

# Music, Philosophy, and Religion: Harmonious Themes in Three Novels by E. M. Forster

音楽・哲学・宗教 — フォースター小説3作品における静謐なる歓喜 —

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## Keyword

- ① *The Longest Journey* (小説『ロンゲスト・ジャーニー』)
- ② *Maurice* (小説『モーリス』)
- ③ *Arctic Summer* (小説『アークティック・サマー』)
- ④ Philosophy, God, and Faith (哲学, 神, 信仰)
- ⑤ Opera, Symphony, and Folksong (オペラ, 交響曲, 民謡歌)

## Abstract

This paper examines three novels by E. M. Forster—*The Longest Journey*, *Maurice*, and *Arctic Summer*—and interprets the musical and philosophical motifs that structure the novels. In *The Longest Journey*, Wagnerian operas (*Tristan und Isolde* and *Das Rheingold*) and the philosophy of Schopenhauer present a somber vision of life. In *Maurice*, Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony and the dialogues of Plato imply homosexual themes. In *Arctic Summer*, English folksongs about the birth of Christ are suggested as a potentially unifying thread in all of Forster's works.

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## Introduction

The twentieth-century British writer E. M. Forster (Edward Morgan Forster, 1879-1970) wrote seven novels. The five novels published during his lifetime were *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howards End* (1910), and *A Passage to India* (1924). Two other novels were published posthumously: *Maurice* (1971), which was written in 1913-1914 and revised intermittently over many decades, and the unfinished *Arctic Summer* (1980) which Forster began in 1911 and then abandoned and returned to sporadically almost until his death. In addition to his novels and his subsequent copious body of short fiction, social commentary, and literary criticism, most notably *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Forster also collaborated on the libretto of the opera *Billy Budd* (1951/1960), an adaptation of the Herman Melville novel of the same title. On this libretto, Forster worked with British composer Benjamin Britten (Edward Benjamin Britten, 1913-1976) and Eric Crozier (1914-1994), a British theatrical director and opera librettist long associated with Britten. As in the opera *Billy Budd*, Forster's own novels are often organized by musical structures that symbolically evoke philosophical and religious themes, and it is these interests that we wish to consider.

This paper examines three of Forster's novels: his second novel, *The Longest Journey*, together with *Maurice* and *Arctic Summer*, both of which were published posthumously. These three works were chosen for their similar storylines involving triangular relationships among the male characters and for their potential to be understood in terms of direct and indirect influences of Western classical music, philosophy, and religion. *The Longest Journey*, for example, is thematically structured by the operas of German composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and the ideas of German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). *Maurice*, set at Cambridge around the time of Forster's own undergraduate

years there from 1897 to 1901, shows the influences of Russian composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) and Greek philosopher Plato (5th to 4th century B.C.E.). The incomplete *Arctic Summer* poses some tantalizing questions about its influences from music and philosophy which will be considered later. Moreover, the thematic connections of these three novels to Forster's work on the opera *Billy Budd* are significant and will be considered in the final section of this paper. Overall, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the musical, philosophical, and religious elements in each of these three novels and in the libretto of *Billy Budd* in order to illuminate Forster's use of Western classical music, Greek and German philosophy, and religious practice within a broadly Christian context.

### 1. "Will" and "Desire" in *The Longest Journey*

Forster's second published novel, *The Longest Journey* (1907) is a complex and contradictory work that seems to defy classification. Forster scholar Elizabeth Heine states that this work is Forster's "least known, most difficult, most personal novel, rich and adventurous in its complexity of symbolism and subtlety of structure, profound in the simplicity of its approach to the philosophical ideas of turn-of-the-century Cambridge" (Heine, "Introduction," *The Longest Journey* vii). In this novel, a triangular relationship of three male characters parallels a thematic trinity of music, philosophy, and religion. The first part of the novel is set at Cambridge. In ways similar to *Maurice* and *Arctic Summer*, in *The Longest Journey* Forster represents the efforts of his male characters to develop their potential, including their latent or undiscovered identities, as they pass from adolescence into early adulthood and beyond. In this struggle, as Heine observes, "Forster borrows the patterns of Greek drama, Christian religion, and Wagnerian myth" (Heine, vii). Moreover, Forster borrows indirectly from Schopenhauer by way of Wagnerian music, in order to suggest the emotional struggles of one of

the main characters, Rickie Elliot, to resist “the dreariest and the longest journey” (*Longest Journey*, 127). The line comes from the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), whose *Epipsychidion* (1821) criticizes conventional morality, a poem which, some generations later, the Cambridge undergraduate Rickie is re-reading and pondering. The poem suggests that “the code of modern morals” (cited in *Longest Journey* 126) requires each person to select just one life partner, and forsaking all others, then together make “the longest journey,” figuratively speaking, through life.

