

ART AND IMAGINATION IN E. M. FORSTER'S ITALIAN NOVELS

"A NIGHTINGALE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS OF DUST":
ART AND IMAGINATION
IN
E. M. FORSTER'S
ITALIAN NOVELS

By

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ABSTRACT

E. M. Forster's critical conception of art as "the one orderly product which our muddling race has produced" and his notion of the imagination as a redeeming power find expression in his "Italian" novels where he includes within these fictions aesthetic objects and aesthetic analogues which draw attention to the nature of artistic representation (including Forster's own), and which also thematize his concern with the function of the imagination in relation to external reality. An account of his aesthetics, particularly as they relate to the function of the artistic imagination in relation to external reality, is offered in the Introduction. This account of Forster's ideas about the nature of art and artists constitutes a framework of preoccupations in light of which the Italian novels are discussed in the succeeding two chapters. Both Chapters I and II discuss the implications of the oppositions which develop in the novels between art and life, the imagined and the real, aestheticism and naturalness, detachment and involvement, but more importantly, they discuss these conflicts in light of the tension, apparent in Forster's own critical views, between his endorsement of involvement in personal relations on the one hand and his valuation of art and the imagination (and consequent endorsement of a withdrawal from life) on the

other. In the novels, art both opposes and inspires life, and although the search for a reconciliation of the claims of art and life is their motive power, their burden is the demonstration of uninspiring discord and complexity in existence and a related undertone of sympathy for withdrawal into the unified world of art.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD.	23
CHAPTER TWO: A ROOM WITH A VIEW	76
CONCLUSION	129
APPENDIX	133
NOTES	139
BIBLIOGRAPHY	141

ABBREVIATIONS USED WITHIN THE TEXT

- AH: Abinger Harvest
API: A Passage to India
ARV: A Room with a View
TCD: Two Cheers for Democracy
WAFT: Where Angels Fear to Tread

Introduction

In Chapter IX of A Passage to India Dr. Aziz recites to his companions a solemn poem by Ghalib, a poem whose pathos is to him "the highest quality in art" because it does what art should: "touch the hearer with a sense of his own weakness" (107). Although the poem "had done no 'good' to anyone", it was, we are told,

a passing reminder, a breath from the
divine lips of beauty, a nightingale
between two worlds of dust it
voiced our loneliness nevertheless,
our isolation, our need for the Friend
who never comes yet is not entirely
disproved. (108)

The poem's vision of sadness and disharmony is echoed at novel's end where Aziz expresses his need for Fielding's friendship, and Forster, voicing "our loneliness nevertheless, our isolation", replies that "the earth didn't want it", saying in its "hundred voices, 'No, not yet . . . No, not there'" (289). Aziz's contention that "'poetry must touch life'" (249) reiterates Forster's own concern that art should provide "a support to our common humanity" (ICD 7). However, although the poem which he recites voices a truth which the enclosing fiction itself acknowledges, it is not one which Forster's earlier fiction overtly proclaims. Indeed, at the heart of A Passage to India runs Mrs. Moore's startling revelation that "though

people are important, the relations between them are not" (135), a conviction which directly counters the thematic admonition of "only connect" articulated in Forster's earlier novels.

A Passage to India is, to some extent, a fictionalisation of Forster's resigned acceptance of a breakdown in personal relations, an acceptance which is symptomatic of his vision of a world brutally altered after the 1914-18 war. Nevertheless, while Forster may have become less confident in his humanistic and liberal values after World War I, his non-fiction reveals that he still tried to keep faith with them. If anything, he tends to assert his views in his many essays with increased fervidness, particularly when they are challenged by the threats of Fascism current in the 1930's and 1940's. Thus the 1939 essay, "What I Believe", expresses ideas and attitudes which are substantially the same as those embodied in the earlier fiction. "What is good in people -- and consequently in the world --", Forster asserts, "is their insistence on creation, their belief in friendship and loyalty for their own sakes; and though Violence remains and is, indeed, the major partner in this muddled establishment, I believe that creativeness remains too, and will always assume direction when violence sleeps" (ICD 81). The conception of art as "a nightingale between two worlds of dust" is one to which Forster continually turns

for comfort in the face of the turmoil of the modern world. Indeed, he confesses that Matthew Arnold's poetry provided him with a spiritual "armory" during the First World War (AH 74). Aziz's feeling that "literature had always been a solace to him, something that the ugliness of facts could not spoil" (API 242) is reiterated again and again in Forster's many essays and reviews, where he affirms that art is the one lasting order which will provide an "antidote against our present troubles" (TCD 7).

Forster's scepticism about the existence of any benevolent or inspiring order in the universe makes him focus on creative individuality as a level of existence at which it is possible to perceive some kind of coherence. Life is complex, often incomprehensible, and in many respects pre-determined, in Forster's view, yet the individual's freedom to create and to assert his own initiative is one of the forces by which existence is, and ought to be, determined. Forster finds in works of art an expression of human freedom and of the human 'spirit' which he links with intense experience, creativity, and self-fulfilment. Spiritual fulfilment is shown, in part, as that intense response to the arts, which indicates that man is more than a mere "'blemish in the eternal smoothness'" (ARV 47). If Forster is idealistic about the creative imagination and its embodiment in works of art, it is because he sees that only by this means has man created

small, but significant, spheres of order within surrounding chaos and flux. The basic thrust of his "aesthetics" (which, if they lack rigid principles, nevertheless offer a well-defined point of view) is the argument that true order only exists in the heterocosms created by works of art.

His use of the sister arts in his earlier fiction, specifically in the "Italian" novels, which are the subject of this thesis, draws attention to the nature of aesthetic representation, its value, its inadequacies, and its place in the lives of people. Like Aziz, many of the characters in Forster's Italian novels find in literature and the sister arts a solace, something that the drudgery of daily life and sordid fact cannot spoil. What they also find there, however, is an ivory tower, a haven from the flux of those experiences to which Forster would have them submit. Because Forster places such value on the capacity of art to reveal order and eternal truths of existence, he comes close to committing himself to a system of assumptions opposite to the one he explicitly endorses in the novels. That is, in order for his characters to perceive order and meaning in their lives, they usually must withdraw from involvement in personal relations and life itself, either into the world of art or into that world constructed by the creative imagination. Forster is both sympathetic to and condemnatory of this withdrawal: he sympathizes with those characters who need to retreat from the facts of life and

enter into a more inspiring universe of their own creation, but when this retreat is contingent on their permanent denial of the truth he is censorious. Forster's identification with those characters who hide in the world of art is more extensive in Where Angels Fear to Tread than it is in A Room with a View, so that in the first novel it complicates our ability to perceive emergence into real-life experience and personal relations as an ideal Forster wholeheartedly endorses. In Where Angels Fear to Tread he would prod his protagonist in the direction of renouncing his illusions about life and people, of leaving his ivory tower, but he would also make such a condition of withdrawal from reality a necessary one for the attainment of insight. In sympathizing with the mind's desire to create the unreal across the barrier of the actual, Forster reveals his awareness of the obvious discrepancy between imaginative representations and things as they really are. In A Room with a View such a sympathy is still apparent, but Forster's attitude is more clearly defined. Cecil Vyse, like Philip Herriton of Where Angels Fear to Tread withdraws into the world of art, but his detachment or retreat does not afford him any insight; it is only when he faces and accepts the truth about himself, about things as they really are, that he is allowed a vision. The protagonist of A Room with a View withdraws into an illusion which tells her that if she listens to convention

and conducts herself accordingly, she will not have to confront the truth about herself. It is actually when she withdraws into her own art, music, and listens to what it tells her, that she finds the truth of her desires. It is thus that in the Italian novels art both tells the truth and shelters the characters from it. By including within themselves aesthetic analogues or aesthetic objects which operate as models of what art should or should not be, Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View draw attention to the nature of aesthetic representation. In many cases, the aesthetic analogues duplicate what Forster is himself trying to do in the enclosing fiction and thus thematize his interest in the function of the creative imagination in relation to external reality.

It is to Forster's aesthetics that one must turn for an idea of how much this issue concerned him. Although other critics have discussed Forster's use of art in his fiction, their analyses, while illuminating, are, as in the case of Meyers' Painting and the Novel, limited to the thematic implications of the novels' use of paintings, or as in the case of Wilde's Art and Order, to the thematic implications of the clash between those characters who adhere to what he terms "the aesthetic way of life" and those who actively participate in life. Within the present context, such an approach by way of themes and techniques can only be of peripheral interest since this thesis is

concerned with building up a framework of preoccupations within which the Italian novels may be set in order to be seen as the fictional extension and prefiguration of attitudes toward the relationship between art and life which Forster embodied. With this framework in mind, one can see that certain characters in the Italian novels are projections of Forster's own concerns, and that judgements and interpretations of art made within the fictions are closely related to or identical with the author's opinions. While several other critics, most notably Wilfred Stone and John Colmer, discuss Forster's aesthetics, their concern is more to present a survey of what Forster was doing, rather than integrating this into the overall thesis of their respective studies.

A consideration of Forster's aesthetics in relation to his treatment of art and the creative imagination in his novels is important because his ideas about art follow from and are the most important constituent of his view of life. The important essays in aesthetics were written over a long period, between "Inspiration" (1911) and "Art for Art's Sake" (1949), and in these essays Forster offers a coherent and cohesive theory of art. In "Art for Art's Sake", he lists the four categories of thought and endeavour which have claimed to possess order and concludes that art is the only one which can make such a claim with any justification. He refutes the sociopolitical category's

claim to order on the grounds that history and human experience continually tell us that existence is really a series of disorders. Astronomical order, he asserts, has been disproved often enough by physicists, and while he will admit the possibility of religious or divine order, he qualifies this by stating that an apprehension of its order is not available to everyone. The aesthetic category is, in his eyes, the only one whose claim to order is irrefutable, because a work of art

is the only material object in the universe which may possess internal harmony. All the others have been pressed into shape from outside, and when their mould is removed they collapse. The work of art stands up by itself, and nothing else does. It achieves something which has always been promised by society, but always delusively. (ICD 101)

Unlike the other categories, art is ordered by an inner, transcendent vision rooted in the elemental human spirit. Because it is derived from sources of integrity deep in human nature, it is to be valued as the embodiment of human aspiration and as the source of unique knowledge about ourselves. In "Inspiration" Forster argues further that an artist's creations are rooted in knowledge imparted from an unfathomable spiritual source. In the act of creation, he contends, the influence of the conscious mind is almost negligible, and thus in the sphere of aesthetics it is misleading to esteem intellect over the spirit because

"[t]he mind, as it were, turns turtle . . . and a hidden part of it comes to the top and controls the pen [It] is the process, termed by the ancients 'inspiration', and one wishes that the term was still in use, for it is far nearer the truth than most accounts" (Albergo Empedocle 119). Here Forster points to a view of the creative imagination as one which relies not on an apprehension of external reality or conscious life for its impetus. Elsewhere, however, his contentions regarding the genesis of a work of art are not so simplistic. In "The Raison d'Etire of Criticism in the Arts", he argues that the work of art is comprised of a complex combination of the subconscious life and conscious worldly existence, and that the work of art reflects the notion that the imagination both draws upon and transforms real experiences. In the creative state, the artist is "taken out of himself":

