

Aspects of Music: Aesthetic Perception in E. M. Forster's "The Celestial Omnibus" and "Co-Ordination"

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Introduction

Benjamin Britten says in an article written for Forster's ninetieth birthday (1969), "There is no doubt that E. M. Forster is our most musical novelist. And I don't mean that he just likes music or likes going to concerts and operas, or plays the piano neatly and efficiently (all of which he does), but that he really understands music and uses music in his novels, and fairly frequently" (Arlott et al. 81). It is true that Forster had a very close relationship with music. A brief look at Forster's musical life would lend support to the claim that he was a devoted lover of music.¹⁾ He also occasionally refers to music when he discusses literature and art in his *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) and essays written after his career as a novelist. In addition, he uses music in his novels. For instance, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) includes a performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, which discloses the Italian audiences' attitude towards life; in the third chapter "Music, Violets and the Letter S" of *A Room with a View* (1908), the heroine's performance of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 111 suggests her temerity and inner passion. This essay will reveal another, more notable instance of Forster's relationship with music; that is, Forster's earlier short stories, "The

Celestial Omnibus” (1908) and “Co-Ordination” (1912), are his early attempts to outline his aesthetic position with regard to music.

However, not only has little attention been given to this point but the study of Forster’s earlier short stories has also been superficial. There were only several anonymous reviews of *The Celestial Omnibus and Other Stories* (1911), the first collection of his short stories including “The Celestial Omnibus,” in newspapers and literary magazines after the publication. For, in England, the short story as a genre was given very little recognition in the early twentieth century. Consequently, critics have tended to dismiss the short stories as “a relatively minor affair, a sort of sidelight to Forster’s greater achievement as a novelist” (Leavitt and Mitchell xii).²⁾ Other reviewers have found the stories whimsical and elusive, and stressed the unreal, supernatural, fantastic world “in a very different mood from the acute reality of his *Howards End*, which dissect[s] real people with so much adroitness” (Stape 1 : 157).

As for *The Eternal Moment and Other Stories* (1928), the second collection including “Co-Ordination,” critics have also focussed on supernatural aspects of the stories. For instance, Morton Dauwen Zabel writes, “The supernatural is never very far away from the characters of the Forster novels,···. It is in his shorter narratives, however, that the shapes of fantasy and strangeness become most concretely embodied, even to the extent of surrounding the scenes and persons of ordinary life with powers beyond ordinary comprehension and grasp” (Stape 1 : 234). Zabel argues that Forster’s short stories compare favourably with his novels in respect of fantastic quality. In truth, Forster himself describes these stories as “fantasies” in his preface to *Collected Short Stories* (1947), which brings together stories in the first and second collection (v). In *Aspects of the Novel*, Forster defines fantasy as fiction that “implies the supernatural, but need not express it” and adds that when it is expressed, there is an introduction of “a god, ghost, angel, monkey, monster, midget, witch into ordinary life” or

that of “ordinary men into no-man’s-land, the future, the past, the interior of the earth, the fourth dimension” (78). Accordingly, Forster’s short stories have been commonly written off merely as what the author himself calls “fantasy” and not been extensively discussed.³⁾

The purpose of this essay is however to reveal that in “The Celestial Omnibus” and “Co-Ordination,” Forster bases his discussion of art on nineteenth-century Romantic musical aesthetics. In these two short stories, Forster shows how characters react to art. His views on aesthetic perception are interwoven with a view of art that is deeply influenced by leading music critics and composers of nineteenth-century Romanticism. This essay will thus demonstrate that not only do the two short stories reveal Forster’s thinking about aesthetic appreciation, but they also play an important role in illustrating his profound understanding of music and the centrality of music in his practice as a novelist.

“Celestial Omnibus”

It is true that “Celestial Omnibus” is, as David Leavitt and Mark Mitchell comment, “an example of the fantasist working at the height of his powers” (xv). A young boy, full of curiosity, walks along an alley towards an old sign-post, “To Heaven,” and finds a piece of paper that announces an omnibus service. He travels by omnibus to heaven, where he meets Thomas Browne, Dante, Achilles, and characters of musical drama and fiction. In the end, the boy cannot return home because when he travels for the second time, this time accompanied by his neighbour Mr Bons, this man plunges to earth with the two return tickets in his pocket. The boy is thus ushered into what Forster calls “fantasy,” a world inhabited by the shades of the poet and the writer, and fictitious and mythical figures. More noteworthy, however, is that Forster’s idea of how to approach art

is reflected in this story.

In order to show his ideas about aesthetic perception clearly, Forster carries into this story the pattern of binary opposition: Mr Bons who has social, cultural authority and knowledge of literature; the boy who has few social attributes but has a powerful imagination. Mr Bons is “a churchwarden,” “a candidate for the County Council,” a generous contributor to “the Free Library,” and a president of “the Literary Society,” and has formed a close acquaintance with “Members of Parliament” (CS 38-39). As these titles indicate, Mr Bons is portrayed as socially and culturally authoritative and well-informed about literature. His authoritative position and literary knowledge also lead him to assume an arrogant attitude. For instance, when the poet Shelley is brought into the conversation, the boy’s mother says, not to be seen as philistines, that her family has not less than two volumes of the poet. Then Mr Bons responds promptly to her with “a slow smile”: “I believe we [the Bonses] have seven Shelleys” (CS 39). He thus reveals himself as a pedantic, supercilious figure.

