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Has the representation of masculinity and homosocial bonds changed since E.M. Forster wrote *Maurice*?:

A comparison between Forster's novel and Jim Grimsley's *Dream Boy*

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Abstract

This essay provides some insight into how the representation of masculinity, homosocial bonds and homosexuality in two novels has changed during the last century. The essay analyzes the novels, *Maurice* (E.M Forster) and *Dream Boy* (Jim Grimsley). The main focus lies on how *Maurice* and *Dream Boy* handle certain topics; social behavior in private and public among the male protagonists and the role of the father figure. The essay points out similarities and differences between how each topic is being handled in the respective novels. The main theoretical concept focuses on masculinity, homosocial bonds and the perception of homosexuality and how it is constructed in the two novels. The representations of masculinity seem to change over time only to take the same shape as before. The same kinds of masculinities are represented in both *Maurice* and *Dream Boy*. The fact that young men have learned that their bodies can be used as instruments of power makes it difficult for them to allow intimacy within homophobic cultures which might threaten their male identities and therefore influence the way their homosocial bonds.

Key words: Homosocial bonds, homosexuality, E.M Forster, Jim Grimsley, masculinity

1. Introduction

While out teaching teenagers you not only notice their intellectual abilities but also their social characteristics. You learn how young men and women interact and you see the different social rules that they abide by. I have, during my short periods out in different schools, noticed that girls and boys interact differently and that a major difference lies within the area of physical contact. You often see girls holding hands, hugging each other or playing with each other's hair, but you almost never see this among the boys. I came to wonder why physical contact is so important between girls and not between boys, for surely, regardless of gender, we all need closeness in our daily lives. In addition I asked myself has it always been like this or have the rules for male interaction changed over time and if so, why?

To seek an answer I started reading E.M. Forster's novel *Maurice* which was written during the early 20th century and presents male friendship and male love in Forster's contemporary England. I noticed a big difference in how men, during Forster's era compared to today, socialized and interacted with each other. To be able to see a possible change in the perception and presentation of homosocial bonds I also read Jim Grimsley's novel *Dream Boy*, written in 1995, which presents the same topics as *Maurice* but in a different time, namely the 1980s and thus is almost contemporary with the society in which Grimsley wrote the novel. In these novels, it is clear that society's attitude towards homosexuality and homosocial bonds influences the young men within their relationships.

This essay will provide some insight into the changes within masculinity, homosocial bonds and homosexuality, but the main focus will be on how *Maurice* and *Dream Boy* handle certain topics that I believe might present an answer to my questions about male interaction. The chosen topics are social behavior in private and in public among the male protagonists and the

role of the father. I will point out similarities and differences between how each topic has been handled in the respective novels and discuss the comparison with emphasis on the question how the representations of masculinity and homosocial bonds has changed since E.M. Forster wrote *Maurice*.

1.1 Method

I will begin with a brief summary of the main points of interest in the novels for this essay. Then, as I described in the introduction I will analyze how the two novels handle social behavior in private and in public between the male protagonists, and the role of the father. I will point out similarities and differences between how each topic is handled in the respective novels and discuss how the topics are portrayed in each novel. My main theoretical concepts will focus on masculinity, homosocial bonds and the perception of homosexuality and how it is constructed in the two novels.

1.2 Secondary literature selections

The secondary literature used in this essay is mostly based on masculinity studies, literature about homosexuality and homosocial bonds but also literature about the role of the father and child development. The main authors behind the literature are R.W Connell, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Victor J Seidler. All of these scholars work within masculinity studies. They share the idea that masculinity is structures of complex gender relations, in which dominant, subordinated and marginalized masculinities are in constant interaction, are in continuous change and that masculinity only exists in the context of a whole structure of gender relations.

