CHAPTER III

A JOURNEY TO SELF: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVELS

(a) The Longest Journey

Whatever the relative merits of the two Italian novels might be, Forster's Italian experience provided him with a major insight into his powers and potentials in fiction writing. Through short stories and the Italian novels, he mastered the technique of faking his ideals with fantasy to give his themes a romantic touch and perfected the skill of presenting his material in a well-ordered aesthetic art form. With a natural gift of story telling reinforced by a lucid style, Forster gained the confidence of a novelist who could move, shock and overwhelm his readers by inventing incredible yet convincing characters, forceful dramatic situations and profound ironies. Our dismission of his two Italian novels makes it clear that the transformation through education of his inherently intelligent but naive protagonists was an exercise aimed at fathoming his own self. It strengthened his faculty of self-analysis. His autobiographical novels, The Longest Journey and Maurice, reveal a similar pattern of growth and development of his protagonists. The fact that the two novels are out and out auto-biographical has been admitted by Forster on more than one occasions.1 While Lucy, Philip and to some extent Cecil closely resemble their creator, Rickie and Maurice are the two
characters with whom Forster consciously identifies himself most. They are the spontaneous expression and reflection of the writer's most private dimensions of the self.

Though Forster has maintained an aesthetic distance from the protagonists and seen them from a detached, ironic eye, with the result that he has been able to pin-point their flaws and muddles without indulging too much in sentimentality, the tendency to identify himself with the protagonists is discernible in both these autobiographical novels.

Artistically The Longest Journey is more successful and of greater literary value for the simple reason that it was written by Forster when he was at the most vibrant point in the process of his growth and development as a young man. He was in search of his own identity, both as a man and as an artist. This novel is written in the spirit of James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Like Stephen of the Portrait Rickie is also a young writer in the making. Although parallels between the two novels cannot be stretched too far, it will suffice to point out here that both the protagonists are young, intellectual aesthetes and both have a natural urge for creation. Both are young scholars in quest of their identities and their creative powers. They are professedly their authors' own stories. Rickie and Stephen meet life in their individual, unique ways and reach the individual truths of their selves through intense internal struggle.
The Longest Journey begins with a discussion on the dialectical problem of appearance and reality. It deals with the philosophic problem whether existing things are real, and if so whether their reality can be established on the touchstone of logic and sense perception. Rickie, the final year student of the Classics at Cambridge, is listening to the discussion between Stephen Ansell and a few other friends. They are arguing whether a particular cow seen grazing from the window exists or not when, suddenly, Agnes Pembroke, an old acquaintance, barges into the room calling Rickie a wicked boy for not having turned up at the station to receive her and her brother whom he had invited for the week-end gathering. While other friends leave the room formally greeting her, Ansell stands there indifferently. After the departure of his guests to the lodgings, Rickie asks Ansell why he was so rude to Agnes when she arrived. But Ansell refuses to admit the presence of Agnes, unlike the cow's which they were just discussing. He says philosophically:

Did it never strike you that phenomena may be of two kinds: one, those which have a real existence, such as the cow; two, those which are subjective product of a diseased imagination, and which, to our destruction, we invest with the semblance of reality? If this never struck you, let it strike you now. (LJ, 24).

Soon after Rickie watches Ansell drawing a square within a circle and within the circle a square and again inside that square a circle and inside the circle another square. He asks
him if they were real. "The inside one is, the one in the middle of everything that there is never room enough to draw" (LJ, 24), says Ansell, meaning thereby that there is an essence, a reality enveloped at the centre of all appearance.

Bertrand Russell, who was a contemporary (and, like Forster admired G.E. Moore's philosophy that there is a simple unanalyseable quality 'good' which belongs to certain states of mind) also toyed a lot with the question of appearance and reality in his several books on philosophy. According to him appearance precedes reality because any given reality has a number of aspects and one's particular perspective gives him a particular aspect while the same reality may look different to a person with a different perspective: "Thus an aspect of a thing is a member of the system of aspects which is the 'thing' at that moment. All the aspects of a thing are real whereas the thing is a mere logical construction." It follows that we can never see a thing in its 'wholeness'. We can however see its different aspects in parts and construct its reality from our perspective. By this logic the reality of the thing being subjective rather than objective, lies somewhere at the centre of the different appearances of the thing. It therefore follows that while we should not be misled by only one or two appearances (aspects) of any thing, we must not, at the same time, dismiss such appearances merely as illusions as we can arrive at its reality through appearances.

To extend the logic to another of Forster's major themes,
the relation between the soul and the body, we come to the same conclusion that while the soul is the supreme reality, the body, which is generally treated as an appearance, is indispensable. So while Ansell rightly advises Rickie to track down the reality at the centre of appearance, Rickie commits the terrible mistake of thinking appearance i.e. Agnes as the reality itself.

This philosophical problem of appearance and reality anticipates the bigger problem that Rickie is to face in his own life: Should he choose objective reality or subjective appearance? Rickie, short sighted as he is, chooses the subjectives one and suffers a tortuous life, 'the dreariest and the longest journey' (LJ, 146).

Agnes, who is engaged to Gerald, soldier and athlete, receives Rickie warmly when he visits the Pembroke. He thinks that she and Gerald don't make a good match, but soon after he finds both of them locked in each other's arms in a lonely corner of the lawn, Gerald pressing her against his chest and kissing her passionately. Rickie immediately leaves the place, but the memory of the scene burns in his mind. "Do such things actually happen?" he asks himself. Mesmerized in the memory of their embrace, he loses himself into a romantic trance:

Music flowed past him like a river. He stood at the springs of creation.....In full unison was love born, flame of the flame, flushing the dark river beneath him and the virgin snows above. His wings were infinite, his youth eternal.
The sun was a jewel on his finger as he passed it in benediction over the world. Creation, no longer monotonous, acclaimed him, in widening melody, in brighter radiances. Was Love a column of fire? Was he a torrent of song? Was he greater than either - the touch of a man or a woman? (LJ, 49)

The poetic description of Rickie's feelings in the above passage has puzzled quite a few critics. J.S. Martin wonders if it is not Forster's close identification with Rickie which betrays him into such sentimentality and ambiguity. "What, for example, is his attitude to Rickie's feelings when Rickie sees Agnes and Gerald kissing?" The passage anticipates Helen's adolescent romanticism in *Howards End.*

Alan Wilde explains the sudden outburst of these poetic feelings in Rickie in terms of his inability to "see things as they really are, for his vision corresponds not to the lovers themselves but to his conception of what lovers ought to be." Rickie's voyeuristic peeping into the lovers' grove creates in him a sense of guilt as well as jealousy and he seeks a poetic resolution for these internal currents of feeling. Wilfred Stone is nearer the mark when he says that "Rickie is able to tolerate the shock only by receiving it as 'poetry'. One glimpse of the carnal facts filled this action with guilt rather than with desire, and drove him, hysterically rhapsodizing, to the safety of an over-ripe empyrean...

