

A Love That Cares Not Speak Its Name: Clive Durham as Narrative Guide in E. M. Forster's *Maurice*

Joshua G. Adair

E. M. Forster's Maurice narrates the author's life experiences, critiques English society, and offers the first gay literary narrative with a hopeful conclusion. Despite Maurice Hall's prominent role in the novel, his first love, Clive Durham, must be positioned as equally important throughout the entire novel in order to properly appreciate Maurice. Durham, as an exemplar of middle-class homosexuality in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England, enables readers to immerse themselves in Forster's innovative narrative wherein homosexuality emerges from middle class respectability as a revolutionary force (via Maurice Hall and Alec Scudder) intent upon subverting attempts to thwart it.

Keywords: Carpenter, Edward, Forster, E. M. (Edward Morgan), Symonds, John Addington, Male Homosexuality, Homosexuality in British Literature, Narrative Theory, Bloomsbury Group, Clive Durham, Coming out, Maurice

Foreword: An Author with a View

Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps, in their article "Narrating the Self," assert,

Personal narrative simultaneously is born out of experience and gives shape to experience. In this sense, narrative and self are inseparable. Self is here broadly understood to be an unfolding reflective awareness of being-in-the-world, including a sense of one's past and future. We come to know ourselves as we use narrative to apprehend experiences and navigate relationships with others. (1996: 20-21)

For homosexual men, turning to narrative as both a mirror of one's self and a roadmap to the future is a well-established tradition. Critics like Claude J. Summers, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and David Halperin, and numerous others have all explored the significant role of narrative in the process of self-recognition and the development of a sense of community. In the first decades of the twentieth century homosexual men overwhelmingly turned to drama, novels, and poetry to find themselves and learn more about "their kind." Apart from queering heterosexual narratives to serve their own ends, homosexual men were also infrequently the subject of narratives that directly addressed same-sex sexual and romantic attraction. These literary depictions were often penned anonymously, as with *Teleny* (1892), or circulated privately among like-minded individuals, like E. M. Forster's *Maurice* (composed 1912-13, published 1971). For nearly two generations of English homosexuals privileged enough to belong to E. M. Forster's circle (including Edward Carpenter, Lytton Strachey, and Christopher Isherwood), *Maurice* served as one example of a significant organizing narrative for homosexual experience.

Since its publication in 1971, *Maurice* has continued to function as an organizing narrative for homosexual men, although perhaps in a slightly altered capacity. I first discovered *Maurice* as a closeted college student in a tiny Midwestern town in the mid-

1990s. I thieved the book from my college library (later returning it) because I was too nervous to have anyone know I was checking it out. During that first read, I think it is worth noting that I identified far more closely with Clive Durham than I ever did with Maurice Hall. I understood Durham's paranoia and self loathing after Hall's initial rebuff: "I'm thankful it's into your hands I fell. Most men would have reported me to the Dean or the Police" (1971: 65). After all, the only openly homosexual student on my campus had literally been run off by several members of the football team, only after they made his life so difficult it was excruciating to witness. The fear of being discovered was quite real; no safe place existed. For that reason, it seemed perfectly plausible to me that Durham would "come to his senses," as it were, to pretend heterosexuality to avoid the torture that characterized male homosexuality in my mind. Looking back, I certainly was not alone in this feeling; many gay men, particularly in rural areas have quite similar experiences. To hide and obfuscate becomes second nature, making Durham seem primarily interested in self-preservation and therefore, eminently sensible. To identify with, or wish to emulate, Hall signaled a kind of madness. In many ways, I suspect this reaction is not markedly different from Forster's or from *Maurice's* early readers.

While my experience cannot be characterized as universal, particularly as the world has changed so quickly in the last decade or so, I do not believe it would be difficult to find a significant number of homosexual males who experienced life, and the novel, on similar terms. While critics routinely cite the novel as dated, unrealistic, and poorly executed, it offered me, as a teenager, hope: there were others like me, there was a chance of happiness. Hall's and Scudder's escape into the Greenwood seemed both plausible and preferable: to survive life at a tiny private college characterized by conformity and narrow-mindedness I needed to know that I might escape elsewhere and find a way of living I never imagined. However, it was only by initially identifying with Durham that I could start to see how one might arrive at the place Maurice and Alec do. As a narrative, perhaps *Maurice* only seems naïve and poorly conceived in hind sight; we easily forget how desperately we needed hope and possibility after we have made that escape ourselves.

Aspects of His Novel Narrative

In *Maurice*, E. M. Forster's literary sensibilities function organically, narrating his life experience, critiquing English society, and offering the first gay literary narrative with a hopeful conclusion. I contend that despite Maurice Hall's perceived primacy in the novel, his first love, Clive Durham, must be positioned as equally important throughout the *entire* novel in order to properly appreciate *Maurice's* message. Many critics, foremost of which is Robert K. Martin, dismiss Durham as a platonic homosexual à la John Addington Symonds whose narrative significance lies in helping Hall recognize his own homosexuality. Far more than a necessary plot point, I argue that Forster presents Durham as an exemplar of middle-class homosexuality in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England: a point of intellectual entry, if you will, embodied in a single character that helped readers to experience contemporary homosexuality and then to see what it could *become* via Hall and Scudder. As I conceive it, Durham embodies homosexuality as Forster experienced it and he serves as the narrative lynchpin guiding readers from a homosexuality crippled by social convention toward the Forsterian vision of what it might *become*. It is only by initiating Hall's journey with a model (that is, Durham) that readers (particularly those of Forster's generation) could

readily recognize, that they can begin to understand and conceptualize Forster's innovative narrative wherein homosexuality emerges from middle class respectability as a revolutionary force disinterested in staid "morality," and intent upon subverting any attempts to thwart it. For readers accustomed to narratives of homosexuality whose denouement inevitably signaled the denial or destruction of homosexual desire, Forster's oft-criticized narrative demonstrated the progression from contemporary models of homosexuality (embodied by Durham) toward an uncharted, seemingly fantastic, territory where desire and its myriad variations may be embraced.