He lets down as it were a bucket into his subconscious, and draws up something which is normally beyond his reach. He mixes this thing with his normal experiences, and out of the mixture he makes a work of art . . . whether it is good or bad it will have been compounded in this unusual way (TCD 123)

Art does not offer, then, a direct reflection of real life, nor is fidelity to the facts of life its province -- that belongs to history. It is an artist's ability to disclose the underside of the mind where passion and poetry lie, to create a world which cannot be conveyed

by depicting external fact alone but which is the quintessence of external fact. An artist does not simply recreate actual or imagined experiences in their totality, but isolates those experiences which have potential for carrying greater meaning. Of the poet, Forster claims that "[t]he living fact which he experienced was entangled with dead stuff which did not interest him: he has to isolate it before he can express it passionately . . ." ("Ancient and Modern", The Listener 921). But Forster also believes that art expresses something deeper than just the artist's personality and what he may alone perceive as meaningful. The artist's submersion into his deeper self is not simply a self-absorbed retreat into an inspired and imaginative universe, but a submersion into a condition which reveals to him his affinities with all humanity. In "Anonymity: An Enquiry", he maintains that all art aspires to be "anonymous" because the artist "forgets himself" in the act of creating and plumbs the depths of a deeper self which is the archetypal undercurrent and buried heritage of all men. Paradoxically, the consummate instance of an artist's individuality, that is, his creation, is what links him to every other individual, since individual works of art are informed by, and all individuals possess, that same spirit which transcends the limits of surface selfhood. "All through history", Forster claims in Aspects of the Novel, "writers while writing have felt more or less the same"

(36), and this same contention is expressed in "Anonymity: An Enquiry":

. . . . each human mind has two personalities, one on the surface, one deeper down. The upper personality . . . is conscious and alert, it does things like dining out, answering letters etc., and it differs vividly and amusingly from other personalities. The lower personality is a very queer affair. In many ways it is a perfect fool, but without it there is no literature, because unless a man dips a bucket down into it occasionally he cannot produce first-class work. There is something general about it . . . and the mystic will assert that the common quality is God . . . as it is general to all men, so the works it inspires have something general about them, namely beauty. The poet wrote the poem, no doubt, but he forgot himself when he wrote it. . . .(TCD 93)

It follows that if the genesis of art is rooted in the expression of a universal human spirit common to every man's subconscious, then the artist is not a member of a Chosen Race, indeed, "[e]very man has something of the artist in him" ("The Claims of Art", The Listener 743). Forster confirms this supposition in his paraphrase of Blake's opinion of the artist, an opinion which is probably closest to his own:

[Blake] never supposed that creation is the prerogative of the small minority If this were so, humanity would be in a tragic plight. He believed that everyone can create. . . .The imagination waits within us, ready to redeem from inertia and chaos, and lead us through

action to our eternal home, and the poet . . . is only specially valuable when he reminds average men of the salvation they are neglecting. ("An Approach to Blake", The Spectator 474)

In submitting ourselves to the work of art, or in allowing our own creativity to emerge, we are led by imagination into an impersonal and transcendent world which, "while it lasts, seems more real and solid than . . . daily existence" (TCD 91). The imagination which "waits within us" cannot be so easily stifled by the strictures of society, and the little worlds which it creates contrast with social order in being more permanent, for "[t]he world created by words exists neither in space nor time though it has semblances of both, it is eternal and indestructible" (TCD 91). Art is not only "the one orderly product which our muddling race has produced", but the one product which withstands the ravages of time and change; indeed, "Ancient Athens made a mess -- but the Antigone stands up. Renaissance Rome made a mess -- but the ceiling of the Sistine got painted. James I made a mess -- but there was Macbeth" (TCD 101). And whereas the state legislator imposes social order on individuals who desire to be free, the artist "legislates through creating . . . he creates through his sensitiveness and his power to impose form" (TCD 103).

The unique order and beauty of a work of art, which separate it from the rest of the world, may also have some

utility, Forster suggests, although its capacity to be instructive and edifying is not of supreme importance. In his analysis of the dual function which words in a work of literature perform, he suggests the notion that the "usefulness" of the information conveyed in a creative vision is of far less consequence than its power to transport us to another world. His conception of the tendency in words to move from a simple utilitarian function towards forms that are independent and spiritual suggests his belief that art achieves greater sublimity the farther it moves away from a direct or mimetic rendering of reality. Words in a work of literature which contain "information" point to the world outside themselves, while words which create "atmosphere" generate a world other than the real one and make us forget "this daily existence of pickpockets and trams" (TCD 91). Forster places greater value on those words which point only to the imaginative and autonomous universe created by them:

. . . at the end of pure information stands the tramway notice 'stop'. . . at the extreme other end is lyric poetry. Lyric poetry is absolutely no use. It is the exact antithesis of a street notice, for it conveys no information of any kind [W]hen we are reading 'The Ancient Mariner' or remembering it intensely, common knowledge disappears and uncommon knowledge takes its place. We have entered a universe which only answers to its own laws, supports itself, internally coheres, and has a new standard of truth. Information is

true if it is accurate. A poem is
true if it hangs together. . . .
Information is relative. A poem is
absolute. (TCD 89, 91)

The essence of such ideas about the nature of a work of art has led at least one critic to ask, "How far can one go in worshipping things not of this world, and yet remain a humanist and a novelist?" (Stone, 109). But if Forster defines art as something sacred and far removed from everyday existence, he also sees the strong connections between art and life, and recognizes that the aesthetic response art elicits can ultimately be a moral, humanizing response. The perfect unity of form may be what distinguishes art from the confusion and flux of life, but Forster's conception of aesthetic response implies that a work of art depends for its effect on a mixture of its formal beauty and the significance of its subject. In "Not Looking at Pictures", he confesses that he finds it a nearly impossible task to respond only to the arranged world of a painting without reference to its subject matter, and in "Not Listening to Music", he claims that musical notes remind him of things like "fear, lust, or resignation" (TCD 137). Elsewhere, he claims that the artist "helps to civilize the community, builds up standards, forms theories, stimulates, dissects, encourages the individual to enjoy the world into which he was born" (TCD 122). Moreover, in "The Duty of Society to the

Artist", he imagines a conversation between a state official and a painter of genius in which the official asks that the artist create something instructive or entertaining and is met with the bald reply: "'I want to extend human sensitiveness through paint. That's all that interests me'" (ICD 107). The artist explains that he does not fit in to society and that it is his "duty to humanity" not to do so because, "'I feel things, I express things, that haven't been felt and expressed, and that is my justification'" (ICD 107). Though the aesthetic impulse is not "useful" in itself, nevertheless the objects engendered by it have helped "to lead us out of the darkness" ("The Claims of Art" The Listener 742). Though a picture or poem or novel or musical composition is in essence autonomous, it does exert a moral influence by virtue of the dynamic forces it contains. The artist's imagination exposes us to intuitions that might otherwise be beyond our powers to apprehend; as a witness to the truth, he may enable us to comprehend its elusive dimensions and in this way wield a redeeming power. But, "[t]he arts are not drugs", proclaims Forster, "[t]hey are not guaranteed to act when taken" (AH 72), for we must bring our own imaginations to works of art before they can "prop our minds":

The propping quality in books, music, etc., is only a by-product of another quality in them; their power to give pleasure . . . where the fire was thence will the light come; where

there was intense enjoyment, grave or
 gay, thence will proceed the help
 which every individual needs. (AH 72)

In "The Functions of Literature in War Time", Forster claims that it is salutary to continue reading literature, even in times of crisis, because it has a potent influence on people. But the direct influence which a work of art exerts -- the moral code it endorses -- is less important, he claims, than the indirect influence. This latter influence arises not in reponse to the argument or code of behavior presented, but in response to the general impression afforded, an impression which helps man to be "noble, gentle and brave" (Albergo Empedocle 179). At the conclusion of Othello, for instance, one's lasting impression is not merely pity for Desdemona and anger against Iago, "[b]ut much more a general sense that we have been in a world much greater than our own . . . the world of spirit, that helps us to endure danger and ingratitude and answer a lie with the truth" (Albergo Empedocle 179). Ultimately, Forster argues for the creation of an art which moves away from an uninspired imitation of the real world towards an intense illumination of the inner life of value, and contends that in a sensitive response to this illumination will be found the understanding of life which every individual desires.

Paradoxically, however, for art to afford a general impression of greatness and to express the fundamental

truths of life, it implicitly must be an escape from life itself. In "The Ivory Tower", Forster asks whether "books can be an escape from life, and if they can be, ought they to be?" He discusses the popular idea of the ivory tower as "a retreat from life, a denial of life, a spiritual suicide" (Atlantic Monthly 55) and contrasts it with his own conception. "Escape" and "expression" are synonymous for Forster because it is only by a temporary withdrawal into an ivory tower of the imagination that the artist expresses himself. Of Alfred de Vigny, he says that "when he took to writing he tended to withdraw from the hurry, noisiness, muddle, and littleness of the world, and contemplate action from the heights like a god, or from within a fortress where he remained unscathed" (51). There is a good deal of value in escapism, he suggests, and the example of Milton, whom the "cruelties of daily life never entangle" (53), reveals that wisdom comes through deliberate seclusion. "Fifty years ago one could escape" in body by moving away, but in the modern world daily life everywhere is tiresome, cruel and, ultimately, inescapable, "because this is the twentieth century and the clock says no" (54). A retreat into a private heaven of the imagination is, however, still a viable alternative and one of which we need take advantage in order to tap the source of creative art and personal religion. It is not only great artists who retreat into quiet bowers, but the

ordinary individual also must "withdraw into his little fortress and build up a small private universe before he can see where he stands" (55). There are two chief motives behind the escapist impulse, Forster asserts, but the first, fear of confronting the real and true, is "escapism in the bad sense" because it does not promote creativity, but unproductive self-absorption. The other motive for retreat -- boredom, disgust, indignation against people and the world -- is, in his eyes, a more cogent argument for escape, because it is based on the "conviction that sometimes comes to the solitary individual that his solitude will give him something finer and greater than he can get when he merges in the multitude" (56). Because involvement in the flux of existence precludes the possibility of attaining a clear and coherent conception of life, Forster suggests that the detached contemplation of life is "the aim of every public-minded person" (57). Such a detached and privileged perspective is afforded by creative literature and the other arts because the artist sees his society more truthfully by being alienated from it. The "reader" of a work of art is rapt into that region where the artist worked, and so escapes with him into another world and then returns to his own reality with a clearer understanding of its complexities. Forster concludes that permanent withdrawal into an ivory tower is not the ideal, that one must both submit to experience in

life and withdraw from it in the way Milton did:

. . .he did perform the great feat of coming out of his tower and going back into it again, and performed it with a fullness that makes him an example for our race. Milton wobbled; and it is in wobbling that the chief duty of man consists. We are here on earth not to save ourselves and not to save the community, but to try to save both.
(58)

In the creative act, then, there should be continued interplay between the external world and the imagination of the artist. A subtle balancing of inner and outer impulses takes place, as the artist's imagination reaches out to the world of the senses and returns with what it has been able to find there for its creative purposes. The artist starts with the world as it is apprehended by the senses, and to this extent he embodies in his work, especially if he is a novelist, a reality that is in part representational. The poet is perhaps less bound by the social scene, but does use his sense impressions derived from the external world in his work. In any event, when the artist concentrates upon a single facet of his observation and experience, it may be transformed into the iridescent entity that we recognize as art. The poet, Forster says in talking of Housman, "hides things up and pares them away", not because he is "refined" but because his method requires him to modify his original experience in accordance with his aim ("Ancient and

Modern", The Listener 921). In the artist's mind a fusion of fact and fiction takes place, therefore, which cannot be argued about and which is so strong an activity as to seem "ruthless" ("Writers at Bay", The Spectator 724). Forster does not argue for a complete abandonment of life for the imagination, but at the same time he suggests that an artist must be willing, in the interest of a creation truly dynamic, to go without compunction beyond a prosaic realism. The works of art which a writer, painter, or sculptor creates are partly based on his observations of life, but the imagination he brings to his subject separates that subject radically from its counterpart in nature. This fusion of fact and fantasy takes place mysteriously, Forster asserts, and cannot be traced precisely nor argued about (Furbank and Haskell, 32-33).

