

**Music in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*:  
Resistance to Totalitarianism and Aesthetic Totalisation**

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## 1. Introduction

Music was an integral part of E. M. Forster's life as he says, "Music has meant an enormous amount to me" (qtd. in Fillion *Rhythm* 1) <sup>(1)</sup>. As this essay will demonstrate, in his fourth published novel, *Howards End* (1910), music plays an essential role in resisting not only totalitarianism but also aesthetic totalisation that acts in the same way as the political system. As regards totalitarianism, in the final paragraph of "What I Believe" (1938), his most famous and frequently quoted essay, Forster writes, "The dictator-hero can grind down his citizens till they are all alike, but he cannot melt them into a single man.... He can order them to merge, he can incite them to mass-antics, but they are obliged to be born separately, and to die separately, and, owing to these unavoidable termini, will always be running off the totalitarian rails" (*TC* 73). Forster thus rejects the totalitarianism that controls or limits every aspect of individual life in order to create societal homogeneity. According to Hannah Arendt, twentieth-century totalitarianism had its ideological root in the "tribal nationalisms" of movements such as Pan-Germanism, where "people were either 'ours' or 'not-ours'" (Gleason 111) <sup>(2)</sup>. Side by side with a nation, which is thought of as a unified group of people with common cultural and ethnic characteristics attributed to them, a class society existed, where people were grouped into a set of hierarchical social categories <sup>(3)</sup>. Both totalitarianism and nationalism alike served to eliminate the so-called "other." In *Howards End*, Forster uses English music to suggest the exclusion of the Other. In the early twentieth century, for English people, English music was symbolic of England and the British Empire as an all-encompassing social totality. However, in fact, the cultural values of the privileged classes were employed as representative of the social totality.

More significantly, however, it is not just in the political/social system but also in the aesthetic or epistemological realm that exclusion is involved. As Seamus Deane observes, "In Europe the category of the aesthetic has as its project the reconciliation of the specific and the universe," in other words, a "totalizing vision that can contain or conciliate them" (4). The most influential theory of the aesthetic in Europe arises from Immanuel Kant's aesthetics of the beautiful in *Critique of Judgment* (1790). According to Kant, beauty in art results from judgements of taste that are universal and objective, but at the same time subjective. In other words, when we experience beauty, we find ourselves feeling as if we had synthesised the two contradictory opposites and thus approached and

conceptualised the world (reality) as a whole, which is always unknown to us, but now seems accessible; for, the outer world conforms to “our expectations as to how it ought to be” and is “endowed with intention, meaning, and purpose” (Martel 40) <sup>(4)</sup>. As Jean-François Lyotard points out, people have desires for “a reconciliation of the concept and the sensible,” “a transparent and communicable experience,” and the representation of the world as “the totality of what is” and as “the simple (the nondecomposable),” despite the fact that these ideas “provide no knowledge of reality (experience)” (*Postmodern* 16, 10, 11). In this utopian process of the representation of the world as a totality, difference and heterogeneity are homogenised and displaced <sup>(5)</sup>. Forster, on the other hand, in the novel shows Helen’s response to Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony; her interpretation of the third movement, for instance, does not serve as a mode of seeing the world as a whole. Forster also describes the Fifth as resistance to aesthetic totalisation which is a process that depends on leaving out what does not fit a totalised representation, for example, by showing characters’ diverse interpretations of the music.

## 2. English Music and the Political/Social System

In Chapter V, characters who attend a concert in the Queen’s Hall discuss Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Debussy, and Wagner. The only English musical figure who is brought up for discussion is Edward Elgar. During the interval, half-German Margaret talks to a young man, Leonard, and says that she has no interest in the next piece on the concert programme, Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance*. Overhearing the conversation, her English aunt Mrs. Munt says to her, “Here have I been persuading Herr Lieseche to stop for ‘Pomp and Circumstance’, and you are undoing all my work. I am so anxious for him to hear what *we* are doing in music. Oh, you mustn’t run down our English composers, Margaret” (*HE* 33, emphasis original). Here, Mrs. Munt’s utterance clearly shows her loyalty to England. More significantly, the attitude of Mrs. Munt, who is characterised as being “so British,” towards English music, Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance* in particular, reflects the social contexts of music in England in the early years of the twentieth century (*HE* 30, emphasis mine). In other words, for English people, English music was symbolic of England and the British Empire as an all-embracing social entity; however, the operation of symbolisation actually involved “our” social differentiation from the Other—the lower class and the colonised Other, as the word

