest, p. 23.
74. Sexual Heretics, p. 48.
75. Socialism and the New Life, p. 33.
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98. E. M. Forster: A Life, Vol. Two, pp. 36-38.
99. The Victorians and Ancient Greece, p. 50.
100. Ibid. p. 50.
101. Ibid., p. 51.

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103. Ibid., p. 291.

Chapter 3

The Structure of Desire in Where Angels Fear to Tread

Where Angels Fear to Tread illustrates the doubts and dilemmas that beset Forster in his first attempts to write a novel. The novel reveals the author's initial struggles towards creating a style that was appropriate to his purposes. As in all of Forster's novels, the narrative operates on two levels - the conspicuous structure of domestic comedy disguises the homoerotic subtext that unfolds with the metaphor of journey. At this stage, it is relatively easy to extricate the homosexual strain from the heterosexual structure of the text. With each novel the convergence between the apparent and the hidden becomes progressively more skilful until in A Passage to India the fusion of the two layers is complete. Where Angels Fear to Tread already touches on themes that become major concerns in the later novels.

The Form of Desire

Forster began and ended his literary career by writing direct homosexual stories. 'Albergo Empedocle' was published in Temple Bar in 1903 while 'The Story of ^aPanic', 'The Other Side of the Hedge', and 'The Road from Colonus'

appeared in The Independent Review in 1904. His later stories, composed during 1922-1961, are collected in The Life to Come and Other Stories and Arctic Summer and Other Fiction.

It is evident from these works that Forster had no difficulty regarding the content of his fiction. As Elizabeth Heine points out, that Nottingham Lace, Ralph and Tony and 'The Tomb of Pletone', 'these three early works are relatively free of corrections, suggesting that Forster wrote out the stories with ease and then chose to abandon them rather than struggle with their unsatisfactory structures, though he might use the same material again in a different form'.¹ Nottingham Lace focused on topics that would become familiar Forsterian themes, 'suburban class-consciousness, public-school insensitivity, and the awakening of a passive, inhibited youth by the example of a more vigorous young man of different class and culture'.² The subject of the transformation of a middle-class Englishman with an undeveloped heart through passionate experience was one that preoccupied Forster in all his fiction. Forster described the crux of his novels in the Commonplace Book in 1930, 'Two people pulling each other into salvation is the only theme I find worthwhile. Not the rescuer and rescued, not alternating performances of good turns, but It takes two to make a Hero'.³ Forster's comment implicitly juxtaposes the salvation theme against the heterosexual plot of the rescue of a damsel in distress. The theme of salvation in Forster's novels is essentially homoerotic in that both the saviour and the saved are both

male characters who complement one another to create an ideal of homoerotic love, or 'make a Hero'.

But Forster faced insurmountable problems in finding an effective channel for homoerotic themes. Years after he had given up writing fiction, Forster wrote the reasons for his frustration in his diary of 16 July 1964, 'Suddenly remembered a short story I tore up a couple of years ago like a fool, called Adventure Week . . . It was a craftsman['s] dissatisfaction that destroyed it'.⁴ In his novels Forster was trying to fit homosexual narratives into predominantly heterosexual genres, and as such the weight of tradition was against him. The stages of Forster's toil are interesting for they provide an insight into the design of Where Angels Fear to Tread.

While still at Cambridge, in 1900 or early 1901, Forster wrote some fragmentary drafts which are now known as Nottingham Lace.⁵ He carried these notes on his travels to Italy, Sicily and Austria in October 1901. Sometime between 10 December 1901 and 9 February 1902, Forster abandoned Nottingham Lace for a plan of a 'Lucy' novel. These 'Old Lucy' notes branched into the 'New Lucy Novels', a manuscript begun in 1903, which finally produced A Room with a View.⁶ In 1904, Forster was working simultaneously on the 'Lucy' and 'Gino' novels, another novel about Wiltshire and an edition of the Aeneid, interrupting these projects to write short stories.⁷ However, by 2 December 1904, the Lucy scripts had been overtaken by the Gino novel. The novel was first called 'Rescue', and then

'Monteriano', but ultimately published as *Where Angels fear to Tread* in October 1905.⁸

Yet, at this time, even some of Forster's short stories were being returned by the publishers. In a diary entry at the end of 1904 Forster recorded that "'Gemistus Pletho" and "The Story of the Siren" have gone the rounds and failed' and Oliver Stallybrass adds that, 'both "the Purple Envelope" and "The Rock" are known to have been rejected by at least one editor, and a similar fate probably attended "The Helping Hand".⁹ Elizabeth Heine says that by "Gemistus Pletho" Forster was probably referring to the story "The Tomb of Pletone" rather than his essay by that title; In a letter of 25 August 1904, Forster wrote to E. J. Dent, 'How crooked the world is: for my compositions are returned because they are too long "as well as being hopelessly perverse and overstrained in their attempts at epigrams"'.¹⁰ Forster had written to Dent in late April of 'The Tomb of Pletone' that he was 'engaged on the impossible - a short historical story'. Elizabeth Heine comments that the story 'preserves his unsatisfactory efforts to fuse the history with imagined scenes of nightmarish violence, as well as with his characteristic themes of brotherly friendship and sacrifice'.¹¹ This mixing of the realistic and the fantasy modes indicates the dilemma that confronted Forster for he realized that his view of reality was fundamentally at odds with that of contemporary society. The real world did not endorse homoerotic passion and was therefore unreal for him; hence love between men occurs in the spaces of imagination or

fantasy which necessarily had greater reality for Forster than the tangible world.

The solution Forster devised was to posit the real world against the imaginary one, connecting the two by means of journey, so that both realms reflect and counter-reflect each other. Forster said of Where Angels Fear to Tread that it,

grew into a novel of contrasts. On the one hand was the English suburbs with the gray inhibited life that I knew only too well, and on the other hand was Monteriano, a romantic hill town which I established in Tuscany on the basis of San Gimignano.¹²

Thus the English, middle-class heterosexual values are offset by the passionate, and invariably homoerotic, experiences afforded by the foreign country. While the English society is depicted in terms of social criticism and the realistic mode, the Other region contains elements of fantasy.

Already Forster's short stories, which were homoerotic fantasies, had been inspired by 'the genius loci' of Italy and Greece.¹³ 'The Story of ^a Panic' had rushed into Forster's mind when he took a walk near Ravello in May 1902; the following year, 'The Road from Colonus' occurred to him in Greece, near Olympia; and in 1906, for the third time Forster conceived of the full story, 'The Rock' while visiting Gurnard's Head in Cornwall.¹⁴ In his novels, Forster further refined his techniques, and during his trips to Italy, he began to envisage a different kind of conflict than he had been trying to represent between

aesthetic and bourgeois English life in Nottingham Lace and The Lucy Novels. He began to think of an international conflict, a comedy in which England and Italy, reason and feeling, realism and imagination might be connected'.¹⁵

Forster had been unable to proceed with the fragments of his first novels because he lacked 'appropriate vehicles for his positive values'.¹⁶ Italy provided Forster with the antithesis to the English life he required, and Where Angels Fear to Tread is his first venture in combining fantasy with realism, homosexual themes in a heterosexual genre. Hence the novel's superstructure of domestic comedy is constantly modified by the adventures in Italy.

Forster's technique can be best defined, in Herz words, as comprising a 'double-plot', 'Two fictions move together in the same fictional space. Often one is true, the other a lie. Finally one or the other is displaced'. Forster's narratives involve, 'the surface heterosexual romance and the interior homosexual romance'.¹⁷ However, Herz does not elaborate how the technique of double-plot actually works in Forster's fiction nor the complex relation between the two planes of narrative. Each of Forster's novels in a fresh experiment in duplicity until in A Passage to India the demarcation between the heterosexual and the homosexual aspects of the narrative can be barely detected.

Departure from Domestic Comedy

While writing Where Angels Fear to Tread, Forster called it 'Rescue' and the previous title refers to the overt, heterosexual action of the novel.¹⁸ He took the conventional, heterosexual plot of an English woman, helpless in the clutches of a cruel man, and treats it ironically in Lilia's story. The rescue plot includes within it the potential for Philip's salvation. Thus the heterosexual and the homosexual plots are knit together into a single narrative in the stories of Lilia and Philip, but the outcome of Philip's friendship with Gino ultimately supersedes Lilia's tragedy.

Lilia's story provides a cover for the homoerotic content of the novel. Forster had planned Where Angels Fear to Tread for the development of Philip. In a letter to Robert Trevelyan, dated 28 October 1905, Forster explained the purpose of his novel:

The object of the book is the improvement of Philip, and I did really want the improvement to be a surprise. Therefore in chapters 1-2 I never hinted at the possibility, but at the same time did not demonstrate the impossibility, or did not mean to . . .

But I do begin to think (- I will say 'to fear' for it is a pity it should be so -) that this surprise method is artistically impossible wrong, . . . I disliked and do dislike finger posts, and couldn't bear in the earlier scenes the thought of inserting "Philip has other things in him besides these: watch him", however well the insertion had been made.¹⁹

As these statements show, Forster wanted to take his readers unaware of the homoerotic intent of his narrative.

Where Angels Fear to Tread opens by focussing attention on Lilia's journey, 'They were all at Charing Cross to see Lilia off' (WA, p. 1), and the text evolves from the event of Lilia's excursion to Italy. 'High spirits to begin so long a journey', comments Mrs. Herriton as Lilia's train moves out of the station (WA, p. 3). Soon after, the Herriton family have returned home and the subject of travel is continued: 'And, Granny, when will the old ship get to Italy? asked Irma', and, in the ensuing dialogue between Philip and Mrs. Herriton (WA, pp. 3-5).

More impressions of her trip are disseminated in the novel through Lilia's letters telling them about her progress across the country:

She wrote to them frequently during the winter . . . Florence she found perfectly sweet, Naples a dream, but very whiffy. In Rome one had simply to sit still and feel . . . The letter was from Monteriano, and concluded not with an unsuccessful description of the wonderful little town . . .

Lilia's next letter was also from Monteriano, . . . 'We love this place, . . . It is not only so quaint, but one sees the Italians unspoiled in all their simplicity and charm here. The frescoes are wonderful.' (WA, pp. 7-8).

However, the expedition to Italy is not for Lilia's but Philip's sake and reflects on his character. 'Here beginneth the New Life' (WA, p. 3), Philip remarks on

Lilia's departure. To Philip, the prospect of Lilia going across Italy, has a curious appeal:

He found the situation full of whimsical romance: there was something half attractive, half repellent in the thought of this vulgar woman journeying to places he loved and revered. Why should she not be transfigured? The same had happened to the Goths (WA, p. 5).

He insists to his mother, that the tour to Italy cannot be without significance,

"I do believe that Italy really and ennobles all who visit her. She is the school as well as the playground of the world. It is really to Lilia's credit that she wants to go there . . . This travel is quite a crisis for her (WA, pp. 4-5).

Philip's words ring throughout the text as Italy emerges as an alternative to English society. Lilia indeed finds a 'new life' in Italy, but it is contrary to what Philip could have imagined for her. In fact the new life that Lilia chooses is intended to be in defiance of Mrs. Herriton's and Philip's expectations. 'We were mad drunk with rebellion', Caroline Abbott tells Philip explaining the circumstances of Lilia's marriage with Gino (WA, p. 61). Lilia's behaviour is motivated largely by a reaction against the Herritons and, to her last, she does not lose her capacity for opposition. Even in the misery of her crumbling marriage, she still can think of ways of aggravating her relatives in England:

one day she took the advice of Spiridione and joined the Roman Catholic Church, or, as she called it, Santa

Deodata's. Gino approved; . . . and the whole thing was a good slap in the face for the people at home.

The people at home took the slap very soberly (WA, p. 44).

Lilia's engagement to Gino upsets their domestic life at Sawston, and briefly jolts Mrs. Herriton out of her great impassivity. The news reaches Harriet and Mrs. Herriton while they are absorbed in their all-important business of sowing peas. The scene is narrated in a sardonic tone and Forster describes Mrs. Herriton's outrage on learning of Lilia's engagement,

Suddenly she broke down over what might seem a small point. How dare she not tell me direct! How dare she write first to Yorkshire! Pray am I to hear through Mrs. Theobald . . . bear witness that for this I'll never forgive her! (WA, p. 10). As the incident closes, Mrs. Herriton, after a day of hectic activity, has resumed her customary control and manner, but beneath the surface the traces of disturbance caused by Lilia still linger:

Before Mrs. Herriton went to bed she wrote to Mrs. Theobald, using plain language about Lilia's conduct, . . .

Just as she was going upstairs she remembered that she never covered up those peas. It upset her more than anything, and again and again she struck the banisters with vexation. Late as it was, she got a lantern from the toolshed and went down the garden to rake the earth over them. The sparrows had taken every one. But countless fragments of the letter remained, disfiguring the tidy ground (WA, p. 14).

The image of the littered garden incisively captures the effect of Lilia's engagement in the Herriton household; the disruption of domestic order signifies a larger collapse of Sawston values of which Mrs. Herriton is the chief exemplar.

However, Lilia's quest for new life ends in disappointment as she realizes that her assumptions about Italy have been deluded. Lilia's aspirations, such as they are, to freedom and fulfilment, are betrayed in her marriage with Gino. Her life in Monteriano is not without restraints. The conventions of Italian society prove rather more rigorous than the demands of Sawston community and only further stifle her 'high spirits' and vitality. Lilia dies in giving birth to a son that Gino has always wanted.

Lilia's involvement with Gino prompts Philip's trips to Italy, the first to rescue her and the second to rescue her son. She is instrumental in establishing intimacy between Philip and Gino. Philip's missions to rescue Lilia and her son come to nothing, and lead instead to the friendship of the two men. Having decentred heterosexual relations in the failure of Lilia's marriage, after her death Forster prepares for Philip's journey to Italy, this time disillusioned and unencumbered by any prospect of heterosexual romance.

The novel charts Philip's initiation from a dispassionate young man to a realization of his capacity for male friendship. he 'had got a sense of beauty and a sense of humour, two most desirable gifts', but these are really substitutes for love. There is a deeper hankering in

Philip which the novel simply hints at, 'All the energies and enthusiasms of a rather friendless life had passed into the championship of beauty' (WA, pp. 54-55). Philip is unable to change society so that life can be fulfilling and, 'If he could not reform the world, he could at all events laugh at it, thus attaining at least an intellectual superiority' (WA, p. 55). Philip's intellectual pursuits are unrewarding and only make him aloof, 'He concluded that nothing could happen, not knowing that human love and love of truth sometimes conquer where love of beauty fails (WA, p. 55). In a complacent speech to Caroline he assures her,

"Miss Abbott, don't worry over me. Some people are born not to do things. I'm one of them; . . . I seem fated to pass through the world without colliding with it or moving it and I'm sure I can't tell you whether the fate's good or evil. I don't die. I don't fall in love. And if other people die or fall in love they always do it when I'm not there. You are quite right: life to me is just a spectacle" (WA, pp. 120-21).

Philip's passivity and detachment are systematically destroyed as he finds irrepressible happiness and vitality in his love and friendship for Gino.

Philip nurtures a romantic vision of Italy based on an intellectual sense of its beauty, 'At twenty-two he went to Italy with some cousins, and there he absorbed into one aesthetic whole olive-trees, blue sky, frescoes, country inns, saints, peasants, mosaics, statues, beggars' (WA, p. 54). Lilia's decision to visit Italy is a result of Philip's enthusiasm, 'It was your idea of Italian travel

that saved us', Mrs. Herriton tells Philip (WA, p. 4). He advises Lilia on her tour, "Remember," he concluded, "that it is only by going off the track that you get to know the country . . . Love and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvellous than the land" (WA, p. 1). Philip's response is mostly 'theoretical' and Lilia's journey is an enactment of his beliefs; her adventures are important for what she confronts Philip with. She rids him of his worthless aestheticism about Italy and brings him into contact with an ordinary Italian in Gino.

Whereas Lilia's journey is reported in the novel, Philip's two trips are portrayed directly. The function of Philip's first rescue mission is that rids him of his trite notions of Italy and 'Romance'. Mrs. Herriton dispatches Philip to Monteriano to negotiate the wretched business of Lilia's infatuation with some Italian man, 'he and departed for Italy reluctantly, as for something commonplace and dull' (WA, p. 14). Philip's venture challenges his beliefs, 'He was in a painful position. For three years he had sung the praises of the Italians, but he had never contemplated having one as a relative' (WA, p. 14). The news that Gino is a dentist's son upsets Philip's complacency, and in one stroke Forster wrenches the narrative free of the glorified idea of Italy:

A dentist! A dentist at Monteriano! A dentist in fairyland! False teeth and laughing-gas and the tilting chair at a place which knew . . . the Middle Ages, all fighting and holiness, and the Renaissance, all fighting and beauty! He

thought of Lilia no longer. He was anxious for himself: he feared that Romance might die.

Romance only dies with life. No pair of pincers will ever pull it out of us. But there is a spurious sentiment which cannot resist the unexpected and the incongruous and the grotesque. A touch will loosen it, and the sooner it goes from us the better. It was going from Philip now, and therefore he gave the cry of pain (WA, pp. 19-20).

The narrator rejects the popular, historical fame of Italy and advances a more specific version of the country associated with Gino. Gino's humble family origins echo of Forster's desire to be loved and hurt by a man of the lower classes.

Philip's discomfort is emphasised again when the two men meet. Gino is attractive, but Philip is unable to respond to the qualities he manifests:

Philip had seen that face before in Italy a hundred times before - seen it and loved it, for it was not merely beautiful, but had the charm which is the rightful heritage of all who are born on that soil. But he did not want to see it opposite him at dinner. It was not the face of a gentleman (WA, p. 23).

Philip is not yet ready for a relationship with Gino because he is too entrenched in the Sawston attitudes as is conveyed in his closeness with his mother.

Nevertheless, the first encounter culminates with a momentary physical contact between Philip and Gino. As Philip offers to bribe Gino to break his engagement with Lilia, the Italian youth, 'gasped and exploded and crammed

his hands into his mouth and spat them out in another explosion, and gave Philip an aimless push, which toppled him onto the bed' (WA, p. 29). The meaning of this casual and boisterous gesture and the sexual innuendo of being 'toppled onto bed' are not obvious at time but the incident builds up in significance in the latter part of the text. Philip merely treats it as an insult and returns to Sawston defeated in his endeavours to rescue Lilia.

The apprehension of new life pertains to Philip's rather than Lilia's story. On hearing of Lilia's death Philip sadly recalls,

"Here beginneth the New Life, then. Do you remember, mother, that was what we said when we saw Lilia off?"

"Yes, dear; but now it is really a New Life, because we are all at accord. Then you were still infatuated with Italy. It may be full of beautiful pictures and churches, but we cannot judge a country by anything but its men" (WA, p. 57).

As it suggested in Mrs. Herriton's reply, the quest for new life actually applies to Philip, and attained through relations between men.

The Italian baby, like the Italian marriage, is another source of 'new life' in the novel, which again arouses contention between the Italian and the Sawstonian worlds. As the novel retraces its trajectory from Sawston to Monteriano, the rescue plot is re-enacted in all its failure, and the themes of the novel recur but with subtle differences. Philip once more undertakes a mission to Gino, again on his mother's instructions, this time to intercede

in the matter of Lilia's baby. The narrative clearly harks back to his previous experiences when Philip 'was in no humour for Italy' (WA, p. 15). Meanwhile, the second Italian enterprise is in a changed mood, 'Philip saw no prospect of good, nor of beauty either. But the expedition promised to be highly comic. He was not averse to it any longer; he was simply indifferent to all in it except the humours' (WA, p. 74). The object of the second journey is to realize the possibilities that were merely hinted at in the first part of the novel.

Whereas the preceding trip had wrecked ^{Philip's spurious} sense of Romance, the second journey serves to restore a genuine experience of romance. Philip returns to Italy full of unhappiness and discontent, 'Italy, the land of beauty, was ruined for him' and 'He hated Gino, the betrayer of his life's ideal, and now that the sordid tragedy had come it filled him with pangs, not of sympathy, but of final disillusion' (WA, p. 55). He is indifferent to the outcome of his negotiations with Gino to get Lilia's baby and is determined to be responsive to the warmth and pleasures of Italy. In this state of alienation and receptivity, Philip approaches Gino one more time.

Although they parted in hostility, the memory of Gino toppling Philip onto the bed has remained with both men. While Philip nurses his wounded pride over the incident, Gino mentions the incident to his friend Spiridione, 'It sometimes happens that such things are recollected longest. I shall never see him again, of course; but it is no benefit to me that he should wish me ill. And even if he

has forgotten, I am still sorry that I toppled him onto the bed' (WA, p. 40). Then Philip hears from Caroline that Gino remembers his brush with Philip, it instantly brings 'romance' back into his life. Philip's reaction is one of sexual thrill. Caroline Abbott reports to Philip that Gino, 'asked after you, and wished he hadn't been so rude to you eighteen months ago' and Philip replies, 'What a memory the fellow has for little things!'. Philip 'turned away as he spoke, for he did not want her to see his face. It was suffused with pleasure. For an apology, which would have been intolerable eighteen months ago, was gracious and agreeable now' (WA, p. 88). This is a moment of Philip's conversion as he realizes that Gino cares for him, but the transformation is achieved is imperceptible. As if conscious that these statements would seem improbable in the text, the narrator hastens to add,

This admirable change in Philip proceeds from nothing admirable, and may therefore provoke the gibes of the cynical. But angels and other practical people will accept it reverently, and write it down as good (WA, p. 89).

The narrator's comments serve to obscure the emotional intensity of the scene, and this is one of the points at which homoerotic desire surfaces in Forster's texts only to be suppressed quickly.

The possibility of friendship with Gino presaged in Philip's conversation with Caroline materializes in the opera scene. In the riotousness and merriment of the opera house Gino hails Philip as 'his friend', 'his long-lost brother' (WA, p. 98). The pledge of Gino's friendship

brings to Philip 'the access of joy that . . . promised to be permanent' (WA, p. 116). The acknowledgement of friendship and brotherhood between Philip and Gino forms the climax of the novel against which the rescue of the Lilia's baby becomes an inconsequential matter.

Although Philip and Gino become friends and brothers, their relationship is still undefined by sexual desire. The death of Gino's baby brings the two men together physically. Whereas once Gino had playfully knocked Philip onto the bed, on this occasion he tortures Philip in a merciless display of masculine strength and sexual violence. The scene completes the other half of homoerotic desire, to be hurt by a man of the lower classes. Philip watches Caroline kissing Gino and her tenderness mirrors his own love for Gino, 'Quietly, without hysterical prayers or banging of drums, he underwent conversion. He was saved' (WA, p. 139). Through Gino, Philip is granted 'a vision of perfect friendship' (WA, p. 140), and it is his quest and his salvation that endure in the novel.

June Perry Levine describes the pattern of Forster's fiction as 'the tame in pursuit of the savage'. She explains that,

The side of the tame includes Forster's own tradition: the English professional classes, whether conservative or liberal, educated at public school and Oxbridge, possessed of secure social position, adequate income, and religious or ethical scruples of "civilized man"; the province of the savage, the "natural" man, lies outside the English ruling class; its representatives are either foreign -

Mediterranean, Eastern - or working-class English and educated not by a university but by the tribe or self.²⁰

The contrasts that Levine refers to issue basically from the theme of homoerotic love. In Philip and Gino Forster joins the tame and the savage, the intellectual and the natural man, and together they embody the Forsterian ideal of a 'Hero'.

Italy as a Romantic Construct

Italy in Where Angels Fear to Tread is conceived not in isolation but as antithetical to Sawston. As Rosenbaum comments, 'the beauty, love, cruelty and vulgarity of Monteriano are partly defined by the civility, security, complacency, and pretense of Sawston'.²¹ The novel hinges on contrasts between Monteriano and Sawston and the couplet from the Baedeker, 'Poggibonizzi, fatti in la, Che Monteriano si fa citta!' alludes to the oppositions operative in the text. Caroline overhears the young men shouting the lines and, 'Poggibonsi was revealed to her as they sang a joyless, straggling place, full of people who pretended. When she woke up she knew that it had been Sawston' (WA, p. 99).

For Caroline and Lilia, their stay in Monteriano is directly a rejection of Sawston. Caroline's appreciation for Italy detracts from her tolerance for Sawston values, 'To her imagination Monteriano had become a magic city of vice . . . Sawston, with its semi-detached houses and

snobby schools, its book-teas and bazaars, was certainly petty and dull; at times she found it even contemptible (WA, p. 69). Caroline admits to Philip that she had come to hate Sawston:

"I hated the idleness, the stupidity, the respectability, the petty unselfishness. . . . I had got an idea that everyone here spent their lives in making little sacrifices for objects they didn't care for, to please people they didn't love; that they had never learned to be sincere and, what's as bad, never learned how to enjoy themselves. That's what I thought at Monteriano (WA, p. 60).

As is expressed in Caroline's statement, Italy stands for landscapes, classicism, beauty, warmth, spontaneity, abundance and imagination against the narrowness, restrictive norms, routine, domesticity and loveless life in Sawston.

Italy liberates the characters from their inhibitions and Philip concedes that 'in Italy Lilia, however wilful and silly, was at all events growing to be a human being' (WA, p. 16). Caroline Abbott too succumbs to the attractions of Italy, 'she had paid homage to the complexity of life. For her at all events, the expedition was neither easy nor jolly. Beauty, evil, charm, vulgarity, mystery she also acknowledged this tangle, in spite of herself (WA, p. 89). As Caroline lets go of her petty morality and fears, Philip sees that, 'This stiff suburban woman was unbending before the shrine' (WA, p. 94). On the other hand, Harriet's limitations are exposed in her

incapacity to respond to Italy. The atmosphere of Italy is filled with invitation, as Philip says to her:

"There is a caffe. A prison. A theatre. A church. Walls. A view."

"Not for me, thank you," said Harriet, after a weighty pause.

"Nobody asked you, miss, you see. Now Lilia was asked by such a nice young man, with curls all over his forehead, and teeth just as white as his father makes them." (WA, p. 77).

The author mocks Harriet's narrow or flawed vision, as they travel to Monteriano in the train, 'Philip made her look out of the window because it was Virgil's birthplace, and a smut flew in her eye, and Harriet with a smut in her eye was notorious' (WA, p. 75).

The equation between Monteriano and Sawston is primarily sexual and all the other comparisons simply reinforce the idea of Italy as a romantic place. Forster's description of Italy is special and he dissociates it from the conventional impressions of the country. Philip tells Lilia, 'And don't, let me beg you, go with that awful tourist idea that Italy's only a museum of antiquities and art' (WA, p. 1). When Mrs. Herriton learns that Lilia has got engaged to someone in Monteriano, she wants to know more about the town, 'She looked up the place in Childe Harold, but Byron had not been there. Nor did Mark Twain visit it in the Tramp Abroad. The resources of literature were exhausted' (WA, p. 11). Philip's own intellectual and

aesthetic attitudes to Italy are constantly satirized in the novel.

Italy inspires romance in Lilia. Caroline Abbott says to Philip that on their first evening in Monteriano, 'Lilia went out for a walk alone, saw that Italian in a picturesque position on a wall, and fell in love' (WA, p. 58). Lilia makes Gino buy the house where, 'she had first seen him, sitting on the mud wall that faced the Volterra gate. She remembered how the evening had struck his hair, and how he had smiled down at her' (WA, p. 31). Philip is aware of the spell of Italy more than anybody else for he says to Lilia, when she is adamant about her engagement with Gino, 'I am not blaming you now. But I blame the glamour of Italy - I have felt it myself, you know (WA, p. 26).

The foreign country is posited as the unknown and the Other to English society. Philip's arrival in Italy has a surrealistic quality about it:

It was three in the afternoon when Philip left the realms of common sense. He was so weary with travelling that he had fallen asleep in the train. His fellow passengers had the usual Italian gift of divination, and when Monteriano came they knew he wanted to go there, and dropped him out. His feet sank into the hot asphalt of the platform, and in a dream he watched the train depart, . . . (WA, p. 15).

And again, when Philip travels to Italy, taking his sister from Tirol:

They travelled for thirteen hours downhill, whilst the streams broadened and the mountains shrank, and the vegetation changed, and the people ceased being ugly and drinking beer, and began instead to drink wine and to be beautiful. And the train which had picked them at sunrise out of a waste of glaciers and hotels was waltzing at sunset round the walls of Verona (WA, p. 75).

Forster delineates the topographical and cultural features of the other country in great detail only to heighten the sense of exotic. In the drive from the station to the dogana with Caroline Abbott, Philip learns of the disagreeable facts about Gino, but his anguish is mitigated by the view around him:

The trees of the wood were small and leafless, but noticeable for this that their stems stood in violets as rocks stand in the summer sea. There are such violets in England, but not so many. Nor are there so many in art, for no painter has the courage. The cart-ruts were channels, the hollows lagoons; . . . his eyes had registered the beauty, and next March he did not forget that the road to Monteriano must traverse innumerable flowers (WA, p. 18). As they near the town, 'The hazy green of the olives rose up to its walls, and it seemed to float in isolation between trees and sky, like some fantastic ship city of a dream' (WA, p. 20).

Even the ordinary life of Italy is romanticized,

The dogana men admitted them with an air of gracious welcome, and they clattered up the narrow dark street, greeted by that mixture of curiosity and kindness which

makes each Italian arrival so wonderful. He was stunned and knew not what to do. At the hotel he received no ordinary reception. The landlady wrung him by the hand; one person snatched his umbrella, another his bag; people pushed each other out of his way. The entrance seemed blocked with a crowd. Dogs were barking, bladder whistles being blown, women waving their handkerchiefs, excited children screaming on the stairs (WA, p. 22).

The abundance of violets, the legend of Santa Deodata, the antiquity of Italy's towers, 'olive-trees in the starlight and white winding roads and fireflies and untroubled dust' (WA, p. 94), all contribute towards creating the image of Italy as alien and different. Finally, the author affirms, Italy 'is a marvellous land, whether you love it or hate it' (WA, p. 38).

Italy is seen as strange and terrifying in that it is designed to threaten English values and way of life. Philip loses his temper when his mother tells him of Caroline's resolve to get Lilia's baby from Gino:

"Let her mess with Italy by herself. She'll come to grief somehow. Italy's too dangerous, too - . . .

Look at this letter! The man who wrote it will marry her or murder her, or do for her somehow . . . He is mysterious and terrible. He's got a country behind him that's upset people from the beginning of the world (WA, p. 73).

The appeal of the other country lies precisely in that it endorses passion, specifically love between men. The Sawstonian values of home and domestic life are inimical to the friendship between men, and in contrast, Italy is

depicted as a land of open spaces and outdoor life. In his replies to Mrs Herriton Gino 'had addressed letters - who writes at home? - from the Caffè Garibaldi' (WA, p. 71). The narrator eulogizes Italy for the opportunities it holds for male friendship.

The connotations of Italy are primarily homoerotic. It is instructive that Forster perceives Italy, and later India, almost exclusively in terms of the male population. Italian or Indian women hardly exist in Forster's novels. Whereas for Lilia, it turns out 'that continental society was not the go-as-you please thing',

Italy is such a delightful place to live in if you happen to be a man. There one may enjoy that exquisite luxury of socialism that true socialism which is based not on equality of income or character, but on the equality of manners. In the democracy of the caffè or the street the great question of our life has been solved, and the brotherhood of man is a reality. . . . Though you become as David and Jonathan, you need never enter his home, nor he yours. All your lives you will meet under the open air, the only roof-tree of the South, under which he will spit and swear, and you will drop your h's, and nobody will think the worse of either . . . life is very pleasant in Italy if you are a man (WA, p. 36).

All the images of beauty, warmth and spontaneity blend into this portrayal of Italy as a culture where relations between men flourish. Conversely Italy means nothing to Mrs. Herriton for she 'did not believe in romance, nor in

transfiguration, nor in parallels from history, nor in anything that may disturb domestic life' (WA, p. 5).

The religious and social values of the English characters are based on rationalism and prudence, and fail to accommodate randomness and contingency, which are essential ingredients of a passionate life. Harriet's Christian righteousness is restrictive and her discomfort is clear when Irma asks her if she may include her Italian brother and 'her new father' in her prayers (WA, p. 63). Philip is not religious, but he too relinquishes his intellectual stance, In Italy, Philip learns to relinquish his beliefs, 'Life was greater than he had supposed, but it was even less complete. He had seen the need for strenuous work and for righteousness. And now he saw what a very little way those things would go' (WA, p. 142). In contrast to the English society, life in Italy is a whole and includes the non-rational, such as the messenger who carries Harriet's note to Philip, 'a ghastly creature, quite bald, with trickling eyes and gray twitching nose. In any other country he would have been shut up; here he was accepted as a public institution, and part of nature's scheme' (WA, p. 126). Philip compares Italy and England, not Monteriano and Sawston, precisely in the context of male friendship and brotherhood. Philip is elated by his reception from Gino, 'I'm his friend now - his long-lost brother. What's the harm? I tell you, Miss Abbott, it's one thing for England and another for Italy. There we plan and get on high moral horses. Here we find what asses we are,

for things go off quite easily, all by themselves." (WA, p. 98).

Therefore the journey is crucial to the theme of homoerotic love in that it provides a vehicle for removing the characters from their own surroundings and putting them in the unknown. In transporting his characters from one setting to another, Forster also displaces them. The experiences of the characters in the foreign country are in the nature of an ordeal, and Forster, unremittingly, designs situation after situation of his characters' tribulations in an alien environment. In Where Angels Fear to Tread, Philip's and Harriet's travel through Italy causes them great suffering,

on the second day the heat struck them, like a hand laid over the mouth, just as they were walking to see the tomb of Juliet . . . Nor did Florence improve matters. Eating, walking, even a cross word would bathe them both in boiling water. Philip, who was slighter of build, and less conscientious, suffered less. But Harriet had never been to Florence, and between the hours of eight and eleven she crawled like a wounded creature through the streets, and swooned before various masterpieces of art (WA, pp. 75-76).

Philip's experiences in Italy are disorientating and dissipate his sense of rationality; he feels helpless and out of control, 'Monteriano seemed in one vast conspiracy to make him look a fool. He felt tired and anxious and muddled, and not sure of anything except that his temper was lost' (WA, p. 84).

The reason for Philip's powerlessness is that the values of Sawston are ineffective in Monteriano and his disorientation is a step towards his transformation. For alongside his painful experiences, there is an added recognition that perhaps he needs to modify his perceptions:

Italy was beastly, and Florence station is the centre of beastly Italy. But he had a strange feeling that he was to blame for it all; that a little influx into him of virtue would make the whole land not beastly but amusing. For there was enchantment, he was sure of that; solid enchantment, which lay behind the porters and the screaming and the dust (WA, p. 76).

As this paragraph indicates it is not the foreign country but the characters, or rather the English characters, who are the agents of action in the novel. Their predicament in Italy highlights their emotional inadequacy as they encounter passion and intensity in the foreign country.

The effect of Italian journeys in Where Angels Fear to Tread is to procure the friendship of Philip and Gino, and as such the journey is a transgression of the values of home and Sawston society. Philip steps out of his sheltered life as he undertakes his trip to Italy, 'The hall was warm and attractive as he looked back into it from the cold March night' (WA, p. 14). Philip's journeys to Italy result in a estrangement with his mother. At their introduction in the novel we are told, 'Mrs. Herriton and her son were left alone. There was immediately confidence between them' (WA, p. 3). Philip had assisted his mother in taking care of

Lilia and she can rely on him to fetch Lilia from Italy who 'has insulted our family, and she shall suffer for it (WA, p. 13). Philip, 'in his heart of hearts he agreed with her' (WA, p. 14), and all the conventional inquiries he makes of Caroline, about Gino's status and position, are under the influence of his mother.

But no sooner is he in Italy than Philip begins to compromise his filial duty and the argument is that he is far away from home; Italy also provides him with another perspective from which the issues of social propriety are not so urgent:

He was in the enemy's country, and everything . . . seemed hostile to the placid atmosphere of Sawston in which his thoughts took birth. At the outset he made one great concession. If the match was really suitable, and Lilia were bent on it, he would give in, and trust to his influence with his mother to set things right. He would not have made the concession in England; but here in Italy Lilia, however wilful and silly, was at all events growing to be a human being (WA, p. 16).

Following his return from Italy Philip's relationship with his mother deteriorates as he finds out that she is totally calculating, without any sign of feeling:

And, though she was frightening him, she did not inspire him with reverence. Her life, he saw, was without meaning. To what purpose was her diplomacy, her insincerity, her continued repression of vigour? Did they make anyone better or happier? Did they even bring happiness to herself? (WA, p. 68).

In rejecting his mother, Philip also repudiates domestic life, which he increasingly sees as bound in social conventions and devoid of love, in favour of journey. Philip's friendship with Gino inevitably entails a breach with his mother just as Lilia's and Caroline's trip to Italy is a rupture from Sawston mores. After Caroline's first trip to Italy her disaffiliations are clear. They are speaking of Gino and Caroline asserts that he is 'a thoroughly wicked man' to which Philip responds:

"Yet thoroughly wicked men have loved their children. Look at Rodrigo Borgia, for example."

"I have also seen examples of that in my district."
(WA, p. 71).

Caroline's remark is an indictment of her father, who unlike Gino, strangles his daughter's freedom. While Caroline returns to her domestic duties to look after her ageing father, his friendship with Gino displaces Philip's relationship with his mother and cuts the strings by which she had held him. "I can't live at Sawston", Philip says to Caroline, "I wrote from Monteriano. I tried to explain things; but she will never understand me . . . So that is my plan London and work." (WA, p. 142). It is only when Philip's alienation from his mother is complete that finds a new life, one that is found on friendship rather than domestic and family ties.

Women as Devices for Male Friendship

Philip's salvation and homoerotic themes are accomplished in Where Angels Fear to Tread by subterfuge, and the author uses the women characters to promote the theme of homoerotic love. Forster's women characters exist not in their own right but for what they contribute to Philip's development. The friendship between Philip and Gino is a result of the efforts of Lilia, Mrs. Herriton and Caroline Abbott. The women assist Philip in realizing his bond with Gino, but Lilia's and Caroline's relationship to Gino also serves to blur homoerotic desire.

Lilia's Italian marriage is a means of introducing Philip to Gino. Lilia's relationship with Gino was never meant to last and is quickly disposed of, 'It was in this house that the brief and inevitable tragedy of Lilia's marriage took place' (WA, p. 31). Lilia's marriage to Gino is doomed from the start and Forster suggests that the breakdown of their relationship was irrevocable:

No one realized that more than personalities were engaged; that the struggle was national; that generations of ancestors, good, bad or indifferent, forbade the Latin man to be chivalrous to the northern woman, the northern woman to forgive the Latin man. All this might have been foreseen; Mrs. Herriton foresaw it from the first (WA, pp. 50-1).

In his double distinction between 'Northern/Latin' and 'woman/man' it is the latter rather than the former conjunction that the narrator is denying. The 'north/south' metaphor alludes to the journeys to the Mediterranean

undertaken in the nineteenth century by English people in search of social and sexual liberation. The journey to Italy in Forster's text is homosexual for it brings to fruition not Lilia's escapade, but Philip's friendship with Gino.

Gino is described as loveable and both Lilia and Miss Abbott, despite their different temperaments, fall in love with him. So it is no surprise when Philip too is attracted to Gino. The praises of Gino are mostly attributed to Caroline. Philip sarcastically inquires of her, whether Gino is good looking, 'She became decisive. "Very good-looking. All his features are good, and he is well built"' (WA, p. 18). Elsewhere, Caroline recalls of Gino, 'He's charming, but he's no fool; he conquered me last year; he conquered Mr. Herriton yesterday, and if I am not careful he will conquer us all today' (WA, p. 101). Gino is graceful in everything he does and Caroline, for all her misgivings, is completely disarmed, 'This cruel, vicious fellow knew of strange refinements. The horrible truth, that wicked people are capable of love, stood naked before her, and her moral being was abashed' (WA, p. 109).