Forster thus appears to value art less as a reflection of life than as a medium which reveals the inner energy of existence. Indeed, it is the artist's privilege, he contends, to "contradict the facts of life, to make the impossible the inevitable", and he praises Shelley, Dante and Keats for doing just that without also "falsifying" the facts of life; for "the men who falsify life, who profess to be accurate and give us inaccuracy, no blame can be too strong" (qtd. in Watt 48)¹. Although a contradiction of life is as much a distortion of it as is a falsification, Forster would give to artists the license to ignore the

discontinuity between aesthetic worlds and the facts of existence. In one of his book reviews, he paraphrases Gauguin's view of creative activity as one which "leads away from the realistic imitation of nature: if the picture bears the impress of the supreme moment [of inspiration] all is well, and the distortion justified" ("The Extreme Case", Athenaeum 561).

Such a "leading away" from a portrayal of life which remains unimaginatively loyal to the facts of existence is an activity in which Forster's own characters engage themselves. Although in his non-fiction Forster continually pays tribute to the power of the imagination to overcome difficulty, create order, and envision something which may not accord with the facts of life, in his Italian novels he shows that he is aware of the distorting and self-deceptive nature of this power. Indeed, his characters in the Italian novels imaginatively translate life into art, but in so doing they do not so much capture the quintessential truths of life as reveal their inability to confront those truths and their consequent desire to distance themselves from it by escaping into the world of art and imagination. Although Forster often mocks his characters for their indulgence in imaginative excess and habit of seeing life through an aesthetic screen, he neither denies nor disavows the claims of the imagination or the potent influence art has on the lives of his

characters. Ultimately, because Forster so values the expression of individual creativity, a tension develops in his Italian novels between what the heart feels and what the mind knows, between an urge to have his characters submit to the flux of life and personal relations and an awareness that a withdrawal from personal relations into the world of art and the imagination can actually give to his characters a greater insight into life than if they were to merge into the sphere of complex personal experience.

I

Where Angels Fear to Tread

Forster's first novel, Where Angels Fear to Tread, draws attention to the nature of aesthetic representation through its inclusion within itself of aesthetic objects or aesthetic analogues. The fresco of Santa Deodata and the opera, Lucia di Lammermoor, provide the most obvious instances of such a procedure, but other examples are inclusions within the novel of fictional sources (such as Dante's Inferno), which the novel actually claims to mirror, and of analogies with the stage. Intimately connected with this concern for the nature of artistic representation is an interest in the nature of aesthetic response and the function of the imagination in relation to external reality. Forster is concerned in the novel with the status of an imagination which imposes on life the dimensions and solidity of art, and the narrative he constructs concurs in revealing the limits of such a habit of mind. It is clear that in the distance Forster creates between his narrator and Philip Herriton he is suggesting that Philip's imaginative excesses are not his own and are being placed before us ironically. But we cannot entirely dissociate this habit of mind from a narrator who does, after all, transmit it to us with some sympathy and who

also occasionally collapses the distance between himself and Philip and thereby reveals that he too falls victim to Philip's aestheticist inclinations.

What is puzzling about Where Angels Fear to Tread is its emotional and rhetorical indeterminacy: it seems to subvert the claims of the imagination (in favour of the claims of immediate personal experience) and yet to cling to them, to expose and yet to empathize with those characters who exist in a state of illusion. The system of beliefs Forster explicitly endorses in the novel, such as the spontaneous expression of emotion and the complete involvement in personal relations (their passions and hardships included), is complicated by his sympathy for those characters who withdraw from life and personal relations into an ivory tower of the imagination. The many references to art in the novel suggest that, for Forster, an art's value lies in its capacity to depict the inner energy, intensity and complexity of life. In his own art, Forster would have his characters submit to intense, vital experience and to the muddles and joys of engagement in daily life, since one of his duties as an artist is to "[encourage] the individual to enjoy the world into which he was born" (TCD 122). But the emergence of characters into intense real-life experience is often presented as destructive, and characters recoil from it only to resume their previous lives of spectatorship and detachment. It

may be that "'[e]very man has something of the artist in him'" ("The Claims of Art", The Listener 743), but the "artist" in Forster's characters continually urges them to detach themselves from life in order to see clearly its beauties and complexities. Most of the novel's references to art indicate that art tells the truth and that the creative state is founded on reflections of the truth. But the "truths" of art are also the truths of life, in the face of which Forster's characters usually retreat. The novel's complicated movement between emergence and retreat may reflect Forster's own ambivalence about the cost of renouncing imaginative conceptions of life for the sake of entering into intense and complex personal relations. Indeed, the elements that block the novel's movement toward an endorsement of complete submission to life and love may arise from Forster's awareness that he is also committed to the notion that withdrawal from life can give to a character "something finer and greater than he can get when he merges in the multitude" ("The Ivory Tower", Atlantic Monthly 56).

Because it seems that Forster cannot be satisfied with treating the imagination ironically, he approaches Philip through the eyes of a narrator whose occasional lapses into aestheticism and idealism keep unsettling the novel's ostensible commitment to an antiaesthetic attitude. The novel begins, however, on a trenchant note of irony in

its description of Philip's imaginative excesses. In contemplating Lilia's journey to Italy, Philip imagines the situation to be

. . .full of whimsical romance: there was something half attractive, half repellent in the thought of this vulgar woman journeying to places he loved and revered. Why should she not be transfigured? The same had happened to the Goths. (WAFT 8)

Philip's mother, on the other hand, "did not believe in romance, nor in transfiguration, nor in parallels from history, nor in anything else that may disturb domestic life" (WAFT 8). Forster is obviously distancing himself from Philip's absurdly romantic position, but while he suggests that Philip's imagination leads him into thoughts that are dangerously remote from life, he does not align himself with its opposite -- the barren and prosaic realism and practicality of Mrs. Herriton. The fact that the "choice" here is not between imagination and literal-mindedness, but between flights of fancy recognized from the outset as spurious and compensatory and a realism that remains unpalatable, would seem to make the novel's choice of values somewhat indecisive -- a matter of opting for the lesser of two evils. Yet the movement in this scene from Philip's illusions and Mrs. Herriton's demystification of them makes known the need for a mode of vision that will respect both claims, as Forster believed the artist should fuse fact and fiction. But because

Forster must side with vitality over sterility, with imagination over prosaicness, he finds himself expressing greater sympathy for an imagination which transcends prosaic realism. Indeed, Mrs. Herriton's viewpoint is dismissed throughout the novel as representative of that straight-thinking Sawston set whose arid pragmatism is founded in starved imaginations and undeveloped hearts, and who, so absorbed in the sordid facts of daily existence, cannot find anything of beauty or interest in life.

While Philip's point of view is afforded greater attention and, more importantly, greater sympathy, Forster does not discontinue his efforts to reveal the tenuous and self-deceptive nature of the imagination. When Philip learns that Lilia is not marrying a "scion of Italian nobility", that, indeed, the occupation of Gino's father is that scandalously inglorious one of a dentist, he "gave a cry of personal disgust and pain":

A dentist at Monteriano. A dentist in fairyland! False teeth and laughing gas and the tilting chair at a place which knew the Etruscan League, and the Pax Romana, and Alaric himself, and the Countess Matilda, and the Middle Ages, all fighting and holiness, and the Renaissance, all fighting and beauty! He thought of Lilia no longer. He was anxious for himself: he feared that Romance might die. (WAFT 26)

Forster carefully undercuts Philip's rhapsody by having him link rather incongruous ideas of beauty and battle, a link

which suggests Forster's own disinclination to romanticize art and history, to forget their connections with human life. There is a suggestion here that Philip's imagination seeks to silence an inevitable dialogue between the veil of idealism and the knowledge of life. Yet although Forster allows us to see through the illusoriness of Philip's image, he also demands our sympathy for it by commenting that we are all guilty of this habit of idealizing but that "the sooner it goes from us the better" (WAFT 27). Forster's use of "us" here has the effect of generalizing Philip's limitation to include both himself and the reader and thus of encouraging a sympathetic view of the aesthete. Similarly, when Philip makes mental note of the alteration in Caroline Abbott's character since her visit to Monteriano, Forster again moves from the particular to the general, from letting us know that Philip too has changed, to generalizing his condition to "us": "He did not suspect that he was more graceful too. For our vanity is such that we hold our own characters immutable, and we are slow to acknowledge that they have changed, even for the better" (WAFT 113).

This sense of sympathy for Philip is owing not only to the collapsing of distance between Forster and his character, but also to occasional odd resemblances between Philip's rhetoric and his creator's own. As John Colmer observes, in some passages, Forster "speaks with the tones

of the cultural snob who knows what to admire and what not to admire" and this lends to his commentaries "a faint tinge of aesthetic snobbery" (63). Furthermore, although Forster contends that "it is the privilege of art to exaggerate" (TCD 80), his own rhetorical flourishes betray his complicity in Philip's tendency toward imaginative excess. Of Lilia, distraught and disillusioned with her married life, Forster declares that "not Cordelia nor Imogen more deserves our tears" (WAFT 61). Gino is "that glorious invariable creature, a man" (WAFT 59-60), and with his son, he is "majestic . . . a part of Nature; in no ordinary love scene could he ever be so great" (WAFT 139). The very magnificence of the language and the peculiar coexistence of this rhetoric with another that radically contradicts it alerts our critical sense and heightens the tension between sympathy and judgement. Significantly, when Forster was asked, "Do any of your characters represent yourself at all?", he replied, "Rickie more than any. Also Philip. And Cecil . . . has got something of Philip in him" (Furbank and Haskell 33). Such an admission of affinity may lead us to believe, as it has at least one critic, that Philip "is a kind of experimental self for Forster, a portrait of the artist as a young man exploring his own possibilities for experience" (Stone 176-177). While such a supposition is cogent, one must keep in mind that Forster's sympathy with Philip is not unailing; where

Philip may share some of his qualities, he lacks his more mature, fully-developed insight. In many places, the distance between the narrator and Philip is extensive, and this often results in a portrait which is more scathing than charitable. Philip's cultivated unconventionality is called "tiresome" (WAFT 81), his talk, "a good deal of nonsense" (WAFT 28), and his analyses of other characters shallow: "Insincerity was becoming his stock explanation for anything unfamiliar, whether that thing was a kindly action or a high ideal" (WAFT 90). This sense of impatience with Philip, which demands that the novel leave the enclosure of his world, is complicated by a sense of sympathy for him, which conscripts reader and author alike into keeping faith with his fruitless imagination.

