

A Gay Masculinity:

An analysis of the portrayal of masculinity, gender and sexuality
in *Maurice* and *Moonlight*

Master's Thesis by

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Abstract

This study sets out to examine the ideological interpellations of gender, sexuality and masculinity expressed in *Maurice* (1987) and *Moonlight* (2016). This will be done by analyzing the chosen works by way of a critical close reading with the intent of performing a critique of the works' depictions of masculinity, gender, and sexuality. To do this, queer theorist Judith Butler's ideas regarding the concepts of gender and sexual performativity in tandem with Raewyn Connell's theories surrounding the concepts of hegemonic masculinity, as well as toxic masculinity. To add further detail and depth to the analyses, the aspects of class and race will, to a limited extent, be used to describe these social structures' effect on the other aspects of the analysis. Findings show that both movies depict societies with structural issues in terms of freedom of performing gender and sexuality, as well as considerable consequences for deviating from the accepted hegemonic masculinities found in the works. Both depicted societies appear restrictively heteronormative, to the point of legal persecution being possible in the case of *Maurice*, and considerable social ostracization and harassment in *Moonlight*. The study concludes that the two movies differ significantly in their approach to portraying these inequalities in their depicted societies, which can be caused by a variety of factors that require more research.

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Introduction

“Faggot is a word used to make gay people feel bad”. Such is the definition given by Juan in *Moonlight*, when asked about the word’s meaning by young Chiron, who is bullied for being gay and thus different from the other children. In a similar context, yet completely different setting, the titular protagonist of *Maurice* tells his doctor that he is an “unspeakable” regarding his own sexuality. Why are these men so tormented by their differences in sexuality? And why do they face such harsh criticism, ostracization from society and even legal persecution when going on their journeys of self-realization and self-discovery? These are merely some of the questions this study seeks to answer. It seeks to analyze the ideological interpellations of gender, sexuality and masculinity expressed in the chosen works. This will be done by way of an approach melding queer theory with theory surrounding masculinity studies and specifically the concept of hegemonic and challenging masculinities, and their issues to perform a critique of the chosen works. In other words, the aim is to examine how the portrayal of masculinity, gender and sexuality in movies has changed from the late 80s to the present, using "Maurice" (1987) and "Moonlight" (2017) as case studies.

Theory

In order to analyze the chosen works and dive into their depictions of gender, sexuality and masculinity structures, it is imperative to establish the theoretical framework for such analysis. First, gender and sexuality as performative concepts will be introduced, as described by Judith Butler in their work *Gender Trouble*, followed by R.W. Connell's masculinity framework, the concept of hegemonic and toxic masculinity, as well as the overlap between these concepts both as theoretical bases upon which an analysis can be built, but also the analytical tools that they contribute. Furthermore, due to the characters and narratives in the chosen works, theories surrounding the relevant themes of class and race will also be briefly introduced, as they will allow for a more thorough analysis of the main aspects of this study.

Gender and Sexuality

Queer theorist Judith Butler describes gender, and by extension sexuality, as performative in their work *Gender Trouble* originally from 1990. Embarking from a feminist standpoint to address taxonomic and labeling issues of gender within the tradition of feminist theory, they posit that describing a person as a woman is inherently flawed as it is not exhaustive, and that gender is too nuanced to be simplified as such. "Gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (Butler 4-5). Here, gender is described as conditionally created by the individual depending on the multitude of different contexts that may impact identity creation. It can be concluded then that gender is constructed culturally, based on an assortment of varying factors, but this boundaryless approach to gender leaves little room for more general approaches and categorizations, to which the answer is gender coherence, according to Butler:

"In this sense, *gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence...In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (34).

In other words, gender is performative, as the substance perceived as gender is interpreted via the actions, i.e. the performance, of another. Continuing this thought, it is necessary then to establish a taxonomy of gender that better allows for analysis. The Oxford Living Dictionaries provides a literal textbook definition for these terms, citing that gender is "the fact of being male or female,

especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences, not differences in biology...The term gender is also used more broadly to mean a range of identities that do not necessarily fit in with the usual division between male and female” (Oxford). As established by Butler, gender describes a possibly fluid aspect of a person that does not necessarily define itself binarily, but rather allows for the possibility of variation and deviance to exist. Continuing this line of thinking, it is possible to establish that while gender appears to not inherently exist before it is performed, people and individuals are capable of performing a perceivable gender, which, according to the above definition, can be placed in a binary dichotomy of male and female, but which may also fall outside of the binary categories, becoming its own aspect. Thus, for the use of these thoughts in a practical analytical sense, it is necessary to scrutinize the actions of characters and determine which kind of gender they are performing, how and why they are doing this, as well as look into the impact and reception that this has on the surrounding world and other characters.

These theories and thoughts regarding gender can similarly be applied to the world of sexualities. Since determining sexuality is traditionally done via defining attraction to various genders, especially ontologically speaking, as some sexualities are named accordingly based on attraction to the same or different gender, i.e. hetero or homo. As such, acknowledging fluid and multiple types of gender performances necessitates the same level of fluidity and variation in sexuality.

Masculinity

Australian theorist R.W. Connell has written several publications on masculinity and defines it as follows: “[It] is, to a large extent, formed around the psychological investment men make in this system of unequal power, income and respect. So any challenge to the system, any attempt to limit the power or reduced the dividend, is likely to be felt as an attack on masculinity (Connell, “Men, Masculinities and Feminism ” 8). In other words, masculinity contains an inherent hegemony in the sense that perpetuating masculinity, and by extension the power structure itself, reinforces a hegemonic type of masculinity that allows for this type of power dynamic of imbalance. The problem, then, according to Connell, is that any attempt to change or question this unequal system feels personal and as an attack on masculinity, due to the personal investment made by those who partake in and perpetuate the system. Connell goes on to further explain an approach to analyzing masculine gender roles: “To understand a system of inequality, we must examine its dominant group – the study of men is as vital for gender analysis as the study of ruling classes and elites is for class analysis” (Connell, “A Very Straight Gay” 736). In other words, Connell corroborates how the

analysis of masculine gender roles, inevitably intertwined with the idea of the masculine and its derivations, is necessary to analyze masculinity itself. To understand a system of power imbalance or oppression, it is imperative to examine the dominant group and its inner workings.

As the perspective of masculinity studies is on masculine gender roles, and their conventions and issues, it becomes critical to include its counterpart, which is referred to as the unmasculine. A hegemony implies deviation, which leads to the conclusion that there must be subordinate or deviating types of masculinity that can be used to better understand the masculinities and power dynamics at work at a deeper level (Connell, "A Very Straight Gay" 736-737). Connell and co-writer James W. Messerschmidt have worked in depth to describe this approach in categorizing hegemonic masculinity, where they explain that "It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it..." (Connell and Messerschmidt 832). Further on, they describe the hegemony as normative and detail institutional and societal examples of where it is perpetuated, such as schools, neighborhoods, dating patterns and through the exclusion of deviant masculinities by way of e.g. homophobic speech or harassment (Connell and Messerschmidt 838-839). Especially the last two elements are important to elaborate on, as there appears to be a link between heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. Assuming a patriarchal and heteronormative society, this would be the case, and Connell describes the hegemonic masculinity as having a desire to dominate women in order to maintain the current patriarchal and heteronormative power structure, also describing it as "aggressive, competitive, and homo-social (excluding women from its social networks)" (Connell, "Men, Masculinities and Feminism" 8).

The foundation for how masculinity is formed, besides the structural elements detailed above, is assumedly in collaboration with other men, the inclusivity of a group, possibly with common characteristics, goals, or mannerisms, but this is not necessarily always the case ("A Very Straight Gay" 741-742). Presumably, the hegemonic power structure seeks to maintain its position of superiority through various means of domination. The examples described above are largely structural and societal in nature, but a more concrete example could be physical violence. However, this is not necessarily always the approach chosen, and as such, men might choose to distance themselves from specific types of masculinity displays. Thus, masculinity, or the hegemony, does not necessarily represent a single type of man, but rather "a way that men position themselves through discursive practices" (Connell and Messerschmidt 840-841). For even more concise definitions of negative hegemonic masculinity, alternatively called toxic masculinity, it is possible

to borrow from the field of psychology, where Terry Kupers has stated that “Toxic masculinity is the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence” (714). This allows the establishment of a dichotomy within masculinity, as traits opposite to those described must then be different types of masculinity, but not necessarily deviant in the sense that this is not the hegemonic type of masculinity. Kupers further confirms and describes the toxicity that can be present in a hegemonic masculinity, elaborating that emotions other than anger are unacceptable and that it is characterized by homophobia, and in extension the rejection and devaluation of anything feminine, especially in men (Kupers 716). As such, the analysis of masculinity through the criteria described becomes incredibly nuanced and case-specific, but from these criteria it is possible to surmise conclusions about different types of masculinity.

