

“A Grown Man Doesn’t Cry”

Reconsidering Masculinity and Emotionality in E.M. Forster’s *Maurice*

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the paradoxical concurrence of masculinity and emotionality in *Maurice*. Scrutinising the construction of masculinity in early-twentieth-century England, it argues that the novel challenges contemporary norms of English manhood through Maurice's and Clive's recurrent and profuse shedding of tears. Generally interpreted as a weakness, emotionality has usually been repressed by men in order to sustain their masculine identity (Jansz 166). Maurice's continual emotional unrest throughout the novel subverts the requirement for men to be emotionally discreet and demonstrates that repressing emotions clashes with human nature. Linking the novel's thematisation of tears to Judith Butler's gender performativity theory (*Gender Trouble* 1990; *Bodies That Matter* 1993) as well as previous research on the role of gender in emotional behaviour (Lutz 1999; Jansz 2000; Fivush and Buckner 2000; Ross-Smith and Kornberger 2004), this thesis argues that the recurrence of tears in *Maurice* undermines the conception of gender as a fixed category. As one of the first literary works to openly thematise homosexuality, *Maurice* ultimately asks for a reconsideration of the limits of masculinity as well as the exclusion of vulnerable emotion from English manhood.

## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
I. Messy Masculinity: Gender Construction in <i>Maurice</i>	6
II. <i>Maurice</i> 's Tears: Rethinking Emotional Manhood	13
Conclusion	25
Works Cited	27

## Introduction

‘Man up.’ Though brief and seemingly straightforward, this phrase carries a plethora of social connotations that are at the centre of our cultural understanding of what manhood entails.

Alongside expressions such as ‘Be a man’ and ‘Big boys don’t cry,’ it suggests that manhood ought to entail toughness and emotional inhibition. It is what Geraldine Walsh refers to as “Fears for tears” in *The Irish Times*. She warns for the long-lasting harmful consequences of teaching boys to inhibit their emotions, as this ultimately leads to higher depression rates and even suicide (Walsh, “Fears for Tears”). Furthermore, psychological research unequivocally points out that living up to this standard goes against human nature (Fivush and Buckner 233).

On the contrary, men’s rigid adherence to images of toughness are merely the result of a social construction of what is also referred to as “hegemonic masculinity” (Palkki 26). This specific interpretation of masculinity opposes characteristics that are culturally perceived as strong, dominant, and tough to the male body, as opposites of a feminised and emasculated conception of weakness, emotionality and submission (26). The negative impact of hegemonic masculinity is also referred to as “toxic” or “fragile masculinity,” and has gained increased public attention in recent years. The publication of J.J. Bola’s book *Mask Off: Masculinity Redefined* (2019), for instance, advocates for a more inclusive understanding of manhood and asks men to take off their masks of stoicism, both to support gender equality and to benefit men’s own health (Bola, “We Need to Redefine Manhood”).

As of today, gender is recognised more and more as a cultural and therefore fluid concept, but the rigid social implementation of hegemonic masculinity has longer been challenged and criticised for its restrictive and suppressive interpretation. The implementation of masculine norms not only affects those who do not fit the category of men, but men themselves, too. Research repeatedly shows that men suffer both physical and mental health issues due to the pressure that is put on them to live up to the masculine ideal through a

structural practice of tough, dominant, and aggressive behaviour (Jansz 168; Palkki 26; Reigeluth et al. 237). This has not only been examined in sociological and psychological research, but in fiction as well (Wallowitz 26).

E.M. Forster's *Maurice* narrates the psychological struggles of its eponymous protagonist Maurice Hall and his antagonist Clive Durham, and their diverging ways to deal with homosexuality and emotionality within the restraints of their masculine identities as Englishmen in the 1910s. The novel, finished in 1914 but published only posthumously in 1971, is mainly known for its revolutionary thematisation of homosexuality in a time where it was still legally condemned, but also heavily revolves around and reflects upon the existing norms and boundaries of masculinity and manhood in English society. This became one of the leading critiques of the novel, as its narrative focus on homosexuality was perceived as narrow due to "the exclusion of the feminine from the depiction of homosexual masculinity" (Booth 182). This observation is, I believe, remarkable, since it fails to consider the novel's deliberate focus on masculinity as an object for internal scrutiny. *Maurice* specifically revolves around manhood, in order to present its social construction in its 1910s English context as well as subvert this conception of manhood through Maurice's repeated failure to adhere to the social norms that manhood prescribes. This is particularly evident in the frequent occurrence of tears throughout the novel.

In this thesis, I argue that Maurice's disapproval of men showing vulnerable emotion is structurally undermined by his own recurrent shedding of tears. I demonstrate this in two interpretive steps in two chapters. Chapter One discusses the construction of masculine gender through performativity in *Maurice* and situates the novel's thematisation of crying within gender discourse of hegemonic masculinity. Chapter Two is centred around a close-reading of Maurice's and Clive's tears. It argues that the depicted ambivalence about showing emotion in *Maurice* deconstructs the foundations of the early-twentieth-century English view

on masculine gender as a fixed category confined within strict social norms. As such, I argue that the thematisation of men's tears in *Maurice* undermines the emasculation of emotionality and demonstrates that gender cannot be gauged through emotional behaviour.

