

“It feels like yesterday!”

*Reading Gay Heartbreak in E. M. Forster’s
Maurice and André Aciman’s
Call Me By Your Name*

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Abstract

This thesis explores E. M. Forster and André Aciman's descriptions of gay heartbreak in *Maurice* and *Call Me By Your Name*. Following the definitions given by *Oxford English Dictionary*, common patterns during heartbreak as presented by psychology specialist Annicken Martinez-Aasen and typical traits of those who experience rejection, in addition to those who reject, as presented by Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell, I explore the protagonists' experiences as presented by the authors. The thesis examines how political and social contexts regarding homosexuality affect the emotional process of heartbreak. By close-reading the authors' descriptions of heartbreak, I suggest reasons for my findings regarding similarities and differences with Maurice and Elio's emotional experiences.

The thesis starts with a close-reading of the authors' descriptions of heartbreak before it compares their narration techniques, their representations of self-revelation regarding homosexuality, multiple presented causes resulting in heartbreak and the authors' views on human emotions. As Forster and Aciman explore many similar aspects regarding heartbreak, they appear to pay different amounts of attention towards certain emotional details.

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Introduction

Both *Maurice* by E. M. Forster and *Call Me By Your Name* by André Aciman illustrate similar narratives of male homosexual relationships. As a result of these romances, of which one is set in the early 1900s and one in the 1980s, Forster and Aciman describe the losses of romantic loved ones. The reactions to the characters' losses of love presented in both novels will in this thesis be referred to as 'heartbreak'. The meaning behind 'heartbreak' is however in need of definition in order to explore the use of it in the novels. The term will therefore be defined by way of introduction with the help of *Oxford English Dictionary*, Annicken Martinez-Aasen and Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell. After looking into the complications homosexuality has had on love, and more specifically the losses of love, the thesis will examine the authors' ways of communicating this phenomenon with the similarities and differences that occur in the novels, and what the reasons for these findings might be.

Considering that there are few secondary sources offering detailed analysis of how heartbreak is communicated through literary works, this thesis will present a contribution to the discussion concerning the illustration of heartbreak as a result of rejection in gay love stories. There are naturally less secondary works examining Aciman's interpretation and presentation of homosexuality, and even less about his illustration of heartbreak, compared to Forster. However, I was successful in making contact with Aciman myself with the result that this thesis benefits from, and engages, with some of his own insights.

According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'heartbreak' is defined as either an "overwhelming, unbearable, or intense sorrow or emotional distress, esp. as a result of bereavement or the end of a romantic relationship; the fact or experience of having a broken heart" or "an occasion or instance of overwhelming or intense sorrow or emotional distress; a person who or thing which causes this" ("Heartbreak"). Both explanations give the impression of sadness being the main and overwhelming aspect of someone's emotional experience. The 'heart' can be defined differently. The use of it in 'heartbreak' seems to allude to a figurative or symbolic meaning of the word, which according to *Oxford English Dictionary* can be "[...] considered as the seat of love, attachment, or affection, or as representing a person's affections, devotion, loyalty, etc." ("Heart"). The breakage therefore seems to affect the development of someone's love and affection for another person, which results in an "intense sorrow", being heartbreak. As the first definition of 'heartbreak' describes the emotions

especially taking part at the end of a romantic relationship, the storylines in *Maurice* and *Call Me By Your Name* show great relevance.

Annicken Martinez-Aasen is a psychology specialist at Oslo Psykologklinikk, and when explaining heartbreak (via the equivalent Norwegian term “kjærlighetssorg”), Martinez-Aasen first points to developmental psychology. As a part of evolution, humans have developed an automatic “program” being an innate ability. This human program makes us seek protection and safety as a part of our own survival, and as newborns this aims towards our closest family members. The bond of relation built in this scenario is a result of the need for attachment and is particularly aimed at one or a few close relatives. This specific need for attachment has grown to become a natural part of the human body solely because of its desire: survival. When a baby cries, it seeks its mother. If something is unsafe, there is a safe base to return to. As we grow older, our lovers, being our boyfriends or girlfriends, become that new relation that our “program” seeks as the most important attachment, resulting in a safe environment. If we were to lose this attachment as adults, the results are not as fatal as with young newborns. However, they might feel that way, which leads to strong emotions as a part of heartbreak (Martinez-Aasen).

As Martinez-Aasen suggests, our existence might feel threatened when losing this attachment. This usually leads to a mixture of emotions that culminates in grief and a struggle to perceive a future alone. Considering how one might feel a threat towards one’s survival, having thoughts about death might also occur. These are natural reactions. Nevertheless, our reactions depend on the length of a relationship and the amount of attachment made. Personal experiences and one’s own vulnerability also play part in the reaction made from a lost attachment (Martinez-Aasen).

Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell also touch upon how a relation made between mother and child might affect the romantic attachment made between adults, which strengthens the credibility and relevance of Martinez-Aasen’s claims (390). They also examine the process of those who reject and how this affects the one feeling heartbroken. Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell refer to Tesser and Rosen’s term known as the “mum effect” (1975). The “mum effect” is according to Tesser and Rosen named from the “tendency to keep mum”, meaning to keep quiet (Tesser & Rosen 193). The effect is a common reaction amongst those who reject others, involving a difficulty in telling admirers that they are unwanted and “[...] especially telling them *why* one finds them unlovable [...]” (Baumeister et al. 380). As a result of the rejector feeling uncomfortable, they usually avoid their admirer

passively, or even reject in a manner that might lead to misunderstandings. Additionally, the rejector might feel even more uncomfortable as the “would-be lover” does not have any interest in hearing the rejection, which supposedly might lead to more misunderstandings as the discomfort increases. The “would-be lover” might even ignore the rejection, which complicates the situation further, and probably leads to an even longer process of heartbreak (Baumeister et al. 392). Therefore, the heartbreak process could arguably escalate as well as lengthen itself, if factors like these play part with both the rejector and the “would-be lover”.

The emotional aspects that usually occur when one is being rejected depend on the self and one’s involvement in the one who rejects the romance, which was briefly mentioned by Martinez-Aasen. Lowered self-esteem as a result of humiliation is particularly central when experiencing rejection, and a typical pattern is “[...] for heartbroken lovers to express their grief, perhaps assign blame, accept the failure, and then go on with their lives” (Baumeister et al. 379). Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell emphasize the importance of the emotions heartbreak results in, which “[...] stimulates motivations connected with restoring self-esteem” (Baumeister et al. 380). The process of heartbreak is therefore seemingly an important part of improving oneself mentally, despite how it is an emotionally draining process while it takes place. The two studies presented in their article, which includes autobiographical stories with emotions connected to being the rejector and being the “would-be lover”, also confirm the normality in rebuilding one’s self-esteem after a rejection (Baumeister et al. 383). The heartbroken lovers and their actions while undergoing this process of restoring one’s self-esteem will therefore be important to keep in mind when analyzing the protagonists in *Maurice* and *Call Me By Your Name* due to how both protagonists experience rejection.

Edward Morgan Forster was born 1879 in London. He attended Tonbridge School and later King’s College Cambridge in 1897 before he became a successful author. He published, amongst other works, six novels in total: *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howards End* (1910), *A Passage to India* (1924) and lastly, *Maurice* (1971) (Forster i). *Maurice* was published after Forster’s death in June of 1970, and there were various reasons why he never wanted it published during his lifetime (Leavitt xii).

Dating from 1913, *Maurice* is about the story of Maurice, a young man who grows up with his mother and sisters. In the process, he realizes his sexuality as he develops romantic feelings toward his friend, Clive, whom he meets at Cambridge. After their secretive affair of

three years ends, he develops further feelings for Clive's gamekeeper, Alec. As the novel explores homosexual desires, Forster never wanted it published, which he explains in the Terminal Note. Forster himself based the story on his own experiences. He visited Edward Carpenter at Milthorpe where Carpenter's companion George Merrill touched Forster's lower back. This specific touch created a reaction within Forster that led to him writing *Maurice*. After his visit, Forster traveled straight to Harrogate, where his mother was "taking a cure" and started writing (Forster 219). The story was finished in 1914, but because of its content, Forster did not wish to publish it. As he mentions himself, "if it ended unhappily, with a lad dangling from a noose or with a suicide pact, all would be well [...]" (Forster 220). The reason for this conclusion was probably due to how homosexuals were portrayed in the early 20th century. To not let a homosexual character survive homosexual desires would supposedly please the society Forster was familiar with. Although Maurice experiences heartbreak in *Maurice*, Forster ends the novel with a protagonist who has moved on and even found a new lover, which was illegal at the time. This sort of fiction would not necessarily be received well in the England of 1914, as Leavitt mentions in the introduction to *Maurice* (xii). The novel was nevertheless published posthumously in 1971, with a response Forster had somewhat foreseen. Even so, *Maurice* was still made into a film in 1987 (Leavitt xiv).

André Aciman was born in 1951 in Egypt. His family was expelled from Egypt in 1965. He lived briefly in Italy before his family settled in New York in 1968. Today, Aciman is a writer as well as a distinguished professor at the Graduate Center of City University of New York ("André Aciman: The Meaning and Message of *Call Me By Your Name*" 00:35 – 01:07). Amongst other works, Aciman has at this point written five novels: *Call Me By Your Name* (2007), *Eight White Nights* (2010), *Harvard Square* (2013), *Enigma Variations* (2017) and *Find Me* (2019) (Aciman ii). Although Aciman's mother tongues are French and Italian, he still writes his novels in English ("André Aciman: The Meaning and Message of *Call Me By Your Name*" 02:31 – 02:40).

