

Was the Classical Tradition Betrayed by J. Ivory's Adaptation of E. M. Forster's *Maurice*?¹

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To J. Baucells, J. M. Orteu and M. Forcano

Abstract

According to literature and film studies and from the point of view of the influence of classical tradition on Western culture—classical Greek tradition, in this case—this article analyses the inevitable—to a certain degree—betrayal by screenwriters of the literary texts that they adapt. However, in spite of being practically inevitable, Dr. Pau Gilabert indicates what are, in his opinion, the limits beyond which Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey should not have gone in order not to dilute the Hellenic temper of E. M. Forster's *Maurice*.

As citizens of this and the last century, we are very much used to the undeniable pleasure of seeing remarkable masterpieces of world literature on the screen. Images quite often endow the text with a power of seduction that appears as 'inherent to' and 'exclusive of' visual expression, and, yet, it would be absurd not to admit that 'an image is not always worth a thousand words'. If we consider that all translations are betrayals, the translation of a literary text into images must necessarily fall into the same category. Therefore, these short reflections will deal with this idea, with J. Ivory's small or great betrayals, whether conscious or unconscious—actually, Ivory and Hesketh-Harvey's, since both were responsible for the script—when he brought E. M. Forster's *Maurice* to the screen,³ taking into account the urge, unquestionable in my opinion, to preserve and illustrate, with the utmost precision, the series of Greek references that make a particular love story credible within the context of England⁴ at the beginning of the last century.⁵ On the other hand, I would like to point out that, in spite of my frequently disagreeing with them, I frankly admire Ivory's neat and exquisite adaptations of Forster's novels—*A Room with a View*, *Howards End*, and *Maurice* itself—so that these are reflections which, I would like to state once again, have been conceived and written thanks to him and not against him, if only because of the courtesy owed to one who cannot defend himself personally.⁶

In his "Notes on the three men" protagonists of his novel which follow *Maurice* as an epilogue, E. M. Forster makes it a point to remark: "It was I who gave Clive his Hellenic temperament ... He believed in Platonic restraint and induced Maurice to acquiesce" (218).⁷ On the other hand, in his "Terminal note", he had already stated his admiration for Edward Carpenter, follower of Whitman and, like him, convinced of the nobleness of love between comrades, a clearly Greek feature.⁸ Finally, it should be remembered that once he has overcome his initial confusion and reluctance, when Maurice decides to respond to Clive's declaration of love by openly confessing his own, the Greek reference allows him to be daring enough to say: "You might give me a chance instead of avoiding me—I only want to discuss ... I mean the *Symposium*, like the ancient Greeks ... I have always been like the Greeks, and didn't know" (61-62).

Thus, at this point, Maurice is already one of those who dare avenge both Lord Alfred Douglas for having had to write a poem entitled “I am the love that dare not speak its name”⁹ and Oscar Wilde for the trial, sentence and exile that he suffered. Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey did not resist the temptation to transform Viscount Risley into a replica of the unfortunate writer and, as a consequence, they have him experience public scandal followed by both trial and sentence. In spite of this, in the novel he only fulfils the role of getting Maurice acquainted with the use of words, enemies of the oppressing silence, which weighs heavily not only upon him but also upon a whole historical period: “This man who said one ought to ‘talk’, ‘talk’ had stirred Maurice incomprehensively” (36). ‘Talk’, ‘talk’, it is worth repeating this over and over in Lord Alfred Douglas’s country! By means of this confession, Maurice has finally become “master of words”.¹⁰ In order to do so, he has decided on Greekness, he has had to adopt another cultural and spiritual nationality, that is to say, that of those who philosophised about male *éros* with neither obstacles nor prejudices.¹¹ And it is because of this, in my opinion, that the Greek adventure of the protagonists of the novel should be neither overlooked nor minimised, especially Maurice’s.¹² Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey follow Forster’s text accurately at many moments, but a little capriciously in others. What follows is, though brief, the description and detailed analysis of these aspects.

Despite the disadvantages of superimposing the credits of the film, which may dangerously have the effect of distracting the audience, Ivory stages the first chapter marvellously. During the annual walk that puts an end to the school year—and in this case to the primary school cycle—Maurice Hall’s tutor, Mr. Ducie, decides to have a “good talk” with him (15) in order to initiate him into the topic of sex. Maurice’s situation is rather special: he has neither father nor brothers; nor does he have any uncles, and there are only two men at his home, the coachman, and George, the young gardener, both of whom belong to a different social class. Yet, he does have a mother and two sisters, Ada and Kitty, but within Victorian-Edwardian society¹³ sex is a topic that is foreign to the ‘venerable’ role assigned to women, not even, however paradoxical it may seem, to mothers: “It is not a thing that your mother can tell you, and you should not mention it to her nor to any lady” (18). However, as in primary school so far, or in the school where he will be trained to go to university, or at Cambridge itself, like Greek adolescents—or maybe even worse, as a boarder—he will mostly live in a closed male world, surrounded by his peers and teachers only,¹⁴ while women will be relegated to a kind of English *gynaikeiôn*, all maternal purity and respectability.¹⁵ Victorianism, however, did not manage to make humans reproduce through other means than the natural ones, so that the tutor, quite rightly, finds it appropriate to speak openly both of sexual intercourse and of the organs by means of which it is carried out: “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).

