

## The Narratological Discourse of Music in E.M. Forster's Novels

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Music in E.M. Forster's fiction possesses a narratological and discursive nature that embodies social, cultural, political and aesthetic bearings. Music has a certain politics of narration and a mysterious power that transcends limitations imposed upon it. Music can be employed, heard, written, and read as a narrative text that discursively functions within a certain narratological problematics in a novel, poem, or a play. Throughout this article, I argue that music in Forster's fiction is seen as a narrative discourse that affects and even changes the characters' lives. Forster is considered as one of the most important music-lovers among British novelists for whom music had both personal and professional impact and (that is, in his novels) meanings. In his own life, Forster played music well for his own satisfaction, but certainly not as well as his character of Lucy in *A Room With a View*. He repeatedly and variously deploys music in his novels in ways that this article will attempt to trace and explore. Also, in his own non-fictional writings, which are in themselves valuable pieces of criticism, he presents a critique of the novel form, outlining its striking connection to music as a sublime art that should be imitated in order for the novel to reach sublimity and uniqueness. In this article, I argue that music can be seen as a narrative discourse, and I shall do so through brief elaborations of key passages of Forster's novels.

In stating that music is a narrative discourse, I mean to say that it is made—like a narrative text—by human beings for one another to express the problems, despairs and triumphs of people within certain social contexts. Music as a narrative discourse throughout this article is seen as a semiotic structure, as a message that possesses a multiplicity of meanings. For Forster, music promotes creative expression and provides means to revealing authorial and other intentions; moreover, music pos-

esses a narrating capacity of plural meanings often with ideological and political implications. Indeed, Forster is concerned with how music can vividly convey one's own stories and experiences. I argue that Forster has appropriately employed music as a narrative discourse because it quite literally functions as a site (or, fills a social space) through which the inner feelings and intentions of characters are dramatically revealed. Music as a narrative discourse explains, for me, how Forster has used music as a text that has a transcendental power of aesthetic ideology and a redemptive capacity to address the various conflicts and contradictions in art and life. Indeed, music is a narrative discourse because it acts as a kind of symbolically ideologized and centralized text that can be effectively and cathartically used by and for the representation of conflict surrounding themes of subjects, ideologies, nations and races. Music, like narratives, has then many ideological, social, political, psychological and philosophical implications inherent in it since it is produced by and for the people. Thus, music is a narrative discourse because it epitomizes for Forster these sociological and political questions that run throughout his novels on the personal, social and narratorial levels.

In his book *World Music, Politics and Social Change* (1989), Simon Frith, a leading popular musicologist, advanced the idea of music as an ideological and social narrative. For some, Frith argues, music is "the paramount expression of human creativity, for others the symbolic affirmation of the western cultural tradition. Others again hear in their music an explicit denial of the values of such a tradition: for them music may mean the sound of protest, rebellion or even revolution" (vii). Edward Said develops a similar argument in *Musical Elaborations* (1991) where he examines the meanings of music and its cultural and geopolitical implications. He asserts that "music remains situated within the social context as a special variety of aesthetic and cultural experience that contributes to what, following Gramsci, we might call the elaboration or production of civil society" (15). Music thus is seen as an art of fundamental interest, "an art not primarily or exclusively about authorial power and social authority, but a mode for thinking through or thinking with the integral variety of human cultural practices" (105). Indeed, following Theodor Adorno's interpretations of western music,

Said argues that “music had been not only a documentation of the bourgeoisie’s reality but also one of its principal art forms, since the proletariat never formulated or was permitted to constitute itself as a musical subject” (13). As Christopher Norris also argues in his book *Music and the Politics of Culture* (1989), music is given political and narratological functions. For Norris, and indeed for Said, it was Adorno who strongly advocated the affinity between philosophical, social, and political functions and musical thought when he claimed that “philosophy says what art cannot say, although it is art alone which is able to say it: by not saying it” (Adorno 107). This illuminating statement may be seen as Adorno’s opinion about the ideological and political functions of music as a radical art form that is able to symbolically express a great deal about the miseries and joys of human existence. Indeed, music for Adorno—and for many German philosophers, including Schopenhauer and Nietzsche—“was the truth to which philosophy aspired but which could never reach the point of articulate understanding since language itself, and philosophical language in particular, dealt only in concepts or abstract figures of thought” (Norris 309). But music for such critics and radical philosophers has concrete human responsibilities despite its abstractedness. Norris suggests that “music was at once the most humanly-revealing form of art and the form most resistant to description or analysis in conceptual terms” (307). In a similar way, Forster aims to provide for the novel itself an ecstatic, symbolic, and philosophic status similar to that of music.

Moreover, music is measured within the parameter of a sign system as a semiotic structure that entails a discursive and narratological mode of communication. This kind of argument is forwarded by Wendy Steiner in her book *The Sign in Music and Literature* (1981) which strongly supports my original thesis that music can be read as a text, and that playing music could be seen as narrating a story where the player is like a narrator or character in a novel; this is a relationship that I explore in detail with respect to Forster’s characters who narrate a number of stories through their musicality. Indeed, on many occasions—as will be illustrated shortly—Forster considers music as more appropriate than verbal language for revealing the purely structural requirements

of a symbolic system. For example, the music deployed by Professor Godbole in *A Passage to India* is very rich in meaning, especially in so far as the text makes it clear that the colonialist English finds it impossible to understand the Indians and their culture. Every instant of Godbole's musical sounds or singing in the novel, let alone all the music used in Forster's novels, becomes for the listener/reader not only a reference to, but, as Henry Orlov says in a different context, "the direct source of a rich multifarious sensuous experience" (135).