Gino's capacity for love is presented again through Caroline as she is entranced by his washing the baby. The scene between the father and son is curiously intimate for Forster endows it with symbolic significance. In his affection for his son Caroline becomes conscious of Gino's sexuality and as is characteristic of Forster, sexual desire is communicated through a third-party observer:

Gino lifted his son to his lips. This was something too remote from the prettiness of the nursery. The man was majestic; he was a part of Nature; in no ordinary love scene could he ever be so great . . . Gino passionately embracing, Miss Abbott reverently averting her eyes (WA, p. 111).

Gino is really being observed by Philip, who enters the scene unnoticed and is deeply stirred by Gino's affection for his son.

Caroline ruminates over the failure of Lilia's marriage and says that Lilia was unable to develop Gino's potential for a relationship, 'Gino, I thought was splendid, and young, and strong not only in body, and sincere as the day. If they wanted to marry, why shouldn't they do so? . . . Of course I was wrong. She only changed one groove for another a worse groove . . . Lilia that I should dare to say it must have been cowardly. He was only a boy just going to turn into something fine, I thought and she must have mismanaged him (WA, pp. 60-1). Gino's capacity for friendship, like his brutality, is reserved for Philip. Therefore whereas Mrs. Herriton forces Philip to go to Gino, Caroline assists him in understanding Gino's qualities. Thus by careful interposing and mediation Philip attains a revelation of friendship.

One of Forster's techniques of ambiguity that occurs just in this novel is that he creates empathy between Caroline and Philip. The similarity between them is regularly illuminated; Philip is 'delighted' to hear her opinions on Sawston, "Why, Miss Abbott," he cried, "you

should have told me this before! Think it still! I agree with lots of it. Magnificent"' (WA, p. 60). She stands by him in Italy and together they are transformed by their experiences, 'Philip found a certain grace and lightness in his companion which he had never noticed in England' but, 'He did not suspect that he was more graceful too. For our vanity is such that we hold our own characters immutable, and we are slow to acknowledge that they have changed, even for the better' (WA, p. 90).

Caroline is exalted as she consoles Gino in his grief at the loss of his son. Philip observes the devotion with which she ministers to Gino and joins in the act of adoration. As before, passion is voyeuristic in Forster and Philip makes love to Gino through Caroline:

Her hands were folded round the sufferer, stroking him lightly, for even a goddess can do no more than that. And it seemed fitting too, that she should bend her head and touch his forehead with her lips. Philip looked away, as he sometimes looked away from the great pictures where visible forms suddenly become inadequate for the things they have shown to us (WA, p. 139). Her final function is to initiate the communion of friendship and brotherhood between Philip and Gino. Much of the emotion of the scene is deflected away from Philip and Caroline mediates the intimacy between two men. Again, Forster moderates homoerotic desire in the passage by presenting the incident as a ritual:

"That milk, said she, "need not be wasted. Take it, Signor Carella, and persuade Mr. Herriton to drink."

Gino obeyed her, and carried the child's milk to Philip. And Philip obeyed also and drank.

"Is there any left?"

"A little," answered Gino.

"Then finish it." For she was determined to use such remnants as lie about the world. (WA, p. 139).

The correspondences between Philip and Caroline grow until by the end of the novel they reflect one another. Their unity is complete, and even the literal space between them closes for a moment, and Caroline articulates love for Gino for both of them:

The train seemed to shake him towards her . . . Their faces were crimson, as if the same thought was surging through them both. . . .

He came close to her. "Perhaps I could speak instead. But if you will say the word plainly you'll never be sorry; I will thank you for it all my life."

He said plainly, "That I love him." Then she broke down. Her body was shaken with sobs, and lest there should be any doubt she cried between the sobs for Gino! Gino! Gino!

He heard himself remark: "Rather I love him too!" (WA, p. 145).

Caroline makes it possible for Philip to speak of his love for Gino although his brief statement is lost in the midst of the louder, and rather hysterical protestations of Caroline Abbott. Caroline's love for Gino is seen as grotesque and untenable; it is cast in the form of a myth - first, as Pasiphae's infatuation with the bull and then

as the Moon's love for Endymion (WA, pp. 146-47). Having performed her function in bringing Philip to the realization of his love for Gino, they drift apart she retreats into her life in Sawston and it is Philip, not she, who plans to come back to Italy. However, the ambiguity is maintained to the very last, and even Philip remains slightly outside the novel's vision of friendship, 'he was standing at an immense distance' (WA, p. 147). In his first novel, Forster stops short of categorically asserting love between two men.

The Theme of Brotherhood

Homosexual desire is connected specifically to the theme of brotherhood/ⁱⁿ Where Angels Fear to Tread, but in keeping with Forster's style, it does not occur as a separately identifiable theme but is dispersed in parts of the text. The ideal of a friend is defined in the context of the other country and is introduced when Spiridione asks Gino if Lilia is simpatico, 'The person who understands us at first sight, who never irritates us, who never bores us, to whom we can pour forth every thought and wish, not only in speech but in silence'. Gino replies, "There are such men, I know, . . . And I have heard it said of children. But where will you find such a woman?" (WA, p. 39). When his marriage with Lilia goes wrong, Gino 'yearned for sympathy', for which he turns to friendship but his friends are far away, and unfortunately 'Friends cannot travel

through the post' (WA, p. 51). The desire for a friend is translated into the wish for a son, which is more than just the instinct to propagate:

His one desire was to become the father of a man like himself, and it held him with a grip he only partially understood, for it was the first great desire, the first great passion of his life. Falling in love was a mere physical triviality, like warm sun or cool water, beside this divine hope of immortality: I continue (WA, p. 52).

The wish for a son is linked with a greater dream of populating the world with men:

the desire that his son should be like him, and should have sons like him, to people the earth. It is the strongest desire that can come to a man - if it comes to him at all - stronger even than love or the desire for personal immortality. All men vaunt it, and declare that it is theirs; but the hearts of most are set elsewhere. It is the exception who comprehends that physical and spiritual life may stream out of him forever (WA, p. 109).

Forster differentiates Gino's yearning from the general impulse to procreate in that only 'the exception' can understand what is behind Gino's longings.

The meaning of Gino's wanting a son is clarified when he confides to Lilia, 'I have prayed all night for a boy', and she says, 'You are a boy yourself, Gino'. To which he answers, 'Then we shall be brothers' (WA, p. 52). The words 'son' and 'brothers' are not used in terms of family relationship but as forms of endearment in homosexual relations.

As the author proposes friendship and brotherhood, marriage and heterosexual relations are simultaneously decentred in the novel. In the failure of Lilia's marriage he denounces the heterosexual type of 'Romance' and offers a more individual version of 'romance' in Philip's experiences. The account of Lilia's affair is impersonal and dismissive:

Lilia had achieved pathos despite herself, for there are some situations in which vulgarity counts no longer. Not Cordelia nor Imogen more deserve our tears (WA, p. 47).

Forster also debunks the code of male chivalry to women. Gino is unchivalrous to Lilia, but he 'carried his iniquities like a feather' (WA, p. 48). When Harriet condemns Gino for his behaviour towards Lilia, Philip responds, 'Because he was unfaithful to his wife, it doesn't follow that in every way he's absolutely vile . . . Things aren't so jolly easy' (WA, p. 78). And later he defends Gino against Caroline's attack, 'The Italians are essentially dramatic: they look on death and love as spectacles. I don't doubt that he persuaded himself, for the moment, that he had admirably, both as husband and widower' (WA, p. 87). His treatment of Lilia does not detract from Gino's character for heterosexual relations do not matter in the novel. The positive values in Forster's novels attach to relations between men.

The significance of friendship and brotherhood is never spelt out but left indeterminate. However, homoerotic desire is disclosed through inference. Gino says to Caroline, 'we are old friends' (WA, p. 106), and Caroline

addresses Philip as 'my dear friend' (WA, p. 121) but these assertions lack intensity. Where Angels Fear to Tread celebrates the friendship and brotherhood between men. As Forster frankly admits, in Italy the socialism of men 'is accomplished at the expense of the sisterhood of men' (WA, p. 36). Forster is not concerned with friendship and brotherhood in the conventional sense, but posits them in deliberate opposition to social norms. Gino sends picture-postcards to Irma 'from your lital brother' (WA, p. 63), and relationship is socially unacceptable. The most joyous affirmation of friendship and brotherhood is in the relationship of Gino and Philip, and with it 'romance had come back to Italy.' (WA, p. 88).

Their relationship is consummated in sado-masochistic incident where Philip informs Gino of the death of his son. Gino's 'brutality' has been referred to and noted by all the characters and it manifests in his torture of Philip. During the dinner scene, at Philip's first meeting with Gino, when a cat was worrying the fish in a bowl, 'Signor Carella, with the brutality so common in the Italians, had caught her by the paw and flung her away from him' (WA, p. 24). In another instance Lilia had annoyed Gino and he swiftly advanced upon her, 'None of his clothes seemed to fit - too big in one place, too small in another. His figure rather than his face altered, the shoulders falling forward till his coat wrinkled across the back and pulled away from the wrists. He seemed all arms' (WA, p. 45). Philip's contact with Gino is violent and violating. It unleashes some of the pent up homosexual energies in the

novel and disintegrates the structures of heterosexual society. The incident is delineated with detail typical of D. H. Lawrence:

Gino approached from behind and gave him a sharp pinch. Philip spun round with a yell. He had only been pinched on the back, but he knew what was in store for him. . . . There was a quick swoop above him, and then a low growl like a dog's. Gino had broken his finger-nails against the stove. . . . He crawled quickly to where Philip lay and has him clean by the elbow.

The whole arm seemed red-hot, and the broken bone grated in the joint, sending out shoots of the essence of pain. His other arm was pinioned against the wall, and Gino had trampled in behind the stove and was kneeling on his legs. For the space of a minute he yelled and yelled with all the force of his lungs. Then this solace was denied him. The other hand, moist and strong, began to close round his throat. (WA, pp. 136-37).

The scene is sexually exciting and resembles Forster's own erotic fantasies that he wrote in his diary on 13 August 1945, 'Sun sex and a little pain', 'flowers and trousers opening', 'farming lad with a splinter in his finger', 'All warmth and willingness', 'I was the splinter up the farm lad's nails'.²² Charles Sayle is reported to have said to Maynard Keynes after reading 'The Story of Panic', 'I am amazed . . . I am horrified . . . and longing to meet the author'. Forster was annoyed by Sayle's insinuations but later confessed that the story had excited him as he wrote it, particularly the passages where

`something was up' and it was the same with the scene of Philip's torture by Gino.²³ As Philip drinks the milk Perfetta has prepared for the baby thus substituting Gino's brother-son. When the ceremony of brotherhood is over Gino, `broke the jug to pieces. Perfetta exclaimed in bewilderment. "It does not matter," he told her. It does not matter. "It will never be wanted any more" (WA, p. 139). This is friendship and brotherhood that ultimately emerges from the novel and so Philip's quest for new life is inspired not so much by Dante, but by Carpenter's vision of physical and sexual comradeship of men.

Thus Where Angels Fear to Tread everywhere extols relations between men and the desire for male love undermines domestic life. The novel appears to be a domestic comedy, but a closer analysis shows that Forster deals with the structures of marriage and heterosexual relations only to crumble them. Herz's comment on A Room with a View is also true of Where Angels Fear to Tread, `It is quite an achievement in so early a novel - to take a tradition two hundred years in the forming and simultaneously accept and reject it'.²⁴ In Where Angels Fear to Tread, Forster discovered his talent for exploiting a mainstream genre for conveying the theme of homoerotic love, and in doing so he subverts the themes and structures of heterosexual literature.

Conclusion

Where Angels Fear to Tread Forster to some extent contains an embryo of Forster's later novels. Furbank says of Forster that he had 'only one novel to write' insofar as 'he was content to use and re-use many of the same plot-materials'.²⁵ All of Forster's novels elucidate the themes of homoerotic love, albeit from different angles and with varying emphases.

Hence the desire for a brother, which is hidden in Where Angels Fear to Tread, becomes the main theme of his next novel. Even before he finished Where Angels Fear to Tread, Forster conceived of a story in July 1904, of 'a man who discovers he has an illegitimate brother'. He wrote to his mother on 5 August 1905, 'Should I ever write another book it will be called "The Longest Journey", and the one after that "Windy Corner"'.²⁶ As it is discussed in the following chapter, in The Longest Journey Forster transfers homoerotic desire into another novel genre, the Bildungsroman. Although the author strives to be more explicit than in his first novel, the theme of male love is nevertheless disguised in a socially acceptable form of the desire for a brother.

1. Cited by Elizabeth Heine, 'Editor's Introduction', Arctic Summer and Other Fiction, p. xi.
2. Ibid., p. viii.
3. Commonplace Book, p. 64.
4. Cited by Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', The Life to Come and Other Stories, p. xiii.
5. E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume 1, p. 73.
6. Elizabeth Ellem, 'E. M. Forster: The Lucy and New Lucy Novels, Fragments of Early Versions of "A Room with a View"', TLS (28 May 1971), p. 623-25.
7. E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume 1, p. 120.
8. Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', A Room with a View, p. viii and S. P. Rosenbaum, 'Towards a Literary History of *Monteriano*'.
9. 'Editor's Introduction', The Life to Come and Other Stories, p. viii.
10. Cited by Elizabeth Heine, 'Editor's Introduction', Arctic Summer and Other Fiction, p. xi.
11. Ibid., p. xi.
12. 'Three Countries', The Hill of Devi and Other Indian Writings, p. 291.
13. E. M. Forster, 'Introduction', Collected Stories of E. M. Forster (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1947), p. vi.
14. 'My Books and I', Appendix B, The Longest Journey, pp. 300-6, p. 301.
15. Rosenbaum, 'Towards a Literary History of *Monteriano*', p. 182.
16. Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', A Room with a View, p. x.
17. Herz, 'The Double Nature of Forster's Fiction', p. 257.
18. Rosenbaum, 'Towards a Literary History of *Monteriano*', p. 182.
19. Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, Volume One, p. 83.
20. June Perry Levine, 'The Tame in Pursuit of the Savage: The Posthumous Fiction of E. M. Forster', PMLA, Vol. XCIX, 1 (January 1984), pp. 72-88, p. 72.
21. 'Towards a Literary History of *Monteriano*', p. 183.

22. Cited by Furbank, E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume Two p. 257.
23. Recorded by E. M. Forster, 'My Books and I', Appendix B, The Longest Journey, p. 302.
24. 'The Double Nature of Forster's Fiction', p. 258.
25. E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume Two, pp. 132-33.
26. Cited by Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', A Room with a View, p. viii.

Chapter 4

The Desire for a Brother: The Longest Journey

Homoerotic desire in The Longest Journey is structured in the theme of brotherhood. The novel is ostensibly written as a Bildungsroman, where the protagonist's development entails a union with his brother. Again, Forster maintains the duality of his narrative in that within the socially acceptable definition of a 'brother', the author elucidates the ideal of homoerotic love. The desire for male love emerges by uncovering the multiple meanings of the word 'brother'.

The Longest Journey, unlike Where Angels Fear to Tread, is located entirely in England, and so the fulfilment of relations between men cannot be attained in the novel. The theme of homoerotic love is extremely coded, but the author's tirades against society derive from the symbolic ideal of brotherhood. The Longest Journey contains Forster's most forceful condemnation of women and marriage as the narrator overturns the usual categories of imagination and reality.

The Brother as a Homoerotic Ideal

Published in 1907, The Longest Journey highlights the theme of brotherhood latent in Forster's earlier fiction, 'The Other Side of the Hedge' and Where Angels Fear to Tread. Although the subject suggested itself to him, the stylistic or technical matter of how the predominantly homoerotic concept of a brother could be made to work as a homoerotic code still had to be overcome. Forster said that while writing this novel he 'had trouble with the junction of Rickie and Stephen. How to make them intimate'.¹ As Forster's comment indicates, the relation with a brother occurs not in the ordinary sense, but infused with homoerotic passion; Rickie's acknowledgment of his brother is not neutral but involves wider issues personal fulfilment, love and truth, and imagination and reality.

From the start, the author mobilizes a specific ideal of a brother which is distinct from the filial relationship that the term commonly denotes. It is intended that Rickie does not have a 'real brother' and in his childhood, He would conduct solitary conversations, in which one part of him asked and another part answered. It was an exciting game, and concluded with the formula: "Good-bye. Thank you. I am glad to have met you. I hope before long we shall enjoy another chat." And then perhaps he would sob for loneliness, for he would see real people - real brothers, real friends - doing in warm life the things he had pretended. "Shall I ever have a friend?" he demanded at the age of twelve. "I don't see how. They walk too fast. And a brother I shall never have" (LJ, p. 24).

A brother is synonymous with a friend. Mrs. Aberdeen, Rickie's bedmaker, speaks to Agnes the of kindness of Rickie's friends, and says that 'they're more like brothers than anything else', to which Agnes replies, 'Nice for him. He has no real brothers' (LJ, p. 10). Friends are terribly important for Rickie because he does not have any immediate family.

Friendship is contrasted to marriage and heterosexual relations. While social roles entail definite commitments, there is no way of ensuring togetherness in friendship. Through Rickie, the narrator expresses immense sadness at the impermanence of friendship:

He was thinking of the irony of friendship - so strong it is, and so fragile. We fly together, like straws in an eddy, to part in the open stream. Nature has no use for us; she has cut her stuff differently. Dutiful sons, loving husbands, responsible fathers - these are what she wants, and if we are friends it must be in our spare time. Abram and Sarai were sorrowful, yet their seed became as sand of the sea, and distracts the politics of Europe at this moment. But a few verses of poetry is all that survives of David and Jonathan.

"I wish we were labelled," said Rickie. He wished that all the confidence and mutual knowledge that is born in such a place as Cambridge could be organized. People went down into the world saying, "We know and like each other; we shan't forget." But they did forget, for man is so made that he cannot remember long without a symbol; he wished

that there was a society, a kind of friendship office, where the marriage of true minds could be registered.

"Why labels?"

"To know each other again" (LJ, p. 64).

The passage is crucial to understanding the value of friendship and a poignant expression of the marginalization of friends by demands of family life. Rickie questions why the heterosexual relationship of Abraham and Sarah should be granted posterity whereas there no visible traces left of the homoerotic love of David and Jonathan. In the reference to David and Jonathan, Forster evokes a model of male friendship that has been lost in modern society that is structured instead on the unhappy paradigm represented by Abraham and Sarah.

The narrator illuminates the indeterminacy and vagueness of the general notion of friendship. Rickie wants to confide in Ansell, but refrains because he is unsure whether he can make such a call on friendship, 'If his friend had been, as he expressed it, "labelled"; if he had been a father, or still better a brother, one might tell him of the discreditable passion. But why irritate him for no reason?' (LJ, p. 66). Against such diminution of friendship, Forster reconstructs the ideals of friendship and brotherhood that contest and dislodge the structures of marriage and domestic life.

Forster reveals the intensity of friendship and brotherhood by testing them against heterosexual love and marriage. The relation with a brother is problematized by making Stephen illegitimate, and Agnes as Rickie's wife,

obstructs their union. In the ordeals and suffering that ensue from the separation of the two brothers, Forster dramatizes love between men. In an inversion of the heterosexual plot, it is Rickie who is caught in the snares of a scheming woman, and is rescued by his friend. The uncontrollable rage against marriage and women is proportionate to the intensity of homoerotic desire in the text. The love of his friend and brother ultimately triumphs over Rickie's relationship with his wife.

While Stephen is apparently Rickie's half-brother, their relationship is just a convenient mode for bringing the two men together and masks homoerotic desire. Their brotherly relation is discarded at the critical point when Rickie proceeds to accept Stephen:

"Come with me as a man," said Stephen, already out in the mist. "Not as a brother; who cares what people did years back? We're alive together, and the rest is cant" (LJ, p. 257).

This is reiterated a few pages later as Rickie recognizes that 'Stephen was a man first, brother afterwards' (LJ, p. 267). By the end of the novel, the relationship between Rickie and Stephen as brothers is de-emphasized, and Forster accomplishes intimacy between them primarily as two men.

The ideal of friendship in The Longest Journey applies only to men, and alongside the talk of friends and brothers, Forster male protagonists are defined in relation to the ideal of homoerotic love. Gerald is an epitome of masculine beauty and handsomeness; he 'had the figure of a

Greek athlete and the face of an English one' (LJ, p. 35). But he is disappointing because, 'Just where he began to be beautiful the clothes started (LJ, p. 35). Whilst Mr Pembroke praises Gerald 'a Christian and a gentleman', to Rickie, Gerald evokes memories from Aristophanes of, the young Athenian, perfect in body, placid in mind, who . . . trains all day among the woods and meadows, with a garland on his head and a friend to set the pace; the scent of new leaves is upon them; they rejoice in the freshness of spring; over their heads the plane-tree whispers to the elm - perhaps the most glorious invitation to the brainless life that has ever been given (LJ, p. 47).

Gerald is cast as a product of the English middle-class, a 'gentleman', and as such, he is another example of an Englishman with an undeveloped heart, incapable of spontaneity and passion. Indeed, he is portrayed as petty and conceited; Rickie remembers him as a bully in school and, in his resentment of the men at the university, Gerald 'a little despises the intellectual professions' (LJ, p. 47). Gerald is so completely physical that Forster says of his death, 'He was broken up in the football match' (LJ, p. 51).

Ansell, on the other hand, is a philosopher, the intellectual man:

Ansell was in his favourite haunt - the Reading Room of the British Museum. In that book-encircled space he always could find peace. He loved to see the volumes rising tier above tier into the misty dome. He loved the chairs that glide so noiselessly, and the radiating desks, and the

central area, where the catalogue shelves curve round the superintendent's throne. There he knew that his life was not ignoble. It was worth while to grow old and dusty seeking for truth though truth is unattainable, restating questions that have been stated at the beginning of the world. Failure would await him but not disillusionment (LJ, p. 177).

Ansell's tireless search for truth is in his habit of always drawing 'within the square a circle, and within the circle a square, and inside that another circle, and inside that another square' (LJ, p. 17).

Ansell embodies the Platonic ideal for the opening scene where Ansell and others are discussing philosophy is described as a 'symposium' (LJ, p. 6). Rickie and Ansell emulate the ancient Greeks as they sit and talk in the dell. Rickie plaits two garlands of buttercups and parsley which both he and Ansell wear (LJ, p. 62). Moreover, Ansell is not a gentleman nor a passive intellectual for he swears that 'When the moment comes I shall hit out like any ploughboy' (LJ, p. 180), but physically, like Rickie, Ansell is 'ugly' (LJ, p. 20).

Rickie is the author persona, an 'effeminate' poet-dreamer (LJ, p. 79). Rickie shares much of Ansell's world-view except that his mind is creative rather than lucid:

He came to his worthier results rather by imagination and instinct than by logic. An argument confused him, and he could with difficulty follow it even on paper. But he saw in this no reason for satisfaction, and tried to make such use of his brain as he could, just as weak athlete, might

lovingly exercise his body. Like a weak athlete, too, he loved to watch the exploits, or rather the efforts, of others - their efforts not so much to acquire knowledge as to dispel a little of the darkness by which we and all our acquisitions are surrounded (LJ, p. 166).

A crucial distinction between Rickie and Ansell is that Ansell is dedicated to a universal, impersonal idea of truth; he strives for the scrupulous objectivity of a scholar whereas Rickie invests the phenomena around him with personal feeling. As Rickie responds even to philosophical issues with imagination and emotion, he is liable to be confused and misled. Always unsure of himself, he lets Agnes and Pembroke dictate his life, but in return for his mistakes he gains experience. Rickie is a gentleman (LJ, p. 192) and therefore inhibited, but at Cambridge he learns to shed some of his inhibitions.

Herbert Pembroke straddles the two institutions that are most oppressive of male passion in Forster - the school and the church. As a respectable pillar of society, he is one of Forster's villains, classed among the 'goats'. Where Ansell extols the supremacy of the individual, Herbert believes that 'without innumerable customs there was no safety', and also that 'Perhaps each of us would go to ruin if for one short hour we acted as we thought fit' (LJ, p. 43). Herbert's obsession with organizing and practicalities is at the cost of his personal life. He is empty within so that when he has to consider getting married for the sake of his career, 'he went, as it were, to his spiritual larder and took down Love from the top shelf to offer him to Mrs

Orr, he was rather dismayed. Something had happened. Perhaps the god had flown; perhaps he had been eaten by the rats. At all events, he was not there' (LJ, p. 149).

Herbert does not have an inner life and if Leonard Bast in Howards End represents a physical degradation of the homoerotic ideal, Herbert is a version of its spiritual decline. Whereas Ansell is not afraid of failure because it is a sign of an uncompromised life, Herbert Pembroke's approach is wholly pragmatic, and his worldly success is a sign of his emotional failure:

for all his fine talk about a spiritual life he had but one test for things - success: success for the body in this life or for the soul in the life to come. And for this reason Humanity, and perhaps such other tribunals as there may be, would assuredly reject him (LJ, p. 166).

Stephen Wonham is an apotheosis of Gerald and Ansell, combining physical and philosophical qualities with naturalness and spontaneity. He has the warm impulsiveness so rarely displayed by Ansell and the intelligence that Gerald lacks, together with the health that Rickie has been denied in his physique. Stephen is attractive, and unlike Gerald, his body is not stuffed inside clothes but has been exposed to the weather:

His face had after all a certain beauty: at all events the colouring was regal - a steady crimson from throat to forehead: the sun and the winds had worked on him daily ever since he was born (LJ, p. 90).

Stephen is Gerald transposed into a homoerotic context and hence the negative qualities of Gerald become virtues in Stephen. To Rickie:

The boy had a little reminded him of Gerald - the Gerald of history, not the Gerald of romance. He was more genial, but there was the same brutality, the same peevish insistence on the pound of flesh (LJ, p. 106).

The word 'boy' is a homoerotic form of address. Mrs Failing asks him, 'Are you a dear boy? I sometimes wonder; or are you a brute?' (LJ, p. 91). As in Gino, Stephen's brutality gives away homoerotic desire for it hints at the sexual energies of men. Even Agnes is drawn to his sexuality, and 'for one terrible moment she had desired to be held in his arms' (LJ, p. 260).

Unhampered by punitive morality or social conventions, Stephen's attitudes are robust and wholesome. According to Mrs Failing Stephen's honesty is admirable, 'To snub people! to set them down! to be rude to them! to make them feel small! Surely that's the life-work of a hero?' (LJ, p. 102). These attributes make Stephen free of class-consciousness or any other barriers between men. He is determined to settle scores with Flea because, 'it wasn't a question of gentility and poverty - it was a question of two men' (LJ, p. 116). He fights with Flea, and men fighting is an instance of physical contact between them, analogous to the wresting of gladiators in ancient Greece.

Stephen blends the Greek, pagan and rustic qualities and embodies the homoerotic ideal to which Rickie must

aspire. Even Ansell, who is never at a loss for words, is spellbound when he first meets Stephen:

A silence, akin to poetry, invaded Ansell. Was it only a pose to like this man, or was he really wonderful? He was not romantic, for Romance is a figure with outstretched hands, yearning for the unattainable. Certain figures of the Greeks, to whom we continually return, suggest him a little. One expected nothing of him - no purity of phrase nor swift-edged thought. Yet conviction grew that he had been back somewhere - back to some table of the gods, spread in a field where there is no noise, and that he belonged for ever to the guests with whom he had eaten (LJ, p. 213).

Stephen is Forster's fullest exposition of the ideal of homoerotic love, and while he is derived from the Greeks he is located in modern life. Although born a gentleman, he lives outdoors amongst the shepherds.

Stephen is defined in terms of the Other to the English middle class values, and as such he is an object of homoerotic desire. Located in rural England, Stephen is untouched by civilization; he is unrefined and childlike in his grappling with intellectual issues, 'he worried infinity as if it was a bone. Gnashing his teeth, he tried to carry the eternal subtleties by violence' (LJ, p. 90). Stephen's simplicity and childishness, as with Aziz later, make him susceptible to male friendship.

Stephen's potential is realized in his relation with Rickie. Their ride through the Rings is a romantic moment full of colour and space, including Forster's fetish with

broken nails, 'Rickie lurched forward, and broke his thumb-nail on the horse's neck. It bled a little, and had to be bound up' (LJ, p. 108). The landscape is portrayed in classical terms; they ride through 'Elysian fields' and, 'A dazzling amphitheatre flank gleamed in the flank of a distant hill, cut for some Olympian audience' (LJ, p. 110). In these surroundings, Stephen teaches Rickie to ride and holds him close when the latter falls asleep on his horse. However, as it usual with Forster, the pleasure of the incident is transferred to a dream mode which Rickie returns to later, 'That dream of his when he rode on the Wiltshire expanses - a curious dream: the lark silent, the earth dissolving. And he woke from it into a valley full of men' (LJ, p. 176). On his part, Rickie tends to Stephen when he returns to Sawston drunk, just as Stephen had looked after him in the Rings, and these are scenes of homoerotic love making. As Heine explains, 'Bedroom settings support this socially acceptable way of bringing men into close physical contact and emotional intimacy; the desire to help becomes a kind of love'.²

Friendship and Brotherhood versus Marriage

Friendship in Forster is neither secondary to nor compatible with marriage, but stands in opposition to heterosexual love. In The Longest Journey, the female characters are not used to beguile homoerotic desire; consequently, the novel presents Forster's most forthright

and devastating critique of marriage and women. At the beginning of the novel, hypothetically there are two possible routes by which Rickie can attain his destiny - through marriage or friendship. As in Where Angels Fear to Tread the narrative encompasses two journeys - the first one is significant for what it eliminates or undoes and the second one for what it achieves and replaces. Rickie initially takes the conventional road of marriage which proves to be a false start, and having rejected marriage, he finds fulfilment in friendship and brotherhood.

The announcement of Rickie's engagement to Agnes is like a battle cry and unleashes tremendous hostilities in the text. Ansell protests against Rickie's marriage in a conversation with Tilliard:

"Damn these women, then," said Ansell, bouncing round in the chair. "Damn these particular women." . . .

"Then, my dear Ansell, why are you so cut up? It's beastly when a friend marries - and I grant he's rather young - but I should say it's the best thing for him . . . and, really, you talk as if you were mixed up in the affair. They pay a civil visit to your rooms, and you see nothing but dark plots and challenges to war."

"War!" cried Ansell, crashing his fists together.

"It's war, then!"

"Oh, what a lot of tommyrot," said Tilliard. "Can't a man and woman get engaged? . . . We're his friends, and I hope we always shall be, but we shan't keep his friendship by fighting. We're bound to fall into the background. Wife

first, friends some way after. You may resent the order, but it is ordained by nature."

"The point is, not what's ordained by nature or any other fool, but what's right" (LJ, pp. 79-80).

Ansell refuses to accept either that marriage is inevitable or has supremacy over friendship. Agnes as Rickie's wife is an enemy whom friends and brothers must fend off, and when Stephen turns up to stake his claim on Rickie, Ansell hopes that he will be granted 'at least one battle royal with Agnes' (LJ, p. 218).

Marriage invades the sphere of friendship and comes between the pastimes of men. Ansell tries to persuade Rickie to stay with his friends and the scene has an air of mild homoerotic flirtation:

"Why go?" He stretched out his hand and caught hold of Rickie's ankle.

"I've got that Miss Pembroke to lunch - that girl whom you say never's there."

"Then why go? All this week you have pretended Miss Pembroke awaited you. Wednesday - Miss Pembroke to lunch. Thursday - Miss Pembroke to tea. Now again - and you didn't even invite her."

"To Cambridge, no. But the Hall man they're stopping with has so many engagements that she and her friend can often come to me . . ."

"Don't go, he said idly. It's much better for you to talk to me." . . .

Rickie laughed, and suddenly overbalanced into the grass. Ansell, with unusual playfulness, held him prisoner.

They lay there for a few minutes, talking and ragging aimlessly. Then Rickie seized his opportunity and jerked away.

"Go, go!" yawned the other. But he was a little vexed, for he was a young man with great capacity for pleasure, and it pleased him that morning to be with his friend. The thought of two ladies waiting lunch did not deter him; stupid women, why shouldn't they wait? Why should they interfere with their betters? (LJ, pp. 64-5).

On his part, Rickie is also sensitive to the intrusions upon his friendship. When he first visits the Pembrokes, Herbert embarrasses him by wanting to know the name of the friend he has been staying with:

Rickie had a young man's reticence. He generally spoke of "a friend", "a person I know". "a place I was at". When the book of life is opening our readings are secret, and we are unwilling to give chapter and verse (LJ, p. 34).

Another time, Rickie tries to avoid Agnes' inquisitiveness about Ansell, 'So self-conscious was he, that he thought the two women exchanged glances. Had Agnes already explored that part of him that did not belong to her?' (LJ, p. 69). Rickie's relationship with Ansell is something private and cannot be subjected to Agnes' scrutiny.

Forster unravels the myths and assumptions that perpetuate the validity of marriage. Rickie is driven into marriage with Agnes because of his desperate need for a home. Rickie's naive attitudes lead to the disastrous consequences. Ansell can discern that marriage is not a real option and in an attempt to avert his friend's

tragedy, he writes to Rickie advising him to break off his engagement with Agnes. Ansell's argument is that Rickie is an individual, with his own unique nature, which must not submit to conventions. The Longest Journey is Forster's only novel in which the narrator's objections to marriage are expressed so plainly:

You are not a person who ought to marry at all. You are unfitted in body: that we once discussed. You are also unfitted in soul: you want and you need to like many people, and a man of that sort ought not to marry. "You never were attached to that great sect who can like one person only, and if you try to enter it you will find destruction." (LJ, p. 81).

The passage makes clear that Rickie should refrain from marriage not only because of his physical disability, but also because he is emotionally unsuited to loving a woman.

Relieved by the thought of having found a home at last, Rickie answers Ansell's misgivings with breezy confidence. It is significant that he does not care to defend his wife against his friend's attack:

You've written to me, "I hate the woman who will be your wife," and I write back, "Hate her. Can't I love you both?" She will never come between us, Stewart (she wouldn't wish to, but that's by the way), because our friendship has now passed beyond intervention. No third person could break it. We couldn't ourselves, I fancy . . . (LJ, p. 83).

Friendship and marriage are irreconcilable in Forster and Rickie's marriage alienates him from his friends and work. But one purpose that the crisis of Rickie's marriage does

serve is that it induces the pledge of friendship between two men.

As predicted by Ansell, the failure of Rickie's marriage is inevitable. It has been made abundantly clear that Rickie is misled into marriage by his overweening urge to conform; he falsely believes, after his engagement with Agnes, that 'he too had a purpose and a value in the world at last' and 'the sun as it rose next morning spoke to him of a new life' (LJ, p. 99). Rickie's marriage is based on ignorance and delusion, and the narrator tries to excuse his behaviour:

He is, of course, absurdly young - not twenty-one - and he will be engaged to be married at twenty-three. He has no knowledge of the world; for example, he thinks that if you do not want money you can give it to friends who do. He believes in humanity because he knows a dozen decent people. He believes in women because he has loved his mother. And his friends are as young and as ignorant as himself. They are full of the wine of life (LJ, p. 61).

Ironically, Rickie's marriage does not bring him a home that he had so wanted; instead, he ends up as a master in the boarding house of Sawston School, earning his living as a master. As he adapts to a conventional way of life, the narrator comments that 'Rickie's programme involved a change in values as well as a change of occupation' (LJ, p. 154). Yet marriage produces disenchantment, and as his enthusiasm for life wanes Rickie has a sense that 'some imperceptible bloom had passed from the world' (LJ, p. 140)

He is bewildered to discover that marriage does not bring fulfilment and merely intensifies his sense of isolation:

The crown of life had been attained, the vague yearnings, the misread impulses, had found accomplishment at last. Never again must he feel lonely, or as one who stands out of the broad highway of the world and fears, like poor Shelley, to undertake the longest journey. So he reasoned, and at first took the accomplishment for granted. But as the term passed he knew that behind the yearning there remained a yearning, behind the drawn veil a veil that he could not draw. His wedding had been no mighty landmark: he would often wonder whether such and such a speech or incident came after it or before (LJ, p. 167).

Rickie's relationship to Agnes curbs his personal development and shuts him from love and beauty, particularly brotherhood and friendship. Rickie's ride with Stephen to Salisbury are precious moments with his brother, but Rickie is oblivious to the magic of the occasion and all he can think of is Agnes, whom he has left behind with Mrs. Failing. The narrator is acutely conscious of the transience of happiness as Rickie neglects to make the most of this time with his brother, 'Ah, the frailty of joy! Ah, the myriads of longings that pass without fruition, and the turf grows over them! (LJ, p. 110). Earlier, Rickie is shocked to learn that he was so engrossed with Agnes that he did not know that their train had run over a child:

"A child - " said Rickie. "I can't believe that the train killed a child." He thought of their journey. They were alone in the carriage. As the train slackened speed he had

caught her for a moment in his arms. The rain beat on the windows, but they were in heaven (LJ, pp. 94-95).

In his marriage Rickie loses contact with all that is important, and most significantly, Agnes stands between Rickie and his friends and brother. Rickie faints on hearing that Stephen is his brother and Stephen helps him regain consciousness, but Agnes takes charge and intercepts any communication between the two men. Rickie's instinct is to reach out to his brother, 'There broke from him a cry, not of horror but of acceptance' (LJ, p. 130). But Agnes cannot comprehend Rickie's impulse, 'What does a grown-up man want with a grown-up brother?' (LJ, p. 135). When Stephen calls out, she physically obstructs Rickie from answering him:

He moved forward - into what? He pretended to himself he would rather see his brother before he answered; that it was easier to acknowledge him thus. But at the back of his soul he knew that the woman had conquered, and that he was moving forward to acknowledge her (LJ, p. 138).

Agnes schemes with Mrs Failing and bullies Rickie into keeping his relationship with Stephen secret. The brother shakes Agnes' absolute claim on Rickie, 'They embraced passionately. The danger had brought them very near to each other. They both needed a home to confront the menacing tumultuous world' (LJ, p. 138).

Rickie's collusion with Agnes destroys his peace of mind; the 'Spirit of Life' departs from him and he is dead to the affection of his friends (LJ, p. 207).

Forster describes Rickie's suffering as he loses touch with the values he had acquired at Cambridge;

He did not aspire to beauty or wisdom, but he prayed to be delivered from the shadow of unreality that had begun to darken the world. For it was as if some power had pronounced against him - as if, by some heedless action, he had offended an Olympian god. Like many other, he wondered whether the god might be appeased by work (LJ, p. 132)

The reference to the Olympian god indicates that Rickie's pain is due to his discrediting the love of men; he tries to find comfort in his work, but his emotional damage is irreparable.

However, Rickie is only partly to blame for his troubles for Agnes actively denigrates relations between men, 'She began to patronize and pity Ansell, and most sincerely trusted that he would get his fellowship' (LJ, p. 176). Greedy for Mrs Failing's legacy, Agnes turns her against Stephen who is thrown out of Cadover. The consequences of Agnes' actions hurt Rickie badly:

He sighed. Had he ruined his brother? A curious tenderness came over him, and passed when he remembered his own dead child. "We have ruined him, then. Have you any objection to 'we'? We have disinherited him (LJ, p. 204).

Marriage is systematically exposed and de-centred in The Longest Journey, and any mention of heterosexual relations is extremely reserved.