Call Me By Your Name is the story of Elio, a seventeen year old boy spending his summer at the Italian Riviera with his parents. During this summer, Elio's father receives a house guest, Oliver, who stays with them for a few weeks. During Oliver's stay, Elio and Oliver develops a romantic affair filled with uncertainty and fear of consequences, yet a dominating emotion of lust towards each other. On the sideline of Elio and Oliver's romance are characters such as Anchise, the groundskeeper, and Marzia, Elio's female love interest. The focus is however mostly on Elio and Oliver's relationship. When writing *Call Me By*

Your Name, Aciman wanted to communicate a sort of conflict he has felt himself. In an interview, Aciman emphasizes an inner conflict by saying “[...] everything about me is a mess [...]” when referring to his early experiences of moving around the world and having multiple mother tongues (“André Aciman: The Meaning and Message of *Call Me By Your Name*” 02:56 – 03:00). Other personal experiences also had an impact on the characters and the novel’s storyline.

When asked about the reason for why Aciman chose a male protagonist, which led to a homosexual romance instead of a heterosexual one, he has one specific memory in mind. When Aciman was ten years old, he had a fascination with a seven year older boy at the beach. The fascination led to a sort of obsession due to Aciman’s strong wish for a friendship. As an older man, this memory resurrected when writing *Call Me By Your Name*, which he wanted to explore as he wondered if what he wanted as a child was more than a friendship (“André Aciman: The Meaning and Message of *Call Me By Your Name*” 08:36 – 09:26). Although Aciman has not expressed personal homosexuality himself, he still expresses the importance of accepting children’s curiosity and accepting particularly homosexuality when referring to *Call Me By Your Name* (“André Aciman: The Meaning and Message of *Call Me By Your Name*” 10:10 – 10:45).

Both novels illustrate homosexual relationships and must be seen within the context of a wider literary and cultural discussion around homosexuality and sexuality in general. According to Nils Axel Nissen, sexuality in itself is more of a modern idea rather than something natural to the human body. There has been created a system to categorize sexual preferences, which has only been done in later history. Therefore, the whole concept of homosexuality is seemingly only a social construction to categorize a person’s romantic desires (Nissen 20). Any desire, and supposedly emotions resulting from losing an object of desire, are therefore seemingly equal in terms of heterosexual love compared to homosexual love. A similar statement has been made by John D’Emilio, who argues that homosexual men and women have not always existed, but have emerged as “a product of history” (D’Emilio 469). As Martinez-Aasen similarly describes the process of heartbreak, she points to the need of attachment and its’ importance to *all* humans, and not particularly one or a few sexualities. Additionally, Carole Jurkiewicz emphasizes that “[...] the diversity amongst those identifying as gay is as diverse as those identifying as heterosexual”, which again indicates that heartbreak experienced differently with homosexuals compared to heterosexuals is simply an unrealistic suggestion (Jurkiewicz 152).

Even though homosexual desires are no different to heterosexual desires, the way homosexuals have been treated might have affected their emotional processes of romance. In England, where *Maurice* is set, the Buggery Act of 1533 was the first act to punish homosexuality with the conviction of death. In 1861, death penalty of sodomy, involving male homosexuality, was replaced by “a minimum of 10 years imprisonment” (Dryden). The sodomy was, according to Nissen, originally viewed as actions made of people who were so horrid that no one in society could recognize oneself in them (Nissen 27). The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 made any act of male homosexuality illegal where even unwitnessed, private acts were subjects of prosecution (Dryden). As Nissen argues, and which has been substantiated through these political acts, it is only in recent history that people have made homosexuals more of a minority. They were not as closed off by society in earlier years simply because the categorization was not socially constructed yet (Nissen 22). The issues that arose for male homosexuals only took place because the categorization of sexualities and unwanted behavior took form in the late 19th and early 20th century. This is the period where they were assigned a symbolic meaning, which was only created by the ones who did not categorize themselves as homosexuals (Nissen 27).

As a result of the political conditions in England in the late 19th and early 20th century, it was seemingly an advantage to keep the romance unrevealed to the public, considering that the danger of being discovered could lead to imprisonment. Being rejected at the same time as hiding one’s homosexual love life would presumably lead to even more emotional issues. Due to these circumstances, one would probably avoid public expressions of love, which makes Forster’s *Maurice* interestingly relevant considering how the novel was published after his death, although it was finished in 1914, as previously mentioned. It was not until the Wolfenden Report of 1957 got published that changes slightly began to take place for homosexual rights. However, this was long after the story of *Maurice* was set (Dryden). In the Terminal Note, Forster even expresses doubt regarding an implementation of the Wolfenden Report (Forster 224). Nevertheless, despite Forster’s predictions, the Wolfenden Report was implemented by the government in the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 (Dryden).

Forster lived in England and was supposedly affected by English society when creating the storyline of *Maurice*. Aciman on the other hand has lived in Egypt and Italy, but mostly the United States. Gayle S. Rubin describes the American politics concerning treatment of homosexuals in recent decades. In the 1950s, there were made changes to the views of sexuality in the United States. The term “sex offender” became a fearful

phenomenon, which replaced other debated topics, such as prostitution and masturbation. The following decades included homosexuals being viewed as out of the ordinary, and FBI even “[...] began systematic surveillance and harassment of homosexuals which lasted well into the 1970s” (Rubin 5).

On the 28th of June in 1969, a year after Aciman moved to the U.S., the Stonewall Riots hit New York City. As the 1960s were filled with negativity towards the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community, a riot was sparked when the police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club located in New York. The result of the police raid was a gathering of hundreds of people who protested against the police’s actions, which led to chaotic circumstances. This has since been viewed as an important spark in LGBT political activism (“Stonewall Riots”). The rise of gay liberation continued into the 1970s, and activism had made some progress for the acceptance of homosexual people by the 1980s. However, there were still struggles seen with “[...] the increased power of sexual conservatives in the Christian Right, the New Right, the Republican Party and national politics [...]” as well as the rise of “the AIDS epidemic”, as mentioned by Marc Stein (143). Although there were religious political difficulties as well as health issues including gay men particularly, the main focus was on the health aspect brought in by AIDS. Although AIDS had a major negative impact on people’s health in the 1980s, it managed to signal a “[...] reorientation and rejection of gay and lesbian politics” as well as it “[...] greatly influenced the process of social change in the United States” (Stein 143). As *Call Me By Your Name* is set in the mid-eighties, both political and social circumstances in the U.S. at this time might become relevant, as Aciman was living in the U.S. at this point (Aciman 105).

Although Aciman has lived in the U.S. most of his life and has supposedly seen more of how the gay movement has progressed in America, *Call Me By Your Name* is still set in Italy. The timeline with history regarding the LGBT community in Italy illustrates however similar circumstances to the one in the U.S. The Italian people fought for gay liberation in the 1970s and 1980s, being in many ways influenced by the U.S. as well as other countries around the world, such as France, Germany, Australia, Mexico and the Netherlands (Nardi 573). Therefore, Elio, being familiar with the Italian politics, and Oliver, being familiar with the American politics, presumably have similar views on the public acceptance of homosexuality.

When referring to heartbreak in this thesis, I will refer to *Oxford English Dictionary* and Annicken Martinez-Aasen's definition of heartbreak when analyzing the characters after their breakups. Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell's article will also be taken into consideration when examining the symptoms presented by both authors. Additionally, I will show awareness and discuss communication regarding emotions in literature as I compare the authors' descriptions of heartbreak. The political history regarding male homosexuality will be taken into consideration when examining the protagonists' emotional impacts, if it shows any relevance to the descriptions of the characters' heartbreaks.

1 Maurice

In the Terminal Note of *Maurice*, which Forster wrote in September of 1960, he mentions Maurice and Clive's relationship and metaphorically compares Maurice's romantic emotions to a "[...] soul released from prison" (Forster 221). As Clive decides to turn to women and end his homosexual encounters, Maurice is according to Forster sent back to prison by his former lover (Forster 221). As Martinez-Aasen suggests in our interview, it might be easier in today's society to suffer from heartbreak openly due to a modern openness regarding our emotions. Experiencing heartbreak in earlier periods would supposedly lead to a more severe heartbreak, and those categorized as homosexuals would presumably feel more alone (Martinez-Aasen). Loneliness seems to be a natural reaction to the loss of an attachment, in regards to developmental psychology and our innate "program" which seeks attachment for our own survival. Nevertheless, the loneliness in heartbreak might have felt even more extreme to homosexual people who were in need of secretive affairs in order to pursue romances, the opportunities for which could be very limited. Forster's use of the word 'prison' is therefore interesting when comparing it to the more modern and less invasive term 'closet', which is usually used when referring to someone's homosexuality being kept secret. The use of the word 'prison' might therefore suggest a more intense experience of heartbreak for Maurice. So, how are Maurice's emotions described when he suffers rejection by his first true love, Clive? Are they described with more extremity considering how the loss of Clive led Maurice to a 'prison' state?

1.1 Descriptions of heartbreak

Clive is the first one to express his love for Maurice before their romantic affair starts, while being intimate at Cambridge: "They were lying breast against breast soon, head was on shoulder, but just as their cheeks met someone called 'Hall' from the court [...]" (Forster 48). Maurice, not having had any homosexual experiences before Clive, rejects him immediately when hearing Clive's confession: "[...] it's the worst crime in the calendar, and you must never mention it again" (Forster 48). Maurice's outburst is very much expected behavior considering that homosexuality was illegal at this time. His outburst also makes sense bearing in mind how his previous experiences in life have included people telling him to find a female to marry, and a homosexually categorized encounter is unwanted by the ones who raised him. For example, this was clearly emphasized by Maurice's teacher, Mr. Ducie, who introduced a

fourteen year old Maurice to men and women as God's creation and emphasized how they are meant to unite sexually (Forster 8).

However, the manner of Maurice's reflections on his loss of Clive at this point shows traits of the descriptions made about heartbreak. As *Oxford's* definition emphasizes, there must be an agonizing sorrow arising from the end of a relationship. Forster explicitly communicates Maurice's sadness by saying, amongst various descriptions, "he supposed the climax of agony had come" (Forster 49). Ironically, this climax is exceeded later on in the novel as Maurice is rejected by Clive after their three yearlong romance. However, having the experience of reaching a limit of grief accentuates the claim about Maurice experiencing heartbreak both now and later on. The clear descriptions of sorrow continue as Maurice is described crying and even experiencing a suicidal mentality, which is briefly mentioned by Forster: "He continued to cry, for he could not stop, but the suicidal point had been passed, and, remaking the bed, he lay down" (Forster 50). Forster mentions suicidal thoughts in more detail later on in the novel as Maurice's heartbreak reoccurs and intensifies, although this is the first time it is mentioned.

