

Water Sports: Nature, The Male Body and Homoerotic Voyeurism in The Film Adaptations of E. M. Foster's Fiction

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Blessing and thanks for you, you wild waters
eternally flowing - O come flowing, encroaching
over me, in my ears: I salute you because
you are pure and sweet (ah! What designs,
what love are hid within you!).

Edward Carpenter.

Love is of the body, not the body, but of the body.

Mr Emerson
(*A Room With A View*).

E. M. Forster's fascination with English and foreign landscapes and cultures is reflected in both his fiction and his other writings, which include vivid descriptions of typical sights of England, Italy or India. If, as acknowledged by the critics and by Forster himself, part of the driving force behind his writing was the relief of sexual tensions, we could also expect to witness (as voyeur-readers) similar descriptions of sexual physical intimacy and human bodies.¹ Yet, very few moments of sexual intimacy or erotic descriptions appear in his published work, for Forster believed that his writing was the wrong channel for the release of his sexual energy and so his revisions of his manuscripts, left very few sexual instances in the final product.² This apparent contradiction opens up a question of whether E. M. Forster displaced sexuality onto other terrains.

In 'E. M. Forster and the "Possession of England"', Philip Gardner argues:

¹ This is especially true of the short stories. In an entry to his diary on the 18 April 1922, Forster wrote: "They [the short stories] were written not to express myself but to excite myself" (Stallybrass, introduction to *The Life to Come and Other Stories* 1972, 14).

² Several critics have studied Forster's manuscript revisions with regard to its effect on the stories' sexuality. See Rahman 1991, Stape 1981 or Nelson 1992.

the countryside offered Forster was a sense of space and freedom, an expansion and release from his cultured personality [which] enabled the homosexual, half defiant and half afraid, to create a world into which he could disappear and be happy. (Gardner 1981, 169-70)

The three Merchant-Ivory film adaptations of Forster's fiction seem to manifest a certain fixation on nature and landscape. It could be argued that Forster's writing favours an admiration of the landscape on which the films appear to concentrate and which, to a certain extent, enacts the pleasurable gaze so often related to sexual pleasure. The Oxford English Dictionary, defines the voyeur as somebody who "obtains stimulation or gratification" by observing the action of others without participation (OED, XIX: 779). If voyeurism involves watching *people*, Forster's *pleasurable look* at the landscape, then, is motivated by a more general desire to see (scopophilia), not necessarily people as voyeurs do. This article studies those few instances of *real* voyeurism in the three Forster novels adapted by Merchant-Ivory and its respective films, seeking the links between the fulfilment of the scopic drive in topographic descriptions and the voyeuristic pleasure that focuses on the male body. Indeed, the intertwining of male bodies and landscapes (especially water images of rivers or ponds) characterises many key passages of the novels. This 'desire to see' is explicit in *A Room With a View*. The readers (or the film audience) expect to *discover* Italy and England through the fictional characters but as if they themselves were there. Both novel and film start in the Bertolini *pensione* which, although in Florence, *looks* English and is English-owned. Here, Forster criticises the English tourist who travels abroad in search of the *authentic* foreign experience but actually remains safely enclosed in his/her home environment, expecting to be *shown* the real thing without really partaking of the foreign lifestyle. This brings about a series of cinematic parallelisms: the audience sits passively in the (dark) auditorium waiting to be entertained, expecting to enjoy the spectacle *as if* taking part in it but staying safely and comfortably in the theatre seat. Certainly, the Merchant-Ivory adaptations succeed in offering the audience what they expect when buying a ticket for a so-called *period* film: the scopic drive is satisfied with the films' display of English heritage culture. The camera draws our attention to the English country houses and their surroundings, the costumes or the antiques. This could be, perhaps, part of the visual pleasure inherent in Forster's writing. Yet, what is its relation to *sexual* pleasure?

This question can be addressed in the light of the two mysteriously untitled chapters of the novel (Fourth and Twelfth), for whereas the rest of the chapter-headings draw attention to the main plot, these two episodes remain untitled, questioning their significance for the development of the *main* plot. Yet, even though the main narrative action is, to a certain extent, suspended in these two chapters, they prove essential for the development of the *other* plot. The narrative slows as voyeuristic pleasure surfaces in the two central scenes of these chapters, provoking a crux in the psychological and sexual development of the characters.