The boy has very few social attributes in contrast to Mr Bons. He is not given even a name, which is different from any other leading characters in Forster’s fiction. As Erik Alder and Dietmar Hauck comment, the boy thus gains universality, and so his experiences could occur “under any circumstances at any time in any age” (70). The boy is also characterised as being imaginative by nature, again utterly different from Mr Bons. For example, the narrator describes the boy’s state of mind before he sallies forth on his first omnibus trip:

Small birds twittered, and the breadwinners’ train shrieked musically down through the cutting... It was this cutting that had first stirred desires within the boy—desires for something just a little different, he knew not what, desires that would return whenever things were sunlit, as they were this evening, running up and down inside him, up and down, up and down, till he

would feel quite unusual all over, and as likely as not would want to cry. (CS 39-40)

Here, the “cutting,” a passageway that appears to go on forever, which arouses his deep desires, is indicative of the invisible world beyond the passageway. It should also be noted that such desires seize the boy at a particular time when “the sun ha[s] just set in splendour,” in other words, “at the liminal moment of sunset, at the in-between time that constitutes the cusp of day and night” (CS 39, Hai 235). Furthermore, although Mr Bons and the boy’s parents curtly dismiss the sign-post rumoured to have been made by Shelley as a meaningless hoax, the boy follows it and enters the alley between the high walls of the gardens of “Ivanhoe” and “Belle [sic] Vista”; in the dream that he has that night, the joke grows “more and more real” and the streets around his house seem “instead to become hoaxes and shadows” (CS 40, 42). The sign-post (related to Shelley), “Ivanhoe” (literature), and “Belle Vista” (visual arts) are, together with the twittering birds and shrieking train (music), relevant to art. These descriptions indicate that the boy is ready to envisage an unseeable sphere beyond visible, phenomenal reality, a world connected with art. It is also implied that the boy’s state of mind hovers between dream and reality. Forster thus displays the boy’s imaginative, artistic impulse.

The polarity between Mr Bons and the boy directs attention to their disparate ways of appreciating art. During his second journey to heaven, the boy talks to Mr Bons about his previous trip: a conversation with Mrs. Gamp and Mrs. Harris, a fictitious character and her imaginary friend in Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit*, respectively; an invitation to a racecourse from Fielding’s character Tom Jones; and racing with Achilles. Then Mr Bons says, with a sigh of dissatisfaction, “A cultured person . . . would not have wasted his time with a Mrs Gamp or a Tom Jones. The creations of Homer, of Shakespeare, and of

Him [Dante] who drives us now, would alone have contented him. He would not have raced. He would have asked intelligent questions” (CS 54). Mr Bons condescendingly rejects Dickens and Fielding and regards Homer, Shakespeare, and Dante as of high merit, thereby establishing a hierarchy of literary values. Here, Forster seems to suggest Mr Bons’s application of hierarchy as a criterion for literary judgements. Lectured at by Mr Bons, the boy suppresses his frustration and makes “a hundred good resolutions”: “He would imitate Mr Bons all the visit… He would be very careful to pronounce their names properly, and to remember who knew whom. Achilles did not know Tom Jones—at least, so Mr Bons said. The Duchess of Malfi was older than Mrs Gamp—at least, so Mr Bons said” (CS 55). Forster sarcastically reveals through the boy’s insincere determination Mr Bons’s way of understanding literature—a sort of scientific analysis, for which pedantic accuracy is absolutely essential.

As for Mr Bons’s approach to literature, Forster’s lecture delivered at a symposium on music “The *Raison d’Être* of Criticism” (1947) can provide us with a useful analogy. The key assumption underpinning Forster’s arguments in this lecture can be traced to his idea of how to react to art. In his awkward attempt to justify critical judgement, Forster mentions a need for “previous training,” namely, learning “by example and by failure and by comparison,” before appreciating art (TC 105). However, he hesitates to agree on the necessity and says, “There is always the contrary danger: the danger that training may sterilize the sensitiveness that is being trained; that education may lead to knowledge instead of wisdom, and criticism to nothing but criticism; that spontaneous enjoyment, … may be checked because too much care has been taken to direct it into the right channel” (TC 106). He adds that criticism “keeps them [“imagination and sympathy”] and all the faculties under control, and only employs them when they promise to be helpful” (TC 112-13). Forster thus casts doubt on criticism because systematically gained knowledge and a logical

approach can hamper individual sensitivity and voluntary enjoyment, and imagination. In “Anonymity: An Enquiry” (1925), Forster denounces intellectual appreciation more vehemently, saying that study “teaches us everything about the book except the central thing, and between that and us it raises a circular barrier which only the wings of the spirit can cross” (*TC* 84). Forster believes that the intellectual approach can hinder readers and audiences from capturing the essence of art, which the spirit might instead apprehend.

In the lecture, Forster shows another function of criticism. After forcefully providing a counterargument to criticism, he makes a concession. Forster says that critics or a “clique” can protect an artist “if he wishes to” keep company with them (*TC* 117). He goes on to say, however, that it “is the artist’s duty, if he needs to be in a clique, to choose a good one” that applies “superior” cultural standards, because “[g]ood standards may lead to good work” (*TC* 117-18). Here, Forster seems to withdraw the concession. The derogatory word, “clique,” the hesitant, circumlocutory expressions, “if he wishes to” and “if he needs to,” and the unconvincing explanation that good standards result in good work—all of these are suggestive of his dissent. Indeed, Forster adds his candid opinion on the need of artists to associate with critics, citing Beethoven, whom he fervently admired: “To be alone may be best—to be alone was what Fate reserved for Beethoven” (*TC* 117).⁴ Moreover, he ends his concession by passively saying, “That is all that there seems to be to say about this vague assistance, and maybe it was not worth saying” (*TC* 118). From these remarks, it follows that for Forster, the intellectual approach to art can involve the considerable, unfavourable influence of questionable cultural authorities.⁵