All marriages are soul-destroying in The Longest Journey the relation of Mr and Mrs Failing, and Mr and Mrs Elliot. Rickie is taken aback as he watches Agnes and her

fiance Gerald bickering, 'It was dreadful: they did not love each other' (LJ, p. 39). At no point does the narrator dwell on male-female love, but moves on explaining that Gerald and Agnes are not central to his story, 'So the lovers fall into the background. They are part of the distant sunrise, and only the mountains speak to them (LJ, p. 41). Similarly, the writer says of Rickie, 'Meanwhile he was a husband. Perhaps his union should have been emphasized before' (LJ, p. 167). Rickie's relationship with his wife is described in what it is not; their relationship is devoid of intimacy such as Rickie knew with his friends in Cambridge and finds with his brother.

In this novel, once again Forster substitutes the jaded idea of heterosexual romance with the more vigorous passion of love between men. In a conversation with Rickie, Stephen talks about getting married. Stephen reckons, that he would be faithful to his wife,

of course, but that she should never have all my thoughts. Out of no disrespect to her but because all one's thoughts can't belong to any single person . . . For it's something rather outside that makes one marry, if you follow me: not exactly oneself . . . We want to marry, and yet - (LJ, pp. 271-2)

As Stephen says, marriage is functional; man-woman relationship cannot be dispensed with insofar it is essential to reproduction, but it is by no means an end in itself. And the narrator comments:

Romantic love is greater than this. There are men and women - we know it from history - who have been born into the

world for each other, and for no one else, who have accomplished the longest journey locked in each other's arms. But romantic love is also the code of modern morals, and, for this reason, popular. Eternal union, eternal ownership these are tempting baits for the average man. He swallows them, will not confess his mistake, and - perhaps to cover it - cries "dirty cynic" at such a man as Stephen (LJ, p. 272).

Forster repudiates the popular concept of romantic love as a monogamous, heterosexual relationship, is a result of social conditioning; Stephen, unlike most people, at least admits that such a relationship, driven by practical needs, cannot be personally satisfying.

The Longest Journey encompasses a world of men in which the introduction of the female protagonist is unwelcome. In the opening scene, Rickie and his friends are located in Cambridge, when women were kept out of the University. Agnes' entrance into Rickie's room is as intrusive and harsh ^{as} the light she switches on, and she causes commotion amongst the young men who begin to flee her presence. Rickie has forgotten entirely about her visit which, according to Cambridge ethos, is no grave offence. Only Ansell, the self-possessed philosopher, is unperturbed by Agnes' arrival. The disturbance caused by the incident is vividly captured:

The door opened. A tall young woman stood framed in the light that fell from the passage.

"Ladies!" whispered every one in great agitation.

"Wicked boy!" exclaimed the young lady, advancing a gloved finger into the room. Wicked, wicked boy!"

. . . She turned on the electric light. The philosophers were revealed with unpleasing suddenness. . .
. "I'll have you horsewhipped . . ."

"He must indeed be horsewhipped," said Tilliard pleasantly. Then he made a bolt for the door.

"Tilliard - do stop - let me introduce Miss Pembroke - don't all go!" For his friends were flying from his visitor like mists before the sun. . . .

She was quite right. Rickie was not as much upset as he ought to have been. He was sorry that he had forgotten, and that he had caused his visitors inconvenience. But he did not feel profoundly degraded, as a young man should who has acted discourteously to a young lady. Had he acted discourteously to his bedmaker or his gyp, he would have minded just as much, which was not polite of him (LJ, pp. 6-7).

Forster's portrayal of Agnes is vicious; she is the most hateful of his female characters. Agnes is unscrupulous, calculating and she trivializes personal relations. Widdrington compares her mindless efficiency to 'an electric light. Click! she's on. Click! she's off. No waste. No flicker', to which Ansell replies, 'I wish she'd fuse' (LJ, p. 179). Agnes seeks to control Rickie thoroughly and her influence is corrosive. Forster's condemnation of her is complete. The reasons why Rickie leaves her are:

He only couldn't stand her; she lied and taught him to lie; she kept him from the work that suited him, from his friends, from his brother - in a word, she tried to run him, which a man won't pardon (LJ, p. 260).

Agnes is described in predatory images, 'ravenously devouring scrambled eggs' (LJ, p. 156), and she drains Rickie and Stephen, 'It was as if Agnes had absorbed the passion out of both of them' (LJ, p. 257). In the drafts of Chapter 31, Forster had considered Agnes' total extinction by sending her into the fire while Rickie, Ansell and Stephen walked away (LJ, pp. 379-80).

Although The Longest Journey overtly expresses the desire for a brother, nevertheless sexual passion is kept ambiguous and diffused throughout the text. Occasionally, sexual feeling is just insinuated, as for instance, in the account of Agnes' earrings:

These earrings were a freak of hers - her only freak. She had always wanted some, and the day Gerald asked her to marry him she went to a shop and had her ears pierced. In some wonderful way she knew that it was right. And he had given her the rings - little gold knobs, copied, the jeweller told them, from something prehistoric - and he had kissed the spots of blood on her handkerchief. Herbert, as usual, had been shocked (LJ, p. 8).

Then, there is a reference to Rickie's nose-bleeds (LJ, p. 9) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick says that 'The bloody nose, especially, is an emblem of a specifically female powerlessness' and 'it occurs in eighteenth-century novels at moments of sexual threat against women'.³ Hence the

allusion to the picture of Demeter of Cnidus without a nose, hung in Stephen's room, is ironical. Demeter is the goddess of fertility, but insofar as she is a woman, Forster divests her of sexuality.

The only scene of love making in the novel involves three characters. Rickie stumbles upon Gerald and Agnes in an embrace, and the passage concentrates on the man as if Rickie imagines what it must be like to be in Agnes' place:

He only looked for a moment, but the sight burnt into his brain. The man's grip was stronger. He had drawn the woman onto his knee, was pressing her, with all his strength, against him. Already her hands slipped off him, and she whispered, "Don't - you hurt -" Her face had no expression. It stared at the intruder and never saw him. Then her lover kissed it, and immediately it shone with mysterious beauty, like some star (LJ, p. 39).

Rickie is utterly distracted by the incident and the narrator proceeds to present his state of mind in highly abstract images but the description has undertones of homoerotic desire:

the riot of fair images is increased. They invaded his being and lit lamps at unsuspected shrines. Their orchestra commenced in that suburban house, where he had to stand aside for the maid to carry in the luncheon. Music flowed past him like a river. He stood at the springs of creation and heard the primeval monotony. Then an obscure instrument gave out a little phrase. The river continued unheeding. The phrase was repeated, and a listener might know it was a fragment of the Tune of tunes. Nobler instruments accepted

it, the clarinet protected, the brass encouraged, and it rose to the surface to the whisper of violins. In full unison was Love born, flame of flame, flushing the dark river beneath him and the virgin snows above. His wings were infinite, his youth eternal; the sun was a jewel on his finger as he passed it in benediction over the world. Creation, no longer monotonous, acclaimed him, in widening melody, in brighter radiances. Was love a column of fire? Was he a torrent of song? Was he greater than either - a touch of a man on a woman?

It was the merest accident that Rickie had not been disgusted. But this he could not know (LJ, p. 40).

Against the monotony of sexual attraction for propagation, Forster celebrates a rarer vision of passion. Love is personified as a 'he', the homosexual Eros rather than the heterosexual Venus. While love in Forster surpasses the needs of creation, it is still inexpressible and can only be rendered in images of music and light. It is categorically stated that heterosexual love is not for Rickie, but he finds this out only by undergoing the experience.

Rickie falls in love with Gerald by proxy, through Agnes; he exalts Gerald and constantly reminds her to remember him. Agnes is unmoved by Gerald's death until Rickie tells her, 'I came to see that you mind. He is in heaven, Agnes. The greatest thing is over' (LJ, p. 54). In contrast to Rickie watching Gerald make love to Agnes, his own physical contact with Agnes is dull. The episode is again represented in natural, rather diminutive images:

The wind blew her dress against her. Then, like a cataract again, she vanished pure and cool into the dell. The young man thought of her feelings no longer. His heart throbbed louder and louder, and seemed to shake him to pieces.

"Rickie!"

She was calling from the dell. For an answer he sat down where he was, on the dust-bespattered margin. She could call as loud as she liked. The devil had done much, but he should not take him to her.

. . . A bird called out of the dell: "Rickie!"

A bird flew into the dell (LJ, p. 73).

Rickie is seduced into his relationship with Agnes for it is against his will and the work of the devil. In responding to Agnes' call, Rickie 'went out to die' and he expresses his reluctance to her, saying, 'I prayed you might not be a woman' (LJ, p. 73). Any sexual association between Rickie and Agnes is resisted in the text and Forster maintains duplicity by mentioning Agnes together with Gerald. In Cambridge, Rickie 'dreamt that she lay in his arms. This displeased him. He determined to think a little about Gerald instead (LJ, p. 66).

Yet Rickie must marry in order to be unmarried, and it is only through the collapse of marriage and heterosexual love that the way can be paved for homoerotic love of friends and brothers. Throughout his narrative Forster mobilizes an alternative vision of love:

Love, say orderly people, can be fallen into by two methods: (1) through the desires; (2) through the imagination. And if the orderly people are English, they

add that (1) is the inferior method, and characteristic of the South. It is inferior. Yet those who pursue it at all events know what they want; they are not puzzling to themselves or ludicrous to others; they do not take the wings of the morning and fly into the uttermost parts of the sea before walking to the registry office; they cannot breed a tragedy quite like Rickie's (LJ, p. 61).

Rickie's relationship to Agnes is not inspired by desire, but other motivations, and he comes to love her by imagination. Rickie relationship with Agnes is false, based on self-deception. Giving into the temptation of a heterosexual relation, crushes Rickie's spirit and in denying his most fundamental instinct he consents to take 'the world at secondhand' (LJ, p. 255). It is interesting that Forster transfers the feelings of guilt and shame - sentiments that were applied to homosexual love - to Rickie's relationship with Agnes. Rickie knows that 'there was nothing shameful in love', but to love Agnes 'was the crime from the devil, the crime that no penance would ever purge' (LJ, p. 66). His immense unhappiness in marriage makes him feel 'diseased in body and soul' (LJ, p. 192).

Yet hints of how Rickie's suffering might be alleviated are strewn everywhere in the text. Rickie's adoration of Agnes is actually a sublimation of something more authentic:

And so Rickie deflected his enthusiasms. Hitherto they had played on gods and heroes, on the infinite and the impossible, on virtue and beauty and strength. Now, with a

steadier radiance, they transfigured a man who was dead and a woman who was still alive (LJ, p. 60).

The reference to gods and heroes pertains to the classical world and the homoerotic ethos it entailed. In Sawston, as Rickie's perceptions begin to falter:

The room grew brighter. A boy's laughter floated in, and it seemed to him that people were as important and vivid as they had been six months before. Then he was at Cambridge, idling in the parsley meadows, and weaving perishable garlands out of flowers (LJ, pp. 152-53).

Again, Cambridge is a reminder of a society of friends when Rickie lived honestly, according to his true instincts. The compromise Rickie tries to make with himself is untenable, and not until he finally dies in saving the brother he had initially rejected, that he pays for his error. Stephen, who claimed that, 'when I've a girl I'll keep her in line' (LJ, p. 107) is bequeathed salvation. At the resolution of the novel, Stephen is Rickie's heir and the novel endorses the relationship of brothers and friends; Ansell lives with Stephen while Stephen's wife is reduced to a spectre in the mist.

Forster writes in The Longest Journey, 'Life had two distinct sides - the drawing-room and the other' (LJ, p. 242). Forster's novels are concerned with the other, the outdoor exploits of men instead of domestic life. While domestic life is constricting, passion and poetry pertain to outdoors. Forster describes the dullness of domesticity in terms of the 'teacup' of life', which his male protagonists reject:

They are full of the wine of life. But they have not tasted the cup - let us call it the teacup - of experience, which has made men of Mr Pembroke's type what they are. Oh, that teacup! To be taken at prayers, at friendship, at love, till we are quite sane, quite efficient, quite experienced, and quite useless to God or man. We must drink it, or we shall die. But we need not drink it always. Here is our problem and our salvation. There comes a moment - God knows when - at which we can say, "I will experience no longer. I will create. I will be an experience." But to do this we must be both acute and heroic. For it is not easy, after accepting six cups of tea, to throw the seventh in the face of the hostess. (LJ, p. 61).

Forster removes his narrative from the confines of domestic life and states that he will create his own subject. Domestic life is constantly wrecked in Forster's novels. Stephen and Ansell fight on Agnes' bed of lobelias (LJ, p. 222) and later when Stephen returns to Rickie, he smashes his way through Dunwood House (LJ, p. 247).

In contrast to the imprisoning walls of a home, the love of men occurs in wide open spaces surrounded by a view. Gino in Where Angels Fear to Tread is seen with a view stretching behind him and in The Longest Journey too Forster indicates the emotional breadth of his characters in terms of the external view. Agnes acquires an expansiveness briefly at the moment when Rickie falls in love with her, 'She stood for a moment looking at the view, for few steps will increase a view in Cambridgeshire.' (LJ, p. 73). When Rickie is unresponsive to love when riding

with Stephen, 'It seemed each moment there would be a splendid view. The view never came (LJ, p. 110). A view becomes a major motif in A Room with a View except that in that novel the view forms a backdrop to heterosexual romance.

Symbolism and Reality

In The Longest Journey the conflict between marriage and friendship broadens into a dispute on reality and imagination, prose and poetry, success and failure, and Forster inverts the customary emphasis. In the words of Elizabeth Heine, '"Real" and "really" become highly suspect words as they recur in the speeches of his middle-class English characters'.⁴ At the heart of the narrative is the debate as to whether Agnes and her heterosexual values have a reality.

Ansell simply denies Agnes' existence and his arrogance is not from lack of social etiquette, but arises from his deep conviction that Agnes is superfluous to their life. Forster clarified the concerns operating in The Longest Journey, 'There was the metaphysical idea of Reality ("the cow is there"): there was the ethical idea that reality must be faced (Rickie won't face Stephen)'.⁵ It is in the context of the ethical reality that Agnes is irrelevant to Rickie's destiny. However, Ansell is wrong in believing that it is sufficient to negate Agnes metaphysically by argument, and 'Ansell, clever as he was,

had made a bad blunder. She had more reality than any other woman in the world' (LJ, p. 48). Agnes emerges as an adversary in her bid for Rickie, and the novel rehearses the rival claims of the two sexes to the love of men.

Ansell affirms the efficacy of friendship and in this belief he brings a fresh perspective on life, 'The world as Ansell saw it seemed such a fantastic place, governed by brand-new laws' (LJ, p. 181). In contrast to Rickie's rather timid character, Ansell asserts individual autonomy, 'The only real reason for doing a thing is because you want to do it. I think the talk about 'engagements' is cant' (LJ, p. 32). Ansell's statements relate not, as Rickie understands, to the philosophical speculations about subjectivity and objectivity but to the austerer discipline of ethical reality. Ansell is engaged in an unrelenting pursuit of truth. As he says to Rickie,

"Did it never strike you that phenomena may be of two kinds: one , those which have a real existence, such as the cow; two , those which are the subjective product of a diseased imagination, and which, to our destruction, we invest with the semblance of reality? If this never struck you, let it strike you now" (LJ, p. 17). Rickie's need for emotional security leads him to treat everyone as equally real, but as Ansell tells him that love and friendship are not indiscriminate or uniform, and therefore some people have greater reality and value than others.

Thus the arguments about reality in The Longest Journey have an emotional charge. For Forster the heterosexual world had little solidity and the author

conveys his disturbed sense of reality through his characters. To Ansell, who upholds the friendship of men, Agnes does not exist; conversely, the news of Rickie's brother upsets Agnes' sense of reality. Rickie's participation in a heterosexual way of life disorients him and damages his grasp of reality. The contradictory apprehensions of Rickie and Agnes emerge when Rickie speaks of Stephen being his brother as 'a real thing' but Agnes fails to understand him (LJ, p. 136). But Agnes' notion of reality is impoverished for it leaves out so much, 'Actual life might seem to her so real that she could not detect the union of shadow and adamant that men call poetry' (LJ, p. 141).

An offshoot of the discussions on reality and unreality are the oppositions between life and imagination and prose and poetry. Rickie's story is turned down by the publisher because it 'does not convince' and he recommends to Rickie that he should try an alternative route to imagination, 'you might get inside life. It's worth doing' (LJ, p. 143-44). The talk about life as opposed to imagination is glib and for Rickie life is elusive and intangible; moreover, to him true life is in the imagination. Poetry, imagination, myths and fantasy are important for recreating homoerotic love in a world where every trace of male passion has been erased by heterosexual reality.

Forster's scepticism about reality has implications for his style and results in the narrator's rejection of pure realism. Homoerotic love cannot be described in terms

of reality and realism; hence, Forster, like Rickie, reflects life through poetry and imagination. Forster said that he was so excited and absorbed in writing The Longest Journey that 'sometimes I went wrong deliberately, as if the spirit of anti-literature had jogged my elbow'.⁶ Forster does not comply with the convention of the novel as a realistic form, and freely employs dreams, fantasy and imagination to render the theme of homoerotic love.

The exposition of homoerotic love, as embodied by Stephen, is symbolical. Elizabeth Heine says that 'Stephen is one of Forster's most "created" characters' in that he is not drawn on anybody the writer knew.⁷ The symbolic quality of Stephen is demonstrated in the incident from his childhood, when he was being washed by his nurse; Stephen 'had slipped from her soapy hands', 'and sprang upward through the skylight on to the roof':

She implored him to remember that he was a little gentleman; but he forgot the fact - if it was a fact - and not even the butler could get him down. Mr. Failing, who was sitting alone in the garden too ill to read, heard a shout, "Am I an acro-terium?" He looked up and saw a naked child poised on the summit of Cadover (LJ, p. 119).

The episode is characteristic of Stephen and even as an adult he is visualized naked against a picturesque background:

But still, when the weather was fair, he liked to come up after bathing, and get dry in the sun' . . . The sloping gable was warm, and he lay back on it with closed eyes, gasping for pleasure. Starlings criticized him, soots fell

on his clean body, and over him a little cloud was tinged with the colours of the evening. "Good, oh good!" he whispered. "Good, oh good!" (LJ, pp. 118- 19).

Therefore the rejection of Stephen in the novel is at two levels - while apparently he is unacceptable because of his illegitimacy, he also signifies the ideal of homoerotic love. Rickie tries to reason with Agnes:

It seems to me that here and there in life we meet with a person or incident that is symbolical. It's nothing in itself, yet for the moment it stands for some eternal principle. We accept it, at whatever cost, and we have accepted life. But if we are frightened and reject it, the moment, so to speak, passes; the symbol is never offered again (LJ, p. 136).

Stephen is something more than just a brother in the usual sense of the word for he symbolizes the ideal of male love.

However, the symbolism surrounding Stephen makes him an abstract figure. In a diary entry dated 23 March 1906, Forster himself expressed anxiety over that way he had written The Longest Journey, 'Doubt whether novel's any good: all ingenious symbols: little flesh and blood'.⁸ In the drafts of the novel, Forster had written a fantasy chapter in which Stephen bathes in a river and walks naked through the woods. He omitted that chapter and contented himself simply with the mention of Stephen sleeping naked on the roof of Cadover.⁹ In a letter to E. J. Dent of April 1907, Forster gave his reason for abandoning the fantasy chapter, 'it shifted the vision too far round'.¹⁰ Afraid that the homoerotic coding detracted from Stephen's

credibility as a character, Forster endeavours to retrieve some of his humanity. Hence the symbolic descriptions of Stephen are counterbalanced by the assertions that he is a man. As Herbert tells Rickie, 'It makes no difference whose son he is. I mean he is the same person' (LJ, p. 250). Stephen is angry at Rickie's idealism of him, 'The man was right. He did not love him, even as he had never hated him. In either passion he had degraded him to be a symbol for the vanished past' (LJ, p. 255). Rickie recognizes that Stephen is not an object but a human being who demands an emotional response.

The drafts reveal Forster's struggle to make Stephen more substantial. For Rickie:

One by one Stephen had stripped him of his illusions, until the world was again real. Ansell had tried, but he was sentimental, he was Cambridge, and could but evoke the reality they had found in that beautiful past. This man belonged to the present (LJ, p. 378).

Cambridge and Ansell are associated with the philosophical, Platonic ideal of friendship whereas in Stephen, Forster envisages a contemporary notion of homoerotic love. But he was unable to synthesize the real and symbolic functions of Stephen and the relationship of Rickie and Stephen does not materialize in the world of social reality.

Homoeroticism in Journey

The journey motif in The Longest Journey is largely abstract. The title of the novel and the metaphor of journey in the text allude to a verse from Shelley's Epipsychidion, the invocation of the Shelleyan ideal of love is significant. Shelley defines a concept of romantic love that is distinct from the popular cult of adherence just to one person. In Forster's novel, Shelley's vision of love as individualistic and outside conventions is employed to argue against marriage and in favour of homoerotic love.

The verse from Shelley echoes throughout the text. Ansell's refers to it in his letter to Rickie when he cautions him against marriage (LJ, p. 81) and Rickie himself 'cherished greatly' those lines from Shelley's poem and felt as 'very good' (LJ, p. 126). In accord with the poet, Rickie too 'believed that life should be in a line - a line of enormous length, full of countless interests and countless figures, all well beloved' (LJ, p. 108). Unlike Jane Austen's novels, where romantic love is integrated with and even a function of social relations, love in Forster does not conform to any relationships. Whereas relationships are prescribed, given, familiar, love is a lack, 'for Romance is a figure with outstretched hands, yearning for the unattainable' (LJ, p. 213). In the title of the novel and everywhere in the text, the motif of journey is entwined with the quest for love, and insofar as this love is a wanting and not to be found in society, it pertains to homoerotic desire.

The novel is a Bildungsroman and the author evokes the image of life as a journey. Rickie's journey is in search for a home and lasting relationships, and he progresses from friendship, through marriage, to an acceptance of his brother. Rickie had entered Cambridge, 'preparing for a silent and solitary journey' (LJ, p. 5). Rickie and his friends are on the verge of leaving Cambridge, and as Herbert Pembroke tells Rickie, 'The Tripos is the beginning of life, not the end' (LJ, p. 13). The analogy is made again when Herbert says of Agnes' engagement with Gerald that, 'She has found a worthy helpmeet for life's journey' (LJ, p. 48). The notion of journey is implicit in Ansell's warning to Rickie, 'You can go to the bad. But I refuse to accompany you' (LJ, p. 56). The metaphor of journey mainly applies to Rickie for the other main characters have made their choices while Rickie's prospects are uncertain.

As the time to leave the university nears, Rickie is acutely aware of homelessness. Ansell rebukes Rickie for believing that Cambridge is narrow. He says, 'To compare the world to Cambridge is like comparing the outsides of houses with the inside of a house. No intellectual effort is needed, no moral result is attained. You only have to say, 'Oh, what a difference! Oh, what a difference!' and then come indoors again and exhibit your broadened mind' (LJ, p. 63). Ansell's speech touches a raw nerve in Rickie:

"I never shall come indoors again," said Rickie. . . .
"It matters very much to me what the world is like. I can't answer your questions about it; and that's no loss to you, but so much the worse for me. And then you've got a house -

not a metaphorical one, but a house with father and sisters. I haven't, and never shall have. There'll never again be a home for me like Cambridge. I shall only look at the outsides of homes. According to your metaphor, I shall live in the street, and it matters very much to me what I find there" (LJ, p. 63).

As the narrative unfolds, Rickie indeed turns out to be an eternal traveller; without an anchor he passes through the various and mutually exclusive worlds presented in the novel.

Rickie's internal journey co-ordinates with his movements from Cambridge through Sawston to Wiltshire, places and the three sections of the novels correspond with the themes of friendship, marriage and brotherhood respectively. Forster describes the distinct features of each setting. Cambridge is warm, animate and reassuring, a place that inculcates the validity of every individual:

The journey thither was now familiar to him, and he took pleasure in each landmark . . . Cambridge, according to her custom, welcomed her sons with open drains . . . Here it was gas, there electric light, but everywhere something, and always a smell . . . Ansell turned aside to some large lighted windows, the abode of a hospitable don, and from other windows there floated familiar voices and the familiar mistakes in a Beethoven sonata. The college though small, was civilized, and proud of its civilization. (LJ. pp. 55-58).

The smells from open drains are part of Cambridge's atmosphere and give it an air of continuity.

Sawston, on the other hand, is indistinguishable from any other suburban town, with its 'innumerable residences, detached and semi-detached' (LJ, p. 42). In contrast to the intellectual world of Cambridge and the commercialism of Sawston, Wiltshire is a depiction of natural, rural life:

The rain tilted a little from the south-west . . . and a kind of sigh passed over the country as the drops lashed the walls, trees, shepherds, and other motionless objects that stood in their slanting career. At times the cloud would descend and visibly embrace the earth, to which it had only sent messages; and the earth itself would bring forth clouds - clouds of a whiter breed - which formed in the shallow valleys and followed the courses of the streams. It seemed the beginning of life. Again God said, "Shall we divide the waters from the land or not? Was not the firmament labour and glory sufficient?" At all events it was the beginning of life pastoral, behind which imagination cannot travel. . . . out on the slopes beyond them stood the eternal man and the eternal dog, guarding the eternal sheep until the world is vegetarian (LJ, p. 85).

Each of the three places is associated with a house. Rickie's rooms at Cambridge are 'the perishable home that was his for a couple of years' (LJ, p. 59); otherwise he is truly homeless, forever a sojourner. Pembrokes' house is located in Sawston and the decor reflects their pragmatic taste:

Madonnas of acknowledged merit hung upon the stairs. A replica of the Hermes of Praxiteles - of course only the

bust - stood in the hall with a real palm behind it. . . .
if a house could speak - and sometimes it does speak more
clearly than the people who live in it - the house of the
Pembrokes would have said, "I am not quite like other
houses, yet I am perfectly comfortable. I contain works of
art and a microscope and books. But I do not live for any
of these things or suffer them to disarrange me" (LJ, p.
33). Cadover is Mrs. Failing's house in Wiltshire is as
unattractive as its owner and Rickie thinks of it as 'the
perilous house' (LJ, p. 110) where he fears for his safety.

The three places also represent contrasting values and
outlooks and Rickie muses over the differences between
them:

He was extremely sensitive to the inside of a house,
holding it an organism that expressed the thoughts,
conscious and subconscious, of its inmates. He was equally
sensitive to places. He would compare Cambridge with
Sawston, and either with a third type of existence, to
which, for want of a better name, he gave the name of
"Wiltshire" (LJ, p. 155).

Cambridge is a glorious abode of men and fosters friendship
between them, and women figure only as Dryads or elm trees
outside; women dominate in Sawston, which upholds public
school outlook and social conventions; finally, Wiltshire
represents pastoral life, where women are kept in their
place and there is a possibility of male brotherhood.

Rickie's traumas in marriage wreck his faith in the
traditional values of home and domestic life and prepare
him for an alternative way of life with his brother and

friend. He repents his earlier indifference to Stephen and explains his emotional conversion in terms of a journey:

"I have been too far back," said Rickie gently. "Ansell took me a journey that was even new to him. We got behind right and wrong, to a place where only one thing matters - that the Beloved should rise from the dead" (LJ, p. 249).

Rickie's journey has been far back into time, beyond Christian morality, to the classical times when neither Stephen's illegitimacy nor the love of a brother would have been condemned. The journey is connected with homoerotic desire in the allusion to the Beloved, which recalls Forster's reference to love, the Beloved Republic in 'Two Cheers for Democracy', which in turn refers to Plato's Republic that permits relations between men. Forster's novel reinstates Plato's values in contemporary society.

The theme of friendship and brotherhood are reinforced by homoerotic codes in the novel. Homoerotic desire not only affects the plot and language, but also Forster's depiction of his characters. One of Forster's greatest strengths as a novelist lies in his creation of male characters.

Other homoerotic codes that exist in the text are the allusions to Pan and Orion. Classical references invariably carry a homoerotic content and Rickie is unapologetic about the fact that the Greeks, 'As to women - oh! there they were dreadful' (LJ, p. 46). Significantly classical allusions escape Agnes or if applied, they become tame, 'A kindly Medea, a Cleopatra with a sense of duty - these

suggested her a little' (LJ, p. 47). The only other allusion associated with her is that of 'Medusa in Arcady' (LJ, p. 178), as destructive of homoerotic love.

Finally, the mention of Stephen's bathing is homoerotic, for in bathing men are seen naked and it recalls similar scenes in Whitman's Leaves of Grass and Carpenter's Towards Democracy. A slightly less explicit scene is that of Rickie watching Stephen paddle in water, described in terms of a mystical communion between the two brothers (LJ, pp. 272-73).

Conclusion

The Longest Journey is akin to Maurice in that it conspicuously deals ^{with} relations between men, but unlike Maurice homoerotic desire is explored mostly at a symbolical and abstract level. Although the male characters in The Longest Journey represent various facets of homoerotic desire, the ideal of male love is coded in the themes of friendship and brotherhood. The narrative is written in two modes - the realistic mode which consists of Forster's denunciations of marriage and heterosexual relations and the fantasy mode which gives expression to homoerotic desire. Ultimately, Forster is unable to incorporate the theme of brotherhood with social reality.

Forster's ^{'s} technique in The Longest Journey of investing solely his male characters with homoerotic desire, did not facilitate the theme of male love. In fact, the themes of

brotherhood and male friendship proved to be too thin a disguise to allow for a comfortable expression of homoerotic love, and hence desire is obscured to the point of abstraction in the novel. In the novels written after The Longest Journey, Forster increasingly uses women as vehicles of homoerotic desire, which enables him to articulate his themes more freely. In A Room with a View and more so in Howards End the women characters are effective advocates of Forsterian values of personal relations.

One outcome of this strategy of using the device of women characters is that Forster's narratives are written mostly in the realistic mode. The split between reality and imagination in The Longest Journey develops into the conflict between love and truth in A Room with a View. This theme is touched upon briefly in The Longest Journey when Ansell voices his objections to Agnes, '(1) She is not serious. (2) She is not truthful' (LJ, p. 82). In Forster's texts, truth does not reside with women characters or in heterosexual relations. Thus love and truth are not always compatible because to be truthful is to admit homoerotic desire. The division between love and truth in A Room with a View is greater than in The Longest Journey because the novel's concerns are presented through a female character.

1. In the interview with Furbank and Haskell, 'The Art of Fiction: E. M. Forster', p. 32.
2. 'Editor's Introduction', The Longest Journey, p. lvii.
3. Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, pp. 101 and 223.
4. 'Editor's Introduction', The Longest Journey, p. vii.
5. 'Author's Introduction', The Longest Journey, p. lxvi.
6. Ibid., p. lxvi.
7. 'Editor's Introduction', The Longest Journey, p. lx.
8. Cited by Elizabeth Heine, 'Editor's Introduction', The Longest Journey, p. xiv.
9. E. M. Forster, 'Author's Introduction', The Longest Journey, p. lxix.
10. Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, p. 87.

Chapter 5

Homoerotic Desire and Heterosexual Romance in A Room with a View

According to Oliver Stallybrass, of Forster's six completed novels, 'A Room with a View has, if not the longest gestation period (a distinction claimed by A Passage to India), at least the most complicated pre-natal history'.¹ Forster confirmed that, 'The Italian half of the novel was almost the first piece of fiction I attempted'.² The early fragments of the 'Lucy Novel', were written as early as winter 1901-2 which, from December 1903, evolved into the 'New Lucy Novel'. Forster started with a conventional plot of a hero and heroine and a set of genteel English characters in Italy, who decide to organize a concert to raise funds for the church.³ Having modelled his novel on a heterosexual plot, Forster found that he was either unable or unwilling to complete it. The 'Lucy Novel' stagnated while he went on to write Where Angels Fear to Tread and The Longest Journey.

Once he had got the themes of friendship and brotherhood in Where Angels Fear to Tread and The Longest Journey out of his system, Forster returned to the Lucy novels with renewed vigour, determined to finish in the style in which he had begun. A study of the Lucy drafts reveals that Forster systematically expunged homoerotic

desire from the text. In focussing on Lucy and her relationship with George, Forster's narrative is twice removed from its source. Although Forster managed to force Lucy's marriage with George in the novel, the deception he exercised seriously dented his sense of artistic integrity. Hence A Room with a View is rife with motifs of untruth and silence. The more he succeeded in concealing homoerotic desire, the more Forster detested his writing. A Room with a View marks the beginning of Forster's alienation from his work which reaches its height in A Passage to India.

The Rift between Love and Truth

Forster explained the rationale of his fiction, 'True and loveable would be my antithesis'.⁴ The conjunction of love and truth is peculiar to Forster and expresses his dilemma as a novelist. Insofar as homoerotic desire cannot be articulated directly, love in Forster is banished from the realm of truth. Truthfulness is defined in Mr Emerson as 'the merit - if it is one - of saying exactly what he means' (RV, p. 7) and this is one luxury that Forster himself could not afford. Love and truth exist apart in Forster's novels so that while his male protagonists such as Rickie and Ansell uphold truth because they embody the homoerotic ideal, but they are deliberately severed from love. On the other hand, sexual relations are represented through women characters such as Agnes and Lucy, who are also associated with untruth.

In A Room with a View, Lucy is condemned for not having the courage to admit her love for George, but Forster's criticism of Lucy widens into a general comment on the difficulty of truthfulness to love. The narrator reflects his own situation through Lucy:

She gave up trying to understand herself, and joined the vast armies of the benighted, who follow neither the heart nor the brain, and march to their destiny by catchwords. The armies are full of pleasant and pious folk. But they have yielded to the only enemy that matters - the enemy within. They have sinned against passion and truth, and vain will be their strife after virtue. As the years pass, they are censured. Their pleasantries and their piety show cracks, their wit becomes cynicism, their unselfishness hypocrisy; they feel and produce discomfort wherever they go. They have sinned against Eros and the Pallas Athene, and not by any heavenly intervention, but by the ordinary course of nature, those allied deities will be avenged (RV, p. 174).

Forster sees most people acting from other motivations than love and his criticism of deception in love is thorough. Significantly love is identified with the male god Eros and wisdom with the female goddess, Athene, who repulsed the advances of gods, and so both the allusions are relevant to homoerotic desire. Of course, it was virtually impossible to combine truth and passion in homosexual love, and Forster's anger directed at the unbearable situation, where love for men has to be constantly denied. Mr Emerson, with tears in his eyes, tells Lucy, 'we fight for more than Love

or Pleasure: there is Truth. Truth counts, Truth does count' and to Lucy 'he had shown her the holiness of direct desire' (RV, p. 204). Ironically, the only direct desire Forster manages to express is one of heterosexual relations through Lucy; love between men, as always, is disclosed obliquely.

Forster felt his own position in A Room with a View to be incriminating and was the first to dismiss his own work. In a letter to E. J. Dent, dated 30 June 1907, he referred to the novel as 'toshy, but one trusts inoffensive'.⁵ He progressively grew more cynical about his work and ten months later regarded it as utter 'bilge'.⁶ Forster was conscious of his own evasiveness in A Room with a View and sought to defend his method against the criticisms of some of his more perceptive friends. He wrote to Nathaniel Wedd on 25 June 1908 of his latest novel:

It is slight, unambitious, and uninteresting, but - in rather an external way - the characters seem more alive to me than any others that I have put together. The publisher is much pleased - which is all to the bad, I admit - and I have got good terms. Have tried to get it taken in America, but that was no go. "Not sufficiently compelling for a transatlantic audience." Which, I admit, is all to the good. The thing comes out in October, and will probably gratify the home circle, but not those whose opinions I value most.⁷

It seems as if Forster resented the very publication of the novel. As he says in this letter, the characters in A Room with a View have more of an external life in the mode of a

comedy of manners, but it is at the cost of the imaginative life that gives the clue to homoerotic desire.

E. J. Dent was one of the people not convinced by A Room with a View, and in letter of 19 October 1908, Forster agreed with him that the novel entailed an element of dishonesty. He wrote to Dent:

No, I don't expect that you will do with the book very well: it does, sincerely or insincerely, commend an attitude that you will think insincere. Only I do wonder that you find it difficult to read - pretty straight forward isn't it, surely.⁸

The insincere attitude that the novel projects is the upholding of marriage and Dent probably found the book tiresome in its imitation of heterosexual themes. The book continued to prey on Forster's mind, and in another letter to Malcolm Darling, dated 12 December 1908, he tried again to come to terms with it:

I am so glad that you see I'm not a cynical beast. Not that you've suggested that I was, but information to the contrary is extraordinarily difficult for me to convey. I can't write down "I care about love, beauty, liberty, affection, and truth" though I should like to.⁹

These various statements voice the author's deep sense of frustration at not being able to portray homoerotic love directly. Forster's disowned A Room with a View insofar as it was untrue the values he cherished; his final verdict on the book was, 'It is not my preferred novel - The Longest Journey is that - but it may fairly be called the nicest'.¹⁰

Connected with the issue of truth is the motif of silence in Forster's fiction and he uses silence where he cannot be truthful. Silence occurs in a substantial way in A Room with a View and not only becomes a major theme in A Passage to India, but also a crucial aspect of Forster's own life. Silence is enigmatic and denotes homoerotic desire which may not be put in words.

In contrast to the talkative heroes of The Longest Journey, George in A Room with a View is withdrawn and quiet, and his loss of speech is symptomatic of the silencing of homoerotic desire in the text. At one point he is conceptualized as naked, as a figure in Michelangelo's paintings, but although the analogy is presented through Lucy, the appreciation of the vision lies beyond her nature:

The feeling soon passed; it was unlike her to have entertained anything so subtle. Born of silence and of unknown emotion, it passed when Mr Emerson returned, and she could re-enter the world of rapid talk, which was alone familiar to her (RV, p. 24).

Silence implies a failure of communication, and when the other characters at the pension ostracize the Emersons 'the father was almost as silent as the son' (RV, p. 37).

George breaks his silence on the two momentous occasions - the murder and the bathing scenes - both of which are homoerotic incidents. Particularly in the latter episode, silence weighs heavily as the three men proceed towards the lake, 'Mr Beebe who could be silent, but who could not bear silence, was compelled to chatter' (RV, p.

128). As they near the woods George begins to open up and as Mr Beebe notices, 'To his relief, George began to talk' (RV, p. 128). Bathing with Freddy and Mr Beebe, George becomes carefree and totally liberated from oppressive silence.

Silence is connected with the ability to express the desire for male love, and in the novels where the ideal of homoerotic love is hidden, Forster uses silence to denote the inadequacy of language. It is only in Maurice that the wish to talk is recovered, and in that novel language is employed entirely to elucidate the theme of homoerotic love.

However, whatever techniques Forster adopted, homoerotic desire is never completely obliterated from his texts. In A Room with a View, as in Howards End and A Passage to India, the apparent structure of the novel is qualified by what is left unsaid in the text.

Erasing Desire

The materials from which a Room with a View was composed contained elements of both heterosexual and homosexual plots, but as always Forster despaired of his ability to synthesize them, and edited the drafts to sift out homoerotic themes from the final text. But the author's lack of interest in his female protagonist and the subject of marriage comes through, and earned him the reputation of being prudish.