The analytical structure for masculinity that Connell suggests is sociological in nature, as it aims to understand masculinity and gender power dynamics via interviews and the analysis of social relations. For this type of analysis, the three primary components listed are: “(1) the life course (i.e., the narrative sequencing of events); (2) a structural analysis, using a grid of the substructures of gender relations defined by the theoretical model; and (3) a dynamic analysis that traced the construction (and deconstruction) of masculinity in the individual life” (Connell, “A Very Straight Gay” 739). As Aristotelian mimesis dictates, it is simple to transpose these criteria to the analysis of fiction, especially works pertaining to the realistic and dramatic genres, which, as noted earlier, is the intention of this study. By utilizing these criteria and interpreting works through the lens of masculinity studies, it will be possible to discern different types of masculinities, hegemonies, and related issues.

Marxism and class

In order to utilize class to further explain the complexity and depth of the theories described above surrounding identity, it is necessary to briefly outline the theoretical background for the structural and individual class differences and the impact that they can have on an analysis. To this end, it is possible to utilize the Marxist school of thought to explain the theoretical differences between classes, the system itself as well as the challenges and issues it creates.

“For Marxism, texts belong to a superstructure determined by the economic base (the ‘real relations of production’)” (Culler 129). In other words, Marxist theory delves into the economic ideologies or differences presented in a text, whether overtly or covertly. Exploring characters, and by extension texts, from a Marxist critique angle requires contextual knowledge of

the environment that the text portrays and the socioeconomic situation in order to surmise ideological agendas and biases within the text. This is done via the juxtaposition of classes, usually high and low, as the two are seen as opposites, where one gains profit or advantage over the other, who in turn suffers structurally due to this inequality (Culler 109). As is evident from the criteria described, Marxist readings focus primarily on socioeconomic issues rather than personal and individualistic, which carries an inherent contrast to the more individualistically focused theories of masculinity, gender, and sexuality, as Laura McDowell states: “Class is conventionally defined as a relationship with its origins in the public sphere, as the development of resistance to exploitation in the labor market became the key social division in urban industrial economies.” (826). However, these aspects all pertain to larger structural issues, as described previously, and as such can be used cooperatively to examine the chosen works further.

Race

In continuation of the structures of oppression described above, it seems only natural to consider racism as another contributing aspect of power imbalance or societal inequality. Adding to the theories surrounding sexuality above, Ferguson argues that the intersection of sexuality with other factors, race in this specific case, is vital for a better understanding of chosen works the power structures at play: “In addition, it means that we must engage sexuality as having multiple domains for its production, constituting several objectives in terms of power, enjoying numerous occasions for its incitement, and revealing various periodizations by which to analyze it” (109). To create a concrete definition on the concept so that it then becomes possible to utilize the theoretical and abstract theories surrounding race as a venue for analysis, it is pertinent to include literary criticism theorist Moya’s writing surrounding the subject, where they state that “...*racism* describes a complex of ideas, emotions, and practices having to do with the denigration, hatred, dispossession, and/ or exploitation of people who are visually, and often culturally, different from oneself in a way that is understood to be innate, indelible, and unchangeable” (43). In other words, racism as a concept works based on the premise that people are different and by extension have different value in society.

Analysis

Maurice

The first movie chosen for analysis is *Maurice* from 1987, directed by James Ivory, which details the life of titular character Maurice Hall, as he discovers his sexuality by falling in love with Clive Durham. He further struggles with trying to fit in with society in the sexually restrictive and repressed environment of early 1900s England. To begin the analysis, it is pertinent that the work's context be properly established, as its temporal and environmental factors contribute greatly to the power structures and dynamics that are the focus of this study, as discussed in the theory section. The movie is set in 1909 through 1913 and as such depicts an image of what society looked like back then, both in visuals, as well as behavior, traditions, and mannerisms. In the very beginning of the movie, where Maurice is dining with fellow students and their university's dean, it is made clear via the language used that the movie is not modern. An example of this is their naming conventions, where the norm is that you refer to each other by last names, presumably only using first names when a certain level of intimacy, here not necessarily in the romantic or sexual sense, has been reached. Examples of this are ubiquitous but focusing on the last part will be relevant later when delving into this level of intimacy in regards to masculinity, as Maurice and Clive begin to refer to each other by first names.

Sexuality

The portrayal of sexuality and gender in *Maurice* is markedly segregated, naturally archaic due to its setting, and prejudiced compared to contemporary times, in that it is clearly divided in a binary gender construction, where these two genders fulfill different roles and functions in their lives. The very beginning of the movie depicts Maurice with a boarding school class of boys on the beach, where his male teacher explains to him the puberty-based changes that he is about to go through. The teacher also explains the basic concepts of heteronormative sex, while taking a scientific approach, using Latin pronunciations, rather than colloquial language, to create distance between himself and the conversation with its contextually taboo subject. He even appears nearly unable to and unwilling to call the sexual organs by their proper names. As a family with a girl approaches the explanatory sexual drawings in the sand, she is ushered away by, presumably, her family, who appear disgusted and shocked as they realize what the drawings depict. Thus, the society depicted in the movie has the following predispositions: 1) sexual education is for males only, as Maurice is allowed to receive explicit education on the subject, while the girl is ushered away, implying that this type of knowledge is not meant for her; 2) sex is an embarrassing taboo

subject that is not an appropriate conversation topic, both evident in the teacher's approach to discussing it, as well as the following entourage's reactions to it, and 3) sex is for procreation, rather than pleasure. Especially the last two points are evident in that the teacher's explanations do not go into any depth or detail and he entirely omits pleasure, but rather focuses on the procreational goal of heteronormative intercourse. A decidedly concrete example of the depicted society's focus on heteronormativity is further evident in Maurice's conversation with Clive's mother, where she questions Maurice on Clive's love life, stating that she must move to the dower house when Clive marries and asks whether there is a girl in his life. This conversation serves a twofold analytical purpose, as it firstly reiterates the point of heteronormativity, as Clive's mother explicitly asks whether Clive has a girl in his life, and secondly, it highlights society's norms in terms of gender equality and the normativity of marriage. More specifically for the former, it depicts a system of gender inequality, where Clive has a right to the primary house or mansion, whilst his mother will be sent to a smaller house upon his marriage. Thus, it is possible to discern that the society depicted in *Maurice* is heteronormative in terms of gender and sexuality, which denotes the depicted society as archaic and prejudiced when compared to a contemporary setting. Homosexuality or any other non-hetero sexualities go unmentioned by the teacher, further strengthening the argument of a heteronormative society.

This is further accentuated throughout the rest of the movie, as homosexuality in England at this time is outlawed, further signifying a society that not only holds heteronormativity in high regard morally, stigmatizing other sexualities, but one that is also structurally designed as such. The best example of this would be Lord Risley, who is charged and found guilty of "immorality" as it is referred to by the newspaper that Clive reads about the case. Risley, attempting to solicit intercourse from a soldier, is tricked by the soldier into believing that he reciprocates Risley's interest, however this turns out to be deception, as the police arrive and arrests Risley. The judge overseeing the case refers to Lord Risley's actions as attempting corruption and "taking advantage of the gullibility and the baser passions of this intellectual inferior" (*Maurice*, 00:47:23-00:47:47). The judge's choice of words in this scene reflect his opinions, and by extension the opinion of the society depicted, as the expressions "corruption" and "taking advantage" carry deep negative connotations. Furthermore, the judge refers to homosexual tendencies in this scene as being a baser passion, and he refers to the soldier as intellectually inferior to the highborn and academically educated Risley, which further solidifies the argument of society's negative perception of sexualities deviating from the heteronormative. In this case, the stance taken is that

homosexuality is a baser passion, degrading it as something brutish and beastly compared to the heteronormative standard. Furthermore, the punishment seems disproportionately severe. The judge states that he is within his right to sentence Risley to imprisonment with flogging, but considering the social damages he will endure, he softens the sentence to six months' imprisonment with hard labor. This contributes to the negative perception of homosexuality, but it is also relevant in terms of class and masculinity, which are points that will be addressed later.