Having observed Mr Bons’s reaction to literature, referring chiefly to Forster’s lecture, let us now turn to the protagonist’s response to art. The first point to be considered is, as noticed earlier, Forster’s characterisation of the boy: he is provided with universality and has the capacity to imagine an

invisible, artistic world beyond reality, in a subconscious state of mind. Alder and Hauck argue that Forster accentuates the boy's idiosyncrasy, "which could hardly be found in an adult [a reader] and would therefore make the story implausible," rather than his universality (70). However, universality, together with imagination and a subconscious mind, underlies Forster's viewpoints on how to appreciate art, particularly an important role of "the creative state" in aesthetic appreciation (TC 111). In "The *Raison d'Être* of Criticism," he elucidates the "creative state of mind ... akin to a dream" which is opposed to the critical, intellectual state (TC 111). According to Forster, an artist "lets down as it were a bucket into his subconscious, and draws up something which is normally beyond his reach," when he makes an artwork (TC 111). He goes on to say that "[w]e—the beholders or listeners or whatever we are—undergo a change analogous to creation" (TC 113). Similarly, Forster states in "Anonymity: An Enquiry" that an author lowers a bucket into his "lower personality" (TC 82). He stresses that an author's "lower personality," which is different from his "upper personality ha[ving] a name," "has something in common with all other deeper personalities" and so readers also move "towards the condition of the man who wrote" and have a "creative impulse" (TC 82-83).⁶⁾ At the end of this essay, imagination is given added emphasis: "Imagination is our only guide into the world created by words" (TC 86). Taken collectively, Forster believes that when we appreciate art, we should transform into a subconscious, "creative state of mind," allowing imagination its full play, in the same way as artists do.

The boy's journeys to heaven reveal his response to art and explain more clearly the above-mentioned idea Forster emphasises. During his first journey, the boy perceives "three maidens ris[ing] to the surface of the pool [of "an everlasting river"], singing, and playing with something that glisten[s] like a ring" (CS 48). After returning from the journey, the boy tells his parents and Mr Bons his experience. Mr Bons grudgingly admits that the boy perceived a

scene from Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen*, though he is artistically illiterate. As Mr Bons says, the boy has discovered "glimmers of Artistic Truth" (CS 49). Meanwhile, the boy's parents force him to say by heart Keats's *To Homer* as a punishment for being "a truant, a gutter snipe, a liar" (CS 49, emphasis original). As soon as the boy starts to recite the lines, he realises that in heaven, he thought and felt the same as what is written in the verse, and says that "all these words that only rhymed before, now that I've come back they're me" (CS 50). The boy has thus also grasped "the essential truth" of Keats's piece of poetry (CS 51). The same can be said of his experience during the second visit: the boy sings leitmotifs from *Rheingold* without any knowledge of Wagner. It is clear that Forster shows that the boy, who enters into a liminal, "creative state of mind," bringing his imagination to art, approaches the truth of art despite his little connection with mundane knowledge and practice. Forster thus emphasises that such a state of mind is universal to all mankind, whether or not they are knowledgeable about art, so that any reader and audience can apprehend the absolute truth of art.

As regards the truth of art, it is worthwhile to note that the story suggests the connection between the truth and the Absolute. The two omnibus drivers, Browne and Dante, value spirit deeply. For instance, Browne says to the boy: "As a healer of bodies I had scant success, and several score of my patients preceded me. But as a healer of the spirit, I have succeeded beyond my hopes and my deserts" (CS 45-46). Dante also maintains that "poetry is a spirit; and they that would worship it must worship in spirit and in truth" (CS 57-58). In "Anonymity: An Enquiry," Forster says that "only the wings of the spirit can cross" a barrier between the essence of a book and everything study teaches us about the book, as quoted earlier. In the essay, he repeats this argument in different ways: when we read literature in a subconscious, "creative state of mind," "we find more than we ever threw away, we reach what seems to be our spiritual home"; "the

mystic will assert that the common quality [the “lower personality”] is God, and that here, in the obscure recesses of our being, we near the gates of the Divine” (TC 83).⁷⁾ Forster thus associates the essence of art which spirit can get at with “our spiritual home” and “the Divine.” It is therefore possible that Forster suggests that the boy, guided by the omnibus drivers who worship spirit, reaches the kingdom of God as the place in which “Artistic Truth” is found.⁸⁾

The boy’s visits to heaven show another way of approaching art. During his first trip, when the omnibus moves through fog, the boy sees the fog turn from “foul brown” to “yellow” and then change “from yellow to white” (CS 43-45). He also hears and enjoys various sounds as he travels on. For example, when he hears a crash of thunder, the boy, not being afraid of it, delightedly listens to “the echoes” (CS 47). When the omnibus stops, “a ball of fire…explode[s] with a ringing noise that [is] deafening”; however, to his ear, it sounds “clear, like the noise of a blacksmith’s forge” (CS 47). Then, the boy’s auditory and visual perceptions become interwoven, as he says enthusiastically to the omnibus driver, “Oh, listen, Sir Thomas Brown! No, I mean look; we shall get a view at last. No, I mean listen; that sounds like a rainbow!” (CS 47). He perceives the “colour and the sound gr[owing] together” (CS 48). It is evident that Forster underlines the boy’s auditory and optical perceptions, more to the point, the blending of the senses known as synesthesia.

In “The *Raison d’Être* of Criticism,” Forster refers to the joint perception of senses when in his attempt to defend criticism, he explicates the third type of criticism. However, as his introductory remark suggests,⁹⁾ this type, which he thinks “has no interpretative value,” differs from the other two logical types (TC 107). Forster cites as an example Walt Whitman’s prose fragment about Beethoven’s septet and the Vinteuil’s sonata episode from Marcel Proust’s novel. He explains that this sort of criticism “has nothing to do with music,” though written on music, and “usually describes the state into which the hearer

was thrown as he sat on his chair at the concert, and the visual images which occurred to him in that sedentary position" (*TC* 107). In "Not Listening to Music" (1939), Forster details the role of synesthesia in listening to music:

I thought that music must be the better for having a meaning. I think so still, but am less clear as to what "a meaning" is. In those days it was either a non-musical object, such as a sword or a blameless fool, or a non-musical emotion, such as fear, lust or resignation. When music reminded me of something which was not music, I supposed it was getting me somewhere. "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. The arts were to be enriched by taking in one another's washing. (*TC* 123, emphasis original)

Here, Forster feels uncertain as to "what 'a meaning' is" in music. We shall return to this point in the next chapter, and for the present, it is important to bear in mind that Forster attaches importance to synesthetic perception through which listeners give various "non-musical" meanings to music.

