The Clash of Gayness: Depictions of Homosexuality in *Maurice* and *The Swimming-Pool Library*

Master’s Diploma Thesis

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2017
I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Author’s signature
To everyone who kept me sane throughout this whole enterprise.
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Introduction

Queer literature, that is literature which deals with LGBT issues, has recently seen a great surge in publication, and, as a result, there has also been an increase in scholarly attention this type of literature receives. This, in turn, has caused an influx of research into various historical testimonies, socio-cultural probes into the practices of gay communities, and means gay people used to bend the rules. The aim of the present thesis is to examine various themes and gay dynamics as represented in the period of the “repressed”, pre-Stonewall gay literature in England, specifically a novel from the 1910s, and to compare them with a more contemporary piece from the 1980s. Another aim is to learn how are the preceding generations reflected in more modern writing.

The novel selected from the earlier period is E. M. Forster’s Maurice. The reason for this is because, as Fone puts it, it is “the first modern homosexual novel, heir to those who tried to make society think about homosexuality (175) and “the British herald of the homoerotic texts of the twentieth century” (169). It is also exceptional in the way that its story does not end tragically. In his ‘Terminal Note’ Forster writes that “[a] happy ending was imperative. I shouldn’t have bothered to write otherwise” (Forster 218); even though, still in 1960 Forster did not believe that Maurice would ever be successful because of this decision when he claimed that “If it ended unhappily, with a lad dangling from a noose or with a suicide pact, all would be well, for there is no pornography or seduction of minors. But the lovers get away unpunished and consequently recommend crime” (qtd. in Robb 209-10). It is, therefore, the first novel that breaks from the tradition and forecasts a new current in writing about homosexuality that “predicts in every way what the best homoerotic novels of the twentieth century written before Stonewall would ultimately achieve” (Fone 175).
The second, later novel is *The Swimming-Pool Library* by Alan Hollinghurst. He follows the traditions set by Forster and combines them with other influences such as Oscar Wilde or Ronald Firbank. This is important for the thesis in two ways: firstly, it ensures that the earlier dynamics are commented on in the later work and, secondly, it allows for easier tracing of the homosexual literary continuum. Given the scope of the thesis, it is not possible to cover larger amounts of texts or greater time-spans; such an undertaking would require years of research and would be, therefore, more suitable for a dissertation. Thus, the interest of the present thesis lies mostly in finding out the correlations between similar works and seeing whether it is possible to subsume the conclusions into a more general discourse of queer literary theory.

As far as the structure of the paper is concerned, the thesis is divided into two main parts. In the first part, it provides some basic information as to the practices of gay culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries including terms such as “cruising”, “a quean”, or “a trade”, explains how places and gestures were important for homosexuals, and familiarise the reader with gay life in Victorian and Edwardian periods in general. The second part is devoted to analyses of *Maurice* and *The Swimming-Pool Library*, as well as to a comparison of the topics that are prevalent in both novels, and it finishes with a conclusion, which summarises and explains the findings. More details on the structure of the individual chapters are present at each chapter.

The present thesis uses various literary theories, predominantly it draws on Queer Theory and New Historicism, of course, as various aspects of homosexual motifs

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1 More on the connection between Hollinghurst, Forster, Firbank, and Wilde can be found, for example, in Mark Mathuray’s book *Sex and Sensibility in the Novels of Alan Hollinghurst*, chapter “A Conflicted Inheritance: The Opposing Styles of Wilde, Forster and Firbank in *The Swimming-Pool Library*” by Emily Horton.
in literature are examined through historical lenses. Sedgwick, Houlbrook, Cook, and Robb appear throughout the thesis as the main influences for this work. Marxism and Postcolonialism are also present, as the thesis deals with themes such as class, equality, and (very minimally) race, although the use for these two approaches is very limited.

It is also important to note that this thesis focuses almost exclusively on males. Although there are literary pieces that focus on lesbian love, the purpose of this thesis is limited to finding the correlations in strictly male homosexual narratives.
Part One

The purpose of this section of the thesis is to establish various gay dynamics using sources that deal with late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain. This theoretical, socio-cultural background will help the reader to understand various implications of the themes and motifs in Part Two.

Chapter I – Homosexual Britain

This chapter is divided into several subchapters that follow several topics important for the gay community in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is important to note that the term “community” does not denote any organised whole and in this historical context will rather signify gay men in general\(^2\). The first subchapter deals with cruising practices. It explains what it was and what strategies were used while meeting other gay men. The topic of class and equality is very closely connected to cruising and is, therefore, discussed in the second subchapter, followed by various stereotypes of gay men, since they are all greatly influenced by social status. Distinction between public and private, which is something also very heavily influenced by cruising, is discussed in the fourth subchapter. The fifth part is devoted to the police and punishments for homosexuality. There is the issue of treatment and doctors and their attitudes towards homosexuals in subchapter six, and religion in the seventh section.

The thesis also discusses homosocial environments and their impact on homosexual men, and, finally, finishes with the description and implications of clothing.

\(^2\) Cook, for instance mentions the difference in perception of “the community”: while some enjoyed various social circles, others “remained unaware of the strong community bonds which Wilde, Ives and Ashbee felt in different ways. Though there was a significant overlap and a shared knowledge of London, each of these men had his own map of the city and his own way of understanding his desires there” \((London 41)\). Thus, men could share very firm social circles and bonds, however, they were, eventually, alone.
I. I. – Cruising practices

For gay people of Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was virtually no possibility of meeting each other unless one braved into public places and entered “the disreputable public realm” (Houlbrook 210). Therefore, men interested in sex with other men or forming relationships did not have any other choice than to visit urinals, parks, baths, hotels, museums, train stations, bars, clubs, and theatres which became places known as “cruising grounds” and included, for example, West End, Piccadilly, Soho, Charing Cross, Bayswater Road, and Praed Street (48). The term cruising “derives from a Dutch word, and designates the areas where men would find each other . . .” (Betsky 59). Furthermore, cruising includes using various signals and phrases “transforming requests for a light, directions, or the time into recognized approaches designed to ascertain whether another man were interested” (Houlbrook 47). According to Robb, however, “non-verbal argot was far more important than a set of code words” and “slightly prolonged eye contact, a flick of the tongue, a particular way of smoking a cigarette or offering a light, a style of dress” (150-51) would be the more important markers. This is further confirmed by a sociologist Michael Schofield, who interviewed over a hundred homosexual men. When asked about the identification of other homosexuals, 62 men mentioned eye-contact, for 36 of them it was gestures that betrayed the sexuality of the other men, 28 men said it was intuition, 25 looked at the way other people walked, 14 answered clothes, and for only 8 homosexuals it was the way others were talking (qtd. in Houlbrook 46).

Cruising was extremely popular as it was “a great game, a thrill-seeking flirtation with public urban culture” (Houlbrook 210). Let us, therefore, examine some of the places in which cruising was possible. Firstly, it was the lavatories and urinals. These notoriously known not only homosexuals, but also the police, whose records
speak of the popularity of such places – from 1917 to 1922, “[b]etween 90 and 95 percent of the incidents resulting in proceedings for sexual offences in London’s lower courts arose in urinals, parks, or streets. Urinals accounted for between 55 and 70 percent of the total” (Houlbrook 24). Approaches in urinals were not uncommon and, therefore, there were “strict injunctions” that helped the police (and also men who did not want to participate in any other activity but urinating) to detect homosexuals:

“1. Do not urinate too often. 2. Do not stand next to anyone when there are other stalls free. 3. Do not talk to anyone. 4. Do not look or smile at anyone. 5. Do not undo your fly or have your penis on display more than is necessary” (Houlbrook 60). From these instructions, it is possible to discern the practices that were used by homosexuals: they would frequent a single urinal multiple times, they would try to get as close as possible to the man they were interested in and would use one of the code phrases. There would be some eye contact and friendly smile, and, lastly, showing one’s penis (and the brave would display its erect state). Moreover, “men deployed tactics that allowed them to meet and forge transient moments of privacy” such as “reverse surveillance”, which mean that men at a urinal would keep constantly looking through holes for any sign of trouble coming at them (Houlbrook 49) or a strategy recounted by Michael S.:

“The police . . . used to come and look underneath the doors . . . if there were four feet . . . they’d bash it down . . . This man . . . always took two carrier bags . . . he told his partner to stand with his feet in the . . . bags . . . when the police looked all they saw were two feet and two carrier bags” (Houlbrook 50).

If men wanted more privacy, it was possible to take the person they met at urinals, in parks, or in the street to a hotel. To assure respectability of the place, the staff “focused overwhelmingly on excluding unmarried heterosexual couples” (Houlbrook 122), which allowed homosexuals to rent rooms without much suspicion. There was
less surveillance in hotels, and managers of cheaper hotels, who were not bothered by respectability of their establishments “often knowingly let rooms for the night—or even for the hour—to unmarried couples or prostitutes and their clients” (Houlbrook 122-23). Therefore, hotels became very safe places with almost no surveillance whatsoever as the police would have to receive an official complaint to start an investigation, and owners of such establishments were always looking forward to securing some extra income. However, there was a danger that did not come from the police or the owners but from the homosexuals themselves. As Cook reports on Robert Machray’s account of the situation “‘the worst and most devilish features of the night side of London’ could be found ‘lurking near the entrances of the great hotels of London . . .’” (London 28). This danger was nothing else but men that would not hesitate to blackmail and extort those who would succumb to them.

Another popular place for cruising was bathhouses. They were “usually much safer than brothels” (Robb 158) and “an unexpected by-product of the Victorian obsession with the health, purity, and cleanliness of the male body” (Houlbrook 95). It was a place where the male body was put on display and where being naked was a natural part of it. Therefore, they coalesced into “the site of remarkably open sexual advances” (Houlbrook 98). As Houlbrook also records, a London County Council inspector “was approached twice in the vapor room. One man ‘expos[ed] and strok[ed] his person.’ Another ‘partially clothed . . . beckoned . . . with his finger, exposed his person and made suggestive gestures’” (98). Men were more likely to find a companion to have sex with as “the normal situation was reversed [in the bathhouse]: it would have taken more ingenuity to avoid a homosexual encounter” (Robb 158).

The last cruising place to be discussed is train stations. As Cook suggests “[t]he stations and trains . . . were relatively new urban spaces” as “[t]he constructions of the
railways, chiefly in the years between 1837 and 1876, caused massive disruption in London . . .” (London 1). These newly established, liminal places “promised new erotic experiences (2) and “[t]he opportunities provided . . . could be taken up casually by men not initiated into a subculture” (26). Therefore, these places could be used by people uninitiated into the local gay culture, and for gay men from the neighbourhood, they offered a possibility to meet fresh faces.

I. II. – Class and Equality

Homosexuality was very problematic for the Victorian England, whose clear-cut class distinctions were fundamental to the structuring of the society, since it was subverting the seemingly pure system as Cook suggests: “cross-class transgression was a key component of homosexual scandal . . . in the 1880s and 1890s and working-class soldiers and telegraph boys featured with middle- and upper-class men in a number of cases during the period” (London 38). Such interferences were not regarded appropriate because it endangered the distribution of power in certain areas as “‘rough lads’ and uniformed men were reported ‘ministering’ to higher class men in West End” (38). However, this seems not to happen vice versa, as higher-class men “preferred to pick up their working-class partners in the less threatening and more convenient West End” (38). Moreover, this blurring of class boundaries was facilitated even further by homosexuals, who were often “discarding middle-class styles of dress . . . and disrupting the visual cues of class” (Houlbrook 210). As one of the American doctors, Dr Monroe, noted in 1899, the homosexual intercourse was “practiced to a greater extent among the low and degraded than . . . among the better class” (Fone 186). This observation in American society also seems to be resonant among the Victorians in Britain as “The Street Offences Committee anxiously asked whether ‘did his dress or
manner not indicate . . . what his class was?” (Houlbrook 210). This particular example is taken from a case where two higher-class citizens meet to have sex and are arrested. The committee was stupefied by the possibility that something sexual could have happened between two proper Englishmen. Yet, such lack of knowledge does not seem to affect everybody. For a London magistrate Hesney Wedgwood “sodomy was not a crime confined to the poor and degraded. Indeed, it had a particular status among the upper classes because it was impossible to detect when committed in the privacy which these social groups could afford” (Cocks 118).

There seemed to be a great deal of attraction of middle- and upper-class men towards the working class. Houlbrook claims that there was a certain degree of “an experienced sense of bourgeois self-loathing” and that “the working-class body, by dint of its very physicality, approached some kind of ‘reality’ from which middle-class masculinities had become distanced” (211). In other words, although the aesthetics and wealth, which the higher classes are enveloped by, generate pleasure, they, at the same time, strip them of their masculinity, and, as a result, these higher-class men compensate by having sexual intercourse with someone who is more down to earth. This “generated a powerful sexual charge . . . class difference actuated that desire, eroticized in almost gendered terms” (211). This can be seen in an example Houlbrook further provides, as Stephen Spender comments on Tony Hyndman, an ex-guardsman: “The difference of class . . . between [us] . . . provide[d] some element of mystery, which corresponded to a difference of sex. I was in love . . . with his background, his soldiering, his working-class home” (211). The working-class men were, however, as equally adored as they were loathed. Robb, for instance, claims that “[c]lass differences—like religion and race—were overridden rather than abolished by desire. ‘Equality’ could become desperately tedious” (169). When the fascination with the working-class men started to
dissolve, the socially superior realised how blunt the workers were, as Ackerley bitterly says: “How irritating and unsatisfactory . . . with their irrationalities and superstitions and opinionatedness and stubbornness . . . and laziness and selfishness”; they were “ignorant people who think they know everything” (Houlbrook 212).

I. III. – Stereotypes

The conceptualisation of homosexuality in Victorian society was operating on several stereotypes that were very prominent and appeared on all levels—in the public, in front of the law, at police stations, and at cruising grounds. Sedgwick recognises three categories “[w]ith respect to homosocial/homosexual style” (172). These are: 1) aristocratic men and small groups of their friends and dependents, 2) educated middle-class men, and 3) the working class. (172-74). This would be, however, an incomplete list, because in the categories themselves, there seemed to be some variations. For instance, Houlbrook divides the working class into two stereotypes: one of them is “a quean” or “a pansy” stereotype (7), the other being “a working-class rough” (7). Furthermore, he distinguishes a stereotype of “respectable homosexual” (67), who is “at the intersection of class, masculinity, sexuality, and place” (197) and “unstable and problematic” (209). Therefore, Sedgwick’s classification does not suffice, and the creation of a representable list of stereotypes draws on multiple sources.

Firstly, the socially highest stereotype, the aristocrat, is discussed. Depicted as wealthy and high on the social ladder, this stereotype revolves around a person who possesses enough money to create a private space and, therefore, avoid prosecution, is bohemian in nature and exhibits dandy features. In Sedgwick’s words, they “constituted

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3 A note on spelling: As Houlbrook writes in the notes, both spellings (“queen” and “quean”) “were used interchangeably in the first half of the twentieth century” (277); his decision to use the latter form is based on consultation of Eric Patridge’s dictionary. For the sake of consistency, the present thesis will also use this form.
a genuine subculture, facilitated in the face of an ideologically hostile dominant culture by money, privilege, internationalism, and, for the most part, the ability to command secrecy” (173). At the same time, the aristocrat was very closely associated with homosexuality as “[i]t was the wealthy who appeared to create the norms of homosexual behaviour . . .” and gays “mimicked the affected manners of the aristocracy, and in the 1890s it was fashion and extravagance, the high life of the capital, that came to be associated with London’s culture of homosexuality” (Cook, London 38-9). Sedgwick puts the link between aristocracy and homosexuality as soon as 1865 (172). Furthermore, this stereotype became a prototype for a bachelor. There even was “a weekly male ‘lifestyle’ magazine . . . [that] gave tips on proper behaviour for the single male” and “[b]achelors living in city centre flats featured frequently in court cases involving homosexual activity” (Cook, London 31). This alone, of course, does not necessarily imply that bachelorhood was immediately associated with aristocracy, as there were “thousands of single men c[oming] to London from provincial Britain” (Houlbrook 112), yet “[t]he single bohemian and dandy similarly attracted suspicion” and, according to Alan Crawford, it was “a normal part of Victorian respectability . . . [that an upper-middle and upper-class man] have had rooms and habits of life that were separate from, and not to be questioned by, his household and family” (qtd. in Cook, London 31). This correlation between the right of an aristocrat to have a lodging of his own with no connection whatsoever to his family and the image of a solitary bachelor is striking.

Secondly, there are the middle-class homosexuals. To this particular layer of the populace, the stereotype of the respectable homosexual can be ascribed, since it rose from “medical discourse and middle-class men’s engagement with queer urban culture [which] evinced complex cultural antagonisms that articulated a respectable
‘homosexual’ identity” (Houlbrook 197). The respectable homosexual stereotype inherently incorporates a double-life or double-identity quality. Their everyday, (re)presentable face and the other one that would allow them to move in the social underground of cruising. As a result, “the rigid compartmentalization of the ‘double life’ [which] was integral to protecting one’s person and livelihood . . . could often leave men isolated” (Houlbrook 209). The respectable homosexual was probably the only gay stereotype that the Victorian society could possibly tolerate as Houlbrook illustrates on a case of one such respectable homosexual: “While Champain was convicted, the length of his sentence was reduced—‘having regard to [his] excellent character’” (208). Champain had “his Oxford education, his cricket and rugby awards, his participation in the Gentlemen versus Players match, his public school employment, and his wartime commission” (209). All this “rendered him unequivocally respectable, masculine and controlled—precisely the sort of man who would not be importuning” and, eventually, after an appeal his “sentence was quashed, his good character affirmed, and his costs awarded” (209).

Finally, there are two stereotypes to be discussed that belonged to working class. The first one is the quean or pansy stereotype. It was an extremely gendered stereotype which deviated “from normative masculinities”, and it did not necessarily imply a homosexual but one’s “gendered character” (Houlbrook 143). Queans were effeminate, they occasionally were wearing make-up, cross-dressed⁴, and were “rather womanish in habits” (143). This stereotype was, of course, the one that was the most noticeable in the crowd and also attracted a lot of attention. However, as Robb suggests, “[a]s long as the ‘disgraceful’ behaviour was seen as part of an act—as it was in the theatrical setting of a courtroom and even in the street—it could be accepted and

⁴ A practice when a person is wearing clothes traditionally associated with the opposite sex.
applauded. But if it seemed to be claiming a place in ‘real life’, it was once again a threat” (100-1). The last remaining stereotype is the working-class rough. If there was a possibility for queans not to be homosexuals, roughs were not “anything other than ‘normal’” (Houlbrook 169). They were men who had sex with other men, yet “[b]efore they married . . . [they] entered into diverse relationships with other men, often while they had steady girlfriends” (171). Men like this were also “labelled ‘renters,’ to be had or, most commonly, ‘trade’” which “conceptualized workingmen’s participation in homosex in a particular way” (169-70). This particular way generally meant that “[i]n oral and anal sex, [working-class] men were often unwilling to be sexually passive—to ‘take it’—since that would require submission to another man”; this would be “interpreted as effeminizing” and one would “risk being labelled ‘girlish’ or ‘queer’” (172). Roughs would very rarely commit themselves to the receptive part of the sexual intercourse as it would be degrading and threatening to their status of heterosexuals.

I. IV. – The Public/Private Distinction

Homosexuality did not only cause problems in terms of class but also influenced the form of social lives as “[t]he orderly conceptual division between public and private . . . was compromised by places which seemed to fall between the two . . . and by behaviour deemed inappropriate to either realm” (Cook, London 41). Bathhouses and hotels became places where the distinction between what is private and what is public was extremely difficult. Men “temporarily found the security to have sex” in locked hotel rooms as they knew “that they were outside police surveillance” (Houlbrook 122) and, similarly, bathhouses were “a commercial space in which men felt safe enough to have sex relatively openly—a public space which was, in effect, private” (94). As Houlbrook further claims: “Most sexual encounters took place in the cubicles
themselves, creating a distinctive microgeography predicated upon the movement between public and private space” (99). Hotels and baths became microspaces, which filled the vast void of the public. Moreover, the practices of homosexuals “repeatedly reconfigured the putative boundaries between public and private” (Houlbrook 65), and, therefore, the public spaces such as train stations, urinals and lavatories, bars and restaurants, cinemas, and theatres were also transformed into microregions of privacy.