In the Fourth Chapter of the novel Lucy is alone for the first time. Her predisposition to liberate herself, suggested both by the narrator ("She would really like to do something of which her well-wishers disapproved" (*Room* 61)) and by the emphasis placed on the nature of the photographs she buys, especially Botticelli's *Birth*

of *Venus* which Miss Bartlett would certainly dislike, the narrator remarks, due to Venus's nakedness. Entering the *Piazza Signoria*, Lucy reflects "nothing ever happens to me", immediately fixing her gaze on the phallic tower of the palace, which after a while "seemed no longer a tower, ... but some unattainable treasure throbbing in the tranquil sky" (R 62). Here the tower is humanised through Lucy's fetishistic gaze. This gaze combines scopophilia and voyeurism, since the fascination with the tower (one of Forster's "*objects of veneration*" in the Piazza) results from Lucy's desire for *physical* sensation and also anticipates her following voyeurism in the murder scene. The blood puddle resulting from the fight is the next *object* of Lucy's inquisitive gaze, as the dying Italian's blood stains Lucy's pictures, an image that several critics have interpreted as a metaphor for the impregnation of Lucy's *artistic* experience (photos) with *real* life (blood).³ Yet, the metaphor carries further sexual meaning, as Lucy's initial frigidity is embodied by the *still* pictures which themselves contain sexual images, just as her sexuality is contained behind a still, conventional (Cecil would add *artistic*) façade which is awoken by the splashed blood, a body *fluid* connected to sexual desire and orgasm (semen). The blood puddle on which Lucy fixes her gaze is, obviously, related to the blood in the pictures but also to the fountain that presides the Piazza. This water imagery will be recurrent in Forster, normally working as a referent to *fluid* sexuality.

Fin-de-siècle representations of sexuality experience a shift from images of ardour, burning desire (fire) to images of fluidity (water), especially associated with *feminine* sexuality. Gustav Klimt's 1898 painting *Fish Blood* exemplifies this transition, as the bodies of five naked women merge with the water, defying the traditional representation of female sexuality as dependent on the masculine object (see Dijkstra 1986, 369-71). This is especially interesting in relation to gender, since libido, by definition, is de-gendered: the disassociation of desire from a fixed object involves the former's independence from the latter's gender. In his *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality* (first published in 1905), Freud uncoupled desire from its (traditionally fixed) object, proposing a more *fluid* understanding of it. "It seems probable", he wrote, "that the sexual [drive] is in the first instance independent of its object" (Freud 1962, 14). Thus, desire (libido in Freud's terminology) becomes unpredictable and immeasurable, with an ability to move between objects without permanently attaching itself.

In this respect, the approach taken by Merchant-Ivory with regard to sexuality in the adaptation of this particular scene appears somewhat contradictory. Although failing to transfer this *fluid* imagery, they recuperate some of the homoerotic implications of the incident as first conceived in 'The Lucy Novels' and that Forster excised from *A Room*. In Jhabvala's film script, Lucy's (Helena Bonham Carter) desire for liberation is suggested by Miss Lavish (Judi Dench) in the preceding scene when she informs Miss Bartlett (Maggie Smith) that, under the influence of Italy, Lucy is "open to physical sensation". Then, on entering the Piazza, Lucy impulsively takes off her heavy coat. However, the omission of any shots of the suggestive postcards leads the

³ Summers also points out the relation of the murder scene to sexual desire because "both [are] spontaneous and brutal and both signify the crossing of spiritual boundaries" (1983, 84).

audience to assume she has only bought tourist prints, a cut which obscures the potential *sexual* reading of the blood-stains. Furthermore, while in both novel and film George throws the blood-stained pictures into the flowing stream, the content of the dialogue between him and Lucy varies significantly. In the novel Lucy comments on George's account that the murderer tried to kiss the murdered boy ("And the murderer tried to kiss him, you say! How very *odd* Italians are!" (R 64)), in the film this reference to a homoerotic attraction between the murderer and victim is replaced by Lucy's banal remark: "Isn't it extraordinary: I mean, Italians are so kind, so loveable and yet at the same time so *violent*!". No kiss. Further to this, the "stream of red [that] *came* out between them [Lucy and the Italian boy]" (R 62; my emphasis), is reduced to a few drops on the Italian's chin and a puddle of blood that we only see later (covering the pictures), completely disassociated from the two bodies, and, therefore, obstructing the reference to body fluid mentioned above.