"Co-Ordination"

In "Co-Ordination," Forster portrays two scenes: one set in a girls' school, and the other, in heaven. The Principal of the school introduces her new project, the "co-ordinative system" in tuition; the school as a whole takes a central subject for the whole year and the theme selected for the year is Napoleon (*CS* 187). Accordingly, the music class, for example, practices Beethoven's Eroica Symphony. Meanwhile, in different parts of heaven, the Emperor Napoleon, Beethoven, Mephistopheles, and the archangel Raphael watch the school

closely. As Leavitt and Mitchell remark, “Co-Ordination” is “a curious and funny fable of education” (xx). It is also true that the story contains an element of “fantasy,” namely, the appearances of the ghosts of historical figures and the characters of *Faust*. However, the more important point to observe is that in the story, similar in manner to “Celestial Omnibus,” Forster shows his idea of how to approach music by using the pattern of binary opposition—showing a change in characters’ aesthetic perception.

Firstly, Forster foregrounds the power of cultural authorities and their control over pupils. The Principal encourages the “co-ordinative system” for the purpose of impressing “the Board of Education” (CS 194). Under the system, the girls are obliged to follow meticulously arranged, inflexible timetables and are rigorously supervised by the teachers. More noteworthy, Forster suggests that the girls’ aesthetic perception is also controlled through the “co-ordinative system.” For instance, the school forces the repetition class to recite Wordsworth’s “sonnet, ‘Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee’” (CS 189). This sonnet titled “On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic” indicates a historical event in “Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty,” “a Maiden City, bright and free” (Wordsworth 4 - 5). As Simon Bainbridge describes, several years before the poem was written, Venice was “violated by the ravaging armies of Napoleon, and by Napoleon’s own Treaty of Campo Formio of 1797 which declared the Republic at an end” (65). The sonnet thus shows the poet’s lament for the end of the proud city’s independence and his reaction against the Napoleonic occupation. In the story, however, the Emperor Napoleon in heaven says that the “poet there celebrates my conquest of the Venetian Republic” and praises the class for appropriately understanding “the greatness of the theme” (CS 189). Here, it is suggested that in the repetition class, the poem is strictly defined, not open to other interpretations. Similarly, in the music class, a definite meaning is assigned to the *Eroica*. As the narrator mentions, the

symphony “had been begun (though not finished) in honour of the Emperor” (CS 188). The school compels the music class to practice the symphony because it thus adequately conveys the specific idea—admiration for the Emperor, which coordinates with the signification attached to the sonnet. Forster thus reveals the undue influence of cultural authorities on the girls’ aesthetic appreciation. It is suggested that the school assigns a definite meaning to art and obliges the pupils to appreciate art by only seeing the meaning determined by the school.

However, Forster shows a considerable change in the pupils’ approach to music. Hearing the performance of “the most spiffing band” marching at the front of a “regiment of cavalry” past the school, the girls go “off their heads with joy”: “They rose from their seats, they sang, they advanced, they danced, they pranced, they made trumpets out of paper and used the blackboard as a kettledrum” (CS 190). They emotionally respond to the band music in their own ways, unconsciously putting out of their minds the particular conception imposed by the school. It is also interesting to note that their change occurs after Beethoven decrees, by way of thanks for their constant performance of his *Eroica* symphony, that they should hear his “A minor quartette,” to which no determinate meaning has been assigned (CS 189). Forster thus accentuates their own musical sensitivity and spontaneous enjoyment, which are untied from seeing any specific idea fixed to music.

Forster also reveals a change in Miss Haddon’s approach to sound. Miss Haddon, an elderly music teacher, “has interpreted you [Beethoven] for many years” but feels her teaching growing “worse and worse” (CS 188). When she lifts the Principal’s souvenir shell “mechanically to her ear,” Miss Haddon hears the sound of the sea: “[A]t first it was the tide whispering over mud-flats or chattering against stones, or the short, crisp break of a wave on sand, or the long, echoing roar of a wave against rocks, or the sounds of the central ocean, where the waters pile themselves into mountains and part into ravines;

or when fog descends and the deep rises and falls gently; or..." (CS 191). Here, she creates various visual images in the sound, without connecting it with any particular idea. The recurring use of the word *or* also suggests that she will build up visual images with no limit. In the end, Miss Haddon also hears the sound itself: "She heard them all, but in the end she heard the sea itself, and knew that it was hers for ever" (CS 191). She finally feels satisfied with her way of appreciating sound.

Similarly, there is a change in the Principal's perception. At first, she takes the shell from Miss Haddon's hand and orders her to return to her duties. Nevertheless, she is impelled to raise the shell to her ear and hears rustlings of leaves in a wood: "It was no wood that she had ever known, but all the people she had known were riding about in it, and calling softly to each other on horns. It was night, and they were hunting. Now and then beasts rustled,... and she with them, penetrating the wood in every direction and for ever" (CS 191-92). The Principal, similar to Miss Haddon, creates a variety of visual images in the sounds, which are based on her own experiences and congenial to her. The phrase "in every direction and for ever" also suggests that she will build up images limitlessly. Forster thus highlights a change in Miss Haddon's and the Principal's approaches to sounds—synesthetic perception and listening to music itself, both of which are set loose from seeing any specific idea assigned to music.