The portrayal of gender, and sexuality for that matter, in *Maurice* is very male-centric, as the important and active characters depicted are all male. The female characters have little to no spoken lines, and if they do, these are with the primary purpose of supporting the male characters either on a personal development level or structurally as a narrative tool. An example of female characters being used to highlight changes or developments in male characters occurs when Maurice decides not to go to church after his discussions with Clive and Lord Risley, having become disillusioned with Christianity as a concept. Here, the mother and Maurice's sisters appear disapproving of his decision but are ultimately powerless, as Maurice disregards their critique entirely. The mother's chastisement is noteworthy, however, as it reveals a presupposed idea in that she remarks that Maurice's father always went to church. The presupposed notion here is twofold, as it firstly implies hereditary behaviorisms inherited via gender and secondly that going to church is the correct thing to do, i.e. a societal norm. Furthermore, Maurice's rejection of the church carries perhaps some metaphorical significance, as he at this point has perhaps begun developing feelings for Clive, or perhaps he has always felt different in terms of society's established notions surrounding sexuality, and as such, does not agree with the church's seemingly mandated ideas of marriage and heteronormativity.

Continuing the analysis of sexuality in *Maurice*, it is time to take a closer look at the titular main character and the characters that he interacts with romantically and sexually. Maurice and Clive's relationship takes a step further when Clive confesses his love for Maurice. This happens in a private conversation between the two, albeit in public, and this, along with the initial shock of the proclamation, causes Maurice to react negatively. However, later in the night, he sneaks into Clive's room via window, proclaims his love and kisses him. Maurice's shock at the initial proclamation of love is indicative of the perceived unnaturalness and condemnation of homosexuality (and presumably other deviant sexualities) in this society, i.e. the internalized homophobia, however the main point of this love proclamation is the circumstances for the two characters. Initially, Maurice is unable to act on it much or positively at all, as this would put them

both in danger and because of the novelty of these emotions or the situation, he does not know how to react. However, in the privacy of Clive's own room and in the dead of night, Maurice is able to communicate his real feelings and kiss Clive, in a similar manner to Romeo and Juliet as Maurice climbs up to Clive's window to be with him. The initial exchange and subsequent scenes depict the circumstances under which homosexual relationships need to operate in order to function in this heteronormative and repressed society.

Consequently, the two go on a date away from the city, again removing themselves physically from prying and judgmental eyes, where they are still not free from the repressive norms of society. Clive rejects Maurice's physical advances, stating that becoming physically intimate would bring them down and corrupt them. Thus, Clive paradoxically incorporates the heteronormative ideals of society in tandem with his homosexual tendencies, creating a problematic relation to Maurice, as well as his own self. In other words, Clive represents a more repressed sort of sexuality compared to Maurice who, after what can be called his awakening, is ready to initiate a deeper relationship. Approaching this structurally, it is possible to surmise that Clive is homoerotic, rather than homosexual, removing the sexual part of the identity and appears to be so due to internalizing the attitudes and partly behaviors of the society and culture that they inhabit, while Maurice implicitly rejects these notions via his actions.

After their fight and breakup, caused by Maurice's discovery of Clive's intention to marry a woman (Maurice's sister Ada in this specific instance), Maurice has an evidently uncomfortable and slightly violent encounter with an old man on the train, who is presumably attempting to solicit physical intimacy from him. This, along with the fact that Maurice is naturally and evidently not free himself from the negative internalized ideas from society, he seeks out his family doctor to try and figure out what is wrong with him or presumably how it can be fixed. The doctor's physical check is clear, but as Maurice confesses his homosexual emotions and tendencies by comparing himself to Risley and proclaiming that he is an unspeakable, the doctor reacts extremely negatively. He calls it evil and rubbish, but the most significant part of their conversation is when the doctor tells him that he should find a pretty, young woman who will soon enough cure him. This emphasizes firstly society's stance that homosexuality is a disease, as an educated and established doctor believes this, and second that it is curable by way of heteronormativity.

Afterwards, in an attempt to cure it, Maurice visits a hypnotist, who later visits him in a nightmare. Here, he sees the hypnotist as well as himself lying in a coffin, holding hands with a woman, and floating down a body of water, awakening after the coffin begins flooding, and he

attempts to remove the water. This is an insightful scene into the character's psyche, as it depicts the extreme internal conflict he is undergoing as part of his struggle to compartmentalize his sexuality, society's expectations, and his own emotions. Since Maurice and his dream vision of a wife are dressed in white, it can be inferred that they have been married. Despite this, they are lying down in a coffin, as if they were dead, indicating Maurice's negative feelings towards a heterosexual relationship and marriage, comparing it to death.

Returning the focus to Clive, as his sexuality appears ambiguous throughout the movie. At the beginning, it is he who makes advances towards Maurice, to then turn around and reject Maurice when he seeks a deeper relationship. Thereafter, he marries a woman, but still shares a deep friendship with Maurice. His ambivalent interest in both men and women suggests a deviant sexuality, albeit an unclear one, as the expression of gender is limited in *Maurice*, a topic that will be elaborated on later. In the end, Clive either voluntarily chooses or feels forced to choose a heterosexual relationship, as he marries a woman. This indicates that he is more submissive towards the heteronormative structures in place, which is further emphasized at the very end of the movie after his conversation with Maurice, who arrives to bid him goodbye and to tell him of his relationship with one of Clive's staff members, Alec Scudder. Clive solemnly returns to his wife and begins closing the windows and drawing the curtains. Looking out, he stops to reminisce his and Maurice's relationship, when he is interrupted by his wife, asking who he was talking to, to which he responds "no one" (*Maurice*, 02:16:40-02:17:08). There are a couple of things to unpack here: firstly, it becomes clear that Clive truly treasured his friendship and relationship to Maurice, drawing on his homosexual tendencies; secondly, his wife literally and metaphorically interrupts the flashback of Maurice, becoming a representation of the heteronormative societal structure that Clive let into his life; lastly, as Clive closes the windows and draws the curtains on his view out to where Maurice was a moment before, he is symbolically closing that chapter of his life, putting his deviant sexuality away for good, rejecting the free-spiritedness that Maurice represents, and conforming to the heteronormative standard.

Gender

As established earlier, gender is, in tandem with sexuality, very segregated in *Maurice* and often serves as an implicit power structure of inequality and oppression. The movie is almost entirely male-dominated, which reflects the historic context in which its narrative takes place. As mentioned previously, no women have any considerable roles or even many lines throughout the movie. When women are depicted, most conversations that they participate in revolve around pleasantries and

especially marriage and relationships. In the very beginning of the movie, when Maurice's teacher explains to him the anatomy of intercourse, the movie establishes the gender roles of this society, as the teacher tells him that "You will discover to protect and serve a woman, to have children by her is life's chiefest glory" (*Maurice*, 00:04:55-00:05:12). Thus, women and men's positions are firmly solidified in an unequal system: men are to protect and serve women, putting them in a position of power, while women's only purpose in life is to have children.

An example of the inequality and oppression against women presented in the movie can be found in Maurice's conversation with his sister Ada after his and Clive's fight. He asks his sister about her relationship to Clive, whom she referred to by first name, indicating intimacy, and commands her with the imperative form "Answer". The power dynamic here is clear, Maurice is the male head of the household, as their father has passed away, and holds the power to command his sister.

