

**Greece and Platonic Love in E. M. Forster's *Maurice*,
or the greatness and limits of Antiquity as a source of inspiration¹
(First part)**

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To Annie Carcedo and in the memory of Patricia Cruzalegui

Given a title like this, one might think that this article deals –or will deal- mainly with evidence. I am not going to deny it, since, after all, Forster himself explains in the “Notes on the three men” -who are the protagonists of this novel- that one of them, Clive Durham, shows a “Hellenic temperament”. He is a man who believes in the Platonic way of life and tries at the same time to get his great friend, Maurice, to adopt it as well. I shall not reveal, then, any secret, though I shall try to offer an accurate analysis of something known and “confessed”. It is also true that, in the “Terminal note”, Forster declares himself deeply impressed by Edward Carpenter, a follower of Walt Whitman, and he is convinced of the nobleness of love between comrades. As Forster explains, Carpenter and his friend George Merrill turned into the creative stimulus that made his novel flow smoothly with no impediments. And, nevertheless, it is quite evident that Greece, Plato and his dialogues –mainly his *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*- and the Platonic love that thanks to them became fully outlined are the inspiration, the archetype or model, the challenge and, finally, what must be abandoned in order to go beyond it or to guide it towards its true origin. This is logical –or, at least, comprehensible-, since we should remember that Forster, after having been admitted to King’s *College* in 1897, studied Classical Languages in Cambridge and he even taught Latin at the “Working Men’s *College*” in London³. There are certainly many other reasons which explain the Platonic dependence of *Maurice* in an age like the Victorian-Edwardian one, but I would rather deal with all these questions later on. For the time being, I am interested above all in proposing a clear method of presenting my comments and pointing out its advantages and inconveniences.

Indeed, if my aim is to offer an accurate analysis of the inspiring role of Greece and Platonic love in a specific novel, I could focus logically on some points and add the best quotations *ad hoc*. However, I have already underlined that, in my opinion, both topics are the basis and the structure of a literary work perhaps less complex than the majority of Forster’s novels. Therefore, I should prove that, with regard to *Maurice*, my reading is really useful in order to perceive its true spirit. On the other hand, I do not forget the readers’ right to follow me, thus

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enabling a real control of my intellectual journey. Obviously, I shall respect it, although such a reasonable attitude forces me to beg your indulgence if I invite you to read with me, chapter after chapter, a novel whose literary value I would like to help to reveal. As a philologist, this is certainly my duty and, in spite of some inevitable repetitions, I am convinced that this is what honesty demands. Finally, I hope that the number not only of statements and certainties but also of suggestions and shades will be enough to satisfy the expectations that the title may have aroused. I finish, then, this short introduction and I start immediately.

When reading chapter one of the first part, it is inevitable to notice something that will leave a deep mark on Maurice's character, that is to say, he lives –and in fact he has always lived- in a closed men's world which obstructs and even prevents a fluid contact with the other world, women's one. After primary school and having finished the school year, he may enjoy the annual trip in which “the three masters took part as well as the boys” (15)⁴. These boys, not boys and girls, educated by male teachers, not by male and female teachers, are subjected to a rigid discipline which apparently does not permit any concession. After all, that trip, “lest discipline should suffer, it took place just before the holidays, when leniency does no harm” (15).

Women, in their turn, occupy a different world, i.e. home, where as wives and mothers rather than as women they exercise their hospitable and motherly nature. In fact, this trip “seemed more like a treat at home than school, for Mrs. Abrahams, the Principal's wife, would meet them at the tea place with some lady friends, and be hospitable and motherly” (15).

Consequently, everything shows that these boys educated by men have few and distant contacts with the women's world, which might also explain why Mr. Abrahams, the Principal, has a simple vision of them: “They seemed to him a race small but complete, like the New Guinea pygmies, ‘my boys’ ... And they were even easier to understand than pygmies, because they never married and seldom died. Celibate and immortal, the long procession passed before him, its thickness varying from twenty-five to forty at a time” (16).

Free from the “inconveniences” of death and marriage, they seem to be self-sufficient and by no means conflictive. However, Mr. Ducie, one of Mr. Abrahams' assistants, is conscious of the dangers that threaten them since they lack any sort of contrast and live in an isolated world that impedes a real knowledge of life. Therefore, he decides to have a “good talk” with Maurice in order to approach with him the most masculine topic, sex: “Then, very simply and kindly, he approached the mystery of sex. He spoke of male and female, created by God in the beginning in order that the earth might be peopled, and of the period when the male and female receive their powers. ‘You are just becoming a man now, Maurice. That is why I am telling you about this’” (18).

Maurice's circumstances are certainly singular: he is fourteen years and nine months old; his father has died recently from pneumonia; he has no elder brothers, only two sisters, Ada and Kitty; he has no uncles and, at home, the only men are the driver and his mother's gardener; to sum up, no really close men with whom he can have a “good talk” (15)⁵. Furthermore, having

⁴ London: Penguin Books, 1972, p. 15. All the quotations will correspond to this edition and the numbers in brackets refer to it.

⁵ Maurice's personal circumstances resemble Forster's a great deal. His father died from tuberculosis one year after his birth (1880), he thus became a single son surrounded by women. In Gillie's words, Forster's mother was a “devoted mother with other female relatives eager to assume the role of motherhood when the opportunity offered (*op. cit.* p. 14)... his relation with his mother was always paramount, and probably it was over-intense” (p.16). However, in spite of mentioning these coincidences and other that I will point out later on, I do not mean that basically I think of *Maurice* as an autobiographic novel; on the contrary, I would agree with Philip Gardner when he writes: “Though it chooses to emphasise the sexual psychology

finished the school year, Maurice will spend some months at his mother's, and it is unthinkable that she, being a mother and belonging to the Victorian society that Forster describes, should talk to her son about a theme which is so unfit for her august, pure and paradoxically virginal role⁶. Mr. Abrahams has advised Maurice to imitate his father, but he has also warned him not to do anything of which his mother could feel ashamed if she were to see him committing such an action. It is quite clear, then, that maternity and sex are curiously opposite sides or, as Mr. Ducie says: 'It is not a thing that your mother can tell you, and you should not mention it to her nor to any lady, and if at your next school boys mention it to you, just shut them up; tell them you know' (18).

It is worth underlining, in my opinion, to what extent the puritanism of the Victorian-Edwardian age⁷ has appeared in these words since, although the teacher has decided to talk to him about sex, in fact he speaks about reproduction rather than about desire, pleasure, etcetera. With the help of a drawing in the sand, he introduces Maurice to the features of the masculine and feminine reproductive sexual organs, as well as to their copulation, but the man about whom Ducie speaks is not a libidinous and a carnal one; on the contrary: "He spoke of the ideal man-chaste with asceticism. He sketched the glory of Woman... to love a noble woman, to protect and serve her -this, he told the little boy, was the crown of life... it all hangs together-all-and God in his heaven. All's right with the world. Male and female! Ah wonderful!" (19).

It is impossible to know if this adolescent Maurice, who may have known –or certainly has known- the sexual urges of his body, starts feeling revulsion on account of future sexual intercourse with a noble, chaste, pure and maternal human being with whom, in spite of her reproductive role, logically his relations should be of a different kind. It is really impossible to know this, but Maurice states emphatically: 'I think I shall not marry' (19). Or we could rather think that, having just awakened to the mystery of both sex and pleasure, at this moment much more demanding than other deep reflections, Maurice has felt betrayed. Indeed, walking along the beach, Mr. Ducie remembers that he has left the embarrassing drawing in the sand, mainly because some passers-by are approaching. Full of anguish, he runs towards it till Maurice calms him by saying that the tide will rub it out. He says it, but: "Suddenly, for an instant of time, the boy despised him. 'Liar', he thought. 'Liar, coward, he's told me nothing!'... Then darkness rolled up again, the darkness that is primeval but not eternal, and yields to its own painful dawn" (20).

Here ends chapter one. On the one hand and in accordance with the novel-plot, Forster has

of its hero above other possible aspects of his life, Maurice is not thinly-disguised autobiography or wish-fulfilment but a created fictional world" (E. M. Forster. *Writers & Their Work*, n° 261. London, 1977, p. 29). On the other hand, Forster himself confesses in the "Notes on the three men" that "in Maurice I tried to create a character who was completely unlike myself or what I supposed myself to be...". I guess that this statement must be in fact excessive, so that prudence regarding this sort of consideration is highly advisable.

⁶ Regarding women in Victorian England, see e.g.: Hellerstein, E. O. (ed.). *Victorian Women. A Documentary Account of Women's Life in 19th Century England, France and the United States*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press 1981; Castero, S. P. *Substance or the Shadow: Images of Victorian Womanhood*, New Haven 1982 and Lewis, J. *Woman and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Aldershot: Elgar, 1991.

⁷ This is not, of course, the only possible vision of the epoch, but, at the moment, this aspect is emphasized. For a global view of the Edwardian period, see for instance: Bernstein, G. *Liberalism and Liberal Politics in Edwardian England*. Boston and London: Allen & Unwin, 1986; D. Read (ed.). *Edwardian England*, London: Croom Helm, 1982; Hynes, S. L. *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*. London: Pimlico, 1991; Pemble, J. *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South*. Oxford: O. U. P., 1988; Priestley, J. *The Edwardians*. London: Heinemann, 1970; Read, D. *Edwardian England, 1901-15: Society and Politics*. London: Harrap, 1972 and *Documents for Edwardian England, 1901-15*. London: Harrap, 1973.

succeeded in portraying magisterially the society of his age, with its taboos, prejudices and fears, which has conditioned and still conditions his own life; in short, a society which prefers that human beings keep silence on too much human themes and which, if it finally approaches them, does so with much contention and giving them an aura of chastity that betrays their true nature⁸. The writer has not had time yet to approach the protagonist's homosexuality except for premonitory 'I think I shall not marry' (19). Nevertheless, I should like to quote now James Bowen's thesis about how the Victorian Age –in some aspects the Edwardian one was its appendix- thought about sexuality in general and about homosexuality in particular:

“Sex suddenly became unmentionable, and mid Victorians developed a superficial abhorrence not only of fornication, but also of masturbation and sodomy... a public abhorrence of any form of sexual activity outside the minimal orthodox requirements of marital procreation characterized Victorianism... the universal zeal to deny sex was reflected in the stream of literature... many volumes were written on the dangers of seminal emission in any form”⁹.