2. A short summary of the authors behind the novels and the novels

2.1 E.M Forster

E.M. Forster finished writing *Maurice* in 1914 but did not reveal the manuscript, not even to his friends, until one year after his death in 1971. According to David Leavitt, “*Maurice*” Forster had many reasons for not revealing his script, the main one was the public view on homosexuality and since *Maurice* did not end in the way that other contemporary homosexual novels used to end “with one lad dangling from a noose or with a suicide pact” (xii) *Maurice* would have made Forster very vulnerable in the England of 1914 (xii). Forster himself was a popular author but his readers did not know that he was homosexual and he was afraid of the critical reaction that he feared a publication of *Maurice* would bring.

2.1.1 Maurice

Maurice is a quite beautiful young man who is raised by his mother and two sisters in a privileged middle class home in the southern suburbs of London. He leaves for Cambridge at the age of nineteen to fulfill his father’s dream of the perfect education. Maurice’s father did not live to be there for Maurice during his life’s adventures.

At Cambridge, Maurice meets Clive Durham who is a member of the English landed gentry. Clive’s family estate Penge is slowly decaying away and it’s only hope of survival lies on Clive’s shoulders. Clive sees himself as a kind of rebel. He refuses to attend church and is fully absorbed in the old Greeks. When Maurice and Clive meet they form a very close and intimate friendship but after Clive has declared his love for Maurice, Maurice finds his own feelings for Clive changed in a way that scares him. Homosexuality is not legal in Maurice’s (or Forster’s) contemporary England and the two men have to hide their love from their friends and loved ones.

When Clive travels to Greece to learn about the Greek culture he changes and reveals to Maurice that he is no longer in love with him or any man for that matter. He declares that he is no longer gay. This, of course, turns Maurice's whole world upside down. He not only loses his lover but also his best friend. After many attempts to turn straight, Maurice accepts his destiny and finds a new love in the gamekeeper Alec Scudder. After their first night together, Maurice panics and because of his treatment of Alec, Alec also becomes afraid and pretends that he wants to blackmail Maurice. During a meeting at a museum they find out that they are in love with each other and together they disappear into the woods. The three protagonists all represent different types of personalities; Clive is the dominant and confident type of man who is born within the English gentry, Maurice is more sensitive and docile while Alec is handsome, fit and also from a lower class than the other two. The story represents problems that can be associated with being a homosexual man in a time when homosexual love was not very common. The reader follows Maurice's journey through life, love and friendship.

2.2 Jim Grimsley

The comparison novel in this essay, *Dream Boy*, was written by Jim Grimsley who is a well-known playwright and fiction writer and, according to glbtq (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Culture) "had by the end of the twentieth century established himself as a central voice in an exploding, Southern, gay literary renaissance ...". *Dream Boy*, according to glbtq, received the American Library Association's Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Book Award for Literature in 1996.

2.2.1 Dream Boy

Dream Boy illustrates a relationship between two young men in a small rural town in the American south during the 1980s. Nathan and his parents move to a remote farm house a few

kilometers outside of town. There is only one close neighbor, the Connelly family, whose son Roy turns out to be Nathan's first love and friend. Sometimes Roy lets Nathan join his group in school and at night the two young men spend time alone in the woods. The friendship between Roy and Nathan soon develops into a secret sexual relationship and Roy, without him knowing it, is Nathan's protection from an abusive father. When Nathan's father drinks too much he sometimes finds his way into Nathan's room at night. To minimize his time at home he joins Roy and his two friends on a camping trip but after one of the other young men discovers Roy and Nathan having sex, Nathan has reasons to fear for his life. The two young men represent two kinds of personalities, the timid and sensitive man who is in contact with his feelings (Nathan) and the tough and insensitive man who does not want or is afraid to show his feelings (Roy).

Dream Boy deals with problems in young homosexual love and the fear of being caught by religious families and friends. But it also portrays a damaged boy who lacks the role of a healthy father figure in his life. Even though *Maurice* was written and presents the perception of homosexual love almost hundred years earlier than *Dream Boy* you can still see some similarities between the novels in their themes – young homosexual love, the ongoing fear of being caught by the rest of the world and the absence of a healthy father figure – even if these similarities are not portrayed in the same way.