When Clive falls sick, Maurice takes care of him until the doctor arrives, which leads to a tense discussion between Maurice and the doctor regarding Clive's nursing back to health. Due to their close relationship, Maurice wants to and assumes that he will be taking care of Clive, as he has until this point. However, when the doctor arrives, he informs Maurice that a female nurse has already been called, as she will be able to make Clive more comfortable. The doctor responds to Maurice's objections with "Have you wheeling the baby next" (*Maurice*, 00:52:25-00:52:40). There are several layers to this discussion and the doctor's statement. To begin with, the doctor, and by extension society, categorizes nursing as a female job, as evidenced by the called nurse's gender, as well as the doctor's objection to Maurice nursing Clive. Furthermore, the doctor's comment about wheeling babies, another female occupation in this society, appears scornful as the implicit message and understanding here is that Maurice is incapable or unsuited for this caretaking line of work, or that it is perhaps below him. The doctor's tone in stating that they could be having him wheel the baby next appears mocking, indicating that having a man nurse a man or take care of another man is a preposterous idea and that Maurice is silly for suggesting it or even considering it.

Education is another structural aspect of gender inequality depicted in *Maurice*. The job of women appears to be very much limited to social events and childrearing, with the caretaking of homes (historically and stereotypically a woman's job) being largely assigned to servants for the upper class of society. The first woman to appear on-screen, however, is Maurice's mother about 20 minutes in. This is removed from the education system, where there is not a single woman in sight; the university is completely dominated by men. At this first diegetic introduction of women,

Maurice's sisters are also shown for the first time, none of whom are shown to do anything scholarly throughout the film. The only impact that they have is when one of the sisters, Ada, has a fight with Maurice over her relation to Clive. These aspects underline women's role as presented in *Maurice*, where their primary value and life goals lie in relationships, pleasing men, marriage and by extension children.

Based on the above observations, it can be inferred that *Maurice* depicts a patriarchal society, with little to no room for genders deviating from the norms or the exploration of such, as there is not a single case of a character dressing vastly different from others of similar status or position. Students at the university are dressed in uniforms, staff and upper-class adults wear suits. The patriarchy is perhaps most evident in the contrast between Risley's imprisonment and Maurice's interaction with his mother after Clive falls ill. In his worry and care, Maurice kisses Clive in front of the former's mother, and as described, homosexuality has been depicted as having severe consequences. These factors combined are very interesting to note, as nothing serious happens to Maurice consequently (*Maurice*, 00:50:40-00:50:58). The implications here are not set in stone, however, as the reasoning is ambiguous. One interpretation resides on the mother's love for her son and assumes that she would like to avoid Maurice being sent to prison or otherwise punished and stripped of his career opportunities in society. An alternate possibility is that she does not actually have the power in the patriarchal society as a woman to make such a charge, or perhaps she risks not being taken seriously due to her gender.

In extension of the repressive and limited binary gender depiction described above, Maurice's family, specifically one of his sisters, makes an interesting remark that emphasizes the depiction of gender in the movie: "Imagine Mrs. Barry being a man" (*Maurice*, 00:20:33-00:00:20:45). This is stated as a joke by Ada, and the response from Maurice and their other sister, Kitty, is laughter, as the idea of trans people and different gender identities is comical to them.

Class

Based on the observations above, it becomes possible to discern the class divisions, expectations, and issues present in *Maurice*. Their attitudes and proclamations regarding homosexuality show that the public opinion of deviant sexualities is that it is below humans. Humanity should be held to a higher standard than animals when it comes to sex, as they describe homosexuality as beastly and a baser passion, as discussed earlier. Since it is described as a baser passion, it enables us to infer the class divisions incorporating a human above animals-ideology, presumably perceiving gay people as less than human. In connection with the scenes regarding Lord Risley's trial, Clive refuses to

offer testimony for Risley's innocence, as that would put Clive in danger of having his own sexual deviancy exposed and similarly punished. Something interesting to note here, is that Risley uses Clive's first name, indicating a level of intimacy, perhaps between former lovers, or it could simply be their friendship as roommates at college that prompts Risley to speak like he does. Clive on the other hand refers to him as Risley, creating a discrepancy between their levels of formalities and, by extension, the nature of their relation and their intimacy.

Further connections between deviant sexualities and class are evident in Maurice's conversations with his family doctor, of which there are two. The first conversation happens after Maurice has been all but expelled from college, following his misdemeanor in the eyes of the dean. Dr. Barry even points out explicitly that there are class divisions in society, as he states that "[Degrees] were never meant for the suburban classes" (*Maurice*, 00:32:17-00:32:23). The inherent and subtle implication here is that there is a fundamental cognitive difference between classes, which makes the suburban class incapable of attaining a degree or working in a more highly educated field, compared to the upper class. What follows is a part of the conversation that delves into the masculinity side of this study but is also relevant for the class expectations of the characters in *Maurice*, as the doctor states that "A gentleman would have apologized by instinct if he'd found that he'd behaved as you did" (*Maurice*, 00:33:01-00:33:09). The defining word here is "gentleman" as this places Maurice into a specific role, or class, with certain rules and expectations. By not behaving in accordance with these rules, Maurice does not behave like a gentleman and is thus shamed or disgraced by Dr. Barry. As such, it is evident that even within the exclusive society in regards to sexuality, gender and class, there are still power struggles, imbalances and issues within the dominant or reigning categories. The second conversation between Dr. Barry and Maurice is later when Maurice visits the doctor to find out if there is something physically wrong with him or if his homosexuality can be cured, where the doctor correlates heterosexuality with decency and being a gentleman, creating an intersection of sexuality and class, "You whom I see and know to be a decent fellow" (*Maurice*, 01:16:00-01:16:08). Here, Dr. Barry finds it difficult to believe that Maurice has homosexual tendencies, and partly argues with him or admonishes him for it, while also correlating being a "decent fellow" with heterosexuality, implying that being homosexual is not decent.

Maurice, whether by exposure to the upper-class environment or due to his own upbringing, is especially interesting in terms of class. In conversation about Clive's tenants and their rights and housing with Clive's wife, Anne, Maurice states that "The poor get used to their

slums” (*Maurice*, 01:20:17-01:20:26). This interaction indicates a couple of things. Firstly, it shows that Maurice looks down on the lower classes, as the implication of what he says is that the poor belong in slums and will eventually get used to them and accept them as natural. Secondly, it denotes an unwillingness to change things, implying that Maurice is content with the power structure of classism in its current incarnation. However, by the very end of the movie, when he is explaining his relationship to Alec, he states that “I’m flesh and blood, Clive, if you’ll condescend to such low things” (*Maurice*, 02:11:36-02:11:43), indicating a change in perception. Since he has fallen in love with a lower-class man, his stance on classes have changed, and he evidently does not regard career as the most important thing in life, which might have been true before. This conversation also makes clear Maurice’s opinion that Clive is either heartless or that the upper class in general has created too large of a division between itself and the rest of society.

Class divisions are especially clear in the later half of the movie, as there are several instances, where class is an implicit structural division or explicitly a point of conflict for some of the characters. So far, the division has been between middle and upper class, but the conflict includes the lower, working class as well when Simcox, one of Clive’s servants, talks about the cricket game, where he disapprovingly states that “Things always go better with a gentleman captain” (*Maurice*, 01:43:47-01:43:53). Here, he is talking about Maurice’s suggestion to make Alec captain for the game, which Simcox disapproves of, as there is a bias towards the upper class, what he refers to as a gentleman, and with it, discrimination towards the lower social classes.

The primary problem in Maurice and Alec’s relationship is their class differences, where Maurice is ready to find solutions and a way for them to live together, while Alec is more adverse, stating that “You talk like a man who’s never had to earn his living” (*Maurice*, 02:03:07-02:03:12). The difference between their attitudes can be ascribed to their class differences, as Maurice is middle-upper class, as he has a job in the city and he is depicted having lots of free time to spend with Clive and his family. Alec on the other hand works as a servant under Clive and, as he himself states, needs to earn his living. Implicitly saying that city jobs are not as demanding or not even categorizing them as actual jobs.