“we” suggests.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when “Italian music dominated the opera, German music the orchestral field and French music the operetta stage,” in England there were persistent needs for the development of English music to express an English identity (Richards 10) <sup>(6)</sup>. In the musical movement called “the English Musical Renaissance,” English composers sought a national musical identity to counteract the influence of European music which had been considered in England not only as a model to be imitated but also as “a luxury...imported from overseas” (Trend 5). They did so, for example, by rediscovering the classics of English music and reviving interest in English folk music (Trend 8-9). In order to promote English music, they also contributed not only to the establishment of the Royal College of Music but also to the growth of brass bands for amateurs (Trend 10-11, 15-16). However, English music of the period did not necessarily express the national identity based on a unified community. Andrew Blake observes that “the ‘folk-music’ collected by Cecil Sharp and his followers was not that of the folk in the industrial towns (by far the majority of the population), whatever their dialects or musical cultures, but of the rural areas, especially the South-West,” namely, “the music of an idealised English village” (44). Georgina Boyes also remarks that the Folk-Song Society (founded in 1898) attempted to inspire the working classes “to turn their minds to a higher purpose, and to elevate them from the drudgery of their own hardships” through “the pure, quintessentially English culture of the rural Folk,” in which “there was ‘no sham, no got up glitter, and no vulgarity’, nothing ‘common or unclean’” (qtd. in Boyes 26-27). Concerning brass bands, which had initially grown with “the first mass engagement of working-class people in instrumental art music,” it was still in working class communities rather than in England as a whole where they played an important cultural role (Herbert 10) <sup>(7)</sup>. To recapitulate, in England, the cultural values of the whole society except the lower classes were used as symbolically representative of the social totality.

The growing movement in English music coincided with the rapid expansion of the Empire <sup>(8)</sup>. To that end, for instance, the third verse of the national anthem “God Save the Queen” was translated into languages spoken in the Queen’s Empire in 1897, the year of the Diamond Jubilee (Richards 92). Elgar, the composer of *Pomp and Circumstance* that Mrs. Munt likes extremely, reached the zenith of his national acclaim with the first *Pomp and Circumstance* march in 1901. The trio section of this march was reproduced the following year in the solo song “Land of Hope and Glory” with

verse <sup>(9)</sup>. This song, which became an unofficial second national anthem for the Empire, includes the lines: “By freedom gained, by truth maintained, / Thine empire shall be strong” and “Wider still and wider / Shall thy bounds be set, / God who made thee mighty / Make thee mightier yet” (qtd. in Richards 64-65). It is evident that these words express expansionist, chauvinistic imperialism, in which the colonised Other is perforce dismissed out of hand <sup>(10)</sup>. To put it another way, the operation of symbolisation in fact included the exclusion of the colonised Other.

In respect of Forster’s attitude to English music, Michelle Fillion writes, “In his youth Forster had little positive to say about the [English] music of Stanford, Edward Elgar, or Ethel Smyth, and in later years Ralph Vaughan Williams, his neighbor in nearby Dorking, rarely escaped without a poke” (*Rhythm* 21). Forster’s aversion to English music, despite his deep devotion to music in general, suggests his considerable knowledge of the actual, not apparent, circumstances of the musical movement in England. Certainly, in his unfinished work, *Arctic Summer*, on which he began to work in 1911, Forster describes a female folk-music researcher attached to the “Conservatoire,” which refers to “the Hampstead Conservatory...directed by Cecil Sharp” (*AS* 182, Fillion *Rhythm* 7). That the female character travels around the countryside for her research demonstrates Forster’s awareness of the disregard of the musical movement for the urban working class <sup>(11)</sup>. As regards Forster’s attitude to Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance*, Fillion remarks that one of the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches was occasionally performed, but “always to end the program,” at the Queen’s Hall Sunday Concerts which Forster often attended (*Rhythm* 81). Focusing on Margaret’s exclamation of bitter hatred for *Pomp and Circumstance* <sup>(12)</sup>, Fillion observes that Forster “may have had in mind the first march of 1901, that paean to British imperialism” (*Rhythm* 81). The first few chapters of his next novel *A Passage to India* (1924), which were written in 1912-13 <sup>(13)</sup>, help account for Forster’s knowledge of the occlusion of the colonised Other in the anthem for the Empire. In those chapters, he refers to the national anthem “God save the King,” which is performed in the Club of an English association in a fictional Indian town. In connection with the act of symbolising the British Empire as a unified social entity by music, the anthem was translated into Sanskrit and Bengali in 1882 and also set to an Indian melody (Richards 92). However, in those chapters, Forster describes it as “the Anthem of the Army of Occupation” for the Club members and also sets its “meagre tune” against “the stillness” in the mosque and the Hindu “drumming” (*PI* 21, 13). These descriptions clearly reveal an internal division within the whole society and the exclusion of the

