Though in order of publication Maurice follows A Passage to India it was conceived between the publication of Howards End and A Passage to India. There were rumors during his life time that Forster had written a homosexual novel. But aware of the fact that Oscar Wilde was sent to prison for sodomy, Forster could not publish the novel. After his return from India, Forster faced his old problems of idleness and sexual frustrations. He would loiter in Hyde Park or visit public lavatories hoping to make a pick-up. He was torn between respectability and his growing sexual frustration. He could not write anything during period. In an entry in his Diary (16th June 1911) Forster tries to analyse his state of mind, "Having sat for an hour in vain trying to write a play, will analyse causes of my sterility."
In order to see that he had not dried up. Forster wrote short stories with homosexual themes. He was tired of the conventional love between man and woman. In another entry in his personal Memorandum (8 April 1922) Forster writes about the short stories:

> Have this moment burnt my indecent writings or as the fire will take. Not a novel repentence, but the belief that they clogged me artistically. They were written not to express myself but to excite myself...

Many of the stories, later collected and published, deal with sexual relations between men, interestingly enough between men who differ in race or social status. "The Life to Come" and "The Other Boot" are outstanding in their treatment of the homosexual lovers. In one of the stories "Albergo Empedocle", the young Englishman Harold remarks about his past incarnation as a Greek and tells his wife: "I loved very differently... Yes, I also loved better."

In case of Forster it was not simply a matter of being homosexual like Strachey or Maynard Keynes and other members of the 'Apostles.' Forster was a Platonic homosexual, for whom love between two men was more real than it was between a man and a woman.
In 1913 he was advised by Dickinson to visit Edward Carpenter, whose book on homosexual love, The Intermediate Sex, pleaded for a better understanding of homosexuals. The most impressive feature for many visitors at the Millthorpe household was that he openly lived with a male lover from the lower class, George Merrill, and he touched him on the back as he touched others, and the idea of a novel rushed into his mind:

The sensation was unusual, and I still remember it. It must have been on my second or third visit to the shrine that the spark was kindled.

..... George Merrill also touched my backside — gently and just above the buttocks. ..... It was as much psychological as physical. It seemed to go straight through the small of my back into my ideas..... and at that precise moment I had conceived. 2:

The entire outline, the three main characters and the happy ending rushed into his mind, vivid and complete. It was this he had been needing, he thought, to cure his sterility. He also read Samuel Butler's Life and Habit, which praises instinct as the basis of right conduct.

The novel was completed in 1914 and was shown round his friends. To his surprise and relief Dickinson liked the novel. During this time he had tried to write Arctic Summer but could not complete it. The novel concerned the relationship between two men, one civilized
and intellectual and the other a soldier. He wanted to have happy homosexual relationship between the two which was not possible at that time. That partly explains the reason why the novel was abandoned. According to Colin Wilson the problem of homosexual love hunt *Passage to India* also. The relation between Fielding and Asiz, according to Wilson, ought to be homosexual. The whole story turns on the delusion of a frustrated virgin. 3

Many critics feel that the publication of *Maurice* was quite feasible after the publication of *The Well of Loneliness*. Forster would have developed into a greater writer. Forster was like André Gide and Marcel Proust of independent means, and he had nothing to lose.

In an address delivered by him at Paris in 1935, Forster pleaded for more liberty for the writers to treat the theme of sex with greater liberty.

I want greater freedom for writers, both as creators and as critics. In England more than elsewhere, their creative work is hampered because they can't write freely about sex, and I want it recognised that sex is a subject for serious treatment. 4

In *Maurice*, Forster laments the fact that in England the human nature is not accepted as it is (p. 196) *Maurice* was published in 1971 after Forster's death.
In sketching the early development of Maurice Hall Forster draws on some of his own experiences, as he had done in *The Longest Journey* or *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and even Ralph Moore in *A Passage to India*. Maurice is hearty, athletic, slow and conventional in his responses. He is quite unlike the author. But like all his heroes, Maurice is also fatherless. Maurice belongs to the upper middle family of stockbrokers. As in *The Longest Journey* the public and the private themes are woven into the plot of the book. Public theme relates to the agony of a homosexual and his attempts to adjust himself into the society. He wants to fuse the individual vision with the prosaic needs of the society. The private theme, as in the first part of *A Passage to India* is about the search of an ideal friend. Now that Forster's homosexual stories and *Maurice* have been published, it will be a safe hazard to say that the ideal friend is the one with whom Forster could have sexual relations. During his service with the Red Cross in Alexandria in 1917, Forster experiences complete sexual satisfaction with the Egyptian tram conductor, Mohammed. Forster looks back on the difficulties experienced by the hero of *Maurice* and writes to Florence Barger:

"Wish I was writing the latter half of *Maurice*. I now know so much more. It is awful to think of the thousands who go through youth without ever knowing.."
The story begins with the description of Maurice's education in sex by one of the teachers, Mr. Dowie. Whose British hypocrisy and fear of sex surfaces when he gets scared to see some people approaching the place where he had drawn sexual organs on the beach. "Idiot, coward, he's told me nothing" (Maurice, p. 9). Like a Forsterian rhythm, Mr. Dowie recurs again at the British Museum and towards close when Maurice lies in the arms of Alec. Social criticism mingle with personal problem in this instance of the British habit to talk about facts of sex. Forster's experiences during childhood in schools are no less edifying in this regard. The image of the 'naked' George in his dreams serve to heighten his problem of homosexuality.

He was playing football against a nondescript whose [existence he resented. He made an effort and the nondescript turned into George, that garden boy. But he had to be careful, or it would reappear. George headed down the field towards him, naked and jumping over the woodstacks. 6

Forster is fictionalizing his happy memories with Ansell amid the haystacks. When he returns home for holidays he is paired to learn that George is no more their servant and his friend. His life at the school becomes painful by his fears about homosexuality. Forster comments":..., he found himself crossed at an early age this other desire, obviously from sodom." 7
The meeting with Clive Burnham at Cambridge is a significant event in the life of Maurice. He meets the friend he had been searching so far. Exchange of letters during the vacation confirms their love for each other. The intimate horseplay in Maurice resembles the ragging between Ansell and Rickie:

Wou! Be! shut up. I'm going. He fell between Maurice's knees. "Well why don't you go, if you're going?" because I can't go.

In *The Longest Journey*:

... Lemme go,
Don't go, he said idly,
Rickie laughed and suddenly
overbalanced into the grass.
Ansell, with unusual playfulness
held him prisoner.... and
ragging aimlessly.

Michael Ratcliffe points to the homosexual bent in Ansell, "That in *Stewart Ansell Forster* drew one of the subtlest portraits of a homosexual in English literature."

It is ironical that Maurice is shocked by Clive's confession that he loves Maurice. He is muddled like Lucy and does not want to accept his own feelings:
He was shocked to the bottom of his suburban soul, and exclaimed "Oh, rot!" The words, the manner, were out of him before he could recall them. "Durham, you're an Englishman, I'm another Don't talk nonsense... it's the worst crime in the calender." 11

It is equally a trick of nature that it is Clive who becomes normal and leaves Maurice to his fate. Cyril Connolly writes, "It is part of Forster's art that it is not Clive but Maurice who turns out to be the incurable— with considerable irony." 12.

The plot of the novel is concerned with Clive's discovery that he has changed from a homosexual person to a normal heterosexual one and its effect on Maurice. The plot of the book is quite simple unlike those of other novels. In the words of Michael Ratcliffe, 'Maurice...' is the least poetic, the least witty, the least dense and the most immediately realistic of the six novels. 13

Maurice, like other homosexuals of his time, has fallen asleep into the "valley of the shadow"(p.16) Mountains, primroses are used as rhythms in the novel to indicate the state of the character's mind. The most surprising incident is the declaration of Clive that he has become normal. It is the beauty of a plot that it should "Cause surprise", writes Forster
in Aspects of the Novel. Perhaps in the whole novel this episode causes the greatest surprise and it alters the course of the novel. If Clive is promised a dawn Maurice descends into "The valley of the shadow of life." The author pities the condition of Maurice. "... the heart of his agony would be loneliness... An immense silence as of death, encircled him" (Maurice, p. 125). Following Clive's marriage with Anne Woods, Maurice fights the forces of darkness alone:

He hadn't a God, he hadn't a lover - the two incentives to virtue. There was no one to watch him, nor did he watch himself, but the struggles like his are the supreme achievements of humanity, and surpass any legends about heaven. 14

Author's sympathies are obviously with Maurice. He withdraws his sympathy from Clive who becomes the representative of the English middle classes. Forster writes about Clive's marriage and the change in him thus:

Henceforward Clive deteriorates, and so perhaps does my treatment of him. He has annoyed me... nothing he or his wife or his mother does is ever right. 15
Forster identifies with Maurice as he identifies himself with Rickie and Margaret. He cannot see him unhappy and hence Maurice is introduced to Alec Scudder, the gamekeeper at Penge. Alec is a part of the thesis of the novel, Forster wants to bring about a harmonious relationship between persons of upper and lower classes. The beautiful use of primroses as the recurring rhythm in the book suggests the possibility of happiness through sexual relationship. When Maurice was about to meet Alec Scudder at Penge, he sees primroses in the garden:

"Ghostly but perfect, the evening primroses were expanding in the shrubbery, and stirred him by their odours" (Maurice, p. 171) The flowers bring back the fragrance of his love with Clive during his Cambridge days. Before he gives out the cry "come" Maurice walks through the garden again and smells the scent of the primroses:

Scents were everywhere that night, despite the cold, and Maurice returned via the shrubbery, that he might inhale the evening primroses.

John Colmer attaches significance to Maurice's unpremeditated cry "come" and compares it with the call to Krishna by Cosbale.
In Murico, the call 'come' is an appeal that receives a human answer; in a Passage to India, the call is to Krishna, and remains unanswered, yet must continue to be made, as professor Godbole insists. The contrast reflects the difference between writing privately – indulging in a sentimental dream – and dealing publicly with the real world; it also reflects the advance in wisdom and maturity Forster made between 1914 and 1924.

John Colmer's view of the passionate appeal of Clive and the spiritual appeal of Godbole makes one wonder whether the comparison is quite valid. Even while noting the contrast between the two, one is really intrigued how a critic like Colmer is tempted to draw parallels even where there are none. Forster's Indian character ranges between a puzzle and a mystery. That Colmer likens Maurice's cry to Godbole's invocation shows how the West cannot apprehend the essential Orient. Homosexual desire and spiritual longing cannot be identical. Nor is Krishna's fate.

Maurice's experience at Benge throw light on his experience at home. During the vacation he had a very bitter and revealing experience. The Halls had Miss Gladys as their guest. Maurice made some advances, which were favourably responded by her.
As he tried to press her hand she was overcome by revulsion. "... She knew something was wrong. His touch revolted her. It was a corpse's."

(Maurice p. 46) The incident leads to self-realisation that he is a confirmed homosexual:

He would not — and this was the test—pretend to care about women when the only sex that attracted him was his own. He loved men and always had loved them. 19

Maurice's wish has something of an autobiographical element. Forster too was attracted by some strong young man of lower classes. In his personal Memorandum he notes:

I want to love a strong man of lower class and be loved by him and even hurt by him. That is my ticket, and then I have wanted to write respective novels... 19

By writing Maurice, Forster tries to cure himself of the sense of guilt that broods over his life and Maurice's before Maurice attains happiness. In a letter to Dent (6 March, 1915) he wrote "... do feel that I have created something absolutely new, even to the Greeks." He sent the novel to his friend Forrester Reid who was shocked to find that Forster was homosexual. Defending his novel Forster wrote to Reid a letter:
I do want to raise these subjects out of the mists of theology: Male and Female created He not them. Ruling out under developed people like Clive or your youth, when you advised most rightly one is left with 'perverts.'

An absurd word because it assumes they were given a choice, but let's use it.

Are these 'perverts' good or bad? Like normal men, their disproportionate tendency to badness (which I admit) being due to the criminal blindness of Society! or they inherently bad? ... The men in my book is roughly speaking, good, but society nearly destroys him, he nearly slinks through his life furtive and afraid and burdened with a sense of sin. ... But blame Society not Maurice.

This brings me to another point, and having gone hang at it, I will say farewell to sociology. Is it ever right that such a relation should include the physical? Yes - sometimes. If both people want it and both are old enough to know what they want - yes. I used not to think this, but now do. Maurice and Clive would have been wrong, Maurice and Kitty more so. B and A are all right, some people might never be right. My defence at any last judgement would be, 'I was trying to connect up and use all the fragments I, born with.'

