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“Only Connect”: Music’s Role in Forster’s *A Room with a View*

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Introduction

“She had been in his arms, and he remembered it, just as he remembered the blood on the photographs that she had bought in Alinari’s shop. It was not exactly that a man had died; something had happened to the living: they had come to a situation where character tells, and where Childhood enters upon the branching paths of Youth.”¹

The need to find one’s identity and place in the world plagues characters in numerous nineteenth-century British novels.² Moments of insecurity and fragmentation often lead to moments of transformation and connection, evident in passages such as the one above, from E.M. Forster’s *A Room with a View* (1908).³ Just a few pages earlier, the same character stands inside an Italian church and feels lost because there is no one around to tell her how to feel. Forster addresses similar matters – those of separation and connection – in both his fiction and non-fiction, often approaching fragmentation through the lens of art. In “Art for Art’s Sake” (1949), for example, he notes that “society can only represent a fragment of the human spirit...another fragment can only get expressed through art.”⁴ While art only makes up one fragment of the human spirit, it – and music in particular – is the piece that Forster believes can unite all the other parts of human existence. This essay addresses fragmentation and connection on multiple levels in relation to Forster’s *A Room with a View*. George Emerson, the novel’s Romantic hero, loves Lucy Honeychurch and wishes to connect with her. But Lucy cannot decide to marry George for love until she *realizes* she loves him, the latter of which is not possible until she connects two fragments of her self.⁵

¹ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 315.

² Characters who come to mind are Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, *Middlemarch*’s Dorothea Brooke, Jane Austen’s Catherine Morland, and the heroes of Dickens’ *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*.

³ Forster began drafting *A Room with a View* in 1903, but it was not published until 1908, third of his six novels (Trilling, *E. M. Forster*, 97).

⁴ Forster, “Art for Art’s Sake,” 92.

⁵ See below, pp. 4-5 and pp. 15-18, for discussion of Lucy’s two selves.

Lucy's struggles in *A Room with a View*, and the novel as a whole, exemplify the liminal space that Forster occupies as a novelist. Stylistically, he stands on the edge of the deconstruction and modernization of the novel, not quite Romantic or Victorian but also not quite Modernist. Thematically, Forster reaches back to the Romantics in his emphasis on "inner qualities of spirit, imagination, or intuition" that critic Randall Stevenson points out in his essay, "Forster and modernism."⁶ Forster inherits these traits in large part from nineteenth-century musical inclinations of reaching toward the infinite and spiritual, embodied by many Romantic-era musicians beginning with Ludwig van Beethoven. Forster uses this Romantic music to complement and aid Lucy's struggles with connection in *A Room with a View*. Why music, we ask? Forster saw music as the most ordered of all things in the universe, something with "an internal stability, a vital harmony."⁷ The stability and orderliness of music, which remains constant in Lucy's world, grounds her while simultaneously – and perhaps unconsciously – helping push her toward achieving independence.

The above Romantic qualities make up one part of what critic David Medalie calls Forster's "romantic realism," in which "the realistic elements are interwoven with romantic components."⁸ While the Romantic aspects of Forster's prose come from music, the realistic components of his fiction – representing middle class life at the turn of the twentieth century –

⁶ Stevenson, "Forster and modernism," 211.

⁷ Forster, "Art for Art's Sake," 88. Forster himself was an amateur pianist and music-lover: he set out to annotate all of Ludwig van Beethoven's piano sonatas and even collaborated on the libretto for British composer Benjamin Britten's opera *Billy Budd* (Lago and Furbank, eds., *Selected Letters of E.M. Forster Volume Two*, 184, note 4). Britten labels Forster as "our most musical novelist" and pinpoints the latter's musical tastes as follows: "Forster prefers music based on striking themes, dramatic happenings, and strong immediate moods, rather than on classical control and balance, beautiful melodies and perfection of detail...he prefers the Romantic to the Classical" (Britten, in Medalie, *E.M. Forster's Modernism*, 116, 121). We see these musical traits in Forster's fiction as well, in sudden, dramatic events such as the murder in the Piazza and in Forster's ability to elicit strong emotions from both his characters and readers.

⁸ Medalie, *E.M. Forster's Modernism*, 64. The title of Medalie's book, *E.M. Forster's Modernism*, immediately introduces his agenda of identifying a literary place for Forster's work amongst other early twentieth-century writers like Virginia Woolf, whose novels represent fully developed literary Modernism. Medalie thus places Forster's fiction not in Modernism but in the category of "romantic realism."

come from the tradition of such authors as Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Henry James.⁹ Thus, we see Forster bridging nineteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetic trends: his emphasis on love, the spiritual and intuition are rooted in Romanticism and its music, his realism stems largely from the Victorian tradition, and he reaches forward to Modernism in his characters' struggles with connection, their struggles to piece together the fragments caused by "the conditions of modernity."¹⁰

Forster's act of combining aesthetic and literary traditions invites us to step back and look at the initial fragmentation from two angles. Forster believed that fragmentation in the early twentieth century was caused by modernity's "absence of social cohesion."¹¹ On this level, Forster as a novelist uses Romantic music to accomplish the Modernist goal of connecting the fragments of early twentieth century society. He does this through one character in *A Room with a View*: Lucy Honeychurch. Within this particular novel, Lucy has a divided self, one split between the proper social world and the "kingdom of music," where she can be who she wants to be.¹² In the scope of the novel, I map Lucy's progression toward connection onto the development of classical music through the nineteenth century: the music she plays drives her toward connecting her two selves.

Critics have approached *A Room with a View* from several angles. Some map national metaphors onto Lucy's development, using England and Italy to represent different aspects of her character.¹³ Others discuss Forster's place among the liberal-humanist politics and blossoming literary modernism of the early twentieth century and how this is reflected in his

⁹ Forster was born in 1879 in London and raised within the "intellectual middle class" by an architect father and a mother descended from wealthy Evangelicals. He attended Cambridge for university, where he interacted with a number of intellectuals of the late nineteenth-century (Trilling 25, 29, 8).

¹⁰ Medalie, "Bloomsbury and other values," 37.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹² Forster, *A Room with a View*, 302.

¹³ See Jeffrey Heath's "Kissing and Telling: Turning Round in *A Room with a View*"; Ann Ardis' "Hellenism and the lure of Italy"; and Paul Peppis' "Forster and England."

novels.¹⁴ The few critics who focus on music in *A Room with a View* mainly address why Forster features music so prominently in the novel and how music helps Lucy discover the truth about herself.¹⁵ Two critics in particular make observations about Lucy and music that I will use to formulate my argument.

Max Saunders, in “Forster’s life and life-writing,” makes a distinction between Lucy’s “social self” and the self she inhabits when she plays the piano, which I will call her musical self.¹⁶ Lucy lives both as a repressed, commonplace British tourist in Italy and at the same time as a talented, intuitive pianist who knows just what to play in certain social situations. I would like to build on Saunders’ delineation of Lucy’s musical and social selves and identify music as the force that pushes Lucy to the brink of connecting her two selves. The connection fuses in her realization that she loves George and her decision to marry him, brought about by an external, social force: Mr. Emerson. Lucy’s musical self displays independence and intuition from the start, and thus the subtle changes in the music that she plays throughout the novel urge her social self forward while maintaining a connection with her musical self. One could say that her musical self just ends up being the dominant of the two, but I contend that Lucy’s social and musical selves actually do connect in the end, mainly due to the music she plays.

Lucy ultimately connects the fragments of her life and her two selves in large part because of the forward-reaching trajectory of the music she plays throughout the novel. In this I oppose critic John Lucas’ belief that Lucy’s music “pre-figures” a “decline into...middle-class sterility.”¹⁷ I argue instead that Lucy connects her two selves by looking back to music’s

¹⁴ See David Medalie’s “Bloomsbury and other values”; Elizabeth Langland’s “Forster and the novel”; and Randall Stevenson’s “Forster and Modernism.”

¹⁵ See David Medalie’s *E.M. Forster’s Modernism*; John Lucas’ “Wagner and Forster: *Parsifal* and *A Room with a View*”; Max Saunders’ “Forster’s life and life-writing”; and Michelle Fillion’s “Edwardian Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Music in E.M. Forster’s ‘A Room with a View.’”