It is useful to refer to Forster's essay on music "Not Listening to Music" to make clear differences among the three ways shown in the story—the school's approach to art, Miss Haddon's and the Principal's aesthetic listening, and Miss Haddon's last reaction to sound—in relation to the idea that music has a meaning. In the essay, Forster expresses his discontent with critics' common reaction to music: "Professional critics can listen to a piece as consistently and as steadily as if they were reading a chapter in a novel. This seems to me an

amazing feat, and probably they only achieve it through intellectual training” (*TC* 122). This professional response to music is reflected in the school’s approach to art; they attach a consistent, stable meaning to music and only see that meaning. Forster disapproves of this way of appreciating music.

By contrast, Forster emphasises his own way of listening to music. He says, “When music reminded me of something which was not music, I supposed it was getting me somewhere,” and as he details his own experiences, it becomes clear that his mode of listening is similar to Miss Haddon and the Principal in creating multiple visual parallels.¹⁰ He thus comments, “I used to be very fond of music that reminded me of something, and especially fond of Wagner,” whose musical works evoke a variety of things, and inspire listeners to give plural extra-musical meanings to it (*TC* 122). However, Forster shows another approach to music taken by Wagner and says that he feels regret at having “accepted his [Wagner’s] leitmotiv system much too reverently and forced it onto other composers whom it did not suit, such as Beethoven and Franck” (*TC* 123). He also expresses his dissatisfaction with Wagner’s specific prescription for listening to Beethoven’s *Coriolanus Overture*: “[T]he opening bars indicate the hero’s decision to destroy the Volsci, then This seems indisputable, and there is no doubt that this was, or was almost, Beethoven’s intention. All the same, 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 highlights the difference between Wagner’s two aesthetic approaches—stimulating listeners to give to music various “non-musical” meanings, that is, dynamic, flexible interpretations, as suggested in “my *Coriolanus*” and its “largeness and freedom,” and forcing listeners to only see a particular meaning attached to music—and expresses his advocacy of the former and disapproval of the latter.

In the essay, Forster stresses yet another way of appreciating music—

listening to music itself, as displayed in Miss Haddon's last reaction to sound. Forster regards it as a contrast to the other two forms of aesthetic listening—adding extra-musical meanings and seeing a given meaning, both of which are related only indirectly to music—and argues that music has no meaning external to the music itself. As he writes, “Music is so very queer that an amateur is bound to get muddled when writing about it. It seems to be more ‘real’ than anything, and to survive when the rest of civilization decays. ... So that the music which is untrammelled and untainted by reference is obviously the best sort of music to listen to; we get nearer the centre of reality” (*TC* 124). Forster thus underscores listening to music as it is, because through this way, listeners can apprehend its ultimate truth. As regards the truth, he adds,

Yet though it is untainted it is never abstract; The Goldberg Variations, the last Beethoven sonata, ... certainly have a message. Though what on earth is it? I shall get tied up trying to say. There's an insistence in music—expressed largely through rhythm; there's a sense that it is trying to push across at us something which is neither an aesthetic pattern nor a sermon. That's what I listen for specially. (*TC* 124)

Forster thus believes that music has an inherent meaning as ultimate truth that is expressed not in definite language but through rhythm.

Forster's View of Art

Forster's ideas about the appreciation of art revealed in these two stories are tightly interwoven with his view of art, as suggested in his belief in music's non-referentiality. This is clearly shown in his essays on art. In “Anonymity: An Enquiry,” Forster discusses two functions of words: “they give information or

they create an atmosphere" (*TC* 77). To "give information" entails accuracy and reason. These are essential for the logical approach and the fixing of a particular meaning to art, both of which Forster criticises unfavourably in the stories.

On the other hand, atmosphere "resides not in any particular word, but in the order in which words are arranged—that is to say, in style. It is the power that words have to raise our emotions or quicken our blood" (*TC* 80-81). Forster also claims that this element "is also something else" and says, "This 'something else' in words is undefinable. It is their power to create not only atmosphere, but a world, which, while it lasts, seems more real and solid than this daily existence of pickpockets and trams" (*TC* 81, emphasis original). This function of words—to create an atmosphere and a world—seems to be equivalent to that of what he calls in *Aspects of the Novel* "prophecy," which is "a tone of voice," "an accent in the novelist's voice" (86). As he emphasises in the text, it is an "implication that signifies and will filter into" the tone, and it implies that characters "always stand for more than themselves; infinity attends them" and "ask us to share something deeper than their experiences" (86, 91, 93). He also remarks that "the prophet—one imagines—has gone 'off' more completely than" other novelists and "he is in a remoter emotional state while he composes" (94, emphasis original). To sum up, the function of words or "prophecy" Forster emphasises is to create "a world" or "infinity," which has an immanent meaning as "real and solid" truth or the Absolute; that meaning is vaguely implied, namely, its atmosphere is created, and can be shared by all mankind in an unusual state of mind. It is evident that this function of art enables readers and audiences to grasp the truth of art or a meaning inherent in art through transforming into a liminal, "creative state of mind," away from earthly knowledge and practice, a way of approaching art Forster stresses.

Forster emphasises yet another function of art: "eternal freshness in creation" (*TC* 114). He points out in "The *Raison d'Être* of Criticism," "So far as it

["the work of art"] is authentic, it presents itself as eternally virgin. It expects always to be heard or read or seen for the first time, always to cause surprise. It does not expect to be studied, still less does it present itself as a crossword puzzle, only to be solved after much re-examination" (*TC* 114). This function of art is, in other words, to suggest a new thing and call up a fresh emotion in audiences and readers each time they have aesthetic experiences. What Forster calls in *Aspects of the Novel* "easy rhythm" also has this function (115). His "easy rhythm" is equivalent to Wagnerian leitmotif; a symbol grows "as it accretes meaning from a succession of contexts" (Brown 9). However, as Forster emphasises in the text, the symbol, unlike a pattern or a unifying order that is imposed, does not always recur regularly but reappears with varying in an interactive relationship. His "easy rhythm" thus can always arouse a fresh emotion in audiences and readers. Forster also accentuates this function in his "second sort of rhythm," difficult rhythm (113). His difficult rhythm is an effect of a symphony, where, when the symphony is over, audiences can hear "a common entity" or "the symphony as a whole" that is not actually played but has been achieved by a relationship among large parts of or movements in the symphony (115).¹¹⁾ Despite "a common entity" achieved in the final expression of a symphony, what he stresses is individual freedom given to its components. As he writes,