This communicational quality of music is developed by another musicologist, John Blacking, whose argument is included in Steiner's book. He contends that music does have a "quality of social interaction" in its system (Blacking 190). This becomes clear when we remember that the musical discourse that dominates Forster's novels emanates from an "ethnic," racial, or geopolitical tradition, or class and even bourgeoisie tradition. In Forster's novels there is almost always a clash between the Edwardian, middle-class, conservative, domineering and complex Wagnerian musical culture with that of the ordinary lower-classes or Oriental (Indian, Buddhist and Muslim) musical cultures. Indeed, it is through music that Forster's characters and their social and cultural thinking find their chosen domains where the subject-object, man-woman, native-foreigner, black-white, colonialist-colonizer and the self-other binary relations take place in a peculiarly prophetic form. Here I am deploying Edward Said's discourse found in his *Orientalism* in drawing the problematic distinction between the self and the other or the Orientalists and the Orientals in explaining the way music is being politicized. Forster's main ambition, and criticism, is reflected in his attempt to "connect" the self and the other, the English and the Indians and the Muslims and the Hindus in *A Passage to India*, for instance. The most important reference to music as discourse is reflected here in Godbole's Hindu and Vaishnava music that is meant in the novel to unify races and religions. But, without closer inspection, this observation is not clear and the characters face difficulty in discerning why Godbole reintroduced the Krishna songs and that of Vaishnava *Krittān* again in the third part of the novel; it is as I shall explore, one of the most important unifying devices in the novel. A crucial part of the cultural narrative of the

novel depends on the music. Indeed, the only connection that Godbole was able to make through his songs was between himself and the other Hindus present on the very fringe of the scene—the chestnut-gatherers at the tank. But the English do not get it at all: they never understand it, though Mrs. Moore tries. For Dr. Aziz, it is completely foreign and puzzling too; in the *Temple* section he still does not understand it. He has learned, however, to live and let live. Because of this misunderstanding of the others, “they” and their Oriental music seem to pose a challenge to the “self,” a threat to “us,” the Westerners. Indeed, the category of “they” is no longer an inert and weak other to the self (and the Empire), but comprises a dangerous, threatening, incomprehensible culture.

Thus, music plays an important formative and shaping role in Forster’s novels. His love for music is constantly detected in his novels and seems to have come from his great admiration of Wagner and Beethoven. As I have mentioned, Forster thought of music as a great human art, and that the essence of fiction and life can be found through music/art/narrative. Even humanity and the decaying modern world can be redeemed through music or through a rhythmical narrative. Any reader of Forster’s novels will discover how he would gladly take all his characters and the reader to a concert hall in order to appreciate Western classical music and to simultaneously realize the meanings of life, love, art, eternity, and ultimate redemption. It is interesting to quote what England’s leading composer, Benjamin Britten, has said about Forster’s musicality (though these remarks might be seen as merely tactful to an invited guest at a late occasion to honour him): “There is no doubt that E. M. Forster is our most musical novelist. . . . He plays the piano neatly and efficiently . . . he really understands music and uses music in his novels” (81). Despite Forster’s admission that he is only an “amateur whose inadequacy will become all too obvious as he proceeds,” he seems to have a good knowledge of music when he analyses a popular song in his essay “The C Minor of that Life”:

I think I can tell when a tune is in C major, and I do frankly consider this key the most suitable for the Mice—it is straightforward, nurserified, unassuming. Mice in A flat would greatly overstate their claims, for A flat is a delicate suave gracious in-

timate refined key. And Mice in E would be presented far too brilliantly. I mention these three keys (C, A flat and E) because I most readily detect them. . . . Besides them, I sometimes spot F, which has the lyric quality of A flat, only less marked, and C sharp (D flat), which has the brilliancy of E, only more marked. (*Two Cheers* 119–20)

Forster's interest in music began early in his life in Cambridge where he developed a taste for it through the help of his friend Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson. His appreciation of music matured through his visits to Italy, where he went to operas, especially *Lucia di Lammermoor*, which appears in his first novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (Furbank, vol. I, 103). Forster's musical enthusiasms culminated in a collaboration with Benjamin Britten when he (along with Eric Crozier) wrote the prose libretto of the opera *Billy Budd*. Britten was full of admiration for Forster's "deep perception, quick wit, tireless energy and his consistent inspiration" (Britten 86). However, I must mention here that long before Britten and Forster had ceased to be close friends. Their friendship had been a quick and intense one, and the tension reached its peak in their falling-out at the time *Billy Budd* was composed when Forster interposed what he thought was musical advice but had in so doing, completely misjudged Britten's creative process (Furbank vol. 2, 285).

Romantic music is the type of music that is mostly heard throughout Forster's fiction. He shares the "Romantic belief that music is the most spiritual and therefore the most superior form of arts" (Advani 124). Forster believes that the novel, as a work of art, should aspire to be as spiritual and sublime as music, and despite its social, political, religious, and ideological preoccupations, the novel should strive towards an aesthetic goal as does a symphony:

Music, though it does not employ human beings, though it is governed by intricate laws, nevertheless does offer in its final expression a type of beauty which fiction might achieve in its own way. Expansion. That is the idea the novelist must cling to. Not completion. *Not rounding off but opening out*. When the symphony is over we feel that the notes and tunes compos-

ing it have been liberated, they have found in the rhythm of the whole their individual freedom. (*Aspects of the Novel* 116; italics mine)

The sentence I have emphasized in this quotation seems to forecast a Derridean, a poststructuralist and postmodernist poetics of deferral—that is, the never ending, closing down or “rounding off” and constantly “opening out” of narratives.<sup>1</sup> For Forster, the novel is thus open-ended, pluralistic, and never single in meaning, as he practiced in his novels, particularly in *A Passage to India*. The novel as a work of art (or a piece of music), is, in Roland Barthes’s words, “eternal not because it imposes a single meaning on different men, but because it suggests different meanings to a single man” (qtd. in Hawkes 157). This again supports my main contention that both music and the novel are seen as semiotic structures, narrative discourses with a multiplicity of meanings. Music possesses this narrating capacity of plural meanings that often have ideological and political bearings, and it is, as Said writes, “another way of telling” and showing digressive and reiterative stories, experiences and temporalities (100).