colonised Other. Hence, it follows that in the portrayal of Mrs. Munt's reaction to English music as typical of the English, Forster intimates the exclusion implicit in the act of using as symbolically representative of a whole society the cultural values of a privileged elite. His treatment of English music in this novel is also related to his opposition to totalisation, an aesthetic process that involves the sacrifice of difference and heterogeneity.

### **3. Helen's Response to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Resistance to Aesthetic Totalisation**

Fredric Jameson, focusing on Forster's representations of the British Empire in *Howards End*, points out his modernist "intention towards totality" ("Modernism" 58)<sup>(14)</sup>. As he observes, the "life experience and life world" of the colonies "remain[s] unknown and unimaginable for the subjects of the imperial power" ("Modernism" 51). According to Jameson, Forster therefore employs a modernist style—"an image, the image of the Great North Road as infinity"—which compensates for epistemological incompleteness; yet, this seemingly unified, totalising representation is in fact "epistemologically distorted and misleading" and can be traced to the displacement of part of the totality, the unknown Other of imperialism ("Modernism" 58). Jameson's argument, however, does not apply to Forster's descriptions of Helen's reaction to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in the novel. In the descriptions, he seeks to challenge aesthetic totalisation which is a process that includes the erasure of difference.

At the outset of Chapter V, the narrator mentions that Helen, Margaret's sister, "can see heroes and shipwrecks in the music's [Beethoven's Fifth's] flood," whereas Margaret "can only see the music (*HE* 29). Forster's essay "Not Listening to Music" (1939) elucidates Helen's mode of listening in clear contrast to Margaret's. In this essay, he discusses how to listen to music: "What do I hear during the intervals when I do attend? Two sorts of music. They melt into each other all the time, and are not easy to christen, but I will call one of them 'music that reminds me of something', and the other 'music itself'" (*TC* 122). These ideas are equivalent to an argument which has long dominated the philosophy of music since the late Romantic period: the dispute between the notion of "programme music," the term the Hungarian composer Franz Liszt (1811-86) coined, and that of "absolute music," the term Richard Wagner (1813-83) first employed in a derogatory sense. Malcolm

Budd, a proponent of the former, argues in his 1992 work, “In these [musical] works there are embodied, reflected, expressed, symbolised or in some other way presented phenomena that are integral to human life” (52). On the contrary, the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, a proponent of the latter, maintains in his 1962 work that “[m]usic is, by its very nature, powerless to *express* anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood” (qtd. in Richards 3, emphasis original). Peter Kivy expresses a similar position in 1990: “[T]he doctrine, roughly speaking, that pure instrumental music, ‘music alone’ as I have called it, is a quasi-syntactical structure of sound understandable solely in musical terms and having no semantic or representational content, no meaning, making reference to nothing beyond itself” (202). In short, “programme music” is representational, whereas “absolute music” is non-representational and its formal structure and sound is the object to be appreciated. The aesthetic ideas underlying “absolute music” are analogous to Kant’s concept of beauty, in that aesthetic judgements are universal and disinterested, and coherent, totalising understanding is required. In the novel, Helen is depicted as an advocate of the former, and Margaret, the latter <sup>(15)</sup>. That is to say, Helen’s response to the Fifth is completely different from Margaret’s experience of the music which functions as a mode of representing the world as a whole.