In order to prevent ambiguity within the discussion of abstract matters such as emotionality and gender, it is important to explicate and justify my choice of terminology. Throughout this thesis, I use three different terms that are linked to the social understanding of behaviours and attitudes that constitute our cultural image of a man: masculinity, manliness, and manhood. Even though masculinity and manliness slightly differ in meaning, I have decided to use these terms interchangeably, since they connote the same restrictive effects on emotional behaviour constructed within the social norms for masculine identity, "as opposed to women or children" ("Manliness"; "Masculinity"). I use manhood in a broader sense, to refer to a man's masculine identity as constructed both through biological sex and cultural practices of masculinity ("Manhood"). Maurice's manhood, for instance, is, as I will demonstrate, continuously and momentarily reshaped and retouched by different gendered expressions. These expressions vary from moments of physical prestige, perceived as masculine, and moments of emotional crises, showing Maurice in a traditionally weaker and more feminine light. These variations demonstrate the instability of his masculine gender.

## I

## Messy Masculinity

Gender Construction in *Maurice*

The interplay between *Maurice*'s manifestation of gender through behaviour and its simultaneous critical discussion of gender is vital in understanding the novel's portrayal of emotionality in relation to masculinity. The novel challenges Maurice's publicly practised adherence to masculine gender norms according to English morals by exposing several of his deviations from said gender norms out of the public eye. This is emphasised in the dichotomy between Maurice's "handsome, healthy, bodily attractive" outward appearance (Forster, Terminal Note 220) on the one hand, and his private contemplations about his homosexual desires, during which he overtly shows emotion, on the other. The duality of public emotional discretion and private emotional expression is theorised in Tom Lutz's distinction between "private and public identities" (178). He uses this distinction to construe the social contexts in which emotional expression is accepted and those contexts from which it is excluded.

According to this division, people only show emotion in private settings (178) but remain silent about their feelings in public. I will use Lutz's distinction throughout the thesis, as this aptly characterises the pattern of Maurice's emotional behaviour. For men, this public emotional discretion is intrinsically linked with their masculinity, that rarely, if ever, allows for emotional expression (Jansz 167). In light of men's gendered behaviour in public as depicted in the novel, Maurice's gender deviations through homosexuality and emotionality in private settings thus testify to a palpable awareness of gender as a cardinal force abided by in the social domain.

Apart from *Maurice*'s central theme of homosexuality that has received most of the scholarly attention, the novel's more subtle discussion of tears is similarly crucial in its discussion of masculine gender performance. Whilst homosexuality is nowadays more

generally accepted in the West than at the time Forster wrote *Maurice*, the novel's thematisation of crying exposes and challenges the emasculated conception of emotionality that exists in the West to this day (Fivush and Buckner 234). In this chapter I discuss the ambivalent performance of masculine gender in *Maurice*. Providing a historical background of the English construction of gender norms at the time the novel was written, I argue that the English conception of manliness depicted in *Maurice* was not innate, but taught at school and in college through discipline with a focus on athleticism (Janes 363). More specifically, I use Maurice's experiences at school and university to demonstrate that the novel reflects upon the formative and exclusionary workings of the educational system. I will use a number of passages from the novel to illustrate Maurice's conscious adherence to masculine norms, as well as the ways he deals with his homosexuality as part of his masculine identity within the English educational system that fosters a strictly heteronormative version of manhood. I juxtapose time-bound English conceptions of masculine gender with Maurice's homosexuality and emotionality. As such, this chapter aims to demonstrate that Maurice's public display of his gender is limited and unsustainable.

When Forster wrote *Maurice*, gender was usually made to present a fixed categorisation of people according to their biological sex (Janes 363). The duality of Maurice's masculinity, however, disrupts this conception of gender as permanent, as the differences in his masculinity in the presence of others and in private settings shows that his presentation of masculinity is bendable. Masculinity was, at the time, defined mainly physically, and those physical characteristics of masculinity were transferred onto the psyche as well (364). This particular manifestation of gender made "late Victorian manliness ... a visibly effortful performance" (363) in which men were required to be strong, independent, and dominant (Jansz 168). Masculinity was hence constructed through discipline, athleticism, rationalism, as well as a heterosexual power relation of male dominance over the female

(Tosh 110). Maurice's character demonstrates how homosexuality and emotionality, perceived as weaknesses as they did not fit this masculinely heterosexual paradigm, were usually disguised behind a façade of 'masculine' physical strength. Even though emotionally afflicted with his homosexual desires that are socially unaccepted and legally condemned, Maurice rarely puts this unrest on display. The dualism of "private and public identities" (Lutz 178) epitomised in Maurice's internal conflict between his homosexuality along with his emotions and his conformity to rigid English norms of heterosexual manhood illustrates the performative nature of gender, as theorised by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993). Gender is not biologically innate, she states, but acquires meaning through "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (*Bodies That Matter* xii). This behavioural construction of gender is clearly present in *Maurice*, where masculinity is clearly enacted and discussed in light of English social norms (Hartree 129). Rather than through the physicality of his body's male sex, Maurice's masculinity is mainly constructed through his repeated citations of behavioural norms that 'make' his masculinity. His publicly displayed masculinity is therefore purely a mirror of the gender norms that existed in England at the time depicted in the novel. Hence, when Maurice contemplates his homosexuality – in private – or sheds tears – in private – these 'unmasculine' behaviours challenge the English norms for heterosexual manhood, since these private behaviours differ considerably from the gender norms that he repeatedly cites publicly. Maurice's public masculinity thus merely serves as a foil to his genuine identity, with which he becomes acquainted through his frequent emotional outbursts.