Yet, the substitution of the gaze at the tower by a series of shots, from Lucy's viewpoint, of statues only mentioned in passing in the novel ("Neptune ... [and] the men and satyrs who idled together on its marge" (R 61)) *adds* to the homoeroticism of the scene. These close-ups of the statues draw attention to the physicality and close-contact between male bodies involved in the murder scene. This homoeroticism, in effect, supplies the charged sexuality of Forster's first version of this scene. In 'Old Lucy' the point of view of the murder scene was Arthur's (George's predecessor in 'The Lucy Novels') and not Lucy's. One of the passages cut from the published novel introduced one of the visually homoerotic moments of Forster's writing referred to above: on admiring the dead body of the Italian, Arthur observes: "He was one of those handsome Italians of the working classes . . . He was magnificently made and his splendid chest swelled and contracted with every spur of the blood ..." (Stallybrass, 1977). Tarir Rahman argues this scene was meant as a sexual revelation for Arthur who "discovers that his true self responds to male beauty and desires the union with youths who embody it" (1991, 53). This passage, completely removed from the published novel, is recalled in the film when George (Julian Sands) goes back to the fountain to wash his hands after fetching Lucy's blood-stained photos and looks for a few moments at the face of the dead man. In the context of the deletions mentioned here, however, this homoerotic moment alone does not encourage a *queer* reading of the film. In fact, by *washing off* his hands (like Pilate) after the dead Italian is taken away, George seems to reject any durable feeling about the beautiful dead boy.

The other key untitled Chapter Twelfth includes a bathing scene that exemplifies how the homoeroticism provided by the narrator's comments in the novel can be transposed to the screen. Yet, as with the novel's Fourth Chapter, the fidelity to some aspects of the novel contrasts with a tendency to remove those parts of the original dialogue which are of essential importance for the sexual politics of the scene. The moment when George and Freddy (Rupert Graves) meet for the first time is an example of this, especially in the treatment of Freddy's impulsive reaction to this first encounter: "How do you do?; Come and have a bathe!". This spontaneous *homosocial* invitation, described by Mr. Beebe in the novel: "That's the best conversational opening I've ever heard. But I'm afraid it will *only act between men*" (R 145, my emphasis), is reduced in the film to the first sentence only. The same happens with Mr.

Emerson's speech about comradeship and nature. His classic line "In this . . . we men are ahead. We despise the body less than women do" is also removed from the film.⁴

In the film, most of the homoerotic charge is placed between George and Freddy, something that is avoided in the novel, where the narrator seems to pay greater attention to Beebe's *admiration* of George. Merchant-Ivory's film takes advantage of the good looks of Graves and Sands to suggest a potential sexual attraction between the two younger characters. On their first meeting, George's ecstatic look at Freddy has a greater erotic force than the look of Beebe (Simon Callow) to George later in the pond. This filmic addition, once again, facilitates a double reading of the scene. For the mainstream audiences, the exchange of looks can be interpreted as George's acknowledgement of the great physical similarity between Freddy and his sister Lucy (now engaged to another man and with whom, we are led to assume, George is still in love). The heteroerotic mainstream reading of this obvious *homoerotic* attraction would justify George's stare as a displacement of his *heterosexual* desire for Lucy upon her look-alike *brother*. Yet, a queer reading of this look could find an interesting *reverse* interpretation, so that it would be *Lucy* who mediates the (repressed) homosexual desire between George and Freddy expressed in that look and further developed in the lake, where the two soon-to-be brothers-in-law engage in naked bodily friction, hugs, embraces and amicable fights involving physical proximity, while momentarily forgetting about Beebe's presence. This pattern was expressed by Eve Sedgwick in her study of love triangles in the literary canon. She argues that the woman in between the two men often functions as a "receiver" or mediator of the *homosocial* desire between them (1985, chapter 1). This is exactly what happens in *Maurice*, where Clive's identification of brother and sister is based on their physical resemblance. Clive makes a *conscious* effort to find in Ada similar features to her brother's. The resemblance is found (both in novel and film) in the voice. In the novel, the narrator makes explicit the reasons behind the physical resemblance *felt* by Clive (reasons which we are only invited to *guess* in the film): Ada was "the exact need of his transition . . . the compromise between memory and desire" (*Maurice*, 110).

So far, we have seen how Praver Jhabvala's script's treatment of sexuality remains quite ambiguous. The homoerotic force of the Twelfth Chapter is transferred from Beebe-George to George-Freddy and yet in the lake itself Beebe's role as the bearer of the voyeuristic gaze is recuperated. The homoerotic force of this scene in the film works in two ways: on the one hand in the *mutual* attraction between George and Freddy (expressed in their first look and their physical contact in the lake games) and, on the other, in the *one-way* desire of Beebe for the two boys (represented by his voyeuristic look). The latter example is already apparent on the way to the lake; the parson's speech against fate serves both to stress those aspects of his way of thinking that set him apart from the young men's but also to increase the sexual tension of what is to follow. By firstly announcing that these young men are about to engage in nude bathing and then *delaying* the exposure of their bodies with philosophical talk

⁴ Notice the relevance of his name in relation to the American transcendentalist poet Ralph Waldo Emerson and his essay 'Nature' published in 1836.