As Rickie contemplates an escape from such a life sentence – that is, the one which, somewhat later in the novel, he is serving in his failing marriage to Agnes – Rickie reflects that “music has wings” (*Longest Journey* 141). While considering whether to end his own “longest journey” with Agnes and, so to speak, fly away (as the highly unconventional Shelley did himself from his first marriage), Rickie thinks of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* (1859/1865), an opera that dramatizes the medieval tale of doomed romance for the titular characters, and a work which Shelley, had he lived to old age, might well have appreciated. Rickie intends to break “the code of modern morals” himself – though in an ironic mimicry of Tristan and Isolde who betray King Mark, for whom Isolde was intended, and who choose instead to live and die for their own mutual passion. Paradoxically, Rickie wishes to separate himself from Agnes by ending their marriage which had begun with mutual passion but which subsequently was shaken by the loss of a child, followed by a cooling of their original love, and then complicated by Agnes’s efforts to separate Rickie from his recently-discovered half-brother Stephen Wonham. Rickie seeks to end his “longest journey” with Agnes in order to pursue a life with his working-class half-sibling Stephen, with whom he is related through their common mother. (So much for conventionality.)

Rickie does all this through the force of his own will, by acting upon a

spontaneous desire to free himself from Agnes and all of the emotional baggage that they have accumulated in their years together. In following his “will,” Rickie is carried along by the flow of Wagnerian music which serves almost like a soundtrack for his personal journey of self-renewal, one in which his “will” takes him where he should ideally go. (Forster, being a supreme ironist, has Rickie die before the novel ends.)

As if the outline of the plot were not already sufficiently dark (or operatic), the grim philosophy of Schopenhauer casts its shadow over much of *The Longest Journey* and the interaction of its characters. Some background, however, is needed to explain Schopenhauer’s influence in this novel. According to Janaway, “Schopenhauer’s view is that music is a ‘copy of the will itself’” (Janaway 84). Indeed, the “will” to compose music is the way in which many musicians reveal their thoughts and emotions. According to Janaway, “Wagner and Nietzsche seem to have been the most deeply affected” by Schopenhauer, and “Wagner clearly felt that Schopenhauer’s doctrine crystallized some of his own insights” (Janaway 121); moreover, Wagner “comes closest to Schopenhauer’s actual philosophy in his operas when the characters Tristan and Isolde express their deep longing to cease existing as individuals” (Janaway 121). *The Longest Journey*, and in Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* and the “Prelude” to *Das Rheingold* (1869) appear to support the philosophical ideas of Schopenhauer’s “will.” Added to this are the somber predictions about young Rickie’s future, including unhappy marriage, made by the philosophical Cambridge undergraduate Ansell Stewart who is Rickie’s closest “Cambridge brother.”

In *The Longest Journey*, particularly in chapters 7 and 8, the philosophy of Schopenhauer is represented by the Cambridge undergraduate Ansell Stewart, and through him the ideas of two sides of the world, “will” and “representation,” dominate the course of the narrative. In *The World as Will and Representation*

(1818/1859), cited in Stokes 249, Schopenhauer argues that if “one looks deeply into oneself one can discover not only one’s own inner nature but also that of the whole universe” (Stokes 249). Discovering this aspect of the individual self as a microcosm of all creation, i.e., becoming aware of “not only one’s own inner nature but also of the whole universe” allows Rickie to see and comprehend the world in otherwise contradictory ways. Truth is not always beautiful, nor is it easy to accept. For Rickie, even accepting the truth that he has a half-brother, Stephen Wonham, born of the same mother as he himself was, is a difficult emotional balancing act. Rickie, however, gradually accepts Stephen as his brother and develops the “will” and “desire” to live with him. There may be an undercurrent of homosexual love here, though nothing of the kind is ever overtly expressed. But significantly, Stephen remained Forster’s personal favorite, “the only character who exists for me outside his book” (Forster, “Appendix B: Memoirs” 305).

Will and desire are closely related issues in most novels, as they often are in life. The term “will” which dominated much of nineteenth century philosophy was explored and defined initially by Schopenhauer. As noted by Terry Eagleton in *The Meaning of Life*, the influence of Schopenhauer upon Nietzsche was significant, particularly Nietzsche’s early writing. Eagleton extends the thread of intellectual debt by observing, “What Schopenhauer names the Will, Freud re-baptizes as Desire” (Eagleton 50).