¹⁶ Saunders, “Forster’s life and life-writing,” 10.

¹⁷ Lucas, “Wagner and Forster: *Parsifal* and *A Room with a View*,” 95.

development in the nineteenth century and playing the music of some of the century's most forward-looking composers. Beginning with Beethoven, who in his late style began to bridge the gap between Classical and Romantic music, Lucy plays through Schumann, an avant-garde composer and critic in his own right, and ends with Wagner, who completely upset musical form and convention with his *Gesamtkunstwerk* ("total work of art") in the later nineteenth century. Beethoven, Schumann and Wagner bring Lucy closer to connecting her inexperienced social self with her sophisticated and intuitive musical self. These composers help Lucy develop from a girl who plays it safe and follows the rules of society – as Beethoven might have done in his early period – into a free-thinking and independent young woman who marries for love against the grain of her social class.

The first section of this paper ("Forster, Romantic Music, and the Novel") explicates Forster's use of nineteenth-century classical music in his fiction, focusing on Lucy's position as an expressive female musician and the influence of Romantic music on Forster's fiction-writing. Section two ("Lucy's Obstacles") sets up Lucy's personal obstacles at the beginning of *A Room with a View*, including her struggles with propriety and inability to define her feelings, both of which lead to the divide between how she plays the piano and how she lives her life. In the third section ("The Muddle and its Representatives"), I define the term "muddle" in the context of Forster's novels, discussing the muddle's antitheses – the spontaneous or the real – and music's role in pushing Lucy out of the muddle and toward connecting the fragments of her life. The final section of this essay ("Lucy at the Piano") addresses Lucy's innate musical sensibilities and how the specific music she plays is significant for her development as a character. This section builds on the previous sections in its illumination of *how* music helps connect Lucy's musical

and social selves, bringing her out of the Muddle and into real life – the life in which she acknowledges her love for George Emerson.

I. Forster, Romantic Music, and the Novel

At the start of her journey Lucy Honeychurch does not know “what [she] wants and what [she is]”; only by using her art form – music – will she grow into an understanding of herself and where she fits into the world.¹⁸ She must use music to help parse together her sense of self. In critic David Medalie’s words,

[A]rt must function as an alleviation of the ‘brokenness’ of life. Beethoven...provides the formal wholeness of art and the romantic possibility that Lucy denies herself if she does not escape from Cecil and his world.¹⁹

After playing Beethoven early in the novel, Lucy feels that she wants “something big,” but she does not quite know what.²⁰ She struggles with various antitheses throughout *A Room with a View*: her musical and social selves, muddle and un-muddle, England and Italy, love and repression. Though from the start Lucy is quite accomplished on the piano, for a long time she “fears what her music discloses to her” – the freedom and spontaneity of a complete life – and thus will not reach out from the safety of music or bring those musical experiences into real life.²¹ So while music originally seems to mask the events of Lucy’s daily life by allowing her to escape from her social self into her musical self, it eventually allows the two selves to blend into one. I argue that music ultimately helps alleviate the fragmentary nature of Lucy’s life by bringing about the realization that she loves not Cecil Vyse, but rather George Emerson.

¹⁸ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 421.

¹⁹ Medalie, *E.M. Forster’s Modernism*, 122.

²⁰ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 310.

²¹ Langland, “Forster and the novel,” 96.

At the opening of *A Room with a View*, Lucy has a few problems: she is stuck in propriety, which causes her to deny and repress her true feelings, leading to a lack of connection between her musical and social selves. In order to escape from the muddle that these antitheses create, Lucy must connect them and advance into honest life. In *A Room with a View*, Forster uses music to help connect the fragments of Lucy's life because he saw it as the most ordered and stable thing in the universe.²²

Music relates well to *A Room with a View* because the novel consists of characters, events and antitheses that are “woven into a dense narrative fabric” that takes some uncovering to reveal its complexity, akin to the harmonic layers in a piece of classical music.²³ The layers – essentially fragments, when un-stacked – are apparent in the primary characters, George Emerson and Lucy Honeychurch, whom Lionel Trilling calls “young people imprisoned, Lucy by her respectability, George by a deep, neurotic *fin de siècle* pessimism.”²⁴ While “imprisoned” may be a strong word to use, Lucy no doubt lives a repressed, upper-middle class life. She is an accomplished pianist but cannot bring her musical passion into her daily life. *A Room with a View* is Lucy's coming-of-age story; her responses to aesthetics (the art and architecture of Italy) denote an internal division between the proper – the Baedeker guide book, represented by England – and the authentic – intuitive personal responses, represented by Italy. Lucy's music bridges these two notions in that playing the piano is a genuine means for self-expression, but the authenticity is masked by the fact that – for a woman of Lucy's age and social status – she must play music. Luckily, Lucy can use music to her advantage in escaping the propriety she lives in. The struggle between proper and authentic – in daily interactions and musical performance – takes up much of Lucy's story, while the whole time George Emerson makes many attempts to

²² See above, pp. 3.

²³ Herz, “*A Room with a View*,” 139.

²⁴ Trilling 100.

draw Lucy out of her repressed state and help her “dull propriety...give way before the possibility of passion.”²⁵

Multiple spontaneous encounters with George Emerson help Lucy begin to realize her passion for him. In this way, *A Room with a View* matches the development of Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*: it takes many layers and permutations of similar experiences – such as these spontaneous encounters – for Lucy to come into her own un-muddled state. She must play the music of many different composers and styles, from eighteenth to nineteenth century, piano sonata to opera. The fact that Lucy enjoys playing Beethoven – and that he is the first composer we see her encounter – hints that the novel will be looking forward toward her eventual development into something new.²⁶ But while music takes Lucy to the brink of connection, the final push in her un-muddling actually comes from a social source: George’s father, Mr. Emerson. Instead of using music to understand the world, Mr. Emerson “articulates the novel’s controlling system of values and offers a variant on the theme of victory” that Lucy plays for in Beethoven’s music.²⁷

As Mary Burgan outlines in her essay, “Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction,” middle class women in the nineteenth century played the piano as a marker of social status, a gauge of accomplishment and a “channel for self-expression.”²⁸ The development of the piano in the early nineteenth century lent the instrument a stronger tone and thus greater “expressive capacities...that could make the amateur shine.”²⁹ These expressive elements include dynamics, phrasing and tempo; that is, elements of the music that the player

²⁵ Ibid., 100.

²⁶ Beethoven, in his late style, made many compositional innovations as he pushed classical music to develop and expand. See discussion of Beethoven’s late style below, pp. 28-29.

²⁷ Herz 142.

²⁸ Burgan, “Heroines at the Piano,” 51.

²⁹ Ibid., 57.

can directly control. In terms of music, Nancy Kovaleff Baker defines “expression” as “those elements of a musical performance that depend on personal response and that vary between different interpretations.”³⁰ Similarly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “expression” in music as “[t]he manner of performance...suited to bring out the feeling of a musical passage.”³¹ Based on these definitions and Lucy’s playing in *A Room with a View*, we assume that she is one of those women who, as Burgan mentions, plays the piano as a “channel for self-expression.”³² In early nineteenth-century novels, female pianist characters often appear as objects of satire, while later-century novels show how female musicians disrupt the harmony of the home in their “self-proclaiming...display[s] of energy” at the instrument.³³ Lucy’s playing does not directly disrupt the harmony of her home; on the contrary, those around her often applaud her musical skill. But her playing does indirectly disrupt her own internal harmony, causing questions and indefinable feelings to arise. This is where the piano enters as “central to the structure and meaning of the novel” as well as to Lucy’s character development.³⁴

Burgan uses George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1874-76) as an example of music’s implications “for the development of a woman’s character,” especially because in Eliot’s novel music is associated with “the expression of deep feeling.”³⁵ The same can be said for *A Room with a View*. By exercising “initiative, expertise, and talent” on the piano, Lucy becomes “capable of expressing feelings and ideas beyond the limits of rational knowledge”; beyond, even, the limits of her own knowledge.³⁶

³⁰ Kovaleff Baker, et al., *Grove Music Online*.

³¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “expression.”