The agony felt by Maurice in this moment develops further into a clear and descriptive revelation concerning the character's sexuality. Although *Maurice* is set and written in a time where homosexual actions were illegal, Maurice still expresses bravery: "He would not – and this was the test – pretend to care about women when the only sex that attracted him was his own" (Forster 51). As Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell suggest, a stimulation of self-esteem usually occurs at the end of a heartbreak process, which is evident in *Maurice* as he accepts his true emotions and feels a change within himself. Forster describes Maurice's loss as resulting in this revelation: "Now that the man who returned his love had been lost, he admitted this" (Forster 51). Maurice's one night of deep emotional despair makes Maurice "a man" and although "he still suffered, yet a sense of triumph had come elsewhere" (Forster 52).

As Forster describes a positive outcome for Maurice at this time, the grief is short-lived and Maurice's self-esteem is quickly restored. As Martinez-Aasen mentions, heartbreak is not necessarily experienced identically devastating with every person nor situation. This depends on the attachment made, the length of the relationship and one's level of vulnerability (Martinez-Aasen). Clive's confession leads to a short lived attempt of romance as Maurice expresses initial remorse, and therefore his vulnerability is not revealed at this point. Nevertheless, as Clive and Maurice find their way back to a romantic affair, which lasts for

three years and gets more serious and intimate, Maurice is described with a longer heartbreak process later on (Forster 117).

Clive travels to Greece, and during his stay, he realizes how his sexuality has changed and that he is no longer attracted to his boyfriend, Maurice. Through a letter, Clive communicates this revelation, and Maurice manages to mail one response back, questioning the truth in Clive's claims, before they eventually meet face to face (Forster 110). The scene including the breakup itself is described in detail by Forster, and Maurice's initial response seems to be filled with concern and stress, yet he is trying to convince Clive about their true feelings for each other. After Maurice forces Clive to communicate about this issue, he asks Clive to elaborate on his situation. Clive responds: "I have become normal – like other men, I don't know how, any more than I know how I was born. It is outside reason, it is against my wish [...]" (Forster 111). This response does not make Maurice reflect on his own emotions yet, although he knows he wants to "heal", which seems to be attempted by convincing Clive further about a possible confused state. Maurice suggests a possible reason for Clive's believed change, which includes a female nurse Clive had met in Greece in addition to the lack of communication between them both while Clive was away. Maurice then concludes; "can the leopard change his spots? Clive, you're in a muddle" (Forster 111). Maurice continues by saying "you only think you've changed" and is seemingly doing his utmost to convince Clive that Clive's revelation is wrong (Forster 112). This conclusion, or imagination, seems to be a result of a less realistic interpretation, which is common with those experiencing romantic affairs, and especially rejections (Baumeister et al. 385). Romantic love helps to change peoples' interpretations of the world, which affects peoples' common sense, and this is clearly seen with Maurice at this time (Baumeister et al. 386).

As Ruth Vanita explores "the homoerotics of travel", she mentions that "when people travel, so do ideas" (99). In *Maurice*, Clive travels to Greece where he experiences his self-revelation regarding an occurred heterosexuality, and no longer feels attracted to the same sex. Vanita mentions the normality of transformations in personal identity following the crossing of geographical borders, which occurred in many authors' works in the late 19th and early 20th century (Vanita 100). However, the revelation Vanita refers to involves a realization of homosexuality when visiting more exotic countries, including Greece and Italy, which Forster has travelled to in his novels (Vanita 104). In contrast to what usually occurred in novels addressing homosexuality abroad, Forster approaches the revelation in reverse by discovering heterosexuality rather than homosexuality. Although he reverses the revelation

process, Clive's identity is still affected as Forster emphasizes the change in his sexual preferences.

During Maurice and Clive's breakup, the conversation gets more intense as Clive does not change his new state of mind, which is particularly stated by Forster as Clive tries to calm Maurice: "'[...] I like you enormously - more than any man I've ever met.' (He did not feel this as he said it)" (Forster 112). The fact that Forster includes more information about Clive's emotions in parentheses clarifies the breakup by showing that Clive has in fact changed and Maurice is in fact being rejected, without a possibility for them finding back to what they had. The reader arguably would not be as convinced by the relationship actually reaching an end this way without Forster's choice of including more information about Clive's revelation. By writing the novel with a third-person perspective, it gives Forster the ability to clarify certain aspects that could possibly lead to contemplation for the reader. I will come back to Forster's use of third-person perspective when comparing the novel to *Call Me By Your Name*.

Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell mention that the one who rejects a romance, usually feels "annoyance, frustration, and social awkwardness" as well as "guilt" over a shorter period of time after the breakup, while the one being rejected usually "suffers the pain of disappointment" (Baumeister et al. 379). The annoyance is clearly mentioned with Clive before the breakup finds place: "[...] to be with Maurice or anyone connected with him was suddenly revolting" (Forster 104). Additionally, before Clive and Maurice finally speak about their issues, Clive initially tries to avoid their conversation (Forster 110). Avoidance is also a common reaction amongst those who reject, and as Forster emphasizes Clive's annoyance, it drives him to not want a relation with Maurice, which makes him try to avoid all contact with him. As Clive shows these typical traits of a rejector, it becomes clear that Clive is following the "script" of the rejector with Maurice as the "would-be lover" (Baumeister et al. 380).

As the intensity of their conversation develops further, Maurice fixates on Clive's mention of Maurice's sister, Ada, as an example that would attract Clive more at this point. While Maurice desperately shouts for his sister to come, Clive begs him to stop while locking the door. As Clive clenches the key, Maurice and Clive fight physically over who should have it. The intensity fades as Forster once more indicates an ending to their relationship: "They touched with hostility, then parted for ever, the key falling between them. [...] They looked at one another for a moment before beginning new lives" (Forster 113). As Forster yet again emphasizes the ending of Maurice and Clive's romantic relationship, the reader once more

understands that the romance has no chance to recover before they eventually part ways, and part three begins.

Forster continues to describe Maurice's state of mind with Maurice's multiple attempts and reflections trying to cope with his sorrow from losing Clive, which continues up until the point of the romance with Clive's gamekeeper, Alec. Maurice starts off by not wanting to acknowledge the loss of his former lover: "He woke with the feeling that it must be all right soon" (Forster 117). Maurice however continues to realize his loneliness, which intensifies as time goes on. The amount of loneliness is emphasized by Forster's descriptions of Maurice's sorrow: "Yes: the heart of his agony was loneliness" (Forster 119). The extreme sadness, or heartbreak, is quickly compared to the feeling of death: "An immense silence, as of death, encircled the young man, and as he was going up to town one morning it struck him that he really was dead" (Forster 119). There is a clear loneliness in Maurice's heartbreak, which seems to be particularly present with the comparisons to the emotions of feeling dead as well as alone.

The suicidal thought process is emphasized in detail as Forster mentions how Maurice has a pistol at home. The mention of the weapon, which "he would never use", is followed by the descriptions of Maurice's life which continues to be "miserable and misunderstood" (Forster 124). The fact that Maurice feels misunderstood at this time is seemingly due to how no one other than Clive knows the reason for his heartbreak, with Clive also being the only one he does not wish to speak to about his issues. Maurice does however seek help from doctors in attempts to become heterosexual. First, he contacts Dr. Lowitt, whom he knows well, however, the mention of the "Oscar Wilde sort" is for Lowitt an unspeakable subject (Forster 135). Then, Maurice contacts Dr. Barry, who at first believes that Maurice's problem concerns sexual issues with women. When Dr. Barry understands Maurice's real issue, he is quick to react with disgust: "Now listen to me, Maurice, never let that evil hallucination, that temptation from the devil, occur to you again" (Forster 138). As Maurice once more fails to get help, he again mentions the unbearable loneliness. At this point, the loneliness is not only connected to the loss of Clive, but also to the state of being homosexual and unable to communicate to others about this issue. Martinez-Aasen's suggestion concerning the increased emotional burden on homosexuals in earlier periods is relevant in this case, due to how Maurice is socially, and not only romantically, lonely.

During the process of Maurice trying to cope with his homosexuality, his heartbreak concerning the loss of Clive subsides and his focus seemingly shifts to his view of himself. At

the same time as Maurice changes his focus, he develops romantic feelings and thoughts towards Clive's gamekeeper, Alec, whom he often refers to as Scudder. During the time Maurice and Alec's new romance develops, Maurice still struggles with himself and contacts Mr. Lasker Jones, who is open to helping Maurice with his homosexuality through hypnotism (Forster 160). The trance Jones attempts to put Maurice in is however not helpful, and he eventually advises Maurice to move to France or Italy, being countries where homosexuality is legal (Forster 188). The process of heartbreak is less evident in the novel when Maurice comes to terms with his sexuality being unchangeable and sees another man wanting a romance with him.

Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell mention how the common pattern of overcoming a rejection eventually involves accepting the failure and moving on (379). As Clive marries a woman and Maurice accepts the failure of their romance as well as finding another man, he seems to yet again find another failure to accept: himself. Although, as Forster writes, "he was not afraid or ashamed anymore", Maurice still seems to view himself differently as he explores the romance with Alec (Forster 190). He might feel a relief with eventually accepting his sexuality, but part of the relief seems to be weighed down by the acceptance of his true self, who was a criminal in the early 1900s. As Forster mentions in the Terminal Note, *Maurice* would be easier to publish if it ended unhappily. In other words, if Maurice never accepted himself for his categorized sexuality, "all would be well" in terms of the England of 1914 (Forster 220). Forster writes "after all, is not a real hell better than a manufactured heaven?", which seems to be an honest reflection from the author that questions the authenticity of the English society of 1913, when *Maurice* was written (Forster 191). The question appears to reflect on how living as one's true self is more comfortable, although not necessarily completely satisfying, than trying to fit into societies' expected behavior pattern. Additionally, the question appears to present how one's own acceptance of being gay in the early 1900s felt like: very lonely, scary and risky yet liberating. To be forced to accept more aspects while undergoing a heartbreak from loss might therefore lengthen the process of rebuilding one's self-esteem, and seems to influence the development of other romances, such as the one with Maurice and Alec. Although Forster might have wanted to present his critique regarding the society's demands on homosexuality, he seems to have believed it would be too risky career-wise.