Without Durham, there can be no Hall; Hall does not so much reject Durham's "type" of homosexuality as he blazes the trail out of it. It is at once destructive and misleading to construe Durham as a false homosexual or a converted heterosexual: he must be read as a homosexual cowed by privilege and social nicety into refusing his desire. Only by revaluing Durham as integral to altering narratives of homosexuality can we see his operation in tandem with Hall and Scudder to create one complete narrative. Indeed, the idyllic escape at the novel's end excludes Clive neither because he converts to heterosexuality nor because he represents a purely platonic homosexuality, but because the self-denial and thwarted desire of his narrative most effectively mirrors the realities of homosexuality in early twentieth-century English society. Durham's narrative perfectly exemplifies English social propriety: while it is most preferable to disavow homosexual desire altogether, such feelings must be thwarted in favor of heterosexual marriage, the creation of a family, and participation in public life.

Broadly speaking, a common narrative of homosexuality dominated literature during the period Forster composed *Maurice*. To varying degrees of severity, the plot's outcome was remarkably similar: literally or metaphorically, homosexuals confronted annihilation. Often, via suicide, sometimes homicide, but more frequently by a refusal to see: consider *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s literal and metaphorical deaths. Wilde, in many ways, served as *agent provocateur* of the homosexual death narrative; it could be dark and stinging, often it was delivered as barbed, witty comedy. *The Importance of Being Earnest* epitomizes a death-in-life narrative wherein homosexual desire and intrigue course barely below the surface, ultimately abandoned as unresolved narrative elements in favor of a tidy, heterosexually inclined denouement. Christopher Craft in "Alias Bunbury: Desire and Termination in *The Importance of Being Earnest*" notes, "Transcoding the emergent, dissymmetrical binarism heterosexual/homosexual into verbal play, Wilde instantiates homosexual desire as the secondary, punning other of a dominant signification, thereby simultaneously affirming and subverting the authority of the norm" (1990: 23-24). The subversion Craft mentions undergirds the entire structure of *Earnest*: multi-layered puns and frequent homosexual allusions pelt audiences. This is *Earnest*'s only option; to openly address homosexuality risks both prosecution and social pariahdom. Rather, Wilde dances a fine line, ultimately condemning his homosexual characters by relegating them to heterosexual marriages, kowtowing to predominant social mores.

In late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century England, one simply could not allow homosexuals to hold steady in their convictions or to freely pursue their desires, even in the realm of fiction. Practicing homosexuals understood that their actions must always be closeted, whatever the cost. Richard Hornby, author of "Wilde Times," notes, "With a concern for propriety that was typical of his age, he [Wilde] was certainly no early gay liberationist; he stoutly denied any "gross indecencies" with men at all three of his sensational trials in 1895, though he admitted them in private" (1998: 401). For Wilde and his ilk, art imitated life: veiled allusion in a far-removed flirting manner served well enough, for

one could never depict homosexual men finding fulfillment *as homosexual men*. Such matters must be denied wholesale, even at the cost of self-negation. As a result, Wilde narrates the death-in-marriage, eradicating homosexual desire and replacing it with asexual fraternity. If playful flirtation transpires between men in the play, we must later deduce its cause as brotherhood, not sexual desire. Consequently, homosexuals are obliterated and the status quo is maintained. Forster, via Durham's narrative, draws readers in with this familiar strategy, creating a tale all-too-familiar to homosexuals at the time.

So that we may appreciate Forster's narrative innovations in *Maurice*, I would like to examine the prevailing social (as opposed to literary) narratives of homosexuality around the time Forster began composing his novel. While social and literary narratives are by no means mutually exclusive, I have chosen to treat them separately to offer a sense of what preconceived notions readers, homosexual and otherwise, might bring to a text like *Maurice*. In 1872, a young painter named Marcus Stone chose an unconventional subject for his submission to the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Gallery: Edward II and his lover, Piers Gaveston. The painting entitled 'Edward II and His Favourite Piers Gaveston,' featured Edward II amid some assembled courtiers, bemused by a lithe Gaveston positioned intimately near the king. Peter Horne, author of "The Besotted King and His Adonis: Representations of Edward II and Gaveston in Late Nineteenth-Century England," observes,

Gaveston and Edward are positioned off-centre, moving away from the abandoned but centrally-placed shield with its lion rampant. The eye is directed towards this symbol of national sovereignty by the straight path from which the central characters metaphorically stray and by the nonchalant gesture of one of the barons whose collective gloomy presence behind the queen implies an impending come-uppance for the pair. But other signs supplement this indication of the outcome. The jester, an observer from the side crouching dejectedly to the left, has a monkey on top of his back, reflecting Gaveston's relation to the king and suggesting that the favourite apes his role and his love. Meanwhile Gaveston takes the jester's role, mocking the nobles and making the king laugh, suggesting the theme of usurped positions. (1999: 36)

At first appearance, the painting appears to narrate the dangers of neglecting one's duty, particularly as king. However, Horne argues, "The development of notions of homosexual and homophile identities [near the end of the nineteenth century] made the painting, which came out of an earlier homosocial formation, into a 'daring' subject and one that required the critic to ward off too contaminating an absorption in the spectacle of the transgressive bodies" (1996: 33). Horne continues, "As there was a more insistent and prurient searching for signs of this nature, there was greater discomfiture about the need to narrate the story of Edward II" (1996: 40). Ignored whenever possible, the only alternative explanation for the visual narrative involved emphasizing Edward II's and Piers Gaveston's grisly demise. This narrative echoes its literary counterpart: there is but one outcome for homosexuals—death—be it literal or figurative. Ironically, Stone's painting, like that which is proverbially disowned, continued to wreak havoc on its viewing public. Horne notes,

In the Christmas edition of the *Art Annual* for 1896, the year following Oscar Wilde's conviction for gross indecency, the painting was given some prominence with a new full-page engraving of the work commissioned from J. Stephenson, albeit with the

word 'favourite' dropped from the title, which became 'Edward II and Piers Gaveston.' (1996: 43)

Despite its fairly frequent reappearance during the latter part of the Victorian period, by 1908 the Board of Education suggested that Edward II and Gaveston's story was best 'passed over in discreet silence' (qtd. in Horne, 1996: 32).