It should be noticed that, neither in the film nor in the novel, have the Greeks been referred to yet, but all the while Forster is aware of the fact that, somehow, he has made us witness an initiation ceremony resembling those of the Greek, in which an adult brings a youth into the world of complete maleness and reveals the secrets that he will need to know. To go back to the ancient rites of homosexual initiation would certainly be excessive, but it is not exaggerated to think, on the contrary, of the more pedagogical aspects of Greek pederasty, the aims of which are to model the adolescents’ character from a very early stage.¹⁶ Surrounded by men and following the teachings of an adult pedagogue, the adolescents will little by little come into the world of free citizens as husbands, fathers and masters of a society that has basically been planned for men’s supremacy. Women remain mainly at home, where, as inhabitants of the

gynaikeion, they are trained day by day to become wives and breeding mothers. Undoubtedly, men take them into account, since the human race must continue, but a tight bond of comradeship can hardly exist between men and women, for neither do they receive the same education, nor do they have the same role, or take the same responsibilities. Left aside by a pedagogical *éros* that promotes male values and is reluctant to consider them as real citizen companions, women can only offer either the invaluable female gift of motherhood or the coarsest and the wildest of sensualities.¹⁷

Naturally, when I establish certain parallels between the pedagogical institutions of classical Athens and those of England during the Victorian-Edwardian period, I do so very carefully, since, after all, neither is Mr. Ducie Maurice's lover (*erastés*), nor do his explanations attain the degree of naturalness they would have attained in ancient Greece, despite his openly illustrative drawings of sexual organs on the sand;¹⁸ 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" (19).¹⁹ And, yet, speaking of the ideal chaste and ascetic man, it is worth remembering Socrates at the end of Plato's *Symposium*, when he despises Alcibiades's body: this is the same voice as Clive's when he condemns Maurice to a purely Platonic, that is, sexless, relationship. And it is also worth remembering Maurice, who is puzzled at the need for reproduction and at the prospect of having to effect it with a human being who, due to her goodness and nobleness, must excel in purity and respectability, after which he starts to feel a disgust which is difficult to overcome: "I think I shall not marry" (19)—he confesses to his tutor with certainty. However, in the end he will find the person, Alec, with whom he will be able to redirect Platonic love between men to its original physical and spiritual dimension.²⁰

So, taking into account the general Greek tone of the novel, Forster may be implying all this, and Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey are very careful to reproduce it visually. Therefore, we could ask ourselves: why do they eliminate the period at Sunnington just before Maurice goes to university, which is also the period comprising the prime and the end of his adolescence? The whole process of personality construction is vital, if we are to understand why, within an isolated world of education in the company of men only—a world that is utterly Greek and maybe even more British than Greek—the comradeship, the friendship and the tenderness of which human beings are capable must necessarily be addressed to peers, to the other, to he who is simultaneously the same and different. This is either a process or the confirmation of an innate homosexuality which blossoms within an appropriate context.²¹ And still something that should not be forgotten and which is, in my opinion, essential: when he was on holidays at his mother's house, after the walk with Mr. Ducie and before going to Sunnington, Maurice noticed the absence of the young gardener, of George. His mother and sister caressed him all day, but when he 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 sisters are certainly much more important, but it is easy to conclude that, in spite of the fact that George belongs to a lower social class, the love Maurice feels for him is tingled with a natural complicity that inevitably separates him from those with whom he is bound by blood. In other words, George's absence foreshadows the place that Clive is one day to take in Maurice's life, and later Alec, a mere gamekeeper, since Maurice has become—whether he realises it or not—a contemporary replica of the male affection of ancient Greeks, among whom separation is experienced as an unbearable torment.