Masculinity

Masculinity as a concept ties into this Edwardian society with its established strict roles of gender and sexuality clearly pre-defined for the characters. Due to the largely limited representations of genders deviating from the norm, it becomes imperative that masculinity is analyzed then to explore the different exhibitions and types of what it means to be male and masculine, and how this is

presented. The dominant masculinity depicted throughout most of the movie is, by modern standards, an incredibly formal one, where the main activities are conversation and academic discussion. This is evident in the many conversations about topics such as society, religion, relations, and business. The politeness is to be found in their way of addressing each other, where pleasantries are commonplace, as well as referring to others by their title or with respective distance, such as Mr. Durham, rather than Clive. As established earlier, addressing someone by their first name is seen as a sign of intimacy.

Due to Maurice's lack of a parental father figure for a considerable amount of time in his life, as established at the beginning of the movie, it must be assumed that Maurice would act as much as possible in a way befitting a man representing the hegemonic masculinity of his society. This type of masculinity then lends itself to a multitude of factors, such as taking an education, participating in sports, wanting to get married, hunting, and making decisions for himself.

Addressing these one at a time: education is evidently a part of the hegemonic masculinity, i.e. the "natural" way for men to behave in this society, as the entire student body appears to be male, and the lack of women remains unaddressed. Thus, these aspects of masculinity are very homosocial, a characteristic of toxic masculinity, as described earlier in the theory.

Hegemonic masculinity is furthermore described as competitive in the theory, and therefore it is pertinent to examine Maurice's participation in sports. This happens three times throughout the course of the movie: while at university, where he participates in the celebration with fellow students at their preferred team having won the game; he picks up boxing in the city after breaking up with Clive; lastly, he participates in cricket at Clive's request. The first instance combines the homosocial aspect of masculinity with the conforming and competitive aspects, as Maurice naturally wants to fit in, he participates in this type of masculinity with the other students. Second: boxing is both an aggressive sport and a competitive one, both aspects of masculinity in the realm of sports that Maurice participates in. Lastly, the cricket match is mostly interesting for its depictions of class differences outside the game, rather than its representation of the hegemonic masculinity via Maurice's participation.

Moving on to the desire to get married as a part of the dominant form of masculinity. As established earlier, the depicted society is strictly heteronormative, and as such, a desire to get married is part of the hegemonic masculinity. Maurice's participation in this desire is relatively limited compared to the other aspects of masculinity, as he quickly becomes infatuated and invested in his relationship with Clive, who in turn does take further part in this type of masculinity.

However, Maurice does accept the idea at least in the initial scenes as a child with his teacher, where he accepts that the world is constructed heteronormatively and that this is the preferred way of existence in the world.

Lastly, a large part of the hegemonic masculinity presented in *Maurice* is the powerlessness of women, or rather, the considerable patriarchal power depicted. As Maurice is expelled from university, he decides not to write a letter of apology to pursue that career path further, to the chagrin of his mother, but he does not seem to care until his conversation with Dr. Barry. “A gentleman would have apologized by instinct, if he found that he had behaved as you did” (*Maurice*, 00:33:01-00:33:09). Here, Dr. Barry reveals a tenet of the hegemonic masculinity from which Maurice has strayed. He is being chastised for not apologizing to the dean immediately, as that is the expected behavior from a gentleman, i.e. a man representing and incorporating the ideals of the hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, he is also chastised for his lack of chivalry, as his decision not to apologize to the dean causes his mother to worry about him and his future, leading to distress. This reveals yet another tenet of the hegemony, as it seems to be expected of men to take care of the women in their lives.

Next, it is relevant to look at Maurice’s reasoning for “allowing” himself to be expelled from the school. It can be surmised that there is some semblance of pride at stake here, as he remains silent when the dean is chastising him for putting off schoolwork, but Maurice might also feel disillusioned and disappointed with the heteronormativity of society, as he says “If it had been a girl in the sidecar, [the dean] never would have kicked up a stink” (*Maurice*, 00:31:16-00:31:22). The implication here is that were the situation heteronormative, the consequences would have been less severe, revealing that Maurice has an anti-establishment side to him. On the other hand, his lack of a parental father figure perhaps led him to behave as he did, as this lack could have caused Maurice to not completely understand the expectations from the hegemonic masculinity, and by extension, society. In his refusal to write an apology letter, he incorporates masculinity in an increased sense, as apologizing can be seen as a sign of weakness, but this appears to not be the case as this form of behavior is rejected by Dr. Barry.

The most toxic part of the hegemonic masculinity presented in *Maurice* is its treatment of people, or men, who perform deviant sexualities. As established earlier, society is heteronormative and this is linked to its presentation of masculinity, as men dissuade each other and admonish each other for having thoughts or feelings about other men. Additionally, as discussed earlier, deviating sexualities are punished harshly and are especially impactful to social status and

continued life within society, at least in England where the movie takes place.

A large part of the representation of masculinity in *Maurice* can be found in Maurice and Clive's relationship and how this develops. In their disagreement of how their relationship should evolve, Maurice and Clive incorporate each their own type of masculinity, with Maurice's being the one most deviating from the hegemony. During their trip out to the countryside, Clive rejects Maurice's physical advances, claiming that it will corrupt them or otherwise make them worth less as people or men. This is a point of intersection for sexuality and masculinity, as the two evidently have differing ideas of what is acceptable and what they are willing to do. Maurice wants to pursue a full homosexual relationship, seemingly wishing to find a way to make it work, while Clive subscribes to the hegemonic ideas of heteronormativity to a larger extent in rejecting Maurice.

Later, when Clive expresses a desire to marry a girl and continue his life without a romantic or sexual relationship to Maurice, the two fight. This conversation and altercation become very physical and aggressive, which are typical traits of toxic masculinity, which the two then exhibit in this scenario. Furthermore, the cause of the fight also pertains to toxic masculinity, as anger is the only valid emotion for toxic masculine behavior, which is what happens in this scene. Because the two disagree on an emotional matter and appear unable to express or deal with their emotions properly, it leads to a fight.

Moonlight

The second movie chosen for analysis is *Moonlight* from 2016, directed by Barry Jenkins, which details the life of a young black man, Chiron, as he struggles with fitting in, his sexuality, masculinity, and the structural issues of the community that he grows up in. The movie is split into three chapters, where each of them is divided by a significant time skip and named after the nickname that Chiron identifies himself with during the chapter. The first part, Little, depicts Chiron as a young child growing up in a poor black neighborhood, where Juan, a local drug dealer, takes him under his wing and acts as a father figure towards him. The second part, Chiron, depicts him in high school, as he struggles with ostracization and bullying. He experiences a form of sexual awakening with his childhood friend Kevin but is arrested for assault due to a later fight. The third part, Black, details his life as an adult drug dealer away from the city he grew up in. Here, he rekindles his friendship with Kevin and the two share an intimate moment.

To properly analyze and understand the character's actions, it is important to establish the movie's diegetic context. In stark contrast to *Maurice*, a work of historic drama fiction, *Moonlight* appears to take place during contemporary times, as of its time of publication. The characters are shown using cellphones, there are cars, and the characters are not in suits and vests, but rather jeans, shirts, and hoodies. The movie takes place in black communities and depicts the life of a young black male, his upbringing and development through the three chapters described earlier. Most interesting perhaps is the fact that Chiron appears to perform a deviant sexuality, as he is bullied throughout most of his life for being different or perceived as queer. A common theme for all three parts is bullying, i.e. power struggles, sexuality, masculinity, and especially the overlap of these aspects of Chiron's life.

Sexuality

The portrayal of sexuality is repressed and limited, possibly due to the movie's environmental context, as it takes place in almost exclusively black neighborhoods and environs. However, it may also very well be due to the power structures in place, as this study will now focus on. The protagonist Chiron is naturally the primary lens through which it is possible to analyze the chosen aspects and their nuances. He is furthermore the prime candidate for analysis as he undergoes a development in his sense of self as he comes to terms with his own sexuality and understanding of himself.

As stated, the portrayal of sexuality is quite limited, which is probably due to the heteronormative and discriminatory toxic hegemonic masculine power structures at play. An

example of this is shown at the beginning of the movie, where Chiron is chased and bullied, presumably for his sexuality, as the kids shout “Goin’ around with that faggot ass bro” and “Get his gay ass” (*Moonlight*, 00:02:22-00:02:38). The physical act of chasing Chiron around with sticks with the intention of beating him is evidence of the oppressive heteronormativity in itself, but the kids also utilize slurs for homosexual people and swear in general about Chiron. Interesting to note here, is the fact that the kids must have these attitudes and behavior because of their own upbringing to this point, i.e. they must have learned that heteronormativity is the norm and anyone who deviates from that must be punished or brought in line via bullying and reacting negatively to deviation. As such, it is possible to establish that the society depicted in *Moonlight* falls under the heteronormative category and there is evidence of toxic masculinity in the children’s maltreatment of deviants.