A Room with a View is produced from two sets of drafts which Forster called the 'Lucy Novel' and the 'New Lucy Novel'. The 'Lucy Novel' was set entirely in Italy and the author had no difficulty in envisaging a group of characters through whom he could present his critique of English society. However, he could not find a role for his hero Arthur or Tancred and his heroine Lucy. The drafts of the novel consist of long, disconnected speeches, 'on the different natures and roles of men and women' and 'the improving lectures on Art' which Forster eventually decided to leave out.¹¹

In the 'Lucy Novel', the repressiveness of social mores is depicted through Lucy who chafes against her cousin, Miss Bartlett's sense of propriety. Lucy leaves Miss Bartlett, 'endeavouring to disentangle their clinging shrieking agonised bleeding clothes' and goes to Rome to stay with Arthur's friends, the Appleblossoms.¹² Freedom in Forster is typically a male prerogative. Lucy's rebellion does not achieve her independence and she realizes that she has merely changed 'one bondage for another'.¹³

The 'Lucy Novel' also includes Forster's concern for passion in men. In these drafts, Arthur alone witnesses the death of an Italian at the Fountain of Neptune, 'On the rim lay a young man of twenty, stripped almost naked. Blood was dripping off him into the water, and the people who held him were bathing him'.¹⁴ The incident reveals to Arthur the inadequacy of art and moves him to aspire to the love of men:

By some subtle connection, the sight of the young Italian's perfect form lying on the fountain brim had led him to disbelieve in his own capacity for rendering beauty. That indeed was an aesthetic connection, intelligible if unexpected, but there was also a stronger connection of a more subtle kind. he longed to be more emotional and more sympathetic.¹⁵

He does not speak to Lucy of his adventure but tells her that he will give up his career as an artist because, 'Art has nothing to do with beauty. Its one true object is to promote human intercourse and bring about the brotherhood of Man.'¹⁶

Although at this point Forster had developed a stance on social issues, he had not identified an alternative to the English values and attitudes that he was criticizing. Consequently, the relationship between Lucy and Arthur/Tancred remained undefined, except that it was to be without any sexual dimension for Lucy 'had the greatest repulsion to marriage'.¹⁷

In December 1903, Forster started afresh on the drafts which he now called the 'New Lucy Novel' and introduced a fresh set of characters. In a diary entry on the 16th of that month he noted, 'Idea of new novel getting coherent: Miss Bartlett, Lucy, Miss Lavish, Mr Eager all reappear. New: George Emerson, his father, Lucy's father & mother, Rev. Charles Beebe'.¹⁸ Forster transferred the qualities of Arthur from the 'Lucy Novel' to Cecil in the 'New Lucy Novel', while in George and his father he embodied the positive values of his fiction. George and Mr Emerson carry

the connotations of the Other - the passionate and the homoerotic - in the novel. Forster emphasizes their strangeness in the novel. Lucy feels that 'they had cast a spell over her. They were so serious and so strange that she could not remember how to behave' (RV, p. 23). The conception of the Emersons made the journey metaphor redundant, and so in the 'New Lucy Novel' Forster designed the second section which is also located in England.

According to Ellem, 'The main differences between "Lucy" and "New Lucy" are ones of mood and the personalities of the characters'. She elaborates that,

In 'Lucy' Forster described the influence of Arthur Tancred and Lucy on each other, but the influence and its results seem trivial and anticlimactic. And he had not fully developed what was to become his recurring theme: the quickening of the conventional by contact with the natural and uncivilized: in other words, how personalities can be improved. At that time, natural and uncivilized meant (to Forster) the working classes: Gino, Stephen and Ansell, George, Leonard Bast.¹⁹

It is true that in the 'Lucy Novel' Forster was just beginning to formulate his contrasts and Ellem fails to point out that the tension between the conventional and natural is fundamentally the opposition between heterosexual society and homoerotic desire. The male protagonists Ellem mentions are not all from the working class, but what they have in common is that they are conceptualized as the Other to the inhibited English middle-class gentleman. However, in A Room with a View,

Forster decided to set out his arguments for love and passionate life in terms of a heterosexual relationship and the drafts exhibit the writer's struggle in adhering to that plan.

Ellem also states that whereas 'In "Lucy" the relationship between Lucy and Arthur Tancred is purely platonic', the '"New Lucy" is full of romance and passion'.

The atmosphere in the second drafts is carefully created:

Instead of the cold, wet, November Florence of "Lucy" we have Florence in springtime and England in summer. The extant portions of "Lucy" are all city: "New Lucy" has vistas of countryside and scenes set in woods.²⁰

Again, Ellem ignores the fact that the romance and passion in the 'New Lucy' is not just due to the attraction between George and Lucy, but also ^{to} relations between men, particularly George and Mr Beebe.

However, in reworking the 'New Lucy' drafts into A Room with a View, Forster deleted passages pertaining to love between men and foregrounded the relationship of George and Lucy. Yet homoerotic desire is not completely eliminated from the text, but impinge on the heterosexual plot of the novel. The drafts of the Lucy novels enhance our understanding of a Room with a View, and provide an explanation for the tediousness of Forster's narrative in the published text. Forster uses the device of women characters again in Howards End and A Passage to India, but in those novels his technique is much more sophisticated, and the process of changes from the drafts to the final

form is not as obvious as in the case of A Room with a View.

Chivalry and Comradeship

In Where Angels Fear to Tread and The Longest Journey, Forster replaces the spurious notion of heterosexual romance with love between men. In A Room with a View, instead of contrasting the moribund code of chivalry with male love, Forster extols the ideal of comradeship. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, comradeship implies a homoerotic ideal except that in A Room with a View, Forster associates it with Lucy.

Lucy craves for fulfilment and she is not content with the medieval definitions of the role of a lady. The narrator explains that Lucy cannot break free of her fetters because the medieval ideas, anachronistic as they might be, still condition modern life:

There is much that is immortal in this medieval lady. the dragons have gone, and so have the knights, but she still lingers in our midst. She reigned in many an early Victorian castle, and was queen of much early Victorian song. It is sweet to protect her in the intervals of business, sweet to pay her honour when she has cooked our dinner well. But alas! the creature grows degenerate. In her heart also there are springing up strange desires. She too is enamoured of heavy winds, and vast panoramas, and green expanses of the sea. She has marked the kingdom of

this world, how full it is of wealth, and beauty, and war - a radiant crust, built around the central fires, spinning towards the receding heavens. Men, declaring that she inspires them to it, move joyfully over the surface, having the most delightful meetings with other men, happy, not because they are masculine, but because they are alive. Before the show breaks up she would like to drop the august title of the Eternal Woman, and go there as her transitory self.

Lucy does not stand for the medieval lady, who was rather an ideal to which she was bidden to lift her eyes when feeling serious. Nor has she any system of revolt. Here and there a restriction annoyed her particularly, and she would transgress it, and perhaps be sorry that she had done so (RV, pp. 39-40).

The language in this passage is terribly archaic and coy, but this is due to the author's fundamental lack of enthusiasm for his subject rather than any squeamishness. Forster debunks the chivalric code on the pretext it restricts women, and the glorification of womanhood precludes the fulfilment of women as individuals. However, Forster's rejection of medieval chivalry does not necessarily mean support for women's liberation. The author is also repudiating the conduct by which men are bound to women; otherwise he celebrates the freedom for travel and adventure, unhampered by women, that was available to men in medieval times. Forster rejects the notion of male courtesy to women, and raises the issues of equality and

comradeship to transfer sexuality purely from man-woman relationships to relations between men.

Forster's heroes are not chivalrous men because they are not in awe of women. George Emerson is measured by some other yardstick rather than courtesy. He 'was trustworthy, intelligent, and even kind', but like Forster's other heroic men, 'he lacked chivalry; his thoughts, like his behaviour, would not be modified by awe' (RV, p. 44). George's creed of passion and truth does not involve sensitivity to women, but indifference to them. Yet the chivalric code of behaviour is insidious and persists in contemporary society. Miss Bartlett bemoans the changed state of affairs, 'O for a real man' (RV, p. 75), and elsewhere she says, 'What's wanted is a man with a whip' (RV, p. 163). By contrast, George Emerson is brutal, and his brutality is owing to his supreme disregard for women's delicate feelings. His brutality, of course, makes George ineligible in terms of heterosexual romance, and at the same time infinitely desirable in the homosexual context.

Lucy too has a vision of 'equality beside the man she loved', but in her case equality transcends sexual attraction for she 'had reached the stage where personal intercourse would alone satisfy her' (RV, p. 110). The meaning of equality for Lucy is primarily social, although the terminology with which Forster delineates this ideal provides an instance of homoerotic slippage in the text. Lucy realizes of Italy that 'anyone who chooses may warm himself in equality, as in the sun':

she felt that there was no one whom she might not get to like, that social barriers were irremovable, doubtless, but not particularly high. You jump over them just as you jump into a peasant's olive-yard in the Apennines and he is glad to see you (RV, p. 110).

The references to a peasant and olive-yard are evocative of homoerotic desire, but are unresonant in relation to Lucy. The words ring hollow especially if we recall the passage from Where Angels Fear to Tread, where the narrator says that true equality in Italy is achieved only between men and at the expense of women (WA, p. 36). Indeed, as the drafts of the 'Lucy Novel' show, even in this novel, Forster had contemplated presenting Lucy's efforts towards freedom as futile.

In the finished novel, Lucy's desire for equality becomes the ground for her rejection of marriage with Cecil, 'He had no glimpse of the comradeship after which the girl's soul yearned' (RV, p. 154). Freedom from sexual relations is imperative to Lucy's pursuit for equality, 'She must be one of the women whom she had praised so eloquently, who care for liberty and not for men' (RV, p. 174). Mrs Honeychurch thinks of her daughter's independence as a single life, and imagines her messing 'with typewriters and latchkeys' (RV, p. 193).

In contrast to the meaningless slogans of equality of women, Forster generates a more vibrant idea of comradeship among men. Unlike Lucy's quest, male comradeship is based on physical and sexual intimacy. On meeting George, Freddy

promptly invites him to bathe with him, and the suggestion sends Mr Beebe raving:

That's the best conversational opening I've ever heard. But I'm afraid it will only act between men. Can you picture a lady who has been introduced to another lady opening civilities with 'How do you do? Come and have a bathe'? And yet you will tell me that the sexes are equal (RV, p. 126). Equality between the sexes is postponed sometime into the future and Mr Emerson says, 'they shall be comrades' (RV, p. 126) while the narrator rejoices in male comradeship in the present. Mr Emerson attests that, 'In this - not in other things - we men are ahead. we despise the body less than women do. But not until we are comrades shall we enter the Garden' (RV, p. 126).

A Room with a View vouchsafes only the ideal of comradeship between men, experienced through physical and sexual bonds between them. In this novel, as in all others, Forster annuls the supremacy of marriage over all other relations. However, the ideal of comradeship in A Room with a View, to some extent, is developed in the context of man-woman relationship but is ultimately superseded by a much more vital description of relations between men.

While the narrative in A Room with a View ostensibly works towards the marriage of George and Lucy, the heterosexual romance is interspersed with scenes of homosexual love. Both the Italian and the English sections of the novel contain an untitled chapter which encompasses homoerotic desire. The 'Fourth Chapter' describes the murder of one Italian man by another and the scene combines

images of pain and pleasure that have become the hallmark of homoerotic fantasy in Forster; the 'Twelfth Chapter' renders the homoerotic motif of men bathing together.

Previous drafts of the 'Fourth Chapter' show that Forster went to great lengths to dilute the homoerotic content of the murder scene. In the first version of the 'Lucy Novel', Arthur/Tancred encounters the stabbed man alone at the fountain, and in the 'New Lucy' drafts the Italian man dies in George's arms.²¹ In the revised final version, both George and Lucy witness the incident and Lucy faints in George's arms.

The incident arouses George sexually and has no relevance for Lucy, but in contrast to the two straightforwardly heterosexual occasions when George kisses Lucy and there is nobody else present, Forster neutralizes a moment of homosexual passion by introducing a third party observer. The eroticism of the murder scene is mediated through Lucy:

She fixed her eyes wistfully on the tower of the palace, which rose out of the lower darkness like a pillar of roughened gold. It seemed no longer a tower, no longer supported by earth, but some unattainable treasure throbbing in the tranquil sky (RV, p. 41).

It is against such aggressively phallic imagery that the stabbing of the Italian man happens. In fact Lucy does not participate in the action as she falls unconscious and only George clearly grasps the significance of the episode. The two men suddenly reveal the world of male beauty and intensity to him and he tells Lucy that the murderer tried

to kiss the dying man (RV, p. 43). Watching the murder is a sexual experience for George, a moment at which 'the boy verged into a man' (RV, p. 43). The narrator continues,

It was not exactly that a man had died; something had happened to the living: they had come to a situation where character tells, and where Childhood enters upon the branching paths of Youth (RV, p. 45).

The incident hints at George's latent homosexual identity so that the spectacle has a greater significance for George than Lucy, and their development is not mutual but along separate paths. The incident dispels George's chronic sadness; whereas formerly he had an anguished sense that 'things won't fit' (RV, p. 26), the revelation of passion in men kindles a desire in him. George declares to Lucy, 'I shall probably want to live' (RV, p. 45). But after this brief disclosure, the breach in the narrative is closed, covering the theme of homoerotic desire.

George comes alive again in 'Twelfth Chapter' and once more women are not part of the action. The setting is conducive to homoerotic love - outdoors, a lake in the woods - in which Freddy, George and Mr Beebe go bathing. George casts off his apathy and sorrow with his clothes and is bursting with energy and happiness. The ordinary lake acquires *symbolic* proportions as the three men dip into it. Forster refers to the naked, muscular form of George as 'Michelangelesque' and the three men revel in the sheer strength of their bodies:

It was no ordinary water, nor was there very much of it, and, as Freddy said, it reminded one of swimming in a

salad. The three gentlemen rotated in the pool breast high, after the fashion of the nymphs in Götterdämmerung. But either because the rains had given a freshness, or because the sun was shedding a most glorious heat, or because two of the gentlemen were young in years and the third young in the spirit - for some reason or other a change came over them, and they forgot Italy and Botany and Fate. They began to play. Mr Beebe and Freddy splashed each other. A little deferentially, they splashed George. He was quiet; they feared they had offended him. Then all the forces of youth burst out. He smiled, flung himself at them, splashed them, ducked them, kicked them, muddied them, and drove them out of the pool (RV, pp. 130-1).

It is a glorious riot, 'the rout of a civilization' as Freddy and George kick Mr Beebe's clerical garments about. Forster in a masterful stroke, which is hardly like a domestic comedy, confronts Lucy with George when he is naked, and while his clothes lay on the ground, 'She had bowed across the rubbish that cumpers the world' (RV, p. 135). Although the events in the fourth and twelfth chapter seem incidental to the main plot, they are the most exuberant sections of the book besides which the two occasions when George kisses Lucy are subdued.

A Room with a View ends with the union of George and Lucy, yet the novel does not endorse marriage as such. From a homosexual perspective love and passion are incompatible with marriage, and in this novel too, the narrator voices all the objections to matrimony which, by now, are familiar in Forster. The announcement of Lucy's engagement to Cecil

is received with a twinge of regret. Forster points to the artificial and forced jollity it incites:

The chief parallel - to compare one great thing with another - is the power over us of a temple of some alien creed. Standing outside, we deride or oppose it, or at the most feel sentimental. Inside, though the saints and gods are not ours, we become true believers, in case any true believers should be present. . . . As for Lucy and Cecil, for whom the temple had been built, they also joined in the merry ritual, but waited, as earnest worshippers should, for the disclosure of some holier shrine of joy (RV, p. 95).

Forster sees the universality of marriage as a result of social conditioning rather than individual choice; marriage is a system as powerful as religion, supported by customs and rituals, which individuals have little scope of resisting. To Forster marriage is an alien creed and he therefore brings another insight into it. Being a social phenomenon, marriage rarely delivers what it promises, Lucy and Cecil must find fulfilment in something that is truer to their own nature.

Love is dissociated from marriage in both Cecil and George. There is an austerity about Cecil, he is like a Gothic statue which 'implies celibacy' (RV, p. 87) as opposed to 'George, who loved passionately' (RV, p. 160).

The engagement of Cecil and Lucy is of public interest, and they are mistaken in supposing that it is a private affair:

The spirit of the generations had smiled through them, rejoicing in the engagement of Cecil and Lucy because it

promised the continuance of life on earth. To Cecil and Lucy it promised something quite different - personal love. Hence Cecil's irritation and Lucy's belief that his irritation was just (RV, p. 97).

The functional aspect of marriage is emphasized again when Mr Emerson wishes Lucy well for her wedding and says, 'Marriage is a duty' (RV, p. 127). Lucy's engagement with Cecil is generally approved of because it fits nicely into social conventions, whereas George's unschooled passion is dangerous and creates fear and anxiety.

Forster concedes that marriage is unavoidable, but equally there is a conspicuous sense of relief when Lucy breaks off her engagement to Cecil. Mr Beebe says to himself, 'What a glorious riddance' (RV, p. 178) and tells Lucy, 'I am very glad, and I am certain that you have done the right thing' (RV, p. 180). The loss is minimal; Mrs Honeychurch 'did mind, but not nearly as much as her daughter pretended' (RV, p. 180). The broken engagement has greatest impact on domestic life, described in the havoc created in Mrs Honeychurch's garden.

The misogynous strain is much more explicit in the 'New Lucy' and the drafts show the extent to which homoerotic desire is refined in the published novel. Forster wrote in his notes for the original conception of the novel that, 'Mr Beebe feels hostility to George whom he likes: not to Cecil whom he doesn't'.²² In another passage Mr Beebe praises George, 'My dear George, you are the most romantic person. It is a wonderful gift'.²³ He hints that George should beware of Lucy for she might fall in love

with him.²⁴ George is thrilled by the thought and Mr Beebe rebukes him when he is unwilling to renounce Lucy:

So long as he could think of George as diseased Mr Beebe had been pitiful and even sympathetic. He was ready to soothe and comfort his hopeless passion, to bind up his broken heart, to nurse him back to daily life. But the suggestion of vigour infuriated him. He became personally hostile.²⁵

Forster's male characters such as Rickie Elliot in The Longest Journey are diseased and sickly for it brings out tenderness in men, and at the same time makes these protagonists unsuitable for heterosexual relations. George's healthiness also makes him susceptible to Lucy's advances. Forster was so loath to have George end up with Lucy that in the 'New Lucy' drafts George and Lucy decide to elope, but a tree falls on George while he is cycling home and he is killed.

Homoerotic Codes in the Text

Illuminating the homoerotic codes in A Room with a View radically alters the appreciation of the novel so that it can no longer be read simply as a domestic comedy. Marriage and heterosexual romance are not central to the text as shown even in the recent Merchant Ivory film of the book. The relationship of George and Lucy is severely undermined by homoerotic desire. The author is concerned with the predicament of George and not Lucy; A Room with a

View is differentⁱⁿ that the hero's development is partially attained through Lucy, but she is only instrumental in achieving George's fulfilment.

George is conceived as an ideal^{object} of homoerotic love. In the 'New Lucy' draft Mr Beebe says that George has sprung 'from the plough' and he sleeps in the woods.²⁶ George's natural instincts and simplicity are preserved in the published novel, but he is incoherent in his sexual impulses. Mr Emerson solicits Lucy's assistance in helping George towards maturity, thus tentatively linking their destinies, 'By understanding George you may learn to understand yourself. It will be good for both of you' (RV, p. 26). Mr Beebe also gives Lucy advice over George, 'He will work off his crudities in time. I rather mistrust young men who slip into life gracefully' (RV, p. 143). George's shyness warms Lucy to him and she realizes that 'men were not gods after all, but as human and as clumsy as girls; even men might suffer from unexplained desires, and need help' (RV, p. 153). Thus Lucy, in A Room with a View, is enlisted to George's cause and she is important for what she contributes to George's story. At the end of the novel, the author writes, 'All the fighting that mattered had been done by others - by Italy, by his father, by his wife' (RV, p. 206).

A Room with a View, like the rest of Forster's fiction, leads to an ideal of male love. The narrative does not expound the need for friends or brothers apart from one mention of the word 'friends'. Standing before the fresco of the Ascension of St. John, George says he would like to

go to heaven in that way, 'and if I got there I should like my friends to lean out of it, just as they do here' (RV, p. 23). The desire for homoerotic love is suggested rather in the overwhelming sense of lack that torments George, and is denoted by the large sign of interrogation that Charlotte finds scrawled in his room. Mr Emerson persuades Lucy to make George 'realize that by the side of the everlasting Why there is a Yes - a transitory Yes if you like, but a Yes' (RV, p. 27). The 'Yes' Mr Emerson talks about is an affirmation of homoerotic love. In an early draft of 'Lucy' Forster wrote of Italy as 'The beautiful country where they say "yes"' and 'where things happen'.²⁷ Except for Maurice, Forster's novels provide only fleeting glimpses of homoerotic love and in A Room with a View, these moments are presented in the fourth and twelfth chapters. Both those incidents are for George's sake. The murder episode reveals to George the possibility of passion in men and the significance of the incident somehow escapes Lucy, 'Leaning her elbows on the parapet, she contemplated the River Arno, whose roar was suggesting some unexpected melody to her ears' (RV, p. 45). As in The Longest Journey, Forster resorts to analogy with music to express what he cannot put in words. The bathing scene too invigorates George and Mr Emerson confirms to Lucy of George that 'he goes bathing with your brother, and became better' (RV, p. 198). The closing lines of the novel strike a note, not of complete bliss, but something left out:

| the song of Phaethon announced passion requited, love attained. But they were conscious of a love more mysterious

than this. The song died away; they heard the river, bearing down the snows of winter into the Mediterranean (RV, p. 209).

The mysterious melody that passes by unheeded is of homoerotic love; meanwhile, the author has to rest content with the relationship of George and Lucy.

The narrator in A Room with a View laments 'The sadness of the incomplete - the sadness that is often Life, but should never be Art' (RV, p. 121). Forster's art redresses the incompleteness of life by including homoerotic love and the plea for wholeness in his texts pertains precisely to the lack of recognition of male love. The Longest Journey had posed the question, 'Will it really profit us so much if we save our souls and lose the whole world?' (LJ, p. 227), in reply to which there is Lucy's feeling that 'in gaining the man she loved, she would gain something for the whole world' (RV, p. 204). Through Lucy Forster validates the theme of homoerotic love; Lucy and the whole world are better off for a man like George, who actually embodies the homoerotic ideal of love.

Forster eventually submitted to bringing George and Lucy together in the completed novel. However, some of the feelings expressed in the drafts are retained in the final text. There is a streak of animosity towards women in Mr Beebe. Very early in the novel, beneath Mr Beebe's pleasant exterior, the reader finds 'The clergyman, inwardly cursing the female sex' (RV, p. 11). On another occasion, the narrator elucidates, 'Mr Beebe was, from rather profound reasons, somewhat chilly in his attitude towards the other

sex, and preferred to be interested rather than enthralled' (RV, p. 32).

In Mr Beebe, Forster conveys an aversion to female sexuality. It is reported that Mr Beebe, never heard that an engagement was broken off but with a slight feeling of pleasure. In the case of Lucy, the feeling was intensified through dislike of Cecil; and he was willing to go further - to place her out of danger until she could confirm her resolution of virginity. The feeling was very subtle and quite undogmatic, and he never imparted it to any other of the characters in this entanglement (RV, p. 187).

Insofar as Mr Beebe's dislike of female sexuality is subtle and undogmatic, its source is not religion, but homoerotic desire. Cecil, too, shares this revulsion ^{from} women. In a conversation with Sir Harry, Cecil extols the virtues of men, 'Men don't gossip over teacups' (RV, p. 104). And his one kiss with Lucy is distasteful, 'As he approached her he found time to wish that he could recoil' (RV, p. 108).

It is noticeable that, in contrast to Lucy, George is wholly loveable and Forster achieves this by emphasizing his boyhood and innocence. Mr Beebe explains George's awkwardness saying, 'he hasn't learned to talk yet' (RV, p. 8). Mr Emerson speaks to Lucy of his son, 'My baby's worth the whole of Paradise' (RV, p. 25) and 'like the little child who ought to have been playing, and who hurt himself upon the tombstone' (RV, p. 26). Finally, in the last scene George has put his face in Lucy's lap as she scolds him, 'George, you baby, get up' (RV, p. 205) and the narrator

indulgently comments, 'He was a boy, after all' (RV, p. 206). As demonstrated in chapter 2, references to a boy or son are homoerotic codes. Forster parodies and subverts traditional relationships. In A Room with a View the Italian driver flirts with a girl he calls his sister and in giving them the names Phaethon and Persephone, Forster alludes to the amoral world of classical mythology (RV, p. 58). What is sacred in Forster is passion, and relationships in themselves do not matter. Hence, in Forster, the relation between a father and a son can be full of passion. Hence Forster's panegyric on Gino's love for his son in Where Angels Fear to Tread:

in no ordinary love scene could he ever be so great. For a wonderful physical tie binds the parents to the children; and - by some sad, strange irony - it does not bind us children to our parents. For if it did, if we could answer their love not with gratitude but equal love, life would lose much of its pathos and much of its squalor (WA, p. 111).

The father-son relationship is a manifestation of the love of an older man for a younger one, exalted by Plato in his Dialogues. Similarly, in a A Room with a View, the narrative nostalgically harks back to, 'the true chivalry - not the worn-out chivalry of sex, but the true chivalry that all the young may show to all the old' (RV, p. 200).

Claude J. Summers lists some of the references by which A Room with a View alludes to the homosexual literary tradition:

Housman and Butler are quoted directly; Michelangelo and Luca Signorelli are explicitly evoked, the latter being the artist that the Emersons discuss in the National Gallery when Cecil first encounters them. . . . Pater's influence is apparent in Cecil's aestheticism, and Whitman and Tuke influenced the bathing scene in Sacred Lake.²⁸

However, Forster uses the homosexual tradition for more than just quotations; homoerotic allusions are modified and enhanced so as to further the interpretation of his texts. For instance Mr Eager mentions a series of monographs titled, 'Medieval Byways' (RV, p. 60), which echoes Symonds' Italian Byways, but as Mr Eager's involvement with Italy is only superficial and the reference is intended to sound facetious.

Furthermore, homosexual codes in the novel are finely balanced against the heterosexual structure of the plot. George is a figure from Michelangelo, 'rugged', 'carrying a burden of acorns' and 'healthy and muscular' (RV, p. 24), whereas Lucy 'was like a woman from Leonardo da Vinci's, whom we love not so much for herself as for the things that she will not tell us' (RV, p. 88). Accordingly, Lucy's display of temper which Cecil believes to be an unfeminine trait, appears to him as incongruous as 'the Leonardo on the ceiling of the Sistine' (RV, p. 99). Cecil gives Lucy the song of the doomed bride, Lucy Ashton, from Sir Walter Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor (RV, p. 189), which sums up the sad conclusion to their affair. The affirmation of love comes instead from a homosexual source, A. E. Housman's A

Shropshire Lad and Mr Emerson recites a verse from that poem (RV, p. 26).

Another of Forster's favourite homoerotic allusions, that recurs in A Room with a View, is the reference to Pan. The picnic ends in confusion because George kisses Lucy. Pan has been let loose, but as it is a heterosexual affair, Forster is at pains to point out that it is a diminished form of the classical deity,

There was a general sense of groping and bewilderment. Pan had been amongst them - not the great god Pan, who has been buried these two thousand years, but the little god Pan, who presides over social contretemps and unsuccessful picnics (RV, p. 69).

Therefore a close reading of A Room with a View discloses that the narrative is imbued with homoerotic desire. There are several eulogies to Italy and Italians in the text that pertain to the theme of homoerotic desire. Finally, every casual phrase indicates the latent desire for male love. For instance, a child helps Mrs Honeychurch rescue the flowers in her garden, and the perception of the scene is entirely homoerotic, 'the orange the cactus fell, and Mr Beebe's last vision was of the garden child clasping it like a lover, his dark head buried in the wealth of blossom' (RV, p. 179). As a child, Forster found companionship with the garden-boys that his mother employed to play with him, and he remembered their names all his life. Forster's greatest affection was for Ansell.²⁹ In 1902 or 1903 Forster wrote a short story, 'Ansell', in

memory of that friendship, now published in The Life to Come and Other Stories.

Views and Rooms

It is significant that in an obviously heterosexual novel, where the narrator distances the narrative from the theme of homoerotic desire by using a female character, Forster dispenses with the metaphor of journey. In A Room with a View, Italy is not constructed as remote or alien, and in fact, the narrator draws parallels between the two places. The sense of English society is deliberately preserved in Pension Bertolini. The owner of the Pension is a Cockney woman and the lodgings are full of English visitors, complete with a clergyman from the parish of Tunbridge Wells. As Lucy complains, they might as well have been in London:

She looked at the two rows of English people who were sitting at the table; at the row of white bottles of water and red bottles of wine that ran between the English people; at the portraits of the late Queen and the late Poet Laureate that hung behind the English people, heavily framed; at the notice of the English church (RV, p. 2).

Just as previously the Pension Bertolini had reminded Lucy of London, she later finds aspects of Italy in the landscape around her home:

Ah, how beautiful the Weald looked! The hills stood out above its radiance, as Fiesole stands above the Tuscan

plain, and the South Downs, if one chose, were the mountains of Carrara. She might be forgetting her Italy, but she was noticing more things in her England. One could play a new game with the view, and try to find in its innumerable folds some town or village that would do for Florence (RV, p. 156).

Insofar as the foreign country is associated with the ideal of homoerotic love, Italy remains at the fringe in A Room with a View. The antithesis between England and Italy is not necessary for a heterosexual romance, and that affair of George and Lucy, begun in Italy is merely completed in England.

However, the narrative is sometimes reminiscent of the potential of Italy albeit in the context of heterosexual relations. Cecil remarks on the depth and intensity that appear in Lucy's character, 'Italy has done it' (RV, p. 122). But Italy in A Room with a View lacks specific homoerotic connotations and the characters' adventures there are described in terms of a coincidence. For George Emerson, 'Italy is only an euphemism for fate' (RV, p. 181), implying that his affair with Lucy could have taken place anywhere in the world. As the narrative concentrates on matters of domestic comedy - social manners and marriage, the emphasis in the novel is on views rather than journey or Italy. Where open spaces provide a setting for the interaction between men, a view denotes a general breadth of mind and openness to passion. Therefore the imagery of the view is appropriate to the relatively tame and domestic affair of George and Lucy.

A view stands in opposition to the narrow confines of a room, especially the drawing-room, which symbolizes the tight constraints of the English middle class society. A view stirs the characters emotionally. In Where Angels Fear to Tread Philip asks Caroline, 'The view from the Rocca - wasn't it fine?' (WA, p. 89), and he himself 'could never read "The view from the Rocca (small gratuity) is finest at sunset" without a catching at the heart' (WA, p. 12).

A Room with a View starts with Lucy's disappointment with her room in the Pension because it does not have a view. In order to have a view, she and Charlotte Bartlett must act against social propriety and exchange their rooms with two strange men. The discussion about views has larger implications for Lucy 'had an odd feeling that whenever these ill-bred tourists spoke the contest widened and deepened till it dealt, not with rooms and views, but with - well, something quite different, whose existence she had not realized before' (RV, p. 4). Lucy urges Charlotte to accept the Emersons' offer and once she has moved into a room with a view, Lucy looks out of her window, 'to see the lights dancing in the Arno, and the cypresses of San Miniato, and the foothills of the Apennines, black against the rising moon' (RV, p. 12); on the other hand, the beauty of the surroundings is wasted on the staid and prim Charlotte, 'Miss Bartlett, in her room, fastened the window-shutters and locked the door' (RV, pp. 12-3).

A view signifies a responsiveness to beauty and adventure, and above all, a capacity for spontaneity and love. Forster prepares for the first kiss of George and

Lucy by building up to a view. Lucy, led by the Italian driver, goes in search of Mr Beebe and each moment is full of suspense, a sense of the unexpected:

They were nearing the edge of the promontory, and the view was stealing round them, but the brown network of the bushes shattered it into countless pieces. . . . She was rejoicing in her escape from dullness. Not a step, not a twig, was unimportant to her. . . . The view was forming at last; she could discern the river, the golden plain, other hills (RV, p. 67).

As always in Forster, the scene of passion is removed from reality and ordinary life and is transformed by fantasy. Amidst such an abundance of flowers and colour it is only natural and inevitable that scene should inspire love and so George kisses Lucy:

From her feet the ground sloped sharply into the view, and violets ran down in rivulets and streams and cataracts, irrigating the hillside with blue, eddying round the tree stems, collecting into pools in the hollow, covering the grass with spots of azure foam. But never again were they in such profusion; this terrace was the well-head, the primal source whence beauty gushed out to water the earth (RV, pp. 67-8).

Love exists in the arena of views whereas social conventions, of which marriage is the foremost, are conducted in homes and rooms. Lucy's cousin worries over about this momentary contact being found out, and it does not matter if George spreads the story in some tavern, for 'what have we to do with taverns? Real menace belongs to

the drawing-room. It was of the drawing-room people that Miss Bartlett thought' (RV, p. 70). The impositions that Charlotte enforces are those of,

a cheerless, loveless world in which the young rush to destruction until they learn better - a shamefaced world of precautions and barriers which may avert evil, but which do not seem to bring good, if we may judge from those who have used them most (RV, pp. 78-9).

It is apt that when they are in Italy, Lucy turns down Cecil's proposal for marriage, but accepts him when he asks her again in the back garden of her mother's home in Summer Street.

According to Mr Emerson, 'men fall into two classes - those who forget views and those who remember them, even in small rooms' (RV, p. 159). A view entails an apprehension of romance and unrestricted passion. Cecil is conscious of his limitations and says to Lucy, 'I had got an idea - I dare say wrongly - that you feel more at home with me in a room' (RV, p. 106). And she admits that she does think of him always in a drawing room with no view (RV, p. 106). Just by talking of rooms and views Forster suggests the routine and mundane quality of their relationship as against the boundless prospects revealed by passion. Hence Cecil's kiss too is mechanical, something he claims in his role as a fiance, and does not spring from a spontaneous impulse.

The two positions, of conventions as opposed to passion, are reflected in the hostility of Charlotte Bartlett to George Emerson. Charlotte snubs George when she

meets him in Summer Street and the narrator comments, 'It was the old, old battle of the room with the view' (RV, p. 152). Love and social conventions are irreconcilable in Forster for passion, as he knew it, was unacceptable in the English middle class society in which he lived. Even in A Room with a View, where the discourse on passionate life attaches to heterosexual relations, Forster nevertheless adds an element of unacceptability to the love of George and Lucy.

Lucy's acknowledgement of her love for George alienates her from her family. She outgrows her mother's care and protectiveness and feels compelled to leave, 'she discovered that her home existed no longer. It might exist for Freddy, who still lived and thought straight, but not for one who had deliberately warped the brain' (RV, p. 192). The knowledge or experience of passion results in the protagonists' estrangement from domestic life. Lucy and George settle in Italy and are completely cut off from England, 'the Honeychurches had not forgiven them; they were disgusted at her past hypocrisy; she had alienated Windy Corner, perhaps for ever' (RV, pp. 206-7).

Forster carried his symbolism beyond the novel so that fifty years later, in 1958, when he retracted the happiness and passion granted to George and Lucy, he titled the postscript to the novel, 'A View without a Room'. In the postscript he describes the difficulty of locating the relationship of George and Lucy in modern life, of finding a viable room for their view.

Conclusion

A Room with a View marks another stage in the development of Forster's fiction. It is the first novel in which Forster complies with the stipulations of a heterosexual tradition, with some unfortunate consequences. The novel breached a fundamental principle of Forster's writing and so he could not bring himself to participate in the success of the book. However, having once written a novel in a traditional mode, Forster *attempts* it again in Howards End.

Howards End is a much more ambitious experiment than A Room with a View in that the novel not only focuses on heterosexual relations, but the repositories of Forsterian values are all women. Although Forster uses women characters as vehicles of his themes, the structure of emotion in that novel remains homoerotic, except that homoerotic desire in Howards End is more protracted and subtle than in any of Forster's other novels. The most serious consequence of this displacement of desire in Forster's texts is that it intensified his alienation from his work, begun with A Room with a View. It is notable that henceforward Forster's sense of failure grows with the success of his novels.

1. 'Editor's Introduction', A Room with a View, p. vii.
2. 'A View without a Room', Appendix, A Room with a View, p. 210.
3. Elizabeth Ellem, 'E. M. Forster: The Lucy and New Lucy Novels', p. 623.
4. In the interview with Furbank and Haskell, p. 32.
5. Cited by Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', A Room with a View, p. xiii.
6. Ibid., p. xiii.
7. Ibid., pp. xiii-iv.
8. Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, Volume One, p. 95.
9. Cited by Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', A Room with a View, pp. x-xi.
10. In 'A View without a Room', Appendix, A Room with a View, p. 210.
11. Elizabeth Ellem, 'E. M. Forster: The Lucy and New Lucy Novels', p. 625.
12. The Lucy Novels: Early Sketches for A Room with a View, p. 68.
13. Ibid., p. 67.
14. Ibid., p. 36.
15. Ibid., p. 37.
16. Ibid., p. 47.
17. Ibid., p. 66.
18. Ibid., p. 89.
19. 'E. M. Forster: The Lucy and New Lucy Novels', pp. 624-25.
20. Ibid., p. 625.
21. The Lucy Novels: Early Sketches for A Room with a View, pp. 36 and 100.
22. Ibid., p. 106.
23. Ibid., p. 106.
24. Ibid., p. 109.
25. Ibid., p. 110.

26. The Lucy Novels: Early Sketches for *A Room with a View*, p. 107.
27. E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume One, p. 30.
28. E. M. Forster (New York: Ungar, 1983), p. 101.
29. E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume One, p. 96.

Chapter 6

The Displacement of Desire in Howards End

Published in October 1910, Howards End is more ambitious than Forster's preceding novel in that the author widens his scope from domestic comedy to the Condition-of-England novel. The novel is written in a realistic mode and avoids the mention of relations between men, yet the narrative is affected by desire as an absence.

Homoerotic desire is displaced in Howards End as the narrative focuses on social and economic themes, presented through women protagonists. The theme of personal relations the novel is pitched on to the framework of contemporary socio-economic and political issues, and Forster strives to synthesize personal relations with socio-economic conditions in the stories of the two sisters and Leonard Bast.

The relationship of brothers had provoked hostility in The Longest Journey; hence in Howards End, Forster resorts to the safer device of the two sisters, who are named after the famous Schlegel brothers. 'Sister' provided Forster with a convenient middle term in that it denotes neither simply women nor homosexuals, but offers a paradigm for love between men. However, Forster's technique traps him in a double-bind - while the sisters act as effective proponents of Forsterian values of personal relations,

insofar as they are women they cannot advance the ideal of homoerotic love; on the other hand, Leonard Bast too fails to encompass the goal of personal relations because he is conceived entirely in terms of socio-economic factors and does not exist outside that background. Howards End is a product of this deadlock, where the author's vehicles are so inappropriate to his themes that the invisible desire for male love undermines the structure of the novel. The author's pronouncements on personal relations are not sustained by the structure of the novel. Unable to conduct the theme of male love through his characters, the narrator constantly intervenes in the text, resulting in commentary that is superfluous to the overt plot.

Women as a Device for Personal Relations

Forster was established as a professional writer by the time Howards End was published. Thus whereas with A Room with a View he had worried about the opinions of those he valued most, he expresses anxiety over the general reception of Howards End. His letter to Edward Arnold dated 13 November 1910, on some emendations he had made concludes, 'I hope however that the public may find the book convincing on other counts'.¹ Howards End was written with the readers in the forefront of Forster's mind. He worked on Howards End reluctantly, as he had done on A Room with a View. During 1909, while still in the process of writing the novel, Forster recorded, 'I've lost

inspiration, and not adequately replaced it by solidity. Words are more in the foreground than they were: even these I seem writing for an audience'.² In Howards End, Forster attempts to create 'solidity' or realism, but as he says words got in the way, and it is in those parts where the text is excessive or redundant that we encounter homoerotic desire in the novel.