And, with regard to that Greek spirit in relation to which one can truly understand what Forster explains, it must be acknowledged that the novelist introduces it in a clear and at the same time subtle way, avoiding any explicit reference but taking advantage of the true parallelism between ancient and contemporary education, between Plato's Athens and England at the beginning of the twentieth century. Of course, this last statement may have caused general astonishment, but let us note that what we have just read is in fact an initiation ceremony by means of which, as among ancient Greeks, an adult introduces an adolescent to the world of full masculinity by revealing to him the secrets that he will need, as it took place for instance – *mutatis mutandis*, of course- in those ancient initiation rites of homosexuality. I think mainly of the pederastic institution which was created to shape adolescents' character. This adolescent, among men and following the guidance of an adult pedagogue -who is also his lover whether there is sexual intercourse or not-, enters little by little the world of free citizens as husband, father and ruler of a society which has been intended basically for men¹⁰. In the realm of a society of governing pederasts, erotic themes are not avoided but approached philosophically, because the proper guidance of adolescents towards Virtue and the Good depends on this fact. In their turn, women remain at home, and there, as dwellers day after day of the gynaeceum, are educated to become wives and reproductive mothers. Undoubtedly, they are respected because the human race must survive, but between husband and wife there may hardly exist bonds of comradeships, since neither have they received the same education nor do they play the same role nor are they responsible for the same things. Left on the sidelines by a pedagogical *éros* of masculine values which is not willing to consider them true citizens and comrades, women can

⁸ Bearing in mind the prudence that I claimed before, I think that there is an evident parallelism between the lives of Forster and Maurice. Let us notice that, before arriving at Cambridge and knowing the liberal atmosphere in which Clive and his friends live -The Apostles-, Maurice -Forster- abhors his previous school –Tonbridge in Forster's case- which does not educate, precisely. As C. Gillie states (*op. cit.* p. 20): “What Tonbridge did for him was to change him from a volatile, beautiful, eloquent child into an awkward, diffident, repressed adolescent”.

⁹ *Rediscovering Hellenism. The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, edited by G.W. Clarke, Cambridge 1989, chapter 8: “Education, ideology and the ruling class: Hellenism and English public schools in the nineteenth century”, pp. 180-1.

¹⁰ With regard to all these themes, see for instance: Marrou, H. I. *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1948; Dover, K. J. *Greek homosexuality*. London: Duckworth 1978; Buffière, F. *Eros adolescent. La pédérastie dans la Grèce Antique*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1980 and Sergeant, B. *L'homosexualité dans la mythologie grecque*. Paris: Payot, 1984.

only offer themselves as sensual beings who are capable of procreating. Deprived of Virtue because of their intellectual incapacity –incapacity to learn a “masculinized” and excluding virtue, of course-, they do not provide true friendship but the feminine gift of maternity or the basest sensuality, thus pursuing all the time in this last case vulgar bodily pleasures which are unfit to shape noble and virtuous characters¹¹. At any rate, we should admit that the ideal woman that Forster has described represents, as usual in Victorian-Edwardian England, the suppression in a human being of any form of sensuality. Being the exact copy of this highly appreciated model, Maurice’s mother –as well as those women he knows- is respected and even adored, but it is quite evident that she is not the right person with whom he can talk, as if she were his friend, on sensuality, sex or pleasure, that is to say, on everything rather earthly than uranic.

Chapter two presents Maurice at his mother’s, near London, where he has gone to spend his holidays. He will be sent very soon to boarding school, which saddens him a bit, but, for the time being, everything is happiness and joy. Among greetings and kindnesses, he notices yet the absence of George, his mother’s gardener, who, according to some opinions, has left because he was already too old and, according to others, because he aimed at something better. Forster’s intentions are now absolutely coherent with what we have read before. Indeed, in a world where men and women occupy different places and play such different roles, only men are the true comrades of other men. His mother and sisters have caressed him all day, but when Maurice finally went to bed: “He remembered George. Something stirred in the unfathomable depths of his heart. He whispered, ‘George, George’. Who was George? Nobody –just a common servant. Mother and Ada and Kitty were far more important” (24).

His mother and sister are certainly much more important, but it is also true that, in spite of George’s lower status, Maurice held him in high esteem owing to a logical complicity which separates him irremediably from those with whom he has blood-bonds. Or, in other words, George’s absence anticipates the emptiness that Clive will fill some day, since Maurice has already become –no matter whether he is conscious of it or not- the contemporary instance of those Greek masculine friendships where separation was experienced as an unbearable pain.

Maurice is now sixteen years old (chapter III) and, once again in the masculine atmosphere of his new school –where he even plays jokes on younger students- experiences a new and sometimes astonishing revelation: in spite of the rudeness in which men often live, finally they discover the need for tenderness and love. Sometimes they fight and compete with one another; sometimes they shape their character and personality by protecting themselves from the “danger” of femininity, but sooner or later they must confess that they need a complement and desire to devote themselves to someone. However, given that they cannot break out of the closed world where they live, the male friend necessarily turns into the complement, into the equal and yet different human being whom he loves and with whom he shares everything. Maurice has two dreams and both have George as protagonist:

“The second dream is more difficult to convey. Nothing happened. He scarcely saw a face, scarcely heard a voice say, ‘that is your friend’, and then it was over, having filled him with beauty and taught him tenderness. He could die for such a friend, he would allow such a friend to die for him; they would make any sacrifice for each other, and count the world nothing, neither death nor distance nor crossness could part them, because ‘this is my friend’. Soon afterwards he was confirmed and tried to persuade himself that the friend must be Christ. But Christ has a mangy beard. Was he a Greek god, such as illustrates the classical dictionary? More probable, but most probably he was just

¹¹ These are subjects which are treated extensively in Plato’s *Symposium*, Plutarch’s *Eroticus* and Lucianus’ *Amores*. Regarding marriage and the women’s role in the bosom of this institution, it is advisable to read Antipater Tarsensis’ extant fragment on marriage (fr. 63, vol III in Hans von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Stuttgart 1968, p. 254.

a man... Then he would reëmbibe the face and the four words, and would emerge yearning with tenderness and longing to be kind to everyone, because his friend wished it, and to be good that his friend might become more fond of him. Misery was somehow mixed up with all this happiness. It seemed as certain that he hadn't a friend as that he had one, and he would find a lonely place for tears" (26).

In any case, Forster outlines two essential features: a) the literary Maurice he wants to create is a sincere, tender and sensual boy. He does not abhor sexual needs; on the contrary, he experiences them irremediably but with countless restrictions. b) the Maurice he describes denounces both the paradox and hypocrisy of a society which generates homosexuality – consciously or not- and, being unable to carry the burden of its “monstrosity” –as this is the name it uses- and being unable to ponder calmly as well on its own responsibility, it prefers to find a scapegoat:

“As soon as his body developed he became obscene. He supposed some special curse had descended on him, but he could not help it, for even when receiving the Holy Communion filthy thoughts would arise in his mind. The tone of the school was pure -that is to say, just before his arrival there had been a terrific scandal. The black sheep had been expelled, the remainder were drilled hard all day and policed at night, so it was his fortune or misfortune to have little opportunity of exchanging experiences with his school-fellows. He longed for smut, but heard little and contributed less, and his chief indecencies were solitary. Books: the school library was immaculate, but while at his grandfather's he came across an unexpurgated Martial, and stumbled about in it with burning ears. Thoughts: he had a dirty little collection. Acts: he desisted from these after the novelty was over, finding that they brought him more fatigue than pleasure” (26-27).

Forster has not mentioned Plato's *Symposium* yet, but we think immediately of the original source, of that ancient text which describes like no other one those friendships between lovers and beloved and their desire to offer themselves to one another. Maurice feels that he would be capable of dying for his friend and doing his best to please him. Phaedrus in the *Symposium* explains more or less the same thing: there is nothing better for an adolescent than a virtuous lover and vice versa. Neither his parents, nor honours, nor even wealth can guarantee –as love does- that neither will ever do anything of which he could be ashamed. Phaedrus even states that the best city or army would be the one consisting of lovers and beloved, since their desire for mutual emulation would eliminate any possibility of dishonour. ‘Furthermore, only the lovers are willing to die one for another’¹². There were certainly beautiful examples of feminine courage such as Alcestis, but Phaedrus focuses on Achilles' heroism in having preferred his death to a long life, thus avenging his lover Patroclus. On the other hand, if we wanted to compare that

¹² Plato's *Symposium* 178-180c -translated by W. R. M. Lamb. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983; *idem* regarding all the quotations of the *Symposium*. The same feeling appears in Plutarch's *Eroticus* where conjugal and pederastic loves are compared: ‘And now consider’, he said, ‘the extent of Eros' superiority in the sphere of battle, in Ares' sphere. He is not idle, as Euripides said; he has seen service in the field; he does not *Spend his nights on the soft cheeks of girls*. A man filled with love has no need of Ares to fight his enemies; if he has his own god with him, he is *Ready to cross fire and sea, the air itself*, on behalf of his friend, wherever the friend may bid him. When the sons of Niobe in Sophocles' play are being shot at and about to die, one of them calls for help –and for no other helper or ally than his lover: *O... place about me*' (760 D-E, translated by W. C. Helmbold. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969; *idem* regarding all the quotations of the *Eroticus*).

hypocrisy denounced by Forster with Greeks' attitude, it would be worth reading for instance Pausanias' speech -in the *Symposium*, too (180-185c)- which gives much information on the sophisticated rules of masculine courtship, thus proving that, in spite of being an admitted practice, its risks were not silenced¹³. Nevertheless, our aim now is to analyse Forster's Maurice who, overwhelmed by a feeling of chaos, has already developed a definite personality: "All that came out of the chaos were the two feelings of beauty and tenderness that he had first felt in a dream. They grew yearly, flourishing like plants that are all leaves and show no sign of flower" (27).