Helen’s indifference to the second movement of the Fifth also reveals her reluctance to see the world as a totality. As the narrator comments, Helen revels in the first, which she interprets to suggest “heroes and shipwrecks,” and in the third, “heroes and goblins”; on the other hand, she has little interest in the second, the Andante, the “humming and hawing with great sweetness,” because to her mind it is “very beautiful, but bearing a family likeness to all the other beautiful Andantes that Beethoven has written” (*HE* 30). The relation of the second to the first and third is comparable to that of “absolute music” to “programme music.” In other words, the “sweetness” and beauty of the second indicates the predictability and harmoniousness of the piece of work, which is the means of achieving a sense of totalisation <sup>(16)</sup>. Forster refers to “sweetness” in his essay “The *Raison d’Être* of Criticism” (1947). In the essay, Forster challenges unfavourable criticism of “one of [his] earlier novels” which includes the numerous and unexpected deaths of its characters, and says:

But I was not inspired to put anything vital in the place of the sudden deaths. The only remedy for a defect is inspiration, the subconscious stuff that comes up in the bucket. A piece of contemporary music, to my ear, has a good many sudden deaths in it; the phrases expire as

rapidly as the characters in my novel, the chords cut each other's throats, the arpeggio has a heart attack, the fugue gets into a nose-dive. But these defects—if defects they be—are vital to the general conception. They are not to be remedied by substituting sweetness. (*TC* 117)

Here, the “sweetness” that Forster invalidates means predictability and harmoniousness, which enable not only readers but also audiences to comprehend any work in a universal, unified interpretation. Similarly, in his essay on fiction, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), he comments adversely on the mere beauty or what he calls “pattern” (103). He writes, “[T]he pattern appeals to our aesthetic sense, it causes us to see the book as a whole” (*AN* 103). For Forster, beauty means harmoniousness, which compels readers to understand any work as a totality. Helen, like the author, disregards the second movement; it is thus because of its predictability and harmoniousness, the means of obtaining a sense of totalisation.

Helen's reaction to the third movement of the Fifth more closely reflects Forster's resistance to totalising aesthetic procedures. As the narrator says, when Helen listens to the third, in her mind “colour and fragrance [are] broadcast” and “she even stretch[es] out her gloved hands as if” figures and occurrences were “tangible” (*HE* 31). Helen's approach is explained in the essay “Not Listening to Music”; Forster himself declares: “‘How like Monet!’ I thought when listening to Debussy, and ‘How like Debussy!’ when looking at Monet. I translated sounds into colours, saw the piccolo as apple-green, and the trumpets as scarlet” (*TC* 123). Claude Monet attempted to “see the world as a pattern of nameless colour patches” (qtd. in Albright 52). Claude Debussy's music, as Daniel Albright observes, exists “in some liminal region between theme and clusters of notes that refuse to organize themselves into a theme” (67). The indescribability and the absence of totalising theme of these Impressionists' works, which impede any totalising representation, allow Forster to perceive a sound as a colour, and vice versa. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that Helen's perception of the third by the visual sense does not act as a way of grasping works in a coherent, unified interpretation. More noteworthy here is that Helen also uses other senses such as the olfactory sense and the sense of touch. Edmund Burke, whose work on aesthetics influenced Kant, distinguishes a clear expression, which “regards the understanding” and “describes a thing as it is,” from a vague expression, which “belongs to the passions” and “describes it as it is felt” (159, 160). Helen's sensory perception and synesthesia—a mixture of the senses, not the simple experience of one sense—thus seem not to serve as a mode of comprehending artistic works in a clear, unified interpretation.