The private sector was also very scrupulously examined as far as homosexuality was concerned. Particular décor and the way one occupied one’s home could also betray one’s sexuality. There was an inclination of the Victorians towards what they deemed proper housing: “Through the French windows travellers outside in the omnibus can catch a rapid sight of statuettes, a neat white bookcase well filled with bright volumes, a few pieces of choice French furniture—nothing approaching the palatial; but neat, tasteful and orderly, like the house of any English gentleman” (Cook, London 57). Anything that did not fit these standards was deemed suspicious and unrespectable, if not homosexual forthwith. Therefore, there were reports on “hideous cesspool of wickedness and foulness”, “a horrible den of vice”, “a hideous place”, “a den of infamy” and an “abominable institution” all of which were characterised by “darkened, perfumed rooms”, “windows . . . covered with stained art muslin and dark curtains and lace curtains”, rooms “furnished sumptuously” and “lighted by different coloured lamps and candles” (Cook, London 56). When at court, these things would be constantly evoked as it happened in the case of Oscar Wilde (56). Therefore, one could have their home used against them as a testament of one’s homosexuality. However, the private was still generally regarded as the ultimate protection against the law and an escape from the constant surveillance as “[t]he sanctity of the Englishman’s ‘castle’ was legally defined” (Houlbrook 110), although, there were cases in which men were
arrested for having homosexual intercourse in their home. It is true that law could not
reach private houses, but that changed in 1950s as the homosexual homes became
“a potent challenge to normative domesticity: an attack on marriage, a barrier to
demographic stability, and a threat to the nation’s youth” (110). Although the houses of
respectable and proper Victorians remained untouched by the law and, indeed, could not
be touched by it as it “concealed ‘knowledge of the knowledge’ [of sex]” and
“prevented a more general investigation and public discourse which would have had
disturbing consequences for class privileges and social boundaries” (Cocks 4),
homosexual homes were an exception as “male persons living together do not constitute
domestic life” (Houlbrook 110). In this respect, men living with other men were
regarded as second-rate citizens and a vice that needed to be eradicated. Furthermore, as
mentioned in I. III., single men were deemed suspicious as well.

I. V. – The Police

This subchapter focuses on the policing practices and prosecution of
homosexuals. The police were able to “ma[k]e ho
mosexuals visible and knowable in way which invariably preserved a sense of cultural
distance” (Houlbrook 27). The distance that is here spoken of refers to the tradition of
plainclothesmen and officers, who draw upon “a well-practices knowledge of queer
bodies and spaces to temporarily enter that world” (27) and “their experience produced
a detailed cognitive map” (23). The police, thus, became an official organisation that
knew very well the practices of homosexuals and crystallised into the main enemy of
the Victorian gays. Although “the molly-house persecutions [were] pogromlike in
nature” and places favoured by homosexuals as cruising grounds were under heavy
surveillance and frequented by plainclothesmen and agents provocateurs, so that
“a distinctly homosexual man not know whether or not to expect to be an object of legalized violence” (Sedgwick 88), there was another “subtler, answering strategy” (88). This strategy was supposed to secure that “[n]ot only must homosexual men be unable to ascertain whether they are to be the objects of ‘random’ homophobic violence, but no man must be able to ascertain that he is not (that his bonds are not) homosexual” (88-9). In other words, this approach was supposed to ensure that men, no matter their sexuality, would be extremely careful about their bonds with other men as to not being labelled homosexual. This plan seemed to work as plainclothesmen and agents provocateurs had to prove that they were not homosexuals at the court: “a successful prosecution rested upon officers’ ability to reestablish the proper demarcations between police and policed” (Houlbrook 27). Their identities blurred in the environment where anonymity thrived. This was considered a serious threat to a policeman as his “immersion in queer life was thus a particularly resonant embodiment of wider anxieties . . . destroying their identities as men” (30). Moreover, there were cases of “apparent fabrication of evidence” (27).

Homosexuals were sentenced for acts of sodomy, unnatural or unmentionable crime. It “was defined by its very unthinkability, as an ‘offence so unnatural as even to appear incredible’” (Cocks 79). According to Weeks, this is because “[w]e are preoccupied with whom we have sex, the ancients [Greeks] with the question of excess or over-indulgence” and the Europe of the nineteenth century was “obsessively concerned whether a person is normal or abnormal” (29). Even reports and newspapers were extremely ambiguous. The press “was found it increasingly necessary to pursue this form of transparency by recording . . . proceedings in great detail. Yet at the same time, editors were morally obliged not to corrupt public morals . . . and tried to cover all traces of its existence with circumlocution and evasion” (Cocks 78). Newspaper readers,
therefore, “often had to gather clues from details of place and appearance in order to
discern the crime” and “[s]ometimes references were even more oblique and the reader
was left guessing what was at issue” (Cook, *London* 62). Such ambiguity and obscurity
was also evoked at court with “euphemistic question[s] and answer[s], which . . . shed
no real light on what had happened” (63).

I. VI. – Doctors and Treatment

This subchapter briefly deals with practices and attitudes of doctors towards
homosexuality as well as their devotion and, indeed, the devotion of homosexuals
themselves, to find a cure for their condition. Firstly, there seems to be an
overwhelming tendency, a craze even, to find the origin of homosexuality. As Robb
suggests, no matter what the theory is “the essential idea is that they [homosexuals]
must have come from somewhere” (7). Be it religious zealots who want to point out the
evil and wickedness in homosexuality, doctors and scientists who want to find the
genetic materials that predisposes one to homosexuality, or gay-rights activists who
want to show that there is no reason to fear different sexualities, people have been
trying to pursue the origin of homosexuality since the beginning.

The examinations of doctors in the nineteenth century were “ludicrously ill-
informed or simply hostile”, but they were useful in the sense that there were
“[u]nprecedented amounts of information were gathered on the lives of gay men and
women who would otherwise have vanished altogether” (41). However, the doctors
were guided by prejudice and there were almost no materials on the topic whatsoever as
“[e]ven the hastiest modern gay historian has read far more medical literature on the
subject that almost any Victorian doctor” (41). Even in the early twentieth century,
“little work had been done in Britain on homosexuality” as “medical men . . . with
almost unanimous consent, have agreed to ignore the study of sexual science” (Cook,
London 76). Robb argues that this “reluctance . . . has more to do with prudery” (53).
When the materials started to circulate, it was extremely difficult to obtain them. Books
for general publication were destroyed or banned, the “‘particularly revolting portions’
were in Latin”, and even for the elite of sexologists “sexological texts and related
literature could be difficult to get hold of” (Cook, London 76-7) as libraries were
“deliberately restricting access to sexological material and especially to those texts
which attempted to legitimise homosexuality” (78). When writing about homosexuality
in the nineteenth century, “most medical writers still proclaimed their disgust, if only to
create the rhetorical conditions in which the untouchable subject could be discussed”
(Robb 50). It is also interesting to note that the metaphor of disease for homosexuality
had existed long before the nineteenth century and the various symptoms it was
associated with were “a warning from Nature that she did not after all tolerate sexual
deviance” (51). The coming of the AIDS crisis and “[t]he notion that AIDS was
a special punishment for gay people was just the latest version of an ancient idea” (51).

A cure for homosexuality was being sought by both doctors as well as gays. The
most common one was inspired by “the idea that a bridge could be built between
abnormality and normality”; therefore, “a man who was attracted to boys could be
encouraged to fall in love with boyish woman” (Robb 73) or “doctors advised men to
marry” (Houlbrook 202). It was based on an assumption that “heterosexuality would
naturally reassert itself like a stream that had been dammed or diverted” (Robb 74).
There was also “a brothel therapy” which was “one of the commonest self-applied
remedies” (75), but there were also attempts at hypnosis, which was very popular and
even Krafft-Ebing “saw hypnosis as the best hope” (76). However, by the twentieth
century there were so many approaches and so many theories that “[t]he homosexual
became a walking laboratory. The cure was no longer an attempt to heal, it was a means of testing medical theories and procedures” (77) and “brutal aversion therapies were applied with increasing indifference to failure” (78). It seems that the attempts at curing and, basically, testing on humans were the ultimate aim rather than the well-being of the patient. The famous example is Alan Turing’s case. He was “given oestrogen injections to reduce his libido. As a result, he began to grow breasts. Before the treatment, Turing was a normal person who fell in love with other men. After the treatment, he looked more like the androgynous freak that the police had imagined they were arresting. He committed suicide in 1954” (79). Nevertheless, Robb also admits there was a real progress behind “the grisly picture of homosexuality in the surgery” (80) and some studies even called for acceptance and the abandonment of ‘cures’ and therapies (82).

I. VII. – Religion

Despite the fact that the importance of religion fluctuated in the Victorian times with various breakthroughs and progress at the end of the nineteenth century, it was still a very prominent aspect of the lives of the English (Wheeler-Barclay 3). Hillard also argues that the importance of religion, i. e., of Anglo-Catholic religion, was “one facet of the homosexual subculture” and there were various attempts to establish various, reformed movements (184). These movements “provoked vehement hostility in the Church of England” because “it fostered novel ideas and religious practices” (187) and they were considered “essentially un-English and unmanly” (187). As it has been established earlier, the state of being unmanly or effeminate was one of the most telling features of a Victorian homosexual and Hillard confirms that “there were many links between this homosexual literary culture and Catholic religion” (197), however, these were still a minority as “there are indications that a male homosexual subculture was
associated with the more flamboyant wing of Anglo-Catholicism” (202). It seems gay people were particularly attracted to Anglo-Catholicism. Men that could not find any reconciliation with the Church of England or any other traditional Christian group, since, as Robb points out “[t]he teaching of all Christian churches was unambiguous: sodomites were evil” (233), were charmed by Anglo-Catholicism as it “encouraged a slightly more accommodating attitude towards homosexuality” and it was “inclined to the view that homosexual feelings were not in themselves sinful” (Hillard 207). Furthermore, it “provided a visible network of supportive and protective institutions” (209). This all would suggest that homosexuals in Victorian England did not have many choices: they were either extremely marginalised in their faith as various churches would condemn them and their cursed state, or they could denounce their faith and become atheists or join one of the less hostile and more welcoming movements, since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “saw the greatest proliferation of alternative Christs since the dawn of Christianity” (Robb 241).

I. VIII. – Homosocial

As it was mentioned in earlier chapters, homosexuality was associated with certain places very closely. However, as it was also previously hinted, the context, in which the gay activities occurred, was crucial. In some, the homosexual practices could be rendered almost invisible and would barely attract any attention whatsoever. The key component was homosociality of a place in question. The term homosocial “describes social bonds between persons of the same sex” (Sedgwick 1), and can be also extended to places and locations where such bonding happens. One such example would be bathhouses as they were “a new commercial arena of fashionable masculine homosociality” and “in many ways the Turkish bath was an informal gentleman’s club”
Such homosocial establishments were “single-sex cultural spaces that sustained intense emotional attachments and friendships—often articulated in near-erotic terms—between men” (96). In baths in particular, “homosociality blended into homoeroticism” (97). As it was already mentioned, bathhouses were very popular cruising grounds as the chances to find a companion were extremely steep and the chance of being arrested was low, since the practices did not cause much alarm. Therefore, a place that is considered utterly masculine seems to blur homosexual identities and lets them dissolve in the world of man, rendering them acceptable.

Gentlemen-only bars are another example where homosociality worked in favour of gays. They provided spaces where “men could socialize, converse, and form new friendships” (Houlbrook 74) and “[w]hile ostensibly public, such venues offered elite men the opportunity to forge social worlds that were, effectively, private” (74). Given the nature of these bars, there was very low threat of being blackmailed or threatened in any other way as these places were only frequented by men who could afford to pay the high price for entering. Again, the increased homosociality allowed gay men to meet other gay men while remaining invisible. Yet, the benefits of such establishments were restricted only to those with “[t]he privileges of elite masculinity” which “allowed certain men to move through the city unnoticed” (75).

I. IX – Clothing

The last topic in Part One to be discussed is clothes. Apparel had a very distinctive function in the Victorian period as it allowed to be recognised in the crowd by those whose attention was desired. Being dressed “for pleasure”, as Robb describes one case of such conduct, one would be wearing “ostentatious coiffure, open-necked shirt, ‘almost skimpy and artificially tight-fitting clothes designed to show off the hips
as much as possible,”” which “had been a recognizably homosexual style of dress for several centuries” (90). Taylor Croft in 1932, for example, described a distinctive urban homosexual:

He will dress with the most elaborate care . . . with taste of a somewhat too noticeable nature . . . fond of colour as his shirts and ties testify, while any new fashion, particularly if it is a little effeminate, will appeal to him. Wide trousers, suede shoes, pale green shirts, two-coloured shoes, black or eccentric pullovers were immediately appropriated on their appearance in outfitters’ shops for the special use of these people . . . an extremely conscious and highly-coloured attire frequently denotes an invert. (qtd. in Houlbrook 145)

Croft describes an apparel that is extremely visible in the crowd, and, as Houlbrook correctly notes, this “suggest[s] the narrow limits of color, cut and composition” and any “deviation as minute as ‘wide trousers’ or coloured shirt was sufficiently unconventional to signify man’s sexual character” (145). Thus, clothing “acquired growing importance as a public sign of masculine identity” (145). Furthermore, creation of “a queer public persona was predicated upon reworking rather than rejecting conventional masculine styles” (146). This means that gays did not want to establish a tradition of cross-dressing, although, as it was illustrated with the quean stereotype, such traditions indeed existed, but they rather looked for new ways of making the traditional apparels visible. “Instead of dark suits, men wore light gray or white. If they wore a dark suit they adorned it with ‘feminine’ accessories—jewelry and scarves” (146). As Houlbrook further notes, the result “was a hybrid style, blending conventional forms of male dress with articles that were unconventional in cut or color but sill, nonetheless, rendering men visibly different” (146). Clothing became a sign of
aestheticism: not only it was supposed to distinguish one from the crowd and signal one’s intentions to other men, but it was also supposed to be aesthetically pleasing. Similarly to the extensively decorated, perfumed rooms with heavy curtains and coloured lights and candles, clothing became a form of art which is supposed “to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass” (Cook, London 95-6). Robb also notes that “[i]n the 1900s, red neckties and handkerchiefs were a clear signal [of homosexuality] in the United States, Brazil, Russia, Italy, and probably throughout Europe” and “red and green had a long association with homosexuality. Pinkness seems to have acquired consistently homosexual connotations only in the 1900s, but green had been a gay colour for centuries” (151).
Part Two

The thesis now moves to the analyses of the selected works of E. M. Forster and Alan Hollinghurst. Each chapter is devoted to one author. Chapter III is then followed by a comparison of the two works and Part Two finishes with a conclusion.

Chapter II – E. M. Forster and *Maurice*

This section analyses various topics that the novel touches upon. Chapter II. I. is concerned with themes such as marriage, friendship, interest in men, and love. It discusses the way they are conceptualised and negotiated throughout the book. The next chapter, II. II., deals with homosexuality and the perceptions of it, while chapters II. III. – II. VIII. focus on areas influenced by Maurice’s homosexuality, for instance manhood and respectability, double identity, religion, and concepts of family and happiness, as well as class and equality and suicide and death. The final subsection of the analysis, II. IX., is a compilation of less prominent, or rather, less discussed themes in the novel. These themes are, however, important for the comparison of the two novels, and are, therefore, mentioned in this category. As the references are brief, this particular subchapter is thematically very rich, and the individual themes do not coalesce into a unified idea. These themes include the topics of lust, gaze, blackmail and cruising, the distinction between private and public spaces, bachelorhood, and places.

II. I. – Marriage, Friendship, Interest in Men, and Love

The novel tells a story of Maurice through his childhood, university studies, and his adult life. The reader first encounters Maurice at a preparatory school when he is given a talk about sex and marriage by his teacher, Mr Ducie. Even then Maurice is aware that there is something “wrong” with him, yet he is unable to express what it is:
“Mr Ducie got up, and choosing a smooth piece of sand drew diagrams upon it”, however, “it bore no relation to his [Maurice’s] experiences” and “he knew that the subject was serious and related to his own body. But he could not himself relate it” (Forster 18-9). As the female counterpart bears absolutely no relation to him, he even pronounces that “I think I shall not marry” (19).

Maurice’s homosexuality is explicitly mentioned in the novel, but it takes Forster quite a lot of time to get to the subject, leaving clues throughout the early portions of the novel. The first instance of homosexuality being openly discussed is when Maurice decides to stop pretending: “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. He loved men and always had loved them” (Forster 59). This comes only after his companion leaves him and coalesces into one of the major themes of the book, which will be discussed later.

Since he is thus abstracted from it, marriage is transformed into the seemingly ultimate goal, which would solve all of Maurice’s problems: “It would be jolly certainly to be married, and at one with society and law” (Forster 140), and he sees no other alternative: “With the world as it is, one must marry or decay” (148). Yet, he cannot do it and when he tries to approach women, they “knew something was wrong. His touch revolted her. It was a corpse’s” (53). Miss Olcott, whom Maurice chooses to court, can simply feel he forces himself to do such things, because when this unsuccessful episode is over “the insincerity that led him to her remained” (54). For Clive Durham, who is Maurice’s companion at university but who eventually leaves him and marries, romance with a man is, in the end, a practice for actually courting women as he “poured out at her feet all that an earlier passion had taught him, and could only remember with an effort for whom that passion had been” (144). He distances himself from the
homosexual experience but uses what he has learnt from it in his relationships with women. This abstracting from the relationship could possibly be explained by Girard’s erotic triangle. Sedgwick notes that “Girard traced a calculus of power that was structured by the relation of rivalry between the two active members of an erotic triangle” and that “the choice of the beloved is determined . . . by the beloved’s already being the choice of the person who has been chosen as a rival” (21). What is also important is that “the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved” (21). The first person Clive overtly fancies after his transition to heterosexual is Ada, Maurice’s sister. Here, a love triangle is formed by the strong and passionate bond of the former lovers (Maurice and Clive, who are the active members) and the bond is then transferred to the beloved Ada. This is possible because Maurice still has very deep affection for his sister and this family love is transferred onto Clive as romantic love and also because of the fact that there is a striking resemblance between Ada and Maurice. She has “Maurice’s voice, his nose . . . the mouth, too, and his good spirits and good health” (Forster 109), and she is “the compromise between memory and desire” and “the quiet evening that Greece had never known” (110-11). Clive’s transition to heterosexuality seems to be a very common practice as Sedgwick further claims: “Like the young aristocrat, the young gentleman at those same public schools would have seen or engaged in a variety of sexual activities among males; but . . . most gentlemen found neither a community nor a shared, distinctive sexual identity ready for adults who wanted more of the same” (176). Therefore, for many young men who could not find any identification with the real world, the homosexual encounter remained in the childhood and would often referred to as such as Michael Nelson, a twentieth-century writer, notes: “It’s all right for fellows
to mess one another about a bit at school. But when we grow up we put aside childish things, don’t we?” (qtd. in Sedgwick 176).

For Maurice, the concept of marriage does not capture the true notion of love. Only true friendship is the embodiment of such an emotion: “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 for nothing, nor distance nor crossness could part them” (Forster 26). This is cemented further when Clive tells him that such friendships are only possible between men: “I feel to you as Pippa to her fiancé, 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” (84). At university, he meets Clive, and they become very close. “They walked arm in arm or arm around shoulder now. When they sat it was nearly always in the same position – Maurice in the chair, and Durham at his feet, leaning against him” and “Maurice would stroke Durham’s hair” (46). The idea of true friendship and the sacrifice is, eventually, realised, not with Clive, but with Alec Scudder, who is an under-gamekeeper at the Durhams’ and with whom Maurice eventually falls in love with: “He’s sacrificed his career for my sake… without a guarantee I’ll give up anything for him” (213).