1.2 Representative features of Maurice's experience

As Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell's second presented study illustrates, "[...] people who begin with low levels of self-esteem find romantic rejection especially painful and harmful" (Baumeister et al. 392). Maurice is presented with a particularly low level of self-esteem during his homosexual revelation, although his confidence increases as he accepts his emotions and explores a gay romance successfully for three years. Even so, the romantic affair has to remain unseen as a criminal act in order to be successful, which supposedly affects Maurice and Clive's liking to their own actions to some extent. Maurice's self-esteem therefore seems particularly affected due to the experience of low self-esteem before experiencing heartbreak from losing Clive, and the avoidance of the public during the relationship. As emphasized by Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell: "To love is to put one's self-esteem at risk" (392). For homosexuals in the early 1900s, love could arguably lead to even riskier situations affecting self-esteem than those Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell refer to in their article.

The signs of lowered self-esteem are presented by Forster through Maurice's wish and attempts to become a heterosexual. While undergoing these attempts, it becomes clear to the reader that the protagonist is struggling with himself, and a clear sign of his troubles is expressed through loneliness. The loneliness is mentioned frequently throughout all emotional processes related to both Maurice's loss of Clive, and the "loss" of himself when realizing that his sexuality is unchangeable. It is even mentioned when Maurice feels rejected in his relationship with Alec: "He was back with his loneliness as it had been before Clive, as it was after Clive, and would now be forever" (Forster 207). Thus, the loneliness felt seems to be dominant compared to other negative emotions resulting from heartbreak.

In addition to Maurice's lowered self-esteem and the loneliness as a result of heartbreak, Maurice expresses a desperation to heal his emotions. The moment Maurice and Clive's breakup takes place, Maurice feels the need to "heal" more than anything: "He was neither angry nor afraid, he only wanted to heal [...]" (Forster 111). The desire for healing, or surviving his mental state, is present when he wants to commit suicide, and when he observes the weapon he would have used to do so. Committing suicide would in this case lead to the removal of depression, which is troubling him very much at this point. The removal would however lead to the removal of Maurice entirely, which seems to be the only solution in his desperate mental state. The desperation is however quickly restored by the thought of not doing it, although the reason behind not killing himself is not specifically communicated. The

change in thought is usually followed by the descriptions of loneliness as well as unhappiness, which lasts continuously until Maurice eventually finds a distraction, unless he does not and goes back to a desperate mental state. The novel does however give Maurice Alec, who distracts him long enough to reduce his feelings of loneliness, and the romantic memory of Clive fades eventually.

2 Call Me By Your Name

In *Call Me By Your Name*, Aciman has a way of communicating Elio's emotional spectrum continuously, which often makes the reader aware of the protagonist's mental state as it reflects on his emotions. Nevertheless, certain aspects concerning Elio's heartbreak following Oliver's departure after their summer romance are left out from the novel. This means that Elio's mentality is present at all times, but longer periods of time starting when Elio supposedly feels especially heartbroken are sporadically left out for the reader to infer. Although these are years during which Elio supposedly feels most heartbroken, his heartbreak is still presented by Aciman's descriptions in various ways. Aciman's focus seems to be on Elio and Oliver's time spent together and the author's choice of omitting out years of time might not necessarily leave out crucial information about Elio's heartbreak. This is due to how Aciman describes Elio's thoughts and emotions so thoroughly both before and after the periods spent separately. Now, considering Aciman's choice to elide many years of separation, the most interesting question regarding heartbreak is: Since Aciman excludes years of time, how is he still able to make heartbreak apparent in the novel? As this novel involves less explicit descriptions of heartbreak compared to the descriptions in *Maurice*, the answer to this question, and this chapter as a whole, requires more excerpts in order to understand Aciman's communication of Elio's experience.

2.1 Descriptions of heartbreak

Elio seems saddened by how his parents have pointed out how he gets "[...] *too easily attached to people*" and how "it had sent alarming ripples throughout their lives" (Aciman 60). Elio develops a strong curiosity about Oliver early on as they develop a relationship, but as Elio realizes his romantic interest, it brings him back to his parents' observation. Elio therefore does not seem to realize his homosexuality on its own, but more as a result of getting easily attached to other people. Elio's attachment has in this case led him to a homosexual attraction, which he struggles to accept. He keeps reflecting on who he should talk to about these emotions: "My father held the most liberal views – but on this? Who else? Write to one of my teachers? See a doctor? Say I needed a shrink? Tell Oliver?" (Aciman 61). As Elio gets to Oliver, Elio believes he is the only suitable person to speak to: "There is no one else to tell, Oliver, so I'm afraid it's going to have to be you" (Aciman 61).

As Elio experiences insecurity while ruminating over his emotional state, he is quick to demonstrate bravery with being curious about Oliver. Shortly after Elio reflects on his sexuality, he finds one of Oliver's bathing suits, fiddles with it and seems to be very pleased with having a piece of Oliver close to him (Aciman 61). Although Elio's attraction has a troubling effect on him multiple times during the novel, Elio's insecurity about his attraction seems not to lead him into an especially sad or depressed state of mind. He is too easily distracted by his curiosity about Oliver and what their romance could be. The curiosity is however just as easily disrupted by Elio's insecurities, both of which Aciman alternately describes throughout the novel.

Complications continue as Elio believes the romance with Oliver might actually become a real relationship, and not just an imagined one. His anxiety and troubled mind connects to his ancestors, whose voices he hears: "*Don't try, don't try this, Elio. [...] The years are watching you now, every star you see tonight already knows your torment, your ancestors are gathered here and have nothing to give or say*" (Aciman 127). Nevertheless, Elio does not seem to dive too much into his ancestors' worries as he quickly finds aspects about his excitement that he enjoys, being the fear mixed with bravery in particular. "I loved the boldness that was pushing me forward; it aroused me, because it was born of arousal itself" (Aciman 127). Aciman communicates Elio's arousal as a dominant feature which brings Elio out of his anxiety and into an excitement which motivates him to continue his romance with Oliver. The anxiety and troubled mindset is therefore often short-lived before Elio continues the development of his relationship.

As arousal and excitement appears to dominate Elio's emotional state, there are mostly descriptions of a physical attraction to begin with. Martin Green describes the difference between homoerotic sensibility and homosexuality and emphasizes how these are not necessarily synonymous in literary descriptions of same-sex desires: "Homoerotic sensibility can extend to include a very sensual appreciation of another man's physical beauty, without becoming homosexual" (Green 394). Green's claims suggest how one's sexuality does not have to become homosexual in order to appreciate same-sex appearances, which is seen with Elio when first discovering Oliver. Thus, Elio and Oliver's relationship might not necessarily lead to heartbreak if Elio does not illustrate an emotional involvement. The homosexual descriptions, involving more emotional attachment as described by Martinez-Aasen, is however more present as their relationship unfolds and as Aciman illustrates Elio's distress regarding the loss of a homosexual romance.

Oliver holds back on being clear about his emotions towards Elio, which affects how their relationship evolves. Oliver's unpredictable attitude contributes to keeping Elio anxious and unsure about their relationship. As Oliver asks for Elio's permission for romantic intimacy, Aciman describes Elio's insecurity with contradictions: "I nodded again. I was lying. But then I wasn't sure at all" (Aciman 131). The insecurity and troubled mindset continue throughout their relationship, and intensifies even more after Elio and Oliver have a trip together in Rome and Oliver returns to the States.

Oliver's incalculable attitude could arguably connect to Ruth Vanita's exploration of the excitement of traveling abroad and exploring same-sex romances. As Oliver in this case would experience self-revelation with homosexual desires, one might suggest he would act more reserved as he realizes this change in identity. Even so, Vanita emphasizes that self-revelation regarding sexuality abroad was mostly common up until the early twentieth century (Vanita 104). As *Call Me By Your Name* was published as late as in 2007 and set in the 1980s, "the homoerotics of travel" shows less relevance. Vanita even mentions that authors in later periods illustrate less of this specific pattern: "As the world shrinks, gay people are indeed everywhere, both in life and literature, popping up in the most remote places and unlikely settings" (Vanita 112). Additionally, Oliver's unpredictable and sometimes mysterious behavior continues throughout the novel, which suggests that there never is a change in his identity.

As Elio and Oliver have their last trip alone in Rome during summer romance, Elio thinks about how he will react when Oliver is no longer with him, and their romance will be over: "Would I be able to live without his hand on my tummy or around my hips?" (Aciman 187). Elio continues to seem aware of Oliver's departure and how he will find others to develop romances with, but in the moments with Oliver, Elio sees no better match for him and questions the authenticity of other romances to come (Aciman 187). While Elio questions the future without Oliver and how his emotions will evolve when losing Oliver, he questions the purpose of the entire experience itself: "This is either a miracle. Or it is hell" (Aciman 191). By constantly expressing Elio's insecurity and worry, Aciman presents the protagonist's personal growth, which is seemingly in progress at the same time as he is falling in love and reflecting on the end of their romance.