The combination of sympathy and detachment with which Forster approaches Philip is, supposedly, a combination which Philip brings to his own perceptions of the world around him. Not only are we told that "both observation and sympathy were in his eyes" (WAFT 68), but that, in spite of his defects, he had "[a]t all events . . . a sense of beauty and a sense of humour, two most desirable gifts" (WAFT 69). Clearly, such gifts suggest his promise; but what this sense of beauty evokes from Philip is predictably limited to a detachment from life and personal relations, an appreciation only of the semblances of things which he can enjoy without becoming involved in:

It caused him at the age of twenty to wear parti-coloured ties and a squashy hat, to be late for dinner on account of the sunset, and to catch art from Burne-Jones to Praxiteles. At twenty-two he went to Italy with some cousins, and there he absorbed into one aesthetic whole olive-trees, blue sky, frescoes, country inns, saints, peasants, mosaics, statues, beggars. He came back with the air of a prophet who would either remodel Sawston or reject it. All the energies and enthusiasms of a rather friendless life had passed into the championship of beauty. (WAFT 69)

The distance which separates Forster from Philip is simultaneously one of sympathy for his "two most desirable gifts" and one of dissociation from an apprehension of life which makes no distinction between peasants and frescoes and thus seems irrelevant to human concerns. Philip's image of Italy as an "aesthetic whole" testifies to the unifying process of the artistic imagination, but it also suggests the notion that the imagination can simplify life by skating over the depth of its complexities and intricacies into an iridescent image which supposedly captures the quintessence of life but which actually captures little more than superficialities. The perfect unity and beauty that Philip sees on the surface of Italy is one which he attempts to recreate in his English environs, until he realizes that what lies beneath the aesthetic surface he had imagined for Italy are the facts of life from which he has tried to escape: for Italy "too, could

produce avarice, brutality, stupidity -- and, what was worse, vulgarity" (WAFT 69). When he returns from Italy to England and finds that for all his championing of beauty "[n]othing had happened either in Sawston or within himself" (WAFT 69), Forster postulates values which transcend Philip's understanding, concluding with moral certainty what Philip has not: "He concluded that nothing could happen, not knowing that human love and love of truth sometimes conquer where love of beauty fails" (WAFT 69). When Philip, "a little disenchanted . . . but aesthetically intact", tries to console his disappointment through humour, rather than allowing himself to submit to the flux of life, we are made aware that this avenue is equally inadequate by a narrator who relates offhandedly its evanescent nature:

If he could not reform the world, he could at all events laugh at it, thus attaining at least an intellectual superiority. Laughter, he read and believed, was a sign of good moral health, and he laughed on contentedly, till Lilia's marriage toppled contentment down for ever. (WAFT 69)

Even in this sense of humour Philip has affinities with his creator, who exploits the potential for comedy evident in the petty and insular attitudes of his characters and in the disparity between their professed beliefs and their actions. The difference, of course, is that Forster's laughter is edifying and does not proceed

from a fixed and untried system of values, while Philip's is cynical and self-serving and operates only to corroborate his belief in his personal superiority. When Italy, "the land of beauty, was ruined for him" (WAFT 70) by Gino, "the betrayer of his life's ideal" (WAFT 70), and when Caroline Abbott's presence spoils the comedy of life because "she would do nothing funny" (WAFT 103), Philip, in his disillusion, begins to show signs that he is moving closer to Forster's sphere of values. Reality keeps unsettling his commitment to a belief in the transcendent powers of beauty and humour, but it is this disillusion with such powers that encourages him to look behind appearances and prepares him to make the crucial acknowledgement of the truth about his mother. Mrs. Herriton's "soulless diplomacy" had been comic to Philip when brought to bear upon others, but when he is himself its prey, he "started and shuddered. He saw that his mother was not sincere. Her insincerity to others had amused him, but it was disheartening when used against himself" (WAFT 85-86). It is characteristic of Philip that this revelation should materialize because of wounds sustained by his ego; nevertheless, what it prompts him to contemplate is very near the novel's own thematic concerns:

And though she was frightening him, she did not inspire him with reverence. Her life, he saw, was without meaning. To what purpose was her diplomacy, her insincerity, her

continued repression of vigour? Did they make any one better or happier? Did they even bring happiness to herself? Harriet with her gloomy peevish creed, Lilia with her clutches after pleasure, were after all more divine than this well-ordered, active, useless machine. (WAFT 87)

Such an understanding of the values which activate the novel is brought to bear by Philip on other characters and situations where he seems capable of making the distinction between appearances and reality, surface and depth. When Harriet, parroting Philip's own rhetoric that "Beauty is the only test", concludes that Italy is "frightful" and does not measure up to any standard of beauty, Philip replies rather uneasily: "'I'm perfectly right. But at the same time -- I don't know -- so many things have happened here -- people have lived so hard and so splendidly -- I can't explain'" (WAFT 97). Although Harriet dismisses this response as just another manifestation of his incurable "Italy mania", Philip does go on to reveal that it is more a symptom of his growing awareness of the complexity of life, an awareness hitherto stifled by his reliance on the authority of his imagination to create for him a private heaven divorced from involvement in complexity. Indeed, when Harriet sermonizes on the evils of Gino's behavior and condemns him and his entire race for the suffering Lilia endured in Monteriano, Philip, who had previously decided that Gino is a cad,

intervenes to upbraid her provincial attitude, declaring that "[t]hings aren't so jolly easy" (WAFT 99): "Because [Gino] was unfaithful to his wife, it doesn't follow that in every way he's absolutely vile" (WAFT 98). Harriet's hidebound, uncomplicated comprehension of the world is, however, attractive in its simplicity for both Caroline and Philip, for when Caroline expresses her wish to be like Harriet, Philip concedes feelingly that "she had paid homage to the complexity of life. For her, at all events, the expedition was neither easy nor jolly. Beauty, evil, charm, vulgarity, mystery -- she also acknowledged this tangle, in spite of herself" (WAFT 112).

If such a sensitivity to the complexity of life constitutes Philip's emergence into the real world, it is a sensitivity which is, like his sense of beauty and humour, strangely fleeting. Just as the wounding of his vanity allowed him to see through to his mother's heartlessness, so his disillusion with his ideals melts when such vanity is propitiated. Having been told that the "betrayers of his life's ideal" has been asking after him and has expressed regret for the indecorous manner in which he had treated the Englishman, Philip's face becomes "suffused with pleasure . . . His vanity had been appeased and he knew it" (WAFT 111). Not only has "[t]his tiny piece of civility" altered his mood; romance itself, we are told, "had come back to Italy":

there were no cads in her; she was beautiful, courteous, lovable, as of old. And Miss Abbott -- she, too, was beautiful in her way, for all her gaucheness and conventionality. She really cared about life, and tried to live it properly. And Harriet -- even Harriet tried. (WAFT 111-112)

This change in Philip is rather unconvincing as another expression of his moral growth; although the impulse behind the change springs not from any new-found humanist ideology but from self-centredness, Forster would seem, in light of the result, to wish that fact forgotten: "This admirable change in Philip proceeds from nothing admirable, and may therefore provoke the gibes of the cynical. But angels and other practical people will accept it reverently, and write it down as good" (WAFT 112). Although Forster seems dogmatic in his assertion that Philip's novel altruism is salutary and that it is symptomatic of a consciousness emerging into the human sphere of realities, there is a clear suggestion that Philip's change is regressive in that it only precipitates retreat into his old world of imaginative fancy. Forster does reveal that Philip's illusions, previously remote from life, can be life-enhancing, for in his return to his conception of Italy as a beautiful "aesthetic whole" he evinces a generosity of spirit which extends to his acknowledgement of the better sides of Caroline's and Harriet's characters. It seems, however, that this acknowledgement is little more

than an armchair exercise; in returning to his idealized vision of Italy he may gain insight into the characters of others but whether he acts upon this insight is another question. When Philip's mother crushes his ego he can then acknowledge and criticize her sterility, but "he could not rebel. To the end of his days he would probably go on doing what she wanted" (WAFT 87). Similarly, when his vanity is indirectly appeased by Caroline, "[h]e watched her in silence, and was more attracted to her than ever before" (WAFT 112). Philip's feeling of revulsion for his mother and attraction to Caroline may run deep, but he never acts on these feelings. As Caroline asks of him, "'what's the use of your fair-mindedness if you never decide for yourself? It's not enough to see clearly when you see what's right you're too idle to do it. . . . we must intend to accomplish -- not sit intending on a chair'" (WAFT 150). Philip may be the better for the realizations that come to him, but they seem only to encourage and justify his withdrawal into an ivory tower where he can observe life from a detached position and, more importantly, where he finds the impulse to translate the materials of life into art.