After this episode, who would be surprised to see that during the Sunnington period Maurice's dreams should grow into a very specific image? Indeed:

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 a man ... Then he would retrace 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. (26)

Although Forster has not yet mentioned Plato’s *Symposium*, everything is leading to it. It is the source *par excellence*, the classical document in which, like in no other, the friendship and the desire lovers feel when they surrender to the noblest of causes are described. Maurice feels capable of dying for the other, and of doing everything he can to please him. In the *Symposium*, Phaedrus explains approximately the same. In his opinion, there is no better thing for a young adolescent than a virtuous lover, and vice versa. Neither parents, nor honours, nor of course wealth, can guarantee that both of them will always try to do nothing they may feel ashamed of; only the love that unites them can guarantee that. Phaedrus goes as far as saying that the best city or army would be one composed of lovers, since, seeking only to emulate each other, they would keep away any source of dishonour. “Moreover, only lovers show a willingness to give their lives for each other” (178-180c).²²

Of course, for those who are used to identifying traces of classical tradition and, above all, if we consider that references to Plato—and more specifically to the *Symposium*—are frequent in E. M. Forster’s *Maurice*, the association between the texts is inevitable. I do not mean to claim that had Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey not discarded the dream episode—it seems so easy to put it on the screen—they should somehow have led the viewer to the most plausible Platonic source when not even the novelist does so, but they would certainly have helped him or her, and very much so, to understand that Maurice is the result of a long process of modelling:

Other boys sometimes worshipped him, and when he realised this he would shake off them. The adoration was mutual on one occasion ... but ... They quarrelled in a few days. 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. Towards the close of his education at Sunnington the growth stopped. A check, a silence, fell upon the complex processes, and very timidly the youth began to look around him.²³ (27)

There is no doubt that the process has been complex and not at all easy. The farewell party at Sunnington is also an occasion that helps Maurice confirm his childhood forebodings. A doctor who had been one of his father’s friends has been talking to him for a while, and he has told him that he is sure that, after Cambridge, work and a “pretty wife” await him (29). A little later, Maurice says goodbye to his teacher’s wife—incidentally, a very pretty and pleasant woman—and, as he takes his leave, Dr. Barry tells 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! ... Be frank, man ... 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 housemaster’s wife, underwent a violent repulsion from her and blushed crimson; he had remembered Mr. Ducie’s diagrams. (30)

It is the second time that, quite paradoxically, the voice of a still Victorian England, still addicted to purity and respectability, simply reveals the secrets and necessity of reproduction to Maurice, while nobody has ever thought of telling him of the context of friendship, tenderness and companionship that husband and wife are supposed to be able to create, nor of the sensual adventure they might enjoy if only women could finally recover the sensual dimension of their personality. Nobody has ever talked to him about it and, following a strictly Aristotelian line of logical thought, he plunges into repugnance towards the prospect of uniting with a being, woman, that he neither knows nor can relate to the sensuality that has already invaded him. And this is why the Hellenic nature with which Forster endows both Clive Durham—Maurice’s closest intellectual and spiritual guide at Cambridge—and the novel as a whole, requires in my opinion an explanation in no way shorter than that of the text itself. After all, after what we have read—and since we have not been able to see it on the screen—it is most coherent that Maurice—who will soon read Plato’s *Symposium*—should end up understanding quite thoroughly the situation of those who are not Aphrodite Pandemos’s followers, that is to say, lovers of children but also of women and who are consequently contributing to the preservation of the human race (181b). And he might even be more closely related to the spirit of Aristophanes’s speech in the *Symposium*, where, within the context of the myth of the three genres, he remarks that those who come from a former double-male being—before they were split into two by Zeus—are condemned to look for each other continuously and “when they come to man’s estate they are boy-lovers, and have no natural interest in wiving and getting children, but only do these things under stress of custom (*katà nómon*); they are quite contented to live together unwedded (*agámois*) all their days” (192b) (remember the foreboding “I think I shall not marry”).²⁴

Whatever the case, Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey choose to take the audience directly from Maurice’s preadolescence to his days at Cambridge and, aware of the fact that they cannot afford to make any more leaps in the dark, they quickly want to picture what could be called the Hellenic—Platonic—frame in which Forster places the origin of the imminent love between the two protagonists of his novel: a) the reading in the dean’s rooms of the famous paragraph of the palinode of Plato’s *Phaedrus* (chapter XXVI), and b) a brief discussion between Clive, Risley and Maurice about the controversial foundations of education in Athens. Nevertheless, there is also betrayal and, therefore, the Greek nature of the Durham-Hall case is, after all, not too clearly stated. For instance: when Clive dares declare his love, why do they omit the word “*Symposium*” and simply substitute it by a generic “books”? (Forster) (Durham): “I know you read the *Symposium* in the vac” ... / (Maurice): “How do you mean?” ... / (Durham): ... “I love you” (56); (Ivory-Hesketh-Harvey): (Durham): “I know you read those books” / (Maurice): “How do you mean?” ... / (Durham): “That I love you”. And, above all, when it is Maurice’s turn, why do the screenwriters steal his Greek nationality from him, that is, that new and beloved nationality with which he protects himself from the lack of valid references that his own country does not want or know how to provide him with: (Forster) (Maurice): “You might give me a chance instead of avoiding me—I only want to discuss ... I mean the *Symposium*, like the ancient Greeks” (61) ... “Durham, I

love you ... I have always been like the Greeks and didn't know" (62); (Ivory-Hesketh-Harvey): (Maurice): "Durham, I love you, in your very own way ... I do, I think I have always". As you can see, therefore, both the noun "*Symposium*" and the adjective "Greek" have been omitted quite unceremoniously in the film.²⁵