The recurrence of men's tears throughout *Maurice* not only functions as a critique on English gender norms prevalent during the early twentieth century, but also challenges the sustainability of these norms. In their study of the societal perception of crying in relation to gender, Warner and Shields stress the importance "to note that manly emotion is not

equivalent to men's emotion per se. In fact, it is a standard that women are expected to adhere to in many situations as well" (99). Masculinity is thus, they state, not inherently bound to the male sex, but rather to the socially conceptualised manifestation of the male body. As such, it functions as a norm and concept used to dictate behaviour that is culturally expected of men because of their male body. Since masculinity is seen to embody strength, it is imposed on people regardless of biological sex. Seeing as any particular manifestation gender is the result of socially accepted and normalised behaviour, a new behaviour could therefore redefine gender, if it is taken over by the masses (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xxix). Gender is thus, in principle, constantly susceptible to change and redefinition.

*Maurice* clearly functions as a medium to ask for such a redefinition of English norms for masculinity. The novel initially sketches the ways in which the English understanding of manliness is manifested, especially in school settings, and then critically reflects on these manifestations. The novel's internal criticism is evidently verbalised in Mr Lasker Jones's observation that "England has always been disinclined to accept human nature" (Forster 188). Though directed at the condemnation of homosexuality under English law, his criticism also encompasses the more general English rejection of certain groups of people in spite of their inability to change the traits for which they are excluded, such as gender and sexuality. Listening to Mr Lasker Jones's statement, Maurice faces the unpromising future of his homosexuality: "there always have been people like me and always will be, and generally they have been persecuted" (188). Despite the ever-lasting existence of people outside the heterosexual paradigm, the English had constructed a system of division between male and female that reached into nearly every aspect of social life (Tosh 112). Especially the educational system, which comprises a considerable part of the setting in *Maurice*, was strictly divided according to sex and created an environment where boys were reared according to the strict norms of English manliness (110). Boarding schools, either exclusively

boys' or girls', thus created environments in which the youth were drilled to behave according to the social norms linked with their sex (112). For Maurice, this meant that his years at the boarding school in Sunnington taught him both explicitly and implicitly the ways to act manly in order to survive and thrive as a man within English society: "Having been bullied as a new boy, he bullied others when they seemed unhappy or weak, not because he was cruel but because it was the proper thing to do" (Forster 15). The culture of bullying those who appear vulnerable forces boys to ignore and cover up their troubles or insecurities, in order not to appear weak, making independence not merely a masculine ideal to live by (Jansz 168), but a necessity to hold ground. This culture, hence, pressures them to conform to an image of unemotional and physically strong manhood. However, since this attitude does not eliminate feeling in itself but its manifestation through emotional expression, the competitive atmosphere at Sunnington does not change Maurice's nature, but merely restricts it to his inner life, out of the public eye. The English disinclination "to accept human nature" (Forster 188) is, as such, not merely culturally founded, but institutionalised.

While masculinity, as Maurice was taught at Sunnington, is predominantly defined along lines of autonomy, dominance, and independence, *Maurice's* Cambridge setting presents English manhood in a communal light in which the line between homosocial and homosexual becomes strikingly thin. Where fellow students usually "sat elbow to elbow in hall and walked arm in arm around the streets" (Forster 22), no one took particular notice of Maurice and Clive walking "arm in arm or arm around shoulder" (37). The homosocial freedom that men at Cambridge enjoy is remarkable considering the otherwise strict definition of masculinity "as independent and separate from others" (Fivush and Buckner 238). However, the physical intimacy between Maurice and Clive makes for a clear juxtaposition between their diverging masculine appearances. In the image of "Maurice in a chair, and Durham at his feet, leaning against him ... Maurice would stroke Durham's hair" (Forster 37),

Maurice is clearly the larger, dominant party, whereas Clive is unequivocally depicted as smaller and subservient. Portrayed as a “bodily attractive” young man (Forster, *Terminal Note* 220), Maurice is essentially the personification of athletic manhood. Where Maurice enjoys public appraisal for his imposing physique, however, Clive’s disregarded presence at Cambridge symbolises the public discount of what Dominic Janes terms “the cult of aestheticism” (363). Aestheticism was harshly emasculated, Janes notes: “its adherents were not merely [seen as] androgynous, but also ugly” (363). Men were supposed to embody independence and authority through physical strength; a mere aesthetic refinement and intellect did not convey that image (363). As such, Clive often remains unnoticed at Cambridge, especially in comparison with Maurice’s more imposingly athletic physique:

He [Clive] was a small man – very small – with simple manners and a fair face, which had flushed when Maurice blundered in. In the college he had a reputation for brains and also for exclusiveness. Almost the only thing Maurice had heard about him was that he ‘went out too much,’ and this meeting in the Trinity confirmed it. (Forster 28)

Maurice, too, initially shows little veneration in his first impression of Clive, to whom he bluntly says, “You look more like a fresher than a third-year man, I must say” (29). Clive’s physical inferiority – and hence insignificance – is painfully corroborated again when his intimacy with Maurice is interrupted by Maurice’s friends stumbling in upon the two lovers in Maurice’s room: “Maurice ... was drawn into the conversation, and scarcely noticed his friend’s [i.e., Clive’s] departure” (48). Regardless of his intellect that impresses Maurice, Clive, “the weaker” (37), succumbs to the intruders’ sole interest in Maurice, who himself now becomes the centre of his friends’ attention.

Regarding physical appearance, Clive indeed functions as a foil to enhance the image of Maurice’s masculinity. However, the aforementioned public disregard for Clive’s

intellectual superiority over Maurice also exposes the shallowness and limited focus on outward appearance rather than intellect and other psychological components in the public perception of masculinity. As the instigator of Maurice's awareness of his homosexuality as well as several of his emotional crises, Clive undermines the credibility of this traditional image of masculinity personified in Maurice's appearance. Thus, the dichotomy between Maurice's "public" identity (Lutz 178), represented in his athletic appearance, and "private" identity (178), represented in his disguised homosexuality and solitary weeping, essentially separates masculinity, manifested in the public sphere, from manhood, which encompasses both men's public and private lives. As I discuss in the next chapter, the sincerity of Maurice's tears demonstrate that the stoical image of masculinity only encompasses the "effortful performance" (Janes 363) of masculinity as prevalent in England at the time. As I ultimately argue, the persistence and reiteration of his tears undermines the logic and coherence of masculine gender norms as permanent and inherent to the nature of men.

## II

*Maurice's Tears*

## Rethinking Emotional Manhood

As discussed in the previous chapter, *Maurice's* thematisation of and concurrent reflection on English manhood raises more questions than it answers. Maurice's and Clive's tears are likewise presented in a puzzling ambivalence. On the one hand, they are, alongside any expression of emotion, consistently described as weakness put on display. On the other hand, they symbolise how moments of vulnerability and emotional experience constitute elements of life that are inevitably and fundamentally human. This becomes clear in Maurice's display of tears, that barely changes with age. As a "little boy," he "was in tears" when he found his mother's servant George had departed after he had given notice (Forster 12). Maurice's emotional reaction is described as an indispensable part of dealing with his sorrow over this loss. Mourning his loss of George, young Maurice "did not even know that when he yielded to this sorrow he overcame the spectral and fell asleep" (12). It takes him similar emotional troubles as an adult to grasp the significance of acknowledging and expressing his feelings. As such, *Maurice* consistently yet diffusely demonstrates the indispensability of emotion self-awareness, which it disguises behind a gendered discourse of English manhood that superficially praises rationality and stoicism.

The ambiguous perception of emotion in *Maurice* could be read as an example of Butler's conceptualisation of the "masquerade" (*Gender Trouble* 63). Masquerade, she explains, suggests a paradoxical coexistence of two entities: superficially it constitutes the "appearance of being" (63), whereas more profoundly "masquerade suggests that there is a 'being' ... *prior to* the masquerade" itself (63), obscured behind it. Maurice's public masculinity is at the surface level of this "gender ontology" (64) and hence presents the masquerade itself. Behind this all resides his inner emotional life, which he, as I demonstrate

in this chapter, consistently tries to hide from the public view. Again during adulthood Maurice experiences several emotional crises, all triggered by homoerotic sentiments, but he stubbornly refuses to acknowledge the vital role of his emotions in providing him self-insight. And Maurice's emotional fury was vital: "Madness is not for everyone, but Maurice's proved the thunderbolt that dispels the clouds" (Forster 50). Despite the negative connotation of "madness," Maurice's emotions help him momentarily lift the burden of the "masquerade" (*Gender Trouble* 63) of heterosexual manhood that he holds up publicly. This emotional relief proves irrepressible, as Maurice cries on several occasions throughout the novel. He repeatedly loses himself in his grief for Clive yet fails to realise that the acceptance of his sorrow brings him, more than momentary relief, insights about his homosexual feelings as well as the workings of his emotions. Tears in *Maurice* thus demonstrate the indispensability of emotional expression and subvert the English social norms of the era that hold men in a grip of rationality and stoicism.

In this chapter, I argue that the display of tears in *Maurice* deconstructs the gender-based disapproval of emotion, embodied in the novel's internal negative discourse of emotionality. I demonstrate this through a close-reading analysis of Maurice's tears and emotions, as well as theories of crying and emotionality in relation to gender as theorised in scholarly literature. The chapter opens with a discussion of the construction of the rationality-as-power paradigm in the West during the period of Enlightenment (Ross-Smith and Kornberger 282). I then analyse the deconstruction of this paradigm through a close-reading of Maurice's primary emotional response to his homosexual feelings (Forster 50-51). This is followed by an analysis of Maurice's reaction to Clive's tears (91-92), which I use to further explicate Maurice's internalised phobia of overt emotional expression. Ultimately, I argue that Maurice's idealisation of masculine rationality and his phobia of vulnerable emotional expression are undermined by his own emotional behaviour. I do so by means of a close-

reading analysis of the three scenes in which Maurice's sheds tears in private emotional discourse with Clive (113), Dr Barry (138), and Mr Lasker Jones (162).