In part four, being the final part of the novel, Aciman describes the actual end to Elio and Oliver's romance. The final part starts with Elio feeling distracted by his surroundings at the train station after Oliver's departure. Aciman describes Elio's usual pattern without Oliver

resurfacing, which leads Elio to think how he might recover from their romance easier than expected: “Oliver who?” (Aciman 213). Elio is however quick to reflect on the pain that is about to come: “It will come, probably on the sly, as I’ve heard these things always do, and there won’t be any getting off lightly, either” (Aciman 214). This reflection quickly brings Elio’s mentality directed towards Oliver and the emotions their relation has created within Elio.

Elio starts to reflect, and he continues to prepare himself for the intense heartbreak he believes is about to arrive soon. He seems to prepare for Oliver’s departure during their romance, although it is only when Oliver leaves that Elio explains his approach. The reason for his preparation is described explicitly: “I had rehearsed losing him not just to ward off suffering by taking it in small doses beforehand, but [...] to see if my willingness to accept the very worst might not induce fate to soften its blow” (Aciman 212). What Aciman seems to allude to here are two aspects of Elio dealing with the romantic loss of Oliver. First, he imagines the heartbreaking aspects to come when losing Oliver in order to have prepared for his departure. Second, Elio seems to think that his willingness to imagine their separation will manipulate his mind into thinking that he accepts the end to their romance. If he accepts it, it might not lead him into having an all-consuming heartbreak.

As Martinez-Aasen mentions, the involvement one has in a love affair affects the intensity of the heartbreak, and as Elio tries to distance himself from feeling too attached, he seems hopeful about suffering less. Elio’s attempt at manipulating his own mind into a less suffering state helps him with imagining the loss of Oliver, although it ironically keeps Elio’s focus directed towards Oliver. This alludes to how one might not be able to regulate an attachment or involvement that has already been made.

In order to understand Elio’s contradictory mentality, and particularly his constant preparation for losing Oliver, I contacted Aciman myself and asked about his thoughts on Elio’s constant preparatory mentality. In our correspondence, Aciman emphasizes that Elio’s mentality is constructed in a way that affects his way of thinking: “His emotional life is essentially charted on three planes: remembrance, anticipation and perpetual rumination. Because he is constantly shifting between these, one could say that he is always trying to immunize himself against the pain” (Aciman). As previously suggested when describing Elio’s strategy, Aciman accentuates Elio’s insecurity influencing his way of processing heartbreak. However, Elio’s technique for approaching his emotional state is not necessarily connected to heartbreak exclusively: “When he fantasizes, which he does a lot, he is

rehearsing the pleasure to come by consuming it in tiny doses beforehand in his mind; when he anticipates the pain, he does the same” (Aciman). As Aciman conveys, Elio’s way of dealing with heartbreak accentuates his mental strategies. However, the strategies Elio uses cover both positive and negative emotions. The reason for his wish to immunize himself is to protect his own feelings, either by creating happiness through imagination or simply acceptance for any outcome. Aciman mentions the reason why Elio’s mental strategy might be successful concerning his emotional state: “The purpose of both is to jump ahead things before they happen, ultimately perhaps – perhaps! – to know them and master them, and possibly – possibly! – find that the other person may be far less necessary than he originally believed” (Aciman). This way of processing emotional challenges appears to be successful to some extent with the balance of Elio’s mental “planes”. Nevertheless, he is still an insecure teenager, which Aciman emphasizes: “This is the ultimate illusion of someone who is both desiring and afraid of desiring” (Aciman).

Elio seems to feel most comfortable with his own mentality imagining the loss of Oliver when experiencing an individual heartbreak he is in “control” over. The moment Anchise mentions being sad about Oliver’s departure, Elio is quick with attempting avoidance: “I avoided his eyes. I did not want to encourage him to say anything or even bring up the subject” (Aciman 213). Elio continues to feel bothered as other characters influence the psychological balance he seems to have found on his own. The moment his parents tell him that his room is back to normal, Elio reacts with negative emotions: “I was instantly saddened and infuriated. Who had given them the right?” (Aciman 213). If Elio was not influenced by other characters’ reactions to Oliver’s departure, the heartbreak process could have felt different for him. At least, this is what he seems to believe himself due to the frustration he feels when other characters share their thoughts and emotions. However, Elio has to socialize in order to live normally, which he realizes himself: “But I had hoped for a slower, more extended transition to the way things used to be before Oliver” (Aciman 213). When other characters remove certain aspects Elio wishes to observe one last time, such as the sheets they slept in together, the transition Elio experiences does not go according to the preparation he has made beforehand. As certain preparational aspects fail to help with Elio’s process of recovery, he seems to face the heartbreak more heavily than he hoped for.

Elio avoids everything he can that reminds him of Oliver or moments he has had with him, in order to avoid a direct contact with heartbreak: “To avoid entering my bedroom from the balcony and finding him missing, I used the inner stairwell” (Aciman 214). Elio seems to

think that certain actions will yield a greater burden of sadness, and by avoiding them, he seems to avoid more heartbreak. Nevertheless, Elio shows awareness that he has to face certain heartbreaking moments connected to Oliver in the future, but this sadness has not arrived just yet. What Elio does not seem to comprehend is the intensity of the attachment he feels towards Oliver, and Elio therefore fears that the intensity and length of his heartbreak will influence him heavily: “What if it came and didn’t let go, a sorrow that had come to stay [...]” (Aciman 214). Elio continues to examine the possibilities for his reactions, and communicates a fear of the reactions to come: “What if my body – just my body, my heart – cried out for his? What to do then?” (Aciman 215). Elio tries to stay in control over his mind, but if uncalled emotions surprise him and which is out of his mental control, he seems to believe there is a more intense heartbreak that follows.

After Elio and Oliver have a heartfelt phone call after Oliver’s departure, Aciman presents a speech from Elio’s father regarding Elio’s emotions. The speech communicates how the father wants Elio to feel certain emotions he seems to believe his son is distancing himself from. As mentioned, Elio attempts to distance himself from certain memories and areas reminding him too much of Oliver. He attempts to do the same thing as his father approaches the topic of Elio and Oliver’s relationship: “[...] I began to sense that I was already applying evasive maneuvers well before what was awaiting us around the corner was even visible” (Aciman 222). However, Elio’s father advises him to do otherwise: “We rip out so much of ourselves to be cured of things faster than we should that we go bankrupt by the age of thirty and have less to offer each time we start with someone new” (Aciman 224). Elio’s father underlines the importance of all the emotions Elio is feeling, both the good and the bad. He tells Elio to not avoid any emotions due to how “[...] our hearts and our bodies are given to us only once” (Aciman 225). The speech makes Elio understand both that his father knows about the romance and that he accepts it. He even mentions how he never achieved what Elio had found, and that “something always held [him] back or stood in the way” (Aciman 225). These comments make Elio question who his father really is. However, he contributes little to the dialogue, which he says is simply because of how “[he] couldn’t begin to take all this in” (Aciman 224). Nevertheless, after Elio and his father’s conversation, Elio seems to be more at ease with his emotions, and less avoidant of the aspects triggering the heartbreak about Oliver.

As Oliver returns to Italy for a few days around Christmas, he shares the news with Elio that “[he] might be getting married this spring” (Aciman 226). Their following

conversation results in honesty concerning their emotions regarding one another. Oliver even kisses Elio, which brings back the emotions he felt during their summer romance: “I’d never realized how much I liked it or how long I’d missed it” (Aciman 227). However, from this moment on, Oliver has clear restrictions: “I’d love nothing better than to take your clothes off and at the very least hold you. But I can’t” (Aciman 227). Elio seems to realize a more evident ending to their romance during the time following this conversation as he describes the following morning where “things became officially chilly” (Aciman 227). The moment Elio seems to understand that his romance with Oliver is no longer a possibility, he is quick to imagine his first meeting with Oliver, going back to the early summer. As Elio says while mentally going back, “none of it had happened yet”, and he seems to “nurse” all the emotions he has felt, just the way his father told him to do (Aciman 224). By reminiscing about Elio’s early memories of Oliver, Elio seems to distract himself from the deep sorrow of losing him. The sorrow might be implicated in his reminiscing, however, this is not stated explicitly by Aciman.

Elio and Oliver have little communication following Oliver’s second visit that year. The years go by, and Oliver visits Elio’s parents once more nine years later. Elio speaks to him over the phone, and yet again Elio feels Oliver has changed as he talks about his wife and two children, as well as he does not remember their romantic gesture of calling each other by their own names: “He had forgotten” (Aciman 231). Although the years have gone by and Elio has managed to live without Oliver, it appears to be a heartbreak within Elio that has stuck. He reflects on his reactions to Oliver, and seems to suggest that the length of their separation has contributed to his limited satisfaction with life without him: “Perhaps, in the end, it is because of time that we suffer” (Aciman 232).

Another four years go by, Elio meets Oliver yet again over drinks and they once more reminisce about their now fifteen year old romance. As Elio shares his true emotions of not wanting to lose his and Oliver’s romantic relation, Aciman immediately communicates Elio’s sorrow: “Maybe every other sorrow I’d known in life suddenly decided to converge on this very one” (Aciman 241). When Elio believes he will not see Oliver again after this encounter, he once more communicates the fear of a more direct contact with the loss of Oliver: “Suddenly part of my life was going to be taken away from me now and never be given back” (Aciman 242). This way of communicating Elio’s sorrow alludes to Elio having experienced heartbreak during their previous physical separation and that it is mentally on-going as he still expresses an attachment towards Oliver. The intensity of Elio’s attachment to Oliver is

emphasized as Elio describes how he can not live without Oliver taking part in his life: “And if I should hear that you died, my life as I know it, the me who is speaking to you now, will cease to exist”, which brings me back to the attachment leading to Elio’s on-going sorrow, being heartbreak (Aciman 240). The attachment is emphasized even further as Elio later on describes what role Oliver still has in his life: “He was more me than I had ever been myself [...]” (Aciman 243). Again, the reader understands Oliver as a character Elio has struggled and still struggles to live without. Elio seems to have felt some loss of Oliver through the years, but heartbreak is felt in detail as they meet again and Elio is yet again reminded of Oliver’s character and that the attachment is not lost entirely.