I think that the reason for such a surprising attitude should be sought in two previous scenes in which the long process that I have attempted to highlight, and which has both a Greek and an English quality, suddenly gives way to a clearly biblical connotation. While he is looking for Risley, Maurice finds Clive in Risley's room where he is trying to find the pianola record of the third movement of Tchaikovsky's *Pathetic Symphony*. Maurice asks him—only in the film—if he likes this kind of music, and Clive answers: "I'm afraid I do, yes" and "sweet water from a foul well". Forster/Hesketh-Harvey, then, place Maurice in the realm of words—Risley—and of musical expression of an unspeakable passion—the *Pathetic Symphony* which would illustrate the passion of its composer for his nephew, that is to say, a sweet but a devilish sound.²⁶ Therefore, what would now be vindicated would be the expression of feelings, whichever they may be, and the very fact of bringing them to light would represent a liberation, not the fall into the abyss of sin. Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey, on the contrary, seem to prefer the subtle reference to *Genesis*, since, after a first and before the second listening to the *Pathetic Symphony* with the help of the pianola, a quite plethoric Clive looks at the fruit bowl, says he is going to eat one of those apples—a well-known sweet fruit that was the origin of the most terrible sin, according to a long tradition—and, once he has bitten it, he offers it to Maurice who, as plethoric as Clive himself, eats it up. This is how, both of them poisoned by the apple while listening to Tchaikovsky's devilish music, poisoned by their welcoming of a sweet passion that most reject and condemn, march forth towards *anomia*. Nevertheless, considering that successive crises in the relationship between Clive and Maurice have not taken place yet, how could we combine Durham and Hall's fall into temptation with their joyful passing into accepting male love, conscious as they are, like never before, of the fact that they are Greek in England? In fact, it would be as much of a contradiction as it is to identify Clive with Eve in *Genesis* and, immediately afterwards, to make him a faithful follower of the Greeks reminding his friend—everything in only one scene—that, if he reads Sophocles—*Ajax* in the novel—he should try to do so from the point of view of characters. And I am mentioning this because *Ajax*, on the other hand, is the emblematic hero of courage taken to the extreme of *hybris*—then severely punished—precisely that which Clive may need in order to confront his mother when he refuses to take communion at Christmas, not only because he is "heterodox" (Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey), but also because "my gods would kill me" (44) (Forster).²⁷

By now Clive is pagan, he wants to be and is pleased to be so, because, after previous remorse, "he saw his malady described exquisitely, calmly, as a passion which we can direct, like any other, towards good or bad" (67).²⁸ In fact:

He wished Christianity would compromise with him a little and searched the Scriptures for support. There was David and Jonathan; there was even the 'disciple that Jesus loved'. But the Church's interpretation was against him; he could not find any rest for his soul in her without crippling it, and withdrew higher into the classics yearly. (68)

The confrontation between Christianity and paganism will be a constant element throughout the novel, but during this period in which Clive wins Maurice to his cause, the situation is as follows: paganism *versus* Christianity, gods *versus* Christ, Plato *versus* Christ, *Symposium versus Gospel*, Athens *versus* Cambridge-England, freedom

versus repressive morality, speech *versus* silence. It is not, of course, a static situation, since it will be reversed after Clive's "conversion". And when Alec answers Maurice's call affirmatively and decides to unite his life to his, paganism and Christianity will share the wreckage.

All in all, the screenwriters' great betrayal—or at least the most obvious to any viewer who has the novel in mind—is not related to Maurice but to Clive and to the crisis that finally leads him to marriage. Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey create an episode of insurmountable fear,²⁹ which is quite credible, since daring Viscount Risley appears to be the ideal candidate to undergo Oscar Wilde's bitter experience.³⁰ It is not, of course, a matter of questioning the freedom of the adapters, but I wonder whether the final result does not show—contrary to what they may have expected—that the internal logic of the novel, as Forster conceived it, left little room for freedom.

Clive's personality is also the outcome of a long process, and of course it could not possibly be otherwise. We know fewer things about him than we do about Maurice, but, in the end, we may well infer that he has been in several boarding schools and that he is as much a victim of isolation as his friend. He only has his mother and a sister, and Forster presents him as having been conscious of his homosexuality since his childhood (67). He is tormented by a strict religious education which makes him feel all kinds of remorse, although, as we have just read, with the passing of time and his readings of the classics, he has learned to replace the biblical curse with the blessing in Plato's *Phaedrus* (68). Clive is the main master of ceremonies in Maurice's ritual of initiation into the secrets of Platonic love; he does nevertheless collapse when at first Maurice answers him with the morality and contempt common to Victorian man, though, later on, he does confess his Greekness and the novelist will please himself in giving them two years of complete happiness (chapter XVIII).