Clive assigns Plato’s Symposium for Maurice to read during the vacation and after that he tells Maurice that he loves him (Forster 56), to which Maurice reacts with horror at first. When he calms down though, he says to Clive “I have always been like the Greeks and didn’t know” and that he loves him, too (62). Owing to Clive’s initial impulse, Maurice now realises that his condition has been plaguing mankind since the Ancient Greeks at least, although he does not yet truly understand what it means at this point.
Even though they come to a physical contact on several occasions during their relationship, their love was never meant to be physical. Clive does admire the beauty of Maurice, true, and even elaborates on it by inventing “two roads for arriving to Beauty” (Forster 85-6); one common and the other one private, which is based on liking of the actual subject of an artist. Yet, there are numerous examples that abstract their relationship from the realm of the physical: their first kiss is underlined by “scarcely wishing it” (71); when Maurice later asks Clive to kiss him again Clive “shook his head, and smiling they parted, having established perfection in their lives” (87); on one occasion Clive comes to Maurice’s room because he is cold and “[t]hey lay side by side without touching” (103); and “their love, though including the body, should not gratify it, and the understanding had proceeded” (132-33). This seems to suggest that – for Clive at least – the relationship is more about friendship than actual love (including physical love) and attraction even before his transformation and realisation that he loves women, which he confirms during their final conversation. Maurice tells Clive that he has made love with Alec and one of Clive’s comments is that “[b]ut surely – the sole excuse for any relationship between men is that it remains purely platonic” (213). To explain these seemingly confused notions of love, friendship, and desire, one has to look at “a redefinition of Forster’s terms. Forster’s love is in fact desire; desire, sexuality; and imagination, a form at least of love” (Wilde 115) which causes paradoxes: “Love is integrative for Forster, sex partial and temporary. Yet sexuality achieves for its brief moment a unity of desire” (116). As their relationship was never sexual, Clive and Maurice can never successfully be together, while to Alec Maurice gives his body and, therefore, their relationship is happy and blossoms.
II. II. – Homosexuality

Homosexuality is a major topic in this novel as it influences, alters, and forms a great deal of aspects of Maurice’s life. The state Maurice finds himself in is throughout the novel seen as a malediction, a flaw, something one must and has to be punished for. Maurice has held this view since early childhood, even though he does not yet understand it, and does not change it. His only way to defy such an attitude is to rebel against it. When he is attending a public school, he dreams of George, a garden boy that used to help at his family’s house. In the dream, “George headed down the field towards him, naked and jumping over the woodstacks” (Forster 25-6). After Maurice wakes up, “he thought he was going to be ill, and afterwards that it was somehow a punishment for something” (26); he feels “obscene” and as if “some special curse had descended on him” (26). When he is eighteen, Dr Barry gives him a lecture on women and “under the cover of a friendly manner say[s] much that gave pain” (30). As with Mr Ducie’s talk when Maurice was in the preparatory school, this is something that Maurice cannot identify with, and he knows that he will never be the man Dr Barry describes. Even Maurice himself is “scandalized, horrified” and “shocked to the bottom of his suburban soul” when Clive tells him he loves him (56). This “confusion, of course, is caused by Maurice’s failure to appreciate the full meaning of the book [Plato’s Symposium] . . . It is against the Anglo-Saxon conceptions of manhood . . . that Maurice takes a stand” (Bailey 339). As a result, Maurice thinks that Clive is just joking and tells him to be serious since what he mentions is “the worst crime in the calendar” (Forster 56). Clive then writes Maurice a note in which he expresses his hope that Maurice “will not mention my criminal morbidity to anyone” (57). When contemplating his own situation, Clive wonders “why had he out of all Christians been punished with it [homosexuality]” and, after falling in love with his cousin “[i]t was hopeless, he was
“damned” (67). Maurice is also worried of castigation when he goes to see a doctor to cure him: “Any punishment was preferable, for he assumed a doctor would punish him” (136). When Maurice returns to Penge after Clive’s marriage he no longer cares for Clive “but he could suffer from him” and “[a]s twilight fell, he entered a new circle of torment” (148).

Apart from punishment, obscenity, and curse, homosexuality also has very deep religious implications as being perceived as a sin. Maurice, for instance, realises at college that there is vast difference between him and the rest which causes that “in all creation there could be no one as vile as himself” (Forster 32). When Clive realises that he loves Maurice, his struggle for purity is renewed as “[h]is whole philosophy of life broke down, and the sense of sin was reborn in its ruins, and crawled along corridors” (70). Clive’s structured reasoning crumbles as he cannot restrain his feelings any longer. After experiencing an unpleasant pick-up on train, Maurice decides to consult a doctor. During his search for a suitable one, he realises that “[h]e might ‘keep away from young men’, as he had naïvely resolved, but he could not keep away from their images and hourly committed sin in his heart” (136) and he also thinks about his own wickedness after he spends the first night with Alec since “[h]e had abused his host’s confidence and defiled his house in his absence, he had insulted Mrs Durham and Anne . . . he had also sinned against his family” (180). In the final scene, Maurice tells Clive that he has shared everything with Alec including his body: “Clive sprang up with a whimper of disgust. He wanted to smite the monster, and flee. . . . But his thin disapproval, his dogmatism, the stupidity of his heart, revolted Maurice, who could only have respected hatred” (213). Now changed, Clive sees the deformity of Maurice as something horrifying and, indeed, demonic.
Searching for a cure to the disease is another very prominent theme of this book.

As already mentioned before, Maurice decides to find a treatment for his malady, but it turns out that he knows very little of his condition as in “He thought of specialists, but did not know whether there were any for his disease” (Forster 136). He is absolutely oblivious of the nature of his affliction, to which, however, Forster himself provides an explanation a little later in the story: “He [Dr Barry] had read no scientific works on Maurice’s subject. None had existed when he walked the hospitals and any published since were in German, and therefore suspect” (140). Indeed, the literature on homosexuality was extremely scarce. As Robb mentions, a modern gay historian “has read far more medical literature on the subject than almost any Victorian doctor” (41) and book were destroyed, banned, and the “particularly revolting portions’ were in Latin” (Cook, London 76).

Maurice is so miserable in his condition that “He could undergo any course of treatment on the chance of being cured” (Forster 136) and even if not successful, it would at least give him something to be occupied by. Maurice also proves that he cannot blindly trust doctors as he did not know “whether they would keep faith if he confided in them” (136). He is not willing to risk telling a young doctor Jowitt, whom he knows well, as the doctor has no experience and thinks that “unspeakables of the Oscar Wilde sort⁵” are “the asylum work, thank God” (136). Therefore, Maurice decides to see retired Dr Barry because “It’s an illness too awfully intimate for Jowitt – I’d rather come to you – you’re the only doctor alive I dare tell. Once before I said to you I hoped I’d learn to speak out. It’s about that” (137). He is at the very verge of breaking down as he says “Oh, fix me for God’s sake. . . . I’m close on done for” (138). His wish to be normal is just as strong as his desire for men. In this

⁵ According to Sedgwick, “[s]exuality between men had, throughout the Judaeo-Christian tradition, been famous among those who knew about it all precisely for having no name—‘unspeakable’, ‘unmentionable’, ‘not to be named among Christian men’” (94).
very heightened state, he is very surprised to learn that the doctor is unable to find any physical evidence of his malady: “‘So, you’ve never guessed,’ he said, with a touch of scorn in his terror. ‘I’m an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort’” (138-9). The credibility of the doctor is doubted further when, instead of giving a scientific explanation, says: “Now listen to me, Maurice, never let that evil hallucination, that temptation from the devil, occur to you again” (139). After this, given some advice to seek help from Lasker Jones, Maurice tries hypnosis. This is, again, very modern of Forster to include it, as it was increasingly popular and was seen “as the best hope” (Robb 76). Maurice pronounces his scepticism, but Jones at least seems to have at least some idea what Maurice’s problem is since he is able to provide a name for it: “Congenital homosexuality” (Forster 158). Although the first sitting is quite successful: it is possible for Maurice to be hypnotised, he resists hypnosis during the next session and eventually stops coming as he feels the treatment achieves nothing.

II. III. – Manliness and Respectability

As an upper-class citizen and a proper Englishman, Maurice is torn by his sexuality. He needs to choose between what is right, manly and expected of a proper gentleman and what is his heart’s desire. Thus, the novel also examines whether it is possible for a man to keep his dignified status even as a homosexual. The first instance of exhibiting impropriety happens when Clive expresses his love for Maurice to which he responds: “Durham, you’re an Englishman. I’m another. Don’t talk nonsense” (Forster 56). He seems to be unable to imagine such a thing among proper people and is shocked by such a proposal. Maurice’s first sign of weakness happens a few pages later “as he laid his head on the pillows a flood of tears oozed from it. He was horrified. A man crying!” (58). After being suspended from the college for being rude to the
Maurice is visited by his neighbour Dr Barry, who openly criticises Maurice’s behaviour and attacks his sense of respectability: “I mean that the country gentleman would apologize by instinct if he found he had behaved like a cad” (79), while contrasting Maurice with the respectability of his sisters and mother as well as his own: “She and your sisters are my respected neighbours, and as long as a woman calls me I’m at her service. . . . You are a disgrace to chivalry. . . . I’m disappointed and disgusted with you” (79-80). Although Maurice realises he was unfair to his mother, yet he also discovers that Dr Barry would most certainly not demand an apology for him if the person who was sitting in the side-car was a woman (80). Therefore, doing something disrespectful with a man is regarded as being childish and capricious, while doing the very same thing with (or for) a woman would be considered manly. Nevertheless, assuming the role of his father, Maurice manages to establish himself as a strong head of the family, “his mother began to speak of him in the tones she had reserved for her husband” and “[b]y twenty-three he was a promising suburban tyrant” (93). Clive’s respectability or manliness never questioned – even if he is weak and unmanly as a result of his influenza of which he experiences a relapse: “Jowitt, you don’t tell me. A grown man doesn’t cry, unless he’s gone pretty far” to which the doctor replies: “That is only the weakness” (96). In Clive, the quality of not being masculine causes Maurice to love him even more: “Now that Clive was undignified and weak, he loved him as never before” (97). The reason for this is that, as it has been established in Part One, homosexuality was regarded as effeminate in Victorian England, and, therefore, when Clive exhibits signs of weakness in his illness, thus, a marker of effeminacy, he, at the same time grows more homosexual which Maurice, in turn, appreciates as a signal that his beloved is returning to him. Manliness seems to be

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6 Maurice and Clive decide to go for a ride on a motorcycle but are stopped by the dean. After being brusque, Maurice pulls away and leaves the dean behind (Forster 72).
a desirable quality but not in all instances. When Clive tells Maurice that he no longer loves him and that his interest has been shifted towards women, he “was looking with growing dismay into the face he had once loved. The horror of masculinity had returned, and he wondered what would happen if Maurice tried to embrace him” (112). To him, masculinity is now suddenly threatening and very undesirable in his former lover. Maurice also proves that respectability can only be a deception and that the sense of it is only fleeting after an episode with Dickie Barry, Dr Barry’s nephew: “What a solid young citizen he looked – quiet, honourable, prosperous without vulgarity. On such does England rely. Was it conceivable that on Sunday last he had nearly assaulted a boy?” (135).

II. IV. Double Identity, Falsehood, and Sense of Alienation

Maurice’s homosexuality also forces him to create a second life, a false identity that never really surfaces for others to see except for very rare cases. As a result, Maurice feels detached and alienated from his family and humanity in general.

During his time at the public school he realises he has a “secret life” (Forster 26) and he is “nothing but falsities” (39). He also recognises that “[h]e had lied. He phrased it ‘been fed upon lies’, but lies are the natural food of boyhood, and he had eaten greedily” (58). For Maurice, telling lies and being a boy goes hand in glove, but once he becomes an adult, he needs to stop pretending and lying and start being honest to himself and his feelings in particular. After Clive breaks up with him, Maurice loses his temper and blames his older sister, Ada, for breaking that friendship. He realises that “[h]is family, his position in society – they had been nothing to him for years. He was an outlaw in disguise” (120). Losing his friend is the worst thing he can imagine, and his own family robbed Maurice of him. As a result, he simply cannot care for them
anymore. In Clive’s case, his secrecy continues even in marriage, as they do not talk about sex or anything intimate:

They united in a world that bore no reference to the daily, and this secrecy drew after it much else of their life. So much could never be mentioned. . . . So there would never be any question of this episode of his immaturity.

It was unmentionable. . . . it had been sentimental and deserved oblivion. Secrecy suited him, at least he adopted it without regret.

(Forster 144)

Clive simply carries his secrecy to his marriage, and, since there are other things they cannot talk about in their marriage, he can rest assured that his own university secrets will never be mentioned or no one will ever ask about them.

After the session with Lasker Jones, Maurice decides to leave Penge but nor his hosts nor his family know why. They think he leaves because of a girl:

There was to be a laughing open secret about this girl in town, who had almost accepted his offer of marriage but not quite. It didn’t matter how ill he looked or how queerly he behaved, he was officially a lover, and they interpreted everything to their satisfaction and found him delightful.

(Forster 179)

This “open secret” is, of course, a lie that Maurice comes up with in order to cover up for his own intents. Similarly, Mrs Durham tells Maurice that she has to leave Penge to Clive as soon as he marries, to which Maurice blushes and his boyfriend’s mother interprets it as confirmation. It is a desirable result which will keep Maurice and Clive safe. With his two lives and conforming to the standards of Victorian society, Maurice
embodies the respectable homosexual stereotype, which, however, Forster sees as destructive and extremely oppressive.

It is not only double identities and falsehood that demonstrate the sense of not-belonging, but also the actual sense of alienation. When Maurice comes to Penge for the first time, Clive justifies deceiving his family as follows: “I’m a bit of an outlaw, I grant, but it serves these people right. As long as they talk about the unspeakable vice of the Greeks they can’t expect a fair play” (Forster 84). Clive sees it as necessary to fight fire with fire – if the society, including his family, is going to push against them, they are going to push back with deception, which is not anything deplorable in this case.

Maurice feels utterly abandoned after the break-up, and it is not the actual loss or being tormented by love that is the most threatening to him. He worries that “the heart of his agony would be loneliness. . . . The incestuous jealousy, the mortification, the rage at his past obtuseness – these might pass, and having done much harm they did pass. Memories of Clive might pass. But the loneliness remained. He would wake up and gasp ‘I’ve no one!’ (Forster 120). Another such example can be seen during a talk with his dying grandfather:

Why _should_ one be kind and good? For someone’s sake – for the sake of Clive or God or the sun? But he had no one. No one except his mother mattered and she only a little. He was practically alone, and why should he go on living? There was really no reason, yet he had a dreary feeling he should because he had not got Death either; she, like Love, had glanced at him for a minute, then turned away, and left him to ‘play the game’. (Forster 124)

If Maurice is left alone till he dies, there is no reason for him to be good to anyone as no one would matter. His sense of not belonging increases even further as “he came home and examined the pistol he would never use, he was seized with disgust; when he
greeted his mother no unfathomable love for her welled up. He lived on, miserable and misunderstood, as before, and increasingly lonely” (125) and, later, “[t]he morning was exquisite – made for others: for them the leaves rustled and the sun poured into the house” (129). He feels so detached from others that he feels that even a nice day is not meant for him. He does not deserve such pleasures as he is damned in his loneliness. His sense of alienation extends even to his relationship with Alec and coalesces during a game of cricket as a two-against-the-world concept:

He felt that they were against the whole world, that not only Mr Borenius and the field but the audience in the shed and all England were closing round the wickets. They played for the sake of each other and of their fragile relationship – if one fell the other would follow. They intended no harm to the world, but so long as it attacked they must punish, they must stand wary, then hit with full strength, they must show that when two are gathered together majorities shall not triumph. And as the game proceeded it connected with the night, and interpreted it. (Forster 176)

Their game efforts suddenly become an all-out war on the world as they struggle to find their own happiness.

II. V. – Religion

Christianity played an important role for a respectable Englishman; therefore, it does not come as a surprise that Forster devoted a lot of space in trying to marry the religiousness of his characters with their sexuality. After his dream with George running towards him naked, Maurice has a second dream in which a face he cannot recognise tells him “That is you friend” (Forster 26). Maurice interprets this to ultimately mean Christ but that one “has a mangy beard”, and Maurice thinks of a “Greek god, such as
illustrates the classical dictionary” instead (26). This is closer to his understanding and, eventually, he arrives to a conclusion that “most probably he was just a man” (26). He seems to realise even as a child that Christianity cannot fulfil his desires which he is only faintly aware of at this point.

At university, Clive tells Maurice that “I don’t want to worry you with my beliefs, or rather with their absence, but to explain the situation I must tell you that I’m unorthodox. I’m not Christian”; Maurice, however, “held unorthodoxy to be bad form” (Forster 43). Being an orthodox Christian is very important for Maurice as it is a part of being a respectable Englishman, but Clive proves to him that he knows nothing about his own beliefs and only echoes what he has learnt: “But Durham’s voice, when he next heard it, was attacking his opinions on the Trinity. He thought he minded about the Trinity, yet it seemed unimportant, beside the fire of terror” and Clive tells him that “it doesn’t seem that you have any opinions to respect. They’re all second-hand tags – no, tenth-hand” and goes on suggesting that the only thing Maurice really cares about is “[r]ugger” (47). The theological conversations with Clive continue for a few days and Maurice sees that “he had no sense of Christ’s existence or of His goodness, and should be positively sorry if there was such a person. His dislike for Christianity grew and became profound” (49). In the end, Maurice quits going to chapels and “Maurice, although he had lost and yielded all his opinions, had a queer feeling that he was really winning and carrying on a campaign that he had begun last term” (49). Refusal of the ideas he was blindly following liberates him and alleviates the pressure he was under, because he “underst[ood] nothing except that man has been created to feel pain and loneliness without the help from heaven” (55).

Clive was also raised in a deeply religious family but he arrives to the conclusion of rejecting Christianity much sooner than Maurice. He is described as
“Deeply religious, with a living desire to reach God and to please Him, he found himself crossed at an early age by this other desire, obviously from Sodom” (Forster 67). He tries to do everything he can to withstand the trial from God, but “his sixteenth year was a ceaseless torture” (67), but, as Maurice will do several years later, eventually “[h]e was obliged however to throw over Christianity. 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” (68) for “it was the tainted soul that mocked his prayers” (67) and since “[h]e wished Christianity would compromise with him a little and searched the Scriptures for support” (68), yet it does not, he discards it. He sees no other way, because he knows he just cannot pretend that he is something different. But as Robb claims, this was not that very uncommon a phenomenon. “Many people were happy to lose their faith and embraced atheism without suffering any social consequences” (233). Clive’s giving up on Christianity is not unproblematic however. Mrs Durham does not mind Clive’s heathen attitude until Christmas. She wants her son to receive Holy Communion, which he categorically refuses. She “got cross, said I would damage her reputation as well as my own” and she “said I was wicked” (Forster 44). By then, Clive has fully accepted the religion of the Ancient Greeks as well as the unspeakable things they were doing.

Clive’s refusal of Christianity and his becoming a homosexual also functions the other way around. In his transition towards heterosexuality, he starts doubting and denying the Greeks and assumes his position as a Christian again: “The Greeks assumed little enough, yet too much perhaps. . . . In other words, beyond the grave there may be Hell” (Forster 101). It is also made known that believing in the old Greek gods is worse than not believing in God at all as reverend Borenius tells Maurice: “The atheist is nearer the Kingdom of Heaven than the hellenist” (162), because atheists are like small children who need to be led to God.
Maurice meets reverend Borenius later again when he goes to see Alec sailing to Argentina. The reverend gives him another talk concerning faith, this time about Alec himself, as the reverend needs to give him a letter of introduction to an Anglican priest so that Alec can get confirmed right after his arrival: “But being neither a hellenist nor an atheist I hold that conduct is dependent on faith, and that if a man is ‘a bit of swine’ the cause is to be found in some misapprehension of God. Where there is heresy, immorality will sooner or later ensue” (Forster 207). Borenius says that since Alec is a proper Christian, his misbehaving has to be cause by his misunderstanding to God. Again, there is an austere condemnation of hellenists, as Borenius seems to imply that they are inherently immoral and show flaws of character. Atheists are not guilty as he has removed all guilt from them by likening them to children. Borenius is a real threat to Maurice, because “this man had a special sense, being spiritual, and could scent invisible emotions” and “[a]sceticism and piety . . . can generate insight” (207). Maurice realises he has underestimated the reverend and his capabilities:

He had assumed at Penge that a white-faced parson in a cassock could never have conceived of masculine love, but he knew now that there is no secret of humanity which, from a wrong angle, orthodoxy had not viewed, that religion is far more acute than science, and if it only added judgement to insight would be the greatest thing in the world. (207)

Suddenly, religion becomes a mortal enemy and Maurice “feared and hated Mr Borenius, he wanted to kill him” (207) as the threat of being exposed is too great.

II. VI. – Family and Happiness

The sense of family is distorted for Maurice by his sexuality and its concept becomes a gate leading to a happy life that is reigned by normalcy. Over the time, he
grows more and more distant to his family. When he is a child, mother and his sisters are more important than anything else in the world (Foster 24) and he “liked his home, and recognized his mother as its presiding genius” (21). However, the more he embraces his sexuality, the more he does not care for his family and seems to be loathing them. And they him. As Maurice becomes the head of the family and “a promising suburban tyrant” (93), he starts influencing the lives of the other family members as he sees fit. Kitty is not given an allowance, while Ada as the future heiress, is given a lot of free space to do whatever she wishes. Moreover, when Clive comes back to Maurice’s place to inform his that he no longer loves men, he mentions that “[i]f I love anyone it’s Ada. . . . I take her at random as an example” (113). Yet, it suffices for Maurice to put two and two together and later questions Ada about Durham. He blames her for “breaking up that friendship” to which she responds: “I don’t mind that – you’ve always been so unkind to us, always” (120). He is aware that Kitty has never fancied him because Ada was the favourite, but this kind of open hostility towards him makes him realise that “his sisters disliked him: he had not even succeeded at home” (120). When he later apologises, Ada has no mercy: “Her brother’s apologies were so rare that she seized the opportunity to trample on him” (125-26). Kitty was also “displeased when he made amends”; he offers to pay for her education, but she now claims to be “too old now to properly learn anything” (126). Mrs Hall tries to defend Maurice but “finding her son too indifferent to protect himself, she grew indifferent too. She was fond of him, but would not fight for him anymore” (126). As a result, Maurice loses his position as the head of the family and “he was considered less in the house” (126). He is thus abandoned by his lover and by his family alike. Maurice’s position in the family is confusing and it feels like he does not have a place there: “His position at home was anomalous: Mrs Hall wished that someone would decide it for her” for
Maurice “looked like a man and had turned out the Howells last Easter; but on the other hand he had been sent down from Cambridge and was not yet twenty-one” (78-9).