Elio and Oliver’s final meeting in the novel includes Oliver’s one-night stay in Italy, which is twenty years after their once so intense romance. Again, they reminisce about Oliver’s first stay as it is the one experience that has led to their attachment to one another. The novel ends with Elio and Oliver “taunting” each other, which seems to give Elio a hope of romance, despite years of separation: “Twenty years was yesterday, and yesterday was just earlier this morning, and morning seemed light-years away” (Aciman 248). As Elio seems to suggest that no time has passed between them, Aciman ends the novel with Elio once again using his imagination to picture something romantic between himself and Oliver. The reader does however not get to know if this imagination eventually leads to reality, but it is clear that the imagination has a positive effect on Elio’s mentality. Although the loss of Oliver has led to Elio’s heartbreak, which has reoccurred intensively as Elio has met Oliver sporadically, the hope of something to reoccur appears to distract Elio from the heartbreak from losing Oliver.

Due to how Oliver reappears sporadically throughout the novel, it is difficult to ascertain when Elio’s heartbreak first appears and when or if it lets go. As Elio has a continuous uncertainty regarding Oliver’s feelings about him no matter what happens in both of their lives, the misery of Elio and Oliver not being romantically involved appears to be a constant sorrow for Elio, which continues to the very end. As Elio still expresses his attachment towards Oliver until the very last page, it becomes clear that he still suffers a sorrow over them no longer having a romance and does not appear to have any interest in letting go of the hope for a recurring romantic attachment.

Elio still feels attached to Oliver and appears to suffer from heartbreak years after their summer together, although it intensifies particularly when they are together. The change in intensity is described by Aciman: “A loss I didn’t mind thinking about in abstract terms but which would hurt when stared at in the face [...]” (Aciman 233). As Elio’s heartbreak

resurfaces whenever he is reminded of Oliver's presence, he seems to have staggered in the pattern presented by Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell. As mentioned, a usual pattern for those who get rejected is to express the grief resulting from the heartbreak, possibly give one party the blame for the ending and eventually accept it and move on. In Elio's case, he expresses grief during their romance with fear of what is to come. Additionally, Elio expresses grief he has felt during their separated periods. However, Elio does not assign Oliver or himself the blame for the ending to their romance. Furthermore, Elio does not show signs of moving on from the romance, which is seen with his continuous reminiscing and his fixation on their relation, which suggests that he does not wish to accept an end to their relationship. This adds to the claim of Elio not recovering from his heartbreak as he still feels an attachment he does not have an interest to decrease.

Elio's preparation with losing Oliver continues throughout the novel, which illustrates the high level of involvement Elio has in their relationship. Elio shows awareness of this involvement as he tries to escape from it. However, Elio seems to fail with avoiding Oliver due to how he never loses his focus on him. Martinez-Aasen does not emphasize if the heartbroken person can be in control of their own attachment to the person who contributes to their sorrow. One might suggest that one is not in control over these emotions due to the heartbreak that usually follows. Heartbreak is according to Martinez-Aasen a product of our human instinct searching for attachment that fails to be mutual, which therefore suggests how one can not control the reaction as it is stimulated by human instincts and not our own mentality. When Elio supposedly has no control over his already-formed attachment, his constant questionings regarding his own emotions make sense because he honestly does not seem to know the answers to them. Elio reaches a point where he seems to convince himself that he "owns" the scenario contributing to his sorrow by creating an illusion of control: "I knew what I was doing. Even in my sleep, I knew what I was doing" (Aciman 215). However, his questions quickly return by the end of this very paragraph: "Or was I fooling myself?" (Aciman 215). The reoccurring uncertainty usually leads to Elio asking questions about himself. It could be that Aciman wrote these questions in the mind of Elio whose thoughts they are meant to reflect. However, one might suggest that these questions are meant for the reader, which in that case would make the reader reflect and possibly understand more about Elio's emotional state than he does himself.

2.2 Representative features of Elio's experience

Elio's uncertainty about Oliver and their relation is present as they get to know each other and continues with different levels of intensity as their romance unfolds and eventually decreases. The uncertainty as well as Elio's insecurity contributes to an intense focus towards Oliver regarding the areas of their relation that Elio does not understand completely. The constant focus contributes to the idea of a heavy involvement, and Elio's continuous preparation for separation lets the reader see Oliver as his biggest attachment. Elio shows awareness of his attachment to Oliver by expressing the fear of their separation, and the fear is clearly seen through his insecurity regarding their relation. This leads to both fear and insecurity being two dominating aspects of Elio's heartbreak.

As previously mentioned by Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell, a typical part of the recovery process from heartbreak is to rebuild one's lowered self-esteem as one moves on (383). When Elio shows few signs of wanting to move on from his relation with Oliver, he appears to stick to the same mindset, which makes him less open to rebuild his confidence and it results in low self-esteem. Additionally, having a teenage insecurity already when beginning the romance, Elio assumingly starts off with a mental foundation that struggles more with heartbreak compared to how others might experience it. Furthermore, Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell mention how the "mum effect" experienced by the rejector might lead to a difficulty when telling an admirer that he is unwanted. This difficulty can lead to unclear messages, which can make the admirer, or "would-be lover", confused and therefore hold on to a romantic relationship longer (380). Aciman writes *Call Me By Your Name* with a first-person perspective, and the reader does not observe Oliver's perspective as he rejects Elio. Therefore, Oliver's communication is not expressed with a clear unpleasantness other than him saying he is unable to pursue their romance (Aciman 227). Elio does however follow the "script" of the "would-be lover" as he continuously wonders about how their relation unfolds even though Oliver appears to have moved on.

3 Comparative discussion

Forster and Aciman illustrate many similar aspects of heartbreak experienced by Maurice and Elio. Both heartbreaks presented follow *Oxford's* definition regarding how their experiences revolve around an “overwhelming, unbearable, or intense sorrow or emotional distress”, which both authors describe (“Heartbreak”). The aspects of the characters’ developments and experiences with grief are however often portrayed differently as the characters appear to pay different attentions toward certain details. One of the most obvious reasons for the authors’ ways of describing the protagonists’ heartbreaks differently is their narration techniques.

3.1 Narration techniques

Forster writes *Maurice* with a third-person point of view. Third-person narration is “in literary fiction, the most common mode of narration in which the narrator acts as a non-participating observer of the represented events” (Chandler & Munday). Usually, the author writes with an “omniscient point of view”, which is seen in Forster’s writing due to his descriptions of both Maurice and Clive’s inner emotions (Chandler & Munday). Although the author usually appears as a “non-participating observer”, Forster seems to take advantage of his all-knowing perspective by including clarifying information for the reader. As previously mentioned, when Clive appears to try to calm Maurice during their breakup, Forster adds information in parentheses: “[...] I like you enormously - more than any man I’ve ever met.’ (He did not feel this as he said it)” (Forster 112). By clarifying Clive’s real intentions, the reader is not given a chance to believe Clive having a romantic interest in Maurice. Therefore, there is less hope given to the reader by Forster regarding a recurring romance between the two. There is however more hope presented by Aciman in *Call Me By Your Name*, both through the protagonist’s imaginative mentality and the author’s narration technique.

Aciman writes *Call Me By Your Name* with a first-person point of view. Subjective narration is when one character from a novel (or novella or short story) presents the plot from his or her point of view. “The narrator [...] relates events as they occur, from memory and/or from hearsay, making judgements on these and on other characters” (Chandler & Munday). Aciman writes the novel from Elio’s point of view, which makes the reader only view the plot with his understanding of his surroundings. By only letting the reader observe Elio’s inner mentality and experiences, the narration technique contributes to more uncertainty regarding a recurring romance between Elio and Oliver. This is due to how Aciman, with his use of first-

person point of view, is not able to express Oliver's own particular reasons behind his unpredictable attitude. The only way for Aciman to describe Oliver's inner thoughts is through conversations with Elio, which is seen, for example, when Elio gets told how Oliver had seen through his attempts at ignoring him before their flirtation started: "I was crushed. All these times when I thought I was slighting him by showing him how easy it was to ignore him in the garden, on the balcony, at the beach, he had seen right through me" (Aciman 79). The reader does not see more of Oliver than his actions and verbal language. Therefore, Elio's imagination regarding their relationship status affects the hope presented for the reader, which creates a romantic undertone towards Oliver throughout the novel. This undertone of romance also contributes to a less clear ending to their romantic affair, which makes the process of heartbreak appear more complex with Elio compared to Maurice.

3.2 The process of self-revelation

In both *Maurice* and *Call Me By Your Name*, the protagonists undergo a process of accepting their sexuality as they realize their interest in the same sex. Both Maurice and Elio have short processes for this revelation due to how they appear to be driven by bravery to pursue the relationships with Clive and Oliver. In *Maurice*, Forster explicitly describes Clive as the reason for Maurice's drive to admit his true emotions: "Now that the man who returned his love had been lost, he admitted this" (Forster 51). Maurice's revelation is short-lived as he both realizes his sexuality and accepts it in one night. Although briefly mentioned, Maurice experiences suicidal thoughts when expressing an unbearable agony: "He continued to cry, for he could not stop, but the suicidal point had been passed [...]" (Forster 50). Shortly after, however, the bravery in Maurice arises. Although he knows his future might be challenging, he does not want to live untruthfully: "He would not – and this was the test – pretend to care about women when the only sex that attracted him was his own" (Forster 51). The following day, Maurice feels relieved and is described as more of "a man" after his "crisis" (Forster 52). Nevertheless, as Maurice is rejected by Clive later on, the self-loathing regarding his homosexuality resurfaces. Maurice no longer sees a motivational aspect, and the heartbreak from losing Clive transitions into the emotions connected to Maurice's homosexuality, which lasts for a significantly longer period of time the second time around. Thus, the self-revelation before the romance with Clive appears to not have been fully efficient as Maurice attempts to remove his homosexual desires when he no longer has a romantic interest.