Philip's habit of looking upon life as a work of art, as if it had the timelessness, permanence, shape and coherence of an "aesthetic whole", is intimately connected with the idealizing power of his imagination. Our

eagerness to condemn Philip's flights of fancy is complicated by our awareness that Forster himself not only sympathizes with Philip but that he also evinces the same kind of detachment and habit of translating life into art. What also complicates our ability to relegate aestheticism to the side of wrong is that Forster occasionally gives to Gino and some of the Italians (who represent, for the most part, his ideal of unselfconscious commitment to and participation in life) a readiness to "look on death and love as spectacles" (WAFT 110). After verbally abusing his wife for taking a solitary walk, Gino is upbraided by Lilia, who now sees him as "a cruel, worthless, hypocritical, dissolute upstart". "Then alas!", we are told, "the absurdity of his position grew on him, and he laughed -- as he would have laughed at the same situation on the stage" (WAFT 64). Gino here displays Philip's sense of humour, one which allows him, as Caroline remarks, to "'see through [people] and laugh at them'" (WAFT 150). While the withdrawal that Gino makes here may stop him from taking the already heated dispute with Lilia to catastrophic extremes, and while it may be a "detached contemplation of events" which Forster claims every individual needs, in light of what Gino represents such a withdrawal from the personal scene is nothing less than unsettling. His detachment may give him a clearer perspective on himself and the situation, but his very

ability to extract himself from the intense moment suggests a retreat from personal involvement Forster does not elsewhere in the novel explicitly endorse. Such a propensity is not, however, nearly as full-blown as is that of Philip, who seems, as he himself attests to Caroline, to remain "aesthetically intact" in his ivory tower throughout the novel:

'I seem fated to pass through the world without colliding with it or moving it -- and I'm sure I can't tell you whether the fate's good or evil. I don't die -- I don't fall in love. And if other people die or fall in love they always do it when I'm just not there. You are quite right; life to me is just a spectacle, which -- thank God, and thank Italy, and thank you -- is now more beautiful and heartening than it has ever been before.' (WAFT 151)

That Philip looks upon life as something of a stage production or other work of art is confirmed by several images. In Chapter II, after Caroline has been forced by Philip to explain the social status of Gino and the circumstances of his involvement with Lilia, she cries, in tearful frustration, "'I'll not tell you another word!'", and Philip, "[a]fter a silence, which he intended to symbolize to her the dropping of a curtain on the scene, . . . began to talk of other subjects" (WAFT 27). Such comments stress not only Philip's predilection for retreat in the face of those emotional realities which threaten him

with their proximity, but his ability to manipulate and transform the scenes of life into something less real, less unsettling. His tendency to retreat to a position of detachment gives credence to Caroline's evaluation of his character: "'You're without passion; you look on life as a spectacle, you don't enter it; you only find it funny or beautiful'" (WAFT 181). Indeed, even after his exposure to both the beauty and brutality of Italy his parting words to Caroline are those of disengagement: "'Well, goodbye; it's all over at last; another scene in my pageant has shifted'" (WAFT 156). The moral implications of Philip's detachment are far-reaching, as Caroline observes, yet we are still left with a sense that the implications of Forster's latent sympathy for such a detachment are equally far-going and significant. As he remarks in "The Ivory Tower", "in daily life we are so involved in . . . things that we cannot focus them properly. We desire to withdraw and behave as if they don't concern us, and then we have a better chance of seeing what they are up to" (Atlantic Monthly 57). Philip does indeed behave as if things do not concern him, but this detachment still seems unjustifiable since he does not also appear to "wobble" between involvement in life and retreat from it -- his involvement being minimal if not negligible, and his withdrawal being more permanent than temporary.

To some degree, Philip's habit of detaching himself

from the scenes of life and looking at them as spectacles characterizes Forster's own treatment of his characters. In the same chapter in which Philip draws the curtain on the scene with Caroline, Forster opens his own. He constructs a scene, complete with curtains and audience, which, in its peculiar staginess, leaves the impression that off in the wings there stands a detached scenarist manipulating his creations as Mrs. Herriton would "pull the strings" (WAFT 73,86,94) of her puppets. When Philip first arrives at the hotel in Monteriano, Lilia awaits him at the top of the stairs, "very radiant, with her best blouse on" and their bald interchange is watched by the audience below:

"Welcome!" she cried. "Welcome to Monteriano!" He greeted her, for he did not know what else to do, and a sympathetic murmur rose from the crowd below. (WAFT 29)

Significantly, Lilia's words of welcome are repeated in their exact form by the audience which greets Lucia when she first appears on the stage at the opera. Moreover, the staginess of this early scene is made even more apparent when Gino, also positioned above the "audience", comes upon Lilia and Philip:

He was half enveloped in the drapery of a cold dirty curtain, and nervously stuck out a hand, which Philip took and found thick and damp. There were more murmurs of approval from the stairs. (WAFT 29)

That the audience looks upon the scene as something of a spectacle is not sufficient ground, it seems (in terms of Forster's moral categories), to condemn them as aesthetes, for they do not look upon it from a position of detachment but from one of active sympathy. While Philip takes part in this scene he does so with such self-consciousness that this business of being a participant in life comes across as a particularly unnerving experience and one from which he gladly, and predictably, withdraws as soon as possible. Although this little drama does confirm Forster's belief that art should act as a "support to our common humanity" by, in this case, revealing the difficulties inherent in human relations, and although it does confirm his belief that aesthetic response should involve the evocation and extension of our sympathies, by calling attention to his own artifice, the drama also implicates Forster in Philip's habit of seeing through the lenses of aestheticism. Forster's withdrawal here from involvement with his characters as human beings to a detached interest in them as objects which can be moved around a stage or within a picture's frame by his own will and in accordance with the demands of his aesthetic vision is, of course, a given element of his artistic mode. One may well wonder, however, why he should call attention to his ability to manipulate like a stage director when the narrative he constructs would explicitly ask that his protagonists

surrender such an inclination and also when he would criticize other novelists, like Henry James, for achieving "a particular aesthetic effect" at the "heavy price" of really involving themselves in their characters as human beings (Aspects of the Novel 144). While Forster may be suggesting in this scene that "all the world's a stage", and that art can capture the subtle difficulties of human relations, he is not consistent in this view, for the opposition which he elsewhere sets up between life and art, where he would have his characters relinquish the idea that Italy is just a museum or theatre, leads one to conclude inevitably that art must not serve as a replacement for life.

Indeed, his criticism of aestheticism extends beyond his characterization of Philip Herriton. Philip is perpetually "weary of the whole show" (WAFT 88), but Caroline Abbott too suffers from the habit of translating life into art. When she goes to visit Gino on "important business" concerning her adoption of the baby, she is left alone in the dusty reception-room, now "sacred to the dead wife" (WAFT 125), on whose walls hangs a portrait of Lilia. When at last Gino's arrival is made known by his singing, he proceeds to open the door of the reception room without seeing her, and, alarmed at going unnoticed, she sits in nervous silence watching him:

The vista of the landing and the two

open doors made him both remote and significant, like an actor on the stage, intimate and unapproachable at the same time. She could no more call out to him than if he was Hamlet.
 (WAFT 128)

Such an image of an actor who is, in a work of art, both "intimate and unapproachable" suggests Forster's contention that works of art are intimate experiences because they touch us with a sense of the quintessential truths about ourselves, but are also untouchable because, in their coherence and timelessness, they are "not this world" (TCD 91). But because Caroline cannot approach the real Gino, the image also carries implicit criticism of her defensive habit of removing herself from the possibility of greater involvement with him. Significantly, this scene follows closely after the climactic scene at the opera where "[t]he audience takes its share" (WAFT 114) of the drama and excitement. The opera is not for the Italians a work of art to be enjoyed through detached contemplation, but a form of pure entertainment, an excuse for spontaneous outbursts of enthusiasm which directly affect the singers themselves. The juxtaposition of the Italians' active vocal response to the work of art with Caroline's muteness before Gino, suggests Caroline's inability to connect with the vitality of Gino. As happens with Philip, Caroline's uneasiness with the emotional life of a character prompts her to adopt the detached position of spectator, to imagine

Gino as the inhabitant of a fixed and manageable work of art. Indeed, a few pages later we are told that "her thoughts and actions were not yet to correspond" (WAFT 130), and in an exercise of self-discipline, she imagines Gino as an objet d'art:

He sat near her, astride the parapet, with one foot in the loggia and the other dangling into the view. His face was in profile, and its beautiful contours drove artfully against the misty green of the opposing hills. "Posing!" said Miss Abbott to herself. "A born artist's model". (WAFT 131)

It is interesting that Caroline translates her perceptions only of Gino, and not of other characters, into artistic visions -- something which suggests that her imagination takes over when she cannot face up to the facts; that is, the process of translating life into art is for her precipitated by an awareness of the depth of her "unacceptable" attraction to him. By relegating Gino to the sphere of art, of unreality, Caroline is liberated from having to confront the reality of her feeling for him. That she has never really collided with life is evidenced by her comment that her trip to Italy represented the first time that she had ever gone into "real life" (WAFT 77). We learn from the Herritons that she spends a good deal of time on this first trip "very busy sketching" (WAFT 12). And when Lilia recalls how "she had sat with Gino one afternoon in March, her head upon his shoulder", she also

recalls that she had done so "while Caroline was looking at the view and sketching" (WAFT 63). The juxtaposition of the image of Lilia and Gino with that of Caroline translating the "real" into art, suggests that Caroline must turn away from the sexual and emotional implications of Lilia and Gino's togetherness into a safe world of semblances. "'Every man'" may indeed have "'something of the artist in him'" ("The Claims of Art", The Listener 743), but the artist in Caroline continually creates for her a world in which she can find solace by not having to merge into personal relations.

To suggest, however, that Lilia engages herself directly in life would be misleading, for she too seems subject to similar flights of fancy. Indeed, the description of how she fell in love with Gino hints that she responded to him as if he were something of a posing artist's model. She makes Gino buy for her a particular house

. . . because it was there she had first seen him sitting on the mud wall that faced the Volterra gate. She remembered how the evening sun had struck his hair, and how he had smiled down at her, and being both sentimental and unrefined, was determined to have the man and the place together. (WAFT 41)

Our suspicion that Lilia has responded to Gino as if he were an important component of an artistic composition is confirmed by Caroline's explanation, offered to Philip, of

how Lilia "went out for a walk alone, saw that Italian in a picturesque position on the wall, and fell in love" (WAFT 74). This action of Lilia's may be an expression of her essentially unbecoming levity, but it is also an ironic comment on Philip's exhortation delivered to Lilia at the beginning of the novel: "'And don't, let me beg you, go with that awful tourist idea that Italy's only a museum of antiquities and art. Love and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvellous than the land'" (WAFT 4).

Lilia may be "sentimental and unrefined" but she is also described as sincere, and the fact that she actually lives out Philip's own untried theory suggests that she is closer than we may at first believe to Forster's own system of values. Small details such as her description of Monteriano, which she includes in a letter to the Herritons, reveal that Forster does, to some degree, appreciate her sensitivity:

"In a place like this," she wrote, "one really does feel in the heart of things, and off the beaten track. Looking out of a Gothic window every morning, it seems impossible that the middle ages have passed away." (WAFT 11)

This letter, we are told, "concluded with a not unsuccessful description of the wonderful little town" (WAFT 11). That it is "not unsuccessful" suggests Forster's appreciation, albeit qualified, of Lilia's ability to turn her perceptions into words. In one

particular scene Forster again comes close to offering praise of Lilia's writing. The night Gino abuses her for taking a solitary walk, Lilia

. . . wildly took up paper and pen and wrote page after page, analyzing his character, enumerating his iniquities, reporting whole conversations, tracing all the causes and the growth of her misery. She was beside herself with passion, and though she could hardly think or see, she suddenly attained to magnificence and pathos which a practised stylist might have envied. (WAFT 66)

Although the "magnificence and pathos" of Lilia's prose may not be artistic per se, there is the suggestion that the process of writing is for her akin to the process of creating art. Her translation of her experiences is inspired by a passionate engagement in life which she must withdraw from and write about before she can understand. That "she could hardly think or see" while composing echoes Forster's own conception of how the conscious mind counts for little in the moment of creation because "[t]he mind as it were, turns turtle . . . and a hidden part of it comes to the top and controls the pen" (Albergo Empedocle 119). Also, in "The Duty of Society to the Artist", Forster quotes from Plato's Phaedrus and agrees that the act of creating is "a madness . . . the madness of those who are possessed by the Muses: which enters into a delicate mind and there inspires frenzy . . ." (ICD 108).