In the three novels considered here, Forster’s subliminal “desire” to explore the theme of homosexual love can subtly be detected. Heine explains Forster’s desire to represent homosexual love in terms of Freudian psychology: “the absent, unloving fathers and the ambivalent, over-protective mothers of both Rickie Elliot and Forster fit those of the Freudian stereotype of the homosexual so well that it can easily be forgotten that Forster himself learned of Freud’s emphasis on early childhood development long after he wrote *The Longest Journey*, even after he

first wrote *Maurice* in 1913-14” (Heine, “Introduction,” *The Longest Journey* xxiv). Not long after publishing *The Longest Journey*, Forster explored his own desire toward homosexual love more freely in *Maurice*, about which he wrote in the “Terminal Note” at the end of the novel, “A happy ending was imperative” (*Maurice* 218).

## 2. The Light and Power Within *Maurice*

It is important, however, to distinguish Forster’s characters from the author himself. Forster makes it clear, for example, that his characters are not idealized versions of himself or literary alter-egos; instead they are often deliberately made different from their creator. In “Notes on the three men” [sic] included in *Maurice*, Forster explains how he conceived his titular protagonist, Maurice Hall: “In Maurice I tried to create a character who was completely unlike myself or what I supposed myself to be: someone handsome, healthy, bodily attractive, mentally torpid, not a bad business man and rather a snob” (218). This description of Maurice is similar to the portrait of Lance March in *Arctic Summer*, which Forster started writing in 1911 – that is, just a few years before composing *Maurice*: “He [Lance] had so many assets. He was large handsome strong, clean of body, kind of heart, with a good brain and a powerful will, both of which he kept in the background. Who wants more? Have we not here the perfect public-school man?” (*Arctic Summer* 53). In an authorial choice that seems almost ruthless, however, Forster suddenly kills off the ideal Cambridge man Lance shortly after he is sent down from Cambridge for a heterosexual transgression at the end of *Arctic Summer*. With the character Maurice, however, Forster may seem to have resurrected Lance, even though Maurice has to suffer for being different from most of his contemporaries because of his unconventional sexuality which, of course, at the time was officially outlawed.

The sorrows of young Maurice are reflected in two main interests: the recent concert music of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6, Op. 74, "*Pathétique*" (1893), and the lives and ideas of the Greek philosophers of classical antiquity. Chapter 32 of *Maurice* concerns the relationship between Tchaikovsky and his nephew, known familiarly as "Bob." Maurice's Cambridge friend Risley explains that "Tchaikovsky had fallen in love with his own nephew, and dedicated his masterpiece to him" (*Maurice* 141), and Maurice replies, "Queer things you know" (141). Maurice, or Forster, may be using the word "queer" with some irony here, as in the time in which the novel is set, the late 1890s, the older meaning of "queer" as "odd" or "eccentric" was already giving way to a pejorative sense of sexual deviance, particularly in regard to homosexuality. While "queer" gained a more ameliorative sense in the 1980s with the rise of "Queer Studies" along with "Gay Pride," the word carried negative connotations for much of the twentieth century, and may still do so in certain contexts. Later in the novel, Maurice finds a book on the life of Tchaikovsky in the library and describes it as "the one literary work that had ever helped him" (*Maurice* 141). Similarly, when Plato's *Symposium* – with its references to love, including love between men – is introduced to Maurice by Clive Durham, his Cambridge brother and sexually intimate friend, Maurice initially feels "free" as if the "breath of liberty touched him" (*Maurice* 50).

Maurice expects his covert two-year homosexual relationship with Clive to continue forever. As Plato mentions "love between men" (or more specifically a common practice of love between well-born older men and younger males), so consequently does Maurice want to continue a homosexual way of life together with Clive. Such a desire on Maurice's part may be reflected in *Symposium* when Socrates says to Aristodemus: "With the two of us going on the way together, we shall deliberate on what we shall say. Well, let us go" (Plato 235). To Maurice's



chagrin, however, after Clive recovers from a serious illness, he tells Maurice, “I have become normal – like other men” (*Maurice* 112), and thereupon Clive ends his intimate relationship with Maurice, eventually entering into the conventional life of a married man. Maurice is understandably left desolate by Clive’s rejection, as expressed paradoxically by a passage in *Symposium* in which Apollodorus reflects on the influence of Socrates: “I was more miserable than anyone in the world, for I believed that everything was preferable to philosophy” (Plato 233). By ironic contrast, Maurice has studied Plato but grows more miserable from learning that certain homosexual relationships were acceptable among well-born Greeks of classical antiquity, while he himself has been deserted by the very person, Clive, who introduced him to the world of *Symposium* in which such practices were permitted.