The memory of this scene transfigures intensely what he
has seen of their love into the Forsterian 'eternal moment'.
The mere glance at the loving pair sends Rickie to the gates
of heaven. But somewhere in his inner being he begins to
consider himself unworthy of love. This muddles his vision
so much that when Gerald dies in an accident while playing in
the football match, he willingly agrees to marry Agnes, despite
Ansell's warnings to the contrary. The decision proves to be
the result of his 'diseased imagination' and Ansell's prophecy
is proven right in due course of time.

Rickie, like Forster himself, is a misogynist, and his
problem whether to go in for marriage after Gerald's death is
in a sense his creator's dilemma. While Rickie is not sure
that he can love Agnes or any woman for that matter, Forster
makes his marry Agnes to see what would happen to a man in
marriage when he is attracted more to his own sex than to the
opposite sex. Rickie's views after this 'burning' scene
correspond to Forster's own dilemma at this stage. "But we are
disturbed by the feeling that Forster...has simply not yet
made up his mind whether he is or is not going to side with
his fictional self", comments Wilfred Stone on the ambiguity
of this passage. Though the author is convinced that Rickie's
marriage will be doomed sooner rather than later, he wants to
ascertain what would happen to himself if he were to marry fully
knowing that he is 'crippled' like Rickie by his homosexuality.

When Rickie broaches to his friends his resolve to
She is happy because she has conquered; he is happy because he has at least hung all the world's beauty onto a single peg. He was always trying to do it. He used to call the peg humanity. Will either of these happinesses last? His can't. Hers only for a time... She wants Rickie, partly to replace another man who she lost two years ago, partly to make something out of him. He is to write. In time she will get sick of this. He won't get famous. She will only see how thin he is and how lame. She will long for a jollier husband, and I don't blame her. And, having made him thoroughly miserable and degraded, she will bolt - if she can do it like a lady. (LJ, 94).

Ansell's prophetic vision penetrates through this muddle while Rickie's blurred sight only deceives itself and sees in Agnss the qualities which she singularly lacks. His way of viewing life through sentimentality is the tragic flaw that does not allow him to connect himself to reality. Ansell however knows that she is an unsympathetic and selfish girl. He is symbolically true when he refuses to accept her existence to the annoyance of Rickie. Rickie has lived a lonely life, and is a product of a broken marriage. He despised his late father for his irresponsible and immoral character and is excessively attached to his mother who for him was the only ideal and upright person and the victim of his father's cruelties. His upbringing is therefore partially responsible for his conduct. His excessive dependence upon his mother reminds us of Forster's emotional attachment to his own mother.
After marrying Agnes, Rickie expects her to provide him not a wife's love but a mother's protection. Having lost his hated father and beloved mother, Rickie thinks she will liberate him from the world, as his mother did before her death. Forster's attachment to his mother coloured his creative imagination throughout his later novels and stories. Furbank gives an instance of this affinity. Forster as a child of ten bore an unconscious desire to return to the fold of his mother's protection. During the period when he established a sentimental friendship with the garden boy Ansell, he entertained certain infantile fantasies:

The Ansell period was an idyllic one for Morgan, and instinctively he clung to his happiness and was unwilling to grow up... He had a 'return-to-the-womb' daydream at this period, when he was about ten...?

This incident from Forster's early life conclusively shows that his protagonists - Rickie to top them all - are most autobiographical in temperament, behaviour and in their excessive attachment to the mother-figure in a fatherless home. While delineating Rickie he is analysing the unconscious forces stirring within his own self and is transforming them into an artistic but sentimentally toned character.

The flaw of sentimental and fantastic idealization, rooted in the unconscious self, is common in both Forster and Rickie. Surrounded by the unseen and uncontrollable forces
Rickie's problem is either to win over these intractable forces emanating from his own self, or to face defeat at their hands. Despite his desperate attempts to identify them, he is defeated by them towards the end of his life.

His decline begins with his misplaced judgment of Agnes' merits and his decision to marry her. Before they marry, Agnes and Rickie happen to visit his aunt Mrs. Emily Failing, at her Wiltshire estate where they meet Stephen Wonham, a rough and wild boy. Mrs. Failing gives Rickie the first major shock of his life by disclosing to him that Stephen is "your brother". Rickie shocked with horror thinks this utterance as Aunt Emily's slip of tongue, but when she says she means it, he faints. For a moment, he prepares himself to accept the truth, but Agnes comes in the way of the truth and clasps her love to her breast symbolically clouding the 'view' of reality from him. Comparing this failure of Rickie of not facing up to the truth with Philip's collusion with his mother in Where Angels Fear to Tread, J.K. Johnstone remarks:

Rickie's sin, it will be seen, is exactly the same as the sin the Harritons committed when they tried to prevent Irma from knowing the existence of her Italian brother. It is a sin not only against blood relationship but also against the sacred racial strain and Forster's attitude towards such a sin is as grim and uncompromising as any Puritan creed.

The punishment for this sin follows soon after. At the Sawston school, Rickie undergoes a slow corruption of body,
mind and soul. The corrupting influences of Sawston have already been highlighted by Forster in his earlier novels. While Mrs. Harrioton represented the decayed conventional values of Sawston in Where Angels Fear to Tread, Herbert Pembridge is her successor here. He is a muddled personality, always making discipline and organization his sole objective. Blind to beauty and good values of life, he is a priest of convention. Rickie's inner self, so carefully cultivated and moulded in the healthy Cambridge atmosphere, gradually begins to fritter away into hypocrisy. In the company of Herbert and Agnes, who show scant respect for truth, Rickie learns to lie, to be habitually false to his true self. He pathetically submits to this menacing atmosphere and becomes a prototype of Herbert, whom he had so much abhorred for being an insensitiv mind. As prophesied by Ansell, his marriage turns out to be a failure because Agnes begins to show herself now in her true colours. She is a Sawstonian philistine through and through and very soon assumes the role of a hen-pecking wife. Their relations in marriage are cold, passionless and degenerate into constant bickering and virtual estrangement.

Rickie's last hope of salvaging any meaning from this relation lies on his son, who he thinks would be born soon and bring life back to him. But to his sorrow and dismay, a girl even more crippled than himself is born, to die within weeks. Rickie, panicked and overwhelmed by the birth and death of the
crippled baby decides that no child must ever be born to them again. The hate for his paternal ancestors is further accentuated in him. In a dream he encounters the threatening faces of his enemies, "his aunt's, his father's and worst of all, the triumphant face of his brother" (LJ, 218). Passing through this tragic phase of his life Rickie still believes that he had done the right thing by disowning his step-brother Stephen.

The cold, calculating Agnes has her eyes set on Wiltshire estate which Rickie is to inherit and because she fears Stephen would share it with them she plans ways and means to disinherit him. The opportunity comes soon, when, one day, Rickie tells her that while riding over Salisbury Plain the drunken Stephen had read a poem derogatory to Mrs. Failing. Agnes grabs the opportunity and writes to Mrs. Failing how ungrateful Stephen had been to her. Short tempered and easily provoked as Mrs. Failing is, she orders Stephen to leave the house for good. But at the same time she hands over to him some documents that later on reveal to him his relation to Rickie.