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 composing it have been liberated, they have found in the rhythm of the whole their individual freedom. (116)

As suggested in “Expansion,” “Not completion,” and “Not rounding off but opening out,” the components are given individual freedom to evoke various things, while acting in harmony with the whole.¹²⁾ It is apparent that this ability of art enables audiences and readers to make art rich in meaning through aesthetic responses such as synesthesia.¹³⁾

Nineteenth-Century Romantic Musical Aesthetics

Forster’s view of art bears the great influence of the music concepts of nineteenth-century Romanticism, though he never directly referred to them over his long career as a writer. Before the nineteenth century, vocal music, particularly opera, was written and performed more frequently and captured far more attention in the public and the press throughout Europe than instrumental music. The concept of mimesis—art is to faithfully represent nature—had prevailed in Western culture since ancient Greece, and instrumental music or music without words was considered inferior to vocal music or music with words in mimesis.

However, early in the nineteenth century, the status of instrumental music, the symphony in particular, rose enormously. It was partly because Romantic composers and music critics emphasised that music’s status as an ideal art form lay in its ability to transcend “the mere rationality of language” and appeal forcefully to the emotions, that is, in “the expressive potential of music” (Bucknell 3, 2).¹⁴⁾ Accordingly, composers such as Wagner,¹⁵⁾ Franz Liszt, and Hector Berlioz experimented with symphonic means in “revitaliz[ing] or destroy[ing] classical forms and harmony for the purposes of expanded ‘expressivity’” (Bucknell 20, emphasis original). They attempted to justify music’s power beyond language to express not only things but also “both

conscious and unconscious levels of emotion” of composers (Bucknell 3). Wagner also introduced his notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk* or a single organic unity of music, language, and gesture, which stems from the ancient Greek notion of *mousike*, “the unity of the various performance arts” (Prieto 1). His attempt through total art was to reform Italian opera in which opera singers and words played a more important role than players and music and which widened the divisions between music and words, and the composer and the librettist.¹⁶⁾

In the latter half of the century, however, the question arose as to music’s expressive capacity—how composers’ inner world, the most invisible realm, can be expressed. The need to “corra[l] their experiments” in music without words, the necessity to convey emotional states and things exactly rather than express them, became very much concern for composers of those days and “even for so convinced an ‘expressivist’ as Wagner” (Bucknell 20, 21, emphasis original). Hence, Wagner brought in musical programmes and “semantically determined structural procedures like the leitmotiv” to convey anything with ever greater precision—to make audiences see a definite meaning assigned to music (Prieto 5). Although they sought for music that transcended the limits of language, in the end, they required music bound to language.

Meanwhile, apart from the claim for music’s expressive potential and the tension between music and language, there were composers and music critics who declared instrumental music to be the most prestigious of all forms of art because of its existence as an autonomous entity. For instance, E. T. A. Hoffmann maintains in his 1810 review of Beethoven’s Fifth:

When we speak of music as an independent art, we should properly refer only to instrumental music which, scorning the assistance and association of another art, namely poetry, expresses that peculiar property which can be found in music only. It is the most romantic of all the arts, one might almost

say the only really romantic art, for its sole object is the expression of the infinite. The lyre of Orpheus opens the doors of Orkus. Music discloses to man an unknown kingdom, a world having nothing in common with the external sensual world which surrounds him and in which he leaves behind him all definite feelings in order to abandon himself to an inexpressible longing. (Loche and Hoffmann 127)

For Hoffmann, “music dissolved from language and even from expression of affections” appeared as true and it was “perceived as an intimation of the ‘infinite’,” “a revelation of the absolute” (Dahlhaus 54, 17). Hoffmann, according to Mark Evan Bonds, also stresses in his 1813 reworking of the review that “[i]f we as listeners lack sufficient imagination ... we will not be able to enter that world” (36).

Hoffmann’s perspective, however, was viewed by mid-nineteenth-century music critics as “an irrational and thus unsatisfactory basis on which to build any systematic aesthetic” (Bonds 10). In his *On the Musically Beautiful* (1854), Eduard Hanslick, pointing out a profound difference between language and music, stresses the concept of music for music’s sake: “The essential difference is that in speech the sound is only a sign, that is, a means to an end which is entirely distinct from that means, while in music the sound is an object, i.e., it appears to us as an end in itself” (42). For Hanslick, the autonomy of music meant its nonreferentiality, and his treatise became “the manifesto of musical formalism” (Bonds 108). However, Wagner, who at this period, believed in music with “programs or words or other extra-musical devices and reference points,” called Hoffmann’s and Hanslick’s ideas about music “absolute music” and criticised it adversely (Bucknell 23).

Clearly, Forster’s view of art reflects a significant influence of major musicological concepts of the Romantic period. Forster, like many composers

and music scholars of this period, maintained that art must transcend language—logic and reason—and awaken emotions in readers and audiences. Some proponents of the expressive capacity of music, in the end, resorted to language to adequately and unambiguously convey inwardness, the most difficult realm to express. On the other hand, Forster insisted on art's power beyond logic and reason to evoke a variety of things. Forster's aesthetic position also shows a deep influence of the idea of "absolute music," namely, art's autonomous status—Hoffmann's Romantic idea rather than Hanslick's formalism. That is, he believed that art had an immanent meaning as absolute truth, irrelevant to mundane standards and affects, and intimated the truth, which could be grasped through the imagination.