Indeed, nearly all of Clive’s influences over Maurice, which initially seem liberating, prove to be detrimental. The highly emotional and dramatic Romantic concert music of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony *Pathétique* is a work which the fellow college undergraduate Risley – risibly, as it were – describes jokingly as the “Pathetic” symphony. The joke deflates Maurice’s high emotions and self-dramatizing, even as it reminds readers along with Maurice that Tchaikovsky’s infatuation with his nephew, to whom the work was dedicated, eventually disgraced the composer socially and drove him to suicide. Under the influence of Clive, Maurice also learns of the philosophical and social traditions of Plato’s *Symposium*, and, moreover, he loses his Christian faith. For Maurice, however, such grand music and deep philosophy, along with a release from conventional Christianity, give him no consolation after Clive’s “desertion”; instead Maurice feels a pervasive misery which leads him to “contemplate suicide” because “there was nothing to deter him” (*Maurice* 121). As the narrator of the novel describes Maurice’s situation:

He had no initial fear of death, and no sense of a world beyond it, nor did he mind disgracing his family. He knew that loneliness was poisoning him, so that he grew viler as well as more unhappy. Under these circumstances might he not cease? He began to compare ways and means, and would have shot himself but for an unexpected event. This event was the illness and death of his grandfather, which induced a new state of mind. (*Maurice* 121)

The central figure of this “unexpected event” is Maurice’s maternal grandfather, the aptly named Mr. Grace, who believes that “God lives inside the sun”; that “sunspots reveal God to men”; and that “the incarnation was a sort of sunspot” (*Maurice* 122). After Maurice tells his dying grandfather, “Since Cambridge I believe in nothing – except in a sort of darkness” (123), Mr. Grace utters from his deathbed “the light within” three times along with the words “One ought to be good–kind–brave” (124).

Upon hearing these simple but moving pronouncements – modest echoes of the words of Christ from the cross that are delivered by his own grandfather during the “unexpected event” of his passing – Maurice decides to change himself to be a good man. As the narrator observes:

He set himself to acquire new habits, and in particular those minor arts of life that he had neglected when with Clive. Punctuality, courtesy, patriotism, chivalry even – here were a few. He practiced a severe self-discipline. It was necessary not only to acquire the art, but to know when to apply it, and gently to modify his behaviour. (*Maurice* 125)

Mr. Grace’s dying words so completely change Maurice’s way of seeing the world that he gains the strength of will and courage to consult a doctor about his homosexual identity, though in the end Maurice is unable to change his fundamental nature.

As a closeted gay man himself, Forster understandably felt it impossible to publish *Maurice* during his lifetime for fear of tarnishing his literary reputation and possibly even falling prey to the same harsh Victorian laws against “gross indecency” which had ensnared the Anglo-Irish writer Oscar Wilde when Forster was in his late teens. In 1895, the British press remorselessly covered the sensational trial of Oscar Wilde for the “crime” of homosexual acts, followed by Wilde’s subsequent punishment of a two-year sentence to hard prison labor from 1895 to 1897. While not always enforced consistently, these draconian British laws against “gross indecency” were not formally rescinded until 1967, near the end of Forster’s long life. Consequently, during the many decades of his lifetime, Forster and hundreds of thousands of other gay British men had had to live their lives deceptively and in constant fear.

Significantly, in *Maurice* there is a reference to Wilde in a conversation between Maurice and Dr. Barry. Maurice tells the doctor, “I’m an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort,” but Dr. Barry uncritically dismisses Maurice’s confession as “Rubbish, rubbish!” (*Maurice* 139). Possibly so as not to turn the novel *Maurice* (and his own reputation) into “rubbish,” Forster would not permit the work “to face the critics or the public” (“Terminal note,” *Maurice* 217), but instead left the manuscript unpublished during his lifetime in order to give the work “a happy ending” (218) of a posthumously historical kind. In another significant moment in the novel, Clive’s wife Anne asks Maurice, “Are you a disciple of Nietzsche?” (147). Instead of producing another “birth of tragedy,” in composing *Maurice*, Forster created “tragic happiness” for himself and for his future readers. Indeed, the fact that *Maurice* ends relatively happily might explain why Forster never finished *Arctic Summer*, which is considered next.