Interestingly, Forster's publisher, Edward Arnold suggested that the novel be shortened, a request that Forster declined. In his reply of 9 August 1910, Forster wrote:

I have thought over shortening the MS, and am very sorry, but fear it would be impossible. I might have done something earlier, when I submitted the bulk of the MS to Mr Arnold, and indicated the scale on which it would be completed, but he did not make any comment then. I am very sorry that its length should be excessive, though, as I said, I have had a good many complaints that my previous novels were too short.³

The digressions form a major part of the narrative in Howards End and ^{are} essential to the writer's technique; indeed, Forster could not remove the long discursive passages without collapsing the whole structure of the novel.

In a letter to Dickinson, dated 8 May 1922, Forster chafes against the pretence of realism in the novel form. He says:

I am bored not only by my creative impotence, but by the tiresomeness and conventionalities of the fiction-form:

e.g.. the convention that one must view the action through the mind of one of the characters; and say of the others "perhaps they thought", or at all events adopt their viewpoint for a moment only. If you can pretend you can get inside one character, why not pretend it about all the characters? I can see why. The illusion of life may vanish, and the creator degenerate into the showman.⁴

Forster could only partially get inside his female protagonists in Howards End, and uses them rather as mouthpieces of Forsterian tenets. The events in the novel are often clarified not through the characters' experiences but from the narrator's point of view who stands outside and above his characters.

In an essay 'The Challenge of Our Time' (1946), Forster examines the impact of socio-political changes on personal life, and he argues for a society that would combine 'the New Economy with the Old Morality'.⁵ Howards End stresses the importance of personal relations in the context of socio-political matters. While the Wilcox family are associated with the modern outlook, the Schlegels cherish tradition and personal relations. The central debate of the novel is cast by the Schlegel sisters; Margaret and Helen 'desired that public life should mirror whatever is good in the life within' (HE, p. 25). Margaret reflects on the efficacy of personal relations in comparison to materialistic values:

It's one of the most interesting things in the world. The truth is that there is a great outer life that you and I have never touched - a life in which telegrams and anger

count. Personal relations, that we think supreme, are not supreme there. There love means marriage settlements; death, death duties. So far I'm clear. But here's my difficulty. This outer life, though obviously horrid, often seems the real one - there's grit in it. It does breed character. Do personal relations lead to sloppiness in the end? (HE, p. 25).

In this opposition between personal relations and outer life, the meaning of 'personal relations' is unstable and conditioned by homoerotic desire. In the other novels, Forster's discourse on personal relations gives way to a vision of male friendship and brotherhood. Howards End too highlights the theme of friendship, albeit it is the friendship of Margaret and Mrs Wilcox.

By now it has become typical of Forster that personal relations are instituted as an alternative to marriage. Howards End opens with an engagement which proves to be a false start. Helen Schlegel's engagement to Paul Wilcox is called off no sooner than it is announced, and only after the cumbersome issue of heterosexual love has been moved out of the way, does Forster prepare the ground for friendship. In Forster's text, the engagement of Paul and Helen is a mistake; the young man and woman are 'those human beings who will hurt each other most' (HE, p. 19). The impulse to marry is a result of social pressures, and serves the purpose of procreation rather than individual fulfilment so that 'in nine cases out of ten Nature pulls one way and human nature another' (HE, p. 66). Helen's

brief attraction to Paul was prompted by that impersonal instinct for propagation.

Forster proceeds with the theme of friendship, having removed every prospect or expectation of a heterosexual romance. It is firmly established that Helen and Paul's affair will not be revived and as Margaret says to her aunt, 'I look on that disastrous episode (over which you were so kind) as the killing of a nerve in Helen' (HE, p. 55). Mrs Wilcox believes that there is no complication about her meeting with Margaret because both Paul and Helen have been sent abroad, 'Yes, certainly, it is quite safe - safe, absolutely, now' (HE, p. 65). Although Howards End does not encompass relations between men, the effect of the author's discourse on personal relations, from the very beginning, is to modify and de-centre the primacy of heterosexual love.

Friendship in Forster is not compatible with family life and the relationship between Margaret and Ruth when both their respective families are away. Their friendship has an element of spontaneity, which in the other novels is identified with relations between men. Forster describes Mrs Wilcox's invitation to Margaret for shopping as a 'crisis' (HE, p. 77). The nature of their friendship is symbolized by 'a tawny sheaf of chrysanthemums' (HE, p. 87) that Margaret puts on Mrs Wilcox's grave, which are then stolen by a passing woodcutter who gives them to his beloved in courtship.

However, the passion and intensity that Margaret and Mrs Wilcox's friendship are endowed with is due to the

narrator's rather than the characters' consciousness. Mrs Wilcox takes time to reciprocate Margaret's affection and this elicits a general comment from the narrator:

Was Mrs Wilcox one of the unsatisfactory people - there are many of them - who dangle intimacy and then withdraw it? They evoke our interests and affections, and keep the life of the spirit dawdling round them. When physical passion is involved, there is a definite name for such behaviour - flirting - and if carried far enough it is punishable by law. But no law - not public opinion even - punishes those who coquette with friendship, though the dull ache that they inflict, the sense of misdirected effort and exhaustion, may be as intolerable (HE, p. 77).

Although Margaret is eager for Mrs Wilcox's affection, the comparison between friendship and heterosexual relations belongs to Forster. Margaret is in no position to draw the analogy and the emotional charge in the passage is homoerotic. Here, as in Rickie Elliot's speech in The Longest Journey, Forster expresses his complaint that friendship should not be considered as important as marriage.

The relationship of Margaret and Mrs Wilcox is inexplicable and is not based in anything particular, but Forster invests it with values of love and personal fulfilment. It is significant that Margaret's brief companionship with Mrs Wilcox is precious because it alleviates her loneliness. She says to Margaret, 'I should like to give you something worth your acquaintance, Miss Schlegel, in memory of your kindness to me during my lonely

fortnight' (HE, p. 78). But unlike George Emerson, Mrs Wilcox is not characterised as yearning for a friend. Margaret, on her part, makes little of her attachment with Mrs Wilcox and acknowledges that her family have greater claims. When Mrs Wilcox suggests that she would like to give her a gift, Margaret thinks that, 'Their acquaintance was singular rather than intimate, and she divined that the Wilcox clan would resent any expenditure on outsiders' (HE, p. 78).

On hearing that Margaret is going to be homeless, Mrs Wilcox offers to take her to Howards End. Margaret turns down the chance to spend a night with her friend and the whole occasion is filled with bitterness at her refusal, 'The city seemed satanic, the narrower streets oppressing like the galleries of a mine . . . It was rather a darkening of the spirit, which fell back upon itself, to find a more grievous darkness within' (HE, p. 82). Her response hurts Mrs Wilcox and Margaret offends against passion. Mrs Wilcox had revealed a side of herself to Margaret that even her family are ignorant of, and whereas Margaret fails to appreciate the significance of the gesture, the narrator explains, 'Mrs Wilcox, though a loving wife and mother, had only one passion in life - her house - and that the moment was solemn when she invited a friend to share this passion with her' (HE, p. 83). Margaret cannot grasp it, the invitation is a rare opportunity in Forster's text for an adventure with a friend. Margaret 'was convinced that the escapade was important, though it would have puzzled her to say why.

There was the question of imprisonment and escape' (HE, p. 83). The homoerotic connotations of a journey in the open countryside with friends, have been elucidated in Forster's earlier novels. But as Howards End is written as a heterosexual novel, the trip never takes place. As Margaret and Mrs Wilcox walk up the platform, they are interrupted by Mr Wilcox and Evie, and family demands infringe upon the rights of friendship, 'Before imagination could triumph, there were cries of "Mother! Mother!" and a heavy-browed girl darted out of the cloakroom and seized Mrs Wilcox by the arm' (HE, p. 84). The anticipation aroused by their friendship is never fulfilled as 'The voices of the happy family rose high. Margaret was left alone' (HE, p. 85). The homoerotic desire buried in the female characters impels the friendship of Margaret and Ruth, but insofar as they are women, their friendship does not materialize, and an occasion which would otherwise have led to a climax, is here denied. However, some of the connotations the visit to Howards End are explored later when Helen and Margaret spend a night there together.

Homoerotic desire is excluded from Howards End in the journeys and incidents that do not happen in the novel. At the beginning of the novel Margaret takes Mrs Munt to King's Cross station, who is off to Hilton to attend to Helen's affair, and for a moment the narrative dwells on the journeys that the characters, regretfully, are not destined to undertake. Margaret,

had strong feelings about the various railway termini. They are our gates to the glorious and the unknown. Through them

we pass out into adventure and sunshine, to them, alas! we return. In Paddington, all Cornwall is latent and the remoter west; down the inclines of Liverpool Street lie fenlands and the illimitable Broads; Scotland is through the pylons of Euston; Wessex behind the poised chaos of Waterloo. Italians realize this, as is natural; those of them who are so unfortunate as to serve as waiters in Berlin call the Anhalt Bahnhof the Stazione d'Italia, because by it they must return home. And it is a chilly Londoner who does not endow his stations with some personality, and extend to them, however shyly, the emotions of fear and love (HE, p. 9).

The effusiveness of this long digression is incomprehensible unless one recalls the journeys of Forster's other novels. The words 'unknown', 'adventure and sunshine' evoke a sense of a foreign country. At the same time the passage is overwritten and redundant to the text, except that it touches a nerve in Forster, and expresses his awareness of what exists outside the boundaries of the novel. And it is as if the author recollects himself for he adds with asperity, 'If you think this ridiculous, remember that it is not Margaret who is telling you about it' (HE, p, 9). Thus the journey abroad and the homosexual adventure incumbent on it are curtailed in Howards End and the narrator reverts to the socio-political issues of England instead.

Another journey that does not get fully realized is Leonard Bast's. In a spirit of rebellion against the dreariness of his life, he walks all night to get out of

London and reach the woods. He tells Helen and Margaret, 'I wanted to get back to the earth' (HE, p. 115). In an impulse of romance and heroism, Leonard divests himself of all the trappings of civilization and gets lost following the stars as his guide. The walk is a common enough incident on the surface, and the response of the sisters is exaggerated. Leonard's walk is construed as an indication of a primitive instinct in him, which to Margaret is an apprehension of 'the truth' and search 'for a real home' (HE, p. 140). Mr Wilcox finds the episode 'risqué' (HE, p. 143). Leonard is completely transformed by the experience, 'There was fight in his eyes' (HE, p. 115) and Margaret and Helen catch a glimpse of the spontaneity that is locked inside him, 'the naive and sweet-tempered boy for whom nature had intended him' (HE, p. 118). The walk is a contact with the 'unknown', a subversive impulse by which he 'got upsides with the world' (HE, p. 122). The emotions in the passage are incongruous with the event itself, except that such a journey in Forster's fictional world is full of homoerotic potential. Although Leonard's journey has all the ingredients of a homosexual adventure leads nowhere and, when asked by the sisters whether the dawn was wonderful, he replies, 'No' (HE, p. 117). The incident is not enjoyable because it is not shared by a lover and in the ethos of Howards End Leonard's capacity for friendship remains untapped.

As in Forster's other novels, friendship in Howards End is counterposed to marriage and domestic life, with one major difference in that this time friendship is associated

with women while the virtues of family life are staunchly defended by the Wilcox men. In contrast to the fondness with which Margaret remembers Mrs Wilcox, Mr Wilcox's memory of his wife is fairly dull, 'Not anything in detail - not courtship or early raptures - but just the unvarying virtue, that seemed to him a woman's noblest quality' (HE, p. 88). The short friendship of Margaret and Mrs Wilcox has repercussions in the family life of the Wilcoxes. Margaret is Mrs Wilcox's 'spiritual heir' (HE, p. 96). and she leaves her Howards End, but in doing so she bypasses the claims of her family:

Yesterday they had lamented: "She was a dear mother, a true wife; in our absence she neglected her health and died." Today they thought: "She was not as true, as dear, as we supposed." The desire for a more inward light had found expression at last, the unseen had impacted on the seen, and all that they could say was "Treachery". Mrs Wilcox had been treacherous to the family, to the laws of property, to her own written word (HE, p. 97).

The author satirizes the Wilcoxes' attitude to friendship, 'Ought the Wilcoxes to have offered their home to Margaret? I think not. The appeal was too flimsy. It was not legal; it had been written in illness, and under the spell of a sudden friendship' (HE, p. 96). Invariably, the notions of illness and disease occur with the concept of friendship and as such Margaret's friendship with Mrs Wilcox follows the pattern of male friendships in Forster's fiction.

The contradictions in the narrative are most evident in the author's treatment of marriage. While at the level

of the plot the novel hinges on marriage, at a deeper level, the prospect of marriage arouses bitterness and protest. The author is derisive of the conjugal bliss of Charles and Dolly Wilcox, 'All his affection and half his attention - it was what he granted her throughout their happy married life' (HE, p. 93). The announcement of Margaret's marriage to Mr Wilcox breaks Helen's heart:

"Don't," sobbed Helen, "don't, don't, Meg don't!" She seemed incapable of saying any other word. Margaret, trembling herself, led her forward up the road, till they strayed through another gate onto the down.

"Don't, don't do such a thing! I tell you not to - don't! I know - don't!"

"What do you know?"

"Panic and emptiness," sobbed Helen. "Don't!" (HE, p. 169).

Marriage is presented not as a forming of new relationships but as the breaking up of old ones. Henry Wilcox is seen as a totally unsuitable husband for Margaret and this impression remains throughout the novel. However, in the deliberate design of the novel, Helen's outburst is made out to be irrational, and while Helen expresses the feelings of jealousy and loss, Margaret adopts a sensible and assuring attitude. Forster allows Margaret to minimize the cost of marriage:

The real point is that there is the widest gulf between my love-making and yours. Yours was romance; mine will be prose. I'm not running it down - a very good kind of prose, but well considered, well thought out (HE, p. 171).

As with Ansell and Rickie, Helen tries to prevent Margaret's marriage to Mr Wilcox, and communication between the sisters deteriorates as marriage becomes inevitable. Helen 'had been ominously quiet since the affair was settled' (HE, p. 184). Marriage is a transgression against homoerotic love and severs the bond between the sisters.

Through Margaret, Forster takes a practical view of marriage; marriage is necessary but it cuts her off from the people and values she holds dear. Forster describes marriage as 'that astonishing glass shade' which 'interposes between married couples and the world' (HE, p. 171). Although Margaret tries to combine her own outlook with the Wilcox way of life, the proportion she seeks to achieve is a compromise. Forster concedes the marriage of Margaret and Henry grudgingly but it detracts from her happiness:

Marriage was to alter her fortunes rather than her character, and she was not far wrong in boasting that she understood her future husband. Yet it did alter her character - a little. There was an unforeseen surprise, a cessation of the winds and odours of life, a social pressure that would have her think conjugally (HE, p. 171). While marriage is essential to Forster's plot, it still not desirable. Ideologically, Forster's position in Howards End is again anti-marriage; it is used merely an artistic device to get Margaret to Howards End.

The sisters are a version of the friendship couple of Forster's other novels in that they dispute heterosexual values without needing to be homosexual males. Helen's

right to stay in Howards End is fiercely contested and nearly destroys Margaret's relationship with her husband. Through his female characters, Forster raises some of the issues that are central to homoerotic love. Margaret is outraged at the conspiracy Mr Wilcox hatches to trap Helen. Believing Helen to be ill, he violates her liberty as well. Accompanied by a psychiatrist, Mr Wilcox prepares to hunt down Helen, 'the plan that he sketched out for her capture, clever and well-meaning as it was, drew its ethics from the wolf-pack' (HE, p. 279). The denunciation of his tactics is absolute:

How dare these men label her sister! What horrors lay ahead! What impertinences that shelter under the name of science! The pack was turning on Helen, to deny her human rights, and it seemed to Margaret that all Schlegels were threatened with her. Were they normal? What a question to ask! And it is always those who know nothing about human nature, who are bored by psychology and shocked by physiology, who ask it (HE, p. 286).

The terminology of disease and abnormality was applied to homosexuals because they did not conform to normative behaviour. In the face of adversity, Margaret asserts her loyalty to her sister against her husband.

Similarly, Forster condemns heterosexual morality in Henry's refusal to let Helen sleep at Howards End for a night. Margaret challenges her husband's temerity in judging Helen. Henry lives quite comfortably with his own sexual misdemeanours, but penalizes Helen for the choice she has made. Margaret is furious with Mr Wilcox and her

rage is not so much on behalf women as against all norms. She tells him,

You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry! You have had a mistress - I forgave you. My sister has a lover - you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection? Stupid, hypocritical, cruel - oh, contemptible! (HE, p. 305).

Whereas Margaret forgives Mr Wilcox's infidelity to his first wife, his attitude to her sister breaks their relationship and Margaret decides to leave her husband and live with her sister in Germany.

In Howards End Forster uses the female protagonists as vehicles of the theme of personal relations, and the positive characterization of women the novel suggests that Forster intended to write a straightforward, heterosexual novel. Inevitably, within personal relations the narrative focuses on the theme of friendship and, in this case sisterhood, and the emotional content of relations between women is infused with homoerotic desire. Although homoerotic desire lingers in the text, Forster cannot bring it to fruition because he is stuck with the inappropriate device of female characters. Therefore the dilemmas in the novel remain unresolved, and the narrative commentary does not coincide with the stated aims and structure of the text. The theme of personal relations and friendship ultimately culminates in the prediction of friendship between Helen's son and Tom, the farm boy.

The Problem of Leonard Bast

Social criticism in Howards End also stems from the secret desire for homoerotic love. The author plainly admits that he is not concerned with issues of poverty and deprivation in themselves, 'We are not concerned with the very poor. they are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet. This story deals with gentlefolk, or those who are obliged to pretend that they are gentlefolk' (HE, p. 43). Forster had a class bound view of homosexuality in that for him the unacceptance of homoerotic love occurs solely in the context of English middle-class society. In Howards End, Forster draws the parameters of his text and restricts his narrative to respectable society, where the theme of homoerotic love is most relevant.

The most highly charged political debates of the time are peripheral to the novel. Helen and Margaret are sensitive to these issues, but they are too big for them to handle and they prefer to concentrate on personal responsibility rather than public activity:

Temperance, tolerance, and sexual equality were intelligible cries to them; whereas they did not follow our Forward Policy in Tibet with the keen attention it merits, and would at times dismiss the whole British Empire with a puzzled, if reverent, sigh (HE, p. 25).

Other topics of national interest are unceremoniously brushed aside by Mr Wilcox who, unlike the Schlegels, is equally immune to public and personal accountability. He

holds 'that Equality was nonsense, Votes for women nonsense, Socialism nonsense, Art and Literature, except when conducive to strengthening the character, nonsense' (HE, p. 21). In these forthright statements Forster dissociates his work from social satire and shifts the focus from economic and political theories to personal relations.

The basic premise of Howards End is indeed that 'the lowest abyss is not the absence of love, but the absence of coin' (HE, p. 58). But money is important only insofar as it affects relationships, 'The poor cannot always reach those whom they want to love, and they can hardly ever escape from those whom they love no longer' (HE, pp. 58-9). Forster repudiates social or political solutions in relationships because ideologies are impersonal and he emphasizes the primacy of the individual instead. While his criticism of the oppression and inhibitions in English middle class society is trenchant, he could not combine his vision of homoerotic love with any social or political system. Thus he had to resort to fantasy or momentary contact for the fulfilment of homoerotic desire.

The socio-economic discussions in Howards End revolve around the predicament of Leonard Bast, who represents the decay of the homoerotic ideal. He has descended from proud ancestors:

One guessed him as the third generation, grandson to the shepherd or ploughboy whom civilization has sucked into the town; as one of the thousands who have lost the life of the body and failed to reach the life of the spirit. Hints of

robustness in him, more than a hint of primitive good looks (HE, p. 112).

Leonard Bast occupies quite a precise position in the spectrum of Forster's heroes; standing at the borderline of respectability, he has vestiges of physical beauty which are gradually being eroded as he acquires intellectual improvement. Leonard is a cross between Philip and Gino in Where Angels Fear to Tread, Rickie and Stephen in The Longest Journey and Cecil and George in A Room with a View.

The socio-economic issues are raised through the changes that have been incurred in Leonard Bast's experiences. The onset of urban life has uprooted him from rural life, and reduced him to a clerk with the 'mournful eyes above a drooping moustache that are so common in London, and that haunt some streets of the city like accusing presences' (HE, p. 113). Money is important to Leonard's destiny in that it deprives him of personal relations; it is a barrier between him and the middle class men with whom he could be friends. And so, the narrative in Howards End evolves from a troubled consciousness 'that beneath these superstructures of wealth and art there wanders an ill-fed boy, who has recovered his umbrella indeed, but who has left no address behind him, and no name' (HE, p. 42). Leonard is referred to as 'the boy' throughout the text and the homoerotic resonances of the term have been already elucidated in the preceding chapters of this thesis.

Forster deliberately refines the scope of his narrative from political matters to the subject of

personal, sexual relations. Political democracy has brought only partial equality between men and breeds false expectations in Leonard:

Had he lived some centuries ago, in the brightly coloured civilizations of the past, he would have had a definite status, his rank and his income would have corresponded. But in his day the angel of Democracy had arisen, enshadowing the classes with leathern wings, and proclaiming, "All men are equal - all men, that is to say, who possess umbrellas," and so he was obliged to assert gentility, lest he slipped into the abyss where nothing counts, and the statements of Democracy are inaudible (HE, p. 43).

Although the slogans of democracy are irresistible, Forster questions the virtue of a system that churns out masses like Leonard, men divested of their natural dignity.

The case for personal responsibility over political causes is made in relation to Leonard Bast when the Schlegel sisters discuss the best use of money at a dinner party. Margaret argues that people such as Leonard Bast should be given an opportunity of having a private income, 'When your socialism comes it may be different, and we may think in terms of commodities instead of cash. Till it comes give people cash' (HE, p 125). Political change is too long a process to benefit Leonard himself. Margaret is not concerned that Leonard should 'save his soul in the superterrestrial sense', but is anxious that 'he will ever explore the spiritual resources of this world, will ever know the rarer joys of the body, or attain to clear and

passionate intercourse with his fellows' (HE, p. 125). 'Spiritual' in Forster is always connected to passion and the capacity for friendship is essential to Leonard's betterment. Social and political doctrines are prescriptive and inculcate uniformity whereas love and sexual relations are a matter of personal desire and preference. Therefore Margaret set her sights on individual fulfilment:

Others had attacked the fabric of society - property, interest, etc.; she only fixed her eyes on a few human beings, to see how, under present conditions, they could be made happier. Doing good to humanity was useless: the many-coloured efforts thereto spreading over the vast area like films and resulting in a universal gray. To do good to one, or, as in this case, to a few, was the utmost she dare hope for (HE, p. 125).

Forster's interest in Leonard Bast is specifically in the context of homoerotic desire and the socio-political issues are incidental^{to} it. Margaret decides to leave Leonard alone, because, she tells Helen, 'We musn't play at friendship' (HE, p. 127). Thus Leonard is integral to the theme of friendship in the novel except that intimacy between men does not exist in the society of Howards End.

While Margaret and Helen champion Leonard's cause, the connection that the novel strives towards is between him and the Wilcox men, but Mr Wilcox is averse to acknowledging Leonard. In The Longest Journey, Rickie's collusion with his wife results in the disinheritance of Stephen. Similarly, in Howards End, Mr Wilcox is directly responsible for Leonard's dispossession. It is significant

that Leonard is 'ruined twice' by Mr Wilcox (HE, p. 250), both socially and sexually in that Henry Wilcox has had an affair with Leonard's wife, Jackie. Mr Wilcox's dislike for Leonard Bast is attributed to class difference, but there is a more deep-seated reason for mistrust of intimacy with men. As with women characters, the male characters too are constructed at two levels - at the conscious level of the characters Forster gives a social explanation for Mr Wilcox's behaviour; at the unconscious level of the narrator Mr Wilcox's attitude is interpreted in terms of homoerotic desire.

Mr Wilcox's attitudes are entrenched in fixed gender roles and his relations with women are as constrained as his interaction with men. His behaviour towards men and women originates in the same source - the etiquette of courtly chivalry. Margaret reprimands him for the elaborate restrictions he places on women, 'You men shouldn't be so chivalrous' (HE, p. 218). Mr Wilcox's relationship with his son, Charles, is equally controlled:

each desired no doughtier comrade when it was necessary to voyage for a little past the emotions. So the sailors of Ulysses voyaged past the Sirens, having first stopped one another's ears with wool (HE, p. 99).

Mr Wilcox is not susceptible to seduction, least of all by Leonard Bast. He hides behind customs and rituals to avoid emotions so that each relationship is finely regulated. It is his greatest drawback that 'he was content to settle one of the greatest things in life haphazard, and so, while his investments went right, his friends generally went wrong'

(HE, p. 206). Margaret feels that his stance 'undermined imagination. As he spoke some outpost of poetry and perhaps of sympathy fell ruining' (HE, p. 143). Although the terms are loosely mentioned, we know from The Longest Journey that 'poetry' and 'imagination' give access to alternative relationships such as homoerotic love against the concrete structures of society. In this instance, Mr Wilcox's imperviousness to the values of imagination pre-empt compassion for Leonard Bast.

Indeed, the Wilcox men have strayed a long way from the classical ideal of masculinity. Charles is a 'gentleman', always a suspect word in Forster, and 'To a feminine eye there was nothing amiss in the sharp depressions at the corners of his mouth, nor in the rather box-like construction of his forehead' (HE, p. 14). Implicit in the statement is the contrast between the homoerotic ideal and the heterosexual concept of maleness; the repressed personality is consistent with the socially acceptable version of men and hence Charles Wilcox meets Mrs Munt's approval. Leonard Bast, on the other hand, is not integrated into society and this is his most redeeming quality. He is not a gentleman, which makes him care for physical adventure and poetry (HE, p. 142). He cannot conduct himself according to social norms for 'As a lady's lap-dog Leonard did not excel' (HE p. 135). Yet, from the novel's perspective 'he's a real man' (HE, p. 144). Margaret's strong defence of Leonard excites Mr Wilcox, and this is again an instance of a sexual triangle common in Forster's novels. Mr Wilcox's is drawn to Margaret through

Leonard, 'A woman and two men - they had formed the magic triangle of sex, and the male was thrilled to jealousy, in case the female was attracted by another male' (HE, p. 144). While the novel proceeds with the relationship of Margaret and Mr Wilcox, Leonard Bast's potential for love remains undeveloped.

As with the Schlegel sisters, the conception^{of} Bast leads the narrative to a dead end. Leonard is embedded so much in the socio-economic circumstances that he cannot carry the emotional burden of the novel. Leonard is described entirely as a social phenomenon so that Forster cannot express homoerotic desire through him that presses on the text. The intensity of feeling that lurks around Leonard is at its most urgent as he walks across the countryside of Hertfordshire, 'Over all the sun was streaming, to all the birds were singing, to all the primroses were yellow, and the speedwell blue, and the country, however they interpreted her, was uttering her cry of "now"' (HE, p. 320). The novel's theme of personal relations and friendship culminates in Leonard's story. The novel exhorts the reader to 'connect the prose in us with the passion. Without it we are meaningless fragments, half monks, half beasts, unconnected arches that have never joined into a man' (HE, p. 183). The connection that the narrator pleads for is explained in the text, to 'connect without bitterness until all men are brothers' (HE, p. 266). The social issues are dropped at this point and Leonard's tragedy is the denial of friendship and brotherhood. But Leonard and the Wilcox men are so enmeshed

in the social structure of the novel that homoerotic desire cannot be manifest through them and functions as an absence in the narrative.

In the final analysis homoerotic desire asserts itself over the social structure of the novel and it is befitting to the theme of male love that Leonard should die at the hands of Charles Wilcox. Leonard's death is symbolic and rich in homoerotic imagery; he must die because the novel has no prospect of male friendship, and the Wilcox men are responsible for his death because they will not befriend him. Leonard's death is ritualistic in that Charles Wilcox strikes him with the sword that Margaret and Helen's father had used at war.

The homoerotic desire implicit in Leonard is transferred on to Helen. Speaking of his problem in this novel, Forster said, 'I didn't know how to get Helen to Howards End'.⁶ Helen's affair with Leonard is not an end in itself but in order to beget Leonard's child. Whereas Margaret's relation with Mr Wilcox is a compromise, Helen attains dignity in her affair with Leonard and she becomes 'ceaselessly beautiful' (HE, p. 250). Much of the novel depends on Helen's affair with Leonard, yet it does not convince because it is merely a device to cut off homoerotic desire and they are separated as quickly as they come together. The social issues in the novel expand into a larger question of who shall inherit the earth. The unquestionable superiority of heterosexual relations lies in that they result in propagation. As Charles Wilcox's wife produces one baby after another, the narrator comments

regretfully that, 'Nature is turning out Wilcoxes in this peaceful abode, so that they may inherit the earth' (HE, p. 182). Although Leonard is socially dispossessed, at a symbolical and homoerotic level, the narrator is determined that he should inherit the earth. However, Forster comes to this goal tortuously; since Margaret's inheritance of the house through friendship is rejected, the narrator follows the conventional route of marriage. But heterosexual relations become dispensable once Margaret has got the house and Helen has conceived of Leonard's child. At the end of the novel, Helen declares that she will never marry while Margaret says that she does not want a child (HE, p. 335), and both those statements dislodge the supremacy of marriage. Helen and her son in *Howards End* denote a new world order, 'a new life, obscure, yet gilded in tranquillity' (HE, p. 334) and it includes a vision of lifelong friendship between Helen's son and the farm boy, Tom (HE, p. 33). The promise of friendship is stated in terms of the future for male friendship lies beyond the boundaries of contemporary English middle-class encompassed by the novel.

Howards End highlights the conflict between love and truth and truth is inextricably bound up with Leonard's cause. Margaret struggles with Mr Wilcox to force him to see the harm he has done to Leonard Bast. Insofar as Mr Wilcox is unmoved by Leonard's predicament, he is also immune to love for men. As Margaret observes:

How wide the gulf between Henry as he was and Henry as Helen thought he ought to be! And she herself - hovering as

usual between the two, now accepting men as they are, now yearning with her sister for Truth. Love and Truth - their warfare seems eternal. Perhaps the whole world rests on it, and, if they were one, life itself, like the spirits when Prospero was reconciled to his brother, might vanish into air, into thin air (HE, p. 227).

It is an intractable and coded passage. Truth is related to the homoerotic ideal - it is the opposite of what men are at present. For Henry Wilcox, confronting the truth entails taking responsibility for Leonard's situation. Love and relationships in modern society are false because they are based on a denial of intimacy between men. Just as Prospero's union with his brother brings peace to the unquiet souls on his island, the discord in Forster's texts can only be resolved by granting relations between men.

Desire as Unseen

The English, middle-class ethos of Howards End has no place for homoerotic desire, and so it is relegated to the unseen and unknown aspects of the text. Here, and later in A Passage to India, the narrator cultivates obscurity as a way of withholding desire. Critics such as Brower and Hoy have discussed the emphasis on the 'unseen' in Howards End, but both writers interpret Forster's language in metaphysical or mystical terms.⁷ The unseen in the novel, however, pertains to the theme of homoerotic love. Forster first talks of 'the grotesque impact of the unseen upon the

seen' in relation to the Christmas festivities where love has been replaced by commercialism and material values. Margaret writes to Helen 'on the superiority of the unseen to the seen. It's true, but to brood on it is medieval. Our business is to reconcile them' (HE, pp. 101-2). The references to the unseen are not religious or spiritual but in both cases apply to the friendship of Margaret and Mrs Wilcox because it does not belong to the concrete world.

Margaret's affection for Mrs Wilcox is incommunicable when Margaret tries to grapple with the meaning behind Mrs Wilcox's sentences, the older woman tells her, 'I always sound uncertain over things. It is my way of speaking' (HE, p. 66). On her part, Margaret too is taciturn about her actual views on personal relations:

Her thought drew being from the obscure borderland. She could not explain in so many words, but she felt that those who prepare for all the emergencies of life beforehand may equip themselves at the expense of joy. It is necessary to prepare for an examination, or a dinner-party, or a possible fall in the price of stock; those who attempt human relations must adopt another method, or fail (HE, p. 58).

Margaret recommends openness and risk in personal relations for as Donald Salter puts it, 'The desire to be safe always excludes friendship and honesty'.⁸ It is only by relinquishing familiar structures that homoerotic love can be experienced.

Mrs Wilcox is created as a shadowy figure because the values she embodies are not founded in contemporary society

and she carries intimations of another world. To Margaret, Mrs Wilcox:

had strewn at her feet fragments torn from the unknown. A curious seeker, she stood for a while at the verge of the sea that tells so little, but tells a little, and watched the outgoing of this last tremendous tide. her friend had vanished in agony, but not, she believed, in degradation. her withdrawal had hinted at other things besides disease and pain (HE, p. 100).

The imagery is extremely abstract, but the thoughts of disease and pain associated with the mention of a friend give clue to the unspoken desire for homoerotic love. Mrs Wilcox, like Rickie Elliot, dies in anguish of unfulfilled love, but not degradation, for homoerotic desire is not shameful in Forster. The unknown to which Mrs Wilcox beckons is passionate friendship. Through Mrs Wilcox, Margaret:

saw a little more clearly than hitherto what a human being is, and to what he may aspire. Truer relationships gleamed. Perhaps the last word would be hope - hope even on this side of the grave (HE, p. 101).

Through the personas of two women characters, Forster makes a case for homoerotic friendship. He questions the given nature of relationships and suggests the possibility of other, truer emotions beyond those we usually know. In the deaths of Rickie Elliot and Mrs Wilcox, Forster's urges the realization of friendship in this life.

Similarly, the extent of Margaret's affection for her sister is not revealed in full, although the narrator hints

that it goes beyond words and is comparable to a sexual relationship:

She was not going to say: "I love my dear sister; I must be near her at this crisis of her life." The affections are more reticent than the passions, and their expression more subtle. If she herself should ever fall in love with a man, she, like Helen, would proclaim it from the house-tops, but as she only loved a sister she used the voiceless language of sympathy (HE, p. 6).

Forster avoids the expression of homoerotic by resorting to ambiguity. The true source of Helen's objections to Margaret's marriage cannot be disclosed and Margaret 'censured her, not for disapproving of the engagement, but for throwing over her disapproval a veil of mystery' (HE, p. 191). Margaret's marriage ends the understanding that the sisters enjoyed, and their brother comments on the chasm that divides them, "But Helen doesn't talk," said Tibby. "That's our whole difficulty. She won't talk your particular language, and on that account you think she's ill"' (HE, p. 280).

Leonard Bast's adventure through the woods is also marked by silence and resists clarification:

Explanations were difficult at this stage, and Leonard was too silly - or, it is tempting to write, too sound a chap to attempt them. His reticence was not entirely the shoddy article that a business life promotes, the reticence that pretends that nothing is something, and hides behind the Daily Telegraph. The adventurer, also, is reticent, and

it is an adventure for a clerk to walk for a few hours in darkness (HE, p. 121).

Forster does not explain the significance of the episode, and in fact, deliberately misleads the reader by dismissing it as a clerk's adventure.

The theme of friendship in Howards End does not develop into a coherent argument, but is merely hinted at in loose, disjointed phrases and, as the epigraph to the novel states, the author leaves it up to the readers to make the connection. Howards End, like A Passage to India is one of Forster's long novels, yet both in both narratives Forster uses language to obscure meaning. The language of these novels expresses an emotion blighted at source and Mrs Wilcox foreshadows the nihilism of Mrs Moore, her `voice, though sweet and compelling, had little range of expression. It suggested that pictures, concerts and people are all of small and equal value' (HE, p. 67).

The Search for a Home

Howards End is connected with the search for a home. One of the consequences of social conditions in the novel is that they render both Margaret and Leonard homeless, but while Margaret finds a home through marriage to Mr Wilcox, Leonard's quest comes to nothing.

Margaret's marriage to Mr Wilcox is prompted by her urgent need for a home. Helen and Margaret are sitting and talking at Chelsea Embankment, the very name of Howards End

conjures up Mr Wilcox. The thought of a home is uppermost in her mind, when Margaret cuts short her holiday to meet Mr Wilcox and accepts his proposal of marriage. The proposing is got done and over with very quickly, and Forster takes great care to point out that Margaret's relationship with Henry is not founded in love. The author stresses the practical nature of their affair. Margaret is suitably impressed by the proposition, but she 'could think of no central radiance here' and 'she realized that the central radiance had been love' (HE, p. 161). Later, when Helen asks her if she loves Mr Wilcox, Margaret honestly replies, 'No' (HE, p. 170).

Marriage in itself does not ensure stability or a home. The Wilcoxes are forever on the move and Margaret's marriage does not save her from the sense of flux. She is disappointed to learn that Henry has let Oniton Grange without consulting her:

"Where are we to live? said Margaret, trying to laugh. "I loved the place extraordinarily. Don't you believe in having a permanent home, Henry?" (HE, p. 256).

For Mr Wilcox houses are no more than a form of investment. As Helen says to her German cousin, 'the Wilcoxes collect houses as your Victor collects tadpoles' (HE, p. 167). The phrase 'safe as houses' (HE, p. 186) is treated ironically in Howards End. Mr Wilcox assures the Schlegel sisters that Leonard Bast's insurance company, Porphyryon which was on the verge of liquidation, is now safe as houses. But the saying rings hollow for in modern society houses

themselves, like Leonard's insurance company, are subject to the rise and fall of fortunes.

Amid the constant movement and change of modern life, Mrs Wilcox's home, Howards End, stands for enduring tradition. To Mrs Wilcox, it offers a respite from endless motion or, as Margaret says, the 'woof' against 'the warp of the world' (HE, p. 127). She clarifies later, 'either some very dear person or some very dear place seems necessary to relieve life's daily gray, and to show that it is gray' (HE, p. 142). Thus Howards End represents an alternative vision and endorses invisible values, including homoerotic love. The house gives Margaret a feeling of security against concrete life, 'Charles dead, all people dead, nothing alive but houses and gardens. The obvious dead, the intangible alive, and - no connection at all between them' (HE, p. 197). Howards End is unlike other houses in that it not a scene of domestic life but symbolizes friendship, 'Drawing-room, dining-room and hall - how petty the names sounded! Here were simply three rooms where children could play and friends shelter from the rain' (HE, p. 198).

The values associated with the house are depicted in the wych-elm tree that stands in the garden, 'It was a comrade, bending over the house, strength and adventure in its roots, but in its utmost fingers tenderness, and the girth, that a dozen men could not have spanned' (HE, p. 203). The homoerotic tones in the description are obvious, and as with Mrs Wilcox's death, 'Their message was not of eternity, but of hope on this side of the grave. As she

stood in the one, gazing at the other, truer relationships had gleamed' (HE, p. 203). Remembering that Howards End is Mrs Wilcox's house which she left to Margaret, the truer relationships that it upholds are those of friends.

Comradeship is a homoerotic ideal and in Howards End it cannot be depicted through human relations. Forster extracts passion from the relationship of Margaret and Henry. Mr Wilcox:

He desired comradeship and affection, but he feared them, and she, who had taught herself only to desire, and could have clothed the struggle with beauty, held back, and hesitated with him (HE, p. 161).

Comradeship is removed from Margaret's relationship to Henry and imposed on to the house and this is an example of the kind of transference that is at work in the novel.

The homoerotic structure in Howards End is displaced onto heterosexual relations so that homoerotic codes are obscured. The notion of comradeship is mobilized in the narrative but the author is unable to develop it into a fuller theme within the geographical and thematic boundaries of his text. Even of the English countryside he says, 'The comradeship, not passionate, that is our highest gift as a nation was promised by it' (HE, p. 265). The theme of comradeship becomes abstract and manifested in a tree. For Margaret, the wych-elm 'was an English tree. No report had prepared her for its peculiar glory. It was neither warrior, nor lover, nor god; in none of these roles do the English excel. It was a comrade' (HE, p. 203). And

in Howards End, comradeship `transcended any simile of sex' (HE, p. 203).