Apart from the narratives presented in literature and the visual arts, several other social narratives were working to depict the homosexual in ultra-specific terms. I turn here to the work of Leela Ghandi in *Affective Communities*:

After Darwin, the colluding discourses of evolutionary anthropology and psychology hermetically sealed the frontiers of "civilized" community, only admitting within this privileged circle certain types of human being and, concomitantly, certain congruent forms of human alliance. The homosexual, unsurprisingly, was among the first to be denied admission. To be more precise, the historical moment of his psychopathological definition and emergence was already the moment of his exclusion. (2006: 36)

Echoing here the work of Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality, Volume One* (1976), Ghandi (2006: 38) also draws upon the work of feminist theorist Gayle Rubin and queer theorist Leo Bersani to posit the subversive, anti-establishment potential of non-platonic homosexual sexuality. Ghandi, in this vein, argues, "sexual minorities must demand their rehabilitation within the social fabric, unapologetically, as sexed creatures" (2006: 38). This valorization of the physical sexuality of homosexuals, specifically in the case of Maurice Hall and Alec Scudder, stands as a prominent feature of their defiant dissent from well-established models of male homosexuality and its exclusion from society. However, it is fundamental to note at this juncture that Durham either cannot or will not ever participate fully in physical homosexual acts due to their lack of social sanction, which he values above all else. In other words, Clive functions pivotally in *Maurice* because he proves incapable of or unwilling to commit to what Ghandi calls "an obligation, to refute, creatively, the elite prerequisites for civilized, intelligible sociality [...] to posit a more all-encompassing alternative [for homosexuals]" (2006: 36). As with literature and art, homosexuality was a topic that could be discussed and even explained via social narratives, but the ultimate conclusion was perennially one of exclusion or destruction. Forster deftly asserts a third, and possibly most realistic, option: Durham negates his desire, silencing himself, but preserving his position within society.

Even those sexologists working toward gaining homosexual rights in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were often responsible for the apologetic, pathologized perception of the homosexual. Sexologists like John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis sought pity for homosexuals, whom they considered blameless for their "affliction." Both men believed that the path to acceptance and presumably equality, lie in presenting homosexually inclined men as mentally afflicted but fundamentally similar to their heterosexual counterparts. Speaking of Ellis, Gandhi notes, "The homosexual, or invert [...] is likewise tainted by a determining psychic hermaphroditism that sees, as in Darwin's mollusca, both sexes tragically 'united in the same animal'" (2006: 50). With their attempts to present homosexuals at once as exceptional and fundamentally damaged, they created a

homosexual narrative that refused the potential for the creation of a society that would embrace homosexuals as equals.

In his *Apocalyptic Overtures*, Richard Dellamora deftly summarizes the state of affairs for the homosexual in the decades preceding (and informing) *Maurice*:

In an uncanny fashion, the decade following 1885 framed the history of emergent homosexuality in doubly apocalyptic terms. On the one hand, the rapid growth of social relations and cultural productions justifies calling the early 1890s a period of homosexual renaissance. But the reconciliation of Christian, social democratic, and homosexual outlooks that Pater attempts in *Marius the Epicurean* was negated already in 1885 by passage of the Labouchere amendment, with its wide-ranging, anti-homosexual provisions. Once enacted the amendment was a time bomb, in place for detonation at an unspecified moment when it promised to do massive damage. When it did go off in 1895, it ruined more than Oscar Wilde. It devastated hope and destroyed affiliation. (1993: 83)

Despite the emergence and increased visibility of homosexuality as an identity in late-nineteenth-century England, few narratives, even those advanced by apologists for homosexuality, paved the way for gaining acceptance for homosexuals. It was into this world of “devastated hope and destroyed affiliation” that Forster came of age and assumed the charge of narrating homosexuals’ way out of illness, criminality, depravity, and death toward a world where homosexuals could exist as average, fulfilled individuals.

To Get There, We Must Start with Durham

Via Durham’s characterization, Forster actively examines his own life, experiences, and belief systems, ultimately judging legal and governmental structures culpable for Durham’s inability, and the inability of numerous others like him, to sustain lasting, reciprocated homosexual relationships. Thus, concluding that Maurice (and, by extension, Forster) rejects Durham’s ‘type’ of homosexuality, as critics like Robert K. Martin assert, appears short-sighted. Rather, Maurice/Forster rejects a society which demands such capitulation to its long-enforced standards. As readers, then, we should be careful not to reject Durham, whose role in the novel and whose ‘ending’ figures as significantly as Maurice and Alec venturing into the Greenwood. Unquestionably significant, the novel’s ending represents Forster’s wholesale rejection of English society’s refusal to acknowledge or accept the possibility of loving, long-term relationships between homosexual men. However, only by repositioning Durham’s narrative as pivotal to the message of the *entire* novel, rather than just a necessary plot point, can we begin to understand *Maurice* fully. Robert K. Martin’s theory (1983) positions Durham as important only insofar as he helps Maurice realize his own sexual nature and desires and then dismisses Durham as a hypocrite or a poseur with little or no desire to pursue a homosexual relationship. Such criticism construes Durham’s ultimate fate as insignificant or unrelated to the theme of the novel, overlooking the clear correlations between Durham’s life and Forster’s experiences. By the novel’s end, Maurice and Alec emerge as heroes steeped in sincerity and integrity and Durham is all but forgotten. Indeed, the majority of critics, including Robert K. Martin, Matthew Curr, and John Harned, regard Maurice and Alec as primary, Durham as secondary. Unfortunately, this reading of *Maurice*