### 3. *Arctic Summer* as a Puzzling Art

Readers familiar with Forster's more well-known works may wonder whether in *Arctic Summer* they are reading the six finished novels all together in one place. It is not entirely speculative to suggest that Forster might have used the novel *Arctic Summer*, while it evolved over several decades, as a repository of distilled wisdom from his already published novels, with the intention of recycling the material in anticipated future works. Another theory, however, holds that by about 1914, Forster was running out of novelistic steam after composing six novels and publishing four of them in only nine years. According to Anita Desai in the "Foreword" to the 2003 edition (viii) of *Arctic Summer*, Forster considered *Arctic Summer* "awful," and in 1911 he put it aside and left for India, where his experiences would culminate, after a long period of gestation, in the publication of *A Passage to India* in 1924. Afterwards, Forster published no further novels during his lifetime but turned instead to producing what became a large body of short stories and essays on literature and culture, as well as, much later, an adaptation, noted earlier, of Herman Melville's novel *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1924) for the libretto of Benjamin Britten's 1951 opera by the title shortened to *Billy Budd*. Nevertheless, as this paper argues, *Arctic Summer* may embody much to be found in Forster's published works. As Desai notes, "Yet Forster never gave up on *Arctic Summer*" despite all his reservations about the work. ("Foreword," *Arctic Summer* x).

Forster began writing *Arctic Summer* in 1911, and after initially abandoning it soon afterward, he worked on it intermittently – in his words, "giving up and returning" to it – over the rest of his life for nearly six decades. Because the incomplete novel was not published until 1980, there are few clues as to what Forster intended in writing it, as well as few established explanations of why he did not finish it, and consequently little is known about why it languished for so

long. *Arctic Summer* contains some scenes involving classical music, much like those in Forster's published novels, though in *Arctic Summer* only two characters sing.

It remains a puzzle as to why Forster left the novel unfinished. A comparison of the characters may offer some insights. So, too, might a "thought experiment," as it were, imagining what Forster might have done with *Arctic Summer* had he lived under less inhibiting conditions. Would he have used references to more musical pieces to lead the characters and the plot to a different ending? Such questions are certainly provocative but may still prove inconclusive.

In *Arctic Summer*, two young and well-born Englishmen, Clesant March and Martin Whitby, meet by chance while traveling in northern Italy. In a dramatic scene at a railway station, Martin slips and nearly falls under a moving railway coach, but Clesant instinctively rushes to save him. Curiously, Clesant accepts Martin's heartfelt thanks rather ungraciously, a mystery that is gradually revealed to be a matter of social class: Martin and his party – his wife Venetia and his mother-in-law Lady Borlase – represent the British progressive and liberal upper-middle class which has little regard for the old British landed gentry, of which Clesant, as they learn later, is a proud member. In fact, it is Clesant's connection to the chivalric tradition that has brought him to northern Italy, where he is searching for his ancestral roots from the Renaissance. By coincidence, both Clesant and all of Martin's party are bound for Milan. From there, Clesant plans to visit a castle, probably Malpaga near Bergamo, but called "Tramonta" in the novel, where he hopes to view his possible ancestors depicted in the frescoes inside the castle.

As a way to thank Clesant for saving his life, Martin promises to use his influence to get Clesant "a permesso," that is, permission to go into Tramonta because of a "feeling that he owed the man some civility" (13). Unfortunately, relations deteriorate further between Martin and the increasingly petulant Clesant,

who by now clearly resents the Whitbys and their progressive ideas which are so opposed to the values of his much older, more conservative social class.

Eventually the two young men part ways. Martin forgets to deliver the *permiso* to Clesant, who in any case fails to visit the castle at Tramonta. Martin and his party, however, do visit Tramonta, where Martin thinks that “the castle belonged to him [Clesant] and needed his interpretation” (33) by viewing a fresco that may depict one of Clesant’s chivalric ancestors. Martin sees in a young warrior with the baton, an image that could be Clesant himself because of the spirit and the expression. Even though Martin’s wife Venetia and his mother-in-law Lady Borlase do not agree with his interpretation of the picture, Martin tries “to impress the picture on his memory” (32):

It was not the work of a good artist, no nor of a sincere one, but the wall on which it was painted – that was sincere and shone through it. He wrote, “very moving: warriors about to fight for their country and faith”, and was amazed at what he had written, so little resemblance did it bear to his usual art criticisms. Another hand might have guided his pencil.  
(32)

Martin’s subsequent conversation with the *fattore* [the guiding farmer of Tramonta] reminds Martin of the near-accident in the train station in which Clesant saved his life. The conversation continues after the shutters of Tramonta were closed: “‘Dark, dark as death,’ said the *fattore* gaily. ‘When there is light – one sees; when there is none – ’ he clicked his fingers. ‘Exactly,’ answered Martin” (32). Martin recalls the train accident and, inspired by the *fattore*’s clicked fingers, considers how dark his own fate might have been, had Clesant not made his chivalrous efforts to save him.