Chapter four is extremely significant concerning the definite features of a consolidated character -which, in the case of Maurice, is irreversible. The novelist takes us now to graduation, i. e. to Maurice's definitive goodbye to secondary school just before enrolling at Cambridge. He has been given Grote's *History of Greece*¹⁴ and, amid the festivities, he will experience once more an important revelation. Undoubtedly, Freud is already the scientist in relation to whom everything regarding sex must be explained, so that Forster decides that the only male friend of the family talking to Maurice from time to time is a doctor. He detects from the very beginning something irregular in the young Hall. He has been speaking with him for a little while and has added that he supposes that, after Cambridge, a job and a "pretty wife" (p. 29) will be waiting for him. A bit later, Maurice says goodbye to his teacher's wife -a very pretty and kind woman, indeed- and, when he is already leaving, he hears Dr. Barry telling him:

"Well Maurice, a youth irresistible in love as in war', and caught his cynical glance. 'I don't know what you mean, Dr. Barry!' 'Oh, you young fellows! Butter wouldn't melt in your mouth these days. Don't know what I mean? Prudish of a petticoat! Be frank, man, be frank. You don't like anyone in. The frank mind's the pure mind. I'm a medical man and an old man and I tell you that. Man that is born of woman must go with woman if the human race is to continue?' Maurice stared after the house master's wife, underwent a violent repulsion from her and blushed crimson: he had remembered Mr. Ducie's diagrams" (30)¹⁵.

The writer describes what science at his age considered a pathology. Notwithstanding, the *denouement* of the novel will reveal that Maurice is not a half-made man who has not reached full maturity, but precisely a mature man who vindicates and exerts his right to love the way he knows. However, for the time being, Forster wants to explain why things are the way they are.

¹³ On this theme, see e.g.: Dover, K. J. *op. cit.* chapter II, pp. 81-100.

¹⁴ It is worth pointing out that Grote, who also wrote *Plato, and Other Companions of Socrates* (1865), recommends reading Plato from the point of view of the negative dialectic which denies in Plato any sort of dogmatism. As F.M. Turner explains: "Grote argued that Plato had no other purpose in the dialogues of search, which usually concluded in scepticism, new questions, or the simple admission of ignorance, than to illustrate the ameliorative, liberating power of the negative. Plato's method was his very method. The movement of testing, exercising, refuting, but not finding or providing constituted the primary weapons for ending the rule of King Nomos, or inherited customs, ideas, and prejudices". Being in favour of a human truth, i. e. a truth created by human beings and against the Unchanging Truth that tendentious minds believed to be found in Plato's thought, proclaims the *homo mensura* as "the equal right of private judgement to each man for himself in determining what was right or wrong, true or false, wise or foolish" (*The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, New Haven & London 1981, pp. 383 ss.). We should not forget that Maurice, in spite of having adopted liberal positions later than Clive, will finally defend his right to decide on his life, his "special" way of loving, etcetera. Forster knows how to endow, then, the young Hall with the necessary means for a right intellectual development, whose help will be essential in overcoming all sorts of difficulties.

¹⁵ It is worth bearing in mind that the first edition of *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* appeared in 1905.

Indeed, how could he accept sexual intercourse with a distant, noble, pure and untouchable woman? How could we not understand that that pretty and kind woman according to Maurice becomes repulsive from a sexual point of view? To sum up, he is the logical and predictable son of a society which does not speak openly about the sexual dimension of human beings and obstructs a close relation between men and women.

Thinking of Greek references, nothing we have just read is extraneous to the *Symposium*. But it is certainly surprising that those who speak most about marriage, women and reproduction, i.e. the majority of English society represented by Dr. Barry, are precisely those who best reproduce the thesis of the ancient pederasts, who –we should not forget it- were mostly married men. Let us begin, for instance, with Pausanias’ speech which is quite clear concerning the love inspired by Aphrodite Pandemos –base love. Everyone guided by this goddess loves both women –thus perpetuating the human race- and adolescents, and, besides, they love rather their bodies than their souls¹⁶. Later on and with the help of the three-genders myth, Aristophanes points out that all those coming from a totally masculine ancient gender before Zeus split them up search for each other in order to restore their ancient unity. Only they are virile in politics and, as soon as they become adults, they love adolescents –they are pederasts- and, in thinking of marriage and begetting children, they do not do it in accordance with their nature (*katà phýsin*) but according to the law (*katà nómon*); it is enough for them to live together all their life without getting married¹⁷.

And, finally, how could we forget Diotima’s famous speech on human desire for perpetuation? In this respect, however, not everybody acts in the same way, since:

‘... those who are teeming in body betake them rather to women, and are amorous on this wise: by getting children they acquire an immortality, a memorial, and a state of bliss, which in their imagining they “for all succeeding time procure”. But pregnancy of soul – for there are persons’, she declared, ‘who in their souls still more than in their bodies conceive those things which are proper for soul to conceive and bring forth; and what Prudence, and virtue in general’ (that is to say, they beget spiritual children or virtuous pupils)¹⁸.

Obviously Dr. Barry does not go so far, but let us notice that, though societies usually hold marriage and maternity in high esteem, it is finally the real acceptance of women as human beings equal to men with the same rights and free from any kind of isolation or disdain that truly defines the relations between men and women in a certain age. In the last case, “love” is the proper word; in all the others, a meaningless one. The evaluations can be different, but it is highly significant that Dr. Barry reminds Maurice of the urge for reproduction rather than the one for loving, sharing and interchanging. Perhaps he acts so because, like ancient pederasts, he considers women rather as reproductive beings than as persons who both love and are worthy of being loved. It is logical, then, that Maurice, being English and not Greek and used from his childhood to worship his mother, does respect all women, but the sole idea of making love to them when there is not a trustful relation between them and him turns this action into something shameful by which he wants to remain untouched (‘I think I shall not marry’).

Chapter five serves mainly for getting Maurice in touch with Risley but, at the King’s college in Cambridge, Maurice’s first experiences continue to confirm old discoveries. He had already known tenderness and friendship with George, his mother’s young gardener, but now he realises once more that, in spite of the rivalry and confrontation which are peculiar to masculine worlds: “grown-up men behave politely to one another unless there is a reason for the contrary” (31).

¹⁶ 181 b

¹⁷ 191e-192b.

¹⁸ 208e-209.

And, however, we have also seen that the society in which he lives does silence, condemn and isolate its own children: “No they too had insides. ‘But, O Lord, not such an inside as mine’. As soon as he thought about other people as real, Maurice became modest and conscious of sin: in all creation there could be no one as vile as himself. No wonder he pretended to be a piece of card board; if known as he was, he would be hounded out of the world” (32).

This explains why the fact of meeting Risley, a presumptuous and vain young man, in the course of a party in Mr. Cornwallis’ private rooms is so important. Risley likes talking. Indeed, he vindicates his right to talk against the contention that silences Maurice and a whole age. Already in chapter six we read:

“He was not attracted to the man (Risley) in the sense that he wanted him for a friend, but he did feel he might help him -how, he didn’t formulate... he longed to see him more than ever. Since Risley was so odd, might he not be odd too, and break all the undergraduate conventions by calling?... For it had become an adventure. This man who said one ought to ‘talk, talk’ had stirred Maurice incomprehensibly” (36).

‘To talk, talk’ in the country of Lord Alfred Douglas, Oscar Wilde’s beloved, who wrote that famous poem entitled *The Two Loves* and where it could be read: ‘I am the love that dare not speak its name’; to talk in the country where Oscar Wilde himself was prosecuted (1895). Consequently, Risley becomes an emblem of the triumph over fear, an emblem of what must be done in England, of what he should do, of what Greeks certainly did by both frankly and philosophically speaking and dialoguing on masculine *éros*¹⁹.

If the fact of meeting Risley has been important, the fact of meeting Clive Durham will be transcendent. He becomes acquainted with him in Risley’s private rooms while he is putting in order the pianola rolls of Tchaikovsky’s *Pathetic Symphony*. Therefore, the atmosphere has been shaped accurately in order to locate Maurice in the realm both of words -Risley- and of the musical expression of an unmentionable passion. Durham is a short and unaffected man who speaks without arrogance and has a handsome face. Perhaps Maurice cannot explain yet why things are the way they are, but nothing will prevent him from shutting his eyes –and his mind- in order to ignore the truth:

“His heart had lit never to be quenched again, and one thing in him at least was real... If obliged to ask himself, ‘What’s all this?’ He would have replied, ‘Durham is another of those boys in whom I was interested at school’, but he was obliged to ask nothing, and merely went ahead with his mouth and his mind shut. Each day with its contradictions slipped into the abyss... to ascend, to stretch a hand up the mountain side until a hand catches it, was the end for which he had been born” (41).

And once again we hear the echoes of those noble loves between men on which Phaedrus - Aristophanes, Diotima, Socrates, etcetera- spoke in the *Symposium*, thus endowing Western Culture with the terms for passionate, friendly or unselfish love²⁰.

¹⁹ This Maurice who meets Risley and discovers the urge for words reminds us of Forster’s experience in the bosom of the “Apostles”. This group is in favour of and practices the intellectual freedom that Forster desired so much. Without Cambridge this freedom would have been impossible, but this means that the official Cambridge must be “attacked”. As Gillie says (*op. cit.* p. 21): “The original name of the circle had been ‘Conversazione Society’ ... it was informal and yet very serious dialogue... it maintained critical scepticism of all institutions”.

²⁰ It has been often suggested that Maurice and Clive’s friendship might in some way reproduce Forster and Meredith’s friendship. According to P. Gardner (*op. cit.* pp. 8-9): “Among other things Cambridge revealed to Forster his homosexual nature: the Platonic relationship between Maurice Hall and Clive

From now on (chapter VII), Clive and Maurice create spontaneously –their world is already the only world- a great intimacy. First of all, Forster does not hesitate to draw our attention to both an inevitable and desired bodily closeness: “They walked arm in arm or arm around the shoulder now. 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. Maurice would stroke Durham’s hair” (46).