It is also important to point out Helen's interpretation of the third movement and the finale which does not act as a way of representing the world as a whole. Margaret says to Leonard, "Now, this very symphony [Beethoven's Fifth] that we've just been having—she won't let it alone. She labels it with meanings from start to finish; turns it into literature.... But, of course, the real villain is Wagner. He has done more than any man in the nineteenth century towards the muddling of the arts" (*HE* 36-37). Wagner is known for his music dramas intended to return to the Greek drama. Just as the composer "muddl[es] the arts," namely, mixes music with literature, Helen reads the third:

the music started with a goblin walking quietly over the universe, from end to end. Others followed him. They were not aggressive creatures.... They merely observed in passing that there was no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world. After the interlude of elephants dancing, they returned and made the observation for the second time....

as if things were going too far, Beethoven took hold of the goblins and made them do what he wanted. He appeared in person. He gave them a little push, and they began to walk in a major key instead of in a minor, and then—he blew with his mouth and they were scattered! Gusts of splendour, gods and demigods contending with vast swords, colour and fragrance broadcast on the field of battle, magnificent victory, magnificent death! (*HE* 30-31)

Here, as some critics have mentioned<sup>(17)</sup>, her interpretation of the third seems original and creative rather than objective and unified. It is also notable that in the very last scene, the sentence structure breaks down in favour of a series of words or phrases joined by commas. As Molly Tinsley comments, such a comma-spliced sentence helps to indicate "the rapid overlay of thought"; the accumulation of words also suggests a further sequence of ideas (74). Helen is likely to offer plural readings and disseminating interpretations by using her imagination. Her interpretation is broadly comparable to the function of "easy rhythm in fiction...which may be defined as repetition plus variation," which Forster accentuates in *Aspects of the Novel* (115)<sup>(18)</sup>. In connection with the "beauty... [being] a little surprised," which is an effect of this kind of rhythm in fiction, he says in his essay "Ibsen the Romantic" (1928), "[W]ith Ibsen as with Beethoven the beauty comes not from the tunes, but from the way they are used and are worked into joints of the action" (*AN* 62, *AH* 82). That is to say, for Forster, the beauty with a look of a surprise means the flux and mutability of works, which is different from the means of achieving a sense of totalisation. More significantly, Beethoven's conclusion of the Fifth is inconsistent with that of Helen: "[H]e led his Fifth Symphony to its conclusion. But the goblins were there. They could return" (*HE* 32). The reprise of the goblins theme in the finale in her interpretation opens the music to the potential for infinite cycles of defeats and

returns, and thereby makes it susceptible of unlimited interpretations. This reprise corresponds to the function of “more difficult” rhythm, whose effect Forster thinks music “does offer in its final expression” and “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” (*AN* 116). The rhythm of this type thus allows audiences and readers to exceed any conclusion that is generally expected or universally accepted, and thus hampers them from regarding any work as being fixed to a perfect whole. Hence, it follows that Helen’s interpretation of the Fifth does not function as a way of representing the world as a whole.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that in his descriptions of Helen’s reaction to this music, Forster fails to display full opposition. As Fillion comments, Helen’s interpretation rests on “a century of hermeneutic interpretation of the Fifth” (*Rhythm* 84). For example, the heroic struggle appears to derive from Edward Dannreuther’s 1876 article, which conveyed Wagner’s ideas on Beethoven to audiences in England<sup>(19)</sup>. The “elephants dancing” can be also associated with the metaphor that the English critic on music George Grove adopted from Hector Berlioz in his writing in 1898<sup>(20)</sup>. Moreover, her interpretation has an association with Wagner’s *The Ring of the Nibelung*, which was first staged in England in 1882<sup>(21)</sup>. As Peter E. Firschow observes, the heroic struggle of “gods and demigods” against goblins in her mind is indicative of that of gods and mortals against dwarves and giants in the cycle of music dramas, and “the flaming ramparts of the world” in the former, the destruction of the fortress Valhalla in the latter (*HE* 31)<sup>(22)</sup>. Helen’s interpretation is thus tantamount not to the function of “easy rhythm” that can be described as “repetition plus variation” but rather to the repetition and imitation of those existing, universal interpretations. Furthermore, in the end, her imagination comes to a complete halt: “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” (*HE* 32). Ultimately Helen delimitates the Fifth as a whole in “a tangible statement” and refuses to see any other interpretation<sup>(23)</sup>.