Forster does not tell us whether Clive has also lived through episodes of disgust at the thought of reproduction, but, in any case, the two friends—and this again makes them very Greek—show a considerable degree of misogyny. At first it all seems but an anecdote, since, against his sister Kitty's opinion, who wants to avoid his expulsion from Cambridge, Maurice refuses to apologise by saying: "Little girls don't see a good deal" (77). But suspicions are soon confirmed when, in a fit of rage against everything and everyone, Clive, who has received Maurice as host at Penge, states:

I'm a bit out of law, 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 *fiancé*, only far more nobly, far more deeply, body and soul ... a particular harmony of body and soul that I don't think women have even guessed.³¹ (84)

With slight changes, the screenwriters reproduce these two episodes, while the more generous novelist goes further: for instance, Maurice thinks of the children that they will never have and admits to the fact that both his mother and Mrs. Durham have at least given life. Clive immediately finds the appropriate answer to such an overwhelming thesis: "Why children? ... Why always children? For love to end where it begins is far more beautiful, and Nature knows it" (90). And only one step separates this from diagnosis: "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).

Consequently, Clive and Maurice have inherited traditional Western misogyny, which is so Greek!³² a) which may subtly be inferred from Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, ready to make distinctions between those men who have a fertile body—that is, the “crowd kind” that does not do without sex, without women—and those who have a fertile soul who practice a kind of aristocratic reproduction (208e-209); b) which can also be inferred from Aristophanes's speech when he points out that those who come from a former bi-male being, if they think of getting married and having children, it is not out of a natural impulse (*katà phýsin*), but by a legal imperative (*katà nómon*), since spending their lives together without getting married (*agámois*) is enough to them—women, therefore, can even be a hindrance to complete happiness—(189c-193e);³³ and c) which powerfully springs from Pausanias's speech, according to which Heavenly Aphrodite's followers are driven exclusively towards what is male, because it is by nature stronger and more intelligent (*tò phýsei erromonésteron kai mállon nóun échon*) (180b-181d)—no need to say anything else.³⁴

But if I mention the misogynous aspects of Clive's and Maurice's personalities it is not in order to exclusively ascribe an identifying feature to them. After all, Western misogyny, as a “cultural” phenomenon of both Judaic-Christian and Greek origin, spreads through all periods and all social strata regardless of the sexual orientation of their members. I do mention this mainly in order to stress the fact that, for certain people, the late discovery of the power of seduction of femininity is as credible as great was the fervour with which others concealed it from them. In other words, Clive's “conversion”, apparently so illogical, is understandable as the result of a process that it is necessary to explain, while it should not be considered an episode of fear: “I have become normal—like other men” (112).

Forster's text must be considerably manipulated before turning Clive into a victim of an episode of insurmountable panic. First of all, it is Maurice who speaks of dangers when he tells him that he should have talked to him since he cannot confide in anyone else: “‘You and I are outlaws. All this’—he pointed out the middle-class comfort of the room—‘would be taken from us if people knew’” (113).³⁵ Secondly, Clive travels to Greece not only to recover from a crisis, but instead, “he determined to go to Greece. ‘It must be done’, he said ... Every barbarian must give the Acropolis its chance once” (99).³⁶ But he cannot help it, he goes there and “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). And, since he is no coward, he states the facts: “‘Against my will I have become normal. I cannot help it’. The words had been written” (104). He even fights against himself: “Clive did not give in to the life spirit without 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” (107).

To sum up: there has not been a “conversion” brought about by fear; in any case, there were the circumstances of an illness and the nearness of a woman, a nurse, to his body, both of which made him capable of tearing down the British and the Greek wall, modern and old, of the unfortunate separation between men and women: “Illness ... He noticed how charming his nurse was and enjoyed obeying her. When he went [sic] a drive his eye rested on women” (106). Later on, Ada will find him quite ready to perceive her charms: “He was so happy being bandaged ... Now Ada bent over him ... He turned from the dark hair and eyes to the unshadowed mouth or to the curves of the body, and found in her the exact need of his transition” (110).