During the first chapter of the movie, Little, Chiron meets Juan, a local drug dealer who has a considerable impact on Chiron’s development, which will be elaborated upon later in terms of gender and masculinity. In terms of sexuality, Juan represents the heteronormative in that he has a female partner, however, he also gives insight into a deviant and positive understanding of homosexuality and deviant sexualities, as he tells Chiron during their final onscreen conversation: “Faggot is a word used to make gay people feel bad... You can be gay but you gotta let nobody call you no faggot” (*Moonlight*, 00:33:35-00:34:06). Here, Juan explains a subtle dichotomy between the slur and being gay, as their connotations differ. Furthermore, his explanation of the slur indicates that he feels sympathy towards people who identify as homosexual or queer. The potential reasons for this are manifold, but the important conclusion to draw from this is that Juan represents a progressive and understanding adult, which is in stark contrast to the other children that Chiron usually spends time with, and his mother who chastises him for not coming home immediately after school. In this conversation, the way that Juan and Teresa talk about homosexuality, the discourse at work, as it were, is significantly different from the bullying and discrimination that Chiron experiences.

Furthermore, the discourse surrounding Chiron’s sexuality becomes explicit during Juan’s fight with Paula, when he discovers that she does drugs. The power dynamic here is important but will be examined further in the masculinity section. In terms of sexuality, Paula alludes to the way Chiron walks and yells at Juan about taking care of Chiron and telling him why “the other boys kick his ass all the time?” (*Moonlight*, 00:29:02-00:29:22). Through this dialogue, it can be inferred that Paula has not had deeper conversations with Chiron about his sexuality and the

reasoning behind the bullying and harassment. Furthermore, her alluding to the way he walks is depicted as very mocking, presumably to further provoke Juan, but it also indicates that Paula does not approve of Chiron's potentially deviant sexuality.

The last relevant point about sexuality during the Little chapter is Chiron's relation to his friend Kevin, who appears to be Chiron's only friend and the only child who does not bully him. Chiron is averse to touch throughout the whole chapter, only choosing to touch someone else or allow someone else to touch him physically three times. He is touched by others a couple of times, but excluding those makes sense, as Chiron does not seem comfortable with the situations and being touched, as such it can be surmised that it is not consensual. Firstly, he chooses to touch Kevin's face and wrestle with him; secondly, he lets Juan help him stay afloat and teach him to swim; thirdly, he chooses to touch Juan's hand when he asks him to pick a hand for a surprise or gift. These are of course not sexual in nature, as he is still a child at this point, but the points are relevant in terms of his later depicted comfort in being touched and touching others as an adult, which will be addressed later. His touching Kevin's face indicates a certain intimacy, especially given the context of Chiron checking Kevin's cheek for bleeding. Additionally, the wrestling match afterwards is homosocial and masculine, both of which can be perceived as hints at Chiron's sexuality. In a heteronormative and hegemonically masculine society, being sensitive and expressing feelings other than anger is unacceptable, and as such, Kevin helps Chiron conform to the reigning structures by engaging in this playfighting with him.

In the next chapter, named after his real name, Chiron is a teenager and is talking with Kevin who tells Chiron about the detention he got for having sex with a girl in school. Chiron's response is limited and short, but Kevin goes into some details about the encounter, seemingly making Chiron uncomfortable. This is further evident in Chiron's nightmarish vision of the encounter afterwards. The reasons for his discomfort are manifold, and most likely a combination of several factors, such as his relation to Kevin, his inexperience with sexual encounters and his struggle with his own sexuality.

After yet another bullying encounter with his high school bully Terrel, Chiron escapes from the city and seeks towards the beach as his safe place to think, cry and recuperate. Kevin joins him, and the pair smoke marijuana and begin laughing and talking about life. At one point in this deep conversation and bonding experience, Kevin grabs Chiron's shoulder in a friendly way, but then begins rubbing his ear and touching his neck, leading to the two of them kissing and Kevin touching Chiron sexually. There are several aspects of this encounter that require analysis. Kevin

and Chiron are childhood friends and as such share a long and deep bond, which makes it natural for them to be comfortable around each other, mentally and physically. However, the interesting aspect of this is the difference in their relation from school to the beach. As the school is public and their society is, as established, putatively heteronormative in a social manner, rather than lawful, they cannot explore their feelings or attractions in school for fear of social repercussions, akin to the troubles Chiron faced as a child and still with Terrel. The beach is private though and offers them an escape from the structural issues surrounding sexuality and the fear of repercussions, where they can safely explore their sexualities and emotions.

The difference between these two locations is even more stark when Kevin and Chiron's further interactions are considered. Terrel entices Kevin into participating in a hazing ritual by ways of his social status, as Terrel, as the bully, appears to be strong and dangerous in the social hierarchy of the school. As such, Kevin does not want to be perceived as weak or otherwise ostracized. Terrel manipulates him into punching Chiron repeatedly until he is unable to stand, mentally breaking or at least traumatizing Chiron, as the complexity of emotions and the amount of pain he is in must be tremendous. The beach represented a safe space, where Chiron and Kevin were free to do as they pleased, exploring their sexualities, while their time at the school is then characterized by violence, homophobia, and peer pressure.

During the last chapter, *Black*, Chiron rekindles his friendship with Kevin after not having seen each other for years. During this time, Kevin married Samantha, had a child and the two of them were divorced. Thus, in each their own way they dealt with the loss of their relationship by rejecting their homosexual identities and accepting the heteronormative, Kevin by marrying and having a child, Chiron by becoming excessively masculine as a countermeasure to the perceived femininity of homosexuality. During their conversation in the restaurant, Kevin pointedly asks "I don't know you?" (*Moonlight*, 01:32:11-01:32:22) and is met with silence from Chiron, indicating that their previous relation is unresolved, creating tension between them, as none of them have been open about these aspects yet. Additionally, Kevin's character appears to have more depth than a simple binary explanation of his sexuality. The movie depicts him as displaying feelings and interests in both types of relations, positioning him on the queer spectrum, but not within a certain sexuality. Chiron, on the other hand, later reveals that "I haven't really touched anyone since" (*Moonlight*, 01:44:50-01:45:00), indicating that he has completely rejected any type of sexuality since his experience with Kevin on the beach. In a parallel to that scene, the two then share an

intimate moment where Kevin holds Chiron as he did on the beach. This is not necessarily sexual, but rather fulfills a psychological and emotional need for intimacy for both of them.

Gender

Gender representation in *Moonlight* is a bit more varied than *Maurice*, but still focuses primarily on men and their experiences, while not being open to a more fluid approach to gender. Its construction in the movie is binary and remains largely unaddressed throughout the movie, as there are no characters that perform genders not on the non-binary spectrum. There are however some traits of gender fluidity in sexual identification, as the society depicted in *Moonlight* is strictly heteronormative, as established.

In terms of gender roles, Chiron's relationships to his mother, Paula, and Juan's girlfriend, Teresa, are interesting to examine. As Teresa steps in as a kind of surrogate mother when Paula's drug addiction escalates, the two relations appear to create a dichotomy of parenting for Chiron. On one hand, Paula appears as a negative parental figure for Chiron, going straight to punishment when Juan takes Chiron home instead of taking care of the bullying and harassment that Chiron endures. On the other hand, Teresa takes care of him in bringing him juice and not demanding anything in return from him. Her sympathetic nature is further highlighted in her first meeting with Chiron, where Juan sends her to Chiron to try and talk to him. There is some level of stereotyping here, in that Juan perceives Teresa as better at talking in general or perhaps specifically with children, buying into the notion that women's role in society is childrearing. The contrast between Teresa and Paula's behavior lies in the latter's arguably controlling behavior, in that she wants Chiron to be home at certain times, does not allow too much TV and later demands money from him. Thus, Paula demands a subservient attitude from Chiron which is not necessarily optimal for him.