Martin’s impression of the picture in the fresco suggests a turning point in his life. By seeing the picture, he gains insight into Clesant’s existence and into

his purpose in visiting Milan and Tramonta: “For that was the wonder of the picture – that he [Martin] was here to see it. He [Martin] might have been at the Basle hospital – or nowhere; he might have been clicked out of life. But he was here: a fellow creature [Clesant] had saved him” (32-33). Martin afterwards tries to connect again with Clesant after seeing the picture that reminds him his “savior” whom regrets failing to keep faith with. “Nothing that he had experienced described it, and when the emotion passed it left him with feelings of ignorance and shame” (33).

When the action shifts back to England, it is Clesant who renews contact, asking Martin to use his family connections to intercede for Clesant’s older brother Lance, who has been sent down from Cambridge for a major impropriety. Martin’s family connections are embodied in his father-in-law, Lady Borlase’s husband, who happens to be the master of the Cambridge college where Lance was an undergraduate. Martin and his influential father-in-law, however, are powerless to save Lance, as Lance is truly guilty of his transgression, having been discovered in a morally compromising state in what is probably a brothel. After Clesant verbally attacks and humiliates Lance in Martin’s presence, Lance retires to his room and promptly shoots himself dead.

And there the story ends. As Paul Binding observes in *The Guardian* in 2003, “Forster could write no more, he said, because he lacked the central event to bring his two factions together. ‘I had got my antithesis all right, the antithesis between the civilised man [Martin], who hopes for an Arctic Summer [a period when all is light], and the heroic man [Clesant] who rides into the sea. But I had not settled what was going to happen, and that is why the novel remains a fragment.’” Forster left off the story at this point because, by his own admission, he had no idea of where to take the characters next, after the abrupt and almost operatic death of one character in the triangle. The sudden demise of a main characters is

not uncommon in other Forster novels, but in no previous work had such a death halted the plot machinery with such finality that even such an experienced novelist as Forster could see no way to restart it. And so the novel remains as it is, an elegant but unfinished fragment – resembling, as Binding suggests, the salvaged torso of a ruined classical sculpture on display in a museum, a beautiful but forever incomplete artefact. A classicist himself, Forster might have appreciated that description of *Arctic Summer*.

#### 4. Implications and Conclusions

Certain common features in all three novels can be identified. One is the emotional and moral awakening of a major character, mediated by various artistic or social media, including but not limited to music and philosophy. In *Arctic Summer*, after leaving Tramonta, Martin continues to feel inspired by the images on the frescoes there; his emotions flow like music from his soul, as his short visit to Tramonta has clearly enlightened him. Martin’s “epiphany” at Tramonta parallels the moment of Rickie’s discovery of his own “will” in *The Longest Journey*. A similar parallel can be found in *Maurice*, when Maurice undergoes a major change of heart and mind inspired by the words of his dying grandfather.

On the other hand, in *Arctic Summer*, Clesant, in his sullen and even childish behavior, is reminiscent of the adolescent Rickie in *The Longest Journey* and the not-quite fifteen-year-old Maurice at the beginning of *Maurice*. Clesant, still in late adolescence himself, might have grown in ways similar to Rickie and Maurice had the narrative continued beyond the point where it abruptly ends, but sadly that was not to be.

The influence of music in *Arctic Summer* is limited, though further musical pieces might have been planned beyond the two included in the novel. Philosophy, however, exerts its influence through the character of Uncle Arthur, who shares his



given name with the grim philosopher Schopenhauer and is himself a grim figure who offers sententious lessons about life to his nephews Clesant and Lance. Both boys initially accept their uncle's teachings but in time begin to doubt his shallow pronouncements. This is a common pattern, of early acceptance and later doubt, because, according to Schopenhauer, "false consciousness is absolutely integral to our existence" (Eagleton 49). For most people, such "false consciousness" may be a way of surviving the absurdities of life through mental obtuseness that confers some evolutionary advantage. Eventually, however, false consciousness will no longer do for most thinking people. In these three novels, several characters begin with "false consciousness," but in time they feel the need to reject it if they are to understand themselves, others, and the world with greater clarity.