The Romantic nature of Forster’s musicality stems from his great love for Wagner and Beethoven, and when he speaks of music it is to them that he most readily turns. Wagner, in particular, is a passion that began with Forster’s youth and continued at the very least until 1939 (Lucas 92). The reason for this passion, as discovered throughout Forster’s novels, is both thematic and structural. It is thematic in the sense that Forster’s characters, like Wagner’s creatures, are governed by a dream-like and isolated world, and yet they want to gain their own will, affirm subjectivity and establish human connections. And it is structural in the sense that the Wagnerian tripartite structure of his music-dramas is used with good effect by Forster in his novels.

The thematic and to some extent the ideological connection between Wagner’s musicality and Forster’s narratology is important to our discussion. This is because of the influence of Wagner, and his stress on the power and free individuality of human beings, on the great German thinkers Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who themselves greatly influ-

enced many modern European novelists, who in turn echo the irrationality of the age, the necessity of will, and the struggle for recreating and restructuring society as a whole. Like Forster's isolated, disconnected characters in all his novels, Wagner's heroes in his music-dramas are also disconnected; they, like their creator himself, as Said argues, were always doing and "redoing things, restructuring, repairing, reinterpreting in an effort to get them right and give them stability *as if* from the beginning"(67). That is why his musical dramas, Said continues, are "full of characters who, like Wagner, tell the story over and over again" (67). Indeed, in a similar fashion, the main impulse of Forster's characters is to reorganize and rewrite order in a modernist world full of disorder and confusion; they attempt to "only connect" what is already disconnected in their lives. Also in the same way that Wagner's heroes dream of power, so too do Forster's protagonists in jostling for and claiming more emotional, territorial, geographical, political and religious space. They demand independence, more narrative, more centrality and more ethno-centrality among other "central" narratives.

What is relevant here is the association of Wagner and his music with the question of power and will, especially as interpreted by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and later by great European novelists such as Thomas Mann, Joseph Conrad and to some extent Forster. For Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, music is identified with the will and the mystical power of man, which comes very close to the Hindu teachings as exemplified, for instance, by Godbole in *A Passage to India*. For Schopenhauer, as Norris comments, "music most directly embodies the unconscious, inarticulate strivings of Will; and yet, despite this, music is the highest form of art since it dispenses with the various intermediary concepts and representations which characterise other kinds of aesthetic experience" (310). This again confirms that music is seen as a narrative in the unconscious, or to borrow Fredric Jameson's useful terminology, a narrativization in the political unconscious (Jameson 35). Norris continues to assert that for Nietzsche in particular:

music—and specifically Wagner's music—brings with it a force of creative renewal which will make of nineteenth-century



German culture a second great age of world-historical achievement, one in which the two great opposing impulses—the Dionysian and Apollonian—again be interlocked in the kind of titanic struggle that engenders great works of art. (315)

What Nietzsche expresses is that the Apollonian principle of form, discipline, and rational control must somehow give way to the Dionysian element, the dark side of irrational energies in order to allow great works of art or music to come into being—like Wagner's music that gave strong support to the Dionysian irrationality and the romanticization of the will. This Dionysian prominence in Nietzsche's argument and in Wagner's music was gravely misunderstood by Hitler who stubbornly wanted to renew the German race with catastrophic consequences. Of course, the connection here with Fascism is very complex, but yet it can be simplified to this stratum of straightforward semanticization with reference to Wagner's music as a whole. Ironically, Hitler found a great deal of national fervour in Wagner's music and was a passionate lover of his operas—hence Wagner's own criminalization and the demonization of his music during and after the Second World War. As I have already mentioned, Forster stopped being a lover of Wagner's music in 1939. Indeed, as Said argues, Wagner's music is still banned in Israel because it is associated with the Nazis and their brutal history of racial atrocities; he was banned because he “was openly proclaimed anti-Semite and that both his ideological and aesthetic accounts of his own music as an emanation from German and Western European art depend to an appreciable degree upon his attempts to exclude, to excruciate, and, it is suggested, to exterminate what he calls the Jewish character” (40–41). Said also suggested that Adorno and Walter Benjamin were right to have hated Wagner and his music for his anti-Semitism and for being “the willing prophet of imperialism and terrorism” (41). This is so because, it is argued, Wagner's musical themes and tonal narratives were exactly employed and echoed by the Nazis in the concentration camps.

Wagner's influence on Forster, on the other hand, is structural and formalistic in the way that the latter adopted the method of the tripartite structure used in Wagner's operas. For Forster, “Wagner was a

master of construction, especially with his technique of using three long acts joined with recurrent patterns of leitmotifs, a method Forster used in many of his novels” (DiGaetani 159). This three-act structure appears in *The Longest Journey* and *A Passage to India*. But the expression of the leitmotifs appears in all of Forster’s novels. In the Italian novels, for instance, we observe the recurrent patterns that contrast English with Italian values, the Sawstonian imprisonment and the free spirits of the Italians. In the later novels we also see this Wagnerian leitmotif embodied in “only connect” in *Howards End* and through the Marabar caves in *A Passage to India*, the desire to see the real India, and the wasp which is seen by Mrs. Moore in the early part of the novel and by Professor Godbole in his final dancing ritual. Finally, Forster acknowledges the influence Wagner had on him in an interview with the *Paris Review*, when he was asked: “Do you have any Wagnerian leitmotiv system to help you keep so many themes going at the same time?” Forster responded: “Yes, in a way, and I’m certainly interested in music and musical methods” (qtd. in Cowley 31).