Indeed, the house provides a haven for Margaret and Helen against the onslaught of Mr Wilcox. By a complex series of events, the belongings of the Schlegels end up at Howards End, where the housekeeper, Miss Avery, unpacks them. Surrounded by her own things, Helen feels at home, and it is spurious that Mr Wilcox owns Howards End. So Helen persuades Margaret that they spend the night together in the house, `This is ours. Our furniture, our sort of people coming to the door' (HE, p. 298). Helen's logic is that the Wilcoxes `may take the title-deeds and the door-keys, but for this one night we are at home' (HE, p. 299). It is a scene of intimacy and bliss and after a series of intricate manoeuvres Forster, at last, has Helen safely lodged in Howards End.

Margaret is taken aback when she hears that Mrs Wilcox had intended her to have Howards End years ago. She does get the house, but only after it fits in with the pattern of society - Howards End comes to her in her role as a wife rather than a gift from a friend. Mr Wilcox' tells her complacently that when Mrs Wilcox

"was ill and you were so kind to her she wanted to make you some return, and, not being herself at the time, scribbled `Howards End' on a piece of paper. I went into it thoroughly, and, as it was clearly fanciful, I set it aside, little knowing what my Margaret would be to me in the future."

Margaret was silent. Something shook her life in its inmost recesses, and she shivered (HE, p. 340).

Margaret is stunned at the sheer chance by which Mrs Wilcox's gesture of friendship has survived.

Howards End has homoerotic connotations also in that it is located in Hertfordshire and beyond the house lies a view of Six Hills under which Margaret believes 'that soldiers of the best kind lay buried' (HE, p. 195). The reference to soldiers alludes to A. E. Housman's poem, A Shropshire Lad, a work Forster liked a lot. In 1910, Forster wrote some verses starting, 'Incurious at the window I watched the regiment pass, Monotonous in khaki Monotonous as grass', in imitation of Housman's 'The street sounds to the soldiers' tread'.⁹ Michael Halls compares the two poems and points out that whereas Housman rushes out to see the soldier, Forster stays behind his window, suggesting his 'essentially vicarious participation in a life from which he is in the long run excluded'.¹⁰ Housman's poem belongs to the homoerotic tradition and in Forster's poem, too, the soldier's glance is sexually exciting.

The house evokes the past and allusions to the past in the novel contribute to the hidden theme of homoerotic love. Mrs Munt's journey to Howards End takes her through places with ancient traditions, but the appreciation of antiquity is not for the likes of her, 'To history, to tragedy, to the past, to the future, Mrs Munt remained equally indifferent' (HE, p. 12). She is guilty 'of distorting the past' in trivial and profound ways (HE, p.

21). For instance, she excuses her own mishandling of the Schlegel's affairs by giving a version of events that is different from what actually happened. In contrast, Mrs Wilcox 'worshipped the past', and 'the instinctive wisdom the past alone can bestow had descended upon her' (HE, p. 19). The regard for the past in the novel has a bearing on personal relations, and in a culture where relations between men have been wiped out entirely, Forster hints at homoerotic desire only by harking back to the past.

In Howards End, forgetfulness of the past amounts to a lack of awareness of the ideal of homoerotic love. The characters do not have a memory of the classical times and this loss is especially tragic in the male characters. In the rush of modern life there is no time to pause, therefore Mr Wilcox blocks out anything that is inconvenient to remember. He avoids mentioning his dead wife and Margaret thinks, 'Is it worth while attempting the past when there is this continual flux even in the hearts of men' (HE, p. 134). Forster has no chance of reviving the distant past where people have forgotten more recent events. Hence Mr Wilcox can confidently challenge Helen, 'Point me out a time when men have been equal' (HE, p. 188). The statement is left hanging because it is so long ago in ancient Greece, when Plato defined a concept of a republic that included homoerotic love, that it does not sound credible in the present circumstances. The classical world is evoked more directly in the reference to Mr Wilcox's lack of interest 'in the dim, bucolic past' (HE, p. 201).

Mr Wilcox lives for temporary goals, 'No pagan he, who lives for the Now, and may be wiser than all philosophers' (HE, p. 245). Paganism, it is evident from Forster's other novels, suggests homoerotic desire. Leonard Bast, who is not satisfied with modern life, has a strain of paganism in him and 'He never confused the past' (HE, p. 315). These scattered references to the past come together in Howards End which keeps the advance of urban life at bay. Inside the house the two sisters find strength in their love for each other, 'the past sanctifying the present' (HE, p. 296). However, in Howards End homoerotic desire is translated into Margaret's relationship with Helen rather than love between men.

Words and Things

Homoerotic desire is residual in Howards End and occurs in parts of the narrative that are excessive or superfluous to the plot. As with the notions of comradeship and the past, homoerotic desire figures in things that do not happen in the text, and another such non-event is men bathing. The Schlegels' house has 'queer sketches of people bathing upon its walls' (HE, 135). Then there is a lengthier description of Charles getting ready for a swim but the entire proceedings are held up by contraptions:

In the first place the key of the bathing-shed could not be found. Charles stood by the riverside with folded hands, tragical, while the servant shouted, and was misunderstood

by another servant in the garden. Then came a difficulty about a springboard, and soon three people were running backwards and forwards over the meadow with orders and counter-orders and recriminations and apologies (HE, p. 216).

The scene is aborted and the homoerotic feelings aroused are sublimated to another context. Later, in the evening Margaret is in the meadow with Henry Wilcox:

Then she turned westward, to gaze at the swirling gold. Just where the river rounded the hill the sun caught it. Fairyland must lie above the bend, and its precious liquid was pouring towards them past Charles' bathing-shed. She gazed so long that her eyes were dazzled (HE, p. 221). The homoerotic tones of the passage are obvious.

There are several references to warriors and soldiers that do not form into a coherent theme in the text. Margaret and Helen's father 'had fought like blazes against Denmark, Austria, France' (HE, p. 26). Margaret was 'keen to derive the modern capitalist from the warriors and hunters of the past' (HE, p. 160). And the narrator later adds almost casually, 'She hated war and liked soldiers - it was one of her amiable inconsistencies' (HE, p. 195). The mention of soldiers continues to the end of the novel when Miss Avery says that Ruth Wilcox ought to have married 'some real soldier' and Margaret feels that 'It was a criticism of Henry's character far more trenchant than her own' (HE, p. 271). The allusions to soldiers do not significantly contribute to the overt themes of the text, but pertain to the aspects in which the novel is wanting.

The panegyrics to rural life in Howards End also have a different slant from those in Forster's previous novels. The novel contains rhapsodies on the English countryside. Margaret was 'fascinated by Oniton' and it 'thrilled her with poetry' (HE, p. 215). Forster wrote in letter dated 20 November 1960 to William Plomer, that Oniton was Clun. Forster had walked there on 11 April 1907, 'alone, except for the dubious accompaniment of A. E. Housman. There are breaths from him in those chapters, the last I think being at the end of chapter 29'.¹¹ In the novel, the narrator's enthusiasm for the countryside is transmitted through the female characters. Charles watches Margaret walk in the meadow, intoxicated with romance, 'She climbed up the mound in zigzags, and at times stooped down, as if she was stroking the turf' (HE, p. 214). Shropshire, too, is astir with strange happenings, 'Quiet mysteries were in progress behind those tossing horizons: the west, as ever, was retreating with some secret which may not be worth the discovery, but which no practical man will ever discover' (HE, p. 209).

However, the parallels between rural England and the Greek Arcadia are held in check and the author admits that such analogies are not appropriate to his text:

To speak against London is no longer fashionable. The earth as an artistic cult has had its day, and the literature of the near future will probably ignore the country and seek inspiration from the town. One can understand the reaction. Of Pan and the elemental forces the public has heard a little too much (HE, p. 106).

Pastoral and classical literature have had their day, and although Forster approaches these genres from a fresh, homosexual perspective, the weight of tradition was necessarily against him. The narrator asks in vain, 'Why has not England a great mythology?' (HE, p. 264). Howards End is bereft of classical allusions which are so abundant in Forster's earlier novels, except that the name of Leonard's insurance company, Porphyrion, does create a moment of nostalgia. Leonard is oblivious of the Greek original, 'To him, as to the British public, the Porphyrion was the Porphyrion of the advertisement - a giant, in the classical style, but draped sufficiently' (HE, p. 136).

Howards End is full of redundant narrative as when Helen recovers from her infatuation with Paul. Forster writes:

Actual life is full of false clues and signposts that lead nowhere. With infinite effort we nerve ourselves for a crisis that never comes. The most successful career must show a waste of strength that might have removed mountains, and the most unsuccessful is not that of the man who is taken unprepared, but of him who has prepared and is never taken. On a tragedy of that kind our national morality is duly silent. It assumes that preparation against danger is itself a good, and that men, like nations, are the better for staggering through life fully armed. The tragedy of preparedness has scarcely been handled, save by the Greeks (HE, p. 104).

This passage cannot be accounted for in terms of anything that happens in the text. The author's thoughts on

preparedness, of guarding against passion, actually relate to values that hinder homoerotic love, a theme that is never really probed in the novel. Moreover, there are some smaller ruptures in the text such as the description of Mr Wilcox's chauffeur, who is 'as ugly as sin - not that this did him disservice with Charles, who thought charm in a man rather rot' (HE, p. 92). Helen's pathos too is rendered in terms of masculine imagery, she had 'the look of a sailor who has lost everything at sea' (HE, p. 247). These peculiarities of Forster's style point to the theme of homoerotic love that has apparently been omitted from the text, but the socio-economic themes issue from the dormant desire for homoerotic love.

The disjunction between language and structure in Howards End has been most fully explicated by Duke Maskell.¹² Maskell quotes passages from the novel, which to him are fatuous because they do not have a basis in either the characters or the events of the novel. According to Maskell, Forster fails in the depiction of his characters and concludes from it that the author 'is emotionally insufficient'.¹³ Altogether, Howards End like A Passage to India is 'equally unreal, equally factitious and unnecessary a novel' and asserts that 'A Passage to India seems to me as comprehensively not a novel as Howards End, fully as much a thing of unrealised intentions.'¹⁴ Maskell's reaction is astute in that it picks out the distinctive features of the novel, but what he does not know is that the gaps in Forster's texts yield interpretation. That the author's intentions in Howards End are left unrealized is

not due to emotional inadequacy but deliberate. No one was more aware of the facileness of the narrative than Forster himself, who repeatedly express boredom with his subject. In a diary entry for May 1958, Forster wrote of his novel, 'Have only just discovered why I don't care for it: not a single character in it for whom I care'.¹⁵ Howards End does not satisfy if it is read, as Maskell does, as a social document and the fragmented quality of the novel becomes comprehensible once one relates it to the hidden desire for male love.

Oliver Stallybrass says that Howards End was published 'to a chorus of praise'.¹⁶ The greatest fault that Forster's heterosexual readers found with the novel was naturally the sexual relationship of Helen and Leonard. Forster resented the praise accorded which to him was utterly misplaced. He expressed his irritation in a letter to Dickinson dated 12 November 1910, a month after the publication of his fourth novel:

I don't like the popularity. It seems so mad. There isn't any reason why it should be this book and not another, or another of mine. I go about saying I like the money, because one is simply bound to be pleased about something on such an occasion. But I don't even like that very much.¹⁷

Contrary to what Maskell says, Forster had no illusions about his work; he was just caught in the conflict between his preferred theme of homoerotic love and the predominantly heterosexual form of the novel and he managed to combine the two with varying degrees of success.

Howards End illustrates not a successful coding of homoerotic but a symptomatic failure. Hence the good reception of the book alarmed the author and gave him cause for concern. After Howards End Forster started to be increasingly withdrawn and sceptical of the ability to write novels. He examined the reasons for his sterility in his diary entry for 16 June 1911, '1. Inattention to health - curable. 2. Weariness of the only subject that I both can and may treat - the love of men for women & vice versa'.¹⁸ Forster was conscious of complying with the mainstream tradition and it compromised his integrity. It is instructive that the two overtly heterosexual novels - A Room with a View and Howards End - are not dedicated to anyone, probably because Forster did not consider them to be genuine or worthwhile.

Conclusion

In Howards End, Forster broadened the scope of his novels from domestic comedy to social and political issues. However, the true interest of the narrative is displaced as the story excludes the theme of male friendship and focuses entirely on heterosexual relations. Nonetheless, the repressed desire for homoerotic love impinges on the social structure of the novel, resulting in a form that advances neither the social and political issues nor homoerotic desire. With Howards End, Forster realized that his perceptions were intrinsically homoerotic and could not be

ignored, and so in A Passage to India homoerotic desire is projected entirely onto a vast political and metaphysical canvas, thus transforming it into an impersonal, universal theme.

1. Cited by Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', Howards End, p. xiii.
2. Ibid., p. xii.
3. Ibid., p. xiii.
4. Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, Volume Two, p. 26.
5. 'The Challenge of Our Time', Two Cheers for Democracy, pp. 54-8, p. 56.
6. Interview with Furbank and Haskell, p. 32.
7. Ruben A. Brower, 'Beyond E. M. Forster: The Unseen', Chicago Review, II (Fall/Winter 1948), pp. 102-12; and Cyrus Hoy, 'Forster's Metaphysical Novel', PMLA, LXXV, (1960), pp. 126-36.
8. 'That is My Ticket', p. 7.
9. The first two lines are cited by Michael Halls, 'The Forster Collections at Kings: A Survey', Twentieth Century Literature, XXXI, 2 and 3 (Summer/Fall 1985), pp. 147-60, p. 153, and the rest of the three stanzas are quoted by Furbank, E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume One, p. 183.
10. 'The Forster Collections at King's', p. 153.
11. Cited by Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', Howards End, p. viii.
12. Duke Maskell, 'Mr Forster's Fine Feelings'.
13. Ibid., pp. 231-32.
14. Ibid., pp. 234-35.
15. The Commonplace Book, pp. 203-4.
16. In 'Editor's Introduction', Howards End, p. xv.
17. Ibid., p. xvi.
18. Cited by Furbank, E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume One, p. 199.

Chapter 7

The Metaphysics of Desire: Forster's Journey to India

A Passage to India has been regarded as an exceptional product of Forster's oeuvre as being primarily an historical novel. Since it was published in 1924, A Passage to India has been popularized in literary-critical practice as a comment on the British Raj.¹ Although A Passage to India is written in the context of Anglo-India, any discussion of Forster's historical foraging needs to be well-qualified. A Passage to India is not easily identifiable with the genre of English colonial literature comprising authors such as Rudyard Kipling, Flora Annie Steele, Grant Allen, G. L. Dickinson, Edward Carpenter, Annie Besant, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, and Graham Greene. In the historical interpretations of A Passage to India the context takes ^{precedence} over the text, and this has tended to eclipse the Forsterian themes that continue from his earlier novels. This chapter focuses on the text of A Passage to India and highlights the homoerotic desire embedded in Forster's novel.

The Ideal of a Friend

A Passage to India, like all of Forster's novels, works to mediate the writer's aesthetics of personal relations, and within the discourse on personal relations the author postulates the ideal of male friendship. Relations between men in Forster are always obstructed and provoke hostility. British rule in India offered Forster a potent situation to illustrate the barriers to male friendship. However, Forster uses the racial and political prohibitions of the friendship of Fielding and Aziz to signify a wider, universal oppression of homosexual love, so that the novel ultimately transcends the political issues in the text.

The difficulties Forster faced in writing A Passage to India were far more intractable than those he had encountered in his earlier novels. He started the novel in July 1913, but in September 1913 abandoned it to write Maurice; in 1914 he again reached a dead end and declared, 'Shall never complete another novel'.² Not finished until 1924, A Passage to India has the distinction of being Forster's novel with the longest gestation history. Forster could not decide where to pitch the narrative of his work. He had initially thought of writing A Passage to India as a travelogue, but later decided to turn it into fiction.³ In converting his experiences in India into a novel, Forster's central problem was to strike a balance between the politics and the theme of personal relations. He wrote of his first visit to India that 'The sense of racial tension, of incompatibility, never left me. It was not a tourist's

outing, and the impression it left was deep'.⁴ From the first, Forster was concerned with the link between India and his own experiences and the political situation served to heighten his awareness of incompatibility.

In a letter to Edward Arnold, dated 8 June 1924, Forster reiterated that in A Passage to India, he 'had been careful not to allude to contemporary politics'.⁵ The novel rises above politics and Forster wrote to Masood on 27 September 1922:

When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has had to go, my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable. I think that most Indians, like most English people, are shits, and I am not interested whether they sympathize with one another or not.⁶ A Passage to India provided Forster with a medium for projecting his total despair over personal relations, and ^{as} the narrative unfolds, it acquires religious and metaphysical tones.

A Passage to India frames the theme of personal relations in the context of the British rule of India. Implicit in the narrative, from the beginning, is the question 'as to whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman' (AP, p. 5). The question initially has some political content given the colonial situation of the British in India. However, as the narrative progresses, the theme of friendship is gradually drained of its political charge and raised ^{into} the sphere of personal, sexual relations. The political environment gives a certain edge to the concern for friendship but the concept of friendship

that Forster espouses in the novel goes beyond the political arena.

Several meanings accrue to the word 'friend' as it recurs throughout the novel. Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali discuss friendship as a political subject. In the public arena, the obstacles to friendship between the Indians and the English are insurmountable, but Hamidullah argues that 'it is possible in England' (AP, p. 6). A little later Adela expresses a wish to know Indians and she says to Mr Turton, 'I only want to meet those Indians whom you come across socially - as your friends' (AP, p. 22). This is only consistent with the rest of Adela's character for whom even a sexual relationship is ^a social contract. When she first breaks off her engagement with Ronny, Adela is still anxious to maintain the niceties of their situation. Unmindful of Ronny's hurt, she insists that they nevertheless 'shall keep friends' (AP, p. 77). Adela tries to make up for the bad treatment of the Indians at the Bridge Party by her own 'friendliness' (AP, p. 39). Her attitude is caricatured by Miss Derek, who without Adela's honesty, is just 'All friskiness and friendliness' (AP, p. 82). Then there are Aziz's Indian friends, Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali; the Nawab Bahadur, too, is described as 'a straightforward enemy and a staunch friend' (AP, p. 31); and it is said of Fielding that 'all his best friends were English' (AP, p. 55).

Among the usual and rather loose applications of the term, the novel generates a more personal notion of a friend, a kindred spirit with whom one shares 'The secret

understanding of the heart!' (AP, p. 14). Aziz recalls running in the rain in his boyhood, 'Then back with water streaming over you and perhaps rather a pain inside. But I did not mind. All my friends were paining with me' (AP, p. 66). The novel evokes an abstract and metaphysical idea of friend. Godbole's hymn to Krishna, 'Come, come, come, come, come, come' (AP, p. 72) is construed as an appeal to a friend. Consonant with Godbole's song is Aziz's nostalgic hankering after the Mogul past and his sentimental utterances from Persian poetry, 'Less explicit than the call to Krishna, it voiced our loneliness nevertheless, our isolation, our need for the Friend who never comes yet is not entirely disproved' (AP, p. 97). Thus at the mere mention of the name of Krishna, the text vibrates with anticipation. Ronny calls out for his peon:

Krishna was the peon who should have brought the files from his office. He had not turned up, and a terrific row ensued. Ronny stormed, shouted, howled, . . . Krishna the earth, Krishna the stars replied, until the Englishman was appeased by their echoes, fined the absent peon eight annas, and sat down to arrears in the next room (AP, p. 88).

Ronny is not concerned with the religious associations of Krishna as a universal friend and lover and so he is satisfied with the mere echoes of the word.

Whereas in his 'Italian' and 'English' novels, Forster uses classical allusions to denote the ideal of friendship, in A Passage to India he incorporates references to Indian religion and mythology. A friend attains to divine

stature not only in Godbole's hymn to Krishna, but also in Aziz's explanation to Fielding, 'The Friend: a Persian expression for God' (AP, p. 265). Against so magnificent an ideal even the empyreal sun is devoid of splendour:

All over the city, and over much of India, the same retreat on the part of humanity was beginning, . . . The sun was returning to his kingdom with power but without beauty - that was the sinister feature. If only there had been beauty! His cruelty would have been tolerable then. Through excess of light he failed to triumph, he also; in his yellowy-white overflow not only matter, but brightness itself lay drowned. He was not the unattainable Friend, either of men or birds or other suns, he was not the eternal promise, the never- withdrawn suggestion that haunts our consciousness; he was merely a creature, like the rest, and so debarred from glory (AP, p. 106).

These poetic allusions to ^{the} friend relate not to the political aspect of the novel, but to the theme of personal relations that permeates all of Forster's fiction.

Although contemporary racial and political issues constantly impinge on the text, Forster endeavours at every step to de-politicize the theme of friendship in the novel. Aziz is bored by political discussion and as 'The elder men had reached their eternal politics, Aziz drifted into the garden' (AP, p. 8). He could not care less about the relations between the Indians and English and says to Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali, 'Why talk about the English? Brrrr . . . ! Why be either friends with the fellows or not friends? Let us shut them out and be jolly' (AP, p. 7). Not

only Aziz, but all the main characters are dissociated from the political scene of the novel. Fielding exhibits the same weariness as Aziz with political topics. When asked 'is England justified in holding India?' (AP, p. 102), Fielding's response is:

There they were! Politics again. "It's a question I can't get my mind onto", he replied. "I'm out here personally because I needed a job. I cannot tell you why England is here or whether she ought to be here. It's beyond me" (AP, p. 102).

So also with Adela and Mrs Moore, both of whom 'had no race-consciousness - Mrs Moore was too old, Miss Quested too new' (AP, p. 121).

The chief protagonists are deliberately detached from the political state of India; they are private individuals against the backdrop of English civil servants and other officials. Aziz is a doctor by profession and Fielding is Principal of a small college at Chandrapore. Fielding is 'a disruptive force' to the British rule in that he believes in personal relations: Neither a missionary nor a student, he was happiest in the give-and-take of private conversation. The world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can do so best by the help of goodwill plus culture and intelligence - a creed ill-suited to Chandrapore, but he had come out too late to lose it (AP, p. 56).

Forster constantly emphasizes the values of personal relations against the political factors that divide men.

The theme of friendship and personal relations, relevant though it is to the overall situation in India, has a homoerotic inflection. Among the superficial expressions of friendship, the novel moves towards creating intimacy between Aziz and Fielding. Aziz embodies an ideal of friendship to which Fielding must aspire. Although maturer, Fielding belongs to Forster's category of inhibited English men with an 'undeveloped heart', heroes such as Philip Herriton and Cecil Vyse. Like Philip in Where Angels Fear to Tread, who believes that there is something in himself that prevents him from enjoying the charm of Italy (WA p. 76), Fielding too feels helpless before the breathtaking beauty of India:

Lovely, exquisite moment - but passing the Englishman with averted face and on swift wings. He experienced nothing himself; it was as if someone had told him there was such a moment, and he was obliged to believe. And he felt dubious and discontented suddenly, and wondered whether he was really and truly successful as a human being. After forty years' experience, he had learned to manage his life and make the best of it on advanced European lines, had developed his personality, explored his limitations, controlled his passions - and he had done it all without becoming either pedantic or worldly. A creditable achievement, but as the moment passed he felt he ought to have been working at something else the whole time - he didn't know at what, never would know, never could know, and that was why he felt sad (AP, p. 181).

The passage is an indictment of Western values that thwart the development of emotional life. The key to happiness that Fielding lacks is the ability to respond to passion and intensity, but he himself cannot know that and his emotional sterility emerges only in the demands made by India.

The political circumstances give an added urgency to the theme of friendship and the narrative gradually builds towards the friendship of Aziz and Fielding. Aziz stays away from the Bridge Party organized by the Collector to bridge the gulf between the East and West and his relationship with Fielding occurs on a personal footing at Fielding's tea-party. On receiving the invitation from Fielding, Aziz snatched 'up his pen' and 'wrote an affectionate reply', 'For he had never met the Principal, and believed that the one serious gap in his life was going to be filled' (AP, p. 54). Later, Fielding too visits Aziz with an air of expectation, 'He had liked Aziz so much at their first meeting and had hoped for developments' (AP, p. 204). Both meetings form crucial stages in the friendship of Aziz and Fielding.

Aziz arrives early at Fielding's house and a chord of intimacy is immediately struck between the two men. Fielding 'was dressing after a bath when Dr Aziz was announced' (AP, p. 57) and the moment of Aziz's entry is significant if we recall the homosexual connotations of men bathing in Forster's previous novels. Aziz on his part confesses to Fielding, 'I used to wish you to fall ill so that we could meet that way' (AP, p. 57). Again the

sentence evokes the homoerotic sentiment of men caring for one another common in Forster's fiction. The friendship of Fielding and Aziz is spontaneous, and Aziz, completely at ease with his host, 'began to look round, as he would have with any old friend. Fielding was not surprised at the rapidity of their intimacy' (AP, p. 58). The theme of friendship is so well integrated in the text that it does not stand out as it did in the previous novels.

Again friendship is mediated through women. During Fielding's visit to Aziz, the latter reminisces about his dead wife, Aziz 'realised what he had lost, and that no woman could ever take her place; a friend would come nearer to her than another woman' (AP, p. 49). He shows Fielding a photograph of his wife and says that had she been alive she would have come out of the purdah for Fielding, 'I should have told her you were my brother, and she would have seen you' (AP, p. 108). Unlike Where Angels Fear to Tread and The Longest Journey the declaration of brotherhood is quiet, but no less dramatic or moving. Fielding asks if Aziz's wife thought that his other friends were his brothers as well to which Aziz answers, 'Of course not, but the word exists and is convenient. All men are my brothers, and as soon as one behaves as such he may see my wife'. To which Fielding remarks, 'And when the whole world behaves as such, there will be no more purdah?' (AP, p. 108). The conversation is an example of the intricacy with which the theme of friendship and brotherhood is assimilated into the customs and environment of India.

Fielding is overwhelmed by Aziz's warmth and feels ill-equipped to reciprocate the confidence his friend places in him. He does not have any passionate experiences to divulge and Aziz's behaviour only reveals his own emotional inadequacy:

"I shall not really be intimate with this fellow," Fielding thought, and then "nor with anyone." That was the corollary. And he had to confess that he really didn't mind, that he was content to help people, and like them as long as they didn't object, and if they objected pass on serenely. Experience can do much, and all that he had learned in England and Europe was an assistance to him, and helped him towards clarity, but clarity prevented him from experiencing something else (AP, p. 109).

Fielding's rationality, commendable though it might be, is not enough for it *excludes passion*.

The first part of the novel is devoted primarily to establishing friendship between Aziz and Fielding and the 'Mosque' section of the novel concludes with:

But they were friends, brothers. That part was settled, their compact had been subscribed by the photograph, they trusted one another, affection had triumphed for once in a way. He dropped off to sleep amid the happier memories of the last two hours - poetry of Ghalib, female grace, good old Hamidullah, good Fielding, his honoured wife and dear boys. He passed into a region where these joys had no enemies but bloomed harmoniously in an eternal garden, or ran down watershoots of ribbed marble, or rose into domes

whereunder were inscribed, black against white, the ninety-nine attributes of God (AP, p. 113).

Fielding's visit to Aziz is deeply fulfilling and it is male friendship that needs to be preserved from enemies. As the narrative retreats into the realm of fantasy, Forster celebrates the attachment of Fielding and Aziz in richly sensual imagery. It is significant that the theme of friendship in A Passage to India is associated with the Muslim culture and symbolized in the mosque, reflecting Forster's own love for Syed Ross Masood.

Hence the narrative of A Passage to India evolves from central theme of friendship and all the three sections of the novel are concerned with the relationship of Aziz and Fielding. The novel is as far removed from its political context as could be possible. It is notable that although the text is located in India, the 'Mosque' section deals exclusively with Muslim India; the 'Caves' are located nowhere in particular in that they have a universal, timeless quality about them; and the final 'Temple' section is placed in an independent state in India. Moreover, Forster repudiates any idea of a political conciliation. The Bridge Party is a humiliating experience for the English hosts and their Indian guests alike and the narrator comments, 'All invitations must proceed from heaven perhaps; perhaps it is futile for men to initiate their own unity, they do but widen the gulfs between them by the attempt' (AP, p. 32). Elsewhere, the author diminishes the importance of political issues by shifting

the perspective from humanity to the prolific natural life in India and says:

It matters so little to the majority of living beings what the minority, that calls itself human desires or decides. Most of the inhabitants of India do not mind how India is governed. Nor are the lower animals of England concerned about England, but in the tropics the indifference is more prominent, the inarticulate world is closer at hand and readier to resume control as soon as men are tired (AP, p. 105).

The passage suggests that the preoccupation with politics is exaggerated for little can be achieved through political solutions. Unlike Edward Carpenter, who saw socialism as a necessary condition for the prevalence of homosexual love, Forster argues the other way round of sexual reforms leading to political change. Fielding agrees with Aziz that an official approach to personal relations is misguided, 'It's beginning at the wrong end, isn't it? I know, but institutions and the Government don't' (AP, p. 108).

Although male friendship in A Passage to India is affected by politics, the novel is similar to the rest of Forster's fiction in that it rehearses the theme of homoerotic desire from yet another angle. Although the novel occasionally refers to the political climate of the period, it is argued below that politics is merely a pretext for a discourse that is fundamentally sexual in nature. The racial and political dimension of A Passage to India serves to enhance the theme of homoerotic love.

Women and Male Friendship

Love between men in Forster is always defined in tension with heterosexual relations; women characters both screen and clarify homoerotic desire. A Passage to India transmits a strong antipathy towards women and marriage typical of Forster's texts. The main antagonists in the novel are not Indians and the Englishmen but the Englishwomen. The presence of Englishwomen in India is particularly detrimental to any prospect of male friendship. Like the best of Forster's heroes, Fielding is robust and not prone to chivalry, which makes him unpopular among the women from his country:

Still, the men tolerated him for the sake of his good heart and strong body; it was their wives who decided that he was not a sahib really. They disliked him. He took no notice of them, and this, which would have passed without comment in feminist England, did him harm in a community where the male is expected to be lively and helpful. Mr Fielding never advised one about dogs or horses, or dined, or paid his midday calls, or decorated trees for one's children at Christmas, and though he came to the Club it was only to get his tennis or billiards, and to go. This was true. He had discovered that it is possible to keep in with Indians and Englishmen, but that he who would also keep in with Englishwomen must drop the Indians (AP, p. 56).

Aziz too feels constrained by Englishwomen and he says to Fielding, 'Here we never look at them. Oh no, much too careful' (AP, pp. 109-10). Even the Collector has some vestiges of sympathy for the subjects over whom he exercises ruthless control whereas the women are without compassion. Mr Turton

retained a contemptuous affection for the pawns he had moved about for so many years, they must be worth his pains. "After all, it's our women who make everything more difficult out here," was his inmost thought, as he caught sight of some obscenities upon a long blank wall, and beneath his chivalry to Miss Quested resentment lurked, waiting its day - perhaps there is a grain of resentment in all chivalry (AP, p. 204).

Forster implies that the British rule in India is complicated by the demands made by Englishwomen, and of course, relations with Indian men would be easier if the women were not there.

Where women characters are not criticized, they function to mediate relations between men. Adela and Mrs Moore are responsible for bringing Aziz and Fielding together. Adela's wish to see 'the real India' (AP, p. 21) and Mrs Moore's chance meeting with Aziz result in Fielding's invitation to Aziz to his house for tea. Adela and Mrs Moore are intruders at the first meeting of Aziz and Fielding. Aziz earlier encounter with Mrs Moore is inconsequential compared with his pleasure in talking to Fielding, 'The romance at the mosque had sunk out of his consciousness as soon as it was over' (AP, pp. 59-60). He

resents the interruption of their conversation and 'was disappointed that other guests were coming, for he preferred to be alone with his new friend' (AP, p. 60). Although much is made of Aziz's friendship with Mrs Moore, Aziz disclaims any special feelings for the old English woman. He tells Fielding, 'I do not consider Mrs Moore my friend, I only met her accidentally in my mosque' (AP, p. 60). The effect of Mrs Moore's assertions of her affection for Aziz is to cloak the friendship between two men; the intensity of Fielding's attachment and loyalty for Aziz during the trial stand out less starkly against Mrs Moore's categorical belief in Aziz's innocence. Aziz's wife, on the other hand, becomes the ground on which he declares his brotherhood with Fielding. Adela and Mrs Moore later cause the picnic to Marabar Caves.

In Forster, moments of adversity test and affirm the passions of men. The death of Gino's babyⁱⁿ Where Angels Fear to Tread leads to the confirmation of friendship between Philip and Gino, and in Where Angels Fear to Tread the murder of an Italian man arouses George to male love. The crisis in A Passage to India comes in the picnic to Marabar. The trip gets off to a bad start as Fielding misses the train. The journey is dull and uncomfortable and Aziz and his companions make ineffectual efforts to entertain the two ladies. The tour into the first cave nearly kills Mrs Moore while the second cave drives Adela hysterical. Aziz, who has missed his friend all along, is thrilled as Fielding appears on this scene of disaster and it marks a further stage in their friendship. The arrival

of Fielding suddenly changes the disastrous event into a positive occasion. Aziz's 'heart was full of new happiness. The picnic, after a nasty shock or two, had developed into something beyond his dreams, for Fielding had not only come, but brought an uninvited guest' (AP, p. 147). The women are relegated into the background - Adela leaves the scene and Mrs Moore is ill - and Aziz is oblivious of anything wrong. Aziz explains Adela's behaviour to Fielding, "She ran to her friend, I to mine," he went on, smiling. "And now I am with my friends and they are with me and each other, which is happiness"' (AP, p. 149).

The violence that explodes in the Caves is not political but a social disintegration of the structures of heterosexual society and marriage. The reason for Adela and Mrs Moore's visit to India is Adela's marriage to Ronny and the subject looms large in the text, and from the beginning of the text the theme of male friendship is entwined with the heterosexual relation of marriage. Whereas friendship is an entirely male prerogative, marriage is invariably a concern of women. Both Aziz and Fielding profess to have no use for marriage. Aziz's marriage has been a means for begetting sons and, like Lilia in Where Angels Fear to Tread, Aziz's wife dies in giving birth to his son (AP, p. 49). The friendship of the two men is their friendship is cemented by their lack of interest in heterosexual love. Having dissociated his heroes from any desire for a heterosexual romance, Forster proceeds to demolish marriage in the story of Adela. The development of the theme of friendship in the novel simultaneously entails the de-

centering of marriage and the narrative is carefully built up to a climax as the issues of love and marriage erupt in the Caves.

The foreign country displaces the values of English middle-class society and in particular challenges the predominance of heterosexual relations. Marriage becomes marginal as soon as Mrs Moore and Adela step on to the Indian soil and the theme of friendship takes precedence. While Mrs Moore rebukes Ronny for his behaviour towards the Indian people, she 'regretted afterwards that she had not kept to the real serious subject that had caused her visit to India - namely the relationship between Ronny and Adela. Would they, or would they not, succeed in becoming engaged to be married?' (AP, p. 46). The friction between Ronny and Aziz is evident at Fielding's tea-party and the conflict is cultural in the widest sense - Aziz stands for spontaneity and friendship whereas Ronny upholds English conventions including marriage. Hence here, and later in the Marabar Caves, Aziz inadvertently becomes a source of destruction of marriage. In Fielding's house he asks Adela, 'Why not settle altogether in India?' to which she replies, 'I'm afraid I can't do that' (AP, p. 66) which is the first time she voices her doubts about her marriage to Ronny.

Contact with Aziz heightens the sense of their own deficiency in the English characters. Ronny is shocked 'for he had never dreamt that an Indian could be a channel of communication between two English people' (AP, p. 76). To Adela, it brings a sense of emptiness of marriage, and as she ends her engagement to Ronny, 'Her ordeal was over, but

she felt it should have been more painful and longer' (AP, p. 76). Their relationship lacks an emotional aspect and Adela feels 'that a profound and passionate speech ought to have been delivered by one or both of them' (AP, p. 77). But marriage is not allied to personal fulfilment in Forster and he raises the issue only to expose it. Ronny and Adela patch up their quarrel and they become engaged once more as readily as they had they had broken off. However, there is not much difference in either state, except that marriage brings determinacy. Adela, had meant to revert to her former condition of important and cultivated uncertainty, but it had passed out of her reach at its appropriate hour. Unlike the green bird or the hairy animal, she was labelled now. She felt humiliated again, for she deprecated labels, and she felt too that there should have been another scene between her lover and herself at this point, something dramatic and lengthy (AP, pp. 85-6).

Marriage simply contributes to the mundanity of life and much as she tries, Adela cannot feel exhilarated over the thought of her marriage to Ronny. She admits to Mrs Moore, 'I don't feel a bit excited - I'm just glad it's settled up at last, but I'm not conscious of vast changes' (AP, p. 88). Mrs Moore too has to make an effort to find a suitable response to the announcement of her son's marriage, She reminded herself of all that a happy marriage means, and of her own happy marriages, one of which had produced Ronny. Adela's parents had also been happily

married, and excellent it was to see the incident repeated by the younger generation. On and on! (AP, p. 86).

Forster uses the phrase 'happy marriages' ironically and describes marriage as an unvarying event.

Thoughts of marriage are uppermost in the text as the narrative approaches the Caves and the author prepares to negate one of the most deeply ingrained structures of Western society. The journey to Marabar Caves has an element of initiation rites in that the characters shed their old beliefs and are transformed by the experience they undergo. The Caves are cut off from reality for they posit an alternative to actual life:

Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation - for they have one - does not depend upon human speech. It is as if the surrounding plain or the passing birds have taken upon themselves to exclaim "Extraordinary!" and the word has taken root in the air, and been inhaled by mankind (AP, p. 117).

In Mrs Moore, Forster annihilates Christianity and the religious sanction of marriage. Before she enters the Caves, Mrs Moore's view changes radically:

She felt increasingly (vision or nightmare?) that, though people are important, the relations between them are not, and that in particular too much fuss has been made over marriage; centuries of carnal embracement, yet man is no nearer to understanding man. And today she felt this with such force that it seemed itself a relationship, itself a person, who was trying to take hold of her hand (AP, p. 127).

Homoerotic love falls outside the boundaries of relationships and therefore Forster argues for the supremacy of individuals over relationships. Homoerotic desire in Forster is more concrete than the hollow conventions of marriage and heterosexual love. Marriage is equated to an impulse to breed, but it alienates men from one another and their own true instincts.

Adela represents the social norms of marriage and heterosexual relations. She broaches the subject of marriage with Aziz because he symbolizes the Other, but he is indifferent to her problems and 'his mind shut up tight because she had alluded to her marriage' (AP, p. 137). Adela confronts the issue with clarity away from all pressures, in the isolation of the Caves, "What about love?" The rock was nicked by a double row of footholds, and somehow the question was suggested by them' (AP, p. 143). It then occurs to her, 'She and Ronny - no, they did not love each other' (AP, p., 143). Love is not essential to marriage and Adela rationalizes that 'If love is everything, few marriages would survive the honeymoon' (AP, p. 143). The Caves reveal to Adela the falsity of marriage and the awareness is traumatic for it crumbles all the assumptions on which her life stands. Therefore the Caves dramatize the collapse of marriage together with the religious and social values that sustain heterosexual relations, and insofar as the breakdown is presented in relation to Aziz and India, it also has a racial and political aspect.