Emotionality and rationality have often been positioned as opposites in Western gender discourse. Whereas rationality is perceived as masculine and firm; emotionality as effeminate and fragile (Fivush and Buckner 234). However, this specific perception of emotion through tears as delicate and unmanly is not universally shared among cultures throughout history and across the world. The negative judgement of emotional behaviour is a relatively recent phenomenon that emerged in Europe over the course of the nineteenth century (Lutz 180). Before then, Europeans, like many cultures outside Europe, usually regarded tears as exemplary for heroic virility (180): Aristotle and Hippocrates appraise the cathartic function of crying (Lutz 117); Hindu and Jewish cultures emphasise the healing capacities of tears (118); and, in medieval Europe, religious practices such as confession were often bolstered by tears (119). This changes during the Enlightenment. Some thinkers, such as Goethe and Rousseau, argue that the expression, "through tears, [of] the strongest possible emotions" is heroic and emphatically masculine (180). Others, like Kant and Descartes, however, argue for the importance of "rationality and freedom, rather than ... feelings and inclinations" as distinctly human and hence praiseworthy (Kant 41; Ross-Smith and Kornberger 285). According to the latter interpretation, rationality is not only distinctly human but also essentially masculine (Ross-Smith and Kornberger 282). The public condescension of men's tears in *Maurice* is therefore anything but universally human and presents only a very narrow and time-bound European view of what manly emotional behaviour entails.

In a novel so heavily concerned with masculine appearance, men's tears present a striking motif that challenges the idealised image of masculinity exhibited in men's behaviour elsewhere throughout *Maurice*. Because Maurice regards tears and tender emotion as

unmanly weaknesses, he is highly conscious of his own emotional behaviour. The novel narrates his attempts to repress his tears or, when repression is not an option, at least account for them. Maurice's persisting negative view on emotionality is remarkable, since his view on homosexuality becomes increasingly tolerant. His first tears signal utter bewilderment and are accompanied by a fit of hysteria as he first becomes aware of his romantic feelings for Clive. While he accepts his homosexual feelings, he remains adamantly opposed to the exposure of men's vulnerable emotion, which he discusses in light of Clive's emotional outburst (Forster 92). Moreover, he only ventures to show emotion accompanied by tears in the presence of three men: Clive, Dr Barry, and Mr Lasker Jones. Crying is, as such, displayed as a highly personal and private affair in *Maurice*, a matter generally kept out of the public eye. Rather than confirming the conception of manliness as devoid of emotion, the persistent recurrence of Maurice's tears in spite of his constant emotional self-restrictions thus serves to highlight Maurice's struggle with the unstable nature of his own masculinity. Maurice's identity struggle as sparked by his emotional unrest will be the focal point of my analysis throughout the rest of the chapter.

Maurice's emotional development is striking in light of his preceding statements against men's overt expression of emotion. Crying is commonly perceived as a weakness in *Maurice*, because it does not fit the idealised Western notion of "masculine identity" (Jansz 166). Within the boundaries of this framework of masculinity, "men see themselves as independent and separate from others" (Fivush and Buckner 238). Unlike women, who traditionally tend to "define themselves in relation to other people" (238), men are supposed to assert control over their own lives "autonomously" (238), which should be achieved through stoicism (Jansz 168). Showing emotion is perceived to symbolise interdependence as well as a desire for connection (Nelson 24). It is therefore seen as a weakness that men should inhibit through a stoical control over their feelings by means of "restrictive emotionality"

(Jansz 166). Because rationality has increasingly been described as a masculine virtue in juxtaposition to a stereotypically feminised interpretation of emotional expression (Ross-Smith and Martin Kornberger 283), men's rational outer behaviour has increasingly limited in the display of their emotional inner lives over the last two centuries (Lutz 180). The constructed dualism between rationality and emotionality is thus intrinsically connected with masculine identity, as this dualism deals with gendered issues between men and women of power, independence, and control.