Maurice himself also cannot imagine himself starting his own family due to his condition, although he would want to: “He and the beloved [Clive] would vanish utterly – would continue neither in Heaven nor on Earth. . . . The thought that he was sterile weighed on the young man with a sudden shame” (Forster 90). But when his lover deserts him, he starts pondering such a possibility: “He wanted children. He was capable of begetting children – Dr Barry said so. Was marriage impossible after all?” (141). A family of his own is now regarded as a means to cure his malady and loneliness.

As he considers homosexuality a curse and a disease, Maurice seems to perceive it as void of happiness. He experiences a brief spell of it when he is the lover of Clive’s: “During the next two years Maurice and Clive had as much happiness as men under that star can expect” (Forster 91). Other than this, Maurice’s life is dark and unhappy. The misery of a homosexual life is accentuated even more when compared to a heterosexual life from Clive’s perspective: “How happy normal people made their lives! On how little had he existed for twenty-four years!” (106). This is because of the fact that “the women often answered his eye with equal pleasure. Men had never responded – they did not assume he admired them, and were either unconscious or puzzled. But women took admiration for granted” (106). The simplicity of how heterosexual people become acquaintances and the ease of giving and receiving compliments is fascinating to Clive as he has never pictured such bliss even existed. This striking contrast further facilitates the concept of heterosexuals being happy and content while homosexuals are condemned to misery.

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7 As Fone suggests, this “idyll Forster creates between Maurice and Clive derives from the wishful texts of nineteenth-century homoerotic poetry” (173) such as Pater, Tennyson, Whitman, and Carpenter.
II. VII. – Class and Equality

In Forster’s story, homosexuality seems to subvert the concepts of class, and it makes the people more egalitarian not only in terms of social status but also in other respects.

Maurice behaves perfectly in accordance with his status to his subordinates when there is no interest in them. When he was small, he used to play with George in woodstacks. With George gone, Mrs Howell, a servant at the Halls’ family is relieved: “My poor woodstacks’ll be glad” (Foster 23). Yet, Maurice lets her know that: “They are Mother’s woodstacks, not yours” (23). The Howells are not offended as they like “a gentleman to be a snob” (23). The young Hall, therefore, perfectly fulfils his role with demonstrating his social superiority. A little later, he mourns George’s departure, but he soon realises that George was “[n]obody – just a common servant. Mother and Ada and Kitty were far more important” (24). Maurice dismisses his friend as being a mere servant, while his family – that of a higher status and, thus, of higher importance – is where his heart should really belong.

Throughout the novel Forster mentions Maurice’s slowness as far as acuteness of mind is concerned on several occasions. In the relationship with Clive, Hall is the one whose mind is less sharp, but Clive’s “spirit educated Maurice’s spirit, for they themselves became equal” (Forster 91). When Durham is taken ill, he, in his weakened state, turns their relationship around: “I expect you do like me for my mind – for its feebleness. You always knew I was inferior” (102). To Maurice, this rings false and he feels “as if he wanted to pick a quarrel’ (102). They both suspect that even their families will not be able to talk to each other because of the divide: “They will never get on. . . They belong to different sections of society” (92).
The transgression of class and loving someone who is of a lower social status does not come naturally to Maurice. At first, he thinks such a feeling “that can impel a gentleman towards a person of lower class stands self-condemned” (Forster 132) and he “disliked playing [cricket] with his social inferiors” because “in cricket he might be bowled or punished by some lout, and he felt it unsuitable” (175-76). When he eventually does fall for Alec, the fallout that follows – his fears of Alec blackmailing him or hurting him – is regarded as something that Maurice deserves because he mingled with someone he is not hierarchically equal with: “He had gone outside his class, and it served him right” (181). Sedgwick claims this comes from “a space or mechanism of potential power” and its “activation has been performed or attempted repeatedly . . . in the last three centuries”; the result, she argues, “has been a structural residue of terrorist potential, of blackmailability, of Western maleness through the leverage of homophobia” (89). In other words, Maurice can be blackmailed simply because the society has given blackmailers a strong tool of homophobia—without the fear of being exposed and risking “the terrible losses that could accrue to a queer life exposed” (Cook, *Queer* 22), extortionists would have absolutely no means of harming the victim.

When they are together alone, Maurice keeps insisting on Alec calling him by his name and not conjuring his social dominance. “You mustn’t call me Sir” (Forster 171) and later “‘Sir, the church has gone four, you’ll have to release me.’ ‘Maurice, I’m Maurice’” (172). To Alec, however, this is most confusing as he cannot relate his experience to anything like that: “Gentlemen he knew, mates he knew; what class of creature was Mr Hall who said ‘Call me Maurice’?” (192). In his worldview, there is absolutely nothing he can relate to, which produces a very strange effect of abstracting Maurice from his humanity and, indeed, degrades him. During the
confrontation concerning Alec trying to blackmail Maurice, the former actually decides to call the latter by his name: “‘Maurice, listen, I only…’ ‘Maurice am I?’ ‘You called me Alec… I’m as good as you.’ ‘I don’t find you are!’” (196). It is in a moment when Alec goes defensive and is attempting to appease Maurice, who appears to be dissatisfied by it. In the end, they sort their differences out and clear up the misunderstanding about blackmail. However, their being together requires sacrifices, especially for Maurice. They have to create a new place for them to live where the common conventions will not apply. “They must live outside class, without relations or money; they must work and stick to each other till death. But England belonged to them. That, besides their companionship, was their reward” (208-9). As he strips away all the societal benefits in favour of his lover, Maurice thus learns “the existential value of others, the right of every human to be treated fairly and equally” (Bailey 343) and progresses “from disequality to oneness” (Wilde 120).

II. VIII. – Suicide and death

As Maurice’s anxiety and frustration increases, he reaches the point of contemplating suicide on several occasions. After Clive professes love to Maurice, the latter is devastated and “struck his head against the wall and smashed the crockery”, but he is interrupted and eventually “the suicidal point had been passed” (Forster 58). At this point, it is the mixed feeling of horror caused by the idea of a man loving another, Maurice’s own realisation that he is that way, and his sadness over the fact that he has just lost Clive although he also loves him that elicit suicidal thoughts. Another suicidal episode happens shortly after Maurice’s argument with Ada, who is blamed for ruining Hall’s relationship with Durham. While on a train “[a]n immense silence, as of death, encircled the young man, and as he was going up to town one morning it struck him that
he really was dead”; such a contemplation makes him exclaim: “Life’s a damn poor show” and later “I’d jump out of the window for twopence.”” (121) This incident facilitates his thoughts and he enters a stage of making actual plans for suicide:

Having spoken, he began to contemplate suicide. There was nothing to deter him. He had no initial fear of death, and no sense of a world beyond it, nor did he mind disgracing his family. He knew that loneliness was poisoning him, so that he grew viler as well as more unhappy. Under these circumstances might he not cease? He began to compare ways and means, and would have shot himself but for an unexpected event. This event was the illness and death of his grandfather, which induced a new state of mind. (Forster 121).

His condition is progressively worsening and following the event in which Maurice almost assaults Dickie Barry he reaches a point where he sees no real options: “He was entering into a state that would only end with impotence or death” (132). Hall’s anxiety climaxes by seeking treatment from Lasker Jones, which has already been mentioned in chapter II. II. After the unsuccessful treatment and meeting Alec, Maurice’s mental health starts improving – the sense of oblivion and loneliness gradually decreases, and he is eventually ready to face the world with his new friend.

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8 This does not hold true for all Forster’s work, however. As Wilde suggest, in the collection of Forster’s short stories, The Life to Come, “the recognition that love leads inevitably to death is finally accepted” (127).
II. IX. – Minor Themes

Maurice is constantly plagued by desire, as it is very rarely satisfied in his life, but he very seldom succumbs to it. Therefore, when he is confronted with such strong feelings he is almost unable to control, he is horrified by them. He does not even recognise this feeling as desire. He mistakes it for adoration and when he eventually figures it out, he “expected to subdue it, now that he had found its name” (Forster 132). The surge of lust is experienced when Maurice goes to wake Dickie up. In his room, Maurice finds the boy asleep:

He lay unashamed, embraced and penetrated by the sun. The lips were parted, the down on the upper was touched with gold, the hair broken into countless glories, the body was a delicate amber. To anyone he would have seemed beautiful, and to Maurice who reached him by two paths he became the World’s desire. (Forster 129)

When Dickie joins the family downstairs, Maurice “rose to greet his god” and although “[t]he boy’s hair was now flat from the bath, and his grateful body hidden beneath clothes, but he remained extraordinarily beautiful” (130). The desire is so strong that Maurice quite ironically thinks of himself: “What a solid young citizen he looked – quiet, honourable, prosperous without vulgarity. . . . Was it conceivable that on Sunday last he had nearly assaulted a boy?” (135). As confident as Maurice was in his ability to get rid of lust, he fails miserably. As a result, he decides to consult a doctor⁹ about his condition: “He loathed the idea of a doctor, but failed to kill lust single-handed” and “[a]s crude as in his boyhood, it was many times as strong and raged in his empty soul” (136). Lust comes back even in Alec’s case: “But all that night his [Maurice’s] body

⁹ As mentioned previously, the reason to see the doctor was “a hideous experience in the train” when an older man tries to pick him up (Forster 136). However, the incident with Dickie also contributed to this decision.
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” (181) and he arranges another appointment with Lasker Jones to combat it. Lust is something that goes against everything considered meaningful: family, friends, work, and even one’s will.

Another such minor topic is gaze. As written in Part One, gaze has been a very important means for one’s ability to recognise other gays in the crowd. It does appear in the novel, however, and in important scenes. Firstly, it is mentioned when the relationship of Maurice and Clive’s is in its very beginning: “‘Mine too,’ said Durham, meeting his eye. As a rule Maurice shifted, but the held firm on this occasion” (Forster 38). This suggests that Hall, even though he has very little knowledge of what being a homosexual means, is aware that eye contact is key in letting the other person know one is interested. Indeed, as Markley claims that “[b]y switching the gendered object of the male gaze from female to male, and by disrupting the progress of his narrative at important moment . . . Forster invented a kind of narration that powerfully expresses male homoerotic desire while shrewdly maintaining . . . heterosexual conventionality” (268). Gaze, in Forster’s writing is, thus, used to convey desire in men. Secondly, the importance of gaze is used in a situation that is the absolute opposite of the previous one. Clive is thinking about Maurice and doubts Hall could ever like him: “Hall was a man who only liked women – one could tell that at a glance” (Forster 69). Clive simply does not receive enough eye contact to assess the situation correctly.

Forster also provides a glimpse into contemporary gay practices. In one scene, he briefly mentions cruising:

He had been brooding in an ill-conditioned way, and his expression aroused the suspicions and hopes of the only other person in the carriage.

This person, stout and greasy-faced, made a lascivious sign, and, off his
guard, Maurice responded. Next moment both rose to their feet. The other man smiled, whereupon Maurice knocked him down. Which was hard on the man, who was elderly and whose nose streamed with blood over the cushions, and the harder because he was now consumed with fear and thought Maurice would pull the alarm cord. He spluttered apologies, offered money. Maurice stood over him, black-browed, and saw in this disgusting and dishonourable old age his own. (Forster 136)

However unsuccessful for the old man the episode is, it captures very well the homosexual practices that went usually unnoticed to the non-initiated. Forster, after all, does not use a traditional setting as trains are “relatively new urban spaces” which “promised new erotic experience” (Cook, London 1-2). Therefore, Forster may not be overindulgent in the usage of cruising grounds, but their application is very contemporary and fresh. In addition to the cruising, this scene also offers another very common practice and that is blackmailing. The old man is worried that Maurice will report him and, thus, offers money to prevent him from doing that. Hall is, in this way, assigned the role of a blackmailer.

When Clive confronts Maurice after the former reveals his love for the latter, he tells Hall that he is “thankful it’s into your hands I fell. Most men would have reported me to the Dean or the Police” (Forster 62). Clive risks that while confiding his feelings to Maurice, the lover might start extorting him for money. Similarly, Maurice is extremely careful about Alec, who is even more dangerous in terms of blackmailing given is lower social status. In a note Alec asks Maurice to come to the boathouse so that they could meet again, but the message “contained every promise of blackmail” (181). When Maurice finally decides to meet with Alec and face the threat, they have a serious argument: “‘You blackmailed me.’ ‘No, sir, no…’ ‘You did.’ ‘Maurice, listen,
I only’ . . . ‘I was but threatening –’ ‘– for blackmail.’ ‘Could you but understand…”’ (196-97). After this, Alec returns Maurice’s note that would possibly be the only piece of evidence against Maurice and he says that he does not want it to show that the whole quarrel is just one big misunderstanding.

This novel also hints at another very common theme of public/private distinction and creating a sort of domesticity. When Maurice arrives at Penge for the first time, Clive is absolutely thrilled by it: “Maurice! Maurice! you’ve actually come! You’re here. This place’ll never seem the same again, I shall love it at last!” (Forster 82). Maurice’s arrival transforms Durham’s perception of the family residence into an actual home, where he can finally spend time with his beloved. Another such talk occurs between Maurice and Alec just before the moment of Alec’s departure for Argentina. In it, they are trying to concoct a plan for their living together. Alec is a little sceptical about it, because he does not really want Maurice to quit his job because of him and he himself is worried that by squandering an opportunity to work in Argentina, he will damn himself:

‘I shall get work with you,’ . . . ‘No, there’ll be enough money to keep us while we have a look round. I’m no fool, nor are you. We won’t be starving. I’ve thought out that much, while I was awake in the night and you weren’t.’

There was a pause. Alec went on more politely: ‘Wouldn’t work, Maurice. Ruin us both, can’t you see, you same as myself.’

. . . ‘I know what we do today. We clear out of here and get a decent breakfast and we go down to Penge or whatever you want and see that Fred of yours. You tell him you’ve changed your mind about emigrating and are taking a job with Mr Hall instead. . . .’
... ‘Yours is the talk of someone who’s never had to earn his living,’ he said. ‘You sort of trap me with I love you or whatever it is and then offer to spoil my career. Do you realize I’ve got a definite job awaiting me in the Argentine?’ (Forster 203)

Maurice and Alec also spend a night in a hotel. The description of it is quite peculiar: “A strange hotel, a casual refuge protected them from their enemies a little longer” (Forster 200). They follow a similar pattern of creating a small private environment in otherwise public space.

Another minor appearance of a common conception of gay life appears briefly during Maurice’s reign over his family and that is the conception of bachelorhood. Indeed, Mrs Hall, when trying to explain to Clive that Maurice would never miss one of their regular Wednesday meetings, notes that “Nothing I can do or say can make him miss a Wednesday. Maurice is a regular old bachelor” (Forster 100). Thus, she unknowingly and unintentionally marks her son as a homosexual as “[b]achelors . . . featured frequently in court cases involving homosexual activity” (Cook, London 31).

There is also a strong inclination of Maurice to keep his family life from his personal life as it was customary: “He has become a most mysterious person” (Forster 108) and “[h]e keeps everything so secret, and then laughs at girls” (109). As bachelors, Clive and Maurice are also strongly misogynistic: “during their love women had become as remote as horses or cats; all that creatures did seemed [sic] silly” (92).

Clothing appears in minor scenes as well. While in Penge, Mrs Durham tells Maurice: “‘How exquisite is your coiffure.’ ‘My coiffure?’ He found that his head was all yellow with evening primrose pollen. ‘Oh, don’t brush it off. I like it on your black hair. Mr Borenius, is he not quite bacchanalian?’” (Forster 164). By this, she likens Maurice to the Roman god Bacchus and, thus, marks him as eccentric or not properly
Victorian, which may be amusing for a short while but also indicating homosexuality and femininity. When Maurice meets Alec at British Museum the gamekeeper is “dressed no longer in corduroys but in a new blue suit and bowler hat – part of his outfit for Argentine” (192). This very colourful attire is very prominent and as the Victorians would not approve of such deviation since there were “narrow limits of color, cut and composition” and any eccentricity “signified man’s sexual character” (Houlbrook 145), he would be immediately recognised as a homosexual. Furthermore, at a dinner at Penge, the dress-code is discussed: “[i]t was a dinner-jacket evening—not tails, because they would only be three—and though he had respected such niceties for years he found them suddenly ridiculous. What did clothes matter as long as you got your food, and the other people were good sorts?” (Forster 162). Maurice does not think that formality is important anymore: respectability and appropriateness is no longer a function he associated with attire as clothes have acquired a completely new meaning to him and were established as a means of perceiving other people’s sexuality.

The penultimate topic for this analysis is the Greco-Roman tradition. Maurice makes various references to Greek and Roman cultures. At college, during one of the dean’s lectures on translation, one of the students mumbles: “Omit: a reference to the unspeakable vice of the Greeks” (Forster 50). The book also mentions Plato’s Symposium and Phaedrus several times, in which “[Clive’s] malady [is] described exquisitely, calmly, as a passion . . .” (67). Clive also assigns Symposium for Maurice to read. During the description of Clive and Maurice’s happiness while they are together “Clive had expanded in this direction ever since he had understood Greek. The love that Socrates bore Phaedo now lay within his reach” (91).

The last theme in this category is places. Forster makes use of places in a similar manner he uses religion to demonstrate Clive’s change from homosexual to
heterosexual. He is obsessed with visiting Greece as “[e]very barbarian must give the Acropolis its chance once” (Forster 99). For Durham, Greece is an epitome of homosexuality and wants to see the land where Plato and others hail from. However, this happens a few days after his illness that has supposedly changed him\textsuperscript{10}\textsuperscript{11}, so his desire to visit Greece more likely stems from the fact that he wants to be sure he is no longer homosexual. Before his change, he is quite sure that he will love Greece, but when he returns he tells Ada that Greece was: “Horrible,” because he “had to reconstruct my life from the bottom” (111). Thus, the usage of Greece as an indicator that Clive is no longer homosexual is similar to his atheism. He likes the idea of going and looks forward to seeing all – similarly he cannot believe in God and condemns all beliefs – as a homosexual but during his transformation he starts despising Greece and also embraces Christianity. Contrary to Clive, Maurice “had no use for Greece” and refuses to go there as a gay man but to him it is “the yet holier land [than Italy] beyond the Adriatic” (99). It is as if Maurice, who is so sure with his sexuality, does not need any proof of him being thus and, therefore, cannot see a reason why to go to prove anything. Clive, on the other hand, needs to confirm his sexuality and for that reason he is enchanted by it.

\textsuperscript{10} “The changes had been so shocking that sometimes he thought Maurice was right, and that it was the finish of his illness. […] It came during illness – possibly through illness.” (Forster 106).

\textsuperscript{11} Fone, for instance, argues that “Clive discovers that what he felt was not passion but a construction from books, and that his love for Maurice was a blend of lust never realized . . . and the condescension of an upper-class man for the middle-class youth he sought not to love but to change” (174).
Chapter III – Alan Hollinghurst and *The Swimming-Pool Library*

The thesis now moves to the analysis of the other primary source and that is *The Swimming-Pool Library* by Alan Hollinghurst. The book covers a great deal of topics that have already been touched upon in *Maurice* and adds some of its own. The first subchapter is devoted to the perception of the old, that is, the previous generations – it enables for understanding how the themes the novel mentions connect with, or, indeed disconnect from, the past. The second chapter examines the concepts of friendship, love, and interest in men, which are also reflected in Forster’s work. The third part of this section examines another aspect of homosexuality as something known and, to some extent, familiar. This is quite different an approach from Forster’s treatment of homosexuality, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV. The fourth subsection focuses on manliness, while the fifth one follows the theme of double identity and falsehood. The sixth subchapter is concerned with class and equality. The seventh part discusses the sense of isolation, the distinction between the private and the public, and domesticity. The two interconnected motifs of lust and punishment are explored in section seven, followed by subchapters dealing with cruising, gaze, stranger, and, finally clothing. There is one last subchapter that discusses minor themes: fear, the police, homosociality, places, community, misogyny, and the Greco-Roman.

**III. I. – Age, Generation of the Past**

The novel starts with William Beckwith going home, where his new lover, Arthur, awaits him. On the train, he is thinking about the young black boy and his name which is “perhaps the least likely ever to have been young” (Hollinghurst 2) rendering him frigid and undesirable as “it evoked for me the sunless complexion, unaired suiting, steel-rimmed glasses of a ledger clerk in a vanished age” (2). These old-fashioned
Edwardian names are deprived of any sexiness in them, they do not provoke desire, and they are “the denial of romance” (2). For Will, the previous generation seems to be just a period which cannot be sexy or desirable and, eventually, a period in which no sex ever happened, yet, at the same time, the names “bespoke personalities unflecked by sex or malice” (2), and thus signal purity. The strange oldness of the name however is in deep contrast with Arthur, a young black man, who is “beautiful, cocky, slutish” and whom “it was impossible to imagine old” (2). Sexlessness of the old becomes a theme that resonates throughout the book and that never quite disappears.