Wagner’s influence on Forster’s technique of construction appears in his first novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905). The Wagnerian leitmotif occurs here in the way the narrator compares the Italian freedom represented by Gino with the Sawstonian middle-class inhibition epitomized by the Herritons. In Italy there is beauty, emotional honesty, harmony and rhythm in life unlike in isolated English suburbia. For the narrator the Italians understand music by instinct. When Lilia asks Spiridione, Gino’s friend, about music he responds that he loves music “passionately,” although he has not “studied scientific music, but the music of the heart.” But Lilia, who comes from Sawston, not romantic Italy, plays the piano badly and does not love or appreciate music and does not attend concerts: “Lilia had no resources. She did not like music, or reading, or work” (*Where Angels* 44–45). For the narrator, she cannot even form her own history when she cannot read or appreciate musical narratives.

The most important reference to music in this novel is the Italian Opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti. This musical narrative is based on another fictional narrative: Sir Walter Scott’s novel *The Bride of*

*Lammermoor*. The main plot of this three-act opera/narrative centers on Lucia, the sister of Lord Enrico of Lammermoor, who makes her marry Lord Arturo Bucklaw for his money. But Lucia is in love with Edgardo, Master of Ravenswood, and she refuses a materialistic marriage until her brother shows her a forged letter from Edgardo revealing that he has deserted her. Lucia mistakenly believes him and consents to marry Bucklaw. And when Edgardo comes back and wants to take revenge the characters sing the famous sextet of the opera, in which Lucia realizes that her brother had actually cheated her. Then her brother challenges Edgardo to a duel the result of which is the death of her brother. Seeking revenge, she slays her husband and goes mad. She, too, dies grieving for Edgardo who in his turn learns that she is dead and has never faltered in her love for him. Edgardo promises her spirit that they will never part again, stabs himself and dies (Ewen 388–89).

Forster employs this musical opera in his novel as a narratological intertext in order to probe the psychology of his characters and the thematic connection between the two texts. Miss Abbott, for instance, expresses her love for music and her admiration for the Italian airy spirit: “However bad the performance is tonight, it will be alive. Italians don’t love music silently like the beastly Germans. The audience takes its share—sometimes more” (*Where Angels* 90). Philip, the other Sawstonian representative, does not want to come to the opera and does not even like music. His sister Harriet and himself are shown to come to the opera only because they have nothing else to do and perhaps to criticize the Italian manners and ways of listening to music. For them, unlike the Italians, listening to music, like reading a narrative, is something passive and should never involve the audience/readers. They are critical of the “chaotic” spontaneity of the Italians: “Families greeted each other across the auditorium. People in the pit hailed their brothers and sons in the chorus, and told them how well they were singing” (*Where Angels* 94). What is more interesting here is the way this musical narrative changes Philip’s attitude towards people and even towards music itself, a factor that foregrounds the thematic function of music within fiction. He changes into a lover of music in the Italian fashion and agrees with Miss Abbott about the importance of getting involved in the action

of narratives. In fact, this scene shows that Philip, who has the possibilities within himself of really understanding Italian culture, is able to shed his English reticence at the opera and join in with the Italians' uninhibited enjoyment of music. Both he and Miss Abbott sympathize with Lucia in her plight, a text that is similar to Gino's sadness about the abduction and death of his child. Also, the materialistic middle-class Herritons seem to be like Lord Ashton, who cheated his sister for the sake of money. Furthermore, Miss Abbott is deeply touched by the narratological texture of the opera; and because of its musical effects, in addition to her own realization that she loves Gino, feels that her heart is opened and that she is liberated from her isolated Sawstonian English suburbia. Thus, it is through music she is able to rewrite her story and restructure her life from within and without, and rediscover her own self in the Wagnerian fashion:

Miss Abbott, too, had had a wonderful evening, nor did she ever remember such stars or such a sky. Her head, too, was full of music, and that night when she opened the window her room was filled with warm sweet air. She was bathed in beauty within and without; she could not go to bed for happiness. Had she ever been so happy before? Yes, once before, and here, a night in March, the night Gino and Lilia had told her of their love—the night whose evil she had come now to undo.  
(*Where Angels* 98)

Through music Miss Abbott is emotionally stimulated, spiritually liberated and psychologically exonerated, exorcized from the evils of her own conservative suburbia: "Help me!" she cried, and shut the window as if there was magic in the encircling air. But the tunes would not go out of her head, and all night long she was troubled by torrents of music, and by applause and laughter" (*Where Angels* 98–99). Music, thus, like narrative discourse, is the prominent art most immediately expressive of feeling, and therefore, as Linda Hutcheon argues, "almost open to subjective response, social and personal" (95). For these sociological and personal reasons, in addition to the many other ideological and political dimensions that musical discourses usually possess and which will

become clearer throughout this article, music is used by Forster problematically and not so “innocently” for mere “entertainment.”

Forster's second Italian novel, *A Room with a View* (1908), embodies the second major musical influence on him—that of Beethoven rather than Wagner. The first reference to Beethoven occurs in the whole of chapter three in which Lucy is portrayed as an imprisoned and isolated young suburban girl who, through her musicality and musical narratives, is able to reject and escape the “chaotic daily life” of Tunbridge Wells. Thus it is through music that she is able to change and overthrow the enclosed, fixed, duty-ridden, male narrative imposed on her by others in the novel. But Lucy plays the right narratives/notes and performs suitable sonatas of Beethoven to indicate her wish to change and overcome her tragic situation with Cecil Vyse (the pun is intended). Indeed, through music Lucy is able to reconstruct her own subjectivity to free herself, an example of which is that she begins “rewriting” her own love-story with George Emerson “*as if* from the beginning” (to use Said's phrase again), far away from Sawston.