In contrast to the cynicism on marriage and heterosexual relations, the novel elucidates the theme of friendship. Marriage separates men and only through friendship can they come together. Adela asks, 'how else are barriers to be broken?' if not by religion (AP, 136) and although her question can be interpreted in the political sense, the solution Forster offers is in the personal, sexual realm, 'She was only recommending the universal brotherhood he sometimes dreamed of, but as soon as it was put into prose it became untrue' (AP, p. 136). The divisions between men and the ideal of brotherhood in Forster fall outside the scope of social and political treatises for they are sexual in nature. Therefore Aziz debunks any suggestion of political unity and tells Adela, 'Nothing embraces the whole of India, nothing, nothing' (AP, p. 136). When the outing takes place, Fielding had become to Aziz 'a friend, increasingly dear' (AP, p. 124). The Marabar Caves achieve greater intimacy between Aziz and Fielding. Aziz greets Fielding with joy as he eventually joins the picnic, '"Fielding! Oh, I have so wanted you!" he cried, dropping the "Mr" for the first time' (AP, p. 146). Fielding's anxiety at Adela's sudden departure is because he cares for Aziz, to whom he says, 'I do worry on your account' (AP, p. 150). Sitting on top of an elephant, Aziz blissful, 'and by his side sat Fielding, whom he began to think of as "Cyril" (AP, p. 150). In the company of Fielding, Aziz insists that 'This picnic is nothing to do with English or Indian; it is an expedition of friends' (AP, p. 151). Fielding's unshakeable commitment to Aziz

emerges over the Caves incident and although the episode unleashes opposition between the East and West, the racial and cultural conflict revolves around sexual relations, and the counter claims of friendship over heterosexual love.

Adela's allegation that she was assaulted by Aziz in the Caves generates massive instability in the narrative. However, the enmities are only partially political and stem from more from an underlying conflict between heterosexual values and homoerotic love. The narrator emphasizes the sexual divisions operative in the text as Fielding recognizes that, 'It is impossible to regard a tragedy from two points of view, and, whereas Turton had decided to avenge the girl, he hoped to save the man' (AP, p. 156). The English side is allied to the medieval code of chivalry, visualized in the ultra feminine wife of a railway official, who 'was generally snubbed; but this evening, with her abundant figure and masses of corn-gold hair, she symbolized all that is worth fighting and dying for' (AP, p. 172). The English officials turn fanatical over Adela's cause which is not just political, but forms the core of heterosexual society, 'They had started speaking of "women and children" - that phrase that exempts the male from sanity when it has been repeated a few times' (AP, p. 174). Aziz and Adela turn into types as everybody avoids mentioning their names and it is Fielding who reminds that the incident involves two individuals.

Fielding chooses to stand by Aziz and his support for his friend causes estrangement with the English society. Aziz's ordeal also allows for an expression of love and

sympathy between men. Fielding sends a message to Aziz in prison via Hamidullah saying, 'Give Aziz my love' (AP, p. 166). Aziz in his misfortune relies wholly on Fielding and complains to him, 'You deserted me' (AP, p. 170). The trial illuminates the staunch friendship of Fielding and Aziz.

Although it is Adela who withdraws her charges against Aziz, her courage and sacrifice are minimized so that she does not overshadow male friendship. Adela's gesture is rejected by India because she has transgressed against affection:

For her behaviour rested on cold justice and honesty; she had felt, while she recanted, no passion of love for those whom she had wronged. Truth is not truth in that exacting land unless there go with it kindness and more kindness and kindness again, unless the word that was with God also is God (AP, p. 233).

Adela is not capable of love because the novel is concerned with relations between men. Although Fielding is grateful to her for his friend's release, heterosexual relations do not have a possibility in Forster's texts. As Fielding bids Adela goodbye:

A friendliness, as of dwarfs shaking hands, was in the air. Both man and woman were at the height of their powers - sensible, honest, even subtle. They spoke the same language, and held the same opinions, and the variety of age and sex did not divide them. Yet they were dissatisfied (AP, p. 252).

Forster consistently reduces Adela in stature and it is friendship of Fielding and Aziz that survives and is extolled in the book.

The Caves incident and the trial that follows have sexual rather than political consequences. The adventure in the Caves is a process of unlearning for it deconstructs the structures of heterosexual society. Adela observes after her tribulation in the Caves:

What is the use of personal relationships when everyone bring less and less to them. I feel we ought all to go back into the desert for centuries and try and get good. I want to begin at the beginning. All the things I thought I'd learned are just a hindrance, they're not knowledge at all. I'm not fit for personal relationships (AP, p. 188).

The impulse to wipe out modern civilization and start anew is so that homosexual love can be reinstated as it was in primitive life. In the Forsterian scheme of things the heterosexual issue of Adela's rape is redundant; it is immaterial what happened in the Cave, because what matters is male friendship. Mrs Moore has no sympathy for Adela's predicament and comments,

Why all this marriage, marriage? . . . The human race would have become a single person centuries ago if marriage was any use. And all this rubbish about love, love in a church, love in a cave, as if there is the least difference (AP, p. 192).

In Mrs Moore speech, marriage is made synonymous with the notion of rape, both being equally loveless. Heterosexual

relations in Forster do not entail love as Adela admits in a conversation with Fielding,

"Tenderness, respect, personal intercourse - I tried to make them take the place - of - "

"I no longer want love," he said, supplying the word" (AP, p. 251).

Adela sums up her experience in the Caves as a 'hallucination' - 'that makes some women think they've had an offer of marriage when none was made' (AP, p. 228). The validity of marriage is withdrawn completely from the novel and it is only after Adela corrects her perspective that she loses the echo that had haunted her from the Caves.

The criticism of marriage in Forster's novels is so fierce because it poses a threat to male friendship and Forster very vividly delineates Aziz's jealousy of Fielding's contact with women. Fielding and Adela are thrown together in the riot after the trial and Aziz cries out to him, 'Cyril, again you desert' (AP, p. 223). The rumours of Fielding's affair with Adela eat into Aziz's heart and he exclaims bitterly, 'No one is my friend. All are traitors, even my own children. I have had enough of friends' (AP, p. 259). The mere thought of Fielding's marriage drives a wedge in their friendship and they part as strangers because Aziz cannot reasonably express his possessiveness,

But, as he drove off, something depressed him - a dull pain of body or mind, waiting to rise to the surface. When he reached the bungalow he wanted to return and say

something very affectionate; instead, he gave his sais a heavy tip, and sat down gloomily on the bed (AP, p. 266).

Aziz's flippant behaviour weighs on Fielding; he 'was conscious of something hostile, and because he was really fond of Aziz his optimism failed him. Travelling light is less easy as soon as affection is involved' (AP, p. 268). Aziz is deeply hurt by the news of Fielding's marriage; he destroys Fielding's letters unopened and refuses to see him when he returns to India with his wife. Although Aziz's anger is explained as due to the fact that he thinks that Fielding has married Adela, the misunderstanding is only an excuse for giving vent to homoerotic desire. Even after he learns that Fielding has married Mrs Moore's daughter he never speaks to this friend's wife and remains bitter, 'What does it matter to me who you marry? Don't trouble me here at Mau is all I ask. I do not want you, I do not want one of you in my private life, with my dying breath I say it'' (AP, p. 293).

Forster could not conceptualize a future for the friendship of Fielding and Aziz, and this was not just due to the political circumstances, but the social and religious hurdles to homoerotic love. Aziz loses Fielding through marriage, and the passion and intensity of their friendship ends in separation. In the final chapter, all the political layers have been stripped away and Fielding and Aziz meet as individuals, and the consciousness that they must go apart is acute, 'Friends again, yet aware that they would meet no more' (AP, p. 307). It is a sad and tender occasion like any doomed love scene, 'and they went

back laughingly to their old relationship as if nothing had happened' (AP, p. 307). The narrator clarifies the reasons for discontinuing their friendship. Aziz still embodies the ideal of friendship, but it is Fielding who cannot access it any more:

He too felt that this was their last free intercourse. All the stupid misunderstandings had been cleared up, but socially they had no meeting-place. He had thrown his lot with Anglo-India by marrying a countrywoman, and he was acquiring some of its limitations, and already felt surprise at his own past heroism (AP, p. 309).

Heroism in Forster is linked with the commitment to friendship. However, while politics has remained peripheral to most of Forster's text, it becomes the last resort for terminating the relationship of Aziz and Fielding. Aziz bandies political statements against Fielding, "we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then" - he rode against him furiously - "and then," he concluded, half kissing him, "you and I shall be friends" (AP, p. 312). But, of course, the political solution is superfluous to their friendship and Fielding asks for personal intimacy, "Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want" (AP, p. 312). It is to this proposal of homoerotic love that the novel's ultimate denial applies:

But the horses didn't want it - they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single-file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House,

that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there" (AP, p. 312).

There is no one factor to which the breach of friendship can be attributed and the entire universe is responsible for the rift between Aziz and Fielding.

Therefore, from the opening pages to the closing lines A Passage to India, like the rest of Forster's fiction, promotes the theme of homoerotic love. The political strands in the novel give an edge to the concern for male friendship but remain a secondary issue. As such A Passage to India belongs not to the genre of English colonial fiction, but to the tradition of homosexual Orientalism in that the author's perception of India is conditioned by the desire for male love.

Homosexual Orientalism

Edward W. Said describes Orientalism as a peculiarly Western propensity, 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"'.⁷ The Western involvement in Orientalism, dating from Homer to the present day, constitutes a long tradition directed towards appropriating the Orient. Orientalism entails not just speaking of the Orient, but speaking for it and representing it. Orientalist discourse is closely knit with

socio-economic and political institutions, which together work towards defining the Orient as the Other to Europe whilst simultaneously subordinating it.⁸ According to Said, during the early nineteenth century Orient, 'had really meant only India and the Bible lands' and until World War II, 'France and Britain dominated the Orient and Orientalism'.⁹

The Oriental enterprise had social, economic, political as well as sexual dimensions. The Orient frequently acted as a realm of sexual fantasy. the 'embourgeoisement' and regulation of sex in nineteenth-century Europe led Western writers to associate the Orient with licentiousness. Said remarks that after 1800, many European writers sought in the East sexual experiences that had become unobtainable in Europe, 'What they looked for often - correctly, I think - was a different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden'.¹⁰ Forster adapted the general Oriental tradition to his own purposes; for him, as for Carpenter, Dickinson, T. E. Lawrence and Ackerley, Orientalism is combined with the quest for homosexual love.

The opening lines of A Passage to India mark a break away from the conventional view of India and Forster draws the parameters of his own text:

Except for the Marabar Caves - and they are twenty miles off - the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so

freely. . . . So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life (AP, p. 2).

The passage dislocates the traditional kind of Orientalism and the author advances a more specific version of India.

Forster's engagement with India resembles the journeys to Italy in his earlier novels. The author himself compares India to Italy, and says,

To regard an Indian as if he were an Italian is not, for instance, a common error, nor perhaps a fatal one, and Fielding often attempted analogies between this peninsula and that other, smaller and more exquisitely shaped, that stretches into the classic waters of the Mediterranean (AP, p. 55).

Fielding's bungalow, 'though of wood had reminded Fielding of the Loggia de' Lanzi at Florence' (AP, p. 63).

Forster parodies the general, tourist's idea of India; Mrs Moore does not realize that India is only 'seemingly so mysterious' (AP, p. 43) and Adela's sounds naive in her enthusiasm 'to see the real India' (AP, p. 19). Forster shifts the focus of his narrative in Fielding's answer to Adela. He tells her, 'Try seeing Indians' (AP, 21). By Indians Forster means men for Indian women are practically non-existent in the text, and the author notices the physical traits of Indian men. Aziz is introduced as 'an

athletic little man, daintily put together' (AP, p. 12). Forster describes some youths training, 'Round they ran, weedy and knock-kneed - the local physique was wretched' (AP, p. 51). The Nawab Bahadur's grandson, Nureddin, is referred to as 'an effeminate youth' (AP, p. 90). Aziz embodies the lure of India, albeit seen through Adela's eyes:

What a handsome little Oriental he was, and no doubt his wife and children were beautiful too, for people usually get what they already possess. She did not admire him with any personal warmth, for there was nothing of the vagrant in her blood, but she guessed he might attract women of his own race and rank, and she regretted that neither she nor Ronny had physical charm. It does make a difference in a relationship - beauty, thick hair, a fine skin (AP, p. 144).

Another symbol of masculine beauty is 'the man who pulled the punkha' in court, 'Almost naked, and splendidly formed, . . . He had the strength and beauty that sometimes come to flower in Indians of low birth' (AP, p. 207). Spellbound by the dignity of the man, Adela withdraws her accusations against Aziz, 'Something in his aloofness impressed the girl from middle-class England, and rebuked the narrowness of her sufferings' (AP, p. 207). The antithesis between middle-class England and a person from lower class is familiar in Forster, and denotes sexual repression versus a permissive culture. Accordingly, the influence of the punkhawallah in the novel is sexually liberating. The

magnificence of the is manifest again in Aziz and his friends as they celebrate victory after the trial:

Fielding, who had dressed up in native costume, learned from his excessive awkwardness in it that all his motions were makeshifts, whereas when the Nawab Bahadur stretched out his hand for food, or Nuredin applauded a song, something beautiful had been accomplished which needed no development. This restfulness of gesture - it is Peace that passeth Understanding, after all, it is the social equivalent of Yoga. When the whirring of action ceases, it becomes visible, and reveals a civilization which the West can disturb but will never acquire (AP, p. 239).

As the above passages demonstrate, the images of beauty in India relate to men and hint at the homoerotic desire in the text.

India is constructed in the narrative not so much as a historical, geographical entity, but as the Other to the English society. As opposed to the 'chilly English' there are the 'flabby Hindus' (AP, p. 18) and the efficiency of the English is offset by 'Slack Hindus', who have 'no idea of society' (AP, p. 62). Beneath the cultural stereotypes, the contrasts Forster sketches are emotional and sexual. The English are depicted as rational and organized with 'Everything ranged coldly on shelves' (AP, p. 59). Aziz pities the English for 'he knew at the bottom of his heart that they could not help being so cold and odd and circulating like an ice-stream through the land' (AP, p. 64). Aziz himself, on the other hand is 'incapable of administration' (AP, p. 64), and sentimental and

melodramatic. Not accurate over 'verbal truth' he rather represents the 'truth of mood' (AP, p. 65). Unlike the stiff Englishmen, he is 'sensuous but healthy' (AP, p. 5), and his mind often dwells on 'the Bottomless Pit' (AP, p. 92) without guilt. Aziz embodies an ideal of homoerotic desire, and childish tantrums and display of affection make him prone to male friendship.

The contact between the English and the Indians in A Passage to India is rendered ⁱⁿ emotional rather than political terms. As Aziz walks up to Major Callender's bungalow, 'depression suddenly seized him' and 'this not because his soul was servile but because his feelings - the sensitive edges of him - feared a gross snub' (AP, p. 11). According to Aziz the solution to India's problems is, 'Kindness, more kindness, and even after that more kindness. I assure you is the only hope' (AP, p. 108). On his part, Fielding is wary of Aziz's statement because he believes that India calls for a more passionate response, 'kindness - yes, that he might supply, but was that really all that the queer nation needed? Did it not also demand an occasional intoxication of the blood?' (AP, p. 109). Forster projects qualities of warmth and spontaneity onto India and the Indian people. During Aziz's meeting with Mrs Moore in the Mosque, the old Englishwoman comments, 'I don't think I understand people very well. I only know whether I like or dislike them'', to which Aziz retorts, 'Then you are an Oriental' (AP, p. 17). The pattern occurs again at the end of the book when Ralph says to Aziz

that he can always tell whether a stranger is a friend, and Aziz repeats, "Then you are an Oriental" (AP, p. 301).

The specific seductiveness of India lies in that it is receptive to male friendship. Forster's India is 'the East, where the friends of friends are a reality, where everything gets done some time, and sooner or later everyone gets his share of happiness' (AP, p. 131). Furthermore, the theme of friendship is for the sake of the English not the Indian characters. Ronny argues with his mother that the English are not in India 'for the purpose of behaving pleasantly' (AP, p. 43). The author laments that the English civil servant should be so impervious to the prospect of friendship, 'One touch of regret - not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart - would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution' (AP, pp. 44-5). Forster does not condemn England's colonization of India, but deplores the fact that an opportunity for friendship was being lost due to political conflict. Fielding says to Adela, "The first time I saw you, you were wanting to see India, not Indians, and it occurred to me: Ah, that won't take us far. Indians know whether they are liked or not - they cannot be fooled here. Justice never satisfies them, and that is why the British Empire rests on sand" (AP, p. 248). The narrative of A Passage to India evolves from the principle that 'Between people of distant climes there is always the possibility of romance' (AP, p. 256); hence, Forster probes the possibility of friendship between the English and the

Indians everywhere in the text, in spite of the political circumstances.

As in Forster's other novels, the theme of friendship is reinforced by various allusions and motifs in the text, except that in A Passage to India, the homoerotic codes are derived from the history and superstitions of the country. Aziz's favourite Moghul Emperor is Babur who exemplifies male love, for 'never in his whole life did he betray a friend' and 'He laid down his life for his son' (AP, p. 135). Then there is the enigmatic legend of the 'Tank of the Dagger', which has no connection with the plot of the novel, except that tells a story of a Hindu Rajah who killed his sister's son, but the dagger with which he murdered the man remained stuck to his hand until showed compassion to a thirsty cow and was himself forgiven in return (AP, 170). The richest symbol of homoerotic love is of course Lord Krishna, a mischievous, pastoral deity, 'the universal lover' (AP, p. 278) beloved of milkmaids and cowherds alike, and in some ways similar to the classical god Pan.

Therefore Forster's journey to India is romantic, and indeed, homoerotic. The women characters do not participate in the novels' imagery of beauty and passion - Mrs Moore is too old and Adela is too plain. Aziz cannot think of her as sexually desirable, 'she was not beautiful. She has practically no breasts, if you come to think of it' (AP, p. 111). Homoerotic desire in Forster is subversive of dominant social norms, and in A Passage to India he overturns the political hierarchy. The conventional plot of

colonial fiction of the rape of a white woman by a native is parodied in the novel. At the trial Mr McBryde expounds on 'Oriental Pathology' and reiterates the well-known fact 'that the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer' (AP, 208). In reply to which, someone shouts back, 'Even when the lady is so uglier than the gentleman' (AP, p. 208). The heterosexual affair has no credence in Forster's novel and the suggestion is dismissed as soon as it arises.

One of the most striking features of Indian culture is the natural ease with which men touch one another, and Forster records in detail instances of physical contact between men. Aziz's Indian friends drop in to see him when he is ill and, 'One, two, three, four bumps, as people sat down upon his bed' (AP, p. 94) and later Aziz protests to Dr Lal, 'You sit on my leg' (AP, p. 103). Hamidullah calls on Fielding to invite him to the victory dinner, 'he put his arm over the Englishman's shoulder and swayed him to and fro gently' (AP, p. 232) and as he walks away, the author notes that he 'had terminated his slightly minatory caress' (AP, p. 234). As Mr Das and Aziz conclude their conversation, 'They shook hands, in a half-embrace that typified the entente' (AP, p. 256). These undercurrents of homoerotic desire break loose in the Temple scene. The religious festival of the birth of Krishna, with its message of 'God si love', is described as a pagan revelry that combines spiritual with physical ecstasy. The worshippers emulate Krishna in 'innocent frolic':

They removed their turbans, and one put a lump of butter on his forehead, and waited for it to slide down his nose into his mouth. Before it could arrive, another stole up behind him, snatched the melting morsel, and swallowed it himself. . . . Having swallowed the butter, they played another game which chanced to be graceful: the fondling of Shri Krishna under the similitude of a child. . . . The child is restored to his parents, the ball thrown on, and another child becomes for a moment the World's Desire (AP, pp. 279-80).

The 'divine mess' (AP, p. 280) generated by the ritual is a sublimation of sexual energies, 'Not an orgy of the body; the tradition of that shrine forbade it. But the human spirit had tried by desperate contortion to ravish the unknown, flinging down science and history in the struggle, yes, beauty herself' (AP, p. 278).

The impact of the scene is purely symbolical and the vision of universal love is accomplished solely by Godbole and remains beyond the capabilities of the other characters in the novel.

Therefore, homoerotic desire is never fulfilled in A Passage to India and a friend remains an elusive ideal. Unable to relate to so alien a culture, Forster surrenders to the sense of complexity about India:

How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile. The important towns they build are only retreats, their quarrels the malaise of men who cannot find their way home. India knows of the whole world's trouble, to its uttermost

depth. She calls "Come" through her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. But come to what? She has never defined (AP, p. 128).

Ultimately, India resists being cast in the homoerotic mould and disappoints the desire for male love. Ronny and Adela drive across the country with the Nawab Bahadur and the characters emotional sterility is reflected in the landscape, 'the whole scene was inferior, and suggested that the countryside was too vast to admit of excellence. In vain did each item in it call out, "Come, come." There was not enough god to go round' (79). The religious allegories of love do not translate into relationships and India does not endorse homoerotic desire. For all the author's impulse to the contrary, politics impinges on friendship and Forster finally admits that 'every human act in the East is tainted with officialism' (AP, p. 178), and the relationship of Fielding and Aziz is untenable outside the political boundaries.

Silence and Failure

A Passage to India demonstrates Forster's yet another effort to combine homoerotic desire with contemporary historical and political circumstances, but the political issues proved to be so dominant that they effectively smothered the theme of male friendship. Homoerotic love remains an unspeakable subject in the novel resulting in the author's growing frustration with language because of

its failure to facilitate the expression of male love. The narrative of A Passage to India thrives on obscurity and negations. Nothing is cleared ^{up} in the novel - whether the accident of the Nawab Bahadur's car is caused by an animal or a ghost, whether the object that Adela sees on the way to Marabar Caves is a snake or rope, and whether Adela was assaulted in the Caves or not. These conundrums are not significant but meaningless and in Fielding's words 'A mystery is a muddle' (AP, p. 62). Gillian Beer has pointed to the negative sentence structures of A Passage to India.¹¹ Language operates in the novel to negate the norms of English society, to eliminate rather than create. Mrs Moore loses her faith and is struck dumb in the Caves:

Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from " Let there be light " to " It is finished" only amounted to " boum ". Then she was terrified over an area larger than usual; the universe, never comprehensible to her intellect, offered no repose to her soul, the mood of the last two months took definite form at last, and she realized that she didn't want to write to her children, didn't want to communicate with anyone, not even with God (AP, p. 141).

Forster was unable to express homoerotic desire directly and as such language itself became oppressive rather than therapeutic. Words are divorced from meaning in Forster's text in that they do not encompass homoerotic love, and hence everything in the novel is reduced to an echo. Forster was exhausted with coding homoerotic desire, and each time the readers had missed the theme of male love. By

the time he wrote A Passage to India, language in Forster is merely a medium for voicing discontent and as he says in the novel:

Most life is so dull that there is nothing to be said about it, and the books and talk that would describe it as interesting are obliged to exaggerate, in the hope of justifying their own existence. Inside its cocoon of work or social obligation, the human spirit slumbers for the most part, registering the distinction between pleasure and pain, but not nearly as alert as we pretend. There are periods in the most thrilling day during which nothing happens, though we continue to exclaim "I do enjoy myself" or "I am horrified" we are insincere. "As far as I feel anything, it is enjoyment, horror" - it's no more than that really, and a perfectly adjusted organism would be silent (AP, p. 125).

In his struggle to find an appropriate narrative form for his theme of homoerotic desire, Forster discovered that language itself was marred by gaps and absences, and the recognition of these limitations was accompanied by an equally strong sense of his own failure as a novelist.

Insofar as A Passage to India was a product of its time, some political overtones were inevitable, but Forster was unable to control the public reception of the book. Therefore the more A Passage to India won acclaim for the wrong reasons, the greater was Forster's sense of his own failure as a writer.

Six months after the novel was published, Forster complained of the response the book had aroused, in a

letter to Joe Ackerley, dated 27 June 1924, 'I am complimented on my fairmindedness until my soul is numbed'.¹² Forster constantly reminded his readers that the novel:

is not really about politics, though it is the political aspect of it that caught the general public and made it a sell. It's about something wider than politics, about the search of the human race for a more lasting home, about the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and the Indian sky, about the horror lurking in the Marabar Caves and the release symbolized by the birth of Krishna. It is - or desires to be - philosophic and poetic.¹³

Indeed the themes of A Passage to India are wider and more fundamental than politics in that they are concerned with sexual relations. However, it was Forster's peculiar predicament that he could only say what the book was not rather than what it was. In 1960, he reiterated to Furbank that A Passage to India was not 'about the incompatibility of East and West', but 'was really concerned with the difficulty of living in the universe'.¹⁴ Needless to say, the difficulty Forster refers to is that of being a homosexual.

By the time he finished A Passage to India, Forster had experimented with several narrative modes in his novels. He had been so successful in disguising homoerotic desire that by 1924 he had become a major novelist in the mainstream tradition of English literature, and this was of course at the cost of ignoring the most personal and authentic part of his writing. Writing did not provide an

outlet for homoerotic desire because the very conventions of the traditional novel form proved to be heterosexual. The only path left untried was a straightforward homosexual narrative, and thus Forster wrote Maurice which was not meant for publication. With regard to producing conventional novels, Forster understandably lapsed into a total silence.

Conclusion

A Passage to India occurs in the tradition of the homosexual narratives of the nineteenth century. The novel marks the culmination of the quest for male friendship in Forster's novels, which began with the journey to Italy and extends as far as India. The author's attempt to combine the theme of male love with contemporary issues worked again to the detriment of homoerotic desire. By this time Forster had exhausted various methods of coding homoerotic desire, and each time his novels were read simply as heterosexual texts. In contrast to the obscurity and tortuousness of the novels that Forster wrote for publication, Maurice is a direct novel, which finally expresses the theme of homoerotic love that has been reticent in all his other novels.

1. See E. M. Forster: The Critical Heritage, edited by Philip Gardner, E. M. Forster: A Passage to India: A Casebook, edited by Malcolm Bradbury (London: Macmillan, 1970) and G. K. Das E. M. Forster's India.
2. Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', A Passage to India, p. xii.
3. Ibid., p. xi.
4. 'Three Countries', The Hill of Devi and Other Indian Writings, p. 297.
5. Cited by Oliver Stallybrass, 'Editor's Introduction', A Passage to India, p. xiii.
6. Ibid., p. xv.
7. Orientalism, 2nd edition, (1985; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 2.
8. Ibid., p. 6.
9. Ibid., p. 4.
10. Ibid., p. 190.
11. Gillian Beer, 'Negation in A Passage to India', Essays in Criticism, 30 (1980), pp. 151-66.
12. Cited by Elizabeth Heine, 'Editor's Introduction', The Hill of Devi and Other Indian Writings, p. xvi.
13. 'Three Countries', The Hill of Devi and Other Indian Writings, p. 298.
14. E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume Two, p. 308.

Chapter 8

Desire Attained: Maurice

Forster wrote Maurice during 1913-14, and revised it in 1919, 1932, 1959-60, and it was published in 1971, a year after the author's death.¹ A Passage to India called for all of Forster's powers in composing a deceptive text, and Maurice was written as a respite from literary conventions before A Passage to India could be completed. Unlike the other novels, Maurice flowed effortlessly and compulsively out of Forster's pen; and the act was so therapeutic that Forster recorded the dates of writing at the front of the novel, 'Begun 1913 Finished 1914 Dedicated to a Happier Year'. An explicitly homosexual text, Maurice decodes the motifs that occur in Forster's other novels.

Decoding Desire

Forster did not plan Maurice; the novel emerged from the pressures of homoerotic desire which could not be stifled any more. The influence of Edward Carpenter on the homoerotic tradition has already been outlined in Chapter 2. Maurice is not only based on Carpenter's ideas, but was born directly out of the author's visit to Carpenter. Forster was suffering from an acute sense of sexual and

artistic imprisonment, and in this state he went to visit Edward Carpenter in Milthorpe in September 1913.² During the stay, George Merrill touched Forster on the backside and the contact released the author's pent-up emotions, 'The sensation was unusual It seemed as much psychological as physical. It seemed to go straight through the small of my back into my ideas, without involving my thoughts' (Maurice, p. 235). The experience brought Forster sexual release and he poured homoerotic desire into narrative. In Furbank's words, 'At last he knew what had been wrong. For years Maurice, or something like Maurice, had been demanding to be born'.³ Whereas in A Room with a View, Forster could only preach 'the holiness of direct desire' (RV, p. 204), direct desire is delineated for the first time in Maurice. In fact, the narrative focuses so closely on the subject of homosexual love that the author foregoes even the usual trappings of personal relations and many of the generalizations which give a metaphysical dimension to his other novels. Even the social and political criticisms in the novel are specific and accrue to the theme of homosexuality.

Maurice is distinct in that it does not fall within the mainstream genres. It is less well constructed than Forster's other novels, because in this case, the text is determined by content rather than structure. Insofar as Maurice has an identifiable literary form, it resembles the school story, a tradition inaugurated by Thomas Hughes' Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857).⁴ The novel was written by the author to prepare his son for a public school and Hughes'

fondly recreates his time at Rugby under the headmastership of Dr Arnold. Tom Brown is an ordinary boy who goes through school successfully. The story was very popular among contemporary readers because it endorsed middle class values. One of the themes developed by Hughes is the friendship of healthy Tom with fragile Arthur.

The themes of Hughes' narrative were given a further twist by homosexual writers who used the genre to foreground male friendships. Dean Farrar's Eric or Little by Little: A Tale of Rosyln School (1858), coming a year after Tom Brown's Schooldays, is cast in Christian terminology and the novel is not a success story. Eric Williams' boyhood is full of promise but in his senior school he is misled by his companions into smoking, drinking and stealing. Edwin Russell is Eric's staunch friend who stands by him and checks him in his ways. Edwin dies leaving Eric vulnerable. Eric steadily deteriorates and acquires a bad reputation. Barker, Eric's long-standing adversary, plots to have Eric accused of a theft he did not commit. Eric runs away from school and dies a fugitive but not before learning that his name has been cleared among his mates.

H. O. Sturgis' Tim was published anonymously in 1891 and the novel's epigraph is a Biblical quotation often cited by homosexual writers, 'Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women'. The author alludes to the friendship of David and Jonathan. The story revolves around the love of a younger boy Tim Ebbesley - a weak, sickly, lonely son of a civil servant in India, for the older Carol

Darley - a strong, pretty, gifted grandson of the squire. The novel follows the fluctuations of Tim and Carol's friendship from their childhood days at home, through Eton, to their youth when Carol goes to Cambridge. The main crisis in the friendship occurs when Carol falls in love with Violet and neglects Tim. Mr Ebbesley is annoyed by his son's effeminacy and pining for his friend just as Violet resents Carol's attention to Tim. The opposition by the father and the fiancée only provides a measure of Tim's constancy to Carol. However, as Tim lays dying, the two friends are reunited and also reconciled with Mr Ebbesley. The epigraph of the book is to be the epitaph on Tim's grave. Forster reviewed the new edition of Sturgis' Belchamber with an introduction by Gerard Hopkins in May 1935, where he also mentions Tim.⁵

Another school story familiar in the homosexual circle was A. W. Clarke's Jaspar Tristram (1899). It was admired by Oscar Wilde, who in a letter postmarked 2 November 1899, recommended it to Louis Wilkinson, a Radley boy, pointing out that the school depicted in the novel was Radley. Gambril Nicholson wrote a poem 'Jaspar Tristram', included in his volume A Garland of Ladslove (1911) and Charles Kains Jackson composed a similar poem that was not published but Nicholson wrote it into his copy of Clarke's novel.⁶ Clarke depicts the theme of friendship against the background of the rivalries of boys in a public school. At Scarisbrick Jaspar finds himself becoming fond of Els who is a protege of the senior boy Orr. Jasper's friendship with Els blossoms once Orr has left school. As in Tim, the

class factor gives an edge to their relationship. Carol belongs to the gentry while Jasper is an orphan brought up at the rectory by Mr and Mrs Binney. The enmities of school are carried into the outside world when Jasper and Orr both become suitors for Nita's hand. Jasper loves Nita all the more because she is his friend Elsie's sister. The battle between Jasper and Orr is never resolved because Nita dies suddenly. The boarding house created a situation of young boys living together, and contained opportunities for intense love and hostility.

The public school for Forster represented all the abuses of a closed community exemplified in the exaggerated notion promoted by Herbert Pembroke that 'school is the world in miniature' (LJ, p. 157). The 'Sawston' section of The Longest Journey portrays some of the worse aspects of the public school atmosphere. Rickie detests the coercion and the glib slogans of patriotism and esprit de corps that are dinned into the boys, for he believes that these values ought not to be imposed. He says to Agnes that the 'masters a little forget that they must grow from a sentiment. They cannot create one. Cannot - cannot - cannot. I never cared a straw for England until I cared for Englishmen, and boys can't love the school when they hate each other' (LJ, p. 170). When violence erupts at Dunwood House, it is because the boys have been brainwashed rather than learning to care for one another as individuals. Herbert Pembroke, who 'approved of a little healthy roughness' is of course, 'horrified' and 'would not admit that if you herd together human beings before they can understand each other, the

great god Pan is angry, and will in the end evade your regulations and drive them mad' (LJ, p. 185). Forster saw the public school as an English middle class institution which did not foster male friendship, but inculcated conventional masculine roles. In 'Notes on the English Character', ^{he} describes the English public school as an extension of the middle class ethos, 'with its boarding houses, its compulsory games, its system of prefects and fagging, its insistence on good form and on esprit de corps'.⁷ Forster touches on the unpleasantness of school again in a review article of a collection of essays, The Old School, edited by Graham Greene, in The Spectator, dated 27 July 1934.

Because of his dislike of the public school system, Forster only briefly treats of the protagonist's schooldays in Maurice as a stage to the University. The first chapter discloses the issue at the core of the novel - the sexual development of the hero. Mr Ducie, a schoolmaster, takes upon himself to explain sex to Maurice, who is leaving them to go to a public school. Mr Ducie's approach is trite, entrenched in heterosexual assumptions and incongruous with his pupil's apprehensions. Mr Ducie draws diagrams on the sand of the beach to illustrate sex to Maurice, but his speech is merely technical. He drones on 'to the boy, who watched dully: it bore no relation to his experiences' (Maurice, p. 7). After he had finished, 'Love and life still remained, and he touched on them as they strolled forward by the colourless sea. He spoke of the ideal man - chaste with asceticism. He sketched the glory of Woman'

(Maurice, p. 8). Mr Ducie's falseness is immediately exposed; For all his professed honesty about sex as he tells Maurice, 'one musn't make a mystery of it' (Maurice, p. 8), he panics when some people wander up to where he made those diagrams. As he rushes back to erase them, the master's hypocrisy is revealed to Maurice, "Liar", he thought, "Liar, coward, he's told me nothing" (Maurice, p. 9). From this point of Mr Ducie's standard version of sex, Forster traces the process of the protagonist's discovery of his homosexuality, accompanied by an ever increasing awareness of the discrepancy between social attitudes and his own experience. Maurice progresses from his initial horror of homosexual love, from regarding it as pathological, an aberrance to an affirmation of his own nature.

Maurice's awakening to homosexuality is gradual and the novel depicts the stages by which he attains his identity. The dramatic interest of Maurice's story lies in that his development is neither predictable nor coherent. It is Forster's strength that he maintains his protagonist's sense of bewilderment and incomprehension to the last and the author builds up to the realisation of Maurice's homosexuality through a series of fragmented incidents. Forster vividly captures Maurice's struggle as he grapples first with his own, and then society's, prejudice against love between men. Thus homosexuality emerges as a natural phenomenon, something that happens in spite of social conditioning and taboos.

True to the psychological, homosexual content of the novel, Maurice is written in the mode of Walter Pater's narratives, where language approximates the state of dreams, subconscious, and imaginative life. In his 'Conclusion' to The Renaissance Pater speaks of human life as an 'interval' when we have 'this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity'.⁸ Forster's protagonists communicate this sense of transience of life, where between the oblivion of birth and death an individual is briefly quickened by a moment of passion. In the scene with Mr Ducie, Maurice's state is described as a kind of somnolence. He is not yet ready to grasp the complicated subject of sex, the knowledge of which must come from within:

In vain he tried. His torpid brain would not awake. Puberty was there, but not intelligence, and manhood was stealing on him, as it always must, in a trance. Useless to break in upon that trance. Useless to describe it, however scientifically and sympathetically. The boy assents and is dragged back into sleep, not to be enticed before his hour (Maurice, p. 7).

The traumas of youth are portrayed in images of the fear of darkness, of groping in 'the Valley of the Shadow of Life' (Maurice, p. 14). As Claude J. Summers points out the expression is a reversal of the Biblical phrase, 'valley of the shadow of death' (Psalms 23:4).⁹ Forster describes Maurice's recognition of his homosexuality as positive, an emergence from the confusion and anguish caused by social mores to a harmonious understanding of himself.

The first inkling of Maurice's sexuality is given when he is nearly fifteen and comes home from boarding school to find that the garden boy George has left his mother's service. He is overcome by a sense of loneliness and breaks down, for 'Maurice and the late garden boy had been used to play about' in the woodstacks (Maurice, p. 12). He sobs for George in bed at night and at the time does not know why he misses George so desperately, 'Something stirred in the unfathomable depths of his heart. He whispered, "George, George." Who was George? Nobody - just a common servant' (Maurice, p. 13). It is only ten years later, after he has been through the crisis of his affair with Clive, that Maurice's feelings for George fall into place, 'now he knew very well what he wanted with the garden boy' (Maurice, p. 191).

Maurice's early homoerotic desire is transmuted into dreams. He dreams of playing football with a boy whom he wills to be George, running 'down the field towards him, naked and jumping over the woodstacks'. George vanishes as soon as Maurice tries to touch him 'and a brutal disappointment woke him up' (Maurice, p. 15). Maurice suppresses his homosexual instincts because they are disapproved of, and hence he does not let his love for George materialize even in his dreams. However, the pattern of his dream, Maurice 'did not connect it with Mr Ducie's homily' (Maurice, p. 15).

Homoerotic desire in Forster is always attached to the theme of friendship and in Maurice Forster elaborates the idea of a friend. Maurice's ache for George merges into a

longing for a friend. The image of a friend also appears in Maurice's dream and is initially vague and indescribable:

He scarcely saw a face, scarcely heard a voice say, "That is your friend," and then it was over, having filled him with beauty and taught him tenderness. He could die for such a friend, he would allow such a friend to die for him; they would make any sacrifice for each other, and count the world nothing, neither death nor distance nor crossness could part them, because "this is my friend." Soon afterwards he was confirmed and tried to persuade himself that the friend must be Christ. But Christ has a mangy beard. Was he a Greek god, such as illustrates the classical dictionary? More probable, but most probably he was just a man. Maurice forbore to define his dream further. He had dragged it as far into life as it would come. He would never meet that man nor hear that voice again, yet they became more real than anything he knew (Maurice, p. 15).

Maurice's fantasy is homoerotic in that his passion and idealism are inspired by men, but it is not concrete because he has not yet found such relation with a person. He tries to legitimize his desires by connecting them to Christ or a Greek god, but in Maurice homoerotic love is not glorified and is kept strictly within the confines of personal relations.

The figure of a friend, intangible though it might be, transforms Maurice's behaviour and he strives to be worthy, 'longing to be kind to everyone, because his friend wished it, and to be good that his friend might become more fond

of him' (Maurice, p. 16). Forster describes the dilemmas and conflict of an adolescent man with sensitivity as Maurice veers between lust and guilt, 'his chief indecencies were solitary' and 'The other half of his life seemed infinitely remote from obscenity' (Maurice, p. 16). This internal turbulence ends once Maurice has attained puberty, 'A check, a silence fell upon the complex processes, and very timidly the youth began to look around him' (Maurice, p. 17). Still uncertain, but with a sober disposition Maurice starts on his path of homosexual destiny.