In "reporting whole conversations, tracing all the

causes and the growth of her misery", Lilia duplicates what Forster does in the enclosing fiction and thus draws attention to the act of writing and the nature of moments of creative inspiration. What is most interesting about this scene of writing is that the act of writing as it appears in the narrative itself is an act of disclosure and not of imaginative idealization: a retelling in which Lilia must return obsessively to the very core of reality which she, like Caroline and Philip, tried to evade and which Forster would have her understand if not master. She may be transported into a more frenetic state of mind when she writes, but Lilia does not escape from the truth or modify it so much with her imagination that it strays from the facts.

While this scene may corroborate part of Forster's view of the nature of aesthetic representation, as an indication of Lilia's dawning awareness of the complexities of life and personal relations it is problematic. Like Caroline and Philip, Lilia must learn to understand and connect with life, to leave her illusions and Sawston standards behind, and to see Gino as much more than an objet d'art. What is problematic about her renunciation of her illusions and emergence into the pressures and flux of life is that Forster gives to her a fullness of existence when she sees the truth about herself and Gino, but then subsequently withdraws from involvement with her character.

Indeed, as Alan Wilde points out, such a movement from involvement to withdrawal is one of the least satisfying elements of Forster's treatment of his characters:

A moment's involvement is met by a cold awakening [F]rom the center of Forster's creations, his protagonists send out signals that they care to be loved and pitied, that they want to be part of life; still, though they often make the effort, they cannot or dare not. (Art and Order 13)

It seems, at least in Lilia's case (and perhaps even in Philip's), that Forster is unable to make the abandonment of illusion and the process of emergence into the real world a constructive act. Within two pages of Lilia's writing of her suffering she dies suddenly in giving birth. Once she has surrendered her imaginative fancies about Gino and life in Italy, her recognition of and entry into the difficulties of real-life experience do not give her the capacity to continue to confront them. Indeed, "broken by suffering" she retreats from life itself: "She gave up hope, became ill, and all through the autumn lay in bed" (WAFT 67). Her retreat is not into a private heaven of the imagination, but into a seclusion which affords her the wisdom of "knowing everything" (WAFT 67) except the crucial knowledge of how to act or how to create something constructive out of her situation. While the act of writing is depicted as one which reflects the essential truths of Lilia's real situation, at the same time this

very knowledge is destructive and retards movement toward creativity and personal involvement in life. There is perhaps on Forster's part an inability to come to terms with the consequences of leaving one's private fortress and of encountering the real world except through further illusion (as in the case of Philip) or death, and a resultant inability to make the process of emergence a constructive, life-enhancing act. This may be symptomatic of Forster's latent awareness that what he has asked his characters to do is something which he endorses theoretically but which he knows is not conducive to creativity or to the attainment of a clear vision of the beauties and complexities of life.

Forster criticizes his characters for keeping to their ivory towers and private heavens, but when they do make contact with real life the results are far from salutary: he either destroys them (as with Lilia, Rickie Elliot, and Leonard Bast) or allows them, as he does with Philip, to regress. The movement toward personal commitment to life, so lauded by Forster, thus entails, paradoxically, retreat into the private. It is perhaps not so unfitting that Harriet "after a short paroxysm of illness and remorse" (WAFT 177) precipitated by her complicity in the death of Gino's baby, should "quickly [return] to her normal state" (WAFT 178); for Harriet, bearing no illusions about Italy and hardly given a modicum

of humanity or sympathy throughout the novel, seems fated from the start to remain her detached self. But after all that Caroline Abbott, a more fully-developed and sympathetically-depicted character, has seen and experienced, she still, at the end of the novel, claims that "'[a]ll the wonderful things are over'" (WAFT 179), that she must go back to "Sawston and work": "'I'm neglecting it shamefully -- my evening classes, the St. James' --'" (WAFT 178). It is perhaps because Forster sympathizes with the mind's need to withdraw from the flux of life in order to understand its complexities that his characters move uneasily between the process of emergence, to which Forster seems committed, and retreat from intense experience. The novel's complicated movement between emergence and retreat may reflect Forster's own ambivalence about the sacrifices entailed by the renunciation of illusion. In "The Ivory Tower" he attests to this ambivalence, remarking that "[w]e veer from one side of human nature to the other: now we feel that we are individuals, whose duty it is to create a private heaven; and now we feel we ought to sink our individuality into something larger than ourselves -- something which we can only . . . partially understand" (Atlantic Monthly 53). Forster's sympathy for the urge to create a private heaven is inextricably tied to his understanding that this fortress is the domain of the creative imagination and

personal religion which manifest themselves in works of art and in spiritual fulfillment -- aspects which he values over the confusion of daily life and which he appears to value as highly as a commitment to personal relations.

Forster is careful, however, to show that works of art do not ignore and do not simplify the complexities of personal relations but rather that they express such complexity coherently and passionately. When Harriet laments that "'the whole thing'" -- the entire mess in which she and the other Sawstonians find themselves at Monteriano -- reminds her of "'one of those horrible modern plays where no one is in the right'" (WAFT 70), we realize that this perception is based on the fact that, for Harriet, life at Monteriano goes beyond her simplistic moral categories. But what this comment also suggests is that art contains a knowledge of the muddle of human life, that it does not create an idealized world into which one can escape. If the play provides a "support to our common humanity" it is because, in its unsimplified disclosure of the moral complexity of human life, it should touch Harriet with a sense of her own weakness. This concept of aesthetic representation which reflects, rather than avoids, life, is also suggested by the fictional source included in the novel. The few lines which Gino recites from Dante's Inferno ("'Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita/ Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura/ Che la diritta via

era smarrita--'") in order to impress Philip, are, according to Forster, "more apt than he supposed" (WAFT 32). Indeed, Where Angels Fear to Tread is, to some extent, an expansion of these lines. When Philip, on his way to dissuade Lilia from marrying Gino, passes through the little wood at the base of the hill on which Monteriano is set, he is, like Dante at the start of his pilgrimage, morally muddled. Philip's misconception of both the nature of Italy and the situation that has brought him there places him in Dante's "dark wood", where he begins believing he is on the right path of duty until it is almost too late. When he next enters the wood it is on that tragic carriage journey during which Gino's child, whose tear-stained face strikes Philip "as all wrong" (WAFT 161), is killed. Having sustained an injury in the collision of the carriages, Philip faints and awakes in a wood "where it was even darker than in the open" (WAFT 163), and proceeds to crawl through the muddied road in search of the baby. The striking analogy between this fiction and Dante's *Inferno*, coupled with Harriet's complaint that life is like a play "where no one is in the right", tends to confirm as normative for art a translation of life which does not cover up its connections with the disturbing truth of moral complexity.

Such a conception of art as a medium which captures the quintessential facts of existence extends to Forster's

evaluation of other works of art included in his fiction. The fresco of Santa Deodata, which appears in Chapters VI and VIII, depicts the holy maiden in a recumbent position experiencing, just before her death, a moment of divine revelation (See Appendix 133). Forster makes it clear that what the subject of this work of art portrays, and what it ignores, is important. The painting glorifies the virtue of resignation in life in order to attain a higher ideal; and in this respect, Santa Deodata's story mirrors Philip's own. In the fresco the saint looks "neither at the view nor at the pot, and at her widowed mother still less" (WAFT 149). That she should ignore the earthly and the personal is sacrilegious enough in Forster's system of values, and this leads him to conclude scathingly that "in her death, as in her life, Santa Deodata did not accomplish much" (WAFT 149). This last comment is followed immediately by the telling question Caroline directs at Philip: "'So what are you going to do?'" (WAFT 149). Philip's theory that we should be "'judged by our intentions, not by our accomplishments'" (WAFT 150), and his conviction that he shall "'fail honourably'" because "'[s]ome of us are born not to do things'" (WAFT 151), only provoke the ire of Caroline, who tells him that his rhetoric amounts to "'simply not thinking and not acting at all'" (WAFT 150). She concludes that for all his high-sounding rationalizations of his cowardice and idleness, he is

really just "'dead--dead--dead'" (WAFT 150). Although Philip assents to this, her remark still "had only an aesthetic value. He was not prepared to take it to his heart" (WAFT 153). The same kind of lack of interest in real life and the latent hostility toward his mother which Philip's story reveals can be discerned in Forster's portrait of Santa Deodata:

So holy was she that all her life she lay upon her back in the house of her mother, refusing to eat, refusing to play, refusing to work. The devil, envious of such sanctity, tempted her in various ways. . . . [H]e tripped up the mother and flung her downstairs before her very eyes. But so holy was the saint that she never picked her mother up, but lay upon her back through all, and thus assured her throne in Paradise. She was only fifteen when she died, which shows how much is within the reach of any schoolgirl. (WAFT 99-100)

As a pictorial equivalent of retreat into a world which evades reality, the subject of the fresco is related antithetically to the concerns of Forster's own art, as well as to the truth of Santa Deodata's life which its fictive surface hides, a truth which Forster uncovers when he looks behind the aesthetic surface. Forster's contention that "[t]he appreciator of an aesthetic achievement becomes in his minor way an artist" because "he cannot rest without communicating what has been communicated to him" (ICD 115), finds ironic expression in Philip's response to the fresco. His eyes "[rest]

agreeably on Santa Deodata" (WAFT 148) and she keeps him in a "pleasant dream", communicating to him the essence of his argument that we should be "'judged by our intentions, not by our accomplishments'". Indeed, Forster stresses that what Santa Deodata actually communicates and inspires in others is something other than the resolve to create beauty or encourage love:

Those who think her life was
unpractical need only think of the
victories upon Poggibonsi, San
Gemignano, Volterra, Siena itself --
all gained through the invocation of
her name (WAFT 100)

Forster's refusal to allow the subject of this art any authority, to allow it to forget its connections with actuality, is symptomatic of his belief that artists must not "falsify life" and also of his strong conviction that the assertion of individual will is the only means by which man can be "saved". Santa Deodata inspires in others a kind of hero-worship which Forster claims is a "dangerous vice" because it does not encourage a democratic spirit or a vital engagement in real life: ". . . people who cannot get interested in life, and cannot make up their own minds . . . long for a hero to bow down before and follow blindly" (TCD 82). If Forster believes that anyone should be exalted above another and should triumph over life it is not the likes of a sexless, emotionally paralysed saint, but "an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and

the plucky They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos" (TCD 82). And while such an aristocracy may not go to heaven or experience visions of St. Gregory, "their temple, as one of them remarked, is the Holiness of the Heart's Affection, and their kingdom . . . is the wide-open world" (TCD 83). His ultimate position on those people who are glorified above others for their gains is that they "[fail] with a completeness which no artist and no lover can experience, because with them the process of creation is itself an achievement" (TCD 82). Santa Deodata may be "assured her throne in Paradise", but Forster places achievement in the sphere of personal relations and creative individuality and so must conclude that "[i]n her death, as in her life, Santa Deodata did not accomplish much" (WAFT 149).