And finally, as a conclusion, I would like to point out that the English writer's fine irony has succeeded, therefore, in several aspects: a) in order to be able to express and to live out their feelings, Clive and Maurice have had to become Greek. And, at the same time, the English society that reproaches them and wants to condemn them to

silence and self-repression, gives women essentially the same role they had in ancient Greece, that is, they are simply agents of reproduction; b) in order to become “normal” Clive has had to abandon his previous misogyny—which was quite Hellenic³⁷—but at the same time the society that welcomes him joyfully continues to separate men and women,³⁸ like the ancient Greeks did, into two separate worlds far from each other, and condemns them as a result to a cruel lack of complicity;³⁹ c) by what right does England condemn Clive and Maurice or Maurice and Alec⁴⁰ for their Greek option when English society, by means of its educational system, favours the birth and the consolidation of what it refers to as “the unspeakable vice of the Greeks”?⁴¹ and d)—even more ironical and paradoxical—Clive’s final “conversion” to the world of “normal people”—that is, to the world of the English and not of the Greek—could not be due to Victorian-Edwardian morality and institutions—which in fact have hindered it—but to the active *mimesis* of the heroes’s courage in Greek tragedies—for instance, *Ajax*—with which he always seems to have faced whatever challenges he has encountered.

Certainly, Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey’s exquisite screen adaptation of Forster’s *Maurice* does not succeed in picturing all these aspects, but, on the other hand, I think that I have also suggested all the reasons thanks to which I applaud its existence.

NOTES

¹ Merchant Ivory Productions, 1987. Producer: I. Merchant; director: J. Ivory; screenplay: J. Ivory/K. Hesketh-Harvey. The film quotations will correspond to *Odyssey* DVD-Video, 1999.

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³ As an introduction to Forster’s biography and to his human and literary figure, see, for instance, King 1978; Furbank 1979; Summers 1983; Advani 1984; Messenger 1991; Beauman 1994; Rapport 1994. On his letters: Lago and Furbank 1983. Guide to his research: Summers 1991.

⁴ On Victorian England and its relation to ancient Greece, see, for instance, Jenkyns 1981 and Turner 1981.

⁵ *Maurice* was published posthumously in 1971, but Forster started to write it in 1913 and finished in 1914 (see the “Terminal Note”, pp. 217-8 of the Penguin edition, 1972. All quotations will correspond to this edition).

⁶ For a global vision of J. Ivory’s films, see, for instance, Long 1991. In relation to the screen adaptation of *Maurice*, see, for instance, Goscilo 1989; Quince 1989 and Levine 1996.

⁷ On Platonism in England, see, for instance, Cruzalegui 2002.

⁸ On the “queer” Forster, see for instance, Bakshi, 1996; Martin and Piggford 1997 and Martland 1999.

⁹ See, for instance, Ellmann 1987, p. 45.

¹⁰ Therefore, there has been a process in the course of which the discussion he had with Risley and Clive, about the foundations of education in Athens versus the principles of Christianity, was of extreme importance: “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). Days of crisis will come when Maurice will say “I

am an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort” (139), but Maurice will never again abandon words, until he and Alec, once the fear that had betrayed them has been overcome, realise that they can allow themselves to leave it aside. In other words, only love can make them useless, but not the oppressing silence against which Forster and his novel have passionately 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 how natural it was that their primitive abandonment at Penge should have led to peril” (198).

¹¹ Even though only Plato’s *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* are mentioned in the novel, it is important not to forget Plutarch’s *Eroticus* and Lucian’s *Amores*.

¹² See, for instance, Gilabert 1995, 1996, 2004.

¹³ Queen Victoria’s reign ends in 1901 and King Edward’s in 1910. Therefore, Forster writes *Maurice* during the reign of George V. Nevertheless, it might be useful to point out that the context in which *Maurice* is placed is still Victorian. For a global view of the Edwardian period, see for instance, Bernstein 1986; Pemble 1998 and Hynes 1991.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Clarke 1989.

¹⁵ On the Victorian and Victorian-Edwardian woman, see, for instance, Lewis 1991.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Symonds 1971 (1901); Marrou 1948; Flacelière 1971; Dover 1978; Buffière 1980; Sergeant 1984 and Dowling 1994.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Mossé 1983—already a classic—though I would like to recommend in this respect a book of Classical Antiquity, Plutarch’s *Eroticus*. Protogenes, the defender in this dialogue of masculine love, says: “In a normal state one’s desire for bread and meat is moderate, yet sufficient; but abnormal indulgence of this desire creates the vicious habit called gluttony and gormandizing. In just the same way there normally exists in men and women a need for the pleasure derived from each other; but when the impulse that drives us to this goal is so vigorous and powerful that it becomes torrential and almost out of control, it is a mistake to give the name Love to it. Love, in fact, it is that attaches himself to a young and talented soul and through friendship brings it to a state of virtue (*eis aretén*); but the appetite (*epithimíais*) for women we are speaking of, however well it turns out, has for net gain only an accrual of pleasure in the enjoyment of a ripe physical beauty ... The object of desire is, in fact, pleasure and enjoyment; while Love, if he loses the hope of inspiring friendship, has no wish to remain cultivating a deficient plant which has come to its prime, if the plant cannot yield the proper fruit of character to produce friendship and virtue. If, however, such a passion (*páthos*) must also be called Love, let it at least be qualified as an effeminate and bastard love that takes its exercise in the women’s quarters as bastards do in the Cynosarges ... there is only one genuine Love, the love of boys. It is not ‘flashing with desire’, as Anacreont says of the love of maidens, or ‘drenched with unguents, shining bright’. No, its aspect is simple and unspoiled. You will see it in schools of philosophy, or perhaps in the gymnasia and palaestrae, searching for young men whom it cheers on with a clear and noble cry to the pursuit of virtue when they are found worthy of its attention. But that other lax and housebound love, that spends its time in the bosoms and beds of women, ever pursuing a soft life, enervated amid pleasure devoid of manliness and friendship and inspiration, it should be proscribed, as in fact Solon did proscribe it. He 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 (*éros ... tôn gynaikôn*) (750A -751) (Helmbold, 1969; all the quotations of the *Eroticus* will correspond to this edition).