downplays the necessity of readers initially identifying with Durham's position in order to ultimately transfer identification to Maurice. To assume initial reader identification with Maurice presumes too great a leap—his narrative after breaking with Durham is completely original, and therefore, initially incomprehensible—readers must first recognize common ground with Durham to accept the narrative as plausible. Once that transfer of identification from Durham to Maurice transpire, its potential impact as a narrative of social critique increases. In *E. M. Forster*, Claude Summers positions *Maurice* as a “preeminently [...] political novel, for Maurice's education through suffering culminates in a sweeping indictment of his society, an indictment that results directly from his awareness of the political implications of the homosexual experience in a hostile world” (1983: 180). If we accept Summers's claim that social critique is Forster's primary objective in *Maurice*, then the novel's multiple narratives of homosexuality relate the prevailing social narrative/plot (Durham's narrative) of late-Victorian and Edwardian England and provide a new twentieth-century model of homosexual being via Maurice and Alec.

Martin's “Edward Carpenter and the Double Structure of *Maurice*,” (1983) analyzes the novel based on the theoretical constructs of male homosexuality propounded by sexologists John Addington Symonds and Edward Carpenter in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Symonds posited physically chaste male homosexuality as a positive social force, whereas Carpenter championed both individual and social benefit resulting from fully-consummated and developed homosexual relationships. Beyond simply characterizing two models for understanding male homosexuality in the late nineteenth century, the work of Symonds and Carpenter created two primary narratives of homosexuality. Symonds's construction of a homosexuality based in emotional and intellectual attachment (devoid of physicality) gained currency during the late nineteenth century because it proved less disconcerting than a more radical standpoint like Carpenter's. In many ways, Forster is the first author to fully narrate Carpenter's model of homosexuality: gone were the hypocrisy and subterfuge of narratives like Symonds's or Wilde's—for the first time someone narrated homosexuality plainly, requiring no decoding, or subtext. For this reason, Forster's text, theoretically speaking, revolutionizes homosexuality; destruction fails to befall practicing homosexuals and they possess the agency to shape their own destinies. Instead, we are left feeling pity for Durham, who cannot embrace his own desire.

Nevertheless, for many, Martin's theory remains the definitive critical lens for explicating *Maurice* because of his logical delineation between the first portion of the novel (Maurice and Durham's romantic involvement) and the second when Maurice chooses Alec. Martin maintains that Forster models Clive Durham on the homosexual a la Symonds whose aim is platonic love, whereas Alec and Maurice's relationship represents Edward Carpenter's model of homosexuality which celebrates relationships based in both the physical and emotional. Martin reiterates this thesis in *Queer Forster*:

[T]he novel's debate over sexual identity is a conflict between two discourses of the homosexual, both located in a particular time and place. These two discourses are identified with two important late nineteenth century sexual theorists, John Addington Symonds and Edward Carpenter. The first of these is associated with an elitist idealism and the second with radical socialism and feminism. Thus, for Martin the novel is not, as it was often taken to be, a plea for homosexuality, but rather a dramatized conflict between competing models of same-sex desire. (1997: 19)

Martin places Clive Durham's and Alec Scudder's plots in diametric opposition, conceding no intersection between the ideologies of Symonds and Carpenter. For Martin, Durham's narrative represents a false start, later rectified. Martin's problematically asks readers to conceptualize *Maurice* as two tangentially related narratives, rather than a single, cohesive unit.

Martin's reading of Symonds and his idealized pronouncements about male homosexual relationships gains complexity in light of Symonds's own homosexual behavior. While he espoused the value of homosexual love sans any physical expression of desire, according to John Pemble, editor of *John Addington Symonds: Culture and the Demon Desire* (2000: xviii-xxiv), Symonds enjoyed a number of fully-consummated homosexual relationships and, as a result, spent much of his time outside England for fear of prosecution. Thus, the biographical narrative of Symonds's life reveals a significant level of personal hypocrisy. This historical reality sheds fascinating light on Durham's narrative—his behavior aligns neatly with the historical Symonds—both men struggle to present an appropriate public persona while simultaneously struggling with socially “unacceptable” personal desires. As a result, Durham denies his physical desire for Maurice in favor of saving face publicly. Martin never acknowledges that Durham's behavior often suggests the desire for a fully-consummated relationship with Maurice. While I concur with Martin's assessment of the novel's “double structure,” I contend that the novel's organizing structure is not competing models of homosexuality, but rather the representation of a familiar homosexual narrative that guides readers into a new narrative that offers hope for change.

Contra Martin, I argue that rather than representing a false homosexuality, Durham, in the Cambridge portion of the novel, represents homosexuality as Forster (and many others) understood and experienced it. Martin notes, “The first half of *Maurice* is concerned with tracing the false vision of an idealized homosexuality. We perceive its falseness, however, only after we have followed Maurice through his sense of confusion and his apparent salvation in the arms of Clive” (1983: 38). Martin's claim assumes that because Durham's and Maurice's sexually unconsummated relationship ultimately dissolves it must be purely platonic and intellectualized. Within this argument, Durham victimizes Maurice despite his professions and demonstrations of love and attraction for him. Martin argues that Clive transcends his “false” homosexuality and allegedly embraces heterosexuality.