Elio describes frustration when realizing his romantic interest in Oliver. As with Maurice, Elio feels a loneliness due to how he believes there is no one to speak to about his issues other than Oliver. However, Elio does not appear to feel an agonizing sorrow at this point (following the definition by *Oxford English Dictionary* on “heartbreak”) to the same extent as Maurice. He is quickly distracted by his arousal regarding Oliver, which makes him brave about pursuing their romance: “But I loved the fear – if fear it really was – and this they didn’t know, my ancestors” (Aciman 127). When experiencing distress regarding his sexuality, Elio quickly acknowledges his ancestors’ disapproval as a particularly impactful aspect. The ancestors Elio is referring to, according to the timeline presented, most probably had their lifetimes during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The politics and social attitudes towards homosexuality during these periods, when *Maurice* is set, appears to have set a pattern of cultural grammar of which Elio feels the presence generations later. The use of “cultural grammar” here is adapted by the description of “American grammar” as presented by Hortense J. Spillers in “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book” where Spillers mainly focus on racial struggles for Americans (65). In this article, the term alludes to the behavior seen with earlier generations, which has created a pattern affecting later generations’ view of reality and personal values. When using the term in this thesis, it is not meant to show any relevance to racial struggles. By looking more into Maurice’s experience with his revelation regarding sexuality, it gives some insight into a possible mindset of Elio’s ancestors, involving a cultural grammar which Elio fears.

The environment Maurice lives in, which Elio’s ancestors would presumably have been familiar with, is heavily influenced by homophobic attitudes and appears to be a social problem for the protagonist brought in by politics regarding homosexuality. Homosexuality is in this setting viewed as an illegal act, and which can lead to imprisonment if discovered. The fact that Maurice feels suicidal to a larger extent compared to Elio when reflecting on his sexuality is therefore in line of expectations. The fact that Forster has written these emotions regarding sexuality so explicitly is however unusual, which is mentioned by Christopher Lane, in his exploration of “Forsterian Sexuality”. Forster explored homosexuality in his works to a bigger and more obvious extent when writing *Maurice*. Despite his previous self-doubt about this topic, he “[...] wrote most of *Maurice* with unusual freedom and exuberance” after feeling inspired during his visit at Edward Carpenter’s (Lane 113). Nevertheless, the novel was never published due to Forster’s difficulties with expressing homosexual desires in accepted ways during his lifetime (Lane 113).

The reactions Forster feared with publishing *Maurice* in 1914 were seen with some critics even in 1971, 57 years after it could have been published originally. As Lane mentions, the critic and author Samuel Hynes was one of those who after discovering *Maurice*, “[reinterpreted] all of [Forster’s] marriage plots as thwarted attempts at representing a different kind of love” (Lane 117). Lane continues to describe Hynes’ interpretation of Forster as an author, and quotes Hynes’ claim regarding how Forster was supposedly not capable of viewing ordinary human emotions in a realistic manner due to his sexual orientation (Lane 117). As Mariano Longo explores the representation of emotions, she emphasizes how stories told through literature “[...] give us a cognitive access to our social habits and cultural values” (Longo 73). Additionally, when referring to the communication of human emotions through literary stories, Longo mentions how “[...] we, as readers, recognize them, connecting them to our former experiences and memories” (Longo 77). The common reaction to emotions communicated through literature suggests how Samuel Hynes, amongst others, felt a personal reaction to the representation of homosexuality, which might be a result of a grammar of culture hostile to homosexual activities.

The fact that *Maurice* received in the 1970s a similar reaction to that foreseen by Forster in 1914 suggests the heavy and lingering burden of the past regarding matters of sexuality. Elio’s recognition of his ancestors during his sexual revelation is therefore expected, because it is caused by the cultural grammar that was created generations prior to his own. Nevertheless, considering that politics and social attitudes had changed drastically by the 1980s, although not completely, Elio’s desperation is not as suicidal as Maurice’s, who feels more of a direct contact with homophobia and the isolation it produces. The fact that Maurice’s difficulties regarding sexuality resurfaces after the loss of Clive, which does not happen with Elio regarding Oliver, accentuates the intense homophobia felt by Maurice.

Another point which accentuates Maurice’s intense experience with politics regarding homosexuality, is his comparison of himself to heterosexual people during his heartbreak after losing Clive, illustrating heteronormative influence. Maurice mentions that “a refined nature would have behaved better and perhaps have suffered less” (Forster 118). He appears to refer to himself as something other than “a refined nature” who suffers more, which might be brought in by his loneliness living in a heteronormative society where heterosexuals are categorized as possessing a “refined nature”. Maurice continues to reflect on a moment where his overwhelming emotions were less intense: “Except on one point his temperament was normal, and he behaved as would the average man who after two years of happiness had been

betrayed by his wife” (Forster 118). When Maurice compares his heartbreak to heterosexual heartbreak, he emphasizes how his grief only once reached less intensity. The rest of his heartbreak experience is described as more intense, and therefore what he expects to be an abnormal and heavier sadness.

3.3 Suggesting two separate heartbreaks

As Maurice, in addition to his heartbreak over Clive, views himself as less than the “average” person, his homosexuality appears to add a parallel heartbreak leading to more grief that intensifies his agony. As mentioned in the introductory section of this thesis, “heartbreak” can also be defined as “an occasion or instance of overwhelming or intense sorrow or emotional distress; a person who or thing which causes this” (“Heartbreak”). Homosexuality might therefore be an aspect (or “thing”) leading Maurice into a heartbreak with another triggering cause simultaneously as he grieves over the loss of Clive, which therefore intensifies his agony. In *Call Me By Your Name*, Elio focuses specifically on heartbreak as a result of losing Oliver and shows no signs of self-loathing to the same extent as Maurice, especially when realizing his homosexuality. Nevertheless, Elio shares a large amount of remorse after he and Oliver have sex for the first time, which connects to his distress regarding his sexuality: “What I hadn’t expected was that the hurt would find itself coiled and twisted into sudden pangs of guilt” (Aciman 136). The experience of guilt is also mentioned as Elio reflects on his and Oliver’s future romance: “Would I always experience such solitary guilt in the wake of our intoxicating moments together?” (Aciman 150). Elio reflects on his future children and grandchildren, which illustrates the big amount of anxiety connected to his homosexual desires: “It would haunt and sully my love for them, and between us, there would be this secret that could tarnish everything good in me” (Aciman 135). Elio’s experience with self-loathing is however short-lived during his romance with Oliver, and does not reoccur when he experiences heartbreak later on. Elio’s acceptance of himself and overcoming his self-loathing is illustrated as he reflects on his and Oliver’s time together: “I look back on those days and regret none of it, not the risks, not the shame, not the total lack of foresight” (Aciman 161).

Although Elio also struggles with some self-loathing and shame, it does not reach the intensity of emotional distress as the one Forster illustrates with Maurice. It is therefore tempting to suggest that both Elio and Maurice experience two separate heartbreaks with identical triggering causes, but which exist in different intensities and durations, especially concerning their issues with sexuality. Maurice also appears to feel more agony regarding his

sexuality issues due to the intensity of his distress. Elio, on the other hand, appears to feel more anxiety than sadness, which might be due to the shorter length of his heartbreaking experience with self-revelation. Their heartbreaks regarding the loss of their loved ones are however more similar regarding their emotional experiences, although of different lengths.

When both protagonists undergo their processes of heartbreak after the losses of Clive and Oliver, there is more focus on the agonizing aspect of their grief of losing their most valuable attachment than their issues with homosexuality. In other words, the typical symptoms of heartbreak are more visible during these emotional reactions as they react to the loss of another human being, and not a struggle with themselves. With Maurice, his grief is described in detail and there is a clear desperation with heartbreak when losing his main attachment, Clive. After their three yearlong romance, Maurice is forced by Clive, as well as Forster due to his clear narration technique with third-person, to realize that the attachment to Clive is lost. At this stage, Maurice illustrates a heavy attachment towards Clive, and according to Martinez-Aasen's suggested pattern, Maurice is probably more exposed for a heavy heartbreak. Maurice illustrates the normal pattern of overcoming heartbreak, as presented by Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell. As mentioned, they express the normality of how those rejected tend "[...] to express their grief, perhaps assign blame, accept the failure, and then go on with their lives" (Baumeister et al. 379). Elio and Oliver have a romance which lasts mainly for a summer, and it is followed by sporadic meetings with less romance attending each of their encounters. However, Elio does not appear to follow the pattern mentioned by Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell, and therefore keeps the hope of a romantic relationship going as he still feels attached to Oliver, despite his symptoms of heartbreak. One might suggest Elio's ongoing hope for romance results in a lengthened heartbreak process. Even so, Aciman does not illustrate an agonizing sorrow to the same serious extent as Forster does with Maurice.

Forster illustrates Maurice's development of heartbreak systematically with the character reaching new mental challenges in the process of recovering from heartbreak and other issues relating to his homosexuality. Aciman, on the other hand, illustrates a young man who constantly reflects on his inner emotions. The transitions in Elio's process are therefore less clear. In order to understand Aciman's thought process behind Elio's experience with heartbreak, I asked Aciman about his notions concerning the constant hope Elio feels regarding Oliver. In response, he states: "I don't think we ever 'recover'. We learn to live with it, the way we learn to live with the death of those we've loved" (Aciman). Aciman's

suggestion regarding how one does not “recover” from heartbreak shows a contrast to Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell’s previously-mentioned pattern of expressing grief, accepting the failure and moving on, which is seen more clearly with Maurice (Baumeister et al. 379). Aciman appears to view heartbreak as emotions one gets used to and eventually finds ways to live with, and not ones which need to be processed the same way as Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell suggest. Elio appears to move on with life, however, he does not accept a failure with Oliver, probably due to him not finding a failure to accept. Their summer love is viewed as a perfection Elio constantly longs for, which he expresses even fifteen years later: “Would I start again if I could? In a second” (Aciman 240). Arguably, this makes Elio hope for a recurrence of a mutual romantic attachment with Oliver, even after they go back to their original lives, and by doing so, Elio might not feel the intense sorrow Martinez-Aasen mentions when explaining the symptoms of losing an attachment entirely.