In addition to the frigidity and asexuality of the Edwardian period, it also evokes a degree of disgust and fear. When Will tries to pick up a young Arab man in a park, he goes to a public lavatory to see whether the boy understands this old-fashioned strategy. There, he finds several middle-aged men who are waiting there for someone to pick up too. Will is somewhat disturbed by the whole scene, he does not seem to understand this behaviour and thinks it to be below him:

I felt a faint revulsion – not disapproval, but a fear of one day being like that. Their heads seemed grey and loveless to me as they turned in automatic anticipation. What long investment they made for what paltry returns… Did they nod to one another, the old hands, at hey took up their positions, day by day, alongside each other in whatever station in their underground cycle of conveniences they had reached? Did anything ever happen, did they, despairing of whatever it was they sought, which could surely never be sex, but at most a glimpse of something memorable, ever make do with each other? I felt certain they didn’t; they were engaged, in a silently agreed silence, in looking out endlessly for something they couldn’t have. I was not shy but too proud and priggish to take up my
place among them. (Hollinghurst 6)

The old men – given their grey and loveless heads – produce no desire whatsoever simply because of their age and also their automated behaviour. They are stuck in the stale practices of the past and, being used to them for a great span of their lives, unlikely to change. For Will, this is a test of how tolerant he can be as well as a warning and an epitome of what he might eventually become if he is not careful.

This fear is embodied in a scene in which Will describes somewhat crazy behaviour of Arthur’s. “On occasion he would laugh very loudly at something mildly funny, and keep on laughing as he slapped himself and pointe at my puzzled, cross expression. I couldn’t understand where this laughter came from; it seemed to me some new nihilistic teen thing I was already too old for” (Hollinghurst 13); moreover, this behaviour belongs to “kids in Oxford Street or on Tottenham Court Road [who were] laughing in the same cold, painful, helpless way” (13). William realises that his inability to grasp the essence of such conduct is based on the age gap, but in his selfishness, he is not capable of making a more generic statement and apply it to himself and the generation that preceded him.

As cruel as this may sound, Will also pities the older generation on several occasions. When he sees Lord Charles Nantwich – an elderly man who is saved in the public lavatory by Will after a cardiac arrest – in the showers of Will’s favourite gym called The Corinthian Club12 he notices that “three queens sported horizontal members which they turned round from time to time to conceal or to display, barely exchanging looks as they revolved. The old man took no interest in this activity, knowing perhaps from long experience that it rarely meant anything or led anywhere . . . ” (Hollinghurst 26). William befriends Charles and is invited to Nantwich’s favourite gentlemen’s club.

12 “The Corry” for short as it is known among the people who visit it.
After his arrival, Beckwith notes that it is a “a home for people kept artificially alive” (Hollinghurst 34). Later, William bumps into Charles in the swimming pool at the Corry, where Nantwich is only floating in the water. “Though to my mind he looked dead, there was something wonderfully natural about the way he just lay on and in the water” (99). The old gentlemen in the club as well as Charles in the swimming pool are simply long past their life expectancy and, therefore, any extra minute they are alive creates another wave of pity. Similarly, when William goes to a cinema to see a porn movie and receive some sexual pleasure, he sees

a spry little chap of sixty-five or so . . . His was a complete and innocent absorption in the fantasy world on screen. Could he look back to a time when he had behaved like these glowing, thoughtless teenagers, who were now locked together sucking on each other’s cocks in the hay? Or was this the image of a new society we had made, where every desire could find its gratification? (Hollinghurst 51)

William can only see that for the old man there is nothing else left than the memories of his life and the movie that plays in front of him. The other possibility is that in this new world full of possibilities even the old can have their desires fulfilled if only on screen and never in real life. Another tinge of pity can be found in the scene where Will, after being asked by Lord Nantwich to write his biography, opens various books and journals Charles gives him as sources and, browsing through them, notes that “I had seen him less and less in control of his life, and was surprised for a moment to find a young man who would have known how to have a good time” (95). William is unable to create a link between the past and present and to overcome the disparity between him and the previous generation. All he can muster is feelings of pity and slight disgust.
Moreover, there is a sense of superiority permeating all these quotes. One example that makes this more prominent can be found when Will’s best friend James tries to persuade him into writing Charles’s biography, as William is not sure whether he could manage such a task. Beckwith confirms that the lord is very keen on him and James is convinced that Will can manage even that: “Mostly with these old queens they just ask you to go swimming in their pool, or they burst into the bathroom by mistake when you’re having a bath. They just like to have a look, you know” to which William answers: “For God’s sakes, James, I’m not bothered about all that. It’s me that’s doing him a favour in the first place” (87-88). Of course, this could be interpreted as a reaction to the fact that Lord Nantwich wants his biography written, however, given the selfishness of Will’s this seems to also imply that he feels superior to the old man just because he is much younger and more handsome than his admirer, since Charles has “already seen me in my birthday suit\textsuperscript{13} several times” (Hollinghurst 88). William does a favour to Nantwich by showing off his nice body, which the latter can feast his eyes on and be grateful for. The words of criticism also come from James’s mouth during their talk after James is arrested for picking up a policeman:

\begin{quote}
It’ll sound stupid to you, Willy, but over the last few weeks I’ve just felt… \textit{so out of it}. I’ve gone long without love and I’ve become simply so accustomed to it all, as if that’s how life is and evermore shall be – death – horror – amen. It struck me that I’ve turned into that archetypal middle-class intellectual out of touch with everything, just like someone in a Forster novel, and that was eighty years ago. (Hollinghurst 220)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13} meaning naked
For James, this stereotype of a middle-class intellectual who is “out of touch with everything” is old-fashioned and utterly undesirable an image because, as in William’s case, it produces sexlessness and promotes frigidity.

As he proceeds with reading about Nantwich’s life, however, Beckwith begins to see that the previous generation is not that very disconnected from his life and the two share some similarities. He phones Charles to arrange a meeting because he needs to clarify on certain aspects of the lord’s life. William starts talking about one of the episodes which happens in a castle. “But I was very struck that, as well as the Winchester stuff, which, despite its period, spoke for me too, down to the very details of placed and customs, there was a much less expected fore-echo of my own life in the of the Old Castle” (129). Here, Will finally acknowledges that there are connections between the young and the old, as his own experience plays out in a similar manner when he is taken to the Old Castle by his tutor on architectural drive sixty years after Nantwich visits it.

Moreover, in another conversation with Charles, Will admits that “I’m always forgetting how sexy the past must have been – it’s the clothes or something” (Hollinghurst 247). Charles gives his recount of the things long past:

Oh, it was unbelievably sexy – much more so than nowadays. I’m not against Gay Lib and all that, of course, William, but it has taken a lot of the fun out of it, a lot of the frisson. I think the 1880s must have been an ideal time, with brothels full of off-duty soldiers, and luscious young dukes chasing after barrow-boys. Even in the Twenties and Thirties, which were quite wild in their way, it was still kind of underground, we operated on a constantly shifting code, and it was so extraordinarily moving and exciting when that spurt of recognition came, like the flare
of a match. (247)

For the lord, the modern period is not as tempting as his own prime time, because the danger involved in having sex with men has shrunk to a minimum, while during his youth, the homosexuals had to devise various pick-up strategies, speak in codes, and signal when interested. Charles is, therefore, as disinterested in and disconnected from Will’s generation as is Will disinterested in and disconnected from Charles’s. Nantwich also explains that he realises how ridiculous this nostalgia is as he says: “I know what you mean, sex somehow becomes farcical in the past” (247). He understands Will’s inability to identify with the previous generation but at the same time lectures him to stop treating it as something inferior or worthless.

III. II. – Friendship, Interest in Men, and Love

William seems to be very confused about his feelings as it happens to him that he contradicts himself on several occasions. His feelings are very hard to determine and to give them some fixed features is nearly impossible. They keep evolving; they are fluid and unstable. The only thing he is probably certain about is that his friend James is the most important person in the world: “It was from him [James], whom I loved more than anyone, that I most often heard the account of myself” (Hollinghurst 5). He would do anything for him and is willing to go out of his own comfort zone to help him. This can be seen, for instance, when James is arrested: ‘Darling, it’s James. You couldn’t come over, could you?’ ‘Sweetest, I’ve got a pretty frightful head and it’s only seven o’clock. Can’t it wait?’ ‘A bit, I suppose. I’m in a terrible mess. I’ve been arrested’” (212). Once at James’s, they have a very affectionate conversation in which they negotiate their relationship:
'When did we last meet, for instance? I know you’re busy with your boys and what have you – but I would like to see you darling a bit more often, you know? You are one of my oldest, dearest friends, fuck it.’

‘I do feel the same, James. I’m always thinking of you and having conversations with you in my head and imagining what you would say about things. You’re my most constant companion, even though I’m so pathetic and never get in touch with you.’

He smiled: ‘You see, just talking to you now makes me feel better.’ . . . (219)

There is never a question of sex between them, their relationship is never truly physical, although they “slept together once or twice, but . . . did no more that kiss and cuddle” (20) and Will does feel a little sorry that his friend does not get enough attention from other men or that he is not treated better.

As a contrast, William never has this deep relationship with any of his boyfriends or men that he picks up to have a casual sex with. As far as Arthur is concerned, “I was certainly sentimental with Arthur . . . at one moment caressingly attentive, the next gluttoning him with sex, mindlessly – thoughtlessly. It was the most beautiful thing I could imagine – all the more so for our knowledge that we could never make a go of it together” (Hollinghurst 5). Will is aware of the fact that their relationship is more superficial and physical. When James enquires about whether Will loves Arthur, he replies: “I can’t be, actually,” because “We couldn’t sit down and listen to Idomeneo and feel a deep spiritual bond” (19-20). However, at the same time, William wonders that “If I had not been so fiercely and sexually in love with him, these days would have been utterly intolerable” (Hollinghurst 29). Similar contradictions are evoked with Phil, another of Will’s boyfriends that he has after Arthur disappears
without letting him know where. On one hand Beckwith keeps saying how much he loves Phil and how much he cares for him. He cannot stop thinking about Phil as “The day’s spasm of emotion for Phil recurred and recurred, and the prospect of the Nantwich book, which was alluring, was also oppressive . . .” (85). On the other hand, he keeps wondering about Arthur and also has sex with other men, which he does not sees as cheating. When, eventually, he bumps into Arthur in the Shaft14, while being there with Phil, Will first mindlessly kissed Arthur and then takes him to the lavatory, where he fucks him in a lock-up. During that time Will has “almost no idea what I was doing” and he “was almost sick with love” (203). Even though he cheats on his boyfriends quite regularly, he is extremely jealous when it comes to them cheating on him: “I felt a mixture of shame and cruel pleasure in this, that my little Philibuster was not giving anyone else a foothold on his hard, soap-slippery self-possession15” (217). This holds true for Arthur as well: “Actually, Massimo said he wanted to have him too, but I did draw the line there” (Hollinghurst 19). However, when he learns that Phil is, indeed, cheating on him, finding him in flagrante with Will’s friend, he is absolutely enraged. True, he leaves the room silently, completely in shock, but he later confides to James that he “find[s] Phil in there with old Bill Hawkins, from the Corry, messing around stark naked, etc, etc” and that he does “find it very terrible, actually. . . . I mean, I absolutely hate the thought of Phil going with someone else. But one would understand it if it were just some spur-of-the-moment fling—some sexy guy staying in the hotel or something. . . .” (277). A one-night stand seems tolerable to Will, even though it offends him as it hurts his pride, but he is not able to tolerate an intercourse which is planned and, thus, an intercourse that does not operate solely on lust or desire.

14 One of the local gay clubs which William frequents.
15 This refers to James seeing Phil showering in the Corry and his disinclination to show off his body to anyone.
Interest in men in Hollinghurst’s novel is immediately obvious and does not concern only the main protagonist of the story. As he is travelling on the Underground, Will notices two men, of which “the other [is] a severely handsome black of about thirty-five” (Hollinghurst 1). In the Corry (for the first time the reader learns Beckwith goes there), William meets Bill Hawkins, who “sat down on the bench, where he could politely talk while also watching me take my clothes off. It was typical of his behaviour, discreet, but not prurient: his was the old-fashioned ethos of a male community, delighting in men, but always respectful and fraternal” (10). This is slightly different from the lustful approach William adopts: “A week had gone by since we’d met [William and Arthur], a week spent in bed, or trailing naked from bedroom to bathroom to kitchen; sleeping at irregular times, getting drunk, watching movies on the video. I was engrossed with him” (13). As a habit, Will also inspects men’s ring fingers for any signs that the person might be unapproachable. For example, as he travels on the last train home in the opening scene, he inspects the handsome black worker, who “turned his hands over and I saw the pale gold band of his wedding-ring” (1), and later as William “nipped from under his [James’s] umbrella into the taxi, looking, as I always instinctively do, at the cabby’s hand on the wheel to see if he wore a wedding-ring” (20). There are numerous instances in which William displays his interest in men or vice-versa for that matter. For example, when he goes to visit Nantwich in his club, William arrives too early and decides to take a stroll in the neighbourhood. He finds a young Cockney man and he “scuffed around in the dry, unmown grass beside him, my cock lurching into a hard-on which he could hardly fail to notice. His own genitals were punched up tight in the crotch of his jeans, and he squeezed the swelling outline of his cock with the palm of his hand” (133). On another occasion “a young man got on [the train] whom I recognised and placed within a second or two as the wiry person that
James had fancied a while ago in the showers . . .” with “his big, protuberant cock, very emphatic in his light cotton trousers” (93). Yet, there is another person interested in Will himself: “one of the strap-hangers, a man whom I spotted eyeing the erection which even the shortest journey on tube or bus always gives me, inclined to swing or jolt towards me as the train lost or gained speed, and the pressure of his knee in mine, and of his eyes in my lap” (94). As can be seen from the examples above, this interest is mostly physical and is abundant throughout the novel. Generally speaking, it is driven by lust and desire rather than some real interest in the people themselves. More examples follow in III. VIII.

As James struggles to find a proper man for himself, William also examines the drives other males may have that cause them to be interested in other men. He describes James as follows:

He was so lovable, shy, manly, I couldn’t see why he wasn’t adored more, or more often. Yet if I couldn’t do it, there might be a reason why others couldn’t: he didn’t project sex enough, he was too subtle a taste for the instant world of clubs and bars. We had slept together once or twice, but we were both funny with each other and did no more than kiss and cuddle. (Hollinghurst 20)

For William, the only way to have sex or cause men to be interested in someone is through sexual radiance, which some may not be capable of. Yet, he indirectly confirms that having sex with men without any deep connection is, to some extent, unsatisfactory. During their talk after James was arrested, James complains that no one is ever interested in him to which Will retorts: “Darling heart, of course people want you. You’re so adorable” and he “kissed away the tears that weren’t there”; at the same time, however, William finds him “very slightly repellent” (220). To make matter
clearer for Will, who obviously does not understand his complaints, James explains that no one wants to have sex with him. Will’s reply is as follows: “I’ll fuck you – here and now, if that’s what you want”, but for James “[t]hat would never do”, and Will, in his mind, agrees: “It wouldn’t of course” (220). He seems to understand that this forced sexual encounter that would be fuelled just by pity would not help James at all. Given the previous quotes, however, this also unfortunately means that Will provides a white lie to make James feel better. He is simply not a sexual object that is capable of projecting desire in the way that other gay men would appreciate.

It is also important to see how interest in men changes depending on the environment. Such interest is, most of the time, explicitly expressed. In homosocial environment, however, this can change and be neutralised as Will comments on such practices in the Corry:

‘I know – well, that’s what she said.’

‘But have you seen her since?’

‘Only briefly, and then I couldn’t say anything, because of course you-know-who was in attendance.’

‘I really like her actually; from what I’ve seen of her, that is.’

It was the typical transsexual talk of the place . . . It was all a game, any man in the least attractive being dubbed as ‘she’ and only males too dire for such a conceit being left an unadorned ‘he’ or, occasionally, sinisterly, ‘mister’ – as in the poisonous declaration ‘I trust you won’t be seeing Mister Elizabeth Arden again’. (Hollinghurst 66)

This is, of course, extremely transparent to people who are in the know and may sound obvious even to the people who are not aware of such practices, but Will also admits his (and James’s) confusion when they encounter this phenomenon for the first time.
Therefore, it seems to be a very efficient strategy how to talk about and sexualise men in a strictly homosocial environment where the threat of selecting a wrong man from the crowd is significantly higher.

III. III. – Homosexuality

Given the openness of the book about sexuality in general, the novel offers another viewpoint through which homosexuality can be looked at. Rupert, Will’s six-year-old nephew, is quite familiar with the topic of homosexuality despite his age. William arrives home only to meet Arthur going through old photos with the boy, who ran away from his parents. Beckwith then goes through the pictures with Rupert himself, as Arthur needs to hide for Rupert’s father, Gavin, is coming to pick the child up, and William does not want anyone to know about Arthur’s presence. While looking at the pictures the two have the following exchange:

‘And is that Robert Carson um Smith?’

‘Smith-Carson, actually, but jolly good all the same.’

‘Was he a homosexual?’

‘Certainly was.’

... 

‘He was great friends with James, you know.’

‘Is James homosexual, too?’

‘You know perfectly well he is.’

‘Yes, I thought he was, but Mummy said you mustn’t say people were.’

‘You say what you like, sweetheart; as long as it’s true, of course.’

‘Of course. Is he homosexual as well?’ he chimed on, pointing to the
remaining person in the picture . . .

‘I mean,’ Rupert looked up at me cogitatively, ‘almost everyone is homosexual, aren’t they? Boys, I mean.’

‘I sometimes think so,’ I hedged.

‘Is Grandpa one?’

‘Good heavens, no,’ I protested.

‘Am I one?’ Rupert asked intently.

‘It’s a bit early to say yet, old fellow. But you could be, you know.’

‘Goody!’ he squealed, banging his heels against the front of the sofa again. ‘Then I can come and live with you.’ (Hollinghurst 60-1)

Rupert possesses quite acute knowledge of homosexuality and does enjoy the idea of being one. When Rupert’s father arrives, Will tells him that they “were just having a talk about homosexuality” to which Gavin responds:

‘He is frightfully interested in that at the moment, although he can’t have the least idea what it is – can he? It must be the effect of his overbearing and possessive mum. Odd what little children get up to; I was a committed transvestite at his age. But that seemed to get it out of the system,’ he added hastily. (61)

Gavin confesses committing some deviant behaviour in his past as he feels secure enough in the presence of a homosexual, but he also feels the need to reassure William that this happened a long time ago and does not occur anymore in order to save his image of a heterosexual. However, when Gavin appears at Ronald Staines’s photo exhibition he “shook hands warmly [with Will] and he said, ‘Good to see you, my dear,’ in that agreeable, almost nostalgic way that straight men sometimes flirt with gays” (232), so he is not uncomfortable with breaking the rules of his own sexuality.
Moreover, Gavin also later admits that the heterosexual and homosexual communities have very deep connections with one another: “You know, some of us lot do have contacts with some of you lot . . . You may like to think that you live in a world all of your own, but in fact you live considerably further away from Ronnie Staines than we do.” (232). Rupert’s father acknowledges that heterosexuals may even have much deeper connections with homosexuals than gays themselves.

While with Gavin and Rupert homosexuality is openly discussed and is not a sensitive topic, in case of Will’s grandfather, Denis Beckwith, the situation is different. William, Lord Beckwith, and James go out to see an opera in the evening and the two friends have to be very careful not to mention anything in front of the lord. They talk about the opera but “What he [James] would want to talk about would be the suppressed or (in his usual term) deflected sexuality of the opera. We must all have recognised it, though it would have had an importance, even an eloquence, to James and me that would have been quite lost on my grandfather” (Hollinghurst 120), because William’s grandfather “had spent all his adult life in circles where good manners, lofty savoir-faire and plain callousness conspired to avoid any recognition that homosexuality even existed. The three of us in our hot little box were trapped with this insanely British problem: the opera that was, but wasn’t. gay . . . ” (120). Thus, while with the younger generation one does not have to be particularly worried about talking openly about homosexuality, even implicit mentions of homosexuality to the older generation are unimaginable and are rather met with tacit indifference or ignorance. It is only later when William learns from Charles’s journals that his grandfather has a reason to avoid this topic whatsoever, as he built his career on oppression of homosexuals. For Charles, Denis is “a man I could hate, the one who more than anybody has been the inspiration of this ‘purge’ as he calls it, this crusade to eradicate male vice” (260). Therefore,
Will’s grandfather is perfectly aware of what is going on in Britain as he stood against it some forty years ago.