Conclusion

This essay has revealed that "The Celestial Omnibus" and "Co-Ordination" are Forster's early attempts to show his aesthetic position with regard to music. In "The Celestial Omnibus," Forster disapproves of Mr Bons's logical approach, which can thwart the aesthetic responses Forster values. He also shows the undue influence of cultural authorities on the intellectual approach to art. On the other hand, Forster emphasises the boy's transformation into a liminal state of mind and his use of imagination, an approach that Forster believes enables the apprehension of the absolute truth of art. In "Co-Ordination," by describing a change in characters' approaches to music, Forster shows the importance of spontaneous aesthetic responses, synesthetic perception, and listening to music itself—all of which are freed from the influence of cultural authorities. In other words, he underlines both giving to music various extra-musical meanings and grasping the truth inherent in music. Forster's ideas about aesthetic perception revealed in these stories are closely related to a view

of art significantly influenced by the musical aesthetics of the Romantic period. That is, Forster, as the Romantic musicologists emphasised, believed that art should have power beyond rational, logical thinking to express various things and appeal to the emotions. He also believed in art's unworldly autonomy and its inherent meaning as truth, which was not articulated but could be realised through the imagination. "The Celestial Omnibus" and "Co-ordination" thus play a significant role in showing Forster's deep understanding of music—traditional Romantic notions about the transcendent force of music, and thereby explain why he aimed to use music in his literary works and make them have expressive properties and effects analogous to those of music.¹⁷⁾

Forster's Romantic nature is evident not only from his view of art but also from his great love for Wagner's and Beethoven's works, which are indeed used in the two stories.¹⁸⁾ However, his inheritance of the musicological traditions is not primarily or exclusively situated within the aesthetic sphere. Forster says in his lecture "Art for Art's Sake" (1949), "I believe in art for art's sake. . . . Art for art's sake does not mean that only art matters"; for, as he adds, "Man lives, and ought to live, in a complex world, full of conflicting claims, and if we simplified them down into the aesthetic, he would be sterilized" (*TC* 87). Forster thus also regards art as socially and politically effective. As will be made clear in future discussion regarding his literary works, in *A Passage to India* (1924), for example, Hindu music, whose unworldliness is emphasised, is used to suggest that all the Indian audiences, regardless of social status, apprehend its essence and spiritually connect with the Absolute; the music also intimates the importance of loving all mankind equally—a set of values that the English characters cannot easily accept. In *Maurice* (1971), Maurice and Clive convey their homosexual desires, emotions that cannot be put into words out of fear of public censure, through Tchaikovsky's symphony. In the unpublished *Arctic Summer*, music appears as a cultural product closely involved with a

political ideology; that is, Forster suggests a relationship between a female character's musical work, the English folk-song revival in the late 19th to early 20th centuries, and the ideology of nationalism. Music in his literary works thus neither ignores nor romantically evokes practical concerns, the outer world to which Romantic composers and music critics devoted little or no attention.

Notes

- 1) See Michelle Fillion 1-23.
- 2) For example, in her essay (1927), Virginia Woolf refers to the volume as “that curious interlude” between Forster’s successful novels, while she sees the stories as “extremely charming” (107, 109).
- 3) Several exceptions to this tendency include John V. Hagopian’s essay (1965) that attempts to reveal the moral themes recurrently pursued in Forster’s novels: the cultural differences between the English and people of the Mediterranean, and the subjective sense of time, or, the importance of the intensity of a moment. See Stape 2: 165-72. Similarly, Sunil Kumar Sarker maintains that “The Celestial Omnibus” is “an escape story” and the escape is “from culture put on wrong track, or culture that does not further humanness but hinders it” (187). He also argues that “Co-Ordination” is “a reflection of Forster’s disgust at the attempt at introducing mechanical drilling and at bringing in uniformity in human behaviour, which he first experienced, and that very painfully, at Tonbridge school” (251).
- 4) In “The Creator as Critic” (1931), Forster more explicitly expresses scepticism on artists’ need to agree to ideas of their contemporary critics: “[O]nly certain writers are capable of being in touch with their age, and if the critic brought first aid to the others, he would merely make them unreadable. A balanced Byron, a sophisticated Hardy, wouldn’t be Byron or Hardy” (CC 89).
- 5) Concerning the negative influence of cultural authorities, Forster in an unpublished fragment equates criticism with theocracy in relation to their interpretation of art and

- God respectively, and writes, “Both seek to intervene between the individual and that which he desires to understand.... As long as the intervention is tentative and gentle, it may bring help. ... But the moment the intervention becomes authoritative [sic] it changes its character and changes for the worse” (KCC: EMF/10.3).
- 6) Similarly, in “The Creator as Critics,” Forster writes, “Well I mean by Creation an activity, part of which takes place in sleep. It has, or usually has, its wakeful alert side, but it’s rooted in the region whence dreams also grow” (CC 65).
- 7) At the end of the essay, Forster repeats that “[c]reation comes from the depths—the mystic will say from God” (TC 86).
- 8) As regards heaven the boy goes to, Stewart C. Wilcox pays attention to a biblical phrase and argues that the theme of “The Celestial Omnibus” is “the innocent and fresh imagination of childhood: ‘Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew, 18.3)” (191).
- 9) Forster’s comment, “A third activity, less important, remains to be listed, and since it lies more within my sphere than precision I will discuss it at greater length,” suggests that the third type is important for him (TC 107).
- 10) Whitman’s mode of listening to Beethoven’s septet, which is revealed in his prose fragment about the music which Forster cites in “The *Raison d’Être* of Criticism,” is also similar to Miss Haddon and the Principal. Whitman writes, “Dainty abandon, sometimes as if Nature laughing on a hillside in the sunshine; serious and firm monotonies, as of winds; a horn sounding through the tangle of the forest, and the dying echoes; soothing floating of waves, but presently rising in surges, angrily lashing, muttering, heavy; piercing peals of laughter, for interstices; now and then weird, as Nature herself is in certain moods—but mainly spontaneous, easy, careless—often the sentiment of the postures of naked children playing or sleeping....” (qtd. in TC 108).
- 11) Forster’s difficult rhythm seems related to Hegel’s (and Aristotle’s) ideas about “a connection between sound’s close relationship with time and its relation to the ‘inner’ life or soul [subjectivity]” (Halliday 23, emphasis original). See Sam Halliday 20-23.