Maurice, too tries to connect up and use all the fragments he is born with. The homosexual bent in him generates a sort of dislike in his sisters, Ada and Kitty. Outwardly very affectionate, the sisters, like
their guest Miss Gladys, are revolted by Maurice's homosexuality.

At the bottom of their hearts they disliked him entirely — but were too confused mentally to know this. His laugh was the only grievance they avowed.

Maurice, whose brain is 'his weakest organ', realises the confusion in his own nature. Cambridge provides the means by which he leaves the "valley" of his fears and confusions relating to homosexual feelings that he discovers at the Summington school. In *The Lioness Journey* too Cambridge provides the feeling of security and happiness to Rickie Eliot. Clive gradually finds peace and happiness here.

People turned out to be alive. Hitherto he had supposed that they were what he pretended to be ... there came by no process of reason a conviction that they, human beings with feelings akin to his own.

Like stewart and Rickie, Clive and Maurice begin their friendship with horseplay and with the exchange of confidences about their families. During two years of their friendship they remain without physical contact which surprises Lytton Strachey quite a deal.
Strachey finds the male relationship rather morbid and unnatural. Many critics have found Clive burning normal quite difficult to accept. Colin Wilson finds this episode the one unconvincing touch in the novel. I suppose it does happen, but I have never come across a case. 23

Darkness envelopes the life of Maurice and Clive. Was promised a down (Maurice p. 120)

Maurice will emerge in open bright light when he meets Alec Scudder at Penge and finds sexual satisfaction with him. Like the beautiful Forsterian rhythm, the primroses bloom again. Scudder's role has been found to be salvatory by critics like J. S. Martin who thinks that Scudder represents the vital life of the plant and animal life. 24

Michael Ratchcliffe in a review of the book in "The Times" compares Alec Scudder with the earth-man Stephen Womham and Lady Chatterley's lover.

Throughout the novel, especially in the fourth and final part one finds the mingling of the public and private themes that one finds in The Longest Journey. The cricket match at Penge is described in a significant way because Maurice and Alec join up to play against the Social forces.
They played for the sake of each other and of their fragile relationship - if one fell the other would follow. They intended no harm to the world, but as long as it attacked they must punish, they must stand unity, then hit with full strength, they must show that when two are gathered together majorities shall not triumph.

The manner in which Maurice is booted over when he is joined by Clive is also quite revealing. The ordinary social comedy is full of undertones. Maurice is also torn by the different pulls. He is eager for the 'Life of the earth' by deriving sexual satisfaction and by remaining a member of his class. Lytton Strachey expressed the view that Maurice - Scudder relationship would last only six months.

The Maurice - Alec affair didn't strike me as successful. For one thing the class question is rather a red herring; I think ... I should have prophesied a rupture after 6 months - chiefly as a result of lack of common interest owing to class differences. I believe even such a simple - minded fellow as Maurice would have felt this and so your Sherwood Forest ending appears to me slightly mythical.
The problem of rounding off the novel was a technical as well as an emotional problem for the author. Happiness in the case of the homosexuals conflicts with the social taboos. But Forster wanted Maurice and Alec to attain happiness. Forster writes about the problem thus:

A happy ending was imperative. I shouldn't have bothered to write otherwise. I was determined that in fiction any way two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows... Happiness is its keynote.

In order that happiness may be granted to Maurice and Alec, Forster alters the projected end of the novel. Alec puts off his plan to leave England so that they can live together. In the 1913 version, Forster added an epilogue in which Maurice's sister, Kitty, bicycling through the woods on a holiday finds Maurice and Alec living as woodcutters. Afraid that Kitty might inform the police they move on to another place.

Why does the author change Alec's plans? Why does he decide to stay back in England? In John Collier's view, the change in plans might be established in England.
Maurice has been found to be a straightforward story, like a case or a thesis of the author, compared to the more complex novels of the author like Howards End, A Passage to India, and even The Longest Journey. V. S. Pritchett calls the novel as an 'apology for homosexuality' and does not find it as great as Forster's later novels.
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