Forster's response to the fresco is so completely oriented to its subject matter that questions relating to its formal beauty and whether it "bears the impress of the supreme moment [of inspiration]" ("The Extreme Case", Athenaeum 561) seem irrelevant. Similarly, when he describes the other major aesthetic analogue included in the novel, Donizetti's opera Lucia di Lammermoor¹, he concentrates on the aesthetic responses which the work of art elicits from its audience. The opera perhaps offers the best clue as to what Forster thought art should

encourage in its viewer. Unlike the fresco of Santa Deodata, this work of art "aims not at illusion" (WAFT 119), indeed, "[i]t observes beauty and chooses to pass it by" (WAFT 118). One may wonder why this seemingly exemplary work of art cannot also be aesthetically "beautiful", but it seems that, because the opera encourages a spilling over of love for life and of sympathy for living things, it is enough that it "attains to beauty's confidence" (WAFT 118). The painter who claims in "The Duty of Society to the Artist" that he simply wants "to extend human sensitiveness through paint" perhaps best expresses what Forster believed art should do. It is clear that the subject of the fresco of Santa Deodata does not encourage such an extension, and that alone is enough to condemn it. What Forster suggests in his description of the opera is that art should "be alive", that it should be "this man-to-man business" (Aspects of the Novel 38). Indeed, the actors on the stage of the opera do not simply recite or sing their scripts but actually alter their performances in accordance with the demands of the audience. Lucia herself goes into the audience bestowing kisses and accepting carnations from her admirers. Moreover, even though the stage setting and the drama itself are stamped with "bad taste" (WAFT 118), the fact that the audience accompanies the orchestral music "with tappings and drummings, swaying in the melody like corn in

the wind" (WAFT 119), that the stage singers "drew inspiration from the audience" (WAFT 120), and that "violent waves of excitement, all arising from very little, went sweeping round the theatre" (WAFT 120), is enough to commend it as a work which encourages personal involvement and whose surface appearance does not disguise its connections with the real. In "The Raison d'Etire of Criticism in the Arts", Forster claims that "co-operation with the artist . . . is the sole reason for our aesthetic pilgrimage" (TCD 131), and in the novel's opera scene the Italians lend themselves openly to such a cooperation. Although both Lucia and the audience know that the bamboo clothes-horse-cum-animal is a stage prop "brought in to make the performance go year after year" (WAFT 121), that it is "very ugly, and most of the flowers in it were false", they are still willing to make the leap of imagination, to cooperate in such a way that they actually participate in the creation of the work of art. Indeed, we are told that for all their recognition of the animal's fictionality, "[n]one the less did it unloose the great deeps" (WAFT 121). Forster thus draws close connections between aesthetic reponse and the degree to which the audience is willing to stretch their imaginations, and forges intimate links between aesthetic value and the intensity and vitality with which human life is presented. The opera does not avoid the confusions of life; indeed,

its climax is reached in the scene in which Lucia goes mad, but Forster values it most as a medium which reveals the inner energy of existence. He seems not to care for the degree of sophistication with which the work of art is rendered, and this explains why he contends that "[t]his tiny theatre . . . spraddled and swaggered with the best of them" and even those "lightly clad" ladies in that "appalling drop scene", "would have nodded to the young men on the ceiling of the Sistine" (WAFT 118). It is in an art's capacity to connect us in sympathy and understanding with our fellow beings that its intensity, vitality, and ultimately its worth, lie, Forster suggests.

Forster's feeling that art should be a natural and spontaneous reflection of the inner life accounts for his sometimes puzzling attitude toward works of art like the fresco of Santa Deodata. It is because of these standards that the glorification of someone like Santa Deodata is unjustifiable in his eyes and, similarly, why Henry James's fiction seems appealing in a formal aesthetic sense but sterile in terms of its capacity to depict human life. Of the characters in James's fiction, Forster says, in Aspects of the Novel, that they are "castrated", "guttled of the common stuff that fills characters in other books, and ourselves" (143). He claims that because James "pursued the narrow path of aesthetic duty" (142), only "maimed

creatures" occupy his pages:

They are incapable of fun, of rapid motion, of carnality and of nine-tenths of heroism. Their clothes will not take off, the diseases that ravage them are anonymous, like the sources of their income, their servants are noiseless or resemble themselves, . . . there are no stupid people in their world, no barriers of language and no poor. Even their sensations are limited. They can land in Europe and look at works of art and at each other, but that is all".
(143)

While James's characters may only be capable of staring at works of art, Forster's own, we are led to believe, can do more. Because great works of art transform the individual reading or viewing them towards the condition of the artist who created them, they can "bring to birth in us also the creative impulse" (TCD 93). But the aesthetic response is not, for Forster, limited to a sensation of ecstasy; it relates strongly to the moral being of the individual. The two-fold nature of aesthetic response involves both the pleasure obtained from entering the autonomous universe of art as well as the moral influence gained obliquely from the experience. Thus, at the opera, Miss Abbott "fell into the spirit of the thing" and "[a]s for Philip, he forgot himself as well as his mission. He was not even an enthusiastic visitor. For he had been in this place always. It was his home" (WAFT 120). It is not only in the pleasure of the art that

Philip revels, for the opera gives to him a sense of joy that temporarily overcomes his cynicism and detachment and prompts him to appreciate Gino and the way of the Italians; the moral influence gained from this experience apparently leaves a lasting impression: "Philip was averse to losing his temper. The access of joy that had come to him yesterday in the theatre promised to be permanent. He was more anxious than heretofore to be charitable towards the world" (WAFT 145).

Forster seems to value art, then, less for its aesthetic beauty than for its capacity to depict the inner energy of existence and to encourage the extension of its audience's sensitiveness. The fresco of Santa Deodata falls short of his ideal notion of art because it sustains rather than challenges the assumption that art can properly falsify the facts of existence and leads us to believe that inaction and disinterest are the road to salvation. While Forster may have conceded that the form and composition of the fresco are appealing, he would obviously not make such a concession regarding its subject matter. When he recreates the scene in his own fiction, he produces a tableau whose formal compositional elements are, as Meyers observes, similar to those in the fresco (Painting and the Novel 35), but whose subject matter is opposite. Indeed, in the tableau Forster exalts instinct and nature and ironically couches such an exaltation in the language of

religious truth. When Caroline visits Gino about the matter of her adopting the child, her attitude toward both Gino and the infant is reversed, for as she had previously thought of the baby as only a word, "[t]he real thing, lying asleep on a dirty rug, disconcerted her" (130). In the same way, Gino, in all of his suggestive vitality and unselfconscious love for his child, has undermined the force of her theory that he is not a good father. Looking upon Gino and his son, Caroline realizes that "[s]he was in the presence of something greater than right or wrong" (WAFT 137). Averting her eyes "reverently" from the scene, she asks "humbly" if she can help bathe the child, and, as if performing a religious ritual, she is "strangely exalted by the service" (WAFT 140). Forster now arranges a tableau which captures the beauty of the scene and which, in its use of symbols explicitly linked to the fresco, alerts our sense of the bold differences between the characters in Ghirlandaio's art and those in Forster's own. Gino

put a chair for her on the loggia, which faced westward, and was still pleasant and cool. There she sat, with twenty miles of view behind her, and he placed the dripping baby on her knee. It shone now with health and beauty: it seemed to reflect light, like a copper vessel. Just such a baby Bellini sets languid on his mother's lap, or Signorelli flings wriggling on pavements of marble, or Lorenzo di Credi, more reverent but less divine, lays carefully among flowers, with his head upon a wisp of golden straw. For a time Gino

contemplated them standing. Then, to get a better view, he knelt by the side of the chair, with his hands clasped before him. (WAFT 140-141)

By consciously re-creating elements of Ghirlandaio's vision in his own art, and by invoking the more earthly, less "divine" visions of other artists (See Appendix 134-6), Forster effectively suggests what the "message" of his own art is, albeit while also exposing the tendency he shares with Philip to view the materials of life in aesthetic terms. Nevertheless, Forster seems to be suggesting that the "divinity" of these characters rests in their profound humanity, their links with nature and instinct and the Holiness of the Heart's Affection. The tableau is obviously an anti-type of the fresco of Santa Deodata, and even though Philip, when he comes upon the scene, sees the composition which Caroline, the baby and Gino form as "Virgin and Child, with Donor" (WAFT 141), the irony is, of course, that the attraction between Caroline and Gino is earthly and sensual, as is Caroline's attraction to the baby. As if in recognition of this irony, Caroline responds to Philip's sudden appearance on this scene by bursting into tears and fleeing. Untouched by the scene but curious to find out the reason behind Caroline's strange behavior, Philip still remains detached: "he was quite indifferent to the outcome He was only extremely interested" (WAFT 145). Caroline's turning away from Gino is an initial phase in an act of

resignation similar to Santa Deodata's; for, indeed, at the end of the novel, when she confesses to Philip her love for Gino, she claims that she "'dare not risk'" (WAFT 182) expressing her passion for him and implicitly realizes that she is thus as "dead" as the holy maiden. Where Philip possesses the saint's kind of detachment and complacency, Caroline reveals her kinship with the maiden when, in a gesture of self-sacrifice, she turns away from the claims of the flesh and the earthly. This distinction between Caroline and Philip in their parallels with the saint is well captured in the scene where Philip tells Caroline, after she has denounced Sawston and its people for "'never [learning] how to enjoy themselves'" (WAFT 76), that there is "'nothing that can stop you retreating into splendour and beauty -- into the thoughts that make the real life -- the real you'" (WAFT 78). Although it seems that Forster would seek to dislodge Philip from this posture, it is one with which he does sympathize. In "The Ivory Tower" he cites the opinion of Plotinus to suggest that retreat into one's private heaven is salutary: "[he] believes not only that the individual is more real than the community, but that it is absolute reality" (Atlantic Monthly 57). Caroline's uneasiness with this concept of reality as an idealized state of mind untainted by interaction with the social world is confirmed by her subsequent action of going out "to buy petticoats for the corpulent poor" (WAFT 78),

while Philip goes to a matinee. In renouncing Philip's idea of absolute reality, she denies herself his kind of detached, "blasphemous" (WAFT 153) existence, but in continuing her pious acts of charity she aligns herself with the Sawstonians she has condemned for "petty unselfishness": "'I had got an idea that everyone here spent their lives in making little sacrifices for objects they didn't care for, to please people they didn't love . . .'" (WAFT 76). Still Caroline's basic inclination to act on what she feels is right, and her intuition that "'[t]here's never any knowing . . . which of our actions, which of our idlenesses won't have things hanging on it for ever'" (WAFT 153), gain for her a certain moral authority and foreshadow the catastrophe which Philip's idleness does in fact bring about.