When Stephen, having no other acquaintance to fall back upon, comes to Rickie for help, he is turned out by the mindless Agnes but, in the meantime, Ansell meets him in the way. The two quarrel over a trifle, fight and ultimately become friends. Ansell happens to see the documents regarding Stephen's birth and is shocked to learn about the treatment being meted out to
him by Rickie and Agnes. In a burst of anger, Ansell tells Rickie in the presence of the school students that Stephen is his half-brother being his mother's son.

To Rickie who had mistakenly thought till now that Stephen is his father's son, this revelation is too much to bear and he faints. He knew and hated his father for being a morally depraved man. But the conduct of his mother gives even more rude shock to him. The image of the woman who he had idealized and loved all his life is shattered and another reality flashes before him like a lightning.

From this moment onward, Rickie resolves to shed his diseased imagination and begins to reconcile to his reality. Ansell, who had warned him against the bewildering darkness of the path he had chosen once again comes to help him as his guide. The whole fraud of his life with Agnes, the years wasted in futility, the ruination of his career, had all been the result of his distorted, muddled vision. With the dawning of the reality upon him, his decayed soul and his 'diseased' mind begin to heal. To atone his sin, he accepts Stephen as his brother. But Stephen refuses to respond to his love saying that Rickie does not love him as a human being but as the symbol of his mother's memory. Rickie realizes that Stephen is right, because it was for the sake of his love for his mother that he had accepted Stephen. A genuine love for him is born in Rickie's heart and despite Agnes' protestations he deserts her and decides
to devote himself to Stephen's care. Instead of treating him as a relic of his mother's memory, Rickie establishes a man-to-man love with him. Ansel and Stephen Donham serve as the intellectual and physical halves of Rickie's estranged self.

For the first time in his life, Rickie follows the call of his inner voice and leaves Agnes and her wretched world, to live with Stephen. The voice he hears is immortal:

Habits and sex may change with the new generation, features may alter with the play of private passion, but a voice is apart from these. It lies nearer to the racial essence and perhaps to the divine; it can, at all events, overleap one grave. (LJ, 286).

Rickie is once again invited by Mrs. Failing to Cadover to sort out his problems with Agnes. Stephen too insists that he would accompany him. Rickie agrees to take him along on the promise that he would not drink. Mrs. Failing asks Rickie to go back to his wife, which he frankly refuses. After the meeting Rickie finds that Stephen has broken his promise and lay in the dead drunken state on the railway tracks. Just as the train is approaching he pulls him away but in the process gets himself entangled in the track. The train runs over his knees and he dies soon after at Mrs. Failings estate. The dreary and long journey of Rickie's life meets an abrupt end and he dies with the question of reality or appearance of life still unresolved. Towards the end of his life, Rickie displays a capacity to transcend. But in his last moments he
has the consolation that he has sacrificed his life for
Stephen Bonham, his comrade as well as the representative
of his mother's line. His father's race with all its
abnormalities would end with him and the Darwinian law of
survival of the fittest would prevail.

There is considerable difference of opinion among
critics about the intention of the writer in the novel.
F.R. Leavis, for example, pointing out the autobiographical
elements in the novel says:

His intention remains an intention;
nothing adequate is substance or quality
is grasped. And the author appears
accordingly as the victim, where his own
experience is concerned, of disabling
immaturities in valuations; his attributions
of importance don't satisfy themselves.9

While Lionel Trilling declares the novel "by conventional
notions the least perfect - the least compact, the least precisely
formed, perhaps the most brilliant, the most draulic and the most
passionate of his works" he is also conscious of "too much
steam that blows up the boiler."10 John Harvey agrees with
Trilling but emphasizes the gap between intention and
realization:

...In The Longest Journey Forster's moral
intention, his impulses to divide and judge,
comes into conflict with his sense of what
life is really like. On the one hand, he is
tempted by the clarity and decision of the
morality, on the other he is acutely aware
that human beings are not so simple, that
they will constantly elude his moral categories.11
The major difficulty in the novel arises out of the schism existing between the ideal Forster wants to present and the groundwork that he actually prepares to realize this ideal. Harvey, for instance, observes in this novel a good deal of discussion about 'Truth', 'Freedom' and 'Love' which never find an adequately concrete correlative, "they never make contact with imaginatively experienced and dramatically expressed content of the book." Critics generally find a divide between the abstract concepts and the presented facts of life not only in *The Longest Journey* but in all Forster's novels in general. We find that central focus of the book lies in passages which describe and analyze the problem of Rickie's option to have Agnes as his life partner in the long journey of his life. The relation of 'Truth', 'Freedom' and 'Love' to the 'Real' is of course a very important problem in the novel, but the touchstone of this relation and all other relations portrayed in the book is the dilemma whether Rickie would find salvation through his marriage with Agnes or whether, as Ansell asserts, he would have found it not by marrying a woman but by having "friends, and work, and spiritual freedom" (LJ, 95).

The ideals of friendship, comradeship and personal relationship have shaped Forster's vision and his creative spirit more than any other aspect of human intercourse. His friendships with his contemporaries at the King's College
concretized his views about human relationship into these ideals. In his biography of G.L. Dickinson, Forster refers to this healthy Cambridge influence on Dickinson as well as on himself in the following words:

As Cambridge filled up with friends it acquired a magic quality. Body and spirit, reason and emotion, work and play, architecture and scenery, laughter and seriousness, life and art — these pairs which are elsewhere contrasted were there fused into one. People and books reinforced one another, intelligence joined hands with affection, speculation became a passion and discussion was made profound by love. (GLD, 35).

It was this Cambridge and its youthful passion that shaped his whole view of life and the dilemma of devoting himself either to his friends and their intimate comradeship or to take a wife and settle down on a dreary and stereotyped beaten path of life weighed uppermost on his mind at this stage when, already in his late twenties, he was struggling to carve out a career for himself as a writer and was at the cross-roads of his life. The invigorating atmosphere — replete with the pragmatic philosophy of writers like G.E. Moore and friendly inter-action among the members of Bloomsbury Group made Cambridge an ideal place to combine art with life. Earlier in the novel Rackham, while discussing with Ansell the role of Cambridge in relation to the outside world, reflects on the subject of friendship as opposed to marriage:

We fly together, like straws in an eddy, to part in the open stream. Nature has no use for us; she has cut her stuff differently. Dutiful sons, loving husbands,
responsible fathers — these are what she wants, and if we are friends it must be in our spare time... He wished that all the confidence and mutual knowledge that is born in such a place as Cambridge could be organized... he wished there was a society, a kind of friendship office where the marriage of true minds could be registered. (LJ, 75-76).