3. Discussion and analysis

This chapter includes discussions and analyses of homosexuality and homosocial bonds and how it is dealt with in the two novels contrasted to research and other facts about these topics. The main features that are discussed are masculinity, homosocial bonds, homosexuality, social behavior in private and in public and the father figure.

3.1 Masculinity

This section will provide the reader with some insight into the history of masculinity; how masculinity was perceived by society during the early 1900: s and how it is perceived by today's society. I will discuss the concept of masculinity and compare it with the presentations of masculinity in Forster's and Grimsley's novels.

According to R.W Connell the history of masculinity is not linear and there is no simple shift from traditional masculinity to modern masculinity (*Masculinities*). The structures of complex gender relations, in which dominant, subordinated and marginalized masculinities are in constant interaction, are in continuous change and masculinity only exists in the context of a whole structure of gender relations (185). Furthermore Connell argues that masculinity came into existence at specific times and places and is always subject to change (190).

Gentry-masculinity is very present in Forster's novel, Connell claims that gentry masculinity was emphatic and violent and involved domestic authority over women (190)¹. The social boundary was marked by the code of honour and homosexual relationships were understood as defining a specific type of men (190). This is evident in *Maurice* since Clive is part of the gentry and does not behave in the way he is supposed to according to his mother and friends. He does not attend church, he does not wish for a wife or a family and his mother is worried that her son's way of life will not live up to the requirements of a man in his position. Her concerns might be because of a fear that her son might be homosexual and risk legal penalties, but also on worries that their family name will not be carried on.

¹ "Gentry" refers to people of good social position connected to landed estates including various ranks of nobility, clerical upper crust and "gentle" families of long descent who never obtained official right to bear a coat of arms. In England the term often refers to the social class of the landed aristocracy or to the minor aristocracy whose income derives from their large landholdings.

When Connell writes about the hereditary landowners, i.e. the gentry, he says that they dominated the North Atlantic world in the eighteenth century and represented normative Western masculinity at this time (190). This might be why Clive decides to ignore his feelings for Maurice, there are too many expectations on him from his family and the surrounding society. He needs to step up and be the man that he is supposed to be and was born to be. Since Maurice is not gentry he does not have the same kind of expectations on him.

Connell claims that the landowning gentry's declining economic and political power both contributed to the changing gender order but men who died in duels were still the definition of masculine men (192). Neither Maurice (nor Nathan) can be described as men who would die in a duel and they would not be considered masculine against this standard. Additionally Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity in the metropole became more rationalized and the symbolic, violent, masculinity was pushed out to the colonies (194).

In addition to Connell's history of "early" masculinity, Seidler writes that "modern masculinity" began in the 1950s with the images of a body builder named Charles Atlas (7).² Atlas campaigns had "a sense that "real men" do not have "puny" bodies; nor are they "softies" or "wimps" who show their vulnerability and emotions to others" (7). This image of masculinity was spread to young men around the western world and they tried to live up to this image and to the heroic young men they read about in different adventure stories (7). Seidler argues that these images were not questioned until the advent of the women's movement and the gay liberation in the 1970s (7). This image of masculinity is present in Roy

² Charles Atlas was the developer of a bodybuilding method and its associated exercise program that was best known for a landmark advertising campaign featuring Atlas's name and likeness; it has been described as one of the longest-lasting and most memorable ad campaigns of all time.

in *Dream Boy* and Alec in *Maurice*, especially Roy, the hardworking and brave young man who lives next door to Nathan. The narrator describes it like this "...Nathan watches Roy moving from barn to shed. Shirt unbuttoned, sleeves rolled above his elbows, flesh bright as if the glow from a bonfire is radiating outward through his torso and limbs." (11). It is clear that Roy is the perfect image of a man and Roy is instantly attracted to him.