Paula appears to see their relationship as transactional. This is especially evident in the second chapter, where she criticizes Teresa and Juan for taking care of him, and Chiron for accepting their care, as he is bound by blood to Paula, as she states. The transactional nature of their relationship is visible when she cannot find money for more drugs and thus threatens Chiron to give her the money that he has. The implied transaction here from Paula's side is that she is his mother and has taken care of him for his entire childhood and in turn, he should now help her out, creating a toxic relationship dynamic.

Class

Chiron and Kevin's class differences are obvious during the chapters Chiron and Black, starting out as invisible during Little, presumably also due to the fact that Kevin does not have much time onscreen or narrative focus. In Chiron, the difference in their physical appearance is the first hint towards a class difference, as Chiron dresses in old clothes that do not fit him very well, while Kevin appears to be well-dressed and even has some jewelry, perhaps as symbols of wealth or status. Evidently, he also has access to marijuana, indicating that he has disposable income.

Chiron suffers much abuse from his mother struggling with her drug addiction, deteriorating psyche, and dwindling funds, to the point where she threatens Chiron for the money that Teresa gives him. This indicates the difference in economic standing, and by extension, class that exists between Paula and Teresa. In a way, it also highlights the difference in class between Chiron and his mother, as she does not have the funds to spend on drugs anymore and struggles to find it, as is further evident by the condition of their home. Chiron has a surrogate mother in Teresa from a different social class, where she is able to supply him with the needs that he has, whether they be economic, logistic or otherwise. This can be seen in the scenes featuring Teresa during the second chapter, as she jokes with and tries to instill some confidence in Chiron, as well as showing him how to make a bed.

In the last chapter of the movie, Chiron and Kevin's positions in society have changed drastically, and they are no longer part of the same social sphere or near each other in societal hierarchy. Chiron, now known as Black, has become a drug dealer and is completely integrated in this criminal world with its status symbols and behavior, while Kevin has gone an entirely different route, working at a restaurant and having notably removed the symbols wealth he wore during the second chapter. Their class difference is made explicit when Kevin states "That ain't you Chiron" (*Moonlight*, 01:32:02-01:32:08) and asks him why he uses the golden teeth fronts, indicating that the world and class hierarchy that Chiron has established himself in is so strange and foreign that Kevin has trouble understanding it. This, coupled with Kevin's own decisions to remove the wealth symbols and find a decent job are the key points of their class differences.

Masculinity

The theme of masculinity is omnipresent throughout the entirety of *Moonlight's* runtime. It is represented by Juan and neighborhood children during Little, peers and friends during Chiron, and in the largest extent by Chiron himself during Black. To begin with, the movie's opening scene depicts Chiron being chased by boys with sticks, intending to harm him for his deviant sexuality.

Here, as discussed earlier, it is established that society is heteronormative and that the approach to curbing homosexuality or other deviant sexualities is to ostracize and bully the offenders presumably until they conform. Chiron is figuratively and literally saved from this situation and homophobia by Juan, who enters his life and begins acting as a father figure for Chiron. This is emphasized visually as well, as Juan finds Chiron hiding in the darkness, coming in from the light and letting light into the room he is hiding in, metaphorically and figuratively showing him the way, as Juan becomes this father figure for Chiron.

Their relationship slowly develops as Juan tries to take care of Chiron and incorporates a type of masculinity that Chiron has been missing in his life, as his biological father is not depicted at all during the movie. Juan gives him food, shelter and even teaches him how to swim. Through his relationship with Juan and Teresa, Chiron gains a pair of surrogate parents, whose only interests are seemingly to take care of him and wanting him to grow, which contrasts with Paula's survivalist lifestyle. Chiron learns via Juan what it means to be a responsible man and Juan becomes a type of blueprint for Chiron to follow, as is evident from his final transformation in *Black*, where he essentially becomes Juan or adopts his persona to conform to the hegemony, but this will be addressed further later. The pair provide Chiron with essentials, such as food and shelter, but more importantly perhaps the psychological essentials in educating him about how the world works, i.e. Juan tells him about race and they answer Chiron's questions about sexuality, giving him knowledge and education that he will need. Thus, the masculinity that Juan represents and shows Chiron as being possible is not in accordance with what is depicted throughout the rest of the movie. Juan understands homosexuality and the difference between the slur

This is even further contrasted when Chiron arrives home to find a stranger waiting for his mother to get ready. The implication here is that Paula becomes a sex worker to finance her addiction, however the significant aspect of this interaction is the role that the stranger has, or rather, the lack thereof. As Chiron just came back from a full day with Juan, who has acted parentally and caringly towards him, the contrast to the man in his home is that much larger, as he neither cares for Chiron or wants to become a permanent figure in his life, which are aspects that can be surmised to be true about Juan.

Juan is depicted as a caring, nurturing, and sympathetic character which are positive parental traits and in contrast to the traits described as indicative of a toxic hegemonic masculinity. However, there are negative aspects to his character, with the primary example being his occupation. Chiron leaves after finding out that his mother does drugs and that Juan sells them,

implying a disillusionment with his pseudo-parents and the teachings that they have provided.

The children playing around with a ball as an activity fit the criteria of a hegemonic masculinity, as it depicts a homosocial activity, it is competitive, and it allows them to exhibit the one emotion that is socially acceptable: anger. The children attack each other for the ball as is the rule of the game, it would appear, but Chiron walks and runs at the outskirts of this stampede of children, unsure of how to get in, or perhaps if he even wants to do so. When the ball is nudged towards him continually, he refuses to touch it, presumably as he has witnessed what would happen to him if he were in possession of the ball. Here, Chiron explicitly rejects participation via his body language by avoiding touching the ball and subsequently leaving the group. Although Chiron does not wish to participate in this large scale hegemonic masculine activity, he does accept Kevin's offer of fighting and wrestling to toughen up and prove that he is not soft. Therefore, the two develop a bond that is still socially acceptable within the hegemonic structure, as fighting is aggressive, indicative of anger, and as such, is accepted.

During his teenage years in the chapter Chiron, he attempts to reject the toxically masculine behavior he is challenged with by Terrel, by mostly not answering his taunts and provocations, as this will surely lead to violence and other repercussions. However, Chiron is proverbially attacked by the hegemonic masculine structure when Kevin is manipulated into punching him. This consequently leads to Chiron giving up his ongoing efforts to construct a masculine and appropriate identity for himself, by giving in to the aggressivity of the hegemony, as he attacks Terrel the day after Kevin's attacks, leading to Chiron's arrest.

As mentioned previously, Juan's involvement in Chiron's youth leads to the former becoming a blueprint for the latter's later development in life, as Chiron accepts the hegemonic masculine lifestyle, having rejected any kind of sexuality as a consequence of his conformity. The similarities between Juan and Chiron in the final chapter are many: he wears a bandana, has golden teeth fronts, drives his own car with a crown visible in the car, and, perhaps most significantly, has become a drug dealer. It can be inferred by Chiron's personal development that he struggles with fitting in and finding out how he wants to place himself and participate in the hegemonic masculinity, which through most of his life is synonymous with society at large, as he has no homosexual role models or mentors to guide him, other than Juan who is only able to do so partly.

In contrast to the environment that Chiron normally finds himself in as an adult, where this type of masculinity is normalized, and Chiron presumably finds himself near the top of the hierarchy, there is Kevin's understanding of him and the masculinity that he represents. Kevin even

explicitly asks “Who is you Chiron?” (*Moonlight*, 01:41:32-01:41:41) and mentions the abovementioned indicators of a specific type of masculinity, as he himself has abandoned that ideal, apparently no longer participating in violence or wearing jewelry or other status symbols, barring his subtle necklace. Instead, Kevin appears to have adopted a type of masculinity that appeals more to his family life, as he explains with a smile that his child and working legally gives him fulfillment. It is also important to note that Kevin has previously subscribed to the same type of masculinity that Chiron exhibits and inhabits now, as he states “Man, when I got locked up, man, that shit was hard” (*Moonlight*, 01:30:24-01:30:33). In other words, living a criminal life was too difficult when compared to what he wanted to do in life, and as such he decided to change his lifestyle to better complement the family approach he wanted in life.