³² Burgan 51.

³³ *Ibid.*, 52.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁶ Burgan 76; Kovaleff Baker, et al., *Grove Music Online*.

Musical expressions of deep feeling eventually help Lucy connect with her own true feelings about life and love, while also reflecting a post-1800 view of instrumental music as “the most elevated of the arts.”³⁷ In addition to seeing music as the highest art form, some nineteenth-century German Romantic writers – such as E.T.A. Hoffmann, Goethe, Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder – singled out Beethoven as the “quintessentially Romantic composer.”³⁸ Beethoven has the ability, as Hoffmann eloquently states it, to “tear the listener irresistibly away into the wonderful spiritual realm of the infinite.”³⁹ Connected to these views of Beethoven, Hoffmann and other Romantics regarded music in general as “the most direct expression or even manifestation of a spiritual realm.”⁴⁰ Thus, because of Beethoven’s relation to the spiritual and the infinite, coupled with the fact that he “became associated with progress, modernity, individuality, [and] complexity” by the late nineteenth century, Forster sets him up in close parallel with Lucy in *A Room with a View*.⁴¹ Lucy’s playing embodies the spiritual aspect of the Romantics, but as Lucy progresses from Beethoven to Schumann to Wagner she reaches toward modernity and individuality. This parallels how Forster himself ties Modernity’s fragmentation to Romantic notions of the spiritual or infinite by using specific music in his novels to connect aesthetic traditions.

As J.B. Beer points out, “one has to see [Forster]...[as] the spiritual heir of...Beethoven and Wagner” in order to fully understand where he comes from. My essay attempts to do this in the context of *A Room with a View*. Forster belongs to the substantial Romantic movement

³⁷ This “fundamental change in the status of music in relation to the other arts occurred in the years around 1800, the emergence of a new concept of musical expression coinciding with the rise of autonomous instrumental music as a serious art form” (Kovaleff Baker, et al., *Grove Music Online*).

³⁸ Hoffmann, in Finson, 7.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Finson 7.

⁴¹ Botstein, “The Search for Meaning in Beethoven,” 336.

between the French Revolution and World War I; this is where his novels come from.⁴²

Wagner's music was in style when Forster was growing up and so he developed a taste for German romantic music. Beethoven appealed to him as the forerunner of Wagner due to his "constant note of heroism and even triumph," and Schumann serves to link the Beethoven to Wagner.⁴³

In his essay, "The C Minor of that Life," Forster discusses the catalogue of Beethoven's works in the key of C minor, which includes the Opus 111 piano sonata that Lucy plays at the beginning of *A Room with a View*. Forster notes about the C minor works that "one has in all of them the conviction that Beethoven has found himself, that he is where he most wanted to be."⁴⁴ Perhaps Forster employs Beethoven's music in his novels in order to help him find his own niche as an author. Similarly, within *A Room with a View*, playing Beethoven's Piano Sonata op. 111 helps Lucy begin to find herself and her place in society. Leon Botstein also notes that "Beethoven was the most popular composer among the swelling fin-de-siècle musical public because he was understood as communicating thought and emotion."⁴⁵ Forster, then, adopted music – especially Beethoven's and Wagner's – as a model for "communicating thought and emotion" in his literature. He notes in "Art for Art's Sake" that a work of art "is the only material object in the universe which may possess internal harmony," and thus it represents life outside of muddle. Forster thus employs music's "internal harmony" so heavily in *A Room with a View* to lead Lucy out of her muddled state and into reality.⁴⁶

In addition, late nineteenth-century Italian opera composers such as Giacomo Puccini and Giuseppe Verdi "produced a new intensity of passionate expression called *verismo* (Italian for

⁴² Beer, *The Achievement of E.M. Forster*, 15.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁴ Forster, "The C Minor of that Life," 121.

⁴⁵ Botstein 337.

⁴⁶ Forster, "Art for Art's Sake," 90.

‘realism’).” These composers, through their use of *verismo*, “construct dramas with visceral impact” that “draw so little attention to [themselves] as [they] elicit a strong emotional response.”⁴⁷ The musical combination of German emotion – expressed through music – with Italian realism – emphasized through setting – perfectly defines Forster’s literary style in *A Room with a View*, and perfectly equates with Lucy’s expressive musical performances and Italy’s setting, where she begins to experience things outside the norm. Forster’s subtlety of prose encourages us to think about the common character types – the repressed young lady, the Romantic hero, the ascetic fiancé – as we experience the same shocks of emotion that they do.⁴⁸ This is “romantic realism” at its best. Through “the fusion of one with the other,” the connecting of musical and literary influences – Beethoven, Schumann and Wagner with Austen, Eliot, Meredith and Dickens – Forster “is able to present work humorous and arresting, with a curious element in it of compelling strength and emotion.”⁴⁹

II. Lucy’s Obstacles

A Room with a View (1908) engages the reader from the start, when we meet Lucy Honeychurch, the heroine who has trouble thinking and making decisions by and for herself. In chapter two – revealingly titled “In Santa Croce with no Baedeker” – Lucy finds herself standing alone in a church and lost, both physically from her chaperone and mentally in a conflict:

Of course, it must be a wonderful building. But how like a barn! And how very cold! *Of course*, it contained frescoes by Giotto, in the presence of whose tactile values she was capable of feeling what was proper. But who was to tell her which they were? [...] Then the pernicious charm of Italy worked on her, and, instead of acquiring information, she began to be happy.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Finson 290, 295.

⁴⁸ This also hearkens back to the Victorian novel, bringing to mind the trio of Dorothea, Ladislav and Casaubon in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*.

⁴⁹ Masterman, in Medalie, *E.M. Forster’s Modernism*, 70.

⁵⁰ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 295. My italics.

The first part of this passage exemplifies Lucy's situation: she has been trained all her life to appreciate fine art (or at least what others tell her is fine art). But when abandoned by her chaperone and separated from her guidebook she lapses into confusion and must qualify her judgments with words like "of course" and "must." Instead of coming up with her own judgments, Lucy takes others' ideas and applies them to every situation that bewilders her.

What binds Lucy's brain and tongue in these circumstances? Social propriety does it, in the sense of "conformity to accepted standards of behaviour or morals, especially with regard to good manners or polite usage; seemliness, decorousness, decency; (observance of) convention."⁵¹ Lucy's social class represents and embraces this decorum, as do Lucy's mother, Charlotte Bartlett, Cecil Vyse, and even England as a whole.

This propriety causes three things – the Baedeker, Lucy's chaperone (Charlotte), and societal rules – to link together as the entity that attempts to monitor Lucy's actions and ensure she lives properly. The "Baedeker" of the chapter title represents both the figure of the chaperone and the rules of decorum that one should follow in society. As J.B. Beer states in *The Achievement of E. M. Forster*, Lucy is "torn between the bouncing life of the city and the aesthetic values which her guide book tells her to look for."⁵² The monitoring devices mentioned above effectively prevent Lucy from experiencing this "bouncing" city life and, though she "[begins] to be happy" in Italy, she cannot fully express her feelings until she breaks free of societal guides.⁵³ Though in the above scene Italy's "pernicious charm" trumps the barn-like building and Giotto frescoes, Lucy's travel guide – or lack of one – traps her in the Santa Croce church and leaves her struggling to make an aesthetic judgment.⁵⁴ Alone in the church, the

⁵¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "propriety."

⁵² Beer 53.

⁵³ Forster, *A Room with a View* 295.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 295.

“solitude oppresse[s] her: she was accustomed to have her thoughts confirmed by others or, at all events, contradicted; it was too dreadful not to know whether she was thinking right or wrong.”⁵⁵

Social propriety *is* Lucy’s guide book, and when Lucy loses this guide, as she does in the above scene, she loses her map of what is appropriate to say, think or do. Even on the few occasions when Lucy has the liberty to make her own judgment, such as when Mr. Beebe suggests that she decide for herself whether or not Mr. Emerson is nice, she refuses to do so, because “it is so difficult.”⁵⁶ When alone, Lucy has no one to correct her statements and tell her right from wrong.