The university instead of the school, provides the opportunity for passion between men. There is dormant tendency for friendship among boys in the public school, but they are too immature to take it seriously. For Maurice,

As he rose in the school he began to make a religion of some other boy. When this boy, whether older or younger than himself, was present, he would laugh loudly, talk absurdly, and be unable to work. He dared not be kind - it was not the thing - still less to express his admiration in words. And the adored one would shake him off before long, and reduce him to sulks. However, he had his revenges. Other boys sometimes worshipped him, and when he realized this he would shake off them (Maurice, pp. 16-17).

The crudities of Maurice's public school outlook begin to wear off and he absorbs the gracefulness and refinements of the university life before he can be stirred by love. The contrasts between the school and university pictured in

Maurice have their precedents in The Longest Journey. The idealistic friendship of Rickie and Ansell is replicated by the much more demonstrative relationship of Clive Durham and Maurice.

As is typical of a romance, Maurice meets the person he will fall in love with by accident. He is intrigued by another fellow, Risley, and goes looking for him in his room. Risley is not in but Maurice finds Durham there. Maurice has known of Durham, and although he is not special, on seeing him Maurice is strangely attracted to him. The scene has all the components of a lovers' meeting and the very atmosphere is thrilling. Maurice 'was indifferent to beauty as a rule but "what a show of stars!" he thought. And how the fountain splashed when the chimes died away' (Maurice, pp. 26-27). He feels reluctant to part company with Clive for all that evening, 'His excitement had never ceased' (Maurice, p. 30). He drags himself away only to wait outside Clive's door in order to catch a glimpse of him one more time, dimly conscious that 'his heart had lit never to be quenched again, and one thing in him at last was real' (Maurice, p. 32). The insatiable hunger that the incident produces in Maurice is the beginning of love, and paves the way for friendship, 'A caution alien to his nature was at work. He had always been cautious pettily, but this was on a large scale' (Maurice, p. 32).

Like most lovers Maurice and Clive complement one another: Maurice belongs to Forster's athletic type of hero while Clive is an intellectual. Clive is small, reserved

and intimidating because of his mental powers; he belongs to the gentry, and being older of the two, he has already traversed the sexual path on which Maurice is still blundering. Maurice does not have Clive's clarity of mind, but exerts physical control over him; he comes from the class of tradesmen, and being younger he is also pliant in Clive's hands. Thus Maurice is affectionate and impulsive while Clive channels his energies into an enduring relationship. Maurice returns Clive's care when the latter falls ill. His watching over Clive during his convalescence completes their homoerotic relationship, 'Now that Clive was undignified and weak, he loved him as never before' (Maurice, p. 97). It is as if they have switched functions, 'Clive had helped him. Clive would help him again when the pendulum swung, meanwhile he must help Clive, and all through life they would alternate thus' (Maurice, p. 104). Men helping one another is an essential part of a homoerotic relationship - Stephen bandages Rickie's injured thumb and then holds him when Rickie falls asleep on his horse in The Longest Journey; Mr Beebe nurses George in the manuscript chapters of A Room with a View; and, Aziz says to Fielding in A Passage to India, 'I used to wish you to fall ill so that we could meet that way' (AP, p. 57). Those scenes from the preceding novels are clarified in Maurice.

The ordeals that Forster's characters undergo are emotional and, in Maurice, the protagonist's tribulations are explicitly connected with the ideal of homoerotic love. Maurice is shocked to learn that Clive loves him. The episode causes a misunderstanding between the two friends

and Clive avoids Maurice for he cannot bear to be with him. Maurice is forlorn without Clive and in immense unhappiness he forges a new identity, 'It worked inwards, till it touched the root whence body and soul both spring, the "I" that he had been trained to obscure, and, realized at last, doubled its power and grew superhuman' (Maurice, p. 51). In contrast to the Wilcox men, of whom Forster says in Howards End that 'Perhaps the little thing that says "I" is missing out of the middle of their heads' (HE, p. 231), Maurice finds his individuality and selfhood. The Wilcox men, on the other hand are so well integrated into society that they never stop to question their actions or discover their true selves.

The crisis disintegrates Maurice and he comes out of it a changed person. He realizes the importance of his friendship with Clive that he had hitherto taken for granted, 'Madness is not for everyone, but Maurice's proved a thunderbolt that dispels the clouds' (Maurice, p. 52). The fumbings of childhood are left behind and Maurice is surrounded by images of clarity, 'The brilliancy of day was around him, he stood upon the mountain range that overshadows youth, he saw' (Maurice, p. 53). The awareness that Maurice gains is sexual, 'He loved men and always had loved them. He longed to embrace them and mingle his being with theirs' (Maurice, p. 53). Maurice crosses from adolescence into manhood and his maturity is also evident in that he sheds the beliefs he inherited for those he forms through his own experience.

Maurice contains not only an opposition between homosexual and heterosexual relations, but as Robert K. Martin says, between 'two kinds of homosexuality - one that is identified with Cambridge and Clive, and one that is identified with Alec and the open air'.¹⁰ Maurice's friendship with Clive, wonderful as it is, is only a phase. The setting in Forster is crucial to relationships and the friendship of Clive and Maurice could only thrive in the surroundings of Cambridge. They cannot sustain their carefree spirits when Maurice is sent down from the University, and Clive realizes that 'their love belonged to it, and particularly to their rooms, so that he could not conceive of their meeting anywhere else' (Maurice, p. 71). Cambridge harbours relations between men in that, to some extent, it provides an environment that is insulated from the pressures of the outside world. Also classical scholarship produces a atmosphere tolerant of relations between men. It is therefore understandable that in Cambridge, Maurice and Clive's relationship is modelled on Plato's ideal of homoerotic love. Maurice rejects Christianity as a result of his discussions with Clive, and once he is free of the shackles of religion, Clive introduces him to Plato.

Nevertheless, Cambridge is not entirely without malice against male love. On the estrangement of Maurice and Clive, 'it was a don who remarked that Durham had stopped honeymooning with that Hall person' (Maurice, p. 55). Maurice misses his lectures to take an excursion with Clive. The boys go away heedless of the Dean calling after

them. Maurice is punished for his breach of discipline. Mr Cornwallis, 'in a dead, bloodless way, he even guessed what had happened'. Maurice is expelled because 'Mr Cornwallis always suspected such friendships. It was not natural that men of different characters and tastes should be intimate, and although undergraduates, unlike schoolboys, are officially normal, the Dons exercised a certain amount of watchfulness, and felt it right to spoil a love affair when they could' (Maurice, p. 70).

The scenes of homoerotic romance in Forster are always abstracted from time and place. Maurice and Clive's perfect day's outing is set nowhere. As Maurice sets off with his lover, he says inverting religious terminology, 'Now we'll go to Hell' (Maurice, p. 66). They drive a long way from Cambridge, 'into the fens and the receding dome of the sky' and 'cared for no one, they were outside humanity, and death, had it come, would only have continued their pursuit of the retreating horizon. . . . "Right turn," again, then "left," "right," until all the sense of direction was gone' (Maurice, pp. 66-7). The friendship with Clive ultimately loses its aura, and Maurice is unperturbed when Alec blackmails him over Clive, for 'even the Clive of Cambridge had lost sanctity' (Maurice, p. 206).

Maurice outgrows not only Clive but also his archaic ideas of platonic friendship. The platonic ideal of male love is too rarefied to be relevant to modern life. Maurice finds the discipline imposed by the philosopher too harsh, and once his tie with Clive has been broken he sees no justification for asceticism, 'he thought with some

inconsequence that even old Chapman had sown some wild oats. He alone - Clive admonishing - combined advanced thought with the conduct of a Sunday scholar. He wasn't Methuselah - he'd a right to a fling' (Maurice, p. 174). After his affair with Clive comes to an end, Maurice no longer craves for intellectual companionship, but physical solace. Maurice's cry of sexual despair, 'Come' (Maurice, p. 178) fetches Alec Scudder to his bed. Maurice's relationship with Alec does not have an elaborate period of courtship as does his affair with Clive, but starts from the physical.

However, Alec only brings to fruition the career on which Maurice had started with Clive. While Clive helps Maurice to break out of the heterosexual mould; Alec helps him to move beyond the accepted paradigms of homosexuality and create a relationship based on personal need. Maurice is aware that the episode with Alec is an extension of and a logical conclusion to his affair with Clive, 'All this tangle, so different from Cambridge, resembled it so far that too late he could trace the entanglement. Risley's room had its counterpart in the wild rose and the evening primroses of yesterday, the side-car dash through the fens foreshadowed his innings at cricket' (Maurice, pp. 190-91). Maurice could not have stopped short of sexual fulfilment and whereas with Clive, 'his spirit educated Maurice's spirit' (Maurice, p. 89) and with Alec it is 'the flesh educating the spirit' (Maurice, p. 139). His contact with Alec produces fresh conflict in Maurice, but he is already past the stage where Clive left him, 'he seemed a bundle of

voices', and 'now he could almost hear them quarrelling inside him. But none of them belonged to Clive: he had got that far' (Maurice, p. 63). The force of physical fulfilment is so strong that for all the guilt and risks involved, Maurice cannot forget Alec, 'all that night his body yearned for Alec's, despite him. he called it lustful, a word easily uttered, and opposed to it his work, his family, his friends, his position in society . . . But his body would not be convinced. Chance had mated them too perfectly. Neither argument nor threat could silence it ' (Maurice, pp. 191-92). Maurice achieves a balance with Alec, a relationship that 'twists sentimentality and lust together into love' (Maurice, p. 203). Maurice had wanted that 'the 'life of the earth' - it ought to be the same as my daily life - the same as society. One ought to be built on the other' (Maurice, p. 200). With Alec, Maurice is able to close the gap between his inner desires and external life.

The Happy Ending

A motif that gave poignancy to the homoerotic narrative, and was frequently employed in the school story, is the death of young men. In Sturgis' novel, Carol pledges his friendship to Tim as he lies dying. Much of the pathos in Farrar's novel derives from the deaths of Vernon, Eric's younger brother Edwin, and of Eric himself. In these novels, death becomes an occasion for eulogizing friendship

as well as a way of ensuring an eternal bond between characters. Forster's narratives are altogether less effusive than the nineteenth century school stories, but the manuscript drafts of Where Angels Fear to Tread and a Room with a View show that he excised long sentimental speeches of his protagonists from the final text. Forster mourns the loss of young men in Gerald's death in The Longest Journey and in Leonard Bast's death in Howards End, but abstains from employing the death motif in Maurice.

Maurice is written in a tone of affirmation, and Forster steers his narrative away from the note of sadness that exists in his other novels. In a letter to Forrest Reid, dated 13 March 1915, Forster says that he wrote Maurice 'to mark his increasing hope for the physical expression of "manly love"'.¹¹ Forster voices this hope in the relationship of Maurice and Alec, but the ending of the novel provoked controversy. Lytton Strachey found the Maurice-Alec affair neither successful nor likely to last for more than six months.¹² The problem of the novel's conclusion dogged Forster to his last years, but he was adamant that the Maurice-Alec relationship should endure. As he confessed to G. L. Dickinson, in a letter dated 13 December 1914,

the temptation's overwhelming to grant one's creations a happiness actual life does not supply. "Why not?" I kept thinking . . . It's a yearning for permanence that leads a novelist into theories towards the end of each book. The only permanence that is not a theory but a fact is death, and perhaps I surfeited myself with that in The Longest

Journey: at all events the disinclination to kill increases.¹³

Forster stood by the friendship of Alec and Maurice again in the 'Terminal Note' appended to the novel in 1960, 'A happy ending was imperative. I shouldn't have bothered to write otherwise. I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows' (Maurice, p. 236).

Forster was aware that Maurice was radical in its positive view of homosexuality, comparable to the achievement of the Greeks and Walt Whitman, and the better for not being couched in philosophy or mysticism. In a letter to Joseph Dent dated 6 March 1915, he ranked his novel even above the works of other pioneer writers on homosexual love, 'I . . . do feel that I have created something absolutely new, even to the Greeks. Whitman nearly anticipated me but he didn't really know what he was after, or only half knew - shirked, even to himself, the statement'.¹⁴ The figure who inspired Maurice, more than the Greeks or Whitman, was Edward Carpenter. It is interesting that, of all of Forster's friends, Carpenter approved of the ending of the novel. His comments, in a letter to Forster on 23 August 1914, contain words of encouragement to the novelist,

I am so glad you end up with a major chord. I was so afraid you were going to let Scudder go at the last - but you saved him and saved the story, because the end though improbable is not impossible and is the one bit of real romance - which those who understand will love'.¹⁵

With Maurice, Forster had at last found a genre appropriate to the theme of homoerotic love and, considering the compromises he had made in his other novels, it is not surprising that he was determined to give his pair of lovers a place in society, albeit at the fringes. He even attempted an epilogue to the novel, where some years later Kitty comes across Alec and Maurice as two woodcutters (Maurice, p. 239), but felt that that would perhaps stretch the verisimilitude of the novel a bit too far. In the final analysis, the credibility of Forster's characters was not so much the author's problem as that of his readers for as Forster himself pointed out, while they quibbled over Alec they did not raise objection against those that succeeded him, 'the prickly gamekeepers of D. H. Lawrence' (Maurice, p. 238).

Homoerotic Love and Social Criticism

Maurice reveals that Forster's critique of society stems from the theme of homoerotic desire, and the two structures that are attacked most vehemently are Christianity and domestic life for their antipathy to male love.

The condemnation of homoerotic desire in Christian doctrines prompted many homosexual writers to alleviate their guilt by withdrawing further into religiosity. Forster was unable to reconcile homosexuality with Christianity and his treatment of the Christian injunctions

is ironic. In Forster an elementary step towards conceding male love involves the renunciation of Christianity. In Maurice, the clergyman Mr Borenius, expresses the incompatibility of Christianity with sexual permissiveness. He tells Maurice that

fornication extends far beyond the actual deed. Were it a deed only, I for one would not hold it anathema. But when the nations went a whoring they invariably ended up by denying God, I think, and until all sexual irregularities and not some of them are penal the Church will never reconquer England (Maurice, p. 222).

Christianity makes a virtue of asceticism and chastity, and those who seek sexual freedom are automatically ostracised by religion. Clive strives to keep his faith but he discovers that his religion makes no concessions to a homosexual temperament. He cannot live up to the values required and is forced 'to throw over Christianity', and the author comments, 'Those who base their conduct upon what they are rather than upon what they ought to be, always must throw it over in the end' (Maurice, p. 62).

Religion is replaced by other beliefs; Clive finds comfort not in the scriptures but the classics, particularly Plato, who endorses homoerotic love. While the Christian believers indulge in their faith, Clive learns abstinence from Plato. When his mother scolds him for not communicating and he retorts, 'I have my own communions. If I went to them as you and the girls are doing to yours my gods would kill me' (Maurice, p. 35). Maurice's initiation is assisted by Clive, along the same path of loss of

religion to reading Plato and thence to a recognition of homosexual love.

The religious and moral rhetoric of Forster's novels is connected with issues of passion and sexual fulfilment. In Where Angels Fear to Tread the emotional barrenness of the Miss Abbott and Mrs Herriton is described as insincerity; in The Longest Journey and A Room with a View the denial of passion is a transgression against truth. Maurice, too, until he gains an insight into his sexual nature, 'had lied. He phrased it "been fed upon lies", but lies are the natural food of boyhood, and he had eaten greedily. . . . He would not deceive himself so much. He would not - and this was the test - pretend to care about women when the only sex that attracted him was his own' (Maurice, p. 53). The fact of homosexuality suddenly blends the extremes of his character, and brings him an equilibrium that religion had failed to provide, 'The idealism and brutality that ran through boyhood had joined at last, and twined into love' (Maurice, p. 54). Thus agnosticism and the influence of Plato are necessary stages in the protagonist's homosexual development.

Domestic life in Forster is associated with the supremacy of women and heterosexual relations and is therefore uncongenial to male passion. Philip Herriton's friendship with Gino entails a rupture with his home and family. Rickie attains maturity when he refuses to obey her as she asks him to wear his greatcoat; symbolically, his mother dies after that incident (LJ, p. 27). Maurice's intimacy with Clive too gives him a perspective on his

family. That he has a friend who means so much to him is a matter of no consequence to his family, and they tend to disregard his relation to another man:

Ada wondered whether it was brother to a certain Miss Durham - not but what she was an only child - while Mrs Hall confused it with a don named Cumberland. Maurice was deeply wounded. One strong feeling arouses another, and a profound irritation against his womenkind set in. His relations with them hitherto had been trivial but stable, but it seemed iniquitous that anyone should mispronounce the name of the man who was more to him than all the world. Home emasculated everything (Maurice, p. 44).

His mother and sisters control Maurice's life and are responsible for his confusion, 'he had yet to realize that they were stronger than he and influenced him incalculably' (Maurice, p. 48). The influence of home smothered Maurice's personality so much that after a three-week vacation, he returns to Cambridge 'thinking and even speaking, like his mother or Ada' (Maurice, p. 48). They resent Maurice's transformation into manhood, 'Kitty asserted her brother was still nothing but a boy, but all these women had a sense of some change in his mouth and eyes and voice since he had faced Dr Barry' (Maurice, p. 76). Domestic life does not accommodate male friendship and Maurice's closeness to Clive leads to an aloofness from his family.

Clive's love for Maurice is equally in defiance of his filial duty, but he blames his deception on the double standards of the family, which allow heterosexual relations but censor love between men. He says to Maurice:

It served my mother right when I slipped up to kiss you before dinner. She would have no mercy if she knew, she wouldn't attempt, wouldn't want to attempt to understand that I feel to you as Pippa to her fiance, only far more nobly, far more deeply, body and soul, no starved medievalism of course, only a - a particular harmony of body and soul that I don't think women have even guessed (Maurice, p. 81).

Homosexual writers often claimed, and Forster restates the argument here, that homosexual love was superior to heterosexual, because unlike a man-woman relationship, relations between men were not driven primarily by sex.

The hypocrisy of social norms is also exposed in the heterosexual code of chivalry. Dr Barry brands Maurice 'a disgrace to chivalry' for his ill-treatment of his mother and sisters, little knowing that Maurice's stance against his family is due to his loyalty for his beloved except that he happens to be another man. Maurice, 'considered the accusation. If a woman had been in that side-car, if then he had refused to stop at the Dean's bidding, would Dr Barry have required an apology of him? Surely not. He followed out this train of thought with difficulty. His brain was still feeble' (Maurice, p. 75).

Forster debunks the popular notion that women hold sway over the finest feelings of men. Maurice, like Forster's other heroes, is not chivalrous towards women because he is motivated by homosexual rather than heterosexual love.

Domestic life does not just stultify male passion, but women actually threaten relations between men. Maurice

exhibits the aversion to women's sexuality and animosity to marriage that exists in all of Forster's novels. In Maurice the hatred of women arises from sexual jealousy. The prospect that Clive might be attracted to his sister Ada drives Maurice mad and he is filled with loathing towards her as he watches her asleep, 'Her bosom rose and fell, her heavy black hair served as a cushion to her face, and between her lips he saw teeth and a scarlet tongue' (Maurice, p. 98). Marriage implies social conformity, and Clive becomes complacent after he is married, 'Clive had become quite the squire. All his grievances against society had passed since his marriage' (Maurice, p. 157). However, passion and personal fulfilment are found not through marriage but friendship, and Clive's relationship to his wife is banal, 'the actual deed of sex seemed to him unimaginative, and best veiled in night. Between men it is inexcusable; between man and woman it may be practised since nature and society approve, but never discussed nor vaunted' (Maurice, p. 151). Yet, for all the limitations of marriage it does offer continuity, and as Maurice realizes, 'With the world as it is, one must marry or decay' (Maurice, p. 156). Their inability to reproduce is the highest penalty Maurice must pay for loving Clive:

An immense sadness - he believed himself beyond such irritants - had risen up in his soul. He and the beloved would vanish utterly - would continue neither in Heaven nor on Earth. They had won past the conventions, but Nature still faced them, saying with even voice, "Very well, you are thus; I blame none of my children. But you must go the

way of all sterility." The thought that he was sterile weighed on the young man with a sudden shame. His mother or Mrs Durham might lack mind or heart, but they had done visible work; they had handed on the torch their sons would tread out (Maurice, pp. 87-8).

But for this one fact in favour of it, Forster's narratives repudiate the efficacy of marriage.

Forster reveals the artificiality of a society organized entirely around marriage. In The Longest Journey Ansell points to Rickie's fallacy in supposing that marriage will give him a sense of purpose, 'he is happy because he has at last hung all the world's beauty onto a single peg. He was always trying to do it. He used to call the peg humanity' (LJ, p. 80). For Mr Ducie the entire universe is designed upon the framework of marriage, 'It all hangs together - all - and God's in his heaven. All's right with the world. Male and Female!' (Maurice, p. 8). But heterosexuality is not as natural or universal as it is assumed to be. Maurice turns out to be a homosexual despite Mr Ducie's lesson, despite Dr Barry's envious teasing him about women, and despite his own masculine appearance. Forster is at pains to emphasize that there is nothing exceptional about Maurice; he is an average sort of person except for his sexual preference. Added to these is the 'episode of Gladys Olcott'. Maurice, even tries to fit his behaviour to social expectations when he tries to make love to Gladys Olcott, but his flirtation has disastrous effects, 'It was not that Miss Olcott objected to having her hand pressed. Others had done it and Maurice could have

done it had he guessed how. But she knew something was wrong. His touch revolted her. It was a corpse's' (Maurice, p. 46). Regardless of his upbringing and his conscious attempts to be otherwise, through no fault of his own, Maurice finds himself attracted to men.

There are no explanations for Maurice's temperament, and the circumstances of his homosexuality are as fortuitous as those of Clive's conversion to heterosexuality,

It humiliated him, for he had understood his soul, or, as he said, himself, ever since he was fifteen. But the body is deeper than the soul and its secrets inscrutable. There had been no warning - just a blind alteration of the life spirit, just an announcement, "You who loved men, will henceforward love women. Understand or not, it's the same to me" (Maurice, p. 108).

But while one predicament is accepted, the other is banned and Maurice is left to himself to work his way out of the tangle. It is in Durham's company that Maurice can reckon honestly, The truth in his own voice made him tremble. "A rotten vac and I never knew it," and wondered how long he should know it. The mist would lower again, he felt sure, and with an unhappy sigh he pulled Durham's head against his knee, as though it was a talisman for clear living' (Maurice, p. 49). The torment he undergoes in clarifying his emotions is intense, 'He stared at the ceiling with wrinkled mouth and eyes, understanding nothing except that man has been created to feel pain and loneliness without help from heaven' (Maurice, p. 49). Maurice's homosexuality

makes him a fugitive in society, 'There was now a complete break between his public and private actions' (Maurice, p. 157). In contrast, he finds understanding and support from people around him when he pretends to them that he is in love with a woman.

Forster constantly highlights the inadequacy of a system that allows one set of relations, but banishes the other. For Maurice, his friendship with Alec has the same status as Clive's marriage has for him. He explains to Clive why their relationship is not good enough,

"You care for me a little bit, I do think," he admitted, "but I can't hang all my life on a little bit. You don't. You hang yours on Anne. You don't worry whether your relation with her is platonic or not, you only know it's big enough to hang a life on. I can't hang mine on to the five minutes you spare me from her and politics. You'll do anything for me except see me" (Maurice, p. 229).

Homosexual love is an absolute for Maurice as marriage is for Clive except that where heterosexual couples can be together, homoerotic desire is condemned to solitude. For Clive and Anne, 'Beautiful conventions received them - while beyond the barrier Maurice wandered, the wrong words on his lips and the wrong desires in his heart, and his arms full of air' (Maurice, p. 152). Therefore Forster satirizes norms and values that reinforce marriage on the one hand, and debase homoerotic love on the other.

Homoerotic love is stigmatized in every part of society and Forster exposes layer after layer of prejudice against love between men. He had commented in Howards End,

'We are evolving, in ways that Science cannot measure, to ends that Theology dares not contemplate' (HE, p. 238). Not only religion, but also science is not objective in the stance on homosexuality. Dr Barry is quite prepared to treat Maurice if he has a venereal disease or is suffering from impotence, but finds the fact of his homosexuality inconceivable. Maurice has been told that his condition needs curing and consults a hypnotist, only to realize that it is a vain hope. While Maurice is perfectly at ease with his homosexuality, it is the others who cannot cope with it, 'for though science despaired of him he despaired less of himself. After all, is not a real Hell better than a manufactured Heaven? He was not sorry that he had eluded the manipulations of Mr Lasker Jones' (Maurice, p. 200). Maurice does not want to change his sexuality, but rather live according to his temperament, which society does not permit.

Forster knew homophobia to be a particularly English middle-class trait and so social criticism in his novels always applies to the inhibitive values of this class. Forster's novels address the class issue only insofar as the author could not conceive of a homosexual relationship within the English middle class society. Therefore, although socio-economic factors affect friendship, Forster does not advocate any coherent theory of social reform and ultimately asserts the autonomy of love. Maurice's story is that of an individual predicament and the hero has no patience for political reform. He tells Anne Woods, 'The poor don't want pity. They only really like me when I've

got the gloves on and am knocking them about'. and 'These slums, syndicalism, all the rest of it, are a public menace, and one has to do one's little bit against them. But not for love' (Maurice, pp. 155-56). Forster's interest in the working classes is homoerotic and he persistently dissociates himself from political and social zeal.

The class differences between Alec and Maurice are denoted by 'the crack in the floor'. Maurice and Alec sleep together but in the morning 'class was calling, the crack in the floor must reopen at sunrise' (Maurice, p. 183). Maurice jumps over the crack under Lasker Jones' hypnosis, but his crossing over is purely symbolical. Maurice identifies totally with Alec when he tells Mr Ducie that his name is Scudder, but again, it is merely a symbolical gesture. Forster recognised that social conditions played a part in determining the fate of his characters for in a letter to Forrest Reid, dated 13 March 1915, he defends his hero, 'The man in my book 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. . . . But blame Society not Maurice, and be thankful even in a novel when a man is left to lead the best life he is capable of leading!'¹⁶ If the society is responsible for turning Maurice into an outlaw, Forster gives no solution as to how society made be changed to encompass homoerotic love. Instead, there is a crushing sense of defeat, 'For if the will can overleap class, civilization as we have made it will go to pieces' (Maurice, p. 191). Therefore the author resorts to escape; both Maurice and Alec forfeit

their jobs and take to the greenwood where, untroubled by class considerations, they can be together.

A Climax of Forsterian Themes

Maurice brings to a climax and conclusion the motifs recurrent in Forster's fiction. The metaphor of journey is conspicuously connected with homoerotic desire as Lasker Jones advises Maurice to go abroad, 'live in some country that has adopted the Code Napoleon . . . France or Italy, for instance. There homosexuality is no longer criminal' (Maurice, p. 196). However, the framework of journey is dropped along with other techniques of displacement and evasion, and for once Forster locates homoerotic desire firmly where it belongs - in England. Clive goes to Greece but his friend does not accompany him,

Maurice had no use for Greece. His interest in the classics had been slight and obscene, and had vanished when he had loved Clive. The stories of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, of Phaedrus, of the Theban Band were well enough for those whose hearts were empty, but no substitute for life (Maurice, p. 100).

As the passage suggests, the expeditions in the earlier novels were in search of homosexual love, and as Maurice has already found friendship with Clive travel to the Continent as well as classical allusions seem unnecessary. Alec too decides not to emigrate and the lovers rejoice in the thought that 'England belonged to them. That, besides

companionship, was their reward' (Maurice, p. 223). It is the novel's triumph that male friendship is not doomed to exile.

Therefore it is not the foreign country in itself, but the vision of homoerotic love that disrupts links with home and domestic life. Maurice, like Philip and Rickie, enjoys a close relationship with his mother. The mother's home contains security and Maurice's gladness to be back home flatters his mother, "There is nothing like home, as everyone finds. Yes, tomatoes -" she liked reciting the names of vegetables. "Tomatoes, radishes, broccoli, onions -." (Maurice, p. 11). Friendship creates alienation from the family and after Maurice discovers his homosexuality, he is compared to 'a warrior who is homeless but stands fully armed' (Maurice, p. 54). Moreover, in Howards End Forster initiates another idea of a home, one that gives succour to friends. The boathouse in Penge is an alternative to the mother's home. Alec misses his boat to Argentina and Maurice knows his lover is waiting for him, 'His journey was nearly over. He was bound for his new home' (Maurice, p. 223). In contrast to stifling domesticity of a conventional home, their new home is situated in the woods, symbolizing freedom and the physical life of outdoors.

Maurice is sparse in homoerotic allusions although there are some references ^{to} the Greeks, Plato, Dante, the Theban Band, Michelangelo and Tchaikovsky, because the impulse is to disclose rather than mystify the theme of homoerotic love. It is apt that Maurice and Clive talk of

Michelangelo and make love in the Blue Room of Clive's house, which has overtones of Symonds, while the consummation of the love of Maurice and Alec happens in the Russet Room, with blood always associated with sexuality in Forster. According to d'Arch Smith, Symonds' In the Key of Blue (1893) was 'the book which achieved widest circulation among the Uranians'. The title essay purports to be an aesthetic exercise but is actually Symonds' account of his journey with a nineteen-year old Venetian, Augusto and of Augusto's beauty against various colours and settings. An anonymous poem, 'Roundel', preceding the review of Symonds' book in the Artist and Journal of Home Culture, February 1983, put homoerotic constructions upon the word blue. Homosexual writers such as Baron Corvo were influenced by Symonds' book.

Together with the coded homoerotic allusions of his previous novels, in Maurice Forster also dispenses with associations with the past. The past in Forster evoked a pastoral, homoerotic world of the classics. In Maurice Forster gives homoerotic love a contemporary urgency and form. Maurice blames Clive for having misguided him 'with that rotten Plato' (Maurice, p. 181), for 'Had he trusted the body there would have been no disaster, but by linking their love to the past he linked it to the present, and roused in his friend's mind the conventions and the fear of the law' (Maurice, p. 64). Clive and Maurice's friendship is overshadowed by the past and therefore cannot last, and it is with Alec who is intellectually unsophisticated that Maurice finds a healthy relationship. Hence when Clive

objects to Maurice's intimacy with Alec because it is not Platonic and Maurice, who has discovered a new way of life, replies, 'You belong to the past' (Maurice, p. 229).

Finally Maurice too incorporates the theme of silence and failure. Maurice is eloquent where Forster's other novels exploit silence. Unlike Forster's other novels that camouflage homoerotic desire and hence emphasize techniques of silence, in Maurice the stress is on 'talk, talk' (Maurice, p. 26). Words are potent in the novel and have an impact. Risley asserts that 'words are deeds' (Maurice, p. 24), and the action, in contrast to Forster's other novels, is mostly internal and occurs through dialogue. In Maurice, Forster uses language to explicate homoerotic desire rather than conceal it. The novel describes scene after scene of homosexual lovemaking as Clive and Maurice express their feelings towards one another tenderly and frankly. In Clive's house, 'It was the first time they had experienced full tranquillity together, and exquisite words would be spoken. They knew this, yet scarcely wanted to begin' (Maurice, p. 80). Clive tells Maurice that he was struck by his beauty to which the latter responds, 'I think you're beautiful, the only beautiful person I've ever seen. I love your voice and everything to do with you, down to your clothes or the room you are sitting in. I adore you' (Maurice, p. 82). Forster explains the necessity for such declarations, 'Those things must be said once, or we should never know they were in each other's hearts' (Maurice, pp. 82-3). Through the statements of Clive and Maurice, Forster creates the space for homoerotic love. Although there is no

precedent for Clive and Maurice to establish a relationship, they rely on their instincts:

And their love scene drew out, having the inestimable gain of a new language. No tradition overawed the boys. No convention settled what was poetic, what absurd. They were concerned with a passion that few English minds have admitted, and so created untrammelled. Something of exquisite beauty arose in the mind of each at last, something unforgettable and eternal, but built of the humblest scraps of speech and from the simplest emotions (Maurice, pp. 83-4).

When Clive leaves, Maurice does not enjoy conversation any more, 'An immense silence, as of death, encircled the young man' (Maurice, p. 125). Maurice meets Alec in the British Museum and for all the threat in the latter's words, 'Maurice found himself trying to get underneath the words' (Maurice, p. 206). Language is used in Maurice to the advantage of homoerotic desire, and love scenes are neither mediated nor involve a third person, but are presented directly. As the novel demonstrates, the criticisms of Forster being prudish are not valid except that in his narratives sexual intimacy pertains to homosexual rather than heterosexual relations.

From the homosexual angle, the meanings of success and failure are reversed. Maurice's mother and sisters live an uneventful life of the English middle classes, 'It was a land of facilities, where nothing had to be striven for, and success was indistinguishable from failure' (Maurice, p. 10). Maurice himself would have slipped into this

lifestyle, 'Maurice was stepping into the niche that England had prepared for him', (Maurice, p. 47), but his homosexuality saves him from mediocrity, 'Pain had shown him a niche behind the world's judgements, whither he could withdraw', (Maurice, p. 54). He learns to despise 'the middle-middle classes, whose highest desire seemed shelter . . . shelter everywhere and always, until the existence of earth and sky is forgotten, shelter from poverty and disease and violence and impoliteness; and consequently from joy; God slipped this retribution in' (Maurice, p. 203). For Maurice, as indeed for Forster himself, their homosexuality is a source of their unique insights, and their failure in worldly terms is a measure of their success as individuals.

Forster recorded in his diary for 8 April 1922:

Have at this moment burnt my indecent writings or as many as the fire will take. Not a moral repentance, but the belief that they clogged me artistically. They were written not to express myself but to excite myself, and when first - 15 years back? - I began them, I had a feeling I was doing something positively dangerous to my career as a novelist. I am not ashamed of them. . . . It is just that they were a wrong channel for my pen.¹⁷

With Maurice, Forster's literary career comes round full circle, ending as he began, by writing explicitly homosexual narratives. Ironically, when Forster started as a novelist he believed that his sexuality clogged him because his creative powers dried up the harder he tried to harness his sexual energies. Forster was to revise his

opinion about his writings over the years and wrote a postscript to an entry of thirty years before, 'adding when I am almost 85 how annoyed I am with Society for wasting my time by making homosexuality criminal. The subterfuges, the self-consciousness that might have been avoided.¹⁸ Of Maurice, he said to Siegfried Sassoon, in a letter dated 11 October 1920, 'Nothing is more obdurate to artistic treatment than the carnal, but it has got to be got in I'm sure: everything has got to be got in'.¹⁹ Maurice is a result of the need to be inclusive and as Donald Salter has argued Maurice does strike a balance between pornography and sentimentality.²⁰ Maurice completes the development of homoerotic desire in Forster's fiction for the novel divulges the secrets that the other novels hold. In his letter to Forrest Reid of 13 March 1915, Forster stated, 'My defence at any Last Judgement would be "I was trying to connect up and use all the fragments I was born with"'.²¹ Forster's novels have been variously judged as fractured. Maurice fills in some of the gaps and surely all the novels together form a coherent whole.

Conclusion

Maurice illuminates the themes of Forster's other novels and spans the area between his novels and short stories. The general philosophical tones of Forster's novels give way to the celebration of momentary pleasures of homosexual love and the two strains merge in Maurice.

What is remarkable is the diversity of the novels Forster wrote essentially in order to represent the single theme of homoerotic love.

1. P. N. Furbank, 'Introduction', Maurice, pp. v-ix.
2. E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume One, pp. 255-56.
3. 'Introduction', Maurice, p. v.
4. See Isabel Quigly, The Heirs of Tom Brown: The English School Story (1982; rpt. Oxford: OUP, 1984).
5. The review originally appeared in London Mercury, Vol 32 (May 1935), pp. 42-7, which was later published as 'Howard Overing Sturgis', in Abinger Harvest.
6. D'Arch Smith, Love in Earnest, p. 157, 35n.
7. Abinger Harvest, p. 4.
8. The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry (London, 1920), p. 237.
9. E. M. Forster (New York, 1983), p. 150.
10. 'Edward Carpenter and the Double Structure of Maurice', Journal of Homosexuality, VIII, (Spring-Summer 1983), pp. 35-46, p. 35.
11. Cited by Elizabeth Heine, 'Editor's Introduction', The Longest Journey, p. xxiv.
12. Cited by P. N. Furbank, E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume Two, p. 15.
13. Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, Volume One, 216.
14. Ibid., p. 222.
15. Cited in E. M. Forster: The Critical Heritage, p. 428.
16. Cited by Furbank, E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume 2, p. 14.
17. Quoted by Oliver Stallybrass, 'Introduction', The Life to Come and Other Stories, p. xii.
18. Quoted by Elizabeth Heine, 'Editor's Introduction', Arctic Summer and Other Fiction, p. xxx.
19. Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, Volume One, p. 316.
20. 'That is My Ticket'.
21. Cited by Furbank, E. M. Forster: A Life, Volume 2, p. 14.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this thesis Forster's novels have been interpreted as homosexual texts. Homoerotic desire is allied to the theme of friendship which, in turn, is connected with the metaphor of journey. The preceding chapters trace the evolution of the theme of friendship through each of Forster's novels.

As has been argued in the preceding chapters, homoerotic desire pervades Forster's writing, affecting the structure and technique of his narratives. Forster's fiction illustrates the author's struggle to find an appropriate form for the theme of male love, and in each novel homoerotic desire is approached from a different perspective.

Forster experimented with a diversity of genres and methods ranging from the domestic comedy in Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View, the Bildungsroman in The Longest Journey, the Condition-of-England novel in Howards End, a political and metaphysical text in A Passage to India, and finally a directly homosexual novel in Maurice. Forster's development as a novelist relates to the sophistication with which he was able to incorporate homoerotic desire in his narratives.

Focussing on homoerotic desire has significant implications for Forster's texts. It emerges that his novels are a product of the tension between the overt structure and the secret desire for homoerotic love. In each novel Forster sought to integrate the two aspects of his texts more completely, with very different consequences. The homoerotic theme is fairly distinct in Where Angels Fear to Tread and the ideal of male love is associated with Italy. The narrative in The Longest Journey revolves around the desire for a brother, but the theme of brotherhood prove to be too close to the homoerotic feeling in the novel for the author to express it freely; therefore, The Longest Journey, more than Forster's any other novel is written in a fantasy mode. A Room with a View works towards the marriage of George and Lucy, yet the novel's endorsement of marriage is qualified, and the female protagonist actually mediates the sexual development of Forster's hero. Howards End indicates Forster's attempt to write an entirely heterosexual novel. He uses the two sisters as a vehicle and narrative displaces the theme of personal relations on to a socio-economic context. However, neither the device of the two sisters nor the concern with social issues works in the novel, and the narrative is obstructed at every stage by homoerotic love. After the difficulties raised by Howards End Forster realized that he could not suppress homoerotic desire, and so, on the one hand he projects it entirely on to a vast metaphysical and universal dimension of A Passage to India, and on the other

hand expresses it directly at an individual level in Maurice.

Although some of Forster's criticism has taken account of homoerotic desire in his fiction, most of the interpretations focus on Maurice or the shorter fiction. Homoerotic desire has not been systematically followed through each of Forster's novels. This thesis highlights the similarities and the differences between each of Forster's novels and reveals that all the minor themes - the antithesis between love and truth, reality and imagination, prose and poetry, silence and failure - contribute to the theme of male love. Forster's attitude to marriage and women characters is also relevant to homoerotic desire in his texts.

The contradictions between structure and content, and language and feeling in Forster's novels still remain unresolved, but for very different reasons. Forster's novels need to be assessed in terms of his ability as a homosexual writer rather than in terms of an inadequate and prudish heterosexual writer. This thesis offers a basic but thorough exposition of homoerotic desire in Forster's novels, and it is hoped that more sophisticated criticism will follow from this fundamental premise that Forster's novels are homosexual texts.

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