Interestingly, Martin links Maurice and Clive's relationship to an event in Forster's own college career, even while discounting Durham as homosexual. He notes:

[A]t Cambridge Forster became involved in a romantic friendship with a fellow undergraduate, Hugh Meredith, the model for Clive Durham in *Maurice*. Although the two men were very close, the physical element of the relationship was confined to passionate kisses. Forster believed during this period that his sexual identity, his status as what he termed a “minority” was an essential aspect of his personality even though he had not yet consummated his desire for other men. (1997: 12)

And yet, Martin downplays Forster's possible employment of personal experience as a critique of his own society: a society responsible for narratives criminalizing homosexuality and forcing countless homosexuals to pretend heterosexuality, regardless of their emotional and erotic desires. Forster's experience, fictionalized in *Maurice*, can hardly have been unique: men experiencing same-sex physical and emotional attraction were undoubtedly confused and frightened at the dire consequences of acting upon such urges. Because of its

taboo nature and the fear of legal/societal retribution surrounding it, homosexuality at this time remained cloaked in secrecy and a sense of extreme social deviance, which undoubtedly left many individuals frightened and confused. Within that context, it becomes clear why many homosexual men chose to marry and father families, cloaking or defying their own desires in order to retain social rank, influence, privilege, and of course, freedom.

It bears acknowledgement that this approach was *de rigueur* in the social climate of England at that time. The impact of Oscar Wilde's trials and his subsequent imprisonment had a far-reaching impact upon popular conceptions of homosexuality and male effeminacy at the time. Indeed, the threat of legal reprisal for homosexual desire ripples just beneath the surface of much of the action in *Maurice*. One need only consider Maurice's self-characterization to Dr. Barry to realize the specter of Wilde lurks everywhere there is even the slightest hint of male homosexuality: "I'm an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort" (1971: 153). Forster was unquestionably aware of the vehement opposition to male homosexuality that was alive and well when he started composing *Maurice* in 1912.

Indeed, Forster and his fictional creation seem to have had quite similar experiences. Matthew Curr asserts:

We must read with the knowledge that Forster is autobiographically present. Treating *Maurice* as an isolated text to be assessed for its literary merit founders. In this novel Forster impels love and aesthetic sensitivity as coextant in the individual soul's restitution, which is primary to the reconstruction of a healthful society. Private passion and public art are one in *Maurice*. (2001: 63)

Indeed, both Curr and Martin make an important assertion that *Maurice* cannot be read without an eye towards its autobiographical element. However, I take issue with both critics', particularly Martin's, estimation of the role of autobiographical elements in the novel. Martin's reading dissociates Forster from Durham, establishing the cause for Durham's rejection as his own disingenuous homosexuality rather than positioning him as a homosexual with remarkable similarities to Forster, who feels compelled to adhere to society's rules, no matter how difficult or unfulfilling. Martin establishes Durham as a spurning platonic homosexual, citing Hugh Meredith as the character's inspiration, rather than acknowledging the numerous similarities between Durham and his creator.

For instance, if we consider the publication history of *Maurice*, we gain greater insight into the parallels between the historical E. M. Forster and his character, Clive Durham. The novel's publication date (1971) establishes Forster's ongoing fear of legal reprisal and his capitulation, however unwilling, to societal mandates. Despite privately circulating the novel in manuscript form among his friends, Forster never attempted to publish it after the decriminalization of homosexuality in England in 1967. The paranoia Clive Durham exhibits about his desire for Maurice may gesture toward Forster's own feelings of insecurity and ambivalence about his own position in society as a homosexual. Nicola Beauman's *E. M. Forster: A Biography* (1994) notes repeatedly that Forster struggled unsuccessfully throughout his life to achieve a satisfying, sustained homosexual relationship.

While Curr asserts that *Maurice* represents Forster's autobiographical worldview, his positioning of Durham falls short of examining the character's similarities to Forster himself. In doing so, Curr assigns greater importance to the outcome of Maurice and Alec's relationship, rather than stressing the implications of Durham's choices and their relevance to society at the time. In other words, it seems to me that the temptation in reading *Maurice*, if

one accepts the possibility of the novel's autobiographical thread, is to project the element of autobiography onto Maurice rather than Durham, where it accurately belongs. This stance marginalizes Durham's narrative and positions him as little more than a necessary plot point in Maurice's development.

Granted, associating Forster with Maurice, the homosexual who forsakes social position and societal mores in favor of his personal desire, ultimately forging a sanctuary for homosexuals in the Greenwood, proves irresistibly tempting. To accept such a notion, however, one must ignore not only elements of the text itself, but also Forster's lived experience. On the most basic level, Maurice and Forster, apart from their shared desire for homosexual union, bear no physical or intellectual resemblance to one another. Forster himself asserts in the terminal note of *Maurice*, "In Maurice I tried to create a character who was completely unlike myself or what I supposed myself to be: someone handsome, healthy, bodily attractive, mentally torpid, not a bad business man and rather a snob" (1971: 246-47). One can only conjecture that the slippage in identification of the autobiographical elements of the novel and their misassociation with Maurice is the result of many readers' wish that Forster become our hero, the icon leading all homosexuals into a new world which is less harsh and more accepting. Forster achieves that goal, but in a manner unlike that asserted by critics thus far. Rather than representing homosexuality in the novel as right vs. wrong, Forster provides a dual-narrative of homosexuality's social reality at the time and a counternarrative aimed at breaking down those prevailing norms.

In this context, Durham cannot be discounted as a mere poseur whose desire actually lies in heterosexual realms or because his behavior represents a desire for a purely platonic homosexual relationship, as Martin asserts. Rather, he represents a man who fervently wishes to act upon his homosexual desires thwarted his overweening dependence on the power and position his birthright affords him. This becomes clear when Maurice suggests to Durham that he may marry:

"The fact is I'm hoping to get married," said Maurice, the words flying from him as if they had an independent life.