Music, like Italy itself, relaxes Lucy's English inhibitions, as the opera does for Philip Herriton, and frees her from repressed English suburbia. When she plays the piano she knows what to narrate and how to do it. When she plays music she becomes totally free and cannot see anyone around her: “Like every true performer, she was intoxicated by the mere feel of the notes: they were fingers caressing her own; and by touch, not by sound alone, did she come to her desire” (*Room* 30). For Lucy, music is the romantic language through which she expresses her love and it is the effective word through which she tries self-consciously to communicate her counter-narratives to others in the novel and to assert her own free subjectivity. The narrator summarizes succinctly the implications of Lucy's music: “If Miss Honeychurch ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting—both for us and for her” (*Room* 31). This means that Lucy lives in a dreamlike situation when she plays music; she narrates the exact story within her own self, a prediction that is realized later in the novel and which becomes “very exciting” both for the reader and for Lucy herself. Through music she tells the story of her love for George Emerson and her dislike for Mr. Vyse. When the latter asks her to play

on the piano she refuses; but she plays beautifully for Emerson. Mr. Vyse is also irritated by her style and choice of music:

‘But her music!’ he exclaimed [to his mother who suggested that he should marry her as if it were his and his mother’s decision]. ‘The style of her! How she kept to Schumann when, like an idiot, I wanted Beethoven. Schumann was right for this evening, Schumann was the thing. [He continues to say in a very ironical, contradictory, masculine, possessive and funny way.] *Do you know, mother, I shall have our children educated just like Lucy.* (Room 122; italics mine)

I have emphasized these possessive and personal pronouns to foreground the ignorance and arrogance of the male towards woman/music as two essentialized, mysterious, and incomprehensible narratives. In other words, music approximates woman in the way in which both seem to symbolize freedom of choice.

Lucy’s consciousness of the importance of her music in revealing her inner split self and in determining her stance against the masculine domination is concretized in another example of refusal to play music for Vyse in contrast to her willingness to play for Emerson. Mr. Vyse wants her to play the music of the *Flower Maidens* from Wagner’s *Parsifal*. She refuses, but when she looks at her audience she sees Mr. Emerson, who has just quietly entered. Then she proceeds to perform the music from *Parsifal* only for Emerson: “‘Our performer has changed her mind,’ said Miss Bartlett, perhaps implying, ‘she will play the music to Mr. Emerson.’ Lucy did not know what to do, nor even what she wanted to do. She played a few bars of the *Flower Maidens*’ song very badly, and then she stopped” (Room 155). This scene suggests that by deciding to play or not, she wishes to convey a message at once to the one she loves and the one she hates. It also implies that music has a narratological role in revealing the split within Lucy’s psychology and the conflict between her conscious and unconscious desires. Indeed, her own indecisiveness makes her “play very badly,” and also shows her as unable, at least at this stage, to write (to play) openly her own love story with George Emerson. This argument becomes even stronger when we

remember that this chapter where this episode occurs is deliberately called by the narrator/author "The Disaster Within."

This type of psychological disaster, however, is turned into a blissful reality, and this happens again through music and the musical images employed by George Emerson's father. He quickly persuades Lucy to marry his son George: "Life . . . is a public performance on the violin, in which you must learn the instrument as you go along. . . . 'That's it; that's what I mean. You love George!' And after his long preamble the three words burst against Lucy like waves from the open sea" (*Room* 201). Thus, life, history, and narratives become musical occasions in which one must actively be present and competent enough to play one's role, one's tunes. In other words, one must be a powerful performer in order to exist, to communicate, and to exercise one's own identity. In the same way, music becomes life-like, sociological, historical, and narratological in that one must be an ideological and political narrator/writer of it in order to experience these monumental occasions and to unearth the hidden potentials that allow one to see things through and to move forward in a confident way. The novel concludes with a romantic musical image of the two lovers united and at the threshold of their love: "Youth enwrapped them; the song of Phaethon announced passion requited, love attained. But they were conscious of a love more mysterious than this. The song [self-consciously the novel itself] died away; they heard the river, bearing down the snows of winter into the Mediterranean" (*Room* 209). These images of open seas, rivers, torrents, snows, and songs, and the warm Mediterranean, all interact together to elevate the novel towards the sublime level of music. Indeed, it is through music and its narrativization that the binary oppositions between truth and lies, light and darkness, love and hate, and rooms (enclosure) and views (escape) are irrepressibly foregrounded.

Forster's third novel, *The Longest Journey* (1907), particularly deploys Wagnerian music and the Wagnerian operatic tripartite structure. The novel is structurally divided into three sections entitled: Cambridge, Sawston, and Wiltshire. The novel's musicality is also apparent from its opening scene where the main characters of Rickie, Ansell and Tilliard are involved both in philosophical discussions and playing Wagnerian

music, “The Prelude of Rhinegold.” This reference to Wagner’s music plays an important role in the development of Rickie’s subjectivity and his needs for love, connection and freedom. Rickie’s limitations are dramatically shown through Gerald and Agnes who kiss each other in front of him, a sentimental incident that reminds him of his inability to do so and of his inhibitions and ineptness, which make him a prisoner of his own romantic orchestration of thoughts. The narrator describes him through the following musical images:

Music flowed past him like a river. He stood at the springs of creation and heard the primeval monotony. Then an obscure instrument gave out a little phrase. The river continued unheeding. The phrase was repeated, and a listener might know it was a fragment of the Tune of tunes. Nobler instruments accepted it, the clarinet protected [sic], the brass encouraged, and it rose to the surface to the whisper of violins. (*The Longest Journey* 40)

This passage reflects what we have already noted about *A Room with a View* where Lucy’s inner conflicts can be seen here again as reflected in Rickie’s own isolation, inexperience in a repressed Cambridge world. Also, as in *A Room with a View*, these torrents of images of rivers, compared with music, help the reader to understand the disconnected life of Rickie and his attempts to rewrite and reorganize his life from the beginning.