Shelley's poem, from which Forster takes the title 'The Longest Journey', must have haunted him quite a lot during the period the novel was written, because it is not only the title but the theme of the poem which sets the tone and tenor of this novel. The narrator of the poem declares himself a social heretic in the sense that he would not like to go in for marriage and be a member of the herd that follows the 'beaten path', because binding oneself to a single person for life would mean losing the vast opportunity of connecting one's self to the whole humanity. One has either to find one mistress and tread a long dreary journey or one may liberate oneself by renouncing the social obligations of marriage and enjoy a spiritual freedom and universal brotherhood. A part of Shelley's poem runs:

I never was attached to that great sect
Whose doctrine is that each one should select
Out of the world a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, command
To cold oblivion. — though it is the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread
Who travel to their home among the dead
By the broad highway of the world, — and so
With one sad friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go. (LJ, 146).
Shelley's conception of exclusive male comradeship obviously reinforced Forster's well known fondness for 'personal relationship' which had already developed in the conducive atmosphere of Cambridge. Stewart Ansell, the detached self of the author, tenders the following advice to Rickie, the sentimental self:

You are not a person who ought to marry at all. You are unfitted in body; that we once discussed. You are also unfitted in soul; you want and you need to like many people, and a man of that sort ought not to marry. You never were attached to that great sect who can like one person only, and if you try to enter it you will find destruction. (LJ, 94-95).

The internal monologue symbolizes the acute struggle that the author is undergoing divided as he is against himself. Ansell, well aware of Rickie's flaws and weaknesses, sternly warns him against any misadventure by marrying Agnes. Forster, fully aware of his own aversion to the female sex directed his attention to grooming relations with the male friends, hence his obsessive emphasis on personal relations. Instant personal friendship with almost any and every man he came across was a compulsive instinct in him which helped him, consciously and unconsciously to satisfy his urge to have a male company. The vast number of personal acquaintances he groomed in England and overseas go to prove the thesis that at the back of this instinct was his homosexual appeal for the male company. Almost every person who had an opportunity to meet him recounts his
gesture of extreme affection and kindness, so much so that he would help a visitor put on a coat or prolong physical touch while shaking his hand. J.L. Pinchin seems to highlight the same tendency in him when she says:

Images of comrades and siblings gave him the necessary fictive mask through which he could deal with homosexuality, in familial and friendship relationships. They sometimes produced the tension we see in Cavafy's historical love poems. I do not mean to suggest that the mask was always conscious... But in the brotherhood of figures like Stephen Wbnham and Rickiei Elliot, Forster found a permissible way of describing unpermissible impulses.13

Forster's homosexuality was at the centre of all his novels and being obsessed with it he had to embody his urges and inclinations in socially acceptable idées by transferring this 'abnormality' into some physical deformity.14 Considering The Longest Journey as a case in point the anonymous reviewer of The Times Literary Supplement traces the patterns of homosexuality in its story:

It is a marriage novel but not in any ordinary sense; rather, it seems a kind of homosexual nightmare, in which the condition of marriage is imagined - cold, loveless, and degrading... Forster confessed in an interview that he 'had trouble with the junction of Rickie and Stephen. How to make them intimate...' - and the difficulty is surely that he was writing a crypto-homosexual story, in which his protagonist is saved by his intimacy with a young man of humble station (Forster himself favoured young men of lower classes). Forster made the relationship acceptable by basing it on
kinship, and by marrying Rickie to Agnes (his abnormality is transferred to his crippled foot), but the curious dissonance remains that all the heat of the novel is concentrated on the one-man scenes and man-woman scenes have a chill repugnancy.

Rickie, therefore, is a man who suffers from several complexes and betrays suicidal tendency. He wants to avenge himself, through self-sacrifice, for the sins committed by his forefathers. He feels guilty over the money and property he has inherited from them and is in search for peace which he could find either in his mother’s protective fold (hence the strange ‘return-to-womb’ traits in him) or in death. Moreover, the physical abnormality (the crippled foot) is also a legacy of his paternal forefathers. These complexes together with the bewitching fascination of Agnes aided by the cold and calculating machinations of her brother Herbert, entangle Rickie in a tragic whirlpool, where he, like Oswald of Ibsen’s Ghosts is led to meet his grim fate i.e. death. Like Rickie, Forster too lays the blame of his ‘abnormality’ (homosexuality) unconsciously at the door of his heredity. The novel is thus a long exercise in negotiating with the forces agitating within the author’s self and the cathartic effect of Rickie’s tragedy helps the author purge himself of this internal strife.
Maurice occupies a special place in Forster's life both as a writer and as a man. As Oliver Stalybras has asserted, Maurice was the 'turning point' in Forster's career. It is also the turning point in his assessment as a novelist because the Forster criticisms could never again be the same after the publication of this novel. The critics of the fifties and sixties evaluated Forster's work only in the light of his published books, seldom relating it to a very fundamental creative spring in the author's life - the urge to negotiate with his 'self'. They studied him as a fore-runner of modernist novelists like Joyce, Lawrence and Conrad and traced in him the complexities characteristic of the compulsions of modern life. It is only the post-1970 criticism which began to appreciate and evaluate the queer, ambiguous and frequently puzzling features of Forster's work in the light of his so far unpublished material, especially the collection of stories Life to Come and the novel Maurice. These works revealed the unseen aspects of Forster's inner being. John Colmer's detailed study P. N. Forster: a personal voice is a significant critique that seeks to evaluate the basic harmony and equilibrium underlying the disturbing, violent and explosive currents noted in his fiction. P. N. Furbank's biography of Forster makes available to the reader a very significant and indispensable body of material about his
personality. The new Edwin Arnold series of Forster's collected works and manuscripts edited by Oliver Stallybrass shed new light upon his assessment as a novelist. This new body of criticism together with the posthumously published books and unpublished manuscripts in the King's College Library reveal a totally new dimension of Forster's complex world. The most important book in this category, *Maurice*, as emphasized earlier, is the turning point both in Forster's life and his critical evaluation.

The title of the book *Maurice, a novel* makes the reader wonder whether it can indeed be called a novel. The loosely bound series of forty six brief chapters hardly add up to make it a well-made novel. It may better be called a 'novella' or rather a conglomerate of disjointed fantasies and reminiscences. Although there is a simple plot to hold the characters and incidents together, it lacks artistic finish and adequate development of the theme. Sequentially the story does develop and the conflicting elements in the hero's 'self' are brought to a resolution, but the treatment of the psychological make up and workings of the soul of the hero is marred by excessive sentimentalism. Forster has tried to make his hero as unlike himself as he possibly could, but the protagonist is too close to Forster's self to admit such distancing. As a result *Maurice* is even more transparently auto-biographical than *The Longest Journey* and, therefore, it is more valuable for us as a document
which affords a deeper peep into the disquieting currents of author's inner being.