The dualism between rationality and emotionality is, in the case of *Maurice*, intrinsically connected with another fundamental factor in the construction of traditionally early-twentieth-century English manhood: sexuality. As well as emotion, Maurice represses his homosexuality, firstly because sodomy was prohibited under English law and secondly because it was considered as an obscenity. Unwilling to face his homosexual feelings and afraid that public display of tender emotion could harm his masculine identity, Maurice for a considerable time shows little regard for his feelings. His emotional repression proves disruptive, however, when he becomes aware of his romantic feelings for Clive:

He wept stifled in the sheets, he sprang about kissing, then struck his head against the wall and smashed the crockery. ... Lighting a candle, he looked with surprise at his torn pyjamas and trembling limbs. He continued to cry, for he could not stop, but the suicidal point had been passed, and, remaking the bed, he lay down. His gyp was cleaning away the ruins when he opened his eyes. (Forster 50)

Just like his long and stubborn denial of his homosexuality, Maurice's aggressive outburst exposes the fact that he is not "in touch with [his] feelings" (Lutz 179). This is a common impairment among men that often leads to violence (Fivush and Buckner 236). Since aggression is traditionally perceived as an exercise of strength and dominance, men tend to

resort to aggressive behaviour as an expression of their emotional grief (240). Lutz explains that “men are crippled by their social training, which has taught them that crying is a sign of weakness” (179). The disregard for emotional self-awareness poses serious problems later in men’s lives, Lutz continues: “Because men don’t cry, they are too aggressive, they don’t know how to be intimate or nurturing, they don’t know how to get in touch with their feelings” (179). Maurice’s aggression is therefore not an exercise of strength, but rather the emotional climax after years of denying his homosexuality. Maurice’s emotional aggressiveness forces him to acknowledge the undeniability of his homosexuality. Beholding the havoc he had created in his room, he realises that “[h]e loved men and always had loved them. He longed to embrace them and mingle his being with theirs. Now that the man [i.e., Clive] who returned his love had been lost, he admitted this” (Forster 50-51). Maurice’s aggressively emotional impotence thus subverts the construction of masculine power through rationality, stoicism, and aggression, seeing as this very aggression was the result of a lack of emotional self-knowledge. As long as Maurice refuses to acknowledge his homosexual feelings, he remains unable to understand and control his emotions.

Despite the central role of homosexuality in sparking Maurice’s emotional climax, Maurice’s distress during this emotional experience is not primarily caused by his awareness of his homosexuality, but rather the idea that other men detect his loss of emotional self-control. At the sensation of tears flowing down his cheeks, “He was horrified. A man crying! Fetherstonhaugh might hear him” (50). His dread that his fellow students should overhear him crying is rooted in the competitive school-environment in which Maurice was brought up. At Sunnington, Maurice had also “bullied others when they seemed unhappy or weak, not because he was cruel but because it was the proper thing to do” (15). Even though he had “made the important discovery that grown-up men behave politely to one another unless there is a reason for the contrary” (22), his fear that his emotional weakness might have cost him

part of his reputation at Cambridge painfully illustrates the stubbornness of Maurice's "social training" (Lutz 178). Accepting rather than denying his homosexuality, Maurice thus hopes to understand his feelings: "His first resolve was to be more careful in the future. ... He would not deceive himself so much. He would not – and this was the test – pretend to care about women when the only sex that attracted him was his own" (51). He decides to be honest and transparent about his homosexual feelings to himself, so that he is able to contain and control his emotions in public (Stadel et al. 702). Quite paradoxically, Maurice therefore intends to accept his homosexuality as part of his identity – albeit discreetly – in order to sustain the emotional inhibition that, according to the contemporary English social code, is perceived as inherently masculine.

Though acknowledging his homosexual desires and subsequently managing to find a renewed mental stability in Clive's reciprocation of his love, Maurice remains highly concerned with the maintenance of his masculine appearance by virtue of a stoical attitude. Since he only allows tears to flow during his crisis when he became aware of his homosexual feelings, he is convinced that Clive's tears after a sudden relapse of influenza must signal a deeper trouble: "A grown man doesn't cry," he states, "unless he's gone pretty far" (Forster 92). Maurice's statement illustrates the aforementioned deep roots of his gendered view on human behaviour with which he was brought up at school. His first impressions of Cambridge made him reconsider his views of the strict English gentlemanly behavioural norms that he had been taught at school. One of his most important observations was that "[p]eople turned out to be alive. Hitherto he had supposed that they *were* what he *pretended* to be – flat pieces of cardboard stamped with a conventional design" (23), but at Cambridge he realised "that they were human beings with feelings akin to his own" (23). In a way, Maurice thus saw that men not necessarily always "lace up ... their feelings" (Jansz 166). Although the explicit superficiality of Maurice's perception of men as "pieces of cardboard" is challenged when he

arrives at Cambridge, his concern for his own masculinely stoical appearance remains unchanged. This was due to his implicit awareness of his homosexual desires that he, though he never explicitly admitted its existence, crudely tried to suppress: "As soon as he thought about other people as real, Maurice became modest and conscious of sin: in all creation there could be no one as vile as himself. No wonder he pretended to be a piece of cardboard" (Forster 23). Maurice carefully conforms to the "conventional design" (23) of English manhood, even more so because he is aware of his sexual diversion from the heterosexual norm and fears public rejection if found out. Maurice's idealisation of emotional self-control in light of Clive's tears thus initially serves as a public confirmation of his manliness, but also demonstrates his hyperconscious adherence to the formation of manhood implemented at school.