(regardless of how much this relates to the meaning of the bathing scene), the anticipated visual pleasure is postponed and, as a result, the sexual tension increased.

In the novel's account of the moments leading to the lake, similar processes are at work. Whilst the film relies on the visual pleasure of the apparent beauty of Graves and Sands, the novel struggles to describe the stripping *ritual* in as much detail as possible within the subtlety that the narration allows. We are told how George sits down on the ground and unlaces his boots, how he wets his hair first (R 148), and how important the bathing was for him because "he had to use his *muscles*" (149, my emphasis). Less narrative time is spent on Freddy who quickly strips himself as he casually invites Beebe to join them. This is because, unlike in the film, in the novel George is in the spotlight, as the *only* subject of Beebe's homoerotic gaze.

Freud's theory of sex insists on the sexual arousal produced in the process of (un)covering the body described above:

The covering of the body, which keeps abreast with civilisation, serves to arouse sexual inquisitiveness, which always strives to restore for itself the sexual object by uncovering the hidden parts. This can be turned into the artistic (sublimation) if the interest is turned from the genitals to the body (1962, 20)

Part of the *artistic sublimation* of this voyeuristic scene brings to mind Walt Whitman's poem from *Song of Myself* 'Twenty eight young men bath by the shore'. The poem describes the men's hair "running with wet" (like George's) and refers to "little streams" that "passed all over their bodies". It also talks about "an unseen hand" [that] "passed over their bodies" and specifies: "*they do not know who* puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch" (*Song*, 35-6; my emphasis). This "unseen hand" of the Whitman poem is, in *A Room*, Forster's, the narrator's, Beebe's, Callow's, the reader's, the audience's... In relation to voyeurism, Freud wrote: "looking ... is analogous with touching. The manner in which the libidinous excitement is frequently awakened is by the optical impressions" (1968, 20). In the lake scene, Mr. Beebe's look *touches* George's body. Beebe functions as a proper voyeur admiring first-hand what the reader/spectator can only experience mediated through him. His role as a passive voyeur is further accentuated by his physical difference from the young men (in the film this is reflected in the plumpness of Callow, in the novel Beebe is described as a typical "*stout* clergyman" (R 26)) and by his initial reluctance to join in. His carnivalesque victimisation by the athletic youths, who throw his garments to the pond while he watches impotently, also contribute to accentuate this effect.

Both Whitman's poem and Forster's novel celebrate the aesthetically beautiful integration of the male bodies into nature, thus producing an overwhelming interplay of scopophilia and voyeurism. In the novel this effect is accentuated by the character's comments about the pond's vegetation and the narrator's remarks on Beebe's perception of the scene:

Mr. Beebe *watched* them, and *watched* the seeds of the willow-herb dance chorically above their heads . . . [he watched] Freddy . . . becoming involved in reeds or mud . . . How glorious it was! The world of motor-cars and Rural Deans receded illimitably. (R 149, my emphasis)

This passage establishes the opposition civilisation/nature, with a negative coding of the former and a positive coding of the latter (a recurrent binarism in Forster). Thus, the *possession* of nature becomes an alternative to civilisation, an alternative to strict rules and mandatory behaviours. In other words, Beebe's *double* fascination with Nature and male bodies *at the same time*, seems to suggest a common interest in the "possession" of nature and the (homo)sexual possession of the male body.⁵

In the lake, George is pictured "barefoot, bare-chested, radiant and personable *against the shadowy woods*" (R 152, my emphasis). The *phallic* harmony of the nature surrounding them is also observed by Beebe: "the pine trees, *rising up steeply* on all sides and gesturing to each other against the blue" (149, my emphasis). We get the impression that even nature gets sexually aroused by the sight of the men bathing. This harmonic combination of human flesh and wild nature was perfectly captured in the film adaptation through the subtle cross-cutting of long shots and medium shots of the bathing scene. This provides a double perspective of the bodies: one from Beebe's point of view, the other, nature's own. Both Forster's narration and the film draw on similar examples in literature and painting such as Baron Corvo's *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*,⁶ inspired by Symonds' poem *In the Key of the Blue* (1893) and the nude paintings by Tuke and Eakins, which feature images of naked men bathing. References to painting are frequent in *A Room*, such as the description of George as "Michelangelesque" (R 149) or Lucy as "Da Vincian" (R 107).⁷