"I'm awfully glad," said Clive, dropping his eyes. "Maurice, I'm awfully glad. It's the greatest thing in the world, perhaps the only one—" (1971: 169)

Durham's reaction evinces no sincere pleasure. Rather, it suggests relief that his friend will assume a similar social ruse. Indeed, Maurice's decision might also afford the possibility of continuing their romance, albeit less overtly. Furthermore, Durham communicates his pleasure at Maurice's potential marriage with a kiss (on the hand): "Maurice, dear, I wanted just to show you that I hadn't forgotten the past" (1971: 170-171). While they agree not to mention the past again, this short exchange suggests the perseverance of their romantic feelings for one another.

Durham's intellectual decision to pretend heterosexuality fails to stifle the physical and emotional impulses of his homosexual desire. One need only consider his repeated invitations for Maurice to stay at Penge, the kiss he bestows on Maurice's hand, and his fervent wish to convert Maurice into a properly married homosexual to realize that he actively endeavors to sustain, rather than dissolve, their bond. Forster critiques this hypocrisy: in his desire to retain social position and its power, Durham ignores his desire for Maurice and becomes a model upper-middle class gentleman, illustrating the disavowal of personal integrity and fulfillment required to maintain the status quo in early twentieth-

century England. Curr notes, “In *Maurice* Clive is ready to trade his soul for the accoutrements of social blessing and propriety—that hallowed English word just after a secure income in the litany of English desiderata” (2001: 62). Durham’s “conversion” to heterosexuality, ironically, transpires during his trip to Greece, sitting in the theatre of Dionysius (1971: 113). Whereas Durham was entranced by all things Greek during his time at Cambridge, particularly the love between Socrates and Phaedo, he (having just passed his bar exams and thoroughly immersed himself in English law) finds the reality of Greece quite hollow: “[H]e saw only dying light and a dead land. He uttered no prayer, believed in no deity, and knew that the past was devoid of meaning like the present, and a refuge for cowards” (1971: 113). At that moment, Durham recognizes that regardless of social acceptability of homosexuality in previous civilizations, no such changes were foreseeable in England. As a result, he resigns himself to the theatrical role (he assumes heterosexuality in the amphitheater) he performs in order to preserve his social position. In other words, Forster’s frustration lies, not as Martin suggests, with the impossibility of a successful middle-class homosexual relationship but with the hypocrisy of a society which only affords the retention of privilege to those who embody prescribed roles, regardless of the inherent falseness therein. Curr’s argument, however, falls short; Forster implicates himself as similarly hypocritical and politically impotent because of his similar unwillingness to defy social and legal standards on a public level.

Isolating Truth in Falsehood

Forster’s portrayal of Maurice and Clive at Cambridge represents a convincing vision of two men in love. From the beginning, we see them as a romantically involved couple. “Durham didn’t dislike him, he was sure. That was all he wanted. One thing at a time. He didn’t so much as have hopes, for hope distracts, and he had a great deal to see to” (1971: 40). Maurice actively worries about Durham’s interest in his friendship, unsure of his feelings for his new acquaintance. “Very often Durham made no reply and Maurice would be terrified lest he was losing him” (1971: 45). Before long, casual intimacy develops: “Give me a cigarette. Put it in my mouth. Thanks,” Clive says, subtly transgressing the boundaries of friendship by allowing Maurice contact with a sexually charged area of his person (1971: 43). From then on, Forster repeatedly depicts Clive and Maurice in positions of increased intimacy and a sense of the growing attraction between the two emerges: “When they sat it was nearly always in the same position—Maurice in a chair, and Durham at his feet, leaning against him. In the world of their friends this attracted no notice” (1971: 44). So long as the young men involved understood the highly confined (by time and social convention) nature of their flirtation, such behavior bore no stigma in the closed world of the university. In his book, *The Wilde Century*, Alan Sinfield notes, “public schools were crucial in the development of a homosexual identity because, despite the official taboo, they contributed, in many instances, an unofficial but powerful cultural framework within which same-sex passion might be positively valued” (1994: 65). Thus, Maurice and Durham’s intimacy allows mutual bodily access, establishing a profound connection. They become inseparable: “Durham couldn’t do without him, and would be found at all hours curled up in his room and spoiling to argue” (1971: 49). Their growing intimacy suggests sincere emotion and a mutual genuine interest.

Durham's jealousy about Maurice's potential attraction to a woman further establishes their bond when he asks,

"Is there some trouble?"

He caressed again and withdrew. It seemed as certain that he hadn't as that he had a friend.

"Anything to do with that girl?"

"No."

"You wrote you liked her."

"I didn't—don't." (1971: 56-57)

This scene's tension increases when, moments later, friends interrupt the pair's embrace:

Now Durham stretched up to him, stroked his hair. They clasped one another. They were lying breast against breast soon, head was on shoulder, but just as their cheeks met someone called "Hall" from the court, and he answered: he always had answered when people called. Both started violently, and Durham sprang to the mantelpiece where he leant his head on his arm. (1971: 57)

This short scene represents a major shift in Durham's and Maurice's dynamic. Whereas previous demonstrations of physical contact and proximity occurred in their friends' presence, both men recognize the increasingly illicit nature of their relationship and the need for secrecy and subterfuge. The simple action of simultaneously jumping from the bed and mutually disengaging signals both men's cognizance of societal rules and their wish to conform to avoid retribution. They both realize that platonic homosexuality remains marginally acceptable in their social narrative; they also realize their desire violates the platonic. Durham and Maurice have not yet declared love at this point, but they understand the danger of their behavior in early twentieth-century England. Durham disengages first from their embrace, subtly indicating his greater willingness to conform to society's expectations and forsake his own desires, which should not be confused for an absence thereof.