Indeed, the entire novel seems to be decorated with Wagnerian musical images and seems inhabited with his creatures. For example, the letters exchanged between Rickie and Ansell are full of names from Wagner’s operas and Wagnerian heroines. Ansell stands firmly against Rickie’s proposal to marry Agnes and tries to persuade him to abandon this idea. But Rickie, in response, borrows the names of the great lovers in Wagner’s opera to support his plan of marriage from Agnes and to demonstrate his love for her: “Understand Beatrice, and Clara Middleton, and Brünhilde in the first scene of *Götterdämmerung*” (*Longest* 82). But Ansell replies, rhetorically, in the next letter that one must also “understand Xanthipe and Mrs. Bennet, and Elsa in the question scene of



*Lohengrin*" (Longest 82). Indeed, Ansell's warning becomes true at the end of the novel when Agnes, like Elsa, proves to be the untrustworthy woman who destroys her husband. Agnes is also compared to Isolde, the woman who appears in Wagner's music and who plays a destructive role, the femme fatale, a dangerous woman who poses a threat to male power. All these and many other references to Wagner's music in this novel function within Forster's fiction as intertexts or counter narratives that assist in the fictionalization process, the creation of these human subjects, and also enable the reader to understand them and the structure as a whole. This means also that Forster actually deploys music in his novels for special narratological and ideological purposes; and never innocently or decoratively. This ideological ramification of music is strongly evident in Forster's last two novels, to which I shall now turn.

*Howards End* (1910) is, in fact, Forster's most musical novel. I say this because it employs music a great deal, and in it Forster tries to create his favourite image of the novel that it should aspire towards music. The whole novel is like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony where we encounter goblins in an atmosphere of panic and emptiness, but which ends in a climax of joyous splendour. The first and major reference to music in this novel occurs throughout the entire fifth chapter, a chapter that can be read as a dramatized and narrativized essay on music. The chapter opens with a generalized and authoritative statement that must, according to the narrator, be accepted as "truth": "It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man" (29). P.N. Furbank, Forster's biographer, suggests that this chapter is historically biographical because it reminds Forster of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson who wrote a dialogue about a poet and a painter who went to a concert and reacted differently to music (173). In this chapter music is also used as an intertextual narrative against which most characters and their own personalities are probed and understood. Forster has textually taken all his characters to the Queen's Hall in London in order to listen to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, to experience those powerful occasions of rereading, rewriting, restructuring, and rethinking through their lives and subjectivities. Each one of these characters has heard and "written" a different musical narrative accord-

ing to their own inner psychologies and their own hidden agendas. For Example, Margaret can “only see the music”; Tibby, “profoundly versed in counterpoint,” derives his pleasure from “the transitional passage on the drum”; Aunt Juley wants to “tap”; Fräulein Mosebach remembers only that Beethoven is “echt Deutsch”; Frieda, when she is “listening to classical music, could not respond” to any question; Herr Liesecke, too, “looked as if wild horses could not make him inattentive; but, Helen sees “heroes and shipwrecks in the music’s flood” (*Howards* 29–30). Again, we find here that music is ideologically associated with torrents and floods that sweep over people’s experiences and feelings. Nearly all these characters are living and re-living their own musical and “nomadic” world and, as one critic says about Wagner’s creatures, that they “are at home in the volcanic world of impulse . . . acting and talking from within this natural dreamstate” (Bloch 322).

Helen’s response to music is interestingly similar to Forster’s; she remembers falling in love with Paul Wilcox and recalls the recent experience with him. Forster believes that there are two kinds of music; “music itself,” and “music that reminds me of *something*” (*Two Cheers* 122). There is a difference between pure music and referential or representational music: the former is entirely aesthetic and sublime, and the latter is the music that reminds one of something else that has happened in real life, it is the sociological, ideological and problematically political and religious one that comes very near to narratology. Indeed, it is to this latter type of music that I am referring in my entire discussion in this article. Throughout his fiction Forster promotes the music that “reminds” and “represents” things such as Wagner’s music, hence his love for such music and later his hatred for Wagner for purely political, hegemonic reasons and the composer’s ties to Nazism. Indeed, Forster has changed his conviction about what I am calling “representational” music and argues (against the grain of his novels) that pure music is the best of all (*Two Cheers* 123). I say against the grain of his novels because Helen in *Howards End*, for instance, after listening to Beethoven’s music, realizes her tragic situation with Paul. Thus, for Helen, “the music had summed up to her all that had happened or could happen in her career. She *read it as a tangible statement*, which could never be superseded. The notes

meant this and that to her, and they could have no other meaning, and life could have no other meaning. She pushed right out of the building, and walked slowly down the outside staircase, breathing the autumnal air, and then she strolled home” (*Howards* 32; italics mine). This passage explains what I mean by music as narrative that tells and changes things in one’s life. Music becomes that tangible and readable discursive text which reveals to Helen everything that she suffers from as a result of her relation with Paul Wilcox. She rushes out for fresh air and to freedom escaping from the dark life she is living. She sees the goblins walking over the universe and she is troubled by them; she has reconstructed and renarrated from within all her past and relives it through this symphony. As the narrator comments,