As Jeffrey Meyers observed, there is more to this scene than aesthetic beauty, since "bathing scenes in Forster's fiction are either a symbolic release from sexual inhibitions or a manifestation of sexual repression" (1977, 94 and 1970, 184). The scene implies the former, as George develops from a passive questioning "Is it worth it?" before entering the pond to a "bursting of youth force" after both Beebe and Freddy splash him with water. This *baptism* into masculine brotherhood and *homosocial desire* is further suggested by the fact that George's long-lasting crisis comes to an end in this episode (Colmer, 1975, 50).⁸ This is emphasised through a rapid enumeration of actions that suggests awakening and happiness: "he smiled, flung himself at them, splashed them, ducked them, kicked them, muddied them, and drove them

⁵ This affinity between nature and homosexuality acquires a great force in *Maurice*'s ending, where the lovers face a future together in the woods which contrasts with the "civilised" future of Clive and the consequent non-fulfilment of his homosexual desire.

⁶ Symond's poem celebrates the beauty of his 19-year-old travel companion, a Venetian *facchino* called Augusto, set against various shades of light and scenery (see D'Arch Smith 1970, 13-14).

⁷ For a more detailed study of Forster and painting, see Meyers 1975.

⁸ The baptism metaphor gains force later in the novel when Mr Emerson reveals that his son had not been baptised as a child (R 218-9). *Comradely* baptism seems a most appropriate compensation to George for his lack of a Christian one.

out of the pool" (R 150). The closing lines of this chapter draw a closer parallelism with the fourth one in so far as the narrative insists on the importance of the events:

It had been a call to the blood and to the relaxed will, a passing benediction whose influence did not pass, a holiness, a spell, a momentary chalice for youth (R 152, end of chapter 12)

They had come to a situation where character tells, and where Childhood enters upon the branching paths of Youth (R 66, end of chapter 4)

The ending of chapter twelve is anti-climatic, the homoerotic charge is interrupted as it was about to peak. The appearance of Mrs Honeychurch, Cecil and Lucy surprising the naked men and suddenly ending their enjoyment, conforms to a recurrent motif in Forster's novels: women's interference in male pleasures. The two women are accompanied by Cecil, fully clothed and described earlier as "medieval". The representation of Cecil (his personality, his physical description) is meant to reinforce his opposition to George. The opposition responds to the athlete (George) / aesthete (Cecil) divide. The latter type is intimately related to the image of Wilde after the trials (see Sinfield 1994, 84-108).⁹

In *Maurice*, a similar example occurs when Mr. Ducie (who, interestingly enough, is also played in the film version by Simon Callow - Mr. Beebe in *A Room*),¹⁰ using his (phallic) walking stick draws a explanatory diagram of the "glory of the woman" on the sand, by the sea.¹¹ As they leave the scene a group of people (amongst them "a lady") approaches "the very spot where Mr Ducie had illustrated sex" (*Maurice*, 19-20). The sea erases the prescribed diagram: water, once again, functions as a *fluid* eraser of old conceptions of sexuality. The sea scene is recalled in the novel towards the end (chapter 38), in another turning point in Maurice's sexual realisation. After his first night with Scudder, they wake up together and, half-dreamily, they talk about diving. Scudder expresses his reluctance to being taught how to dive, whereas Maurice remembers that he was taught that he would be ill if he didn't wet his hair first (like George in *A Room*).... After Scudder's remark "You was taught what wasn't the case", Maurice says: "A master I used to trust as a kid taught me. I can still remember walking on the beach by him . . . Oh dear! And the tide came up, all beastly and grey ..."

⁹ Meyers explores this motif in Forster's shorter fiction, specially 'The Curate's Friend' (1970, 184).

¹⁰ On the implications of the potential cross-referencing of cast in the films see Craigs 1991, 10 and Hutchings 1995, 220. Simon Callow's "outness" as a gay man also draws a series of contrasts and parallelism between fiction and reality. Also interesting to note the coincidental premier in New York of *A Room* with *My Beautiful Launderette* where Daniel Day Lewis, who plays the "closeted" Cecil in the former film, plays a homosexual working-class gay man. A similarly interesting casting cross-referencing would have happened in *Maurice*, had Julian Sands not withdrawn in the last minute. Otherwise, we would have seen him in bed with Graves, an interesting extension of their homoerotic flirting in *A Room*.

¹¹ The fact that in the film Ducie uses an umbrella instead of a walking stick increases the power of the sexual metaphor. The umbrella is not only phallic but it also relates to water. This links the sexual imagery of the film versions of *Maurice* and *Howards End*.