- 12) Similarly, as regards the “Expansion” Forster emphasises, Mahmoud Salami argues, “The sentence I have emphasized in this quotation [“Not rounding off but opening out”] 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. For Forster, the novel is thus open-ended, pluralistic, and never single in meaning, as he practices in his novels, particularly in *A Passage to India*” (141).
- 13) Bret L. Keeling connects Forster’s notion of expansion with synesthesia and says, “Music’s power, as Catherine Clément says, to be ‘received’ not only through the ear but also ‘through the whole expanse of skin, through the whole body’ (255), is a power that philosophers and artists have long acknowledged” (86). As for synesthesia, Daniel Albright comments, “Synesthesia is a technique for reconstruing commonplace nature into something fresh, for indicating intuitions of ... a beauty that (since it is beyond the usual range of our sensory apparatus) expresses itself through the ‘wrong’ sense organ” (228).
- 14) See also Naomi Miyamoto 3-28. Miyamoto also points out that instrumental music was regarded as enhancing the quality of artistic culture and life, that is, the opposite of vocal music as entertainment. See Miyamoto 202.
- 15) Concerning Wagner’s work, it is worthwhile to note that his influence reached far beyond the domain of music—the symbolist movement of the late nineteenth century, which was “the source of great influence on many writers at work in the twenties [the 1920s],” the years when “English modernism was at its peak” (Bucknell 11). For example, for Stéphane Mallarmé, a major French symbolist poet, the value of music was in “its ability to signify without naming” or its “mode of signification that does not limit thought to the denotata of words” (Prieto 8). Edmund Wilson also points out, “The Symbolists themselves, full of the idea of producing with poetry effects like those of music, tended to think of ... images as possessing an abstract value like musical notes and chords” (21). See also Albright 228-30, 252-53 and Halliday 1-19.

- 16) See Albright 24 and Prieto 6.
- 17) As regards the two functions of music Forster emphasises—extra-musical referentiality (to express various things) and non-referentiality (to have an inherent meaning), David Deutsch argues that “[e]ither way, he [Forster] expresse[s] a belief that, at its best, there is a certain vital ‘insistence in music—expressed largely through rhythm’,” and “at least *aims* for clarity, particularly in his fiction” (176, emphasis original).
- 18) Salami also points out the thematic influence of Wagner’s works on Forster’s novels: “Forster’s characters, like Wagner’s creatures, are governed by a dreamlike and isolated world, and yet they want to gain their own will, affirm subjectivity and establish human connections” (141).

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音楽の諸相

——芸術鑑賞論としての

E. M. フォースター初期短編小説——

増田 有希子

本稿は、E. M. フォースター（1879-1970）の初期短編小説である「天国行きの乗合馬車」（1908）と「統合」（1912）を取り上げ、これらの作品において作家が芸術鑑賞に関する自身の見解を示していること、並びにその芸術観が19世紀のロマン主義的音楽観と密接に関わっていることを明らかにする。

音楽家ベンジャミン・ブリテンが、作家の90歳を祝して出版された論集の中でフォースターを「最も音楽的なイギリス人作家」と評しているように、作家は音楽愛好家であったばかりではなく、芸術論において音楽に言及したり小説の中で音楽を用いたり、あらゆる面で音楽と深い関わりを持っていた。「天国行きの乗合馬車」、「統合」は、従来は単に作家の言うところの「幻想的小説」（現実世界から切り離された空想の世界、あるいは非日常を組み込んだ日常を描いた小説）と見なされ仔細に論じられることがなかったが、作家はこれらの初期短編小説の中で、ロマン主義的音楽観の影響を色濃く反映した自身の芸術鑑賞論を展開しているのである。

「天国行きの乗合馬車」の中でフォースターは、文学を論理的に分析するボンズ氏のアプローチを非とし、また体系的、知的アプローチに深く関与する文化的権威の存在を浮き彫りにする。一方で作家が重点を置くのは、芸術の神髄に触れることを可能たらしめる、無意識的世界の扉を開き想像力を発揮させるといった主人公「少年」の芸術との関わり方

である。「統合」では、登場人物たちの音楽との関わり方の変化が描かれている。それは、文化的権威者が音楽に付与した特定の意味を正しく理解するという鑑賞姿勢から、音楽を自らの中に再現、創造し音楽に様々な意味を持たせるという姿勢、または音楽そのものを聴くことでそこに内在する真の意味に触れるという姿勢への変化であり、作家は変化後に見られる登場人物たちの音楽に対する態度を重視する。

以上のフォースターの芸術鑑賞論には、19世紀に興隆したロマン主義的音楽思想の強い影響が認められる。ロマン派の音楽評論家たちが音楽について提唱したように、作家は、芸術は合理的、論理的思考を超越した豊かな創造的表現力によって人の感情に強く訴えることができると確信していた。また、芸術は社会の既存概念その他何ものにも拘束されず芸術それ自体のために存在し、想像力を通してのみ接近され得る唯一絶対的な真の意味が内在しているとも信じていた。

このように「天国行きの乗合馬車」、「統合」は、フォースターの音楽一伝統的なロマン主義的音楽観一への深い理解を示すものとして、さらには、作家が文学作品の中で音楽を用い音楽的表現や効果を追求し続けたことの原因を示すものとして重要な意義がある作品と位置付けることができるのである。

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