According to Seidler many young men learn that they are the superior sex and that they have to behave in an independent and self-sufficient way, and that thus emotions are signs of weakness (70). This is true in the case of Roy, he is afraid to show his feelings not only towards Nathan but also towards his friends, and even to himself since he never talks about Nathan with his friends or recognizes Nathan as his lover.

When it comes to the presentations of masculinity in the novels there are some other similarities. Connell's argument that masculinity is in constant change becomes visible in these two novels since the protagonists represent the same kinds of masculinities but during different times. Nathan and Maurice are in some ways very similar. They are both sensitive and a bit shy and rely on their relationships and partners. They seek their partner's attention and they want them to approve of their actions and thoughts. Also Roy and the gamekeeper Alec are similar. They are both attractive, hard working men who are hard and tough. They do not show their feelings in the same way as Nathan and Maurice. Alec and Roy are a lot more physical and brave when it comes to relationships. The represented masculinities have changed over time but the same kinds of men are found in Grimsley's novel as in Forster's. The representations of masculinity have changed but the men are still the same. It seems like masculinity is not the same on the surface but deep inside the men are the same in 1980 as they were in the early 1900s. Despite the passing of almost 80 years between these two

representations of masculinity you can still see the same kind of men in both novels. It is only the conditions in the societies in which they live that have changed.

3.2 Homosocial bonds and homosexuality

This part of the chapter will define homosocial bonds and give some insight into the history of homosexuality. Furthermore it will discuss homosocial bonds in relation to homosexuality and parts of the novels will be analyzed and discussed in terms of secondary literature about masculinity.

A researcher that has studied homosocial bonds and homosexuality is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her work *Between Men – English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. “Homosocial” is a neologism formed by analogy with “homosexual” but at the same time meant to be distinguished from “homosexual”. “Homosocial” describes social bonds between persons of the same sex. Sedgwick describes a continuum between homosocial and homosexuality which, for men, in our society is very difficult to understand. She does not mean that homosexual desire is the root of other forms of male homosociality; the continuum is only a strategy for marking the structure of men’s relations with other men (1-3).

Sedgwick means that gender differences in the structure and constitution of sexuality is a consequence in a society where men and women differ in their access to power. According to Sedgwick the diacritical opposition between the “homosocial” and the “homosexual” seems less thorough and dichotomous for women than for men (2). Sedgwick writes in *The Masculinity Studies Reader* that the continuum of male homosocial bonds in England and America has been structured by a secularized and psychologized homophobia since the eighteenth century (159). This might be the reason why the protagonists in the two novels act

differently towards each other in public than in private. They are afraid to be placed too close to “homosexual” in Sedgwick’s continuum.

When it comes to the history of homosexuality it is evident that it has always existed but has not always been recognized. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy the later part of the 12th through the 14th centuries, saw a sharp rise in intolerance towards homosexual sex. The Catholic Church started to use the idea that “nature” should set the standard of morality, and therefore forbade homosexual sex. For the next several centuries in Europe, the laws against homosexual sex were very tough in their penalties. However, in the 19th century there was a significant decline in the legal penalties for sodomy and the Napoleonic code decriminalized sodomy. Forster writes about this code in *Maurice*; Maurice’s biggest fear is to be caught by the authorities and after accepting that he is homosexual he asks a hypnotist “And what’s to happen to me?” (187) and the hypnotist answers “I’m afraid I can only advise you to live in some country that has adopted the Code Napoleon ... France or Italy, for instance. There homosexuality is no longer criminal.” (188). It is evident that Maurice is afraid and seeks an answer on how to live his life the way he wishes.

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy sexual roles were redefined in the 20th century and sex before marriage slowly became more common and eventually acceptable. When society slowly began to accept sex for the sake of pleasure, it became more difficult to argue against homosexual sex. These trends were especially strong in the 1960's, and it was in this context that the gay liberation movement started.