As usual, a significant paragraph of the *Symposium* could be quoted now. Yet, it would not be easy to choose it because there are many moments in which this sort of atmosphere appears. However, let us mention for instance Aristophanes’ speech on those ancient double beings –with two faces, four legs, etcetera-, who, as soon as they were split into two halves by Zeus as a punishment for their arrogance, felt an emptiness which had to be fulfilled urgently: ‘Now when our first form had been cut in two, each half in longing for its fellow would come to it again; and then would they fling their arms about each other and in mutual embraces yearn to be grafted together, till they began to perish of hunger and general indolence, through refusing to do anything apart’²¹ –needless to say, Maurice and Clive have discovered each other as two complementary halves. Secondly, both friends talk frankly and tell each other their secrets and relevant intimacies²². Forster is interested in presenting Clive as being more audacious than Maurice. In the Christmas holidays, at Durham’s, there was a great scandal because he refused to take communion. Talking frankly to his friend, he confesses that he is not a believer, that he is not a Christian. He was convinced that his gods would have punished him. Greece, then, is firmly installed in his personality. Maurice, on the contrary, would never do anything which could annoy his mother; he believes in the Trinity, Redemption, etcetera. Notwithstanding, friends recognize each other as such on account of their capacity for interchanging and sharing, so that, ten days later, Maurice does not take communion and, three weeks later, gives up attending any religious service²³. Why? Due to the influence of Clive who is used to other gods and other sensibilities. At the end of the term, while Maurice was attending a translation class in the Don’s private rooms, one of his fellows was severely warned: ‘Omit: a reference to the unspeakable vice of the Greeks’ (50). Clive regrets such an hypocrisy since, according to him, to

Durham is partly based on his love for his fellow H. O. Meredith, through whom in his final year Forster was elected to the eminent Cambridge debating society known as “the Apostles”, at some of whose meetings homosexuality was freely discussed”.

²¹ 191b.

²² Whatever the extent and nature of friendships between members of societies such as “The Apostles” may be, the truth is that, in Maurice-Forster’s case –if the parallelism is accepted-, we should speak of “confirmation” rather than “complement”. I am not referring now to the passage of the *Symposium* we have just read but to reflections such as: “For Forster, it was honesty and the relationships that mattered most in “the Apostles”... Brought up in a circle of adoring women, then alienated by the exclusively male environment of his schools, he found in Cambridge the experience of deep male friendships which complemented the female overbalance of his childhood” (Gillie, *op. cit.* p. 220). In fact, if we bear in mind the instance of Maurice, in Cambridge he confirms what he had already foreseen regarding George. The problem may reside not in the women by whom he was surrounded but in the sort of women they were and in the sort of relationship between him and them.

²³ It is worth mentioning Forster’s liberalism which in some degree is also present in Maurice’s attitudes. Forster’s liberalism focuses mainly on human experience, an aspect which is often disregarded by politicians and sociologists. John Colmer (*E. M. Forster. The Personal Voice*, London 1975, p. 7) writes: “In the sceptical atmosphere of Cambridge Forster discarded religion... his faith in Christianity quietly and quickly disappeared. This was partly due to the influence of his closest friend, H. O. Meredith, but also to his almost total absence of any sense of sin and his dislike of the personality of Christ, who failed to provide him with a sufficiently attractive ‘rather-figure, brother-figure, son, friend’, and lacked both intellect and humour and much else that Forster valued”. It is quite clear, then, that in the realm of spirit a sort of freedom based upon no pre-established models is essential.

read the Greeks means to refuse every sort of restriction and, therefore, to omit this fact means to omit something essential. Indeed, the Greeks or ‘most of them, were that way inclined, and to omit it is to omit the mainstay of Athenian society’ (50). The following question, that is to say, the reference to the main source of inspiration of the novel –together with Plato’s *Phaedrus*–comes immediately: ‘Maurice, you’ve read the *Symposium*?’ (50)²⁴. Maurice, who reaches everywhere later than Clive but accepts finally the urges of his special nature, answers that he has not read it yet, though he will do it probably in the next holidays²⁵. Therefore, in their small world the love that dare not speak its name has just been vindicated and the passionate Risley’s desire to talk has become a usual feature of his behaviour: “no more was said at the time, but he was free of another subject, and one that he had never mentioned to any living soul. He hadn’t known it could be mentioned, and when Durham did so in the middle of the sunlit court a breath of liberty touched him” (50).

War has been declared now and here are the opposite factions: Paganism *versus* Christianity, gods *versus* Christ, Plato *versus* Christ, *Symposium versus* the *Gospel*, Athens *versus* Cambridge-England, freedom *versus* repressive morality, words *versus* silence. Will Greece win?

Meanwhile (chapter VIII), Maurice tries to make all his family aware that he has got a friend. The others, yet, do not belong to this small and marvellous world in which Maurice lives, and the mere fact that his mother and sisters do not learn Clive’s surname provokes in him the beginnings of a certain grudge against them. As a consequence, from the perspective of two different and hardly related worlds, the undeniable misogynous temper of the *Symposium* and this other one in Maurice, not so clear but detectable as well –and in Clive, too- becomes “comprehensible”. After all, their mothers do not understand the reason for their respective sons’ intellectual attitude. They both belong to another realm and this fact causes Maurice’s mother to be unable to understand why he refuses to take communion at Easter. For the time being, Clive’s gods and Clive’s Greece seem to win. Both friends become more and more permeated by each other, and that “Greek” tenderness also grows. They write to each other every day and “Maurice never let them -Durham’s letters- out of his pocket, changing them from suit to suit and even pinning them in his pyjamas when he went to bed” (52). Then, it is quite clear that, as in the case of lovers in the *Symposium*, they would be contented with being together all their life without getting married. Nevertheless, to defy a whole society, its morality and customs is both a difficult and a risky task, so that Maurice still intends to court Miss Olcott, a friend of his family who often visits them. Needless to say, he fails because of his “special” feelings and, furthermore, “she knew something was wrong” (53). To sum up, Maurice needs a Greek society.

It would be innocent to think that both friends, living one for the other, will not find more obstacles. Knowing each other as never before, they share their anguishes and fears. Holidays have not been so satisfactory as expected (chapter IX) and, in Maurice’s room, “they were lying breast again breast soon, head was on shoulder, but just as their cheeks met someone called ‘Hall’ from the court, and he answered” (55). They have been interrupted, but Clive waits for

²⁴ The best known translation of Plato’s *Dialogues* in the age is by Benjamin Jowett, about whom I shall write later on. It was published first in four volumes and, afterwards, in three successive editions (1871, 1875, 1892); however, it must be said now that discussions on Plato and his philosophy in Cambridge were already usual. Indeed, Rowland Williams gave several lectures on both on Plato and Aristotle at King’s College between 1843 and 1850, W. H. Thomson taught Plato’s *Phaedrus* at Trinity College from 1844, W. Whewel, a well-known science-philosopher, prepared different studies on Plato for the Cambridge Philosophical Society, etc. For further information, see. e.g., F. M. Turner (*op. cit.* pp.372 and following).

²⁵ Forster was also introduced into the Greeks’ world. His tutor in Classics was Nathaniel Wedd, but the influence on him of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, “the political scientist, Hellenophile and author of *The Greek Way of Life*”(P. Gardner, *Op. cit.* p. 8) must be mentioned as well.

him outdoors and, before confessing his love, he needs and wants to frame such a great boldness:

“‘I knew you read the Symposium in the vac’ / ‘How do you mean?’ / ‘I love you’ / Maurice was scandalized, horrified... ‘Durham, you’re an Englishman. I’m another. Don’t talk nonsense. I’m not offended, because I know you don’t mean it, but it’s the only subject absolutely beyond the limit as you know, it’s the worst crime in the calendar, and you must never mention it again’” (p. 56).

The real impediments to reaching happiness are still in Maurice’s subconscious. The way he was educated does not permit him to admit what he also –and not only Clive- knows, so that he answers both with the sensibility of a repressor and the values of the repressive morality. War, then, goes on and this is the situation now: Maurice *versus* Durham, England *versus* Greece, Christianity *versus* Plato-*Symposium*, scandal and horror *versus* sincerity, silence *versus* words. Will Greece fail?

Forster has prepared everything for the period of reflection (chapter X). First, Clive’s firmness breaks down because of his dear friend’s unexpected recrimination. He is also sensitive to the reproofs coming not from a strange and far world but from his complement, Maurice: ‘I shall be obliged if you will not mention my criminal morbidity to anyone’ (57). From now on, they will never be alone in the same room. Clive has planned everything and Greece certainly seems to have been defeated, although Maurice understands very soon that Durham’s values are also his values since only they can make him free. After the fall comes, then, the ascent: “the ‘I’ that he had been trained to obscure, and, realized at last, doubled its power and grew superhuman. For it might have been joy. New worlds broke loose in him at this, and he saw from the vastness of the ruin what ecstasy he had lost, what a communion” (57).

The next days are days of unbearable pain, of tears, but finally: “The brilliancy of day was around him, he stood upon the mountain range that overshadows youth, he saw... most of the day he sat with open eyes, as if looking into the valley he had left. It was so plain now” (58).

This awakening or consciousness both of ecstasy and joy, this light and brilliancy resemble very much the process that Diotima describes in the *Symposium* and it defines like no other the essence of the Platonic man. Indeed, men should receive first the impact of the beauty of a single body and, afterwards, they should notice that beauty in all bodies has a common origin. Acting so, men will not surrender any more to the beauty of a single body nor they will be satisfied with the beauty of an adolescent, etcetera; on the contrary, they will look at that “sea of beauty”²⁶. They will beget, then, noble and beautiful philosophical speeches till, at the end of the ascent, they will get the vision of something which is beautiful in the highest degree. In short, a complex combination of shadows and lights, of falls and ascents which has marked Western sensibility for centuries. Of course, Maurice is still too much dependent on Clive to understand the deep meaning of Diotima’s speech, but let us observe that, thanks to the novelist’s skill, he has also known how to ascend and go beyond himself, thus avoiding the particular dimension of his drama:

“He had lied. He phrased it ‘been fed upon lies’, but lies are the natural food of boyhood, and he had eaten greedily. His first resolve was to be more careful in the future. He would live straight, not because it mattered to anyone now, but for the sake of the game. 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. He longed to embrace them and mingle his being with theirs. Now that the man who returned his love had been lost, he admitted this” (58-59).

²⁶ 210-12.

Chapter eleven marks the end of the first part of the novel or, in other words, after the reflection, words –i.e. the negation of silence- appear again: “He valued words highly, having so lately discovered them. Why should he suffer and cause his friend suffering, when words might put all right?” (60). ‘To talk, talk’ Risley had said once upon a time. In England there are loves that do not dare speak their name, but they both belong to Greece, to freedom, to words, to the open dialogue about the secrets of *éros*: ‘You might give me a chance instead of avoiding me -I only want to discuss ... I mean the Symposium, like the ancient Greeks’ (61). And now, under the protection of that ancient freedom and after a true inner battle, the key words can flow with no impediments: ‘Durham, I love you... I do -I have always-... I have always been like the Greeks and didn't know’ (62)²⁷. Notwithstanding and unfortunately for Maurice, it is now Clive who answers positively to the repression which has always besieged him. He is convinced that he has offended his friend and thinks that Maurice has pronounced these sweet words only to comfort him. England, once more, is disinclined to accept the truth.