According to Schopenhauer, "will" is the key to understanding life and the world, as well as the entire universe which is said to be embodied in every single individual. To these ends, Schopenhauer argues that "Our real essence is will" (Stokes 247). In the three novels, the characters undertake their own personal "longest journey" to discover and take control of their own "will" at some appropriate time and place. As Philip Stokes explains in *Philosophy: The Great Thinkers*, "Schopenhauer does not see the will as something to be glorified, but something to be resisted" (Stokes 248). The characters in the novels struggle to resist the "will" of others by accepting or denying it in their interlocutors and even in themselves. Stokes adds, "We are all at the mercy of the will, it infects everything we think and do, it is the true essence of the universe but also the cause of all our suffering, since we are slaves to its demands" (Stokes 248). The characters in these three novels and most others are slaves to the "will" of other people and also of themselves, and manage to survive by initially concealing their true selves, consciously or not, deep within themselves and consequently from themselves.

In the three novels, *The Longest Journey*, *Maurice*, and *Arctic Summer* (and in most other novels, as in life itself), the main characters must master their own “will,” instead of being directed by the will of others, in order to construct identities that are true to themselves. The death of a character in each of the three novels occurs as a sacrifice that confers enlightenment on the surviving characters and aids them on their journeys of self-discovery. In *The Longest Journey*, Rickie Elliot dies in the course of saving his half-brother Stephen Wonham, and the salvation persists and grows after Rickie’s death. Earlier in the novel Stephen had been an atheist, professing, “When a man dies, it’s as if he’s never been” (*The Longest Journey* 269). Later, however, Stephen comes to realize that, even after death, Rickie still exists within him and in his child because Rickie saved Stephen from being killed by a train. Stephen’s child symbolizes a sense of hope in light of the fact that Rickie lived and died a pious Christian. By contrast, in *Maurice*, no child is expected to appear since Maurice and his eventual partner Alec Scudder intend to share a future, but in a union that cannot by its nature produce children. In *Maurice*, the child is Maurice himself, as the book opens when he is only fourteen years and nine months old. Even then Maurice shows signs of the ways he will keep hope alive to the end by suffering, then resisting, and finally embracing his true identity.

These three novels are structured with triangular relationships of three men, a pattern also found in Forster’s libretto for the opera *Billy Budd*. The triangle includes the titular character Billy, an ordinary seaman; Claggart, a mid-level officer who envies Billy’s essential innocence and good looks but cannot possess them, and so, consequently, he exploits his own superior position in order to harass Billy; and Captain Vere, the commanding officer of the ship who is morally conflicted over having to punish Billy for what might be considered Billy’s justifiable homicide of Claggart.

Through this triangle of characters in *Billy Budd*, which mirrors the triangles of other characters in the three novels, Forster tries to come to terms with the question of evil. In *Aspects of the Novel*, Forster asserts, “I don’t believe evil exists: but most writers think it *ought* to exist and form the backside of their plot: and one or two think it does exist. Dostoyevsky. *Melville* [sic]” (*Aspects of the Novel*, 170). Forster admits that in Melville’s *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1924), published just three years before *Aspects of the Novel*, the character Claggart, the innocent Billy’s great antagonist, “is evil” (129). Tensions arising from this antagonism reach such a height that Billy is suddenly driven to kill Claggart. Paradoxically, more than two decades after commenting on Melville in *Aspects of the Novel*, Forster must struggle again with the questions he raised about these same characters, as he works on the libretto of Benjamin Britten’s opera *Billy Budd*, based on Melville’s novel.

Forster explains Billy’s motivation for killing Claggart by stating that “the power within him explodes” (underlining ours; 129). What does “the power within” mean? In *Maurice*, at least one meaning of this inner force is suggested by Maurice’s grandfather on his deathbed. At a time when Maurice believes “in nothing—except in a sort of darkness” (123), his grandfather says, “The light within, . . . The power within—the soul: let it out, but not yet, not till the evening” (123). His grandfather repeats the phrase, “The light within—” three times. Then, Maurice asks, “Why should one be kind and good?” (124). The reason to “be kind and good” is among “the essentials” in Christian “Redemption” which Maurice has discussed earlier with Clive at some length. Forster let Maurice wait for the chance to explode “the power within” until Forster himself had died.