Sedgwick argues that most Victorians “neither named nor recognized a syndrome of male homosexuality as our society thinks of it” (174). The behavior existed in Forster’s day but

society's reaction was to suppress it, perhaps since homosexuality was illegal and could lead to jail and social ostracism. When Forster wrote *Maurice* the idea of homosexuality did exist but not in the same way as it did during the 1990s when *Dream Boy* was written. Homosexual love was illegal during the time *Maurice* was written and Forster took a risk in writing about homosexual love. A good example of this fear in *Maurice* when Maurice is about to leave for public school and one of his teachers, Mr Ducie asks to talk to him in private since he wants to have a "good talk" (6) with Maurice. Mr Ducie kindly approaches "the mystery of sex" (8), he tells Maurice that "To love a noble woman, to protect and serve her ... [is] the crown of life... It all hangs together – all – and God's in his heaven, All's right with the world. Male and female!" (10). This statement shows the expectations on young boys in the society in which Forster wrote his novel. It was evident that men should be with women.

Another excerpt that also shows the absurdity of the idea that any of your male friends would be homosexual is when Maurice at one point seeks medical help for his condition as "an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort" (138). To the family-doctor this seems unthinkable "Now listen to me, Maurice, never let that evil hallucination, that temptation from the devil, occur to you again." (138). He does not try to understand Maurice and refuses to listen to him. This is clear when he says "Who put that lie in to your head? You whom I see and know to be a decent fellow! We'll never mention it again." (138). The doctor chooses not to believe Maurice, and he wishes never to talk about this subject again, his fear is evident and he chooses to look the other way instead of helping his friend.

According to Seidler, sharing thoughts and feelings became, at one point, unmanly and that young men learned that their bodies can be used as instruments of power which makes it difficult to allow intimacy within homophobic cultures, since such intimacy would threaten

their male identities (73). Maurice and Clive did try to prove to one another who was the better man, but in a different way, they competed in sharing their inner thoughts, their beliefs. This was not considered to be unmanly and therefore not considered homosexual. On the other hand, Nathan and Roy lived in another time when men were afraid to show feelings towards each other since they were afraid to be seen as less masculine and as homosexual.

Homosexuality is recognized today but the fear of being seen as a homosexual has changed. It is no longer illegal and in many cultures accepted. My belief is that the view on men and male friendships has changed a lot since the fear of being seen as a homosexual came into the picture. After reading *Maurice* and *Dream Boy* it became clear to me that men behaved differently towards each other before homosexuality became a recognized concept in society. Even if homosexuality was a known concept when *Maurice* was written, it seems as if people in general chose to look the other way. This might depend on the fear of legal penalties or the fact that the idea that any of your friends would be homosexual was considered absurd. The fear itself has changed from a fear of legal penalties to a fear of being seen as less masculine.

3.3 Social behavior in private

While reading the two novels I noticed a big difference in how the protagonists' private behavior was presented. Physical contact plays a big role in both novels but is portrayed in different ways and is far more striking in Grimsley's novel than in Forster's.

When reading *Maurice* it becomes evident that the view on sex in Forster's contemporary society's was a lot more restrained than what we are used to in today's society. Seidler argues that in Christian traditions "love can only be 'pure' if it is untainted by sexuality..." and that the Catholic identification of the body with, as Seidler puts it, "sins of the flesh" creates a

discomfort about physical contact (73). In addition, Seidler means that within Catholic cultures there is a big difference between sexuality and spirituality which means that sex can never be seen as an expression of love (74). This Catholic view on sex and physical contact is obvious in *Maurice* when Maurice and Clive share tender moments. When, for example, Clive expresses his love for Maurice “Maurice, I love you. (63) “I you. They kissed, scarcely wishing it.” (63) they never take their intimacy to the next level, they kiss and embrace. Maurice and Clive share in a way a much deeper connection since they share thoughts and dreams in a way that you only see between really good friends. After Clive has acknowledged his true feelings for Maurice and Maurice after a while realizes that he, as the narrator writes, has “always been like the Greeks” (54) they act more like a couple than friends when in private but the change is insignificant. The only difference is that they sometimes kiss or sleep in the same bed but it is not obvious if they actually have sex. Perhaps Seidler’s argument that sex should never be seen as an expression of love in Catholic cultures has influenced Forster while writing *Maurice*.