And the goblins—they had not really been there at all? They were only the phantoms of cowardice and unbelief? One healthy human impulse would dispel them? Men like the Wilcoxes, or President Roosevelt, would say yes. Beethoven knew better. The goblins really had been there. They might return—and they did. It was as if the splendour of life might boil over and waste to steam and froth. In its dissolution one heard the terrible, ominous note, and a goblin, with increased malignity, walked quietly over the universe from end to end. Panic and emptiness! Panic and emptiness! (*Howards* 31)

These thoughts surfaced from within her own consciousness, her inner undecided, split subjectivity; she is “panicking” because she fears that they will stay if she does not act out her own true feelings by marrying the man she loves, an act that she believes would get rid of these thoughts and images forever. Thus, as one critic argues, music and images of reality are strongly connected: “Images of consciousness are readily evoked by music because, like consciousness itself music is temporal, continuous in its extent, and without spatial boundaries” (Lidov 196). Indeed, music has, by its very nature, this psychological, social and ideological transgressive element in it and there is no point pretending that it is just “pure aesthetics” and has “nothing to do with reality.” Said, again, strongly argues this point: “the transgressive element

in music is its nomadic ability to attach itself to, and become a part of, social formations, to vary its articulations and rhetoric depending on the occasion as well as the audience, plus the power and the gender situations in which it takes place" (70). This is true of the music Helen has heard, its poignancy and psychological richness, the social formations it has invoked, and in the power struggle and gender difference she has to face in her love-relationship with Paul Wilcox, a relationship that can only be successful if articulated within equal terms. The music she has heard in the concert hall symbolically tells her clearly one message: she must rewrite and reorganize her own history. Forster agrees with Helen's own social and personal evocation when she listens to music. His statement elsewhere sums up all my argument here: "When the orchestra stops, we hear something that has never actually been played" (*Aspects* 115); something psychological, sociological, political and individualistic is always being played, narrated, textualized and contextualized.

Contrary to Helen's conviction that music is a semiotic system, Margaret, her sister, believes that music should not be so "representational," or textualized and contextualized vehicle of thoughts, and, strangely also, it should not be translated into words and deeds like any language or narrative text. She is angry with Helen's main aim which is to "translate tunes into the language of painting, and pictures into the language of music" (*Howards* 37), or even any interchanging of the arts, which for her is so undesirable. She is angry with Helen because the latter "labels it [music] with meanings from start to finish; turns it into literature [narrative discourse]. I wonder if the day will ever return when music will be treated as music" (*Howards* 37). This is how Margaret complains about the ways in which music has been turned into, or made interchangeable with, narrative discourses that tell stories and tackle human problems. Margaret even goes on to argue (against the current of most of Forster's ideas and the ideas of his characters in the novels about music) that "the real villain" in the history of music, for her, is of course Wagner who violates the purity of music by injecting into it so many social and ideological undercurrents:

the real villain is Wagner. He has done more than any man in the nineteenth century towards the muddling of arts. I do feel

that music is in a very serious state just now, though extraordinarily interesting. Every now and then in history there do come these terrible geniuses, like Wagner, who stir up all the wells of thoughts at once. (*Howards* 37)

Interestingly enough, Margaret might be echoing Forster himself who ambivalently stands with those innovators of the arts because he certainly admires Wagner, and he also practices this “muddling of arts” in his own novel writing where he constantly promotes the fact that the novel should be rhythmical, openly ambiguous like a symphony, historical and even realistic. I say “ambivalently” because earlier on in this article I have quoted Forster as saying that “music is the deepest of the arts” and cannot be reached by other forms. My main contention here is that Forster certainly agrees with Helen rather than with her sister who believes in the divorce or the segregation of the arts, rather than the multiple marriage, the interconnected mix between the textual, verbal, and tonal arts. Indeed the main “verbal” and “textual” narrative in this novel is its musicality and the sociological points it has scored through its allusions to Wagner and Beethoven.<sup>2</sup> Such musical scores reach their problematic peak in Forster’s last novel, *A Passage to India*, where musicality is strongly connected with political, colonialist, religious and racial questions, with which I shall conclude the article.

*A Passage to India* (1924) deploys musical texts and musical images in a rather darker way than in the other novels. The goblins of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, that we have encountered walking over the universe of *Howards End*, reside here in the world of the caves and darkness with endless echoes. Also the “panic and emptiness” within and without reach here the peak of a real world of evil dreams and nightmares. Music in *A Passage to India* narrates the language, the anguish, the incomprehensible discourses, tones, sounds, and noise of the caves; through the melodious sounds of the Christian church bells it tells the story of the colonial and racial attempts to baptize India as a Western terrain of Oriental exploration and pleasure seeking; it communicates the rhythmical calls for prayers from the mosques as a reminder to Dr. Aziz of his different faith, race and culture from that of his Western “friends”; it

also expresses the incomprehensible rhythms of the Hindu drums and their cultural attraction. Indeed, the most interestingly revealing music comes from Professor Godbole's narratological song that problematically calls for God (through Krishna) to come to save India from its colonialist occupiers. But music's significance as a narrative transcends this political and material side, underscoring the spiritual connection between the Divine and the Soul, forwarding the view that God is always immanent. All those listening to Godbole's strange tonal narratives are stirred from within no matter their religion is. It is even more interesting, however, to note that in this novel there is no reference to the music of either Beethoven or Wagner. It is rather a music with a difference; a spontaneous, natural, spiritual, and even primeval music dedicated to all beings. When, for example, Mrs. Moore, Adela, and Fielding listen to Godbole's song, the narrator comments:

His thin voice rose, and gave out one sound after another. At times there seemed rhythm, at times there was the illusion of a Western melody. But the ear, baffled repeatedly, soon lost any clue, and wandered in a maze of noises, none harsh or unpleasant, none intelligible. It was the song of the unknown bird. (*A Passage to India* 71–72)

Godbole's music is universal despite its unknowability and unnamability, a factor that enhances its open narrativization and unfixed semantization. Everyone understands its peculiar mysticism, takes from it, and at the same time is challenged by it, pours into it individual interpretations. Godbole's song symbolizes all the rhythms of India, connects the Divine and the Soul, and joins all the Indians and unites them against the dark shadows of Western colonialism.