(*M* 172). This quasi cinematic devise (disappointingly removed in the film adaptation) transports us to the beginning of the narrative through the image of the sea and makes us rethink the whole story-plot as if it was a reflection of Maurice *after* his sexual awakening: the whole story becomes a flashback from that scene.

Maurice's memories of Ducie's patriarchal discourse on marriage and the purity of the body activated a revival of the sexual learning experiences that led him to his present self-understanding. Ducie himself had anticipated: "You can't understand now, you will some day, and when you do understand it, remember the poor old pedagogue who put you on the track" (*M* 19). Now he understood, and the master's invitation "This day ten years hence - I invite you and your wife to dinner with my wife and me" (20) will result in a fortuitous encounter, at an Art Gallery, of Maurice and Scudder with Ducie and family. The sexual metaphor of "learning to dive" also symbolises the *fluid* understanding of sexuality in Forster's fiction. Scudder's way has been guided by *nature* whilst Maurice's learning has been troubled and delayed by a repressive, "civilised" society. Maurice and Scudder's first sexual encounter has been, in a way, facilitated by water: the ladder standing by Maurice's window was only there due to the dripping leak (caused by the incessant rain) at Clive's house. Their first "proper" verbal exchange had occurred not long before, when Maurice offered to help Scudder to fix the leak. Later, when Maurice leaves Penge and goes to town to be hypnotised, the rain stops temporarily (161). Late at night, under the effect of hypnotism, Maurice has sexual dreams involving water and bathing in a football field (the film also insists on the symbolic roaring of water *flowing* during the dream). Half asleep, he opens the window and shouts "*Come!*" (167). This water imagery functions as an instinctive link between them, right through until the end of the story. The ending of *Maurice*, draws attention to it once again by making them lovers meet at the boathouse.

As regards *voyeuristic* pleasure in *Maurice*, Merchant-Ivory's approach also appears contradictory.¹² While introducing a shower scene in the locker room of the gym where Maurice instructs boxing, not mentioned in the original novel, the film avoids the recreation of the "Dickie episode", one of the most homoerotic passages in Forster's writing. Both the film's shower scene and the novel's Dickie episode, occur at a critical juncture, during Maurice's major sexual crisis after Clive's deceit. Maurice's internal feelings after hearing that Clive (Hugh Grant) will no longer be his "friend" are represented in the film by *fire*: the final argument between the "platonic lovers" leaves Maurice staring at the fireplace, which similarly to him, burns with "old" desire. This *burning* frustration results in a sudden attack of jealousy unfairly directed to his sister Ada who, as mentioned above, works as a mediator of the Clive-Maurice desire. Thus, the shower scene added to the film would symbolise the transition from *ardent* (fire) to *fluid* (water) desire, from Clive to Scudder.¹³ In the film's

¹² Notice that this film was not scripted by Ruth Praver Jhabvala but by Kit Hesketh-Harvey and James Ivory.

¹³ Robert K. Martin proposes a double structure of *Maurice* based around the love of Clive - spiritual and Platonic, influenced by Symonds and Scudder - physical, based on Carpenter and Whitman ideals (Tambling, 1995, 100-114). John Fletcher (1992) believes that Martin's reading 'over-polarises' the genealogy of the novel, as Symonds' commitment to Whitman seems to evidence.

shower scene, while Maurice gets changed after his instructing session, he pauses and voyeuristically observes a group of his young male pupils in the shower. They are playing, amicably fighting, splashing buckets of water at each other. The scene is very much reminiscent of the lake scene in *A Room* and all its references to sexual baptism. It also accentuates the sense of Maurice's solitude and nostalgia and adds slightly to the film's homoeroticism. Yet, this short scene hardly compensates for the one suppressed.

In chapter 29 of the novel, right after learning about Clive's engagement, Dr. Barry's young nephew, suggestively named *Dickie*, appears in the story. His presence in the room that Clive used to occupy in his visits, temporarily mitigates Maurice's heart ache by stopping at the bedroom in which his previous beloved will no longer stay. The voyeuristic ritual is, like in the lake scene of *A Room*, slightly delayed, introduced slowly from the beginning in order to increase the reader's sexual curiosity and interest: "He [Maurice] banged at Dickie Barry's door, and, as that seemed no use, opened it". Maurice, the voyeur proper, enters the room. His visual pleasure is transmitted to the (second-hand voyeur) reader:

The boy, who had been to a dance the night before, remained *asleep*. He lay with his limbs uncovered. He lay unashamed, embraced and *penetrated* by the sun. The lips were parted, the down on the upper was touched with gold, the hair broken into countless glories, the body was a delicate amber. To anyone he would have seemed beautiful and to Maurice who reached him by two paths he became the worlds' *desire* (*M* 129, my emphasis)