3.4 The authors’ views on human emotions

Aciman seems to suggest that Elio’s reaction when being reminded of his love is similar to how most people would react when feeling heartbroken: “The memory of love – both joyous and saddening – bobs up in unforeseen ways, and sometimes the memory is so powerful that it seems that time has had absolutely no effect on it. It feels like yesterday!” (Aciman). The reason why the protagonist appears to rewind his mentality to the mid-eighties so often is because of Aciman’s focus on Elio and Oliver together, which is when Elio gets reminded the most of their romantic relationship. The reminiscing is a natural part of living with the loss of an attachment, according to Aciman, a point which he also emphasizes in Elio’s father’s speech, as has been previously mentioned.

Aciman’s view of human emotions and the importance of all aspects of this spectrum, affects his descriptions of Elio’s experience and mental strategies to overcome struggles in *Call Me By Your Name*. As Aciman mentions himself, both positive and negative emotions surface in the aftermaths of a romantic relationship, and one should not let one emotion exceed the other due to how one should welcome all emotions that our body brings. Forster does not appear to view every positive and negative emotion surfacing in Maurice’s experience as equally meaningful, and any resurfacing memory of Clive creates an agony, especially during the process of heartbreak. The reminiscing is not a blessing, but rather a haunting effect that Maurice does his very best to avoid, which is similar to Elio’s initial

reaction before speaking to his father. Maurice's sadness over the romantic loss of Clive reminds him of his separate heartbreak, being his homosexuality, which removes Maurice's focus from Clive to Maurice's sexuality. The transition in heartbreaks with getting over Clive to struggling with homosexuality is therefore not clear as it appears to be viewed as a part of the overall issue and sadness.

As Forster illustrates another approach than Aciman towards the healing process, it suggests that Forster presumably viewed the act of "escaping" emotions as a natural reaction to sadness, especially the one resulting from realizing homosexuality in the early 1900s. Although Forster has not expressed his view on dealing with all human emotions, he has articulated the difficulty in expressing homosexuality in literature, which Lane mentions when exploring Forster's approach towards gay literature. Mariano Longo emphasizes that human emotions are believed to be an unchangeable aspect, however, the social and cultural context of one's emotional reactions are important regarding the experience: "[...] once one accepts the idea that emotions change over time, one may think about emotions in terms of the cultural and social context in which they are embedded" (Longo 45). Forster, writing *Maurice* in a social context within which homosexuality was illegal, suggests an influence creating a close-minded and fearful approach towards negative emotions. By living in a society where certain emotions were deprecated, Forster did not have the possibility to approach human emotions the way Aciman does, at least not in a public manner. Aciman's appreciation of every memory and emotion connected to a romance shows a contrast to Forster's description of Maurice's experience. Thus, Forster presumably felt an influence affecting his understanding of human emotions and how they should be dealt with, or he did not feel a possibility to view all aspects of human emotions as openly as Aciman due to the strict regulations in society. It is not necessarily only Forster's view on heartbreak and negative emotions that affect his illustration of Maurice's experience, but Forster's view on human emotions altogether. Additionally, as Forster's social and cultural context naturally led to less accepting reactions to homosexuality, the contrast to *Call Me By Your Name* is especially clear regarding Elio's father's acceptance. Maurice's family is never mentioned regarding an acceptance of the character's homosexuality, which illustrates a clear contrast to Elio, who is confronted with acceptance. This is far from the reality created by Forster in *Maurice*.

Although Forster was presumably influenced by his social and cultural context regarding his illustration of Maurice's dealing with heartbreak, Forster's illustration by no means depicts an abnormal experience with heartbreak. The heartbreak experienced by

Maurice is naturally affected by the limited restrictions on expected behavior regarding homosexual emotions. Interestingly enough, Maurice's reaction to rejection follows the typical pattern mentioned by *Oxford English Dictionary*, Martinez-Aasen and Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell, which indicates how his experience would be a natural reaction in modern day's society as well. If Elio was to experience heartbreak the same way as Maurice in *Call Me By Your Name*, there would be no surprise if Maurice and Elio had identical experiences. Elio, experiencing a more modern and positive influence regarding homosexuality from his social and cultural context, shows more deviation from what is expected behavior. This indicates how modern ways of handling heartbreak deviate more easily from typical patterns of heartbreak due to a larger variation of opinions in social and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, the most obvious difference in heartbreak presented in *Maurice* and *Call Me By Your Name* is Maurice's recurring issue with his homosexuality, which reaches the intensity categorized as heartbreak. This does not happen with Elio, in addition to Aciman's most likely different view on how human emotions should be handled.

4 Conclusion

This thesis has explored the similarities and differences in the descriptions of heartbreak, and possible reasons for these findings, in E. M. Forster's *Maurice* and André Aciman's *Call Me By Your Name*. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'heartbreak' as an "overwhelming, unbearable, or intense sorrow or emotional distress, esp. as a result of bereavement or the end of a romantic relationship; the fact or experience of having a broken heart" or "an occasion or instance of overwhelming or intense sorrow or emotional distress; a person who or thing which causes this" ("Heartbreak"). Both definitions concern reasons for agony found in both *Maurice* and Elio's experiences. As both protagonists undergo self-revelations regarding their sexualities, they experience distress which in both novels reach an intensity that suits *Oxford's* definition of heartbreak. However, the heartbreak triggered by sexuality issues is more intense and recurring in *Maurice* compared to *Call Me By Your Name*. Maurice's character appears to be more affected by the heartbreak with this triggering cause as he expends more time and energy on its healing process. The notion of feeling a different kind of heartbreak due to one's sexuality is unrealistic, which is particularly emphasized by Nissen, who clarifies how homosexuality has been socially constructed in later history. However, the historical context might influence the experience with creating a more isolated and lonely process, which the findings in *Maurice* compared to *Call Me By Your Name* accentuates.

Psychology specialist Annicken Martinez-Aasen describes humans' innate ability which makes us seek attachment for our own survival. By losing this attachment in romantic relationships as adults, the perceived threat towards one's survival usually culminates in heartbreak. Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell mentions the typical patterns of being rejected, and what symptoms one usually experiences when feeling heartbroken through studies regarding people's experiences both as "rejectors" and "would-be lovers". In *Maurice*, the protagonist's heartbreak follows the typical descriptions mentioned by Martinez-Aasen, feeling a serious threat towards his survival as he feels very vulnerable after the breakup. As Maurice eventually finds another love interest, he follows the typical pattern mentioned by Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell: "If one is rejected in the end, the familiar script calls for heartbroken lovers to express their grief, perhaps assign blame, accept the failure, and then go on with their lives" (379). Additionally, when Maurice develops a romantic relationship with another man, he shows signs of an improved self-esteem, which is also a common trait amongst those who recover from heartbreak (Baumeister et al. 380). Elio's experience in *Call Me By Your Name* shows similar traits to Maurice's experience regarding loneliness and an

intense level of agony, however Aciman's choice of narration technique creates a limited understanding of the plot for the reader to observe. Additionally, Aciman has himself expressed how he believes a typical reaction to the loss of romance occurs, which is significantly different from both Forster's representations in *Maurice* and the typical pattern presented by Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell. According to Aciman, the emotions occurring after the loss of a romantic attachment do not necessarily appear to demand a systematic recovering process. In fact, Aciman states how he does not believe that we recover from these emotions in the first place, but learn to live with them. Thus, Aciman appears to follow certain points made by Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell, being the expression of grief and moving on with life, although Elio does not appear to view his romance with Oliver as a failure and sees no blame attached to their breakup.

The representations of heartbreak and other emotions in literature appear to be influenced by a social and cultural context, as mentioned by Longo. Due to the restrictions by politics in earlier periods, authors, such as Forster, appeared to show less variation in their representations of emotions due to their societal influence. Aciman, having experienced a more modern societal influence, appears to illustrate a deviation from the typical patterns, which also seems to be more common in a more modern society where the social context allows it. Therefore, the descriptions of heartbreak can vary by the way authors perceive human emotions, and their societal influence can create different experiences of heartbreak which represents their individual reality. By analyzing different ways of communicating and describing heartbreak, one gets a greater understanding of how societal influence has affected the authors' views on human emotions, which not only gives insight to different experiences of heartbreak, but how the social and cultural context affect one's view of the emotional spectrum.

Although Forster and Aciman describe different processes of dealing with heartbreaks, especially heartbreaks entangled with experiences of homosexuality and same-sex love, the core of feeling an intense agony as a result of losing a romantic relationship is present in both novels. Maurice is described as feeling "unbearably lonely and should blow out his brains before the year ended" (Forster 120). Similarly, although described in a more anticipatory manner, Elio questions his life alone to come: "What if at night I wouldn't be able to live with myself unless I had him by me, inside me? [...] Think of the pain before the pain" (Aciman 215). The pain Elio refers to appears to arrive during their years of separation as he still expresses a longing for Oliver fifteen years after their breakup. Considering that both authors

appear to present loneliness and sadness as dominating features surfacing during the processes heartbreak, it alludes to a fundamental experience with the loss of a romantic attachment. Although *Maurice* was finished in 1914 and *Call Me By Your Name* was published in 2007, with 93 years between them, the occurrence of heartbreaks result in experiences involving the same level of agony. When referring to the contrast in their historical and political contexts, the protagonists' emotions arrive as heartbreaking, but they illustrate different approaches towards some aspects of the grieving processes. Additionally, as Aciman suggests, any reminder of a romance will create a reaction bringing back the emotions felt during the relationship, which both protagonists experience. Thus, the heartbreak symptoms appear to be easily induced as they are a part of our natural human reactions, despite the novels being influenced by different social and cultural contexts. It does not necessarily matter if you get reminded of lost love a few years, or even 93 years after a breakup. To some extent, "it feels like yesterday!" (Aciman).

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