While Maurice’s and Clive’s interaction is, today, perceived as very subtle and discrete, and even tender, Nathan’s and Roy’s private moments might seem a bit intense, aggressive and even brutal in some ways. Seidler talks about young men that are exposed to domestic violence (as is the case with Nathan). He argues that these boys might have a difficult time to develop open and tolerant relationships with their bodily emotions and desires (74). Connell argues that it can be hard for abused children to separate intimacy from sexual pleasure (74). In the case of Nathan and Roy and their physical contact in private, Seidler’s arguments make sense since the two young men act out their urges in a very exposed and intimate way, for example, when the narrator writes about their intimate moments; “He can smell Roy’s body, he can taste it with the tip of his tongue. ... Nathan knows the nakedness Roy wants, and soon

achieves it. Roy arches with his body toward Nathan, a curve of yearning.” (42) Or even more explicitly; “They have abandoned most of their clothes and Roy is lost in the sensation of Nathan. Nathan has been kissing Roy’s cock with his mouth but then rises over it and presses it against his buttocks. Roy groans in surprise as Nathan guides him inside and they finish in violence, straining and sour” (73-74). The way in which Nathan and Roy share intimate moments is very exposed and in my opinion rather brutal for two young men. Seidler’s argument that it can be hard for boys that have been exposed to domestic violence to recognize their true feelings and perhaps confuse love with physical attraction does fit in the case of Nathan.

3.4 Social behavior in public

When it comes to the perception of social behavior in public in the two novels there is an important difference. Maurice and Clive behave similarly in public and in private while Nathan’s and Roy’s behavior in public is very different from their behavior in private.

Sedgwick argues in *Between Men* that most men in public schools (Maurice went to Cambridge) often act out physically. She argues that friendship is passion and that most men in these schools would have seen or engaged in a variety of intimate activities among males (176). This can be seen in *Maurice*, for example, when the narrator writes, “They walked arm in arm or arm around shoulder now. When they sat it was nearly always in the same position – Maurice in a chair, and Durham at his feet, leaning against him. In the world of their friends this attracted no notice. Maurice would stroke Durham’s hair.” (37). This way of interacting among men was evidently common in Forster’s contemporary England. There is no significant difference in how Maurice and Clive behave socially in public and in private. They are quite affectionate towards each other in public as well in private.

Sedgwick argues that most Victorians “neither named nor recognized a syndrome of male homosexuality as our society thinks of it” (174). She claims that sexual acts in this range were put under moral and psychological headings (174). Not even Maurice’s mother suspects that Maurice and Clive are lovers even when Maurice kisses Clive in front of her when he is afraid that he has fainted. However, he says, “Mother, you needn’t tell the others I kissed Durham ... As you know, we are great friends ...” (91). She answers “Oh, certainly not” (91). It does not occur to her that her son could be homosexual and she appreciates having a secret with her son “She liked to have little secrets with her son; it reminded her of the time when she had been so much to him.”(91). This might be a reason why Maurice and Clive are able to act like lovers in public as well as in private, the public eye did not see them as male lovers only really good friends. Another reason might be that the public eye did not want to see homosexuality in society. There is a chance that Maurice’s mother knows about her son being homosexual but since it is illegal she pretends not to know.