#### **4. Forster’s Descriptions of the Fifth and Resistance to Aesthetic Totalisation**

However, in his descriptions of the Fifth, Forster more resolutely opposes totalisation, an aesthetic

process that involves the exclusion of difference. The first few sentences of Chapter V merit attention for an understanding of Forster's view on this music: "It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man. All sorts and conditions are satisfied by it" (*HE* 29). The first and most obvious point here is that Forster emphasises the potential of Beethoven's Fifth to speak to "[a]ll sorts and conditions," which suggests the music's ability to generate various interpretations. Accordingly, Forster continues to illustrate different modes of response in addition to Helen's and Margaret's: their brother Tibby ponders the musical score; their German cousin Frieda Mosebach sees the essence of Germany in this music; her fiancé is reminded of nothing but Frieda; Mrs. Munt taps quietly and unobtrusively to the familiar tunes. These descriptions do indeed suggest the first sentence of "Not Listening to Music": "Listening to music is such a muddle that one scarcely knows how to start describing it" (*TC* 122). For Forster, music is a "muddle" because it admits of difference and heterogeneity in interpretation and evades any totalising aesthetic procedure. He thus describes the Fifth as what cannot be grasped in one unified representation.

More to the point, Forster considers the Fifth "the most sublime noise." This idea is observed in his essay "The C Minor of That Life" (1941); Forster, giving importance to the key of C minor in Beethoven's music, puts the Fifth at the head of his "catalogue of the C minor items" and writes:

If we lost everything he wrote except what is in this key, we should still have the essential Beethoven, the Beethoven tragic, the Beethoven so excited at the approach of something enormous that he can only just interpret and subdue it. It would be a pity to lose a Beethoven unbuttoned, a Beethoven yodelling, but this musician excited by immensities is unique in the annals of any art. No one has ever been so thrilled by things so huge, for the vast masses of doom crush the rest of us before we can hope to measure them. Fate knocks at our door; but before the final tap can sound, the flimsy door flies into pieces, and we never learn the sublime rhythm of destruction. (*TC* 120)

Here, Forster describes Beethoven's music, the Fifth in particular, as the place of an "excit[ing]," "thrill[ing]" conflict between the composer and "something enormous," "immens[e]," "huge," or "vast"—"the sublime rhythm of destruction." In Kant's aesthetics, the sublime is distinguished from the beautiful; the sublime occurs "when we confront a reality that exceeds our conceptual faculties," whereas the beautiful occurs "when reality conforms to our conceptualization of how it ought to be" (Martel 45). To be more precise, we experience the sublime when our mind is confronted with reason, which forces the mind to conceptualise the object (the world), but fails to conceptualise because the

world is too enormous and overwhelming to be represented as a whole<sup>(24)</sup>. For Forster, the Fifth is the music that makes the audience, as well as the composer, experience the Kantian sublime. That is to say, it is where a fierce but exciting struggle occurs between an “intention towards” a unified interpretation of the music and a challenge to this intention; the music defies any totalising representation. Certainly, Forster deftly shows this conflict in his depiction of Helen’s interpretation of the Fifth: that between heroes—the composer, “gods[,] and demigods”—and goblins “on the field of battle.” It is because a goblin is suggestive of the “imp” mentioned in “Not Listening to Music,” which distracts audiences from seeing music itself, and thereby serves to prevent them from understanding any music as a totality (*TC* 123). Although in Helen’s interpretation, “Beethoven chose to make all right in the end,” Forster thus describes the Fifth as resistance to totalising aesthetic procedures (*HE* 31).

## 5. Conclusion

In *Howards End*, the narrator refers to the comment of the father of Margaret, Helen, and Tibby to his German nephew, “your Pan-Germanism is no more imaginative than is our Imperialism over here.... *That* is not imagination. No, it kills it” (*HE* 27, emphasis original). For Forster, not only do Pan-Germanism and Imperialism eliminate the Other, whether within an individual or a social totality, but they also “kill” imagination; to borrow Arendt’s phrase, they make imagination “at once universal and consistent in itself,” which leads to seeing the world as a totality, a process that involves the displacement of difference (351)<sup>(25)</sup>. Forster expresses his antagonism towards totalitarianism and aesthetic totalisation in *Howards End* by employing music, to which he was assiduously devoted. As this essay has shown, in this novel, he intimates the occlusion of the Other, which was included in the act of symbolising an all-embracing social totality by English music. Forster, to challenge totalising representations, seeks to show Helen’s creative interpretation of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. He also depicts this music as resistance to totalising aesthetic procedures.