While Lucy’s reliance on proprietary guides often impedes her decision-making and aesthetic judgments, it also causes her to deny and/or refuse to recognize her true feelings.⁵⁷ According to critic John Lucas, the central issue in *A Room with a View* is “how to get Lucy to reveal the truth about herself which she will not consciously admit.”⁵⁸ Lucy certainly has feelings, but she often shies away from voicing how she truly feels for fear of saying the “wrong” thing or being criticized by others. Many times Lucy cannot even define her feelings to herself: at one point she feels a “haze of disapproval in the air” and tries pinpoint who disapproves of whom, “but as usual she blunder[s].”⁵⁹ This blundering may be caused in part by Charlotte Bartlett taking early “diplomatic advantage” of Lucy’s “craving for sympathy and love” right before Lucy makes an honest and unprompted assessment of George Emerson.

Lucy’s inability to define her feelings occurs because her exterior self does not “gaze inwards” to explore her inner self.⁶⁰ Is she afraid to do it for fear of what she might discover? But she *must* connect her inner and outer selves – the musical and the social – before she can reach

⁵⁵ Ibid., 315.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 308.

⁵⁷ Ironically, this is a choice in and of itself. Her head struggles against her heart for much of the novel because the former wants to remain within the lines of her guide book even while her heart tells her to transcend convention.

⁵⁸ Lucas 96.

⁵⁹ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 286-7.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 393.

out and connect with anyone else. She must gain self-knowledge before she can fully know others. Mr. Emerson recognizes Lucy's inability to self-connect early on and advises her to reach out to his son and,

Let yourself go. Pull out from the depths those thoughts that you do not understand, and spread them out in the sunlight and know the meaning of them. By understanding George you may learn to understand yourself. It will be good for both of you.⁶¹

Mr. Emerson believes that by connecting with others – by forging social bonds – Lucy will be able to connect with herself. But she refuses to let herself go and instead hides the meaning of her feelings from everyone, including herself. She refuses to “understand George” and thus does not “learn to understand [her]self,” effectively rejecting self-knowledge and connection. After George kisses her for the second time, Lucy resolves to “defeat herself” and “stifle the emotions of which the conventions and the world disapprove”; that is, “love felt and returned.”⁶² By suppressing these emotions she effectively retreats from the sunlight and will not learn “the meaning of [her thoughts].” What Lucy refuses to recognize is that she *does* feel love. George's voice “move[s] her deeply, and she wishe[s] to remain near him.” But life is “bewildering to practice,” and Lucy has not yet learned how to interpret and connect the disparate parts of her own life.⁶³

Lucy's denial of her feelings – externally or internally – feeds into the disconnect between how she plays the piano and how she lives her life. The Reverend Mr. Beebe observes “this illogical element” in Lucy multiple times: “If Miss Honeychurch ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting—both for us and for her.”⁶⁴ Lucy has innate instincts about what music to play in certain situations, but she cannot turn those instincts into actions relating to how

⁶¹ Ibid., 300.

⁶² Ibid., 409.

⁶³ Ibid., 393.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 303.

she lives her daily life.⁶⁵ Mr. Beebe implies in his statement that, if Lucy brings some of her musical passion and daring into her daily life, in connecting the two she will become her own person, “no longer either a rebel or a slave.”⁶⁶ The epigraph to Forster’s fourth novel, *Howards End* (1910), comes to mind in relation to Lucy’s situation: “Only connect.” This phrase appears in *Howards End* in Margaret Schlegel’s words to her husband: “Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer.”⁶⁷ This statement could easily be applied to Lucy Honeychurch by substituting “the music and the life” for “the prose and the passion.” Lucy does not seek rebellion, nor does she seek slavery to her family’s propriety. Independence is the goal. Because Lucy initially uses music to *escape* from real life, she cannot at once connect her musicality with her life. But eventually she realizes that music helps her translate life into commonplace, understandable “human actions,” and the music and the life slowly connect with one another.⁶⁸

Critic Max Saunders notes this disconnect in Lucy’s character and labels her “a divided character” whose “social self has all the limitations of the middle class,” but who “seems...to touch another stratum of existence” when she plays the piano.⁶⁹ Lucy’s social and musical selves are what Mr. Beebe believes will “one day...mingle”; he asks whether “it seem[s] reasonable that [Lucy] should play so wonderfully, and live so quietly?”⁷⁰ In a way, Lucy’s music impedes the admission and definition of her feelings because when she plays the piano, she enters a completely different world that her social self cannot directly experience. This is the “kingdom of music” and Lucy’s safe haven for much of the novel, a place she can go when she does not

⁶⁵ See below, pp. 25-34 (section IV, “Lucy at the Piano”), for discussion of Lucy’s innate musical instincts.

⁶⁶ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 302.

⁶⁷ Forster, *Howards End*, 148.

⁶⁸ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 302.

⁶⁹ Saunders 10.

⁷⁰ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 353.

want to directly face her feelings.⁷¹ Initially, music masks the events of Lucy's daily life – her musical self remains separate from her social self until the former begins to lapse into the latter, in large part due to the music she plays. In the end, both musical and social events cause her final epiphany in which she acknowledges and acts on her love for George.

III. The Muddle and its Representatives

The separation between how Lucy plays the piano and how she lives her life is aptly described by Forster's often-used term, "muddle." As Elizabeth Langland puts it in her essay "Forster and the Novel," muddle is the failure of making connections and the tendency to live in fragments.⁷² According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "muddle" means "a state of disorder or...confusion" or, "to make confused; to disorder."⁷³ In his novels, Forster uses "muddle" to express kind of a universal confusion as well as a lying to the self and others in order to conceal one's true feelings.

For Forster, muddle is a loaded term: it appears in many of his other novels in relation to confused characters and baffling situations. For example, Margaret Schlegel informs Mr. Wilcox in *Howards End* that he is "muddled, criminally muddled," and in *A Passage to India* Mr. Fielding says that "a muddle is a mystery...A mystery is only a high-sounding term for a muddle."⁷⁴ That is, no one knows how to describe a muddle, but what little is known proves that muddles are not good states of existence. In *A Passage to India*, Mr. Fielding goes on to relate the muddle to a lack of freedom:

⁷¹ Ibid., 302.

⁷² Langland 98.

⁷³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "muddle."

⁷⁴ Forster, *Howards End*, 243; Forster, *A Passage to India*, 69.

He foresaw that besides being a tragedy, there would be a muddle; already he saw several tiresome little knots, and each time his eye returned to them, they were larger. Born in freedom he was not afraid of the muddle, but he recognized its existence.⁷⁵

The statement “born in freedom” stands out here as a viable antithesis to muddle: in *A Room with a View*, Lucy is not “born in freedom” because she is a female of the middle class and thus she fears becoming muddled.⁷⁶ She expresses this in her cry, “I want not to be muddled.”⁷⁷ Lucy’s subconscious fear of the muddle ironically causes her to become muddled. Instead of approaching the “tiresome little knots” of muddle head-on, Lucy tries to elude them and ends up more tightly tied into them. Mr. Emerson notices this quality in Lucy and tries to warn her against it:

My dear, I am worried about you. It seems to me that you are in a muddle. [...] there’s nothing worse than muddle in all the world. [...] It is on my muddles that I look back with horror—on the things that I might have avoided...I used to think I could teach young people the whole of life, but I know better now, and all my teaching of George has come down to this: beware of muddle.⁷⁸

This statement reveals a lot about the muddle. According to Mr. Emerson, muddles are the most dangerous because they can be completely avoided. But Lucy does not have enough social awareness or agency to avoid getting caught in a muddle until she realizes she is in one and must get out. Mr. Emerson acknowledges that muddle does not represent “the whole of life,” but he sees that a muddle can be the worst thing “in all the world.” In order to experience “the whole of life,” therefore, one must be aware of muddle. George, because his father has taught him this, has an easier time avoiding it and deciding to face situations “without getting muddled.”⁷⁹ He is knowingly aware of the muddle and can thus actively yet calmly avoid it.

⁷⁵ Forster, *A Passage to India*, 175.

⁷⁶ And perhaps, as a woman, Lucy is more likely to become muddled in the first place. This also fits in with Lucy being somewhere in between a rebel and a slave: freedom and independence are more important than rebellion, slavery, or the muddle.