Not long after this scene, Durham confesses his love to Maurice. Although his initial reaction—"Oh, rot!" (1971: 59) distresses Durham enormously, Maurice quickly rallies and confesses his love as well. Before he does so, though, Clive "wrote Maurice an icy note suggesting that it would be a public convenience if they behaved as if nothing happened. He added, 'I shall be obliged if you will not mention my criminal morbidity to anyone'" (1971: 59). Facing a crushing rejection from Maurice, Durham remains gravely concerned about his public position and perception. Quite obviously, no narratives at the time offer anything other than utter ruin for men with desires like Durham's, and he appears acutely aware of this reality. In fact, his letter mentions nothing of his own feelings or disappointment. Instead, he focuses upon the precarious position revealing his feelings place him in. Although Maurice makes no threat to expose him, Durham's reaction offers a fascinating glimpse into a soul clearly determined to maintain appearances at any cost. Fortunately, Maurice realizes the similarity of their desire: "He loved men and always had loved them. He longed to embrace them and mingle his being with theirs" (1971: 61). After this powerful realization, Maurice confesses his feelings, presumably to forge a more fully-developed romantic relationship with Durham.

However, Durham's anxiety takes control and he rebuffs Maurice: "I shouldn't have said that. So do leave me. I'm thankful it's into your hands I fell. Most men would have reported me to the Dean or the Police" (1971: 65). Durham's fixation on the authorities' power to punish his behavior, while not without grounds, signals an anxiety about the criminal nature of his desire strong enough to outweigh its pursuit. An overwhelming sense of guilt about his homosexuality remains a significant portion of Durham's personality as well. In a description of Durham's pre-college experience, Forster tells us "His sixteenth year was ceaseless torture. He told no one, and finally broke down and had to be removed from school" (1971: 67). Clearly, Durham understands his own desire, but can think of no method to negotiate the satisfaction of such desires while remaining a privileged middle class citizen.

Durham and Maurice briefly attain a romantic relationship. After Maurice confesses his love and the two kiss, a short period follows where the reader anticipates requited love for the pair. This union results in heightened emotions and playfulness, albeit tinged with Durham's anxiety about public exposure as a homosexual. Maurice skips lectures in order to escape into the country with Durham for a day of companionship, the desire of any young lovers. Durham says, "I can't stick Cambridge in this weather. Let's get right outside it ever so far and bathe" (1971: 73). While Durham wants to escape for the day, his words hint at much more; he wants to completely escape ("ever so far") from Cambridge to fulfill his desires and avoid the judgment of society. The two nearly escape, "[b]ut as they threaded Jesus Lane they were hailed by the Dean" (1971: 73). An ironic choice of street name, Forster reminds us of the presence of Christianity, which both men disregard and, according to Edwardian standards, actively transgress to fulfill their desires. The appearance of the Dean, society's representative in his role as chief authority at the college, also reinforces the omnipresence of the condemning gaze of society. In the face of such stifling control and claustrophobic "morality" it becomes necessary to defy society, as men like Carpenter, Keynes, and Grant were doing in Forster's own life, in an attempt to create a space for homosexuality, even if only in a single room or house. For those men unwilling to undergo scrutiny and forfeit their societal privileges in order to live life as they chose, playacting heterosexuality becomes their sole option, regardless of the reality of their sexual desire.

Nearly all the critical discussion surrounding this "transformation" accepts it at face value, believing that Durham either experiences a miraculous transition from homosexuality to heterosexuality or suggesting Durham's homosexuality had always been false. Critics like Jon Harned, Frederick McDowell, Summers, and Martin all seem to accept Durham's 'conversion' to heterosexuality on some level. I view Durham's decision to marry differently: late in the novel he (a married man by this point) kisses Maurice's hand, suggesting his desire for Maurice perseveres, coursing just under the surface. Summers suggests, "Clive's conversion to heterosexuality vividly illustrates the power of the physical, even in someone who has struggled so long to repress it, 'not realizing that the body is deeper than the soul'" (1983: 160). Likewise, Jon C. Harned (1993: 56) in "Becoming Gay in E. M. Forster's *Maurice*" insists, "Clive begins to be sexually attracted to women and to find Maurice's embraces repulsive." Furthermore, critic Frederick McDowell asserts, "Clive's idealized conception of sex may partly motivate his later deconversion from homosexuality" (1972: 51).

Despite the prevalence of such claims, however, *Maurice* offers no convincing evidence of Durham's "deconversion." Rather than becoming heterosexual, Durham succumbs to his fears about living as a homosexual and chooses the safety of feigned

heterosexuality instead. Harned makes a fascinating point about Durham's 'conversion' while simultaneously failing to recognize that no such event took place: "the mysterious alteration in his sexual life occurs just after he has passed his bar exams. The law—the law that forbids the mention of homosexuality and founds culture itself—must be obeyed" (1993: 61). While Harned accepts Durham's growing awareness of the law (one of the most powerful narratives for society) as a primary cause of his sexual about-face (rather than, as I argue, the cause of his desire to hide his sexuality), he unwittingly suggests the cause of Durham's desire to marry: his recognition of the consequences of transgressing the law. As a result, Durham marries Anne Woods and embarks on what is likely a *marriage blanc* that neatly fulfills the requirements of his public life and social ambition.