The next research will focus on “the sublime rhythm of destruction” and illustrate the function of this rhythm in *Howards End*, which makes it difficult for readers to grasp this novel in a single, unified interpretation. For example, the goblins, which return in Helen’s conclusion of the Fifth but

soon disappear from her mind, prevail throughout the rest of the novel, carrying multiple meanings. According to Kantian aesthetics, the experience of the sublime provokes in people the feeling of pain because they feel their mind inadequate to comprehend the world as a whole <sup>(26)</sup>. Similarly, “the sublime rhythm of destruction” makes readers feel pain. Nevertheless, Forster attempts to undermine the claims of aesthetic totalisation by showing that what is left out of art, that which art cannot encompass, is analogous to the Other that is excluded from the social system.

## Notes

- (1) David Jones. “E. M. Forster on His Life and His Books: An Interview Recorded for Television.” *Listener* (1959): 11-12.
- (2) Arendt explicates the difference between “tribal nationalism, the driving force behind continental imperialism” and “the nationalism of the fully developed Western nation-state” and that between “continental imperialism” and British or French imperialism (229). See Arendt 124-34 and 229-36 for a full account. However, it is not the present purpose of this essay to explore these areas.
- (3) See Arendt 12-13.
- (4) See also Miyazaki 248.
- (5) See Lyotard *Postmodern* 16 and 19. Fredric Jameson, a Marxist theorist and literary critic, refers to this position of postmodern intellectuals in order to make a counterargument. See Foreword xx.
- (6) As Theodor W. Adorno observes, “[T]he British musical genius dried up from the early seventeenth century on. Most probably the fault can be attributed to the rise of Puritanism” (159-60).
- (7) As regards Elgar’s commitment to the act of symbolising an English identity by English music, Blake writes, “In many ways Elgar’s musical Englishness is most clearly signalled by use of the oratorio form beloved of the English bourgeoisie” (39).
- (8) See Richards 13-14.
- (9) Elgar requested the poet A. C. Benson to write a verse.
- (10) With regard to Elgar’s imperialistic attitude, there has been the argument that “Elgar was not really an imperialist or that he renounced imperialism or that his imperially inspired works are minor works” (Richards 44). For example, focusing on the verse of *Coronation Ode*, James Day argues, “Britain is indeed presented as a land of hope and glory, but the things that she stands for and that contribute both to the glory that she enjoys and the hope that is to come are humanitarian social and political virtues: Truth, Right and Freedom.... These are the original words that were directly inspired by Elgar’s simple and noble tune” (152). (In 1902, for the coronation of Edward VII, the trio theme of the first *Pomp and Circumstance* march was also reproduced in part of *Coronation Ode* with verse provided by Benson.) However, as recent studies have demonstrated, these arguments seem dubious. It is because, for instance, Elgar’s *The Music Makers* (1912), his setting of Arthur O’Shaughnessy’s *Ode*, includes the lines: “With wonderful deathless ditties / We build up the world’s great cities / And out of a fabulous story / We fashion an empire’s glory” (qtd. in Richards 47). This song is no less suggestive of expansionist imperialism than “Land of Hope and Glory.” His *The Crown of India* (1912), a masque with a libretto by Henry Hamilton, also involves the exclusion of the colonised Other. Elgar once told the press on the masque: “The subject of the masque is appropriate to this special period in English history, and I have endeavoured to make the music illustrate and illuminate the subject” (qtd. in Richards 65). According to Richards, the subject is “the glory and rightness of British rule in India,” where the rights of the colonised are curtailed and denied (65).
- (11) It is reasonable to assume that the exclusion of the lower classes which was involved in the musical movement offended Forster, who had contributed to offering lectures for the working classes since 1902. Concerning Forster’s contribution, see Bradshaw xii; Moffat 63-65.
- (12) Mike Edwards has another opinion. According to Edwards, it is because of her half-German