Despite initially seeming a firm foundation for his emotional control, Maurice's ostensible emotional serenity in the presence of Clive's love soon collapses when Clive renounces his homosexuality and leaves Maurice. As with his first emotional outburst, Maurice sheds tears over Clive each time he is forced to face his homosexual feelings. Facing his own vulnerability in his misery with the same dread as before, Maurice's view on emotionality in relation to masculinity has remained unchanged. The relationship between Clive and Maurice had been essential to Maurice's emotional stability: "Love had caught [Clive] out of triviality and Maurice out of bewilderment in order that two imperfect souls might touch perfection" (85). Maurice and Clive understood each other and transparently shared their feelings with one another, whilst "they proceeded outwardly like other men" (85). What Maurice and Clive share intimately in their private identities, they disguise behind a veil of conventional masculinity in their public identities. Maurice's freedom to express his private identity proves precarious, however, when Clive abandons Maurice to pursue heterosexuality (Forster 103-105). As Clive leaves, Maurice grieves the absoluteness of his

loss: “‘What an ending,’ he sobbed, ‘what an ending’” (113). More than merely his lover and companion, Maurice loses the only person to whom he can safely display his most private feelings. Alone again, he faces the reality of the stoical appearance he is required to take on publicly in order to meet the aforementioned “conventional design” taught at school (23). Living up to the conventions of English manhood proved burdensome, however, due to Maurice’s increasing loneliness: “One cannot write those words too often; Maurice’s loneliness: it increased” (124). Having grown used to Clive’s love and his uninhibited expression of homosexual desire, dealing with his heartache alone becomes unbearable. Despite the “severe self-discipline” that he practises to tuck away his feelings since Clive’s absence (124), Maurice realises that he is unable to deal with his sorrow alone. That Maurice eventually even consults Dr Barry and the hypnotism of Mr Lasker Jones indicates Maurice’s sheer hopelessness. Opening up about homosexuality and hence putting himself in a vulnerable position, Maurice not only deviates from the masculine conventions of emotional autonomy, but also risks persecution after his confessions due to the legal denunciation of homosexuality at the time in England.

The tears that Maurice sheds in the presence of Dr Barry and Mr Lasker Jones testify to the loneliness that he had to endure in his discrete and solitary sorrow over Clive. The English societal disapproval of homosexuality, that was previously obscured by Clive’s company, now suddenly became the harsh reality with which Maurice had to cope. With Dr Barry, Maurice bemoans the agonising humiliation that was enforced upon him because of his homosexuality: “Maurice tried to speak and failed, poured out some water, failed again, and broke into a fit of sobbing. ... He wept at the hideousness into which he had been forced, he who had meant to tell no one but Clive” (137). In his companionship with Clive, Maurice had found a unique situation wherein their “two imperfect souls might touch perfection” (85). Clive had enabled him to accept and embrace his homosexual nature without unease. Having

to verbalise his homosexual nature to Dr Barry therefore vexed him, because it had turned into an involuntary confession: “He loathed the idea of a doctor, but had failed to kill lust single-handed. ... He might ‘keep away from young men,’ as he had naïvely resolved, but he could not keep away from their images, and hourly committed sin in his heart” (135). The irrepressibility of his homosexual desires forced him to seek medical assistance. In speaking out to Dr Barry, Maurice thus became extremely vulnerable, both in light of the illegal status of homosexuality in England and the considerable harm to his masculine reputation this meant in the eyes of Dr Barry.

With Mr Lasker Jones, Maurice is better able to control his emotions, because he had written his confession down and given it to Mr Lasker Jones to read so that he did not have to physically confess (159-60). Under hypnosis, however, Maurice’s tears well up again as he envisages his attraction to men: “‘She doesn’t attract me,’ said Maurice pettishly. ... ‘I like short hair best.’ ‘Why?’ [Mr Lasker Jones asked.] ‘Because I can stroke it –’ and he began to cry” (Forster 162). As with Dr Barry, Maurice faces the unrelenting reality of his homosexual feelings during his consultation with Mr Lasker Jones. Maurice’s candour in his speech is corroborated even further due to the fact that he made these statements whilst in trance. After he had begun to cry, “[h]e came to himself in the chair. Tears were wet on his cheeks, but he felt as usual, and started talking at once. ... [H]e had quite forgotten” (162). The hypnosis had lifted off all veils of masculine stoicism and revealed Maurice’s truest feelings, even if he could not remember that he had admitted them.

In confronting Maurice with the irrepressibility of his homosexual feelings, tears in *Maurice* expose and challenge the English idealisation of manliness through heterosexuality and restrictive emotionality. Anne Hartree argues that, since Forster shaped Maurice’s appearance as that of the quintessential Englishman, “[h]is struggle to formulate his identity as a homosexual is thus also the struggle to renegotiate the terms of his construction as an