Second part:

Following a well-planned scheme, Forster also devotes himself to the literary shape of the second of the three main protagonists: Clive (second part, chapter XII). Once again, the tension between England and Greece, between Christianity-Bible, on one side, and Paganism-Classicism and Plato's *Dialogues*, on the other, turns into the right instrument by means of which his personality can be defined properly. Far from what might have been thought in a period of audacity, Clive is in fact a tortured person who passes from that freedom discovered in the texts of the ancient Greek world to the repression that a pertinacious education has installed in his personality. Deeply religious, he desires to please God, but the spirit of Sodom lives in him, too. Ascetic to the extent of mortification, he has a nervous break-down in the course of which he falls in love unintentionally with a married cousin of his. Convinced that there is no salvation for him, the Bible reminds him of the certain and future tortures which are waiting for him. Desperate, the reading of Classics seemed to have redeemed him, since in Plato's *Phaedrus* “he saw his malady described exquisitely, calmly, as a passion which we can direct, like any other, towards good or bad” (67). Since then, he had been prudent without abandoning yet “tender emotions for other undergraduates” (68). However, Maurice meant a total change, i.e., he helped him not to obstruct his passion and to live it as a source of harmony for the first time in his life: “Once certain that Hall loved him, he unloosed his own love... Love was harmonious, immense... and indeed in that well-tempered soul the two were one” (69-70). The novelist, therefore, with the help of a few sentences has known how to reproduce the essence of Plato's *Phaedrus*. Either in Lisis' speech²⁸, or in Socrates'²⁹ or in the famous palinode³⁰, we are informed of the greatness of the noble love which pursues friendship rather than desire, in opposition to that other one which looks mainly for the enjoyment of a body³¹. The true lover advises and guides the beloved. Indeed, being conscious of the wisdom which fills him, he wants it transferred to the adolescent and he takes him towards the Beauty-Good that he worships³². Or, as read in Plato's

²⁷ In order to understand the interest in the Greeks but not in the Romans, specially in the Victorian Age, see e.g. F. M. Turner, "Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain" a *Rediscovering Hellenism. The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, edited by G. W. Clarke, chapter. 4, pp. 61-83.

²⁸ 231-234c

²⁹ 237-241d

³⁰ 244-257

³¹ 233

³² 253c

Phaedrus: 'If now the better elements of the mind, which lead to a well ordered life and to philosophy, prevail, they live a life of happiness and harmony here on earth, self controlled and orderly, holding in subjection that which causes evil in the soul and giving freedom to that which makes for virtue'³³.

Nevertheless, Clive now feels condemned by his friend, the only one who can truly hurt him:

"So deeply had Clive become one with the beloved that he began to loathe himself. His whole philosophy of life broke down, and the sense of sin was reborn in its ruins, and crawled along corridors. Hall had said he was a criminal, and must know. He was damned. He dared never be friends with a young man again, for fear of corrupting him. Had he not lost Hall his faith in Christianity and attempted his purity besides?" (70).

His remorse will last three weeks until Maurice enters his room at night through the window in order to tell him that he loves him. Finally, after their respective crisis, have become Greek citizens amid puritan England: "'Maurice, I love you'. 'I you'. They kissed, scarcely wishing it. Then Maurice vanished as he had come, through the window" (71).

Needless to say, this England in which Forster lived cannot stand the unlimited happiness of two young masculine lovers (chapter XIII); on the contrary, the respectable academic institution which takes charge of their education, taking advantage of the circumstance that Maurice has been absent from his classes several times, decides to prevent it (chapter XIV). Maurice is expelled and the academic authorities seem to be glad of it. Forster now repeats previous ideas and mentions once again the closed atmosphere of the colleges, which favours "dangerous friendships". In a world without contrast, men meet each other and only hypocrisy can condemn the awakening of a tenderness which is inherent in human beings. Even the Don, who is responsible for the expulsion of Maurice: "always suspected such friendships. It was not natural that men of different characters and tastes should be intimate, and although undergraduates, unlike schoolboys, are officially normal, the dons exercised a certain amount of watchfulness, and felt it right to spoil a love affair when they could" (75). Undoubtedly, the novelist has another notion of what is natural and fair.

Yet, the expulsion is not able to break Clive and Maurice's immense happiness (chapters XV and XVI) and, besides presenting the proofs, Forster confirms the misogynous nature of Platonic love as well. First, one could think of a simple anecdote, since it might not be highly significant that Maurice, against his mother's and sister's opinion, does not want to write to the Don in order to apologise and he even states: 'little girls don't see a good deal' (77). But suspicions turn into certainty when Clive, who receives Maurice at Penge, having a grudge against everything and everyone, maintains:

'I'm a bit of an outlaw, I grant, but it serves these people right. As long as they talk of the unspeakable vice of the Greeks they can't expect fair play. It served my mother right when I slipped up to kiss you before dinner. She would have no mercy if she knew, she wouldn't attempt, wouldn't want to attempt to understand that I feel to you as Pippa to her

³³ 256a-b. With regard to friendship between men and the possibility of considering it both noble and acceptable, compare what we have just read with this well-known thesis in the *Symposium*: "For every action it may be observed that as acted by itself it is neither noble or base. For instance, in our conduct at this moment, whether we drink or sing or converse, none of these things is noble in itself; each only turns out to be such in the doing, as the manner of doing it may be. For when doing of it is noble and right, the thing itself becomes noble; when wrong, it becomes base. So also it is with loving, and Love is not in every case noble or worthy of celebration, but only when he impels us to love in a noble manner. Now the love that belongs to the Popular Aphrodite is in very truth popular and does his work at haphazard... But the other love proceeds from the Heavenly goddess... untinged with wantonness (181a-c).

fiancé, only far nobly, far more deeply, body and soul, no starved medievalism of course, only a particular harmony of body and soul that I don't think women have even guessed. But you know' (84).

Leaving aside the fact that Forster himself might have shared this point of view, the truth is that, once more, that absolute mutual understanding that Plato described in the palinode of his *Phaedrus* –or in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*³⁴– becomes the archetype in reference to which prosecuted and silenced love can be understood. Yet, the reason why Greek pederasts maintain that certain mutual understandings, body and soul, are extraneous to women is that they consider them sensual human beings mainly guided by instincts, thus not attaining, as a consequence, the degree of spiritual friendship which is exclusive to those who do share the intelligence and uranic objectives³⁵. Let us bear in mind the presence of women in Forster's Cambridge or the role played by women and mothers in the first chapters and the fact that both friends have awaked one another –'Perhaps we woke up one another. I like to think that anyway' (85)– turns out to be the logical result of a rigorous syllogism. And, once human beings have discovered love and have surrendered to it –whatever its nature may be–, why should Justice accuse and prosecute them?

Obviously, the protagonists' immense happiness must be put to the test facing all sorts of real obstacles. Maurice (chapter XVII) think of the children they will never have and, in spite of his prejudice concerning femininity, he must admit that both his mother and Mrs. Durham have left life while they are doomed to disappear. Clive finds the suitable reply to this prejudice: 'Why children?' he asked. 'Why always children? For love to end where it begins is far more beautiful, and Nature knows it' (90). And, as usual, we should remember Diotima's words –and already mentioned– when explaining to Socrates that '... there are persons... who in their souls conceive more than in their bodies...'³⁶. Or Aristophanes' according to which: 'When they come to man's state they are boy-lovers, and have no natural interest in wiving and getting children...'³⁷.

"During the next two years Maurice and Clive had as much happiness as men under that star can expect" (91) (chapter XVIII). And, confirming what was already mentioned: "Clive educated Maurice, or rather his spirit educated Maurice's spirit, for they themselves became equal. Neither

³⁴ 201-212b, mainly 209a-d.

³⁵ We should remember that Plutarch (I-II a. D.) wrote his *Eroticus* in order to criticize the ancient pederastic tradition, "thanks" to which terms such as "love", "friendship" and "comradeship" had mainly a masculine connotation. In his opinion, it would be absurd to believe that it is possible to create an harmonic society if all its citizens, men and women, do not share a common world and do not love each other openly. Women are not only reproductive and sensual but also intelligent and noble. If men finally find out women as friends, they will discover as well that a great deal of their particular history has been a complete nonsense. Therefore, although Forster always refers to Plato, it is worth bearing in mind Protogenes' reflections in Plutarch's *Eroticus* or those of Calicratidas in Lucianus' *Amores* in order to understand the extent of Clive's words. On these themes, see e.g.: Gilabert, P. "Algunes reflexions crítiques al voltant de la lectura de Michel Foucault de l'*Amatorius* de Plutarc" (Some critical reflections concerning Michel Foucault's reading of Plutarch's *Amatorius*, *Universitas Tarraconensis* XII (1988-89) 37-49. And regarding Greek misogyny, see e.g.: Madrid, M. *La misoginia en Grecia* –Misogyny in Greece–. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1999.

³⁶ 208e-209.

³⁷ 192b. Perhaps it should be pointed out that Clive and Maurice's relationship cannot be compared *stricto sensu* with that between pederasts –mature men– and their beloved –adolescents or young men. Nevertheless, let us notice that Clive is usually the one who guides. Indeed, Maurice is initiated by him, although it has to do with a first step since, as seen before, there is consciousness of a shared discovery. I would rather emphasize the fact that Forster shapes skilfully both an audacious and initiating Clive who, paradoxically, will become insignificant when confronted with Maurice's final audacity.

thought ‘Am I led; am I leading?’ Love had caught him out of triviality and Maurice out of bewilderment in order that two imperfect souls might touch perfection” (91).

That their respective families get in touch because of the friendship of their sons becomes strictly logical, although they think that their mothers will not get on well with one another as a result of their different social origin (chapter XIX). Forster insists on the above-mentioned considerations: “Both were misogynists, Clive specially. 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 silly” (92).