⁷⁷ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 342

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 442.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 314. Also, recalling Mr. Fielding’s statement in *A Passage to India*, George is a man and thus “born in freedom” – unlike Lucy – and so can recognize and fight against the muddle (Forster, *A Passage to India* 175).

Jeffrey Heath's essay, "Kissing and Telling: Turning Round in *A Room with a View*," illuminates Forster's muddle through developing a handful of relationships. Heath begins his essay with a comparison of "the real and the pretended," or the "spontaneous" versus the "muddled," as he puts it.⁸⁰ With these antitheses in mind Heath argues that, in Forster's novel, England represents the stuffy, muddled, repressed and propriety as exemplified in characters like Miss Bartlett, Mr. Beebe and the Vyses. Italy, on the other hand, lives, vibrant and unruly, represented by George Emerson and his father. Repressing one's true feelings – though maybe proper – denies the "real," something that Lucy is guilty of for much of the novel.⁸¹ Instead of facing the "real" – the authentic, the truth – Lucy becomes entrenched in the "pretended" – the made-up or repressed – and thus cannot face the muddle without fear.⁸²

An example of a spontaneous event that begins to show the un-muddle to Lucy is the murder that she and George witness in Florence's Piazza Signoria. As critic Ann Ardis points out, "The violent exchange [Lucy] witnesses between the two Italians...is a catalyst for change – in George Emerson if not yet in Lucy herself."⁸³ This scene is a pivotal emotional point that – as Ardis notes – does slightly different things for George and Lucy. George realizes the horror of the muddle and decides never to let himself enter it. Lucy, on the other hand, glimpses what life outside of muddle could be like as her thoughts begin to transform.

While Ardis makes a good point about the murder as a catalyst, she skips a step: music also catalyses change in Lucy. The murder is an external catalyst that Lucy realizes changes her thoughts. Music, because of its more quotidian nature for Lucy, acts internally and thus unconsciously as a catalyst for change. Lucy is not as aware of music's pivotal emotional

⁸⁰ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 462; Heath, "Kissing and Telling," 396.

⁸¹ Heath 397, 404.

⁸² Forster, *A Room with a View*, 462.

⁸³ Ardis, "Hellenism and the lure of Italy," 70.

qualities as she is of events like the murder and Mr. Emerson's final speech, but both push her toward connection, with music leading the way: Ludwig van Beethoven's Opus 111 piano sonata sparks the forward-reaching musical trajectory that Lucy embarks upon and that ultimately leads to her un-muddling.⁸⁴ On the above occasion in which Lucy ventures out into Florence alone, *Beethoven* catalyses her going out in the first place by causing her to feel restless and to want "something big."⁸⁵ Beethoven's music induces yearning for the infinite – the un-muddle – in Lucy by magnifying her reactions to Mr. Beebe's "wit" and the "suggestive twitterings of Miss Alan."⁸⁶ Beethoven leaves her wanting more than just parlor chat. Had Lucy not just played Beethoven on the piano she might not have gone out alone and witnessed the external catalyst (the murder).

Mr. Beebe notices that "Lucy never knew her desires so clearly as after music," and he "put[s] it down to too much Beethoven" that she somewhat-recklessly ventures out into Florence alone.⁸⁷ Lucy leaves the Pension Bertolini, buys photographs at a shop and then enters the Piazza Signoria where, after complaining to herself that "nothing ever happens to me," she witnesses an argument between two Italian men that leads to one stabbing and killing the other.⁸⁸ Shocked at this violent exchange, Lucy faints, only to become conscious again in George Emerson's arms. A man is stabbed and his blood has spurted onto Lucy's newly-purchased photographs, George carries Lucy in his arms, the man dies. How do these fragmented events relate to one another? As George points out, "something tremendous has happened."⁸⁹

⁸⁴ See below, pp. 27-29, for discussion of Beethoven's Opus 111 piano sonata.

⁸⁵ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 310.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 310.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 314.

This sudden, tremendous event represents a glimpse beyond the muddle. As Jeffrey Heath mentions, muddled and spontaneous are opposing terms; thus, a life in which things like the murder at the Piazza “happen” for Lucy would be an un-muddled life.⁹⁰ Perhaps an exciting life outside of propriety is a clearer existence in which – though some events are confounding – people are not muddled but rather embrace the natural immediacy of life. Seeing a man die also alerts Lucy and George to their own mortality, causing them to think about “what it might really mean ‘to live.’”⁹¹ George sees this clearly and decides that he “shall want to live.”⁹² He wants to reach into the artlessness of real life: he desires to confront this “something tremendous...without getting muddled.” Another way in which “something tremendous” comes out of these events is the mere fact that these moments stick in Lucy and George’s memories:

She had been in his arms, and he remembered it, just as he remembered the blood on the photographs that she had bought in Alinari’s shop. It was not exactly that a man had died; something had happened to the living: they had come to a situation where character tells, and where Childhood enters upon the branching paths of Youth.⁹³

Here Lucy shows a twinkling of change in her memories of the exchanges with George, but she remains muddled and unable to act on these memories and feelings for quite a while longer. She must experience more spontaneity – like the two impulsive kisses from George – before she decides to enter the real world. She must almost “muddle things away” before she can fully embrace George.⁹⁴ Beethoven’s music originally initiates Lucy’s experiences of these sudden, life-like events. Beethoven points her toward the un-muddle, and Schumann and Wagner only lead her closer.

But how does one get completely un-muddled? If “muddle” represents a general state of confusion and thus a tendency to live in fragments, in order to become un-muddled Lucy must

⁹⁰ See above, pp. 20, for Heath’s discussion of muddled and spontaneous.

⁹¹ Ardis 71.

⁹² Forster, *A Room with a View*, 315.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 437.

spread out the fragments of her life and then connect them: indifference to her fiancé, denial of her true feelings for George, complete acquiescence to anything her elders tell her to do, her tendency to escape into music, the specific music she plays, memories of Italy. Once she identifies a pattern she can step out of society's restraints and into her own person. As Mr. Emerson says to Lucy, life "is a public performance on the violin, in which you must learn the instrument as you go along...especially the function of love."⁹⁵ By mentioning music, Mr. Emerson attempts to nudge Lucy in the direction of connecting her musical and social selves, which would put her one step closer to loving George.

In the mid-nineteenth century composer and music critic Richard Wagner began using the term *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or "total work of art," to describe his operas: syntheses of music and drama in which neither has precedence over the other. This concept of the complete work of art can be applied to Forster's novel in that ultimately he wants his characters to experience the wholeness and realness of life: the anti-muddle. Structurally Germany, Italy and England represent different levels of being in Forster's novel. England stands for the repressed, proprietary Muddle. Italy represents the anti-muddle, or total work of art that Beethoven's (German) music leads us toward in Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Germany and its music represent the progress and development of musical forms from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth century.⁹⁶ The composers whose music Lucy plays have been carefully set by Forster

⁹⁵ Ibid., 442.

⁹⁶ Though the characters in *A Room with a View* only physically visit England and Italy, all of the composers whose music Lucy plays throughout the novel are either German or Austrian: Beethoven, Schumann, Gluck, Wagner and Mozart. Thus Germany represents Lucy's musical self, a place she only visits in her musical world. All three countries relevant to the novel – Italy, England, and Germany – symbolically work together to aid Lucy's development from muddled girl to free-thinking woman.

to clearly show the increasing complexity and forward-thinking notions of many nineteenth-century composers.⁹⁷

But Lucy needs more than music to *fully* rise out of the muddle. While her musical self pushes her closer to connection with her social self, George and Mr. Emerson are the social forces that shock her two selves into connecting with one another. Shock is one of the major tools that Forster uses to un-muddle his characters. As discussed above, the murder in the Piazza Signoria stuns both Lucy and George into recognizing their mortality and causes George's subsequent affirmation: "I shall want to live."⁹⁸ In this scene Lucy is also provoked into the realization that "something tremendous has happened"; though she cannot explain it at the time, it definitely jolts her thoughts.⁹⁹ Lucy is shocked a second time when George spontaneously kisses her in the field of violets. But these two instances are relatively wordless. It is not until Mr. Emerson surprises Lucy does not fully understand what these startling, spontaneous events have lead her toward until Mr. Emerson surprises her with a direct address and the novel's dénouement occurs:

You love George! [...] You love the boy body and soul, plainly, directly, as he loves you, and no other word expresses it. You won't marry the other man for his sake. [...] You're shocked, but I mean to shock you. It's the only hope at times. I can reach you no other way.¹⁰⁰

Finally Lucy begins to realize the truth about herself: she does love George, fully and completely. And Mr. Emerson shocks her on purpose; he understands that he can "reach [her] no other way." Mr. Emerson, an outside observer, reveals Lucy's own feelings to her. This is

⁹⁷ See below, pp. 25-34 (section IV, "Lucy at the Piano"), for more discussion of this trajectory. Lucy plays piano pieces of varying sophistication throughout the novel: Mozart's is simple and pretty, Beethoven's is complex and sublime, and Schumann's elicits deep emotions. She also plays a selection from a Wagnerian music drama transposed for piano, which mixes art forms and thus becomes arguably more complex than Beethoven's late sonatas.