In contrast to Maurice’s and Clive’s rather physical social behavior in public Nathan and Roy are very platonic when in public. Seidler argues that within Catholic cultures, sex has for a long time been identified with reproduction, that is couples should only have sex on order to conceive children (28). Further Seidler stresses that this way of considering sex often makes it difficult for young people to speak about sex openly, in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships (28), and that negative attitudes toward sexuality make sex shameful (29). It is evident that Roy worries that their intimate relationship will be discovered and he fears contempt from society, mostly from church, friends and his parents. This fear becomes very apparent after Nathan and Roy are first intimate, and Roy says “”When we do this, you can’t tell your parents” (28) and “”You can’t tell your friends either. This is a secret.” (29). He

continues “I’m not your boyfriend ... I don’t need to do this if I don’t want to” (29). This comment shows Roy’s fear of being caught and the narrator observes that Roy “will treat Nathan as he pleases ... In the daylight Nathan will be invisible.” (32). Roy always makes sure that Nathan knows his place and he never shows any affection towards Nathan when they are in public. For instance, when they go swimming and wait for their friends to arrive “Roy throws his arm over Nathan’s shoulder ... but removes it when the figures on the railroad trestle become more distinct.” (63). Nathan responds to Roy’s distance with sadness but also with interest. The narrator writes, “It is as if the fact that he knows he must conceal his interest in their bodies makes that interest all the greater, all the harder to hide.” (64).

Additionally Seidler writes that the forbidden nature of sex can add to its excitement and it can limit the possibility for young people of taking time to reflect over sexual desires (29). This interest becomes stronger and at the end of the novel. Roy can no longer hide his feelings towards Nathan. The excitement that Seidler talks about hits Roy and Nathan when the two go camping with two of Roy’s friends, Randy and Burke. When they are in an abandoned house Roy loses his control: “They are standing together and Roy’s hands are insisting, his body is insisting. His mouth crawls along Nathan’s face and Nathan is tempted, for the first time, to push him away. There are eyes watching from all sides.” (163). Roy “kneels in front of Nathan” (163) and “The touch burns through all Nathan’s nerves” (163). This is the first time that the two boys disregard the risk of being caught and the narrator says that “when the flashlight finds them, Roy is still kneeling in front of Nathan, and Nathan’s pants are tangled at his ankles.”(164). Burke and Randy watch the two lovers with disgust and Burke shows his contempt with a voice full of bitterness when he says “This is what you guys do ... Looks like Roy sucks dick pretty good.” (164), Roy runs out of the house and leaves Nathan to face Burke’s “uncontrollable fury” (173). This scene proves Roy’s fear of being seen as a

homosexual and therefore less of a man. He is afraid of the reaction of his parents' and the church's.

It is evident that the fear of being seen as a homosexual is a lot more present in *Dream Boy* than in *Maurice* which, I believe is one of the main reasons why the social behavior in public within the two couples is that different.

3.5 The father figure

The presence of a healthy father figure does not exist in either *Maurice* or *Dream Boy*.

Maurice's father dies before he has a chance to guide Maurice into adulthood and Nathan's father has severe problems with alcohol and during his worst periods he sometimes sexually abuses Nathan.

Nina Chen discusses in her article *The Impact of Father Absence* the importance of a healthy father figure. She claims that warm and affectionate fathers not only can help their children develop positive self-esteem, but also influence the development of their children's gender role behavior. Chen further argues that fathers are significant for both boys and girls. For example, boys can learn from their fathers about growing up as a male, male interests, activities, and social behavior. Additionally Chen writes that research on father-child involvement shows that fathers are important for children and that the way fathers play with children is different from mothers and therefore important to their children. Also Daniel Sieber stresses the importance of a present father since, according to Sieber, fathers promote a sense of security in children differently than mothers, particularly through their play with children (334). In *Dream Boy* it becomes clear that Nathan misses the man his father was before he became an alcoholic. The narrator observes Nathan's memories of his father;

Once there was a younger Dad, of firm flesh and clear skin, a Dad who could look Nathan in the eye when they talked, who could drink whiskey on the weekends and stay sober through the week, who could play ball with Nathan in the yard. Once there was a Dad without a soft belly hanging over his belt, without the slackness of this one's jaw or the broken veins in his cheeks and nose, a Dad whose eyes were not yellow-ringed-with-red. Once there was a man who could kiss Mom on the cheek with a clear heart, who could pick up Nathan in strong arms and toss him toward the ceiling like a toy. That other Dad remains, somewhere; but not here inside this pale body huddled over its gilt-edged Bible. (46)