Forster creates a fascinating portrait of the Durham-Woods marriage—one which falls remarkably short of wedded ardor. Durham actively chooses to hide his (allegedly past) love for Maurice from Anne, implying that his love for Maurice endures. However, even if his love for Maurice ceases, Durham recognizes that the mere mention of a past love for another man gives his wife reason to impugn his masculinity and possibly his fidelity. We learn: "in the first glow of his engagement, when she was the whole world to him, the Acropolis included, he thought of confessing to her about Maurice...But loyalty to his friend withheld him, and he was glad afterwards" (1971: 159). Forster's use of the term 'confessing' suggests that Durham construes his attraction/love for Maurice as criminal and/or sinful and places his wife in the position (potentially) to punish or perhaps even absolve Durham of his 'crime.' Thus, Maurice becomes a guilty secret that Durham guards carefully, unwilling to relinquish his love for him. Although sexual activity occurs between Durham and Anne, Forster depicts it as mechanical: antiseptic and dispassionate at best. "They united in a world that bore no reference to the daily, and this secrecy drew after it much else of their lives. So much could never be mentioned. He never saw her naked, nor she him. They ignored the reproductive and the digestive functions" (1971: 159). Durham strives to maintain contact with Maurice, taking special interest in Maurice's love life and expressing anxiety over his inability to disavow homosexuality. While many critics categorize this concern as a form of revulsion, I view it as more akin to anxiety or jealousy over Maurice's ability to pursue his desires and homosexual relationships. One must question whether Durham does not wish Maurice to follow a path similar to his own so that the two might remain companions of a sort. At the same time, Durham lives with the terror of being 'outed' and losing his social position. Thus Durham's ultimate inability to divorce himself from Maurice accurately represents the plight of the closeted homosexual in early twentieth-century England. In this light, Durham's much touted "conversion" to heterosexuality seems highly suspect, if not altogether impossible. Durham's desire to emulate the accepted standards of social propriety of the time thwarts his homosexuality; it does not negate it. Through exploration of repressed homosexuality in Durham, Forster exposes an incredibly frustrating situation he experienced firsthand and moves toward constructing a more open, liberated homosexuality in the hope of sparking new thought and inspiring social change.

Ultimately, Durham must suffer all that he denies himself and a marriage which includes none of the passion or intensity of his relationship with Maurice. He embodies the fact that "England has always been disinclined to accept human nature" (1971: 206). Nevertheless, his position at the end of the novel is often dismissed as secondary to Maurice's and Alec's, which overlooks a significant element of social critique in the novel for those readers and critics seeking a 'realistic' ending. Although Forster himself never married, Durham comes to represent him and numerous others homosexuals who were forced by law

to behave hypocritically in order to protect their own well-being. The conclusion of this particular facet of the story line is just as, if not more, pivotal to the complete novel and its widespread social critique than Maurice and Alec escaping into the Greenwood. Durham's position at the novel's conclusion represents England as it was at the time; it offers verisimilitude for its readers. Furthermore, and perhaps more significantly, Durham, at the structural level, serves as a narrative bridge that pulls them in by representing life as they knew it and pushes them forward into the world Maurice and Alec will create. Simply put, Maurice and Alec's escape would be unimaginable if we did not first fully understand and sympathize with Durham's difficult, and thwarted, position.

The concluding scene of the novel reinstates the tension between Durham's narrative and Maurice's. It becomes readily apparent that there can be no reconciliation between the two (narratives or characters): Durham is horrified to learn that Maurice plans to leave with his gamekeeper and Maurice remains defiantly dedicated to the goal of finding a place for him and Alec to exist in harmony. In his final rejection of English society, its mandates, and its insistence on binary systems of meaning, Maurice does not tell Durham the specifics of his plans:

To the end of his life Clive was not sure of the exact moment of departure, and with the approach of old age he grew uncertain whether the moment had yet occurred. The Blue Room [where Maurice often stayed as a guest] would glimmer, ferns undulate. Out of some external Cambridge his friend began beckoning to him, clothed in the sun, and shaking out the scents and sounds of the May term. (1971: 242)

Durham, clearly the damaged party in this situation, longs his entire life for the freedom and happiness that Maurice pursues. While we are left with no clear sense of how the relationship between Maurice and Alec ultimately works out, Forster's narrative opens the door to change attitudes and thought patterns regarding the possibility and necessity of creating space for gay men within society. As Forster famously remarked, "A happy ending was imperative" (1971: 246). Without Durham, that happy ending could never have been imagined.

References

BEAUMAN, Nicola. 1994. *E. M. Forster: A Biography*. New York: Knopf, 1994.

CRAFT, Christopher. 1990. Alias Bunbury: Desire and Termination in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. In *Representations*, 1990, vol. 31, pp. 19-46.

CURR, Matthew. 2001. Recuperating E. M. Forster's *Maurice*. In *Modern Language Quarterly*, 2001, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 53-69.

DELLAMORA, Richard. 1993. *Apocalyptic Overtures: Sexual Politics and the Sense of an Ending*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993.

FORSTER, E. M. *Maurice*. 1971. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971.

GANDHI, Leela. 2006. *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siecle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

HARNED, Jon. 1993. Becoming Gay in E. M. Forster's *Maurice*. In *Papers on Language and Literature*, 1993, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 49-66.

HORNBY, Richard. 1998. Wilde Times. In *The Hudson Review*, 1998, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 401-408.

HORNE, Peter. 1999. The Besotted King and his Adonis: Representations of Edward II and Gaveston in Late Nineteenth-Century England. In *History Workshop Journal*, 1999, vol. 47, pp. 30-48.

MARTIN, Robert K. 1983. Edward Carpenter and the Double Structure of *Maurice*. In *Literary Visions of Homosexuality*. S. Kellog, ed. New York: Harrington Press, 1983, pp. 35-46.

———. 1997. Introduction. In *Queer Forster*. R. Martin and G. Piggford. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 1-28.

McDOWELL, Frederick. 1972. Second Thoughts on E. M. Forster's *Maurice*. In *Virginia Woolf Quarterly*, 1972, vol. 1, no.1, pp. 46-59.

OCHS, Elinor and Lisa CAPPS. 1996. Narrating the Self. In *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1996, vol. 25, pp. 19-43.

PEMBLE, John. 2000. Introduction. In *John Addington Symonds: Culture and the Demon Desire*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, pp. xviii-xxiv.

SINFIELD, Alan. 1994. *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

SUMMERS, Claude J. 1983. *E. M. Forster*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1983.

Joshua G. Adair, PhD
Assistant Professor,
Department of English and Philosophy
Murray State University

jadair1@murraystate.edu

In *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* [online]. 2010, vol. 2, no. 1 [cit. 2010-04-14]. Available on web page <http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JLS02/pdf_doc/04.pdf>.