One of the novel's prominent meanings is thus conveyed through its musicality, an example of which is the song used by Godbole in the Temple section—a song that celebrates the birth of the Hindu god. This is an occasion that emphasizes human commonality and serves to unite all Indians, Hindus and Muslims; the song itself is a song of connection and love among all people. The Indians celebrate this occasion through music and in the setting of rain, which is also a symbol of purification:

“And so with the music. Music there was, but from so many sources that the sum total was untrammelled. The braying banging crooning melted into a single mass which trailed round the palace before joining the thunder. Rain fell at intervals throughout the night” (*Passage* 275). Thus, Professor Godbole has a choir that sings sacred songs in the festival with various musical instruments which produce a harmonious performance for this occasion. It should be noted that the performance would have less appeal to the Western ear, perhaps appearing chaotic and odd to Western tastes. The setting of this particular musical performance has an air of the mystical, the religious, and the sacred, and as such stands in contrast to the arguably simpler setting/atmosphere of the Western symphony hall. As Said argues in a different context, this type of music means something momentous, the result of which “is what can be called an extreme occasion, something beyond the everyday, something irreducibly and temporally not repeatable, something whose core is precisely what can be experienced only under relatively severe and unyielding conditions” (17–18). The choir sings to God who is invisible, and whose arrival is uncertain, but despite the intangible qualities of his presence, they await Him because to them, He is always immanent. They sing excessively, so that songs, words, sounds, and narratives become incomprehensible and unknowable. Songs and melody become more like noise and thunder, and listeners/readers yearn for more louder noises and sounds till Godbole and his singers become intoxicated:

Godbole consulted the music-book, said a word to the drummer, who broke rhythm, made a thick little blur of sound, and produced a new rhythm. This was more exciting, the inner images it evoked more definite, and the singers' expressions became fatuous and languid. They loved all men, the whole universe, and scraps of their past, tiny splinters of detail, emerged for a moment to melt into the universal warmth. (*Passage* 276)

Listening to Godbole's music means a great deal for the cross-cultural communications that the novel attempts to advance. Indeed, through this song and the images it evokes about the past and the present of India, the political and racial injustices done against the Indians as rep-

resented by Dr. Aziz's criminalization as an Oriental "rapist" of Western women, and the possibility of racial reconciliation and love among all people, together enhance my idea that musicality in fiction is ideological and sociological. Again, through this narratological discourse of music Forster achieves the ultimate aim of the novel: "universal warmth" toward the whole world. The novel has as its aim the need to foster complete love amongst "all men," and its task is also to promote a vision of the whole universe as connected together harmoniously—a world that is connected by human touch, warmth and freedom.

The narrative discourse of music has thus achieved its acknowledged position and social status with Forster's narratives; it has been contested as a viable social and political terrain. For Forster, music therefore quite literally fills a social space, and as Said argues, "it does so by elaborating the ideas of authority and social hierarchy directly connected to a dominant establishment imagined as actually presiding over the work" (64). What this really means is that music is not an apolitical or an asocial practice; it has, indeed, as I hope this article has shown, real politicized and ideologized implications. Music in Forster's novels emerges out of the fragmented fabric of a text—and society—riddled with pregnant juxtapositions of meaning, characters and irregularities. These irregularities and juxtapositions are installed and at the same time undermined from within through music; they are constructed and deconstructed in a way to demonstrate the healing power of music in this seemingly contradictory process. Indeed, music is central for Forster because it has served as a source of aesthetic ideology that locates the redemptive capacity of art—and fictional narratives as part of art—within their ability to transcend the conflict between contradictory and rival subjects, characters, nations, and races. Music appears to be that kind of symbolically ideologized and centralized discourse that can be effectively and healingly used by and for these conflicting ideologies/subjects. Music epitomizes these sociological and political questions as "immanent content" at the very moment it claims them as something social that must be kept at a distance. This kind of deconstructive argument, that music is political at the very moment it denies its politicization, is advanced by another critic included in Norris's volume, who says: "By externalizing



itself from nature and society art [music] embodies them as immanent content, so that in every perception of nature there is actually embodied the whole of society" (Williams 194). This quotation brings into focus Forster's idea that the novel should aspire to music in its openness and wide scope, which of course means that both are aesthetically sublime but socially "representational." Music is a symbolic echo of society in all its aspects. It is a reminder of Pope's famous line, "The sound must seem an echo to the sense." Norris, finally, concludes with the same point: "If literature henceforth aspired to the condition of music, then it did so in the shape of a symbolist aesthetic which dreamed that language might at least momentarily transcend these hateful antinomies, thus managing to reconcile the world of phenomenal perception with the realm of noumenal reason" (317). The symbolic texture of the novel and its aesthetically ideological deployment of music re-emphasize again that Forster does in fact use music as a narrative discourse in the full sense of the word.

## Notes

- 1 See my own reading of the postmodernist novel in Salami, especially 13–45, 90–120, 253–69.
- 2 See how Stone argues that this novel, according to Forster, must be conceived as "a kind of musical score" (268).

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