⁹⁸ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 315.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 442.

because he “fight[s] for more than Love or Pleasure: there is Truth. Truth counts.”¹⁰¹ Later Lucy reflects that, in that single moment, Mr. Emerson “had made her see the whole of everything at once.”¹⁰² Thus, George’s father delivers the final social blow that jolts Lucy into seeing and believing the truth within herself.

In other words, “music and life...mingle” in Lucy only after two different sources lead her from opposite directions toward a connection. The music she plays – an internal force – brings her closer to realizing her love for George, and Mr. Emerson – an external influence – finally jolts her into reality.¹⁰³ With the connection of music and life, Lucy becomes a free-thinking woman who can step out of propriety, break through society’s rigid rules, and make her own decisions. From the early scene of Lucy playing Beethoven, Mr. Beebe informs us that “she loved to play on the side of Victory...of what and over what—that is more than the words of daily life can tell us.”¹⁰⁴ If Beethoven’s music can “triumph or despair as the player decides,” and Lucy “decided that [it] should triumph,” she at the same moment decides to triumph in her own life, by choosing to play for victory over the muddle.¹⁰⁵

IV. Lucy at the Piano

Lucy uses music to triumph in her own life because, in Romantic philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s words, “music is something innate and internal which needs little nourishment from without, and no experience drawn from life.”¹⁰⁶ This statement applies directly to Lucy. Though she struggles to assert herself in daily life, when she “open[s] the piano” she

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 444.

¹⁰² Ibid., 445.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 353.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 303.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 303.

¹⁰⁶ Goethe, in Kivy, “Child Mozart as an Aesthetic Symbol,” 282.

“enter[s] a more solid world...no longer either deferential or patronizing; no longer either a rebel or a slave.”¹⁰⁷ She experiences different things in this “kingdom of music” than in daily life, but she cannot yet “translate [those] visions into human words, and [her] experiences into human actions.”¹⁰⁸ While Lucy has trouble making decisions in daily life, her “initiative, expertise, and talent” on the piano directly contrast with her personal interactions. At the piano she displays an agency through music that became acceptable for women in the late nineteenth century. This agency let women express themselves musically, and music sometimes even became “an instrument for feminine rebellion.”¹⁰⁹

Lucy’s musical initiative and intuition allows her to know just what to play in certain situations. This ability to interpret social situations through music, however, does not translate into a skill at daily life. This is the “illogical element” that the Reverend Mr. Beebe notices in Lucy: she does not “live as she plays,” which causes a disconnect between her feelings and actions in life versus at the piano.¹¹⁰ While she plays passionately, she does not live so passionately, evident in her denial of having any romantic feelings for George.

The first time the Reverend Mr. Beebe sees Lucy Honeychurch, she performs Beethoven on the piano at “one of those entertainments where the upper classes entertain the lower.” Upon glancing at the program – merely labeled “Miss Honeychurch. Piano. Beethoven.” – the relatively conservative Mr. Beebe expects that Lucy will play “Adelaida, or the march of the Ruins of Athens,” two Beethoven pieces that would have been transcribed and simplified from orchestral score to piano.¹¹¹ In other words, two easy yet pleasing tunes. But, like the scene near

¹⁰⁷ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 302.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁰⁹ Burgan 76.

¹¹⁰ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 303. For further discussion of the disconnect between Lucy’s musical and social selves, see above, pp. 15-18.

¹¹¹ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 303.

the end of the novel in which she plays Wagner, even this early on Lucy’s musical sophistication and prowess surprise Mr. Beebe and her audience. The “opening bars of Opus III” startle the listeners, as they hear a “stormy first movement” that combines “drama and counterpoint...to stunning effect.”¹¹²

The Piano Sonata no. 32 in C minor, opus 111, is Beethoven’s final piano sonata, said by critic David Higdon to be the capstone of Beethoven’s natural and spiritual world.¹¹³ Something must be said for the fact that Lucy attempts – and plays quite well (“It was Mr. Beebe who started the stamping”) – the culmination of Beethoven’s numerous piano compositions.¹¹⁴ In describing Lucy’s performance, Mr. Beebe enthusiastically mentions “the roar of the opening theme” and the “hammer strokes of victory” that “herald the conclusion.”¹¹⁵ The first movement of Opus 111, labeled *Maestoso – Allegro con brio ed appassionato*, is saturated with double-dotted eighth-notes and numerous runs of sixteenth-notes, both difficult figures to play at a quick, *allegro* tempo.¹¹⁶ In addition, the chromaticism and sudden tempo and dynamic changes heighten the drama, giving this movement the “stormy” quality that Finson mentions.¹¹⁷ Overall, the first movement of this sonata is exciting and suspenseful, dominated by the main motif which

¹¹² Forster, *A Room with a View*, 303; Finson 30. “Opus III” is Beethoven’s Piano Sonata no. 32 in C minor, op. 111. See discussion of Wagner below, pp. 31-32.

¹¹³ Higdon, “Opus 3 or Opus 111,” 58.

¹¹⁴ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 303. In addition to 32 piano sonatas, Beethoven wrote five piano concertos and many bagatelles and variation sets for piano.

¹¹⁵ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 303. The “hammer strokes of victory” Mr. Beebe mentions occur in mm. 146-149



(pictured); the accents, *sforzandi* and staccato markings all suggest victory: segment from von Bülow, ed., “Sonata for the Pianoforte by L. van Beethoven. Op. 111.”)

¹¹⁶ Wallner, ed., *Beethoven: Klaviersonate, C minor, opus 111*, 3.

¹¹⁷ Finson 30. Such tempo changes include the *a tempo* to *poco ritente* back to *a tempo* that happens twice in a short span (mm. 30-32 and mm. 34-35), and the *a tempo* to *adagio* to *Tempo I* shift (mm. 55-57). Sudden dynamic changes also saturate this movement and are emphasized by the number of *sforzandi* scattered throughout (for example, the twelve *sforzandi* in a row at mm. 143-146).

gets traded among hands, octaves and keys, weaving in and out of the movement's almost perpetual motion.¹¹⁸

Beethoven's final piano sonata works well as an introduction to Lucy's musicality because of its complexity and forward-looking tendencies. Beethoven composed this sonata in 1820-1821, in the heart of his late period.¹¹⁹ Components of Beethoven's late style include greater focus on lyricism, expansion of form and increased use of chromaticism, variation and counterpoint.¹²⁰ The latter three elements appear in the Opus 111 sonata, and all of Beethoven's late-style components were quite revolutionary in the piano sonata and other musical genres in the early 1820s. In Joseph Kerman's discussions of Beethoven's late style, the author notes that in this period the composer "appears to have been reaching for a more direct and intimate mode of communication."¹²¹ Beethoven does this through the stylistic elements noted above as well as by completing his work in the genre of piano sonata with Opus 111, leaving his canon with a "wholeness and totality" represented by a "coherent narrative of creative development."¹²²

The "wholeness and totality" encompassed by Beethoven's Opus 111 sonata assures us that Lucy will one day achieve a similar completeness in her own life. But after her stunning performance she plays no more Beethoven. Critic John Lucas thinks this is because the major composers whose music Lucy plays – Beethoven, Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – "pre-figur[e] [Lucy's] decline into a probable future of middle-



The main motif first appears in mm. 29-30 in the top line of the right hand (see diagram above), and reappears multiple times throughout the first movement of Beethoven's Opus 111 piano sonata. (Score segment from von Bülow.)