And when everything seemed to go on along a path of consolidated joy, the novelist considers that the time for the true inflection has arrived (chapter XX). Finally England will recover one of its children. Clive does not understand why he should work in Politics taking into account that poor people do not love wealthy ones and bearing in mind as well that what they really want is a comfortable home. Very probably it has to do with a deep and inner crisis, since amid a dinner at the Halls’ he faints. Maurice calls the doctor and explains to him that his friend has had influenza and, obviously, he has not recovered his health yet. Whatever the cause of Clive’s upset may be, Jowitt, the doctor, sends for a nurse in order to look after him. Maurice protests, since, as Clive’s closest friend, he should be the one to take care of him. However, everything has already been decided and Clive will meet finally the person who will make him reconsider all his previous life: a nurse, a woman.

Again at Penge (chapter XXI), Clive often receives Maurice. Yet, he does not know how to cheer him up and he starts thinking that there is a serious inner crisis. Very probably it is due to the love that they both have shared and still share, because Clive thinks of a trip to Greece: “He determined to go to Greece. ‘It must be done’, he said... ‘Every barbarian must give the Acropolis its chance once’” (99). Notwithstanding, with regard to Greece, Clive cannot be a barbarian if he does continue to worship the love –masculine love- that this country accepted for centuries. It is Maurice who notices that it is not Greece, the country, which has protected them but an ancient and everlasting feeling which, at any rate, must be lived where lovers discover it: “Maurice had no use for Greece... The stories of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, of Phaedrus, of the Theban Band were well enough for those whose hearts were empty, but no substitute for life³⁸... ‘It sounds out of repair’ was his argument. ‘A heap of old stones without any paint on’” (99).

In spite of not having had any sexual intercourse with Maurice, Maurice does resemble now the Socrates at the end of the *Symposium* when he despises Alcibiades’ beauty in order to devote himself to a non-sensual Science as Beauty-Good, which needs good pupils rather than beautiful adolescents³⁹: ‘Would that we had never been lovers! For then, Maurice, you and I should have lain still and been quiet’ (101). Under these circumstances, Clive cannot understand why Maurice still looks after him: “‘My beauty?’ said Clive cynically. ‘These somewhat faded charms. My hair is falling out. Are you aware?’” (102).

In any case, Clive is now in Greece (chapter XXII); he has given Greece its chance but, since his soul and heart are devoid of Greek love-feeling, his effort fails. Greece was a part of him -or, at least, he believed it- in spite of living in England. A long journey has not been able to prevent his new condition from prevailing: “He 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” (104). Maurice reads, then, Clive’s great confession: ‘Against my will I

³⁸ We are dealing with emblematic stories which can be found of course in Plato’s *Symposium* (182c) and in Plutarch’s *Eroticus* (760C y 770C).

³⁹ Very probably, the best way to understand the extent of this last statement is the analysis of what has been considered the last son of Platonic *éros*, that is to say the Stoic *éros*. In this respect, it is very useful to read Plutarch’s *De com. not.* 1073 B and C. I approach this theme in “Amor platónico / amor estoico, principio y final de una evolución” (Platonic love/Stoic love. Two poles of an evolution). *Anuario de Filología* 10 (1984), 27-37.

have become normal. I cannot help it' (104). Nevertheless, when Maurice reads such surprising and unexpected news (chapter XXIII), he imagines that his friend is certainly ill –from the particular perspective the general one can also seem to be grotesque-, but his friend has given up loving him and is willing to say it in plain language.

Greek pederasts are conscious of women's sensuality –although sometimes they avoid it hysterically- but, at any rate, they accept women's reproductive mission. In this respect, the English peculiarity cannot be denied. Indeed, besides abhorring sexuality, the still-Victorian society that Forster portrays endows women, as said before, with an aura of motherly purity. Suddenly, Clive finds out what he was robbed of. While he was ill (chapter XXIV), "he noticed how charming his nurse was and enjoyed obeying her... On how little had he existed for twenty-four years! He chatted to his nurse, and left her his for ever" (100). Clive's change is not a "conversion" but the discovery which is peculiar to those who have always lived in a closed and unnatural world⁴⁰. James Ivory, on the occasion of the cinema adaptation of *Maurice*, omitted any reference to this true inner battle of Clive's which in fact is fully comprehensible and even logical: "Clive did not give into the life spirit without a struggle. He believed in the intellect and tried to think himself back into the old state. He averted his eyes from women, and when that failed adopted childish and violent expedients. The one was this visit to Greece" (107).

The second part (chapter XXV) could not end but with the partial triumph of England or, in other words, with the lovers' definitive break. Forster focuses on Clive's reflections and for the sake of this goal he continues to take advantage of the ever-useful reference to Greece: "Greece had been clear but dead. He liked the atmosphere of the North, whose gospel is not truth but compromise. He and his friend would arrange something that should include women. Sadder and older, but without a crisis, they would slip into a relation, as evening into night" (108).

Once more, circumstances have changed completely and here are again: England *versus* Greece, *the Gospel versus* Plato's *Dialogues*, compromise *versus* truth and, more significantly, the acceptance of a certain sadness in order to avoid any sort of crisis, thus living a friendship in which women also play their role. Clive, like the ancient Greeks –Socrates would be the best paradigm- has achieved now the spiritual masculine friendship which is completely devoid of sensuality, the only one that Plato could finally accept.

Moreover, this new achievement implies discovery, since the asphyxiating presence of men had not permitted him to grasp women's charm, while he perceives now the absurd nature of misogyny: "All laughed. The three women were evidently fond of one another. Clive saw relations that he had not guessed, for they were expanding in the absence of their man... when talking to her mother and sister, even Kitty had beauty, and he determined to rebuke Maurice about her" (109-110).

First, we could think that Clive is simply impressed by the feminine sensuality because Forster emphasises Ada's bodily features, but in fact they have become true friends and companions: (Clive to Ada): 'No one knows as much as you! I've told you more than anyone'

⁴⁰ In my opinion, nobody has the right –and by no means a philologist- to ignore the written text. From the contemporary point of view, from the perspective of gay movements, from an increasing and fortunate acceptance of homosexuality, Clive's attitude might be more understandable as a result of an insurmountable fear –as shown in James Ivory's film-, but this certainly means betraying the text. I do not forget that in "Notes on the three men" Forster says: "If Maurice is Suburbia Clive is Cambridge ... He believed in platonic restraint and induced Maurice to acquiesce... Consequently the relationship lasts for three years -precarious, idealistic and peculiarly English: what Italian boy would have put up with it? -still it lasts until Clive ends it by turning to women and sending Maurice back to prison. Henceforward Clive deteriorates, and so perhaps does my treatment of him" (p. 218). But it is also Forster who, with regard to the shaping of the Clive after the break, writes: "It may be unfair on Clive who intends no evil and who feels the last flick of my whip in the final chapter, when he discovers that his old Cambridge friend has relapsed inside Penge itself, and with a gamekeeper" (p. 219).

(111). At any rate, Clive has come to speak to Maurice and his next words, then, are absolutely predictable: 'I have become normal -like other men, I don't know how, any more than I know how I was born. It is outside reason, it is against my wish... I've changed... But I've changed, I've changed... Oh, for God's sake, Maurice, hold your tongue. If I love anyone it's Ada... I take her at random as an example' (112-113).

Maurice, for his part, sees clearly that he has lost his friend definitively since, otherwise, Clive would have talked to him instead of facing his crisis alone: 'One oughtn't to keep secrets, or they get worse. One ought to talk, talk, talk -provided one has someone to talk to, as you and I have' (113). Maurice still sees his friend within the repressive atmosphere of the love that dares not speak its name and refers, furthermore, to fear: 'You ought to have told me. What else am I here for? You can't trust anyone else. You and I are outlaws. All this... would be taken from us if people knew' (113). But Clive, as said before, resembles the Socrates at the end of the *Symposium* or, at least, he practises the Platonic love which was adopted by Western Christianity: (Clive to Maurice) 'It's character, not passion, that is the real bond... you can't build a house on the sand and passion's sand. We want bed rock...' (114). Finally both friends fight because, in the course of their discussion, Maurice wants Ada involved and Clive does not permit it. Their last meeting is marked by hostility. Clive does regret it but, in fact, he has just been born again: "'What an ending!' but he was promised a dawn. The love of women would rise as certainly as the sun" (115). England has recovered, indeed, one of its children while Greece has lost another one irremediably.

Loneliness, as when he was a child, defines Maurice again (third part, chapters XXVI-XXVIII), and the moment for negative reflection has arrived: "He was an outlaw in disguise. Perhaps among those who took to the green wood in old time there had been two men like himself -two. At times he entertained the dream. Two men can defy the world... Yes: the heart of his agony would be loneliness" (120).

Maurice was capable of living (chapter XXI) his own story and despising, as useless, *antiqua exempla* of strong friendships like that concerning Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the famous tyrannicides of Hiparchus, Pisistratus' son in 514 b. C. Now, on the other hand, Maurice idealises them or, in other words, Forster might think -though he does not confess it- of Phaedrus' well-known thesis in the *Symposium*: 'So that if we could... have a city or an army composed of lovers and their favourites, they could not be better citizens of their country than by thus refraining from all that is base in a mutual rivalry for honour; and such men as these, when fighting side by side, one might almost consider able to make even a little band victorious over all the world'⁴¹.

The overwhelming loneliness that invades Maurice gets still worse when Clive lets the Halls know of his engagement (chapter XXIX). Paradoxically, Clive met Anne Woods in Greece, the land of masculine love to which he gave its last chance. Maurice is free, then, to look for a new love and, on the occasion of the stay at his home of one of Dr. Barry's nephews, feels once more an emotion that very soon turns into a physical urge. However, he repents immediately and believes that he is a corrupter. He finds consolation in thinking that it was a mere episode of lust which is always easier to win than love (chapter XXX), and decides to adopt, as never before, that temper and attitude which are peculiar to a good Englishman. It may not seem enough but Forster is shaping a contradictory Maurice who at the proper time will proclaim the impossibility of mistaking physical love for lust, that is to say, a Maurice who will guide Plato -and Platonism- towards its first sensual nature.