The fact that the boy is asleep adds to the voyeur's *active*, phallic power of the covert gaze which, like the sun, *penetrates* the passive, feminised body of the boy who lies there unaware. The subject-object paradigm is reversed when Dickie awakes and acknowledges the gaze. This unexpected *return of the gaze* disempowers Maurice and increases the sexual tension between the two characters. Maurice's voyeuristic position is shattered by this unexpectedly *knowing* character whose natural beauty places him in a position of power over Maurice. Dickie ("his god" (130)) can get away with "being as late as [he likes]" because he is beautiful. Maurice's desire gets out of control on his return to the familial breakfast ("trembling all over" (129)). Water is once more used as a referent to sexual desire: the idea of Dickie's body in the bath adds to his excitement ("his hair was now flat from the bath, and his graceful body hidden beneath clothes, but remained extraordinarily beautiful" (130)).

Glen Cavaliero (1979,133-4) has pointed out that the fact that *Maurice* was not meant for publication in England (the removal of the "official readership" that made Forster so cautious in the previous novels) gave Forster leeway for a greater sexual explicitness. The opposite happened with *Howards End*. The original manuscripts were subjected to Forster's self-censorship and its sexual content underwent several deletions of a similar quantity and quality to those of 'The Lucy Novels' mentioned above (see Stape 1981, 126-132). The final product gives an impression of sexual restraint which affects the relationships of the two central couples in the story: Henry and Margaret (whose relationship is symbolised by coldness in the proposal scene) and Helen and Leonard (whose "mysterious" sexual encounter is omitted alto-

gether in the novel). Katherine Mansfield's ironic remark: "I can never be perfectly certain whether Helen was got with child by Leonard Bast or by his fatal forgotten umbrella. All things considered, I think it must have been the umbrella" (Stape 1981, 123 and Pinkerton 1985, 240) is revealing in two ways.¹⁴ First, it evidences a narrative silence of sexual events and, secondly, it draws attention to the obvious phallic quality of the umbrella. In his discussion on the manuscript revisions in *Howards End*, Stape rationalises Forster's self-censorship on the grounds of the writer's conscious effort to adapt to his potential readership, rather than on Forster's inability to portray heterosexual relationships due to his own sexual orientation (1981, 124). In fact, Forster's avoidance of sexual intimacy in the novel leads to the use of the same kind of subtle sexual imagery that he had previously used in *Where Angels Fear To Tread*, *The Longest Journey* and *A Room With A View*. The novel's suggestive subtitle (*Only Connect*) seems to invite the reader to find links with the sexual metaphors used in the previous novels. The umbrella metaphor connects with the water imagery and the idea of fluid sexuality mentioned above. The umbrella, like the rain and the boat in *Maurice*, serves as a first connection between Helen and Leonard, and refers to their *fluid* relationship throughout. Indeed, at the end of the novel when Leonard dies, Helen pours water over him, an action that recalls baptism and, particularly, the "sexual baptisms" in the sacred lake of *A Room* (George's) and *Maurice* (*Howards End*, 302). Prawer Jahbvala's script should be credited for the dramatic force given to the Helen-Leonard first meeting scene in her screenplay, a scene that in the novel is revealed indirectly, since it is Margaret (Emma Thompson) who first meets Leonard (Samuel West) and takes him to Wickham Place, whereas in the film Leonard follows Helen (Helena Bonham Carter). The strong rain outside the Queen's Hall is also exclusive to the film. In the novel Leonard remains very much dry when he meets Helen and it is her loose "flying hair" that recalls her sexual liberation (*HE* 40). Helen's tendency to steal umbrellas (explicit in both novel and film) insists on their phallic imagery: "Is yours a hooky or a nobbly?", to which Leonard replies "Mine's a nobbly - at least I *think* it is" (*HE* 40). The fetishistic equation of Leonard and the umbrella is strengthened by Jacky's visit to Wickham Place looking for Leonard, in a scene which parallels Leonard's previous visit in search for his umbrella. As Helen remarks: "she asked for a husband as if he was an umbrella" (107). The man is reduced to his phallus. Hence, Leonard's desperation to recuperate his lost umbrella (or even Helen's *castration* of Leonard). This identification of Helen and Leonard's relationship around the rain and other images of water (like the river) points to the *fluid* quality of this relationship which links it with similar couples (Lucy and George in *A Room* or Maurice and Scudder in *Maurice*).