¹⁸ It was clever of the screenwriters to call “Victoria” the little girl who walks on the beach in the company of adults; when she is energetically taken away from the horrible vision of Mr. Ducie’s diagrams on the sand, the effect we obtain is an image of the conflictive relationship with human sexuality of a whole period.

¹⁹ Apart from these, Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey make Mr. Ducie say the following words: “Your body is his temple [God’s]. Never, ever, pollute that temple”. This is in my opinion a clear reference to Paul (*Corinthians* 6:12-19: on the sin of fornication: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you? ... So glorify God in your own body”). Prejudices against the sexual dimension—apparently so dangerous—of human beings are automatically increased with these words. Anyway, it is worth remembering that this idea—i. e. the human body conceived as a temple—appears as well in Symonds’s 1971 (1901): “They had never been taught to regard the body with a sense of shame, but rather to admire it as the temple of the spirit, and to accept its needs and instincts with natural acquiescence. Male beauty disengaged for them the passion it inspired from service of domestic, social, civic duties. The female form aroused desire, but it also suggested maternity and obligations of the household. The male form was the most perfect image of the deity, self-contained, subject to no necessities of impregnation, determined in its action only by laws of its own reason and its own volition” (53). It is quite clear, then, that E. M. Forster adopts Symonds’s thesis at least in *The Longest Journey* when Stephen speaks to his brother: “Slip out after your dinner this evening, and we’ll get thundering tight together. I’ve a notion I won’t. It’d do you no end of good ... There is also a thing called Morality. You may learn in the Bible, and also from the Greeks, that your body is a temple” (1989, 264-5).

²⁰ Remember that when Maurice confesses his intimate relationship with Alec to Clive, his great friend warns him severely that “the sole excuse for any relationship between men is that it remain purely platonic” (213), but, before that, Maurice has let him know, just in case his asceticism were to blind him, that “I’m flesh and blood, if you’ll condescend to such low things” (212).

²¹ I use the words “innate homosexuality” because when Clive abandons him and he is desperate, Maurice seeks medical advice in Dr. Barry with these words: “I’m an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort ... I’ve been like this ever since I can remember without knowing why. What is it?” (139). And, before that, when he tried to convince Clive of the impossibility of certain changes, he had said: “Can the leopard change his spots?” (113).

²² Compare this to: “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). And further on, when it is certain that Alec has decided to unite his life to Maurice’s, Forster adds: “They must live outside the 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” (208-9). And this last text could be compared with Plato’s *Phaedrus* 252: “Therefore the soul 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 properties 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” (Fowler, 1971; all the quotations of Plato’s *Phaedrus* will correspond to this edition), or Plutarch’s *Eroticus* 762 E: “A man in love thinks little of practically everything else, not merely companions and relatives, but even laws and

magistrates and kings. He fears nothing, he admires nothing, he pays service to nothing. He's capable of braving 'even thunderbolt, the spear-wielder'; but once he catches sight of the handsome boy, *He flinches like a cock that droops his vanquished wing*. His confidence is broken to bits and the pride of his soul is overthrown" (Helmbold, 1969).

²³ It is worth pointing out that, though briefly, Ivory does mention the period at Sunnington, but he presents it in the form of a reflection upon the past that Maurice writes down in a kind of personal journal. At the time, Maurice is a guest at the Durhams' and, in any case, the quotation has more to do with the sexual impulses of an adolescent than with the particular feelings of love which have been characterising him for some time (26-7).

²⁴ Of course I am not forgetting Diotima's words (208e-209): "Now 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 things which are proper for soul to conceive and bring forth" (Lamb, 1983; all the quotations of Plato's *Symposium* will correspond to this edition). However, Maurice will flee precisely from this purified view of Platonic love that frustrates his relationship with Clive, and he will choose a more clearly physical and spiritual approach with Alec.