The book also provides an episode in which homosexuality is actually a desired trait. In one of their conversations about Nantwich’s life, the lord mentions that the government was not particularly troubled about homosexuality when selecting appropriate candidates for the work in Sudan:

> On the gay thing . . . they were completely untroubled – even to the extent of having a slight preference for it, in my opinion. Quite unlike all this modern nonsense about how we’re security risks and what-have-you. They had the wit to see that we were prone to immense idealism and dedication. . . . And of course in a Muslim country it was a positive advantage… (Hollinghurst 241)

Quite surprisingly, at the same time Will’s grandfather is persecuting homosexuals in his “crusade”, the government is giving “slight preference” to homosexuals to govern the colonies and provinces.

III. IV. – Manliness

Given the rather sexual drive of the book and Will’s selfishness, the novel does not focus on respectability in any particular way. This is probably because of the so-called “‘secularization’ of sexuality” which means “the progressive detachment of sexual values from religious values—even for many of the religious” (Weeks 95). The assessment of what is moral and respectable “passed from the Churches to the agents of social and mental hygiene, primarily in the medical profession” (Weeks 95). This would suggest that one’s sexuality and acts one commits have little to no impact on one’s social status and decency. The novel does, however, discuss manliness. When Arthur
returns to Will after the former is attacked by his brother and his associate and cut in the face, William notes that “[t]here was something repulsive and careless about him . . . (though he tried to disguise this weakness with a mutinous look). But at the same time he was utterly defenceless: everything about him spoke of need” (Hollinghurst 21-22).

The sudden display of weakness and neediness seems repulsive to William, as it emasculates Arthur and takes away his desirability. At the Corry, William decides to talk to Phil, and the former watches the latter as “[h]e was now standing and putting on his old-fashioned and manly white underpants”; a little later “[s]omething masculine in him momentarily bridled, though the new pleasure of being called beautiful . . . won over and he smiled with shy pride” (83). Although the two instances seem quite contradictory—Arthur being hurt and weak, while Phil is depicted as very masculine—the resulting effect is the same: there is a coherent picture of what manliness consists, or rather does not consist, of. In Arthur’s case is the display of weakness and being needy, while with Phil, being called beautiful emasculates him for a second.

When at Charles’s, Will and his host go to a little library to have a talk. Will notices that the library possesses a similar atmosphere which is also present in drawing rooms: “There was a similar maleness and candour to it, that scholarly inversion of the rules of the drawing room that allowed one to talk about sodomy and priapism as though one were really talking about something else” (Hollinghurst 238). This seems to suggest that with enough masculinity any homosexual activities or topics can be successfully concealed, which also explains why the Corry is a perfectly inconspicuous place, no matter how much nakedness, overt displays of affection, and sex-talk one encounters. This perfectly mimics the Victorian experience of bathhouses where “homosociality blended into homoeroticism” (Houlbrook 97) and “in which men felt safe enough to have sex relatively openly” (94).
A special case of manliness, which does not appear in *Maurice*, is the theme of dominance or control over an individual, particularly sexual dominance. In the cinema where porn movies are played, William has a fellatio performed on him by a stranger he, eventually, thinks is Phil. During their dark encounter, Phil’s “heart was racing” and Will “felt all the tension in his fixed posture between excitement and fear, and knew that I could take control of him” (Hollinghurst 53). A bit later, William basks in his triumph: “I loved the nerve with which I’d done all this, and like most random sex it gave me the feeling I could achieve anything I wanted if I were only determined enough” (53). During their encounter in the Corry mentioned previously, William also feels empowered in conversations with Phil: “But he was clearly not a person that I could win over with collusive bad jokes. . . . More silence followed, in which I felt that I had the upper hand” (83). Furthermore, William does not hesitate to act if he thinks that a situation does not move in a way he imagined. When he is in Phil’s hotel with his new lover, Phil is rather clumsy and shy in sex which leads Will to think that “[n]othing was going to get done unless I took command” (105). The last example of Will’s cravings for dominance is one of the later sexual encounters with Phil. The two are heading to William’s house and Phil is in a great need of visiting a bathroom. Beckwith, however, delays Phil as much as possible:

I unlocked the door and as he slipped in caught him by the arm and made him stand where he was. Then I knelt down and undid his shows and pulled his socks off: he was jiggling on the spot . . . But instead of letting him go I led him on to the lino of the kitchen, and he stood there, obedient and desperate. I took off his shirt, and undid the top button of his trousers . . . His dick was already half-hard from the desire to piss, and as I kissed him, and bit him, and licked his tits, I whispered to him to
let it go. I slipped my hands between his legs and squeezed his balls, and watched his eyes widen as he overcame his inhibition. . . . An abundant, infantile puddle spread on the lino, and when he had finished, I went behind him, pulled down his trousers, pushed him to the floor and fucked him in it like a madman. (Hollinghurst 163)

This is basically the climax of Will’s craze for dominance, when he completely seizes control over a person’s body and behaviour and makes them do whatever he wants.

In cases he fails to exert his power, Beckwith gets frustrated. This is illustrated in his meeting with the Cockney boy. William imagines “pissing over him, jamming my cock down his throat, forcing my fingers up his ass”, in other words, he uses force to compel obedience, however, the young man is only interested in Will’s money and, thus, bids him farewell. Will then “resented his ability to resist me, and that I had no power over someone so young” (Hollinghurst 134). Furthermore, when Will picks up Gabriel, an Argentinean, in Phil’s hotel, it turns out that Gabriel has a very porn-like attitude in sex and possesses a great collection of various sexual toys and instruments including “a black leather mask which completely covered his head. There were two neat little holes beneath the nostrils, and zipped slits for the eyes and mouth” (274) and “[c]lose to I could see only his large brown pupils and the whites of his eyes, blurred for a split second if he blinked, like the lens of a camera” (274). This, as Cooper notes, is extremely unpleasant for Will as “part of what Will rejects is that as the mask is assumed, there is a reverse objectification as Gabriel becomes photographer, clicking in Will’s face” (143). Will loses his dominant position and becomes the one objectified; in other words, he becomes the dominated, which is unacceptable for him.

Charles also proves that the question of dominance is not alien to his generation either. His brother, Franky, was “nymphomaniac” as Charles recounts and “[h]e was
always getting them [farmworkers] in a corner and making them do things. And of course in those days you could – I may be embroidering a little but I think I’m right in saying that virtually any, you know, working-class lads could be had for… not more than ten shillings” (Hollinghurst 158). It is arguable that this example is based on a different distribution of power, however, the class status is of little importance here.

III. V. – Double Identity and Falsehood

The concept of double identity or two lives is incorporated into the very core of the novel as Will is “a perfect Gemini, a child of the ambiguous early summer, tugged between two versions of myself, one of them the hedonist and the other . . . an almost scholarly figure with a faintly puritanical set to the mouth. And there were deeper dichotomies” (Hollinghurst 4-5). All his life is divided into two forces that govern his life and he is full of paradoxes. He is torn between two men, Arthur and Phil, and his thoughts wander from one to the other. He is also divided in terms of sex. While he cannot tolerate unfaithfulness, he cheats on his boyfriends all the time, in a dialogue between a lasting relationship and random, one-night stands. He is as attentive and caressing to his partners as he is ruthless and humiliating. He never prefers one approach or the other, they both seem to coexist at the same time and Will chooses them randomly and capriciously to satisfy his whims; he also never questions them in terms of morality, and they both seem to be equally good, or bad, for that matter. The only person who forces his to reflect on his actions is James. When William secretly reads his journal, he is forced “to see myself from another point of view. It was like suddenly finding out that someone I knew quite well had been leading a double life: the delectable blond super-stud I loved so much was really a selfish little rich boy, vain, spoilt and even, on one stinging occasion, ‘grotesque’” (216). In Nantwich’s club, Will
lies to him about liking girls without any apparent reason: “Do you like girls at all?” he asked. ‘Yes, I like them quite a lot really,’ I insisted” (37).

However, William is not the only one who seems to have a double identity in the city. Bill Hawkins, who is a regular at the Corry, also trains teenage boxers. Will meets him at a local championship, the Nantwich Cup, and is puzzled about that: “I didn’t realise that was your name. I had this idea you were called… Hawkins” to which Bill responds: “I can explain that… I will explain it to you one day. You’re quite right though. At the Corinthian Club I’m Hawkins, but down here with the lads I’m Shillibeer – Shilly Billy, they call me. All in good fun, of course” (Hollinghurst 146). It is not very convincing for Will, however, as he catches “the tone of one who has just dreamt up an alibi and is about to test it on a sceptical CID man” (146). Beckwith never learns the truth about Hawkins’s double life, as Bill is the one with whom Phil eventually cheats on William, and Beckwith never sees them again.

Another person who keeps some deep dark secrets appears to be Ronald Staines, a famous photographer. When he is introduced to William for the first time, Will is immediately alerted by Staines’s persona:

He was dressed entirely properly, but there was something about the way he inhabited his clothes that was subversive. He seemed to slither around within the beautiful green tweed, the elderly herringbone shirt and chaste silk tie which plumped forward slightly between collar and waistcoat. . . .

He was a man in disguise, but a disguise which his gestures, his over-preserved profile and a Sitwellian taste in rings drew immediate attention to. It was a strikingly two-minded performance. (Hollinghurst 42)
Though William feels that Bill may be hiding something and does not necessarily tell him the truth, the appearance of Staines revolts him and he spots the falsehood and pretence immediately.

A brief mention is also made about Arthur the moment he returns to Will after the fight with his brother. Beckwith tends to Arthur’s wound and also calls James to help, then he gives Arthur some of his clothes. At this point “as he [Arthur] stood there in my old red jersey and my army surplus fatigues I felt a kind of hatred for him and his need to disguise himself in my things” (Hollinghurst 30). Will does not seem to mind helping Arthur with his problems, but the moment Arthur actually becomes William through his clothes, the latter deplores him.

III. VI. – Class and Equality

William comes from a very prominent family; therefore, the theme of class and equality is very thoroughly discussed since he “was beckoned on by having too much money” and “belonged to that tiny proportion of the populace that indeed owns almost everything” (Hollinghurst 3). He clarifies from the very beginning that he is very benevolent in his behaviour towards those inferior to him: “In my stuffy, opinionated family, though, there was a stubborn tradition of trust, and I had perhaps absorbed from my mother the habit of testing servants and window-cleaners by exposing them to temptation” (2). However, he is aware that his status is an artificial one at the same time, and he treats it as such in his adult life: “my sister and I, spoilt by my grandparents, [were] feeling decidedly noble and aloof. It was not until years later that I came to understand how recent and synthetic this nobility was – the house itself bought up cheap after the war . . . ” (4).
There seems to be a deep fascination of Will’s towards those of a lower social standing. As James poignantly notes in his diary “yet again he had picked on someone vastly poorer & dimmer than himself – younger, too. I don’t think he’s ever made it with anyone with a degree. It’s forever these raids on the inarticulate” (218). Houlbrook claims that this fascination by working-class men is caused by “an experienced sense of bourgeois self-loathing” and through their “very physicality, approached some kind of ‘reality’ (211). And, indeed, what excites William about Arthur the most is his inability to produce elaborate sentences and his crass sense of humour:

Even when he spoke, in his basic, unimaginative way, I felt almost sick with desire and compassion for him. Indeed, the fact that he had not mastered speech, that he laboured towards saying the simplest things, that his vocal expressions were prompted only by the strength of his feeling, unlike the camp, exploitative, ironical control of my own speech, made me want him more. (Hollinghurst 64)

But at some point, William takes their class difference too far for he sees Arthur “becoming more and more my slave and my toy” (31). It is important to say that Beckwith realises that this is probably not a path their relationship should be following, but the excitement for him is extremely tempting.

As much as he is captivated by the socially inferior, he needs to keep his own status intact as a conversation with James proves: “‘He once asked me to buy him some War Pictures Library comics, but I just couldn’t bring myself to do it in our local newsagents.’ ‘I can see it would sort ill with Apollo, Tatler and GQ’ – but I expect newsagents get used to the strangest combinations of taste’” (Hollinghurst 64).

16 Apollo is an art magazine; Tatler focuses on fashion, lifestyle, high society, and politics; GQ follows men’s fashion and style.
William’s tastes simply cannot be tarnished by some inferior comics, and it is important for his interests to be regarded as refined.

At several instances the nobility of the book, i.e., William and Charles, negotiate and discuss equality. For instance, William notices the power imbalance in the showers, however, he strikingly points out that it is the naked person that is empowered: “There is a paradoxical strength in display; the naked person always has the social advantage over the clothed one (though the naked person can forget this, as innumerable farces show) . . . ” (Hollinghurst 15). The strength of the naked body strips away any other social status and automatically gives the person an upper hand in the environment of the showers. Nakedness removes any legitimate reason to refuse a person: “And how difficult social distinctions are in the shower. How could I now smile at my enormous African neighbour . . . and yet scowl at the disastrous nearly-boy smirking under the next jet along?” (16), since they do not possess anything that would betray their status. Charles is also concerned about class status, and he notices that when he visits a café. In his journal, he writes that “it seemed as unlikely to me now as then that England c[oul]d have come up with somewhere so thoroughly democratic, where I, a Lord after all, might share a table with a bookmaker. Actually it excited a rather corrupt & non-democratic emotion in me” (152).

Furthermore, Charles comments on the issue of meeting with lower-class people. When he is young, he and his friends meet a working-class American, who wants to know where to find a woman to sleep with. After they tell him that they do not know, he tells them: “I know what you fucking do”; for Nantwich it “was the word we sometimes used, but to hear it against us by someone from the class where rough language (& ‘fucking’ itself) were known to thrive, was a shocking & belittling experience” (Hollinghurst 115). Additionally, one of Charles’s friends from his young
adulthood, Chancey, is also lower in his status than the rest of the group Charles used to hang out with. He always tries to be on his best behaviour so that the group does not start shunning him or that he would not reveal his lower-class background. “He never relaxes, & seems constantly aware of his inferior station, though everyone else would gladly forget it” (126). However, Charles is not afraid of abusing his status. In one of the meetings with Charles, he is invited to Nantwich’s project, which he is making with Staines and a few other people. When Will arrives, he learns that they have been shooting a porn movie for a few months and that they have made several of them. It does not take long for Will to realise that the cast of the movie consists of Nantwich’s employees (186-88).

III. VII. – Isolation, Private-Public Distinction, and Domesticity

_The Swimming-Pool Library_ does not explore the sense of alienation but rather isolation. One of the important places for Will, the swimming pool at Corry, possesses a strange ability to make one feel detached and isolated. All its décor and architecture causes “the pool [to] seem remote from the rest of the world” and “the swimmers loom up and down unaware of each other” (Hollinghurst 12). It follows the atmosphere Will has at his home when Arthur is present:

... we kept the curtains drawn in the daytime, only a mild bloom of pinkish light penetrating into the rooms from outside. The creation of this climate was barely conscious, as people in crisis habitually transform their surroundings, the miserable sitting cold through the dusk without turning lights on, and the endangered, like Arthur and I, craving rosiness and security. (28)
Isolation is, therefore, a means of establishing or increasing security. Yet, it could also be created with no intention or function at all. While with Phil, their “funny routine isolated us from the normal gay world” (192).

Contrastingly, isolation can generate awkwardness and take any sexual drive felt in the public away. When Phil and William are supposed to have sex for the first time in the hotel room Phil works at, they both experience a sudden surge of emotional distance as in “[s]everal times, though, it simply came to stop, we stood back for a moment, seeing each other as we most often had before, in the showers or the changing room, naked and restrained. Perhaps the fact that the restraints of the public space had been taken away made us feel unnatural, inept at using our freedom” (Hollinghurst 106). The two lovers are simply unable to generate the private microspace in otherwise public place where men “temporarily found the security to have sex” (Houlbrook 122) as “[t]he orderly conceptual division between public and private . . . was compromised by places which seemed to fall between the two” (Cook, London 41).

Privacy and isolation, however, do offer a glimpse into homosexual households and the way they work. William is attacked by a group of skinheads and suffers some injuries. During his convalescence Phil caters for all his needs:

For ten days or so I hardly went out and he sweetly brought me food – tinned soups, fruit juice, bread and milk – which he unpacked on the kitchen table for me to see. . . . His catering, out of a baffled desire to make everything better, was over-generous, and I twice found myself throwing bread away – guilty about it as I never would be about throwing out overripe fruit, an unpicked carcass of partridge or grouse.

(Hollinghurst 175)
Another depiction of a formation of homosexual household occurs when Will and Phil go together to the Shaft. There, they chance upon John and Jimmy, a black and white couple, who have been together for a long time. Their faithfulness, however, does not take any fun away from their lives. In the Shaft, “they would shuffle around for hours like that, coupled and domestic and yet giggling, party-going. They might have been the beginning of a conga, ready to sweep everyone away in silliness and fun, but their devotion to each other made them at the same time inaccessible” (200). Will seems to be amazed by such accomplishment—it sounds as if his conception of faithful love is bound to turn into a routine and, after some time, become stale and uninteresting.

James’s arrest can also be placed into the distinction between the public and private. According to Grimshaw, “Hollinghurst plays with the ambiguity of the boundaries of the public and the private by illustrating that what James considered to be a private invitation for a sexual liaison was interpreted by the police as public solicitation for homosexual activity” and “[e]qually, the photographs and films produced ‘privately’ for Nantwich’s inner circle could be used publicly to incriminate Colin, the closeted gay policeman who entrapped and arrested James” (244).

III. VIII. – Lust and Punishment

Lust is a minor topic in Maurice but in The Swimming-Pool Library it assumes a much more prominent place given the fact that Will’s inclination to resist it is almost non-existent. Even when he is returning home to see Arthur, he is diverted from his goal as he “spotted a lone Arab boy wandering along . . . with something about him which made me feel I must have him. . . . I felt a delicious surplus of lust and satisfaction at the idea of fucking him while another boy waited for me at home” (Hollinghurst 6). Moreover, William exhibits increased lecherousness if someone else shows their
inclination towards another man as in: “I realised that Bill’s taste for him had made me want the boy too, and I looked at him lustfully and competitively” (24). His sexual drive does seem to dwindle from time to time and is overridden by stronger feelings, for example, the first time William and Phil are supposed to have sex, the former “wanted to fuck his big, muscly bum – and several times dropped behind a step or two to see it working as he walked – [however] my stronger feeling was more protective and caressing” (101).

For Charles, failure to satisfy the lust is the worst thing that can ever happen to a man. In his diaries, there is a passage which recounts his sex with Chancey. At first, Charles notices “how terrific his [Chancey’s] private parts were” (Hollinghurst 127), but his object does not cooperate and, instead, starts complaining about his life and family. It removes the sexual desire and leaves Nantwich complaining that “[t]here is nothing worse than making a bid for someone’s body & getting their soul instead” (127).

Additionally, William somewhat defines the nature of lust in the scene where he is attacked by the skinheads. He reduces their simple visage and basically dehumanise them to abstract the essence of lust: “They were a challenge, skinheads, and made me feel shifty as they stood about the streets and shopping precincts, magnetising the attention they aimed to repel. Cretinously simplified to booted feet, bum and bullet head, they had some, if not all, of the things one was looking for” (Hollinghurst 172).

The reason for the motive of punishment to be incorporated into this subchapter is that it is very closely connected to, if not interconnected with, lust. All the instances in which the characters experience some form of punishment are in a causal relationship with lecherousness. This is made clear from the very beginning when Will decides to seduce the Arab boy. He goes to a public lavatory in the park, where, eventually,
Nantwich appears and has a cardiac arrest. William does not see it as anything else than punishment as he “thought that if I’d never succumbed to this fantasy, I wouldn’t be in this fix now” (Hollinghurst 7).

Furthermore, Will’s desire for Arthur also brings immense discomfort to him. After all, Arthur commits a murder\(^\text{17}\) and the moment he returns to William, the latter is irritated by the former’s presence, his everyday life is disrupted, and he feels as if being punished: “now we could not risk going out” and “[o]rdinary sounds, such as distant police sirens in Holland Park Avenue, took on for both of us a retributory grimness” (Hollinghurst 30). Will is “shocked to find that my heart raced when I heard them [the sirens], and the look we exchanged as they died away must have told him how frightened I was” (30).

Another example can be found when Beckwith goes searching for Arthur to his address. There, he finds nothing, but it is exactly at this moment he is attacked by the skinheads. His punishment for this transgression is temporary and permanent scathes on his beauty and irretrievable loss of a valuable book by Firbank.