*Maurice* was written by Forster for his own private satisfaction. He never thought or intended that it should ever see the light of the day. Publishing this novel in his own lifetime was out of question though a few of his close friends whom Forster showed the manuscript did suggest that it could be published. But he had already witnessed what social and legal upheavals Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* had caused in Britain. The prosecution of Oscar Wilde for his unconventional views on homosexuality must have further deterred Forster from making this novel public. To understand Forster's compulsions in keeping the novel unpublished we have to note the deterrent and cruel laws of the state and society at that time. Tracing the history of the laws persecuting homosexual writings and their impact on modern writers, Jeffrey Meyers writes:

Modern English literature was significantly affected by the conviction of Wilde in 1895, for it established the pattern of persecution that forced homosexuals to go underground for more than seventy years. The post-war period in England led to more liberal attitudes about the relations of men and women, but not about inversion. Though lesbianism had never been illegal, *The Well of Loneliness* was banned as obscene after a scandalous trial in 1928... The laws against inversion remained in force until the recommendations of the widely publicized Wolfenden Report (1957) - which advised that (as before 1885) 'homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence' - were embodied in the Sexual Offences Act of 1967.
Although Forster could publish the novel after the 1967 Act, still he preferred not to expose his private self because he was conscious of the damage that the publication of this book could cause to his own reputation as a widely respected novelist. Besides, friends like H.O. Meredith and Lytton Strachey could object to its publication as they had been drawn upon heavily in the thinly guised characters of the novel. Forster obviously wanted to avoid such unnecessary embarrassments.

Forster recounts the genesis of this novel in his ‘Terminal Note’ appended to the book. He paid a visit to the shrine of Edward Carpenter at Milthorpe in 1913 and George Merrill, the comrade and the male-lover confidanté of Carpenter, casually patted him ‘just above the buttocks’. "The sensation was unusual...It was as much psychological as physical. It seemed to go straight through the small of my back into my ideas without involving my thoughts" says the author. Soon after he felt an irresistible urge to write a book on the theme of homo-sexuality to give vent to his pent up feelings.

Maurice is the most spontaneous of Forster's books. "The general plan, the three characters, the happy ending for two of them, all rushed into my pen. The whole thing went through without a hitch." The reason for this spontaneity is not far to seek. There had been a violent struggle raging inside the author after the successful publication of Howards End.
in 1910. The hopes aroused by the success of this novel were naturally very high. People in general and friends in particular expected from him a few more works of fiction now that he had become an established author of four very popular novels and a number of stories. But he found himself increasingly incapable of meeting these demands, and as the time elapsed, the feeling of helplessness became more acute causing more desperation and frustration. The visit to his 'savior' Carpenter lifted him out of this morass as the 'sensation' caused by Merill's touch provided necessary direction to his muddled self. Till now he had been uncertain about the moral implications of his homosexuality and the consequent feelings of guilt attached to this 'stigma' made his confusion even more confounded.

Carpenter was at that time the "prophet of the simple life and high minded homosexuality", and this visit provided Forster a totally new revelation. The novel was 'conceived' then and there and demanded to be born soon after. It was complete by 1914 and the author had a great relief by giving expression to his long-repressed feelings. It was for him a revelation of his own self, a discovery that he was a homosexual through and through and that he needed not to feel ashamed or guilty of this 'abnormality'. *Maurice* is thus an exercise in self-study in which Forster analysed his innermost instincts and feelings threadbare, without caring for inhibitions that generally accompany a work meant for publication. Discussing *Maurice* in
the context of the study of the self, Jeffrey Meyers remarks:

Maurice is essentially a study in repression and guilt... in which the hero manages to rid himself of both. Forster notes in his diary for 1911, the year after he published *Howards End*, 'a cause of my sterility in weariness of men for women and vice versa'. Despite its lack of conviction, *Maurice* was a therapeutic success, for Forster had to exorcise the homosexual themes that moved so threateningly within his early works before he could complete his final masterpiece, *A Passage to India*, begun in 1912 but not finished until 1924.21

Forster, in this novel, sincerely and straightforwardly portrays the tensions and resolutions of his protagonist Maurice Hall and finds in his happiness his own exultation, for what a writer cannot realize in the real world, he tries to realize in his fiction.

Forster deliberately made the ending of the novel happy because this novel was not to be an 'ordinary' novel which had to meet artistic demands of aestheticism and critical standards. In fact his major source of inspiration is the example set by Edward Carpenter himself. There are quite a few striking similarities common to Carpenter, the fictional character Maurice Hall and the author. Carpenter belonged to a well-off family, went to Cambridge for studies, lost faith in Christianity in his youth, abandoned a 'career' to live an unmarried but simple life of 'open air labour'. He professed the virtues of homosexuality in his book *The Intermediate Sex* (1908) and
practised homosexuality by openly living with his male lover, George Merrill, a young man from the slums of Sheffield. If a man like Carpenter could lead a peaceful and serene life in the company of a male lover, why could his Maurice Hall not lead a similarly wholesome life with Alec Scudder, the game keeper? Another noteworthy element common to Forster, his character Maurice and his 'savior' Carpenter is that they invariably establish the equation with people from lower classes (Merrill, Scudder, Adi), partly perhaps to evade the complexes and self-consciousness they would face in case they opted persons from their own class (H.O. Meredith, Clive). The happy union of two men, Maurice and Alec Scudder, is no doubt improbable. But in this novel at least, Forster wanted that the law of possibility should take precedence over the law of probability. The 'happy ever after' union of the two men is the author's wishfulfilment and it is realized by him without ever having to explain the question of its probability. "Happiness is its keynote which by the way has had an unexpected result; it has made the book more difficult to publish", wrote Forster in his 'Terminal Note'.

Maurice has many things in common with The Longest Journey as both these novels draw on most of Forster's experiences of childhood and youth. The school and Cambridge experiences are heavily dwelt upon although the careers of the two protagonists take sufficiently divergent shapes. Maurice, after Clive's
betrayal into marriage, opts for a homosexual relation with
Alec (a character moulded after Stephen Vonham of
The Longest Journey) and goes with him as a friend-lover.

In The Longest Journey, Ansell establishes an instinctive
and instant friendship with Stephen after an initial fight.
Alec, like Stephen, is man of nature and natural man and the
greenwood to which Maurice and Alec escape is the Rousseau's
prestine world that exists beyond the reach of law and society.
Nature provides the ideal habitat to the two 'outlaws' and
the happy ending of the novel, though artistically a bit
obtrusive, points towards the possibility of the perfect union
of two men devoted to each other. The proliferation of
homo-couples today in many societies particularly in the
western countries is a testimony to the authenticity of this
prophetic vision. What in Forster's time looked only a
remote and wishful possibility is a distinct reality in modern
times where homosexuality has taken the form of a recognised
social institution.