- background that Margaret approves of Beethoven's music that expresses "the heroic Germanic tradition" and disapproves of Elgar's works that lack this tradition (83).
- (13) See Childs 14; Furbank I 255; Moffat 116.
- (14) Here, Jameson refers to George Lukács's term "an *aspiration towards society in its totality*" (174, emphasis original). As Toru Nakayama explains, for Jameson (and Lukács on whom he relies), Kant's theory of beauty is best exemplified in the bourgeois and middle-class way of understanding the world, of which the two Marxist philosophers disapprove. That is to say, in Kant's aesthetics of beauty, when people see the world (the object), they feel as if they had bridged the subject-object split and thus understood the world as a totality, although in fact they see phenomena on which their own judgement is projected; similarly, when the middle classes see capitalism as a historical fact, they feel as if they understood the capitalism as a whole, but they actually see phenomena that their mind concocts from a reality. Jameson writes, "Their [middle-class] relationship to the objects that they produce, to the commodities, the factories, the very structure of capitalism itself is a contemplative one, in that they are not aware of capitalism as a historical phenomenon, as being itself the result of historical forces, as having within itself also the possibility of change or of radical transformation. They can understand everything about their social environment (its elements, its functioning, its implicit laws) except the sheer historical existence of that environment itself: their rationalism can assimilate everything but the ultimate questions of purpose and origin" (*Marxism* 185-86). In his "Modernism and Imperialism," Jameson extends this argument into the realm of literature.
- (15) As Fillion observes, in "Not Listening to Music," Forster cautiously concludes that "music that is itself seems on the whole better than music that reminds"; however, his sympathies lie with "programme music" in that his comments on this idea, not the other, distinctly occupy the essay (*TC* 124). Forster assumes a similar stance in the novel. See Fillion *Rhythm* 83. On the contrary, Paul R. Rivenberg observes, "One senses that Forster, in *Howards End*, is balanced somewhere between the two views, though leaning as always towards Margaret's, just as in 'Not Listening to Music' he admits the superiority of 'music itself', without denying the value of 'music that reminds me of something'" (171). Linda Hutcheon also points out that Forster's inclination for Helen's "transcendental moment" of listening to Beethoven's Fifth does not mean his denial of "the strong interest in formal principles that is revealed in Forster's criticism": "A work of art—whatever else it may be—is a self-contained entity" (Hutcheon 89, *TC* 88).
- (16) However, Fillion argues that Helen's aversion to the second movement reveals "her major shortcoming: her inability to connect" "the feminized 'sweetness'" with the masculine "heroes and shipwrecks" and "heroes and goblins" ("E. M."199, *Rhythm* 83).
- (17) For instance, Kanae Obika describes Helen's interpretation of the third movement as "puzzling" (73, trans. mine).
- (18) Forster cites Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* as an example of fiction that employs the function of "easy rhythm." He writes, "Proust's conclusion [the last volume of this work] has not been published yet, and his admirers say that when it comes everything will fall into its place, times past will be recaptured and fixed, we shall have a perfect whole. I do not believe this. The work seems to me a progressive rather than an aesthetic confession" (*AN* 113).
- (19) See Fillion *Rhythm* 84; Knittel 71.
- (20) See Grove 165.
- (21) See Fifield 25-26. Forster himself saw the performance in Dresden in 1905.
- (22) See Firchow 64-68.
- (23) In "Not Listening to Music," Forster hesitates to fully espouse the idea of "programme music" in spite of his inclination for it. It is possible to say that the reason is related to Wagner's instruction for pieces of music, which is different from "muddling" music with literature. As regards Wagner's instruction for his own works, Forster says, "I accepted his leitmotiv system much too reverently and forced it onto other composers" (*TC* 123). Similarly, Forster comments on Wagner's prescription for Beethoven's *Coriolanus* overture: "I have lost my Coriolanus. Its largeness and freedom have gone. The exquisite sounds have been hardened like a road that has been tarred for traffic" (*TC* 124). Forster thus disapproves of Wagner's prescription that does not permit of any other interpretation.
- (24) See Lyotard *Inhuman* 136; Lyotard *Postmodern* 10; Deleuze 42-44.

- (25) Arendt, though from a different viewpoint, relates totalitarianism to universal imagination. She argues, “The effectiveness of this kind of propaganda [mass propaganda] demonstrates one of the chief characteristics of modern masses. They do not believe in anything visible, in the reality of their own experience; they do not trust their eyes and ears but only their imaginations, which may be caught by anything that is at once universal and consistent in itself” (351). According to Arendt, they are then incorporated into a totalitarian system.
- (26) See also Lyotard *Postmodern* 10-11, 14-15.

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