²⁵ Anyway, it must be recognized that Plato's *Symposium* is certainly mentioned in a previous conversation which is held by Risley, Durham and Maurice: (Risley): "The unspeakable vice of the Greeks! The hypocrisy! He ought to lose his fellowship". (Durham): "It's a point of pure scholarship. All the Dean understands is the physical act. I'm not advocating that". (Risley): "Cold as a fish on a marble slab". (Durham): "Shut up, I'm trying to make a serious point. A masculine love of physical beauty and moral beauty and the beauty of the thirst for human knowledge. Omit that and you've omitted the mainstay of Athenian society. It's as if our benighted Dean hadn't ever read the *Symposium*. Have you read it, Maurice?"

²⁶ In this case I am reproducing the thesis that appears in the novel, regardless of whether it is true or not: "'Symphonie Incestueuse et Pathique'. And he informed his young friend that Tchaikovsky had fallen in love with his own nephew, and dedicated his masterpiece to him" (141).

²⁷ Both Clive-Maurice and Maurice-Alec will need this courage to face a world that stigmatises them.

²⁸ Cf. Plato. *Phaedrus* 256a-b: "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" (Fowler 1971).

²⁹ Surprisingly enough, this is so because they followed Jhabvala's indications—the excellent adapter of literary works into scripts, who belongs to Merchant-Ivory's usual team (see Long 1991, 150). I say "surprisingly" because, in my opinion, this is the main flaw of the screenplay.

³⁰ Clive and Maurice read the following headline in the newspaper: "Viscount Risley arrested on immorality charge".

³¹ For a general view on the role of women in Forster's novels, see, for instance, Elert 1979.

³² For a general view of misogyny in Greece, see, for instance, Madrid 1999.

³³ "Men who are sections of the male pursue the masculine, and so long as their boyhood lasts they show themselves to be slices of the male by making friends with men and delighting to lie with them and to be clasped in men's embraces; these are the

finest boys and striplings, for they have the most manly nature. Some say they are shameless creatures, but falsely: for their behaviour is due not to shamelessness but to daring, manliness, and virility, since they are quick to welcome their like. Sure evidence of this is the fact that on reaching maturity these alone prove in a public career to be men. So when they come to man's state they are boy-lovers, and have no natural interest in wiving and getting children, but only do these things under stress of custom; they are quite contented to live together unwedded all their days" (Lamb, 1983).

³⁴ "Now the Love that belongs to the Popular Aphrodite is in very truth popular and does his work at haphazard: this is the Love we see in the meaner sort of men; who, in the first place, love women as well as boys; secondly, where they love, they are set on the body more than the soul; and thirdly, they choose the most witless people they can find, since they look merely to the accomplishment and care not if the manner be noble or no. Hence they find themselves doing everything at haphazard, good or its opposite, without distinction: for this love proceeds from the goddess who is far the younger of the two, and who in her origin partakes of both female and male. But the other Love springs from the Heavenly goddess who, firstly, partakes not of the female but only of the male; and secondly, is the elder, untinged with wantonness: wherefore those who are inspired by this Love betake them to the male, in fondness for what has the robuster nature and a larger share of mind" (Lamb, 1983).

³⁵ According to Ivory/Hesketh-Harvey, Clive says: "Exactly. If we continue like this, we risk losing everything we say: our careers, our families, our good reputation". In the novel, on the contrary, Clive uses more philosophical—I would even dare to say Platonic and Stoic arguments: "It is character, not passion, that is real bond ... You can't build a house on the sand, and passion's sand. We want bed rock" (114).

³⁶ On the role of Greece in Forster's works, see, for instance, Papazoglou 1995.

³⁷ Let us see, for example, Clive's reaction when, back from Greece, he is at Maurice's: "All laughed. The three women were evidently fond of one another ... When talking to her mother and sister, even Kitty had beauty, and he determined to rebuke Maurice about her" (110).

³⁸ On marriage among the Victorians, see, for instance, Himmelfarb 1989.

³⁹ I would like to suggest the example of Clive and Anne's wedding night, because it is not completely negative: "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" (144).

⁴⁰ It is already commonplace to remember what Carpenter wrote to Forster after reading the manuscript of *Maurice*: "I was so afraid that you were going to let Scudder go at the last, but you saved him and saved the story"(in Lago and Furbank 1983, 223). Thus, once the social barriers have been pulled down and love is triumphant, it is ideal to dedicate the novel to "A Happier Year" (5). Come what may, Carpenter's personal experience and the one in *Maurice* have quite a lot in common, since Carpenter left Cambridge to live on a little farm in the North of England with a working-class lover.

⁴¹ We have the example of what happened at Sunnington: "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" (26). And we also have another example, that is, the dean's relief after Maurice has been expelled: "Mr. Cornwallis always suspected such friendships. It was not natural that men of different characters and tastes should be intimate, and although undergraduates,

unlike schoolboys, are officially normal, the dons exercised a certain amount of watchfulness, and felt it right to spoil a love affair when they could” (75).

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