Maurice Hall's progress from a school-going lad to a
social rebel is not without painful struggle. He is, at the
point of leaving his preparatory school, a confused, lonely
boy having a curiosity to fathom the dark realms of adult
life. On a school picnic his teacher Mr. Ducie offers to
enlighten him on the subject of sex. Maurice the only son of
his widowed mother hesitates saying "I am never to do anything
I should be ashamed to have mother see me do" (M, S). Mr. Ducie
draws a diagram of human sex organs on the sandy beach and
tries to explain the genital functions in the affected manner
of a teacher. He tells Maurice the mysteries of 'love and Life'.
Maurice, though interested, is not much overwhelmed by these
'facts' of life and remarks "I think I shall not marry" (M, S).
But soon after as they leave the spot Mr. Ducie realizes that
he had forgotten to scratch out those 'infernal diagrams' on
the beach-sand and runs nervously to erase them. This exposes
his hypocrisy and Maurice thinks he is a liar, "a coward,
he's told me nothing" (M, S). The 'lesson' leaves Maurice even
more perplexed.

Maurice's stay at Cambridge is again similar to Rickie's
and Forster's days of emancipated existence there. Maurice
establishes a genuine friendship with Clive Durham at
Cambridge. This relationship gradually takes thinly guised
homosexual overtones. Though not a physical relation, it
includes physical horse-play, hair stroking and even embraces.

Their relations continue to be intoxicatingly intimate.
They are haunted by each other even in their dreams so much so
that many a time Maurice utters loudly the name of Clive while
asleep. The nightmares disturb Maurice throughout the novel
showing how deep these relations have gone into his sub-conscious
self. Even Rickie's desire in his childhood of having a
brother friend - "shall I ever have a friend" (LJ, 32) - is
indicative of Forster's unconscious desire of having a boy as a lifelong friend.

Maurice is, like Forster's other protagonists, a fatherless boy dominated by the overpossessive mother. His psychological frame is naturally moulded by the dwarfing influence of the over-cautious mother. We have seen how the influence of an overprotective mother has far-reaching effect upon the son, especially when the boy is the only son in the family. Ronald A. LeTorre's analysis of such a situation is relevant here as it explains why such a child is likely to grow homosexual tendencies in his later life:

Overpossessiveness, overprotection, overcloseness to the child, particularly by the parents of the opposite sex, may inhibit the child's sense of uniqueness or his sense of separateness from that parent. A sense of separateness from the opposite gender identity, a close bond between a mother and a male child, for example, confuses the child by making him feel as if he is one with the mother (and therefore a part of a female) as well as male (which he is).

A.L. Rouse in his book *Homosexuals in History* expresses the same opinion about Forster's upbringing in the feminine environment when he remarks:

Forster never knew his father; and his early upbringing was dominated by three women: his great aunt Marianne Thornton, an affectionate but dictatorial woman; his lively and witty maternal grandmother, whom he adored and later remembered affectionately in the character of Mrs. Honeychurch in *A Room With A View*; and
his mother, who provided a series of happy homes, accompanied the novelist in his early travels abroad, and continued to influence him until her death in 1945. This female dominated world appears in various guises in the novels and probably helped to determine the pattern of his psychological development. Probably Forster was always an upper-middle-class lady.

At school the loneliness and the longing for a friend, again, are similar in both Maurice and his creator. The following lines poignantly reveal the longing for the friend:

Then he would relive the face and would emerge yearning with tenderness and longing to be kind to everyone, because his friend wished it, and to be good that his friend might become more fond of him. Misery was somehow mixed up with all this happiness. It seemed as certain that he hadn't a friend as that he had one, and he would find a lonely place for tears...(M,15-16).

This shows how desperately Maurice feels the need for a friend's appreciation and to what extremes he could go to win his favour. A longing for a friend, even more than a girl friend or a wife, was at the base of Forster's innermost self. The longing for a true friend persisted in him till the last days of his life. When in 1932-33, Bob Buckingham, a longtime friend, announced his plans to marry the news hit him hard. After this marriage, Forster suffered from hysterical rages and threw himself against the furniture. Later on he reconciled himself to the situation but developed a fierce rivalry with his wife May. Relating this episode Furbank writes in Forster's biography:
Bob Buckingham now found himself a prize disputed between two claimants. The great issue was his leisure-time. Forster felt he had a claim on it, or at any rate he meant to assert one. It was a silent fight between him and May, and to a good extent he was the winner, making Bob give him his half-days-off and other odd hours during the week... It made May feel neglected and jealous, also a little bewildered, but she kept her feelings to herself.

Buckingham, continues Furbank, "admired Forster extravagantly, considered him a 'mage' and a 'sublime' malcontent and noticing-perceptively - Forster's suppressed love for the exotic." Forster's attraction for Bob obviously carried homosexual overtones.

The love-affair between Maurice and Clive closely follows the pattern of the intimate relations existing between Forster and H.O. Meredith in their undergraduate days at the King's College, Cambridge. Furbank gives a first hand account of Forster's initiation into homosexual relations:

It seems to have been an affair very much on the lines of that of Maurice and Clive in Maurice - that is to say, it was not a physical relationship, or at least went no further than kisses and embraces. This was by mutual agreement, according to Forster - though one is sceptical of such 'mutual agreements'. It is not clear who took the initiative; most likely Meredith... But if H.O.M. was the initiator, it was Forster for whom the affair counted most. For him it was immense and epoch-making; it was, he felt, up to him. He counted this as the second grand discovery of his youth - his emancipation from Christianity being the first - and for the moment it seemed to him as though all the rest of his existence would not be too long to work out the consequences.
Forster's gradual discovery of his latent homosexual nature had life-long impact on his personality and if any other 'turning point' in his life was as significant as this it was the 'sensation' of the touch on his back of Merrill's hand at Edward Carpenter's Milthorpe residence. The first discovery of Forster's youth - his emancipation from Christianity - too is lengthily dwelt upon by him in *Maurice* because Maurice, as well as Clive, pass through a great mental ordeal before he becomes a non-believer. For both of them Christianity means believing not in what one is but in what one ought to be. The denial of body and supremacy of soul over it is for them the crippling of personality. "Those who base their conduct upon what they are rather than upon what they ought to be, always must throw it [Christianity] over in the end..." (*M, 62).*

For Clive Durham, the Greek ideal of reverencing the body and its passions was more rational than the Christian command that carnal passions were undesirable and, therefore, sinful. *The Phaedrus* of Plato contained for him a greater wisdom, who believed in making "the most of what I have" (*M, 62).* The abyss created out of the depleting faith in the Gospels was adequately compensated by 'a new guide for life' in the form of Greek philosophy of cherishing the soul through the body. "Not to crush it down, not vainly to wish that it were something else, but to cultivate it in such ways as will not vex either God or man" (*M, 62) is the revelation that emancipates both Clive
and Maurice from the confusion of guilt and sin. Cambridge where "Harmony had succeeded asceticism" (M,62), paves their way to the enlightenment.

The gradual awareness of the 'self-nature' through Clive's friendship is painful but elevating experience for Maurice. The experience is equally wholesome for Clive. Though intellectually both of them gave up Christian faith even at the cost of offending their families, at the unconscious level both are still troubled by the sense of guilt throughout their love-affair.

Had he [Clive] trusted the body, there would have been no disaster, but by linking their love to the past he linked it to the present, and roused in his friends' mind the conventions and the fear of the law. (M,64).