In *Billy Budd*, because Billy explodes “the power within” by killing Claggart, Billy “has to be hanged” (129), even though Claggart is the offender. Claggart is evil but Billy is hanged on the ship as a sacrificial victim who may symbolize the

scapegoated Christ. Forster affirms Christianity in all of his novels.

Similarly, in *Maurice*, Maurice struggles to seek for “the essentials” in the “Redemption.” In *Arctic Summer*, the child Hugo asks his aunt by pointing at Clesant, “Aunt Dolly, why doesn’t he sing?” (*Arctic Summer* 74). Clesant never sings in the story, but his purity carries a suggestion that he might have become the Billy Budd of the 1951 opera on which Forster worked. Besides, Clesant has a bad temper and acts impetuously, much as Billy does.

As in the opera *Billy Budd*, music, philosophy and Christian religion serve to structure the three novels. In *The Longest Journey*, Wagnerian music dominates the story of two main male characters of sharply contrasting personalities, Rickie Elliot and Stephen Wonham, who are balanced by a third male character, Ansell Stewart, with his Schopenhauerian philosophical bent. In *Maurice*, the music of Tchaikovsky and the ideas of Plato’s *Symposium* reflect the homosexual relationship of two of the principal characters, Maurice Hall and Clive Durham, while a reconciliation with Christianity is personified by Maurice’s grandfather, Mr. Grace. In *Arctic Summer*, the relationship of the two main male characters, Martin Whitby and Clesant March is contorted into a triangular relationship with the added complication of Clesant’s transgressing and ultimately sacrificed elder brother, Lance March. There is some music, but not much, and a sprinkling of dark Schopenhauerian thought is thrown into the mix by the aptly-named uncle Arthur offering his grim advice to the brothers Clesant and Lance.

Particularly in *Maurice*, Forster might have been trying to offer the consolation of Christian faith to all people – across the full spectrum of heterosexual to homosexual – allowing everyone, but especially the latter community of which he himself was a member, a way to tap into “the power within.” To this end, Forster balances Christianity with Greek philosophy and even Tchaikovsky’s tortured music and sacrificial life, set against the philosophy

of both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche with their complex notions of the ‘will to power.’”

Such a balancing act can be seen in *The Longest Journey* with Schopenhauer’s philosophy (even though the novel shows an undercurrent of the influence of German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), the principal rival of Schopenhauer, who “was important for the idealism of the Cambridge Apostles, of which Forster was a member. . . . as Wilfred Stone [the renowned Forster scholar] has shown” (Martin 273). Wagnerian music, along with the Greek god Pan, can be added to the mix. Moreover, in *Arctic Summer*, Forster includes an English folk song about Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which is sung to suggest the nature of a happy life.

In contrast with the birth of Jesus, however, a major male character dies in each of these three novels. Forster’s decision to sacrifice one character per work seems designed to demonstrate to the surviving characters what is essential in life. When he resumed work on *Arctic Summer* in 1964, Forster noted in his *Commonplace Book* (1978), edited by Philip Gardner, that the human voice in music is more important than instrumental music. He reached this conclusion by listening to Mahler’s symphonies and the tone poem *Das Lied von der Erde* (*The Song of the Earth*), (1908) by Austrian composer Gustav Mahler (1860-1911). This latter piece is sometimes described as Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, but as it consists of six songs that carry the themes of life, death, and salvation, it could be considered a song cycle. Forster regretted not knowing Mahler’s music earlier in his life: “Mahler. 3rd Symphony 4th Symphony Song of Earth [sic]. . . . but I wish I had found him sooner. Certainly, like many others, he loves beauty and wishes it hadn’t [sic] been left, so his company is congenial and his tediousness easy to condone. What a curse orchestral prolixity was in the early half of this century! Composers were allowed too many instruments and too much time” (253).

Despite his admiration for Mahler, however, Forster does not refer to his music in *Arctic Summer*, but instead uses a simple folk song about the earthly trinity of Jesus, Joseph (he), and Mary (she):

Oh he did whistle and she did sing  
And all the bells of earth did ring  
For joy that Jesus Christ was born  
On Christmas day in the morning.  
(*Arctic Summer* 73)

If people are “kind and good” with “the light within,” the bells of earth will ring for joy. This may sound overly optimistic, even Pollyannaish. Nevertheless, this are among the teachings of the Christ of the Gospels which inform many of the themes of Forster’s novels.

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