These moments together, their playful moments are the parts that Nathan misses the most about his father. As Chen writes, warm and affectionate fathers can help their children develop positive self-esteem. Perhaps Nathan would be a lot more self-confident if he could have his "old" father back. Today, Nathan is terrified of his father and the only time that Nathan needs to spend time with his father is during dinner and he can only be safe, as the narrator observes "if he keeps his eyes lowered, if he focuses on the plate of food that he can never taste." (47).

In contrast to Nathan, Maurice never really expresses that he misses his father. Seidler claims, that it is common in Catholic cultures that the oldest son takes the position as the head of the family when the father is absent. As the family head his word will be obeyed by the mother and sister without any questions, and he can expect that his word will be obeyed and that he knows what is best for the rest of the family (79). Maurice's mother and sisters treat Maurice as the man of the house and they look up to him and the narrator observes "When he arrived they ran out with cries of joy, took off his greatcoat ..." (11). Maurice

likes being treated this way. He answer his sisters greeting with a feeling of pleasure, “It was nice to be the centre of attraction ...” (11). According to this excerpt Maurice, instead of having a male role model, becomes the father figure for his sisters. This is a substantial role to fill for a young man and might affect Maurice in his own relationship with Clive and it can be the reason why he needs Clive’s approval of his thoughts and decisions.

Both novels portray young men without a present father figure. Lamb argues that boys seem to conform to the sex-role-standards of their culture when their relationships with their fathers are warm (5). Neither of the men conforms to the sex-role-standards of their culture. Nathan misses his father and seeks one in his lover Roy. Maurice does not miss his father and is surrounded by men but still he finds a role model in his male partner Clive. Both Nathan and Maurice thus find a male role model in their lovers.

4. Conclusion

Has the representation of masculinity and homosocial bonds changed since E.M. Forster wrote *Maurice*? I believe it has, though perhaps not as much when it comes to the representations of masculinity as in the representations of homosocial bonds. As Connell writes, masculinity is continuously changing and the history of masculinity is not linear and there is no simple shift from traditional masculinity to modern masculinity. The representations of masculinity seem to change over time only to take the same shape as before. You can see the same kind of masculinities represented in both *Maurice* and *Dream Boy*. I argue that the representation of masculinity in the two novels has not changed. The external factors have changed for the male protagonists but the same traits recur in both *Maurice* and *Dream Boy*.

When it comes to the representations of homosocial bonds in the novels, however I notice a change. There is a visible difference in how the male protagonists interact, both in public and in private. Maurice and Clive are very physical towards each other in public as well as in private. They openly caress each other, they walk arm in arm, and they hug and even sometimes kiss each other. They more or less behave as female friends do today. On the other hand, Roy and Nathan never touch each other in public. Neither are the other men in Grimsley's novel physical. They behave more like male friends do today. According to Seidler this change depends on the fact that young men have learned that their bodies can be used as instruments of power which makes it difficult to allow intimacy within homophobic cultures which might threaten their male identities. Sedgwick similarly writes that the continuum of male homosocial bonds in England and America has been structured by a secularized and psychologized homophobia since the eighteenth century. If this is true, men have changed their way of interacting and socializing because of the fear of being seen as homosexuals and as unmanly. The following generations need to endeavor to change the common opinion about homosexual love and its correlation to male interaction if we want men to be able to socialize without being afraid to be placed on the "wrong" end of Sedgwick's continuum.

This essay only touches the difficulties within masculinity and homosocial bonds. It never touches the possibility that female bonds might have similar difficulties or other problems linked to the female sex. Further studies could, for example, have a pedagogical focus, for example, on how to teach about homosexuality and homosociality. One question to focus on could be what a teaching situation could look like that could help to change the common opinion about homosexual love and its correlation to male interaction.

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