Maurice's recognition of his own homosexuality is arrived at through a series of agonizing moments. After having grudgingly rebuked Clive for his disclosure of love for him, Maurice has many sleepless nights:

The frenzy...consumed him. It worked inwards till it touched the root whence body and soul both spring, the 'I' that he had been trained to obscure, and, realized at last, doubled its power and grew superhuman...New worlds broke loose in him at this and he saw from the vastness of his ruin what ecstasy he had lost, what a communion! (M,51).

Maurice realizes for the first time that so far he had lied to himself and "been fed upon lies" (M,53). He
decides that now he would live straight.

He would not — and this was his test-pretend to care about women when the only sex that attracted him was his own. He loved men and always had loved them. He longed to embrace them and mingle his being with theirs. (M, 53).

After this self-awareness, Maurice becomes 'a man'. He gains the confidence to face the world with this realization and believing that Clive shares with him this new revelation, he decides to give this new found love a trial before the whole world.

The idealism and the brutality than [sic] ran through boyhood had joined at last, and twined into love. No one might want such love, but he could not feel ashamed of it, because it was "he", neither body or soul, nor body and soul, but "he" working through both. He still suffered, yet a sense of triumph had come elsewhere. Pain had shown him a niche behind the world's judgements, whither he could withdraw. (M, 54).

After he realizes that he is a homosexual, two major incidents mark the career of Maurice. First is the joy-ride he and Clive have in the countryside on a motor-bike. Maurice is too much drunk of the 'discovery' of his love for Clive that he defies the instructions of the Dean before leaving for this ride and for this arrogant behaviour he is sent down from Cambridge. Despite his mother's persuasions, he refuses to apologize for his rude behaviour and goes to the stock-exchange for a career in business. The second incident proves
even more disastrous. Clive, after his graduation from Cambridge, settles down at his country farm-house and during an ailment feels attracted towards the nurse. He feels that his homosexual nature has undergone a transformation and that he has become heterosexual. Gradually he feels repelled by Maurice's masculinity. Before leaving for Greece, Clive discloses to Maurice that he has become 'normal' and plans to marry Anne after his return from Greece. The news shocks him but he thinks that Clive will be his old self very soon. He himself had tried to love a girl but failed to arouse his interest in female sex. To clive he says, "Can the leopard change his spots? Clive, you're in a muddle. It's part of your general health...You and I are outlaws" (M,11). But Maurice ultimately becomes convinced of Clive's change from homosexuality to heterosexuality when he finally marries Anne. His shock at Clive's marriage closely resembles and anticipates Forster's shock at Bob's marriage with May in 1932 and is a proof of the sincerity and genuineness of the truth of the feelings and emotions of the characters in Maurice.

In the meantime Alec Scudder, a low-caste gamekeeper at Clive's farm, is attracted mysteriously towards Maurice and the two find complete satisfaction in each other's love.

It is now a commonly known fact that Forster, partly to avoid embarrassment in his class and partly to tempt the needy people, established chance relations with people of
lower classes at obscure places. He even visited as far places as Stockholm to escape his mother's interference in the fulfilment of his sexual needs. Furbank refers to these chance sex-experiences:

...he would every now and then spend an evening with one or other of their proteges - guardsmen, window cleaners, reformed or unreformed burglars or the out-of-work. He grew friendly with several of them, keeping up with them as friends in a desultory way for years... On one occasion he was robbed, but of nothing of great value, and it did not perturb him.

The bond between Alec and Maurice is gradually strengthened to the dismay and discomfiture of Clive who raises the class-question and tries to dissuade Maurice from Alec. Maurice meanwhile, undergoes a queer mental disturbance. Once in a train he finds himself tempted to seduce a handsome cadet. It was sheer lust and consequently Maurice feels the need to consult a physician with the belief that the doctor may put him on the 'normal' course. The medical consultations prove counterproductive and he finally accepts the fact of his homosexuality. He decides to live for ever with Alec Scudder even at the cost of being socially ostracized. To escape the law, the two lovers decide to live in self-imposed exile and the novel ends on an optimistic note that the two lovers lived happily ever after.

Obviously Forster wanted to give a happy lease of life to the two lovers and wanted to see the possibility whether
two persons of the same sex could lead a reasonably happy life in each other's company. The formidable union of two men was strong enough to face the storm of protests from the world and the society. "Two men can defy the world", (p.25). John Colmer quotes Forster from his Commonplace Book in the King's College Library, "...two people putting each other into salvation is the only theme I find worthwhile. No rescuer and rescuer, not the alternating performance of good turns, but it takes two to make a 'hero'."

Maurice is, thus, a study in self-introspection. Being a homosexual himself, Forster wanted to ascertain the chances of two homosexuals living a happy life together. The novel showed him this possibility. When he showed the manuscripts of the novel to a few of his friends, their approval of the treatment of this theme convinced him of the possibility of success of such a love affair as exists between Maurice and Alec. It further strengthened Forster's resolve not to marry after he had seen the consequences of an 'invalid's' marriage in The Longest Journey. Both these autobiographical novels demonstrated to Forster that the marriage of such an 'abnormal' man as himself is doomed and that he could best live a happy life in single blessedness or, alternatively, he could explore the possibility of a happy life if two men could love each other like Maurice and Alec. Forster's own long affair with Mohammed Adi in Egypt during 1916-17 fit into such an experiment of
mutual understanding and affection.

As we saw earlier, many of the short stories in *Life to Come* are based on real life encounters with strangers, especially the people from lower classes. Curiously enough, almost each of Forster's male protagonists is invariably attracted towards somewhat crude and extroverted males. Philip bears a secret liking for Gino Carella and confesses to have this attraction in the last pages of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. Rickie is attracted not only by the 'son of the earth' Stephen Uenham but also secretly praises the beauty of Gerald, the athlete. Beebe has man-to-man understanding with George at the bathing pool. It is again the physical grit of the Wilcoxes which compellingly attracts the Schlegel sisters towards them in *Howard End*. Even Fielding is impressed by the well-built physique of Aziz and this liking plays an important role in consolidation of friendship between the two. Maurice Hall is seduced more by the physical prowess of Alec Scudder than that of the scholarly Clive. Forster is on record having explicitly mentioned his inclinations in plain words: "I want to love a strong young man of the lower classes and be loved by him and even hurt by him." Apart from his homosexual preference, he also frankly confesses some traits bordering on sado-masochism. No wonder Forster and T.E. Lawrence were such great admirers of each other. Explaining the psychological significance of this peculiar divide between the 'ego and id' in Forster's
...In much of Forster's early fiction the beloved is split into two selves: one spiritual and intellectual, and one sensuous. The latter is of the earth and from the lower classes. The parallels between life and fiction are real.