Englishman" (129). With regards to the tenacity of Maurice's emotions, it becomes clear that Maurice could never genuinely renounce his homosexuality in order to conform to the conventions of "dominant Englishness" (Hartree 133). The adamant English disapproval of homosexuality is lucidly exhibited in Dr Barry's reaction to Maurice's confession. Though sympathetic to his tears, Dr Barry refuses all forms of involvement in Maurice's struggle with his sexuality: "Who put that lie into your head? You whom I see and know to be a decent fellow! We'll never mention it again. ... The worst thing I could do for you is to discuss it" (Forster 138). Dr Barry plainly discards Maurice's truth as a "lie" (138) because homosexuality does not fit his image of Maurice's respectable manhood. Mr Lasker Jones, by contrast, reacts rather calmly to Maurice's confession (188). An American himself, Mr Lasker Jones reflects on the English attitude towards views upon decency and moral codes and remarks that "England has always been disinclined to accept human nature" (188). In the English rejection of "human nature" (188), Mr Lasker Jones rejects the nature of the aforementioned English social "conventional design" that Maurice had noticed at school (23). Mr Lasker Jones not only refutes the condemnation of homosexual acts under English law, but also the rigid English attitude towards emotionality. Realising that the English social objection to homosexuality merely exposes the inhumane rigidity of the English moral code, Maurice "was not afraid or ashamed anymore" (190). Though Maurice still dismisses emotional vulnerability, Mr Lasker Jones's observations help him see through the unattainability of the English moral code.

Considering the consistent recurrence of Maurice's tears at times when he is overwhelmed by feelings that he otherwise suppresses, Maurice's emotional life subverts the English contemporaneous conception of masculinity as unemotional. In this way, Maurice's emotional behaviour incontrovertibly subverts his belief that "[a] grown man doesn't cry" (92). With each emotional outburst, Maurice becomes more aware of his feelings and more

capable of dealing with his feelings appropriately. It is therefore remarkable that Maurice maintains a negative view towards emotion throughout the novel, since this attests to his failure to see that he is only able to understand feelings that he had previously suppressed once he allows himself to express and experience emotions that he perceives as vulnerable. Though Maurice does not recognise this himself, the irrepressibility of his emotions as manifested in his recurrent outbursts in tears shows that emotions, both strong and vulnerable, are endemic to human nature, and indispensable in order to understand why we experience specific emotions in specific contexts.

## Conclusion

The similarities between Maurice's rejection of emotion and the emotional censorship that men deal with today demonstrates that emotionality is and has long been linked to gendered notions of weakness and femininity. Through its deliberate focus on "homosexual masculinity" (Booth 182), *Maurice* constantly questions the validity of the exclusionary English interpretation of manhood by pointing at its harmful effects on Maurice's mental health. That the novel criticises the moral disapproval and legal denunciation of homosexuality in England is obvious both from the plot itself and Forster's dedication of the novel "to a Happier Year" (Forster 2). As I have sought to demonstrate in my argument, however, the novel not only challenges heteronormativity but also hegemonic masculinity. Maurice's understanding of English manhood as surpassing emotional weakness is subverted, ironically, by the repeated flowing of his own tears. His and Clive's tears demonstrate that emotion is endemic to humanhood, regardless of either sex or sexuality.

In a supplementary note written in 1960, 46 years after *Maurice*'s completion, Forster observes "a change in the public attitude ... from ignorance and terror to familiarity and contempt" (Terminal Note 224). Homosexuality was becoming, if not celebrated, at least increasingly tolerated. Unlike homosexuality, however, gender queerness often remains a cause for awkwardness and discomfort to the present day (Westbrook and Schilt 34). I would not like to argue that *Maurice* recounts a story inherently symbolic of gender fluidity, seeing as the novel presents Maurice and Clive specifically and solely as men. It does, however, raise questions about why we have certain social images of men and women and it challenges the grounds for the "effortful performance" (Janes 363) imposed on men to adhere to this image. *Maurice*'s tears thus also hold a mirror up the contemporary audience about their own conception of emotionality, which is usually still considerably gendered (Fivush and Buckner 233). Reading the novel in this light gives it an added value that has up to now remained

largely unaddressed and which, I hope, will some time be looked into in further depth than I have been able to reach in this thesis.

This thesis has been necessarily subjected to a number of limitations due to its limited scope. I have mainly focussed on Maurice's and Clive's tears during their adult lives, while the novel also includes a number of scenes about homosexual desire and emotion during Maurice's childhood and adolescence. Maurice's sentiments and emotions were, in particular, sparked by a certain man-servant at home, George, who, after his resignation (Forster 12, 14), kept returning in his (day)dreams at school (16). Scenes of Maurice's emotionality prior to adulthood could be looked into in further detail, especially to compare the perception of tears in relation to boyhood and manhood.

The value and indispensability of men's emotional lives have been recognised only relatively recently, but the example of *Maurice* demonstrates that this problem has long been part of our cultural formation of manhood. The novel shows that issues of gender and emotional expression are valid yet seriously suppressed, and later research has only corroborated what the novel suggests: we will never be able to understand and maturely deal with our emotions if we suppress those emotions that we consider vulnerable (Quoidbach et al. 2064). As of yet, psychological research has opted for teaching children the benefits of "emodiversity," in which a healthy balance between positive and negative emotions constitutes a fundamental basis for both mental as well as physical health during adulthood (Gruber and Borelli, "Fostering Emotional Diversity"). Hopefully, seeing as this more inclusive approach to emotionality should no longer restrict boys' understanding of masculinity within rigid categories of toughness and dominance, later generations will be more confident with their emotions than Maurice. As such, this study might contribute to a better understanding of the damaging impact of men's emotional silence, in order to help foster emotional health.

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