William is not, of course, the only one being punished for the pursue of his desires. Charles is arrested in a lavatory by plainclothes police when he is searching for a man. Furthermore, when in prison, Charles is informed by an officer that his servant, a man that he has fallen in love with in Sudan and whom he brought back with him, called Taha al-Azhari, has died. He does that very maleficiently and with absolutely no sense of tact: “‘He’s dead,’ said the officer, in a tone overwhelmingly vibrant and severe, as if this event were indeed a proper part of my punishment and as if to Taha too some kind of justice had at last been done” (Hollinghurst 258). Similarly to Nantwich, James is arrested for expressing desire and lust over Colin. The man is known to many

\(^{17}\) He kills his brother’s associate after being cut in the face.
people, William admits having sex with him and he is famous in Staines’s circles for the 
photographer took a picture of him. Colin decides to arrest James, thus punishing him 
for his lecherousness.

III. IX. – Cruising Practices

_The Swimming-Pool Library_ offers a look into contemporary practices of the gay 
community of the second half of the twentieth century. William uses them from the very 
begining when he desires the young Arab man. Will wants “[t]o test him out” by 
“dawdling off behind the pavilion to where some public lavatories, over-frequented by 
lonely middle-aged men, are tucked into the ivy-covered, pine-darkened bank of the 
main road” (Hollinghurst 6). When he enters the lavatories, “men were standing [at 
several stalls], raincoats shrouding from the innocent visitor or the suspicious policeman 
their hour-long footlings” (6). These older men are waiting there for a pick-up and hope 
to have sex. Although Will is somewhat distant from the generation which used these 
practices, he is still very much aware of what pleasures can be found at the lavatories as 
he “was drawn compulsively to public lavatories where the drawings and graffiti 
confirmed my sex-obsessed but impractical view of things, their mystery heightened by 
repeated but incomprehensible words of argot” (133).

Moreover, Beckwith makes a remark about another practice of taking his sexual 
partners to the hotel at the Corry: “More than once I had ended up in a bedroom of the 
hotel above with a man I had smiled at in the showers” (Hollinghurst 10).

Finally, William also experiences a model example of a trade on his way to 
Charles’s club with the Cockney boy:

“Ere, got a light?”

It was faintly incredible too to have this oldest of pick-up questions
Put to me, though I suppose all techniques have their freshness and wit when one is very young. I spin round with a welcoming grin. ‘No, sorry,’ I said. He met my smile with a shy blue gaze. ‘Never mind,’ he said. ‘I ain’t got no fags.’ (Hollinghurst 132)

Will is genuinely shocked to hear such a phrase simply because it seems outdated as “transforming requests for a light, directions, or the time into recognized approaches designed to ascertain whether another man were interested” (Houlbrook 47) were common back in the Victorian period. However, the negotiations do not go as planned for Will, because the boy insists on Will paying him for sex. Beckwith is irritated and surprised that the boy is not willing to have sex for him based just on William’s handsomeness and thinks this to be a very humiliating experience.

III. X. – Gaze

In the novel, a fixed and steady look is a means to convey a lot of information about one’s intentions and, indeed, about oneself in a few seconds without uttering a single word. Will admits having “so selective a vision” that he unconsciously filters out and ignores men that he finds little interest in (Hollinghurst 26). In the Charles’s club for gentlemen, William needs to visit a lavatory where he bumps into Staines, who does not seem to recognise him at all, and Raymond, a waiter who was serving Will and Charles when the two were having lunch at the club. Raymond speaks first, because William does not realise that he was there. Raymond, however, “caught my eye in the mirror as I glanced across” (45). This exchange does not lead to any sexual encounter, but, as Will later learns, conveyed the appropriate information since Raymond is one of the actors in Charles’s porn movie.
Will accentuates the importance of gaze the first time he expresses a real interest in Phil after Arthur leaves. They agree to meet at some point, and William later catches a glimpse of Phil: “I saw Phil again, in one of those odd coups d’œil, typical not only of hesitant mobile manner but of so much of gay life, where happiness can depend on the glance of a stranger, caught and returned” and “[o]ur eyes met, I raised my head, he looked for a moment longer, and then, moved perhaps by the secrecy which characterised his doings, without smiling, tuned and went off. As I sat up it was as if a fist squeezed my heart and cracked a tiny flask at its centre, saturating it with love” (Hollinghurst 84). Another such example can be found in the part in which William is coming back home with the first load of Charles’s diaries. On the Underground, he notices a handsome man, Colin, who is later picked up by James leading to the latter’s arrest. Colin “stood opposite me in the doorway, and we held each other’s gaze for a long moment before each modestly looked away, though with the evident intention of looking back again after a few seconds” (93). This encounter is more fortunate for William than the exchange with Raymond, as this leads to “some efficient sex” (94). Charles mentions the importance of eye contact in his diaries in an entry which describes meeting a certain Sir Arthur Cavill: “For a moment we were very far away from Pall Mall, & though little was said we shared an exalted almost tender glance” (151).

There are, however, other functions of the gaze as well. Will, for instance acknowledges that there are “some greyer specimens, voyeurs who came only for the shower, mooned hungrily at the other end of the room” (Hollinghurst 26). Looking at men, therefore, also allows for satiating one’s desires. Furthermore, Beckwith recounts his experiences from his youth when he is travelling with his family through France. He “would drag behind, my gaze searching out the bulging flies of the lads gathered round
the war memorial, the clenching buttocks of the boys who slammed the pinball machines just inside the doorways of bars” (133). There is a very strong “practice of effectively de-humanising and reducing identity to a series of bodily parts for re-appropriation as artefacts” (Avery 66), rendering every man into pieces that are supposed to be appreciated separately. Nevertheless, the gaze does not always bring positive attention and feelings: “I protested, turning away from a macabre trio of queens, very got-up with gloves and velvet bow-ties. ‘The way some of these creatures look at you, you feel as though you’re being violated–ocularly.’” (Hollinghurst 117).

III. XI. – Stranger

The motif of a stranger is very prominent, too. After all, William’s life consists of having sexual encounters with people he does not know anything about. He justifies this based on the experience of his “stuffy, opinionated family” which has “a stubborn tradition of trust” (Hollinghurst 2). His leaving Arthur in the flat alone is extremely exciting and satisfying, it is “his secret pleasure” and later “a slightly creepy pleasure in imagining Arthur in the flat alone, absorbing its alien richness . . .” (2). Will’s conviction does not falter even in the moment when Arthur admits committing a murder: “If it had not been for our week of love I would perhaps have been frightened of Arthur, too; but I was never even critical of his crime. A rare, unjustified trust kept me on his side” (33). The unfamiliarity of a person is oddly sexual and creates expectation as Beckwith notices “[h]ow loaded dirty talk is between strangers, seeming to imply some sexual rapport between them, removing barriers which in this case I was interested in preserving” (Hollinghurst 38). Here, William is referring to the fact that he is having lunch with Charles, with whom he is not interested to have sex. A similar attraction of strangeness is depicted in the scene where Will goes to the cinema to see
the porn movie. As he admits himself, it is not much about seeing the film, but rather about “sit[ting] in a dark, anonymous place and do[ing] dark, anonymous things” (47).

The darkness of the place further increases the degree of strangeness to such extent that people can hardly see who is their sexual partner as they are generally only able to see silhouettes. It is for this reason that Will is not sure whether the person who he met in there was really Phil or not\textsuperscript{18}.

Nevertheless, these sexual encounters are extremely fleeting and one must have a built-in sense of knowing how to handle the situation:

There is always that question, which can only be answered by instinct, of what to do about strangers. Leading my life the way I did, it was strangers who by their very strangeness quickened my pulse and made me feel I was alive – that and the irrational sense of absolute security that came from the conspiracy of sex with men I had never seen before and might never see again. Yet those daring instincts were by no means infallible: their exhilaration was sharpened by the courted risk of rejection, misunderstanding, abuse. (Hollinghurst 132)

It is a gamble, and a successful completion of such an endeavour brings pleasure and satisfaction originating from the amount of danger involved\textsuperscript{19}. At the same time, the strangeness provides a sense of security as the participants only seek pleasure and are not interested in anything else about the other person. This mutual understanding

\textsuperscript{18} The fascination with a stranger is further accentuated in another Hollinghurst’s novel \textit{The Folding Star}. Here, the concept of a stranger is explained very clearly as “Luc’s essential ‘unknowability’ . . . is reduced . . . to a kind of \textit{tabula rasa}, an empty space onto which Edward is able to project his desires and fantasies” (Avery 65-6). From this it follows that a stranger is also such an unwritten slate and the lack of information about them enables one to put the stranger into any position one finds desirable. A stranger is, thus, capable of fulfilling any role they are assigned.

\textsuperscript{19} Forster does not address this motif in \textit{Maurice}, but it does appear in his collection of short stories, \textit{The Life to Come}, namely in “Arthur Snatchfold”, “Dr Woolacott”, “The Life to Come”, “The Obelisk”, and “The Classical Annex”. The treatment of “a stranger” and “strangeness” is very similar to Hollinghurst’s. A stranger is an exciting and unlimited font of possible pleasure, and the more one learns about another person, the less desirable the person becomes.
secures the complete anonymity of the sexual partners. Charles’s perception of these encounters is very similar:

It would have been wonderful to have had Roy again, but I found I was glad not to, & decided that if he shou[ld] get in touch I w[oul]d not see him. Any repetition w[oul]d lack the spontaneity & beauty of yesterday, & I w[oul]d rather remember it as one of those rare & wonderful day when two strangers come together in deliberate ignorance of each other for their mutual pleasure. (Hollinghurst 226)

Nantwich accidentally destroys the amount of security, however, by giving Roy his number, which he realises happened “in a moment of foolishness” (226).

Contrastingly, not everyone is as trustful as Will or Charles. James, in Beckwith’s opinion, is “full of caution and common sense” and he “would have thought I was crazy to leave a virtual stranger in my home” (Hollinghurst 2). He also seems to lack the instinct for these encounters, and his attempt at it leads to his arrest.

III. XII. – Clothing

Clothes are heavily accentuated in the novel. Most of the time, they are used to decorate a person and further increase their handsomeness, but it is also a way to distinguish, mark, and signify. They can be fetishised as in: “[Arthur] would swarm around wearing nothing but my school straw hat, or a towel which he flirted about or shook like a fetish” (Hollinghurst 13) or “I forbade him [Phil] underwear, and forced him into an old par of fawn cotton trousers which, tight on me, were anatomically revealing on him. The central seam cut up deeply between his balls, and his little cock was espaliered across the top of his left thigh” (154).
Furthermore, clothes can telegraph sexual identity to those who are familiar with the undertones of clothing: “I’d put a suit on, smarter perhaps than I needed to be, but I enjoyed its protective conformity” and “I had always been a bit of a peacock – or rather, whatever animal has brightly coloured legs, a flamingo perhaps” (Hollinghurst 34). Will also “lent him [Arthur] a shirt, perhaps I gave it to him – pink silk, it suited his blackness as it suited my fairness” (14), and James tells Will while waiting for in the foyer for the opera to start that everyone would not be staring at William if we were dressed more properly: “‘They might pay less attention to you,’ he said, ‘if you didn’t look like something out of the Arabian Nights’” (117). Nantwich also records in his journals an individual called Otto Henderson, who was an artist and “apparently very well in with Cocteau & the Parisian world”. Otto is dressed very strangely as “[h]is clothes, on another, w[oul]d have been enough to incite nudism – a boisterously checked jacket, bright yellow trousers & a bowtie with dogs on it” (150). All four examples demonstrate the intention of being seen and noticed in the crowd and by their extravagance or exoticism, it is possible to distinguish a gay person.

Clothes can also betray their wearer as too much artifice, or too little effort, can be appalling. This holds true for Staines for example, who “seemed to slither around within the beautiful green tweed, the elderly herringbone shirt and chaste silk tie which plumped forward slightly between collar and waistcoat” (Hollinghurst 42), and later “there was someone strangely passionate and slavish holed up inside his immaculate clothes – today an almost transparent suit of sour cream Indian silk” (156). As Cooper suggests, Staines is a “[s]pider catching flies in his fine, artful web of gay pornographic desire” (139). William does not believe his “strikingly two-minded performance” and

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20 Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) was a prominent French writer, painter, and film-maker. He was very active and “at the centre of a very visible group of homosexual figures in inter-war Paris. His contribution both to the publicization of homosexuality and to the creation of a particular image of it was very substantial one” (Aldrich and Wotherspoon 119). Therefore, the reference describes a person who is homosexual.
he loathes his overall campiness. Moreover, he realises that a man dressed in such a manner is potentially dangerous as he compares him to a snake and considers him to be “rather sinister” (Hollinghurst 44).

At Staines’s photography exhibition William meets Norman, who used to work in a grocer’s near the place Nantwich first moved in to. The description of the grocer’s boy, as he is called by Nantwich, is as follows:

He was soberly dressed, in an ill-fitting grey suit and shiny casual shoes of a kind that had been fashionable in my earliest childhood . . . The suit, which was broad in the shoulders and stood off the neck, was the sort of thing that students bought in second-hand shops, and on one or two of the modish boys in this room could have had a certain chic. Norman’s wearing of it was without irony and he reminded me, as the man in the lavatory had reminded Charles forty years before, of a College scout, habituated, stunted by service. (Hollinghurst 236)

For Will, who loves fashion, this is completely unappetising and it repels him. The man is not interesting in any way and his style of clothing is similarly stale. Similarly, Charles notes in his journal that one of his friend’s boyfriend, always referred to as Tom’s boy, is improperly dressed as “[h]is clothes were all too small, which made him look wretched and absurd at the same time as showing how large he was” (126).

III. XIII – Minor themes

The first minor theme in this section to be discussed is the topic of fear. This theme appears in the novel for the first time at the urinals when Nantwich collapse: “All along the rank of urinals there was a hasty doing-up od flies, and faces that spoke both

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21 Tom is a member of Charles’s group of friends.
of concern and of a sense that they had been caught . . .” and later one of the men who stayed and helped
Will to revive Charles informs Beckwith that his friend “didn’t hang about, he knew the old bill’d do for him, soon as look at him,’ said one of them, in reference, apparently, to their companion who had fled” (Hollinghurst 7). Moreover, Charles is blackmailed by a Scottish head barman, who, as Charles’s friend Otto mentions, likes wearing female lingerie, after the former “hit it off so with his black Adonis”. The barman “even threatened to expose me, but he changed his tune when I promised to tell all about the knickers” (244). Arthur’s return to Will after he murders his brother’s friend brings a lot of fear as well. Arthur immediately falls into a nervous fit the moment the telephone rings and both experience a rush of fear when they hear police sirens. The last example comes from William after he is attacked by the group of skinheads:

I was profoundly shocked by what had happened. I was constantly reliving the sudden sickening panic of it. James gave me things to help me sleep, which left me drowsy and dozing through the morning, running in and out of horrible, sour little dreams. I hated it when Phil had to leave for work, and longed for him to arrive the following day.

(Hollinghurst 175)

The first two examples illustrate a fear of being exposed and arrested by the police. It is worth noticing that such worries are connected to the older generation: the men at the urinals are described as “middle-aged men” whose “heads seemed grey and loveless” (6), while Charles experiences attempts of blackmailing to which he responds by the same strategy—again, both Nantwich and the barman are afraid of exposure. The

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22 In fact, they did not truly help him, but rather, they only stood there.
23 Nevertheless, an important note is needed to be made. Will and his generation were still not safe, as James’s arrest attests. With the introduction of the Section 28 of the Local Government Act of 1988,
other two examples, however, show younger generations being worried about the police because they were either perpetrators or victims of crime. They are not concerned about being exposed, anymore, their concern is the crime itself (and in case of the attack on William, the violence that went with it).

The motif of the police is, indeed, very strong in the novel, as William, who becomes an involuntary accomplice to Arthur’s crime, keeps making allusions towards police activity and their own criminality: “Perhaps we should have burnt them [Arthur’s bloodied clothes]: the empty, crumpled tubes of his trousers, the bloodstained pink of the shirt, were evidence of a kind. We were such inexpert criminals” (Hollinghurst 32).

When Rupert comes for the unexpected visit and finds Arthur at Will’s place, he becomes a threat to the whole secret of Beckwith keeping a criminal in his flat. While waiting for Gavin, who is supposed to pick Rupert up, Will and the boy are browsing through photographs and Rupert “splod[es] his forefinger down on my face as if recording his fingerprints for the police” (60). After the attack on Will, he is extremely hesitant to go the police:

> And I too, though angry and in great pain, was almost afraid to find the culprits and to throw my weight behind the whole machinery of prosecution. The policemen themselves were very businesslike: they were adamant against crime. But they weren’t prepared to be friendly, to be such suckers as unreservedly to take my part. What, after all, had I been doing at Sandbourne? . . . What was more horrifying, though, was how, in the company of the police, my vulnerable, brutalised state was

“prosecutions for consensual homosexual acts reached their highest level . . . This exceeded even the levels during the so-called witch-hunt against homosexuals in the mid-1950s” (Cook, Queer 194). The homophobic mood in the society increased dramatically in comparison to previous years, and it was one of the most difficult times for homosexuals. Furthermore, as Grimshaw notes, the Section 28 “ostensibly secured a return to Victorian sexual mores by re-asserting the sociocultural centrality of British heterosexual family life” (244).
not soothed but exacerbated; the feeling that anyone might turn on me came over me again as I worried about James. (Hollinghurst 215-16)

The reason is not his own safety, but the very close connection to Arthur that he might accidentally reveal if he was not careful.

The third topic to be discussed is homosocial environment. One of the places the story revolves around is the Corry, which is frequented exclusively by men. As such, it is a very attractive space for homosexuals; however, their sexuality seems to dissolve in the excess of testosterone and masculinity: “At first I used to feel embarrassed about getting a hard-on in the shower. But at the Corry much deliberate excitative soaping of cocks went on, and a number of members had their routine erections there each day. My own, though less regular, were, I think, hoped and looked out for” (Hollinghurst 15).

Nobody is bothered by one’s erection, quite the opposite, it can become the only place where even the heterosexuals can appreciate one’s endowment in terms of one’s private parts since “[t]his naked mingling . . . produced its own improper incitements to ideal liaisons, and polyandrous happenings which could not survive into the world of jackets and ties, cycle-clips and duffel-coats” (16). One has to be careful though, because, as it was hinted in the previous chapters, this homosocial environment not only blurs the boundaries of sexuality, but basically everything about a person’s individuality and life. Similarly, when Denis Beckwith contacts his grandson over the phone, he calls him darling, however, as Will notes, this is diametrically different from the way homosexuals call each other darlings and dears as they “were not amative or effete, but manly like Churchill’s, and gave one a sense of having been singled out, of having value. His ‘darlings’ were not public, like Cockney ‘darlings’ or the ‘darlings’ we queens dispense, but private medals of confidence, pinned on to reward and to inspire” (98).
The fourth theme is places. *The Swimming-Pool Library* creates quite a complex map of areas and establishments that are frequented by homosexuals. There are “the glamorous and fashionable were chatting each other up in King’s Cross or St Martin’s Lane” (Hollinghurst 17) and “the Kensington Gardens bog” (18) or “little private bars, sex clubs really, in Soho before the war, very secret. And my [Charles’s] uncle Edmund had fantastic tales of placed and sort of gay societies in Regent’s Park - a century ago now, before Oscar Wilde and all that – with beautiful working boys dressed as girls and what-have-you” (246-247). There is also the Shaft, the Corinthian Club, the Brutus, which is the name of the cinema Will occasionally goes to, or the Volunteer, Will’s “local gay club” (17). The reader is able to compose a whole picture of the gay London of Will’s time, and even little Rupert goes for a walk “up that very steep path, you know – where the homosexuals go” (58).

The fifth minor topic the thesis deals with is the sense of belonging or the sense of community. There are several instances in which the existence of gay community is acknowledged, for example:

> It is the camp voice of Michael that one normally hears, wringing the wildest insinuations out of words such as guest and occupant. Those who know his ways greet each announcement with a delight unshared by the novice; in my first week at the club the disdainful announcement that ‘Mr Beckwith has a man in reception’ had brought a round of silly laughter as I walked, blushing, from the gym. (Hollinghurst 12)

The people who are in the know, that is homosexuals in this case, seem to form a group or a community at the Corry. However, as it was shown in the section on homosocial environment, this community very much dissolves after leaving the establishment. Nevertheless, Will still indicates that there indeed is a community after he speaks with
James about saving Nantwich’s life: “‘You’d have been proud of me the other day,’” I said, ‘when I did a very heroic deed and saved the life of a queer peer’” (18).

Furthermore, after being attacked, Will’s eyes open even more: “James’s experience, like mine with the skinheads, made me abruptly selfconscious, gave me an urge to solidarity with my kind that I wasn’t used to in our liberal times” and all the people to him suddenly become “an exotic species menaced by brutal predators” (223). This would suggest that the liberal times discourage the creation of communities as they have no reason to unite in the pursuit of common goals and that there is a prevalent tendency to individualism. However, Will’s “solidarity with the ‘cause’ of queer politics endures only to the extent of fulfilling his own narcissistic desire” (Horton 37).