¹¹⁹ Beethoven's Late Period roughly covered the years 1813-1827 (Kerman, et al., *Grove Music Online*).

¹²⁰ Kerman, et al., *Grove Music Online*.

¹²¹ Beethoven's last four piano sonatas – Opus 106, 109, 110 and 111 – were written during his late period (Kerman, et al., *Grove Music Online*).

¹²² Kerman, et al., *Grove Music Online*.

class sterility.”¹²³ The “decline” Lucas mentions is a going back in time and musical style, and thus a falling back into the convention and repression that Lucy’s class, sex and society support. However, I argue that Lucy does not follow a decline at all. In his essay Lucas gets tripped up by Schumann, whom he thinks “pre-figur[es]” the decline mentioned above.¹²⁴ But, in *A Room with a View*, Schumann actually links Lucy’s playing of Beethoven to that of Wagner, and thus continues the forward-reaching trajectory that begins with Beethoven’s Opus 111 piano sonata.

After the Beethoven scene, Lucy’s innate musical sense surfaces again in London while Lucy visits her fiancé, Cecil Vyse, and his mother. At an evening entertainment, Lucy plays a piece by Schumann.¹²⁵ When she finishes, Cecil calls for Beethoven. But Lucy refuses:

She shook her head and played Schumann again. The melody rose, unprofitably magical. It broke; it was resumed broken, not marching once from the cradle to the grave. The sadness of the incomplete—the sadness that is often Life, but should never be Art—throbbed in its disjected phrases, and made the nerves of the audience throb...¹²⁶

Lucy refuses to play Beethoven at the Vyses because Schumann’s beautiful, seemingly simple music adequately critiques the stuffy snobbishness and superfluity of London society (notice the emphasis on Schumann’s “melody” rather than the complex runs of Beethoven). Lucy cannot play Beethoven at this point because she has moved beyond Beethoven to Schumann, a composer who “sought artistic progress” and thus took Beethoven’s piano music and pushed through the “fixed-form sonata...to free-form pieces made from a patchwork of smaller, often undeveloped episodes.”¹²⁷ It is this kind of piece that merely sounds beautiful to the untrained ear but actually carries much inner complexity. Lucy’s playing of Schumann thus criticizes and comments on the stuffiness of the Vyses’ society, though at this point she may be unconscious of

¹²³ Lucas 95.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 95.

¹²⁵ It is hard to know what piece Forster has in mind here. Schumann wrote an inordinate amount of piano compositions, ranging from fantasy-pieces to character pieces to variation sets to romances.

¹²⁶ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 377.

¹²⁷ Finson 97.

it. To Cecil, Schumann's music sounds pretty but boring; in actuality, it is quite complex and process-oriented.

Schumann was a forward-reaching figure in the nineteenth century. He founded the *Neue Leipziger Zeitschrift für Musik* (*New Leipzig Journal for Music*) in the 1830s for the following reasons: in order to campaign for a “new, poetic future”; to help increase the public's musical taste; to canonize composers such as Schubert, Mozart and Beethoven; and, following Beethoven, to “reemphasize[] the notion that music reflected ideas in the spiritual realm.”¹²⁸ In this way, Lucy reaches forward from Beethoven to Schumann's avant-garde, represented by the latter's innovative piano music and musical criticism. At the end of the Schumann evening discussed above, Cecil indirectly realizes Lucy's shift and finally recognizes her musical sense after she has played the Schumann piece twice: “The style of her! How she kept to Schumann when, like an idiot, I wanted Beethoven. Schumann was right for this evening.”¹²⁹ Cecil does not understand, however, Lucy's use of Schumann to critique his society. In this scene Lucy's musical self actually pokes fun at the untrained musical ears and false sophistication of Cecil and his company. In reality, Lucy uses Schumann's “superior language of music” – played twice for emphasis – to continue pushing for the future and the un-muddle.¹³⁰

In addition to commenting on the Vyses' snobbishness, Schumann's music serves another purpose in this scene. The “sadness of the incomplete” in the piece Lucy plays represents Lucy's as-yet-unknown incomplete life – that is, her life without George Emerson.¹³¹ Something does not fit with Lucy and Cecil's coupling, and thus something does not quite fit when Lucy

¹²⁸ Daverio and Sams, *Grove Music Online*; Finson 91, 93.

¹²⁹ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 377.

¹³⁰ Finson 93. Lucy's playing of the Schumann piece twice is another way of poking fun at the Vyses: often, the more one listens to a complex piece of music, the easier it becomes to understand. Here, however, Cecil already thinks he knows everything about the music Lucy plays, and thus completely misinterprets her musical choice.

¹³¹ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 377.

performs at the Vyses. Cecil tries to interrupt Schumann with Beethoven, but Lucy cannot break out of Schumann because her life *is* missing something: it is “incomplete” and she must follow it through to completeness.¹³² Schumann’s broken melody represents the places where George has not yet penetrated and Cecil never can: the voids of Lucy’s soul. Thus, rather than representing Lucas’ “decline into middle-class sterility,” Schumann’s complex expression of the “incomplete” points forward: Lucy’s life *will* be completed at some point, but only *if* she steps out of the music and makes the connections herself.¹³³

The fragments of Lucy’s life begin to join when she moves from playing Schumann’s music to playing music by Wagner. Cecil again unknowingly instigates the event when he requests Wagner one evening after Lucy plays a short piece by Gluck. Cecil pushes Lucy forward, unintentionally. Lucy initially refuses to play Wagner, but when she sees George in the room a light goes on in a heretofore-locked chamber of her mind:

There George was. He had crept in without interrupting her. ‘Oh, I had no idea!’ she exclaimed, getting very red; and then, without a word of greeting, she reopened the piano. Cecil should have the *Parsifal*, and anything else that he liked. [...] She played a few bars of the Flower Maidens’ song very badly and then she stopped.¹³⁴

This is, arguably, the moment that Lucy realizes she loves George, the moment the music and the life finally begin to mingle. Lucy steps outside of her comfort zone to play something Cecil has requested: the seductive Flower Maidens’ song from Richard Wagner’s music drama, *Parsifal*, in which “the last of Wagner’s innocent heroes” has lessons in suffering and compassion that ultimately lead to his enlightenment.¹³⁵ Lucy concedes to Cecil’s request – something that she refused when he requested Beethoven after Schumann – but she makes mistakes and soon stops playing. This happens for two reasons. First, when Lucy sees George, who “had crept in without

¹³² Ibid., 377.

¹³³ Lucas 95.

¹³⁴ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 403.

¹³⁵ Sessa, *Richard Wagner and the English*, 119.

interrupting” her previous piece, she immediately reverses her refusal and decides to please Cecil. Second, Lucy stops playing because when she decides to play *Parsifal* for Cecil she *realizes* that she really plays it for George – her true feelings hit her like a brick wall, and after she “play[s] a few bars of the Flower Maidens’ song very badly” she stops. Here, Lucy’s social self does not “know what to do nor even what she [wants] to do,” even as her musical self begins to recognize the truth.¹³⁶ Coming just before Lucy breaks off her engagement with Cecil, this attempt at Wagner leads to a realization that Lucy has almost connected the fragments in her life – she does not need music as much anymore to help express and/or realize her feelings. Her musicality intensifies during her battle against fragmentation and the muddle as Beethoven, Schumann and Wagner drive her forward toward connection.¹³⁷

Once Lucy gets to Wagner she has almost come out of the muddle. Forster notes in an essay that, due to Wagner’s leitmotiv system, “I always knew where I was; he never let the fancy roam.”¹³⁸ So when Lucy plays the excerpt from *Parsifal*, she abruptly stops when the music finally helps her locate her love for George. This shift succeeds because now Lucy is prepared to move from Schumann to Wagner. The first time Cecil requested a music shift she arguably knew, too, and therefore refused because she could not backtrack to Beethoven once she reached Schumann. If the murder in the Piazza is the moment Lucy *glimpses* un-muddled life, in the *Parsifal* moment she truly sees it.