On the other hand, this water imagery evidences a contrast between Leonard's relationships with Helen and Jacky: water and fire. The film refers to their incompatibility through their radically different dress codes (Jacky is portrayed as an "easy woman"). After his visit to the very luminous *upstairs* flat of the Schlegels, Leonard's return to Jacky (Nicola Duffett) is represented as a journey to a symbolic hell. Leonard and Jacky live in the slums. Their street is very dark, lit only by the *flames* of the

¹⁴ Original quotation in J. Middleton Murry, 1954. *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*. London: Constable, p. 121.

fires that the homeless “neighbours” use to get warm. These fires guide Leonard’s descent to the *basement* flat. At home, Jacky waits for Leonard, burning with desire, with the fire on. The fireplace is placed on the right-hand side of the *mise-en-scène* with Jacky, whilst Leonard’s clothes are remarkably damp when he gets home. Their two desires are incompatible, like Maurice and Clive’s: the water extinguishes the fire. In *Howards End*, fire is also the recipient of all the lies of the story. Ruth’s scribbled note with instructions about Margaret’s inheritance of Howard’s End is thrown by Evie to the fireplace. In the film, the same happens with Margaret’s letter to Helen about the unworthiness of the Bastis. Leonard’s *ardent* love of Jacky is also a lie, as he confesses to Helen: “I needn’t have married her, but as I have I must stick to her and keep her” (220). This confession which in the novel takes place inside a guest-house, before Helen and Leonard receive Margaret’s letters, is transported to the river in the film, where Forster’s silenced physical intimacy between Helen and Leonard is made explicit. In a scene that recalls Maurice’s troubled dream preceding his first sexual experience with Scudder and, as the boat flows through the river, Helen and Leonard get closer and closer until they get stuck on the riverbank. In the novel, the only reference to the river also suggests the immediacy of a sexual experience between Helen and Leonard. Chapter 27 *ends* with Helen and Leonard “listening to the murmurings of the river” (224) from the hotel room... . This *interruption* of sexual pleasure before even starting is typical of the narration in *Howards End*. A mention to the *faint* sexual attraction that Helen felt (and repressed) for the butler, “a handsome young man” (230) or a passing reference to the “muscles” of the navvies who moved into Wickham Place (240) is as sexually explicit as it gets.

This pattern of *interrupted pleasure* also characterises the novel’s only example of voyeurism, (omitted altogether in the film version). In chapter 26, Margaret watches Charles and his friend Albert Fussell on their way to “a morning dip”. References to water and homosocial bathing seem to be preparing the reader for another moment of voyeuristic pleasure. Helen observes that “the day was still sacred to men” and rather than going for a morning stroll by herself as planned, decides to watch the men. She, then, and not a man (as Beebe or Maurice) becomes the bearer of the gaze. Yet, her look at the men is not *desiring* like Beebe’s or Maurice’s, but *amusing* (“she amused herself by watching [the men’s] contretemps” (203)), a fact that increases her castrating power. The men are dependent on the servants’ carrying their bathing suits (no nude bathing here!) and rather than stripping spontaneously and in communion with nature, they have to rely on the “protection” of the bathing-shed. The amusement is all the greater when we find out that the key to the shed is lost. As opposed to George or Freddy, these pathetic *athletes* as Forster ironically refers to them, are the products of the civilisation that the author is criticising here and that opposes them to the feminine, natural, cosmopolitan Schlegels:

If Margaret wanted to jump out the motor-car, she jumped; if Tibby thought paddling would benefit his ankles, he paddled; if a clerk desired adventure, he took a walk in the dark. But these athletes seemed paralysed. They could not bathe without their appliances, though the morning sun was calling and the last mists were rising from the dimpling stream. Had they found the *life of the body* after all? (HE 203-4, my emphasis)

This passage is more enlightening than it seems. First, Margaret's thoughts stand for those of the "love of the body" that *A Room's* Mr Emerson proclaimed in the quotation that opened this chapter. Secondly, the frustration of the two men summarises the motives behind the lack of pleasure found in this novel: the Wilcoxes become a narrative example of the non-pleasurable (as opposed to the "enjoyable nature"). Finally, Margaret, as a woman, is given the *phallic* power of the gaze, thus providing a revealing counter argument to claims of Forster's misogynist sexual politics. Indeed, Forster's sexual politics shared with Edward Carpenter a desire for a society free of class and gender differences, although that in itself could form the basis of another article.¹⁵

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¹⁵ See Restuccia, Frances. 1989. "'A Cave of My Own': E. M. Forster and Sexual Politics". *Raritan* 9.2: 110-128 and Carpenter, Edward. 1918. *Love's Coming of Age*. London: Allen and Unwin.

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