The sixth motif is misogyny. The misogyny is very much restricted to Charles alone. When he is showing William the stele of the King Akhnaten, he remarks as in:

‘It doesn’t yet have the Pharaonic beard, you see – you know, the ugly, square beard – which he does have in most of the remaining statues, even the female Pharaohs, whatever they were called, are shown with beards – perfectly lifelike, though, wouldn’t you think?’ Charles loved making these misogynistic gibes. (Hollinghurst 77)

Moreover, he feels that “men don’t really want women around much. I think most men are happiest in a male world, with gangs and best friend and all that” (242). He does not seem to acknowledge or care for women in the least, his ideal society is completely female-less.

The last theme is the ancient Greece and Rome. There are several instances which these two old cultures are invoked. When the visitors of the Corry are showering,

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Misogyny does appear in *Maurice*, however, the whole reference is limited to two sentences: “Both were misogynists, Clive especially. In the grip of their temperaments, they had not developed the imagination to do duty instead, and during their love women had become as remote as horses or cats; all that the creatures did seemed [sic] silly” (92).
there is a sudden surge of extremely hot water: “Darting movements of hands tried to regulate the taps, steam filled the air, and through it an impression of Bacchic pinkness was suffused, the colour of Anglo-Saxon flesh flushed by just tolerable heat” (Hollinghurst 25), which likens the redness and intoxication of the Roman god to the skins flushed by the heat of the English. Another such godly image appears in Charles’s diary after his sex with Chancey. When they join the rest of the group and they decide to continue in their journey, one of the friends enquires: “So, tell me about our bourgeois Priapus, Charlie” (128). Lastly, while watching the boys competing for the Nantwich Cup in boxing, William notes the difference in seriousness of adult boxing and boys boxing as the latter “maintains too, in some ideal, Greek way, an ethos of sport rather than violence” (135).
Chapter IV – The Comparative Analysis

The thesis now moves to the comparison of the motifs used in the two works to establish the similarities and differences in their usage and/or depictions. It revisits the individual topics mentioned in the last two chapters and puts them side by side so the contrasts or similarities will be the most prominent.

The first two themes are friendship and love. In *Maurice*, the two converge into one. The true friendship is ultimately achievable only with a single male person through love as Clive tells Maurice that there is much deeper connection between men that women simply have no idea about; this is basically the fulfilment of the Greek ideal of friendship. For William in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, the two concepts are both very close and at the same time very distant. He loves his best friend James more than anyone and would do anything for him, yet at the same time, he cannot imagine being with him as a partner. This very closely reflects the relationship of Clive and Maurice’s as it could never be physical. Contrastingly, both Maurice and William find men that are socially inferior to them to have sex with. For Will, however, these bonds can never last forever, while Maurice finds a partner for life in Alec. Therefore, in *Maurice*, the boundary between a soulmate friend and a lover or partner is virtually non-existent, while in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, these two things exist separately and never intersect.

Interest in men is to be examined as the third motive. Forster embarks on a laborious way of preparing the reader for the shock that Maurice is a homosexual, and the interest in men is only very gradual. First, it starts as very subtle hints of Maurice knowing that he shall never marry—as it was established in Part One of the present paper, bachelorhood in Victorian England instantly implied a gay person—and of Maurice being sad for his servant friend left the house. When his sexuality is made
explicit, however, the interest in men becomes more prevalent and dominant: first his admiration of Clive and the willingness of spending his whole life with him, then Maurice’s enormous frustration, followed by the craving for young Dickie Barry, and, eventually, falling in love with Alec. In Hollinghurst’s story, Will’s interest in men is immediately laid out in front of the reader. This marked difference can, of course, be attributed to the temporal distance of the two pieces with the former being published in a period when the public awareness about homosexuality is widely spread and when homosexual acts are no longer regarded as something vile. Will is not afraid to openly show he is interested, yet, to avoid trouble, he is still doing it in the subtler way that resembles the Victorian practices of cruising.

The two different treatments of homosexuality, which is the fourth theme to be discussed, are also distinctly marked in terms of time. In Maurice, homosexuality is depicted as a personal flaw or a curse and something one must be punished for. It is, indeed, the unmentionable, horrifying condition that can only be alluded to. It is regarded as a scar that hideously stains the whole life of a person, and the only way to fight it—except for a suicide—is to learn how to live with it. Unsurprisingly, the treatment of homosexuality in The Swimming-Pool Library is very different and, again, this is based on the progress of the society. While in Forster’s novel, homosexuality is something one should avoid speaking about in a respectable society, in the later story, it is something that is commonly known even among children. No one is denied the knowledge of the existence of homosexuality, and there seems to be no censorship on the topic whatsoever. The homosexual map of places, people and practices, is not restricted to gay people anymore; instead, it becomes a piece of rather general knowledge. However, it is important to note that The Swimming-Pool Library provides a sympathetic picture of homosexuality even in Victorian England as Charles says that
homosexuality was a preferred trait by the government when selecting candidates for
governing the colonies and provinces, whereas in the 80s, gays were considered a security risk.

The comparison of the fifth motive deals with manliness. For Maurice, manliness or exhibiting man-like qualities is extremely crucial and he struggles to adhere to the societal prescription of manliness. When he violates it, he is horrified and frustrated. Even a small deviance from the behaviour, such as crying, leaves him mortified. Maurice also seems to realise that his attraction to men effeminates him, and, therefore, he is trying to compensate for it by becoming the head of the family.

However, the moment he decides to spend his life with Alec, he starts losing control over the family ties and his position in the society—yielding to his sexuality causes him to be more effeminate and, thus, unable to fulfil the masculine role anymore. This is also reflected during Clive’s disease. His sudden neediness and helplessness reduces the amount of manliness in him, and, because it puts Clive on the same level as Maurice, the latter starts loving him even more. This is quite the opposite to what happens in *The Swimming-Pool Library*. Manliness is extremely sexualised and any sign of weakness does not reduce one’s respectability, but it does adversely affect one’s sex-appeal. For Hollinghurst, there is no longer a connection between manliness and respectability, but the connection is established between manliness and desirability. Furthermore, manliness is linked to the exhibition of dominance and control over those who are desired. In Forster’s novel, one man cannot control or be dominant to another man, being subordinate to another is considered unmanly, and even Alec tried to establish this when he meets Maurice no matter his class inferiority. For Hollinghurst, however,

25 Although opposite, there still are connections between Forster and Hollinghurst as in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, there is “Forsterian celebration of masculine physicality readily visible” with the Victorian quality of cultivating one’s body and “embodies the Carpenterian ideal that Forster elegised—here in the form of boxing, also pointedly Maurice’s choice of sport in Forster’s novel” (Horton 45).
being manly also means assuming control over one’s lovers and subordinating to every whim one might have.

Double identity and falsehood is the sixth theme in this analysis. Maurice needs to create a second life, another identity that would shield him from the society and enable him to pursue his happiness in secret. However, he also realises that this double identity is ingenuine, generates lies, and makes him feel miserable. He conforms to the stereotypical “respectable homosexual”, but as his loneliness and misery increase, he abandons it completely and basically loses his status in society. William has two identities, too, but in his case, they do not serve to hide in the society. Instead, one of his identities is very scholarly, intelligent, puritanical, while the other is extremely sexual and lecherous. Moreover, the theme of double identity works as a marker that the person with such trait cannot be trusted, the example being Ronald Staines, whose artificial look implies that there is something wrong and maleficent about him.

The seventh topic focuses on class and equality. Here, the novels exhibit many similarities: both Maurice and Will are upper-class citizens who behave in perfect accordance with their status: they are a little snobbish, perfectly aware of their superiority to most people they know, and they hate when the inferior do not do their bidding. At the same time, however, their lovers are socially inferior to them and, thus, they have to, eventually, make their lovers equal to them. Yet, William is not willing to give up his social status for his lover, and he establishes a very sharp line so that his own tastes and image are not spoilt, whereas Maurice sacrifices everything in order to be with Alec. Furthermore, both novels follow the pattern of fascination by working-class men with little education. Maurice falls in love with Alec, who is a game-keeper at Penge, his poor education is reflected in his speech and writing, and his status is further lowered when Maurice accuses him of blackmailing. Will also satiates his lust with
working-class men, and James even mentions that William has probably never had anyone who would be socially equal to him.

Punishment, another theme to be discussed, is also addressed in both novels but in extremely different contexts. In *Maurice*, the characters see their homosexuality as a punishment and curse. They think that they have somehow transgressed against God or society by being homosexual and expect punishment for it either godly in nature or secular by doctors. In *The Swimming-Pool Library*, punishment usually occurs when succumbing to one’s lust or desire—William needs to revive Charles after he follows the Arab boy and is attacked by the skinheads when in search of Arthur; both Charles and James are arrested for searching for sex. The punishment, therefore, does not befall those being homosexual, but those who commit the actual act or who succumb to the motivations the act is driven by. Therefore, the punishment is utterly legal in nature rather than spiritual.

Forster’s treatment of lust, the ninth topic in this analysis, is very monothematic as he depicts it as something undesirable and dangerous in the novel. It is necessary to subdue desire or kill it, because, otherwise, it can threaten an individual with complete destruction. In Maurice’s case, lust always appears with attractive young boys and throws Maurice’s life into chaos. It is an emotion that is contradictory to anything meaningful: family, friends, work, and even one’s will. *The Swimming-Pool Library* treats desire in quite differently. It is true that the danger of lecherousness permeates this story as well, however, William’s behaviour suggests that lust is something that should not be controlled but rather exploited and taken advantage of. Although it brings him discomfort on almost every occasion, Beckwith still embraces every challenge desire puts in front of him, and Charles considers failure to satisfy lust to be the worst thing that can ever happen to a man.
Another theme to be addressed is cruising practices. In *Maurice*, the appearance of cruising is not very prominent as searching for a man in a public place was more or less restricted to cities. It does, however, contain a scene where Maurice accidentally responds to a man in the train, which causes ruckus, because Maurice is shocked and disgusted by the audacity the older man has, and while struggling with himself, the society, and the sense of what the society thinks is right, he is disinclined to enter the world of homosexuals and their practices. Although Maurice does not seem to know much about gay practices—as he could have reacted more moderately and simply refuse the old man—he is very much aware of blackmailing as he is worried Alec would try blackmailing him. *The Swimming-Pool Library* delves into cruising practices in a greater detail than *Maurice*. It shows cruising in lavatories, taking pick-ups to hotels, Will experiences a trade exchange with the Cockney boy (however unsatisfactory and unsuccessful), and blackmailing is mentioned, too. The novel, thus, reflects the common practices in a more genuine and complete way, although, to be fair, the nature of *Maurice* and the background the story is set in do not really give the protagonist enough space to explore them.

Gaze is a prominent theme in both novels, and is, therefore, discussed, too, as the eleventh topic. As it was mentioned in Part One, prolonged eye contact was one of the crucial parts of cruising, and gaze was the first thing to be used in the sexual exchange. And, indeed, it works very similarly in both novels. Maurice uses prolonged eye contact, which he normally tries to avoid, to signal Clive his interest in him. Contrastingly, the importance of gaze is also accentuated by its absence or insufficiency as Clive does not know whether Maurice likes him or not. In *The Swimming-Pool Library*, however, it does not only serve as a means to acknowledge willingness to participate in sex. The importance of it is also stressed in terms of voyeurism as
watching is an integral part of appreciating male beauty, be it porn movies or Staines’s photographs, thus adding another facet of the meaning of gaze.

The private/public distinction is given a very interesting treatment in The Swimming-Pool Library in particular. In Maurice, Alec and Hall spend a night in a hotel, thus confirming the importance of hotels and of the traditional creation of a private microspace in a public place. The Swimming-Pool Library shows how the tradition of creating private microenvironments in otherwise public realms completely influences the perception of the characters. When William and Phil are supposed to have sex for the first time in Phil’s hotel room, they are embarrassed by seeing each other naked and their behaviour is suddenly restrained. They do not know how to deal with the fact that they no longer occupy a public space and their adaptation to this situation requires some experience of Will’s to advance further.

The thirteenth topic to be discussed is clothing. In The Swimming-Pool Library, this theme is quite frequent and discussed as one’s attire can be quite revealing. It is sexualised, fetishized even, can telegraph one’s sexuality to other people, and can even send warning to other people about one’s dangerousness in case of Staines, for example. Maurice also uses clothes for establishing meaning. Maurice with his yellowed hair by pollen is compared to a Roman god, thus linking him with a culture with a strong homosexual tradition; Alec is distinctly marked in his blue suit and can, thus, be labelled homosexual; and there is also the shift in Maurice’s understanding of what clothes really mean.

The treatment of places, the penultimate theme of this analysis, is present in both novels again, however, with different aims. While in Maurice, the places are meant to signify one’s homosexuality and Clive’s progress from a gay to a heterosexual—the progression from loving Greece to hating it—The Swimming-Pool Library uses various
places to map homosexual community. It is possible to obtain quite detailed an overview of where in London from Will’s time it was possible to meet gay people.

Finally, the Greco-Roman motifs are examined. Maurice basically uses the Greek and Roman motifs to justify homosexuality as the book provides legitimacy for it. The various references to Plato’s work and the usage of Greece as a place as and insinuations to the Greeks as a symbol for one’s sexuality. Hollinghurst, however, does not use these motifs as an apology or excuse to defend homosexual behaviour, he rather incorporates them as a part of homosexual heritage.
Conclusion

The thesis examined various homosexual aspects, dynamics, and themes in two literary pieces. One, *Maurice*, by E. M. Forster from 1910s, and the other, *The Swimming-Pool Library*, by Alan Hollinghurst from 1988. The thesis was divided into two parts. Part One consisted of a socio-cultural probe into late Victorian, early Edwardian England, which described various topics that were important for appropriate understanding and interpretation of the two novels. It discussed things such as cruising practices, the importance of class, several Victorian male stereotypes, the problematic distinction of what constitutes private and public spaces, policing and law, the approaches of doctors and the seeking of treatment, religion, homosocial environments, and, finally, clothing. This historical background knowledge imbued the reader with necessary knowledge to understand the dynamics of Victorian (homosexual) society. Then, the thesis moved to Part Two, which consisted of three analyses. The first analysis was a literary analysis of *Maurice* and it discussed prominent and even minor themes that appear in it. There were major motifs such as marriage, friendship, interest in men, and love, the approaches towards homosexuality, the problematic manhood and respectability, double identity, and religion, the concepts of family and happiness, as well as the meaning of class, suicide, and death. The minor themes included lust, gaze, blackmailing and cruising, private/public distinctions, bachelorhood, clothing, the Greco-Roman traditions, and places. The second analysis dealt with *The Swimming-Pool Library* and examined the way the later novel treats previous generations, and it further discussed major themes such as friendship, interest in men, and love, homosexuality, manliness, the concept of double identity and falsehood, class and equality, isolation, public/private distinction, and domesticity, lust and punishment, cruising, gaze, the meaning of a stranger, and, finally, clothing. The minor topics
included fear, the police, homosocial environment, places, the sense of community, misogyny, and, lastly, the Greco-Roman heritage. The third, comparative analysis examined what motifs are used and how they are treated in the novels. The results are as follows:

The two novels thematically overlapped in fifteen cases, yet they did not always attribute the same qualities to the topics or treat them in the same way. There was a significant agreement or similarity in six cases: interest in men, class and equality, cruising, gaze, the private/public distinction, and clothing. Although the interest in men was treated very laboriously and gradually in Maurice, the characters of both novels did share the same amount of subtlety in using signals to show that they are interested in order to avoid capture. In terms of class, the two novels displayed striking similarities and their overlap was almost absolute. As far as cruising is concerned, The Swimming-Pool Library was more productive in providing detailed information, but both novels used the motif in the same way. Eye contact was prominent in the books and the usage of gaze was alike. Yet, in The Swimming-Pool Library, it also obtained an extra value of sexualising and voyeurism. The distinction between the public and the private was also very similar in both novels as it explored the necessity to create a small private space so that the two lovers could share a moment of intimacy; however, The Swimming-Pool Library furthermore captured the strange feeling of failure in creation of such a space.

The motif of clothing and its usage to signify a homosexual was present in both novels, but The Swimming-Pool Library elaborated on the theme even further as it no longer only marked a homosexual but also indicated a person who was dangerous or undesirable.

The meaning, use, or significance of the remaining nine topics was different in each novel. Love and friendship in Maurice was convergent as they were imprinted into
a single person—Alec—while in *The Swimming-Pool Library* the two were divergent:
James will never be Will’s lover and Will’s lovers will never be his true friends.

Homosexuality was depicted as a personal flaw and needed to be hidden in the older piece, while the more recent book treated it as a part of common knowledge not only of homosexuals but heterosexuals alike. The motif of manliness was also discordant in the comparison of the two novels. *Maurice* showed it as being a part of respectability, thus, essential for one’s survival in Victorian society, and undesirable in tender moments with one’s lover. *The Swimming-Pool Library* saw manliness through the lenses of sexuality and as very desirable in partners as it contributed to their sex-appeal. Double identities in *Maurice* served to protect an individual and conceal him from family, friends, and the police, whereas in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, the two identities were not meant to hide a person; it just signified one’s being or it denoted a person that cannot be trusted. *Maurice* treated punishment as an inevitability that follows from being a homosexual, while in *The Swimming-Pool Library* the punishment sprung from following one’s lust and, thus, was a punishment for acts rather than simple being. Surprisingly enough, lust was also used in different ways in the two novels. Hollinghurst’s story handled it as something that should be exploited and (ab)used on every occasion, while Forster treated it as an undesirable emotion that needs to be killed (or shunned if the former fails). The usage of place was not identical either: *Maurice* used places to signify one’s sexuality and the alterations in one’s sexuality. Contrastingly, *The Swimming-Pool Library* used locations to create a genuine map of homosexual society. Lastly, the Greco-Roman traditions were also discussed with *Maurice* using ancient Greece and Rome to establish some kind of validity and legitimacy of one’s homosexuality, while Hollinghurst’s sole intention was to refer to a cultural heritage.

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Resumé

V této práci jsou zkoumána dvě díla britské gay literatury a jejich tematika. První kniha od E. M. Forstera *Maurice* vznikla na počátku dvacátého století, kdežto kniha druhá od Alana Hollinghursta *The Swimming-Pool Library* byla napsána v osmdesátých letech dvacátého století. Starší kniha tedy předchází období Stonewallských bouří, zatímco Hollinghurstův román se objevuje až po nich. Je tedy nasnadě položit si otázku, jak se tematika těchto dvou knih shoduje či případně liší a zdali je vůbec možné mezi nimi najít nějakou podobnost.

Práce je rozdělena na dva celky. V tom prvním jsou zmíněné různé historické skutečnosti viktoriánské Anglie jako například „cruising“, problematika příslušnosti ke společenské třídě, stereotypizování homosexuálů, nejasné hranice mezi soukromým a veřejným prostorem, policejní praktiky, přístup doktorů a léčba homosexuality, náboženství, homosociální prostředí a konečně styl oblékání.

V druhém celku jsou pak zahrnuty samotné literární analýzy *Maurice* a *The Swimming-Pool Library*, jakožto i komparativní analýza, jež srovnává jednotlivé motivy z předchozích dvou rozborů. Nakonec se v ní objevilo celkem patnáct různých motivů: přátelství a lásku, zájem o muže, homosexualitu, mužnost, dvojitá identita a faleš, třídní příslušnost a rovnost, trest, touha, „cruising“ a vydirání, pohled a oční kontakt, rozdělení mezi soukromým a veřejným prostorem, oblečení, místa a lokace a v neposlední řadě řecko-římské dědictví. Poslední částí druhého celku je závěr, který shrnuje celou práci a bliže interpretuje výsledky všech tří analýz.
Abstract

Two pieces of British gay literature and their themes are examined in the present thesis. The first novel, *Maurice*, by E. M. Forster was written at the beginning of the twentieth century, while the second novel, *The Swimming-Pool Library*, by Alan Hollinghurst was written in 1980s. The older book, thus, precedes the period of the Stonewall Riots, while Hollinghurst’s novel appears after the riots. Thus, an obvious question is needed to be asked: To what degree are the themes in the two books similar or disparate and is it even possible to find any similarity between them whatsoever?

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first one mentions various historical facts about Victorian England such as “cruising”, class distinction, homosexual stereotypes, blurry boundaries between the private and the public spaces, police practices, the attitude of doctors and treatment of homosexuality, religion, homosocial environment, and, finally, styles of clothing.

The second part includes actual literary analyses of *Maurice* and *The Swimming-Pool Library*, as well as, a comparative analysis, which contrasts individual motifs discovered in the previous two examinations. In the end, there are fifteen various themes: friendship and love, interest in men, homosexuality, manliness, double identity and falsehood, class and equality, punishment, desire and lust, “cruising” and blackmail, gaze, distinction between private and public spaces, clothing, places, and, finally, Greco-Roman heritage. A conclusion is the last section of the second part and it summarises the whole paper and further interprets the results of the three analyses.