¹³⁶ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 403.

¹³⁷ One more musical episode in the novel is worth noting for the purpose of this essay. Shortly after Lucy breaks off her engagement with Cecil, Mr. Beebe finds her in the drawing-room playing a Mozart piano sonata. Lucy’s return to the Classical here implies that she considers music her home base, a place she will always occupy, both for her own self-expression and in order to function in society. It is significant here that when Mr. Beebe comments, “how delicate those Sonatas are!”, Lucy immediately “passes into Schumann” (Forster, *A Room with a View*, 424). Lucy revisits Schumann here as a critique of the Vyse’s society that she might have married into. “No more of that,” her playing seems to say. Mr. Beebe leaves and returns, only to hear, “to his relief and surprise, the tinkling of a Mozart Sonata” (Forster, *A Room with a View*, 427). Lucy has returned to neutral, occupying a comfortable musical space, not revolutionary like Wagner but certainly not backwards like the Vyses.

¹³⁸ Forster, “Not Listening to Music,” 122-3.

Forster, like many Romantic writers and philosophers, believed in music's power to transform. Thus he gives Beethoven a central role in sparking Lucy's development. By introducing Lucy's musicality through Beethoven, Forster sets up a comparison between his heroine and the composer, suggesting that Lucy, by playing Beethoven's final piano sonata, also reaches toward the "infinite realm of the spirit" that Hoffmann mentions.¹³⁹ In this novel, Forster also makes a similar comparison between himself and Beethoven, implying that he, as an author, strives to connect fragments and reach toward the infinite.

But in his comparison of Beethoven and Lucy, Forster adds a twist: Lucy only plays the first of the two movements that make up Opus 111. By not completing the entire work Lucy does not reach the "wholeness and totality" that Opus 111 acts as the symbol for in its genre. She also reaches back to earlier times because, according to Kerman, the first movement, "recall[s] in a spiritualized way all the 'C minor' gestures of the early Vienna years"; that is, early moments in Beethoven's career.¹⁴⁰ By sticking to the first movement which, though flashy, does not necessarily reach transcendence, Lucy's musical self indicates that she cannot yet reach all the way forward to Wagner and the un-muddle.

However, her unfinished performance of the sonata implies that, by the end of the novel, Lucy may go back and complete it, at least figuratively if not literally. Here Forster indicates that Lucy reaches for transcendence of the muddle but does not yet know how to attain it. We never experience the second movement of Opus 111 but, according to Kerman, its "variations... create a visionary aura that had never been known in music before."¹⁴¹ The second movement of Opus 111 is an *arietta*, played *adagio molto semplice e cantabile*.¹⁴² The slow tempo, coupled with

¹³⁹ Hoffmann, in Finson, 7.

¹⁴⁰ Kerman, et al., *Grove Music Online*.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Wallner 11.

trills, suspensions and a large range, lend it the “visionary aura” that Kerman mentions.¹⁴³ This compares to the transcendence out of muddle, a reaching forward and into a future reality, while the variations emphasize the changes that happen in Lucy. When she plays the first movement of Opus 111 in only the third chapter of the novel, Lucy is certainly not yet ready to create a “visionary aura”; she cannot fathom the anti-muddle and wholeness of person that will come in her future as something she has never known before.

If Beethoven helps Lucy only *reach* toward the “infinite realm of the spirit,” it is Richard Wagner who shocks her into transcendence and the un-muddle.¹⁴⁴ Wagner himself claimed that Beethoven’s music led to his ideas for the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.¹⁴⁵ This term means “total work of art” in German, and it is how Wagner described his operas: syntheses of music and drama in which neither art form has precedence over the other.¹⁴⁶ This concept of the complete work of art applies to Forster’s novel in that the ultimate goal for his characters is to experience the wholeness and realness of life: in Mr. Beebe’s words, getting “music and life” to “mingle.”¹⁴⁷ Forster orchestrates this mingling through one of Wagner’s favorite themes to employ in his music dramas: redemption through love, which we see paralleled in George’s love for Lucy, her realization of which ultimately permits her divided self to join.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ There are continual trills in mm. 106-117 and mm. 160-171. The overall range spans more than three octaves, as



exemplified in mm. 119 (pictured): Note that the right hand should be played one octave higher than written. (Score segment from von Bülow).

¹⁴⁴ Hoffmann, in Finson, 7.

¹⁴⁵ Kerman, et al., *Grove Music Online*.

¹⁴⁶ Hence Wagner called them “music dramas” instead of operas. The notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* also recalls “only connect,” the epigraph to Forster’s *Howards End*, discussed above, pp. 17 and below, pp. 36.

¹⁴⁷ Forster, *A Room with a View*, 353.

¹⁴⁸ Finson 160.

Conclusion

For Forster, little changes in the musical rhetoric within his texts can mean victory or disaster. By positioning Wagner's *Parsifal* as some of the final music that Lucy plays in *A Room with a View*, Forster asserts music's power over his heroine and his text as a whole. Wagner helps combine the fragments of Lucy's life, which lie separate in her musical and social selves for much of the novel. Once these two selves fuse, Lucy can live a whole, un-muddled life. The music Lucy plays throughout *A Room with a View* pushes her out of repression and into independence. Beethoven, Schumann and Wagner represent the vein of classical instrumental music in the nineteenth century that reached forward toward the spiritual and infinite, raising instrumental music to a higher level.

Exploring Forster's use of music in his novels is imperative to understanding his approach to fiction-writing and character development in general. Nineteenth-century music – especially that of Beethoven and Wagner, the composers book-ending *A Room with a View* – illuminates an important aspect of Forster's stylistic and thematic heritage. He occupies a liminal space in the early twentieth century between Romantic/Victorian and Modernist notions, inheriting his themes from Romantic music and his stylistic realism from authors across the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁹ With these combined, Forster writes in a style of “romantic realism” that looks forward to the twentieth century's preoccupation with fragmentation and connection.¹⁵⁰ For Forster, music is the catalyst for forming connections from the fragments of society. He uses music to chart Lucy's development because he saw music as the most ordered of all things in the universe, and this ordered art form helps Lucy order her life. As an author, Forster strives to connect literary traditions, and so his heroine, Lucy Honeychurch, strives to connect her music

¹⁴⁹ See above, pp. 3-4, for discussion of Forster's thematic and stylistic heritage.

¹⁵⁰ Medalie, *E.M. Forster's Modernism*, 64.

with her life. Forster's main dealing with connection in *A Room with a View* is through Lucy connecting parts of her internal self – the musical and the social – in order to live a whole life. Through connecting her personal fragments Lucy does eventually connect with another human, George Emerson.

Forster's fiction stands out in large part because of its "compelling strength and emotion."¹⁵¹ These qualities drive much of *A Room with a View*'s narrative, as Forster uses music in this novel to draw out emotion and explore ideas of connection before they become fully manifest in the novel's more-noted sister, *Howards End* (1910). The epigraph to *Howards End* – Forster's fourth novel – is "only connect." This later novel assumes internally connected individual characters – since Forster already worked that out in Lucy's character – and instead focuses on connections *between* characters. Sisters Helen and Margaret Schlegel yearn for connection with other people. Some of these connections break – Margaret connects with Mrs. Wilcox only to see the latter die – and others are somewhat futile – Tibby Schlegel fails to connect with anyone, and Margaret must literally shake Mr. Wilcox into connecting with her. Despite these incomplete connections, however, Margaret and Helen share an eternal filial connection and a similar goal of wanting to reach out and connect with others in order to make the world around them better. In *Howards End*, connection occurs between people, but "only connect" also applies to *A Room with a View* in Lucy's individual connection of her musical and social selves. Thus, Forster uses Lucy's music in *A Room with a View* to explore and develop this theme. In *Howards End*, Forster takes what he does with Lucy's character and expands it out to other people and the world as a whole, again using Beethoven – this time the Symphony no. 5 in C minor, op. 67 – to preface and point us toward fragmentation and connection.

¹⁵¹ Masterman, in Medalie, *E.M. Forster's Modernism*, 70.

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