Obviously there is a close correspondence between Forster's real experience and his fiction. His preference for extroverted people of lower social standing is an open secret today. Mohammed Adi, Kanaya, Vicaryla (Steward of a Ship) are only a few examples out of the innumerable acquaintances he made with such people during his visits abroad. In Maurice Forster is trying to make a clean breast of the guilt-ridden self by justifying and eulogizing the man-to-man love without any consideration of race, caste or creed. His homosexuality influenced his fiction as much as it dominated his personal life. Pinchin considers his homosexuality the single most important dominating factor in his fiction.

"E.M. Forster's homosexuality shaped his writing - I'd venture to say, more than any other force did. And it influenced those works that do not explicitly deal with homosexuals every bit it affected Maurice and the stories in The Life to Come," she observes.

The split of Maurice's love for Clive and Alec has puzzled some critics. "When he should be loving Alec, Maurice
is out chastising Clive," remarks Pinchin. Stephen Spender has tried to explain this split by defining two distinct types of homosexual relationships, one based on "identity" and the other on "otherness". Simply stated, a man's instinct of love has two sides, one in which he wants to establish an intellectual, emotional and spiritual union with his beloved. But if the relation remains limited only to this aspect, as Maurice's with Clive in the novel, or Forster's with H.O. Meredith at Cambridge, it remains a Platonic and therefore incomplete because the physical aspect of love remains unfulfilled. For completion, love requires to be satisfied both emotionally and physically. For physical fulfilment Forster's protagonist establishes relations with a man, generally from inferior class, with whom he can have an uninhibited affair free from self-consciousness and hesitation that would generally accompany his interaction with a man of equal intelligence and rank. Moreover, with a person of low intellect and inferior class, the 'cultured' protagonist can, and does, exploit his inferiority complex thus fulfilling his desire on easier terms. How compelling the urge to gratify the physical side of sex was for Forster can be judged from the following excerpts from a long letter he wrote to Carpenter on 12th April, 1916:

Dear Edward, you continue the greatest comfort [sic]. I don't want to grouse, as so much is all right with me, but this physical loneliness has gone on for
too many months, and with it springs and

grows a wretched fastidiousness... It's
dreadful to live with an unsatisfied craving,
now and then smothering it but never killing
it or even wanting to. If I could get one
solid night it would be something. 40

It is this split, between the emotional and the physical,
which divides Forster's loyalty between the two selves, one with
which he can identify himself, share his innermost concerns
and establish spiritual love. The 'other' is the one which is
most unlike himself, uninhibited, free, spontaneous, crude, wild
and rustic. Pinchin underlines this division when she says:

...Forster's central characters are torn.
Like Rickie, they are always faced with
two beloveds, one spiritual and one
physical, and in all cases their most
successful relationship is with a
Mediterranean man or British peasant,
with an earthly mate... Forster's
protagonists search for a beloved and
for themselves but find that they and
their doubles are split. Although Rickie
and Maurice attempt love with Ansell and
Clive, consummation can only come through
the peasant beauty of a Stephen or an Alec. 41

Jeffrey Meyers observes that "Forster takes an
extremely deterministic view of homosexuality and tends to
blame society (he had 'been fed on lies') for the problems
that are partially due to Maurice's lack of self-insight and
moral courage." 42 Of course one has to agree with Meyers
that the novel is marred by over-sentimentalism and lack of
imagination. He concludes:

The close similarity between The Longest Journey
and Maurice suggest imaginative limitations
of the latter novel, for the homosexual that
is oblique, ambiguous and interesting in the earlier work becomes flat, banal and dull when it surfaces in Maurice...The happy ending of Maurice was alien to Forster's experience, for Maurice intends to live with Alec 'outside class, without relations or money' and this is precisely what Forster (who lived with his mother until he was 56) could never bring himself to do.43

But this last argument of Meyers is a bit misplaced because Forster, in the 'Terminal Note' to the Novel, himself makes his intentions - of making the ending of the novel happy - clear without seeking any excuse and fully conscious of the fact that many readers would object to such an artificial ending:

A happy ending was imperative...I was determined that in fiction away two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows, and in a sense Maurice and Alec still roam the greenwood. I dedicated it "To a Happier Year" and not altogether vainly. Happiness is its keynote - which by the way has had an unexpected result: it has made the book more difficult to publish. (M, 236).

The critical difficulties with regard to its thematic execution and intentions have cropped up because critics have generally ignored the difference between this book and other novels of Forster. While all other novels are fiction proper, Maurice cannot be placed in this category for the simple reason that it was not written as a 'novel'. Forster wrote it as an exercise in self-introspection. Although he has created characters in it with proper delineation and distancing them...
from the self, it is still an experiment in which the writer has tried to study himself by mirroring his innermost physical instincts into a story. Moreover he wanted to get rid of the 'stifling', 'smothering' and 'unsatisfied' urge which he could neither suppress nor kill and channelize them into the easiest available mode that is writing. *Maurice* is therefore not a novel strictly in the sense of formal fiction. It is rather a daring interior monologue with the self negotiating with the inner turbulence.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1To the question, "Do any of your characters represent yourself at all?" Forster replied, "Rickle more than any." (See Wilfred Stone, The Cave and the Mountain, p. 186). Furbank quotes him (in the context of The Longest Journey)" "I wrote it neither for my friends nor the public, but because it was weighing on me." (See E.M. Forster: A Life, Vol. II, p. 14).


3Martin, op. cit., p. 46.

4Wilde, p. 23.


6Ibid., p. 201.


10Trilling, op. cit., p. 67.

12 Ibid., p. 125.


14 Transference of homosexuality into lameness in this novel is referred to by many a critic. Giving an account of the Figsbury Rings (Cadbury Rings in the novel) Furbank records Forster's chance encounter with a lame, rustic shepherd. He transferred his lameness to Rickie and his rusticity to Stephen Wonham. "Then this incident on Figsbury Rings supervened, combining in one symbol so many elements with meaning for him: the ideal English landscape, heroic human quality in a working class guise and an inherited handicap (as it might be homosexuality) courageously overcome" (E.M. Forster: A Life, Vol. I, p. 119).

15 See Philip Gardner, pp. 433-84.

16 Stallybrass, op. cit. p. 17.

17 Meyers, p. 9.

18 See "Terminal Note", Maurice, p. 235.


20 Ibid.

A peculiar fact that has generally escaped the attention of critics is that none of Forster's protagonists has a living father and most of them have only a dominating oppressive mother.


Forster praised T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* for, among other things, its "sexual frankness which would cause most authors to be run in by the police", (See Abinger Harvest, p. 167). Lawrence on the other hand showered his encomiums upon Forster's homosexual story "Dr. Woolacott" declaring it
the "most powerful thing I ever read...more charged with the real high explosive than anything I've ever met yet" (Letter to Forster, 27 Oct. 1927 quoted in Life to Come and Other Stories, p. 13).

36 Pinchin, op. cit., p. 86.
37 Ibid., p. 87.
38 Ibid., p. 96.
39 Ibid.
41 Pinchin, p. 96.
42 Meyers, p. 103.
43 Ibid., pp. 106-07.