The significance of race in *Moonlight* in terms of masculinity is almost completely implicit and structural, rather than a key point or theme for the movie, as it does not explicitly work with racism or feature issues pertaining to racism on personal or individual levels. However, many of the issues portrayed are societal and structural in level caused by racism, evident in the poor neighborhoods, school funding, crime, drugs, and the environments that the children grow up in. Interesting to note is its approach in leaning into the stereotypical portrayal of a black overly masculine drug dealer to tell a more moving and tragic story about discovering one’s identity throughout life. It does, however, feature explicit criticism of this stereotyping via Kevin’s questioning of Chiron’s choices in changing himself to fit this stereotypical narrative and to fit in with the hegemonic masculinity depicted both in the movie, but which is most likely representative of reality.

Comparison

Narratively, the two movies feature a contrast in their portrayal of the relationships. In *Maurice*, Clive and Maurice do not end up together, as Clive rejects the homosexual side of him, accepting the heteronormative hegemonic masculinity and staying away from deviancy, which results in Maurice finding a different partner. In *Moonlight*, Chiron and Kevin end up finding each other again and allow themselves to be emotionally vulnerable, in a way rejecting the heteronormative hegemony. However, all characters depicted struggle with every aspect throughout both movies. The two movies share many similarities in their construction of gender, sexuality, and masculinity. Although they are significantly different in almost every contextual regard, the two movies feature a repressed and problematic depiction of these aspects, causing the characters to struggle, as stated.

The most implicit of these struggles is gender, as both movies do not address gender performativity as an issue and it can be surmised that there is little to no room for exploration of gender identities, given the restrictive nature of sexual identities, as well as the oppressiveness of traditional gender roles depicted in both movies' societies. In other words, both movies depict a binary view of gender that remains unchallenged. This is especially the case in *Maurice*, as the society depicted there is completely male-dominated, and women are severely limited in their opportunities in life. This is caused structurally, as society is designed to be this way, while this is less the case for *Moonlight* where especially Paula has more agency as a woman compared to *Maurice*. She makes a living, evidently barely enough to keep their home, and she lives without a male caretaker, which is the norm presented in *Maurice*.

Ironically, *Maurice* appears more progressive in terms of education regarding sexuality, as it depicts a young person being taught about intercourse, whereas this is missing from *Moonlight*. Chiron is curious and asks questions about his sexuality and sexuality in general, but this is far from a formal education setting, as the case is for Maurice as a child in school. However, both movies leave their characters in the dark in terms of education around differing sexualities and experiences with such, where the only explicit information the characters gain is via Maurice's teacher and Juan explaining sexuality in a limited manner.

Due to the difference in setting, there are some aspects of society that change form but largely serve the same function, more specifically names. First names in *Maurice* indicate intimacy and especially a romantic or otherwise relational intimacy that their regular usage of honorifics and last names contrasts. Nicknames in *Moonlight* serve the same function to a certain extent, but have additional uses and meanings, especially when compared to the chapters that they are used in. For example, Chiron is called Little during the first and second chapters as a form of ridicule, rather

than endearment or to indicate intimacy. During the second chapter, however, Kevin gives him the nickname Black, which is the identity that he forges for himself during the third and final chapter. His usage of this new nickname is meant exactly as a term of endearment and intimacy, as the two are close friends.

Another contrast that the two movies share lies in their depiction of sexuality and the degree to which this sexuality is explored. In *Maurice*, the “primary” couple of Maurice and Clive do not engage in physical intimacy, as the latter has reservations regarding his sexual expression and the implications of their relation for their future. Maurice later explores his sexuality physically with Alec, which is indicative of his development and disagreement with the reigning idea that Clive has regarding deviant sexualities. In *Moonlight*, Chiron and Kevin need not fear legal repercussions, as homosexuality is not outlawed in their environment, but they still have the social repercussions to fear, and as such, seek solitude before engaging in sexual activity, which is similar to Maurice and Alec, who need to seek away for fear of both legal and social repercussions. Thus, a core difference between the movies is the existence of legal consequences for deviating from the heteronormative, while sharing the similarity of social repercussions and stigma associated with deviating from the heteronormative hegemonic masculinity.

Moonlight is more hopeful in its depiction of sexuality and especially deviating sexualities, while *Maurice* ends on a semi-tragic note. Especially Clive’s character appears tragic, notably at the end of the movie, as he closes the windows on his deviant sexuality, youth and other aspects discussed above in the appropriate section. In contrast to this tragic ending, Chiron manages to reconnects with Kevin and they reach some sort of understanding amongst themselves and find catharsis in each other. This difference is potentially caused by the significant amount of time between the two movies’ publication dates, where a more optimistic finale is in accordance with the development of the acceptance and inclusion of deviant sexualities.

Discussion

While the theories chosen and the following analyses have been successful in delving into the chosen works' portrayals of gender, sexuality and masculinity, there may perhaps be some inherent biases in them that are worthy of critique and should be examined. Firstly, analyzing a work's portrayal of masculinity through a critical lens leads to an implicit emission of women, as the primary focus is on men and how this masculinity is constructed via their decisions, behavior, and statements. However, as a consequence of men's actions, women and their behavior is impacted by the toxically masculine elements described above, namely aggression and the exclusion of women. In a similar vein, this analysis has neglected the impact that hegemonic masculinity has had on women. A prime example of analysis for going deeper into this subject is Paula's character, who, at one point, acts in a masculinely threatening way, as she taunts Juan and is aggressive towards him, a notable toxic masculine action.

Furthermore, there is the issue of trans people, who are not represented in the chosen works or much in the theoretical texts of this study, which would add yet another layer of complexity to the analysis. How does the hegemonic masculinity perceive trans people? Do they create their own masculinity? How are the effects of the hegemonic masculinity and the restrictiveness of deviant sexualities and genders felt by trans people? This would add a fascinating layer to the theory and analysis. Assuming that queer theory has a field for the analysis of trans people's experience, this must be more varied and nuanced, as well as performative, as is supported by Butler's ideas of gender not pre-existing.

In addition to the theory's weakness regarding women, there also exists the preconceived notion that masculinity is a power structure dominated by men. This is axiomatically correct in patriarchal society, but the point here is that an analysis of a society or works that do not depict men or masculine-presenting individuals at all must be incredibly interesting to analyze and compare to the chosen works, as well as other works that detail the struggle of identity searching and patriarchal suppressive power structures.

A problematic aspect of *Moonlight* in terms of academic research is its heavy usage of the N-word. For the purposes of this study, the word has been purposely avoided in quotes to not risk issues regarding racism, as the word has incredibly tremendous negative connotations, but it would be possible and in fact interesting to perform a meta-analysis of the word's usage in context of black communities and especially in a movie such as this, where the search for identity and conformation versus non-conformation are important topics. This has, however, been out of scope

for this study. *Moonlight* and *Maurice* are polar opposites in terms of racial representation, as the former features an almost exclusively black cast, and the latter exactly the opposite, featuring no black, Hispanic people or anything other than white.

Conclusion

As evident by the analysis above, the portrayal of masculinity, gender, and sexuality in the chosen works is complex and intertwined. In *Maurice*, the illegality of deviant sexualities as well as the lacking awareness and social acceptance of deviant genders and non-conformity shape society and the characters depicted. The movie ends on a semi-tragic note, depicting the restrictiveness and oppressiveness of the society that it portrays as hugely negative factors in the characters' self-discovery, acceptance of themselves and others, as well as compassion and understanding towards those who fall outside of the heteronormative structures of society. On the other hand, *Moonlight* features a prominent focus on the intersection of masculinity with sexuality, or rather, the issue of conforming and the convergence of conformity against the desire for social acceptance and inclusivity and how this can be damaging and consequential. However, Chiron's story ends on a more positive and hopeful note, as he and Kevin finally face their differences and embrace non-conformity. In conclusion, the two movies feature many similarities in their portrayal of the structural issues and their effects on the characters, but they differ wildly in their contextual approach to this end. Especially their settings have huge implications for the stories and perspectives told and, as described in the discussion, warrant more thorough research.

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