On the other hand, Maurice was written between 1913 and 1914, which means that it was impossible to avoid the influence of Freud's theories on sex and homosexuality. Having decided to visit a doctor (chapter XXXI), Maurice thinks first of Jowitt. Talking to him, he asks him if he

⁴¹ 178e-179. Cf. Plutarch's *Eroticus* 761C.

has ever met someone of Oscar Wilde sort. Jowitt answers that these are mental hospital cases, so that Maurice confirms once again that civilization prefers to keep silence with regard to him or to the many others like him. 'I'm an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort' (139), he will say later on to Dr. Barry, whom he visits finally as the family doctor. According to him, he is absolutely normal, but Maurice does not want to avoid the reference to the archetype that defines his condition. The answer is, as usual, a civilized passion for silence: 'No –I'll not discuss. I'll not discuss. The worst thing I could do for you is to discuss it' (139). Devoid of words and dialogue, there is only room for the confession of his nature but not for its aetiology: 'I've been like this ever since I can remember without knowing why. What is it? Am I diseased? If I am, I want to be cured, I can't put up with the loneliness anymore' (139). And still a further parameter with the help of which he can be defined: Tchaikovsky's *Pathetic Symphony*, devoted to a nephew of his with whom he fell in love. He listens to it at a concert and, due to his interest in the famous composer's unfortunate marriage, becomes conscious of the risks that besiege him. Time for action has come and Maurice decides to try hypnosis.

I should like to point out Forster's coherence avoiding now any reference to the Classical world and choosing other parameters. The question of congenital homosexuality appears again and, although Sexual Science has just started its way, it already arouses great interest. The Greek myth on the ancient nature of human beings and the three genders –better known as the myth of the androgynous⁴²- does not fit in a novel that, as seen, intends to explain everything with the help of reason.

If Maurice lives in an atmosphere of silence and strives to come out of it, Clive also lives in another silence which is certainly peculiar to this age, country and value-system (chapter XXXIII). Forster's words are highly significant and focus again on the imperfect meeting –even pathetic!- of men and women as a result of a constant effort to divide human beings into two opposite sides:

“When he arrived in her room after marriage, she did not know what he wanted. Despite an elaborate education, no one had told her about sex. Clive was as considerate as possible, but he scared her terribly, and left her feeling she hated him. She did not. She welcomed him on future nights. But it was always without a word. 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 So there would never be any question of this episode of his immaturity... It was unmentionable... The actual deed of sex seemed to him unimaginative and best veiled in night. Between men it is inexcusable, between man and woman it may be practised since nature and society approve, but never discussed nor vaunted. His ideal of marriage was temperate and graceful, like his old ideals, and he found a fit helpmate in Anne, who had refinement herself, and admired it in others. They loved each other tenderly” (144).

Chapter XXXIV presents Maurice visiting Clive and Anne at Penge. Forster wants to lure him into a meaningful trap related to his future life –a happy one- with Alec, the gamekeeper at Penge. Anne explains to Maurice Clive's activity in favour of the poor. Maurice accepts that something must be done to help them for the sake of the general welfare of the country, but 'they don't suffer as we should in their place' (146). The new priest, Mr. Borenius, even dares say that the poor need love, but Maurice replies resolutely: 'I've no doubt they do, but they won't get it' (146). Anne cannot understand him: 'Now why don't you like the poor?' she asked suddenly. 'I don't dislike them. I just don't think about them except when I'm obliged. These slums,

⁴² 189d-193a.

syndicalism, all the rest of it, are a public menace, and one has to do one's little bit against them. But not for love...' (147).

I said before that Forster will finally abandon Platonic purity on account of considering it a true betrayal both of human nature and of the essence of Platonism. In fact, what we have just read would show this since, in spite of the Greeks and their discriminations⁴³, and in spite of similar prejudices in English society as well, Maurice will be loved by a poor man, a servant, and he will love him, too.

However, let us not reveal future events. At the moment Maurice truly believes that he can change as Clive did (chapter XXXV). He is confident about the doctor –an expert in hypnosis- he will visit very soon and tells his old friend that he is going to get married. Clive believes, then, that the time has arrived to stamp their particular “love story”. He kisses Maurice's hand and adds laconically: ‘Maurice dear, I wanted just to show I hadn't forgotten the past. I quite agree – don't let's mention it ever again’ (153). And, yet, let us notice that, when Forster shapes the atmosphere of this final stamp, he attains in my opinion all the goals at which a novelist –and a denouncer as well- aims. Indeed, he describes Clive's joy and adds: “He hated queerness, Cambridge, the Blue Room, certain glades in the park were...” (152). He even abhors a poem that he dedicated to Maurice: ‘Shade from the old Hellenic Ships’. Now, everything is over and “the knowledge that Maurice had equally outgrown such sentimentality purified it” (152). In my opinion, a logical reading of these last paragraphs implies that those who dare to blame or simply silence certain loves should bear in mind that the impure –and Greek- “queerness” sprouts and lives in Cambridge, and it is also Cambridge. From time to time, some of his best students - Clive- abandon “queerness” and get married dispassionately. Maurice, on the contrary, in spite of the previous talk with Clive and alone again in his room, opens the window and: “‘Come’ he cried suddenly himself. Whom had he called?” (153). Therefore, in Forster's mind and regarding the main protagonist, probably continues to resound that “they only do these things – wiving and getting children- under stress of custom...’.

Nevertheless, Maurice will not give up his inner fight, nor will Dr. Lasker Jones after having diagnosed congenital homosexuality⁴⁴(chapter XXXVI): ‘Mr. Hall! I shall try to send you into a trance, and if I succeed I shall make suggestions to you which will (we hope) remain, and become part of your normal state when you wake’ (158). As far as I am concerned, it is quite clear that Forster is in fact denouncing a science that acts “against nature” by doing violence for the sake of a repressive uniformity to what Science itself considers natural or congenital. Consequently, nothing better (chapter XXXVII) than to confront hypnosis with reality. Again at Penge, Maurice meets the gamekeeper several times and, finally, in the course of an anguished

⁴³ The next paragraph from Plutarch's *Eroticus*, 751 B, turns to be highly significant: ‘Solon forbade... slaves to make love to boys or to have a rubdown, but he did not restrict their intercourse with women. For friendship is a beautiful and courteous relationship, but mere pleasure is base and unworthy of a free man. For this reason also it is not gentlemanly or urbane to make love to slave boys: such a love is mere copulation, like the love of women’.

⁴⁴ I should dare to maintain that Maurice, as a character, is intended to question the psychoanalytic or Freudian vision of homosexuality. It is true that Clive would have a “normal” biological heritage and that the closed masculine atmosphere in which he lived might have caused in him a conditioned and transitory homosexuality. On the contrary, the key for Maurice's sexual orientation would not depend on casual circumstances in his early life but on a biological heritage that makes it inevitable: congenital homosexuality. However, all the pervious data referring to Maurice as a child and adolescent would rather confirm as well the enviromental factors. In fact, the novelist would not be interested in defending the right of a congenital homosexual to be the way he is but in understanding that someone shaped positively as homosexual -whatever the causes may be- has the right not to be impeded and to live joyfully his own reality in the case where he is not being “seduced” by a different one or if he cannot change. As we shall see later on, for Maurice it is as frustrating to be asphyxiated by a repressive society as to be rejected by Science.

night when he thinks of his immediate future under the hypnosis or, in other words, amid the unnatural inner fight that others have planned for him, Maurice gets out of his bed, draws the curtains and shouts spontaneously: “‘Come!’ The action awoke him; what had he done that for?” (167). And, before Science can provide any sort of explanation, another human being, Alec, the gamekeeper, interprets the shout, climbs a ladder until reaching the window and asks: “‘Sir, was you calling out for me? ... Sir, I know ... I know’, and touched him” (167). Neither Clive’s pure Platonism, nor rigid Greek pederasty would have permitted Maurice to arrive at love with the help of a servant. But, obviously, Forster writes his novel to overcome ancient and contemporary taboos⁴⁵.

Needless to say, this Maurice of the fourth part is already a different man. Suddenly, he discovers that mere lust is as rare as purity (chapter XXXVIII). Although he has left behind the matured Plato that only Clive had adopted, and although he has also refused Western Platonism, infiltrated by a particularly Christian experience of loving God⁴⁶, he needs Greek erotic texts, either because they are our cultural patrimony or because they simply provide the suitable reference. Maurice speaks enthusiastically of friendship, of having a friend, and the echoes of ancient instances sound again: ‘Did you ever dream you’d a friend, Alec? Nothing else but just my friend, he trying to help you and you him’. ‘A friend’, he repeated, sentimental suddenly. ‘Someone to last your whole life and you his’ (172).

A few hours later, after having enjoyed both a sensual and spiritual love in a little room at Penge, Maurice goes downstairs to take his place in society (chapter XXXIX). For the time being, he accepts conventions, but now he is a transformed man as a result of the effect on him of an unknown “drug”. Nourished by a new sap, he is willing to fight against everything and everyone. They are two again and “he felt that they were against the whole world... 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” (176). A classical feeling, a Greek one, that we have commented on sufficiently.

However, for a wealthy Englishman like Maurice, it is not easy to leave behind his prejudices regarding servants. Alec’s enigmatic glance shortly after having played cricket at Penge (chapter XL) fills him with groundless suspicions. All of a sudden, he does not know whether his friend, the only one, is a little devil or a true fellow. As ever before, he thinks that one cannot expect the same degree of honesty from a servant as from a gentleman, nor can he ask the former for loyalty or gratitude. He asks himself if everything was a new episode of lust, and the simple fact that Alec sends him a letter demanding another meeting makes him foresee the worst blackmail:

⁴⁵ I said before that Edward Carpenter impressed Forster very much; in this respect, it is also remarkable that “E. Carpenter shared his ‘simple life’ with a young working class man” (P. Gardner, *op. cit.* p. 29). Forster considered this instance worth being imitated.

⁴⁶ We might be astonished by the interest of a pragmatic, commercial and industrious country in a metaphysical philosopher like Plato, but J. S. Mill himself, who partially translated into English Plato’s *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus* and *Apology*, proved with his attitude that Platonic philosophy could be adapted easily to different minds and sensibilities. As F.M. Turner (*op. cit.* pp.374-5) points out: “The study of the ancient philosophy was undertaken by at least three distinct groups of writers for three separate though not wholly unrelated purposes. Sewall, Butler, Blackie, Westcott, A.E. Taylor, and other late-century idealists saw Platonic philosophy as a vehicle for upholding vestiges of Christian or transcendental doctrines in the wake of utilitarian morality, positivist epistemology, and scientific naturalism. They appealed to what may be termed the prophetic Plato. Another set of writers including G. Grote, J. S. Mill, and surprisingly enough Walter Pater, associated Plato with the cause of critical, even sceptical epistemology and in some cases with radical social reform... And B. Jowett, R. Nettleship, etc. used Plato’s moral and political philosophy to provide a more or less idealist surrogate for Christian social and political values. They hoped Plato might provide a counterbalance to individualistic liberalism and the egoistic ethics of utilitarianism”.

‘Butchers’ sons –like Alec- and the rest of them may pretend to be innocent and affectionate, but...’ (182). In short, an Greek caution, too.

The hypnotizer does his best (chapter XLI), but Science has its limits and the doctor tells him that he should move to a country like France or Italy where the Napoleonic Code has been adopted and homosexuality is no longer considered a crime. Very little can be expected from England since: ‘England had always been disinclined to accept human nature’ (185). In fact, not even Maurice can accept Alec as he is, that is to say, a noble young man –in spite of his next attitude- who is against any sort of blackmail. “‘I went wrong with a –he’s nothing but a gamekeeper... he’s an uneducated man; he’s got me in his power’... the perfection of the night – that one with Alec- appeared as a transient grossness” (185-186). It is quite evident, then, that on account of the education he received, Maurice has forgotten that it was precisely he who long ago understood that the Greek freedom he needs, must be assumed freely; otherwise, Greece – Italy or France- do not represent anything at all.

Alone and amid the storm, Maurice receives the threat. The gamekeeper lets him know that he knows everything regarding him and Clive, and adds that he will go to London to talk to him choosing the British Museum as their meeting place (chapter XLII). Alec is willing to make Maurice understand that love is a feeling not only for wealthy citizens but a universal one. Besides: ‘I come of a respectable family, I don’t think it fair to treat me like a dog. My father is a respectable tradesman’ (188-189). Leaving aside the uncertain result of this talk, it is worth noticing that their personal dispute will be settled in the site of the Greek world in England, in the British Museum, where the spirit both of the Parthenon and of an entire people will unite or separate them forever.

The confrontation, which in fact neither of them desires, has begun (chapter XLIII). Alec repeats his threats but Maurice, who has been rejected both by society and by Science and with nothing to lose except his friend –his enemy at the moment- succeeds in keeping his courage. Furthermore, Forster feels the need to endow Maurice with the temper of Greek heroes in order to transform him into the symbol of a noble attitude: “His colouring stood out against the heroes, perfect but bloodless, who had never known bewilderment or infamy” (196). And, if the Greeks worshipped their heroes, Alec, finally surrendering, will also worship Maurice: ‘I’ll never harm you now, you’ve too much pluck’ (196). Now, friendship and tenderness are possible again. After all, it is easy to admire heroes, but they are distant and pure, so that it is impossible to love them. Both confess the fear that betrayed them and, for the first time, perceive that words can be abandoned now or, in other words, only love makes them useless but not the oppressive silence against which Forster and his novel have fought:

“‘Oh let’s give over talking. Here –‘and he held out his hand. Maurice took it, and they knew at that moment the greatest triumph ordinary man can win. Physical love means reaction, being panic in essence, and Maurice saw now how natural it was that their primitive abandonment at Penge should have led to peril. They knew too little about each other and too much. Hence fear. Hence cruelty. And he rejoiced because he had understood. Alec’s infamy through his own -glimpsing, not for the first time, the genius who hides in man’s tormented soul. Not as a hero, but as a comrade, had he stood up to the bluster, and found childishness behind it, and behind that something else” (198).

After the storm, Maurice and Alec sleep together in London and perceive clearly that ecstasy is certainly based upon a body-and-soul communion that very probably Plato himself –and above all Platonism- finally rejected⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ Apart from the impossibility of dogmatic statements regarding this subject, the truth is that the attitude reflected by the text is clearly reminiscent clearly of W. Pater’s thesis. Indeed, in Turner’s words (*op. cit.* pp. 409-10): “In Pater’s analysis that doctrine –Plato’s doctrine of the Forms- traditionally associated with

Close to the end of the novel, (chapter XLIV), Forster wants and knows how to put its protagonists under definitive challenges thanks to which we will see the extent of their courage. Both are filled with an overwhelming happiness, but they know perfectly well that nothing will be easy for them and that they must be audacious. Alec even knows that he must move to Argentina where his brother has found a better job for him. In fact, he must leave England immediately and, as soon as he closes the door of that paradise of love where he has spent “the night”, Maurice must face again the loneliness that he experienced before and after Clive, the one he will experience in the life to come.

Having reached the harbour in order to take leave of Alec (chapter XLV), Maurice will be able to pass from loneliness and deception to hope and joy. He has come since “he forgot everything except Alec’s face and body, and took the only means of seeing them. He did not want to speak to his love or to hear his voice or to touch him -all that part was over-, only to recapture his image before it vanished for ever” (205).

Notwithstanding, Alec will remain in his life because, at the last minute, he does not come, which can only mean that Maurice has recovered his friend and very probably will have him forever. And, conscious as he is of an inherited culture, Forster’s reflections cannot be but Greek, thus recognizing that often literary creation means to repeat suitably the already discovered and everlasting beauty. Here is, then, the contemporary and the ancient text, side by side, brought into a spiritual harmony:

“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 companionship, was their reward” (208-209).

‘Therefore the soul (the lovers’) will not, if it can help it, be left alone by the beautiful one, but esteems him above all others, forgets for him mother and brothers and all friends, neglects property and cares not for its loss, and despising all the customs and proprieties in which it formerly took pride, it is ready to be a slave and to sleep wherever it is allowed, as near as possible to the beloved’⁴⁸.

Maurice thinks immediately that his friend must be at the boat-shed at Penge where they met on other occasions. Finally, “the universe had been put in its place” (p. 209). The meeting takes place and nobody will ever separate them.

Yet, to open a new and definitive chapter in his convulsed life implies closing another one. Maurice must say it to Clive, i.e., he must vindicate in the presence of him a sort of Platonism, of Platonic love, that Clive and the majority of English society are not willing to accept. Plato’s dialogues –his *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, etcetera- have not only given us beautiful images of love which already belong to the Western cultural heritage. Those ancient texts have given us mainly, in Maurice’s opinion, a clear exhortation to the enjoyment of bodily pleasures as a right

spiritual, idealist, or transcendental philosophy, emerged as a vindication of the flesh and the senses... Although Plato sought to impress upon his readers and upon Socrates’ interlocutors in the *Republic* the reality of the unseen realm of the Forms, he had, according to Pater, actually been first and foremost a love of the visible world whose relationship to empirical sense data had been one of love and not hostility”. On the other hand, we should bear in mind that Pater was indebted intellectually to Grote, who in order to attack the religious interpretation of Plato, affirmed on several occasions that the impact of adolescents’ beauty on lovers is essential for the Platonic sensibility (Turner, *op. cit.* p. 397). If we add these data to what has already been said, Forster’s intellectual personality gets clearer and clearer.

⁴⁸ Plato’s *Phaedrus* 252 -translated by Fowler, H. N. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd., Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971. Cf. Plutarch’s *Eroticus* 762F.

way towards spirituality. As far he is concerned, nothing can be compared with both the bodily and spiritual union of two human beings in love. Needless to say, Clive does not understand it, since, belonging to the majority, he stigmatises all those who question his customs and moral values. Therefore, the dialogue between Maurice and Clive is also highly predictable:

M: 'I'm in love with your gamekeeper'. C: 'What a grotesque announcement!... you won't dally with morbid thoughts. I'm so disappointed to hear you talk of yourself like that'. M: 'I'm flesh and blood, if you'll condescend to such low things... I have shared with Alec... all I have. Which includes my body'. C: 'The sole excuse for any relationship between men is that it remain purely platonic'. M: 'He's sacrificed his career for my sake... I don't know whether that's platonic of him or not, but it's what he did' (212-213)⁴⁹.

Throughout the novel, Forster has brought two opposite worlds into conflict, even daring to denounce that Clive, who belongs to the "noble" one, was able to become noble even though, unintentionally, English education institutions did violence to his nature. Their success was so great that they kept Clive away from *nómos* for a long time. Later on, Clive discovers his own world, but in the end it is Maurice, the "heterodox", who explains to the married man –and, we must guess, a mature and happy one- what are and what have been ever since ancient Greece the laws of friendship and love:

"Maurice opened his hand. Luminous petals appeared in it. 'You care for me a little bit, I do think', he admitted, 'but I can't hang all my life on a little bit. You don't. You hang yours on Anne. You don't worry whether your relation with her is platonic or not, you only know it's big enough to hang a life on. I can't hang mine on to the five minutes you spare me from her and politics. You'll do anything for me except see me. That's been it for this whole year of Hell. You'll make me free of the house, and take endless bother to marry me off, because that puts me off your hands. You do care a little for me, I know' - for Clive had protested- 'but nothing to speak of, and you don't love me. I was yours once till death if you'd cared to keep me, but I'm someone else's now -I can't hang about whining forever -and he's mine in a way that shocks you, but why don't you stop being shocked, and attend to your own happiness?' 'Who taught you to talk like this?' Clive gasped. 'You'" (214).

The message seems to be quite clear: "Do love, if you are able to, and let the others love. Its destination: England, such a repressive England that E. M. Forster did not dare to publish *Maurice* in his lifetime; it was published posthumously in 1971.

⁴⁹ Given the importance of Benjamin Jowett's translations in the age, it is worth focusing for a while on his intellectual personality. I said before that he is one of those who, with the help of the idealism of Platonic philosophy, want to save Great Britain from the disaster caused by the utilitarian and liberal morality. However, Plato's sexual morality could not be accepted by his society. How could he solve this great inconvenience? From his Hegelian vision of human history, he maintained that contemporary people could understand what the Athenian philosopher meant better than he himself. Therefore: "to understand him, we must make abstraction of morality and of the Greek manner of regarding the relation of the sexes. In this, as in his other discussions about love, what Plato says of the loves of men must be transferred to the loves of women before we can attach any serious meaning to his words. Had he lived in our times, he would have made the transposition himself. But seeing in his own age the impossibility of women being the intellectual helpmate or friend of man (except in the rare instances of a Diotima or an Aspasia), seeing that, even as to personal beauty, her place was taken by young mankind instead of womankind, he tries to work out the problem of love without regard to the distinctions of nature" (quoted by F.M. Turner, op. cit. p. 425).