The shock of the death of Gino's child brings a new awareness to Philip, namely that inaction as much as action can have profound consequences. He emerges from the "selva oscura" unable to comprehend what happened there: "As yet he could scarcely survey the thing. It was too great. Round the Italian baby who had died in the mud there centred deep passions and high hopes. People had been wicked or wrong in the matter; no one save himself had been trivial" (WAFT 165). Philip acknowledges his responsibility for the catastrophe in a confrontation with Gino, and the expansion of his moral sense is the climax of

his education: from aestheticism he has moved to an awareness of the supremacy of personal relations, to a comprehension of the intricate nature of good and evil, and to a realization of the necessity for action and personal commitment. What crystallizes Philip's sense that he has been wrongheaded all along is his perception of a tableau which Forster creates -- clearly a pietà which moves him like art. After Gino has received the tragic news of his baby's death, Caroline comforts him in his grief and we are told that in Philip's eyes

All through the day Miss Abbott had seemed like a goddess, and more than ever did she seem so now Her eyes were open, full of infinite pity and full of majesty, as if they discerned . . . unimagined tracts beyond. Such eyes he had seen in great pictures but never in a mortal. Her hands were folded round the sufferer, stroking him lightly, for even a goddess can do no more than that. And it seemed fitting, too, that she should bend her head and touch his forehead with her lips.
(WAFT 172-3)

The tableau suggests, as Forster believed, that order and meaning in life can exist and be discerned at the level of both personal relations and art. The tableau captures both the human and the divine in that it depicts a tenderness which Forster exalts and, by being associated with a pietà, it suggests a quality of timelessness about the gesture of humanity pictured. In revealing the essential truth of the need for personal commitment to life and for the expression

of sensitiveness and humanity, the tableau indeed "seems more real and solid than daily existence" (TCD 91). Philip's impression that the tableau has enabled him to see something greater than daily life has hitherto afforded him is not just a superficial acknowledgement of the beauty of the scene, but a realization which relates to his moral being, an impression so far-reaching that it apparently converts him:

Philip looked away, as he sometimes looked away from the great pictures where visible forms suddenly become inadequate for the things they have shown to us. He was happy; he was assured that there was greatness in the world. There came to him an earnest desire to be good through the example of this good woman Quietly, without hysterical prayers or banging of drums, he underwent conversion. He was saved. (WAFT 173)

During and after his visit to the opera, Philip is also assured "that there was greatness in the world", and the access of joy he takes away from that experience of art is not very different from that which he extracts from this tableau. The image of Caroline comforting Gino incites Philip to "try henceforward to be worthy of the things she had revealed" (WAFT 173), just as after the opera he "was more anxious than heretofore to be charitable towards the world" (WAFT 145). Like his own creator, Philip finds in art the order and meaning he cannot discover in the social world, as well as a reminder of the salvation he is

neglecting. Forster's paraphrase of Blake's belief that "[t]he imagination . . . waits within us, ready to redeem from inertia and chaos, and lead us through action to our eternal home" ("An Approach to Blake", The Spectator 474), finds expression in Philip's willingness to suspend his cynicism and acknowledge the imaginative truths captured in art and thus to achieve his own kind of redemption.

Clearly Forster endorses the concept of Philip's salvation. But that he convinces the reader of Philip's transfiguration is questionable. In light of his careful development of Philip's situation, the accident in the wood seems unquestionable motivation for the character's new awareness of his inadequacies. It is equally understandable that, under the influence of feelings of remorse and physical suffering, Philip should be deeply touched by the tenderness and compassion Caroline displays. But Forster's assertion that Philip's salvation is a result of the artistic vision he has seen is a bewildering one, since Philip's habit of seeing life in aesthetic terms has been presented throughout as a limitation. Moreover, there is more than a suggestion that in gaining a vision of the truth of the instinctive life Philip is also returned to his ivory tower and position of detachment. Despite its explicit plea for commitment, the novel concludes amid ironies and ambiguities. Revealing that Philip is now in love with Caroline, and Caroline in love with Gino, the

tone of the conclusion is more depressing than triumphant. Philip perceives that "all the excitement was over. . . . He was convalescent, both in body and spirit, but convalescence brought no joy He had seen the need for strenuous work and for righteousness. And now he saw what a very little way those things would go" (WAFT 177). Looking "mournfully" out the train window, Philip listens to Caroline insist that "'all the wonderful things are over'", an insistence conveyed "so mournfully that he dare not contradict her" (WAFT 179). While Caroline also insists that he cease to think of her as refined, that her love for Gino is earthly and carnal, it is as if Philip must turn away from this disturbing fact into his private fortress of the imagination. Indeed, "to such a height was he lifted" that he conceives of Caroline as a "goddess", albeit one taken from the myth of Endymion: "This woman was a goddess to the end. For her no love could be degrading: she stood outside all degradation" (WAFT 184). Although Caroline implores him to "'[g]et over supposing I'm refined. . . .Get over that'" (WAFT 183), to Philip "she seemed to be transfigured and to have indeed no part with refinement or unrefinement any longer" (WAFT 184). Because Philip seems here to be contemplating life from the heights of detachment, we may very well question his new-found ability to be worthy of the need for a passionate connection with life that Caroline has revealed. Indeed,

he alone is able to "see round" Caroline's love for Gino and, we are told, "to see round it he was standing at an immense distance" (WAFT 183). Earlier in the novel, Caroline remarks of Philip that he is the only person "who has a general view of the muddle" (WAFT 148) and that when he first came to Monteriano he "saw and foresaw everything" (WAFT 77). These early comments suggest Philip's complete detachment, how he observes people and events but "'doesn't grip on to life'" (WAFT 162). Philip's final ability to "see round" things seems to be expressive not of any commitment to life, but of a final retreat into an ivory tower which has always afforded him a disinterested "view of the muddle" while allowing him to indulge in flights of fancy.

While Forster's novel lauds the truth of the instinctive life and preaches acceptance of passion and the necessity of engagement, its two sympathetic characters retreat to a singularly detached position. Furthermore, Forster not only has Philip withdraw, he makes withdrawal a precondition for insight. It is not just Caroline's gesture of humanity that "saves" Philip, but both the artistic quality of the image and Philip's reliance on his imagination to carry the meaning of Caroline's gesture on to a greater plane. It is true that at the end of the novel Philip is some distance from his initial moral and emotional situation; most importantly, he has learned to

allow the truth to inform his imaginative visions rather than continuing to overlay it or evade it with remote fancies. But in terms of his ability to act on the truth, he is still at a considerable distance from the ideal Forster has sought to reach in him. Despite Forster's efforts to purge Philip of his tendency toward detachment and imaginative excess, the final meaning of Philip's salvation seems to lie in the exercise of his powers of observation and imagination, which rely on words and images, not actions, and which can comprehend the meaning of experience only by viewing it at a distance.

In seeing Caroline as a goddess, Philip exposes the process of creation as one which modifies fact according to desire and which can ultimately integrate fact and fiction -- since the truth of Caroline's sensuality is acknowledged by Philip and incorporated into his vision of her as a "greater" being. Caroline is, at the end of the novel, both "intimate and unapproachable" for Philip, both sensual and divine. Although Forster suggests that art and the creative process look to the truth of feeling for their impetus, the "artist" in his major character demands that he disconnect himself from the world in order to comprehend that truth of feeling and embody it in creative images. The indecisive end to Philip's relations with Caroline, and even with Gino, would appear to reflect Forster's inability to connect an interest in the orderliness of art and the

imagination with a concern for engagement in the disordered life of the emotions. Through irony Forster has kept in check his characters' imaginative excesses and their tendency to translate life into art; but he has neither denied nor disavowed the truths of the imagination. It is perhaps because he sympathizes so much with the mind's desire to escape into an ivory tower of the imagination that his explicit endorsement of a form of instinctive energy and involvement comes across with lukewarm conviction.

In light of the critical pronouncements Forster makes in his non-fiction about the nature of art and artists, Philip's final withdrawal is perhaps comprehensible. In the novel, however, such a withdrawal is problematic. The movement there toward an embrace of life, articulated throughout as Philip's need to acknowledge reality and commit himself to it, culminates in retreat into an ivory tower, divorced from the possibility of action. The nature of the conclusion is paradoxical because it runs counter to what it appears to illustrate; indeed, the notion of withdrawal in order to gain insight opposes the very core of Forster's humanistic ideal as it is articulated in the novel. But throughout the novel Forster has suggested that the visions of life offered by art and the imagination give to Philip something greater than he can get when he merges into a complex, often

prosaic, and even destructive reality. The imagination and its embodiment in works of art create "the one orderly product our muddling race has produced" both for Forster and Philip, and because Forster is attracted to the idea of intense involvement in life, but also knows that an ivory tower is the domain of creativity and spiritual fulfilment, he ultimately "wobbles" between his resolve to make his character engage himself in life and his conviction that withdrawal can give to him "something finer and greater than he can get when he merges in the multitude" ("The Ivory Tower", Atlantic Monthly 56). Yet despite its peculiarly ambiguous and rather ominous conclusion, Where Angels Fear to Tread projects the liveliness of its embrace of Italy and frames the crucial antitheses between art and life, detachment and involvement, dispassion and feeling, which Forster will take up in his less complex but more optimistic exploration of the life of the emotions and the world of art and the imagination in A Room with a View.

II

A Room with a View

It is not my preferred novel. . . but
it may fairly be called the nicest.
("A View Without a Room", ARV 231)

It would be difficult to contest convincingly Forster's own evaluation of A Room with a View as the "nicest" of his novels, for, of the six, it is the most light, amusing, and optimistic, owing chiefly to its being unencumbered by the vision of darkness and irreversible disharmony adumbrated in the succeeding novels and finally articulated in A Passage to India. It is important, however, to keep in mind that this love story with a happy ending does not represent a reversal of the strange note of retreat and resignation that concludes Where Angels Fear to Tread. The first part of A Room with a View was almost the first piece of fiction Forster ever attempted (Furbank and Haskell 36), making the ostensible reaffirmation of the victory of love, truth and instinct over detachment and muddle which the novel contains actually the first stage in the progress of Forster's developing attitude toward commitment to personal relations as an ideal.

As in Where Angels Fear to Tread, Forster is concerned to delineate the opposition between reality and

illusion, truth and pretense, the unselfconscious absorption in life and the aesthetic way of viewing life, and consequently to show how the different attitudes toward life and art operate as an index to the individual worth of the characters concerned. Both novels insistently prod the protagonists in the direction of truth and self-realization, both oppose the conventions of social propriety to the spirit of life, and, to some degree, they both oppose art to life. But the Italy of A Room with a View bears few traces of the suffering and brutality found in Monteriano, and the tragic implication of the conflict there between English and Italian mores is absent from the violets and sunshine which abound in the Florence around the Pension Bertolini. Whereas in Where Angels Fear to Tread Italy is vital to the action, in A Room with a View it remains a surface setting, its horrors only briefly captured by the sensational murder in the Piazza Signoria, and its people only charming character-types like Phaethon and Persephone, who guide the English tourists on the sight-seeing excursion which culminates in George Emerson's kiss. Views, found in the landscapes of both Italy and England, represent the truth of instinct that Lucy Honeychurch will not yet perceive, and although Italy provides the initial setting for her self-discovery, its chief function is to shed light upon her life at Windy Corner. Many of the characters from Sawston and Monteriano

reappear in Florence and at Windy Corner: Mrs. Herriton and her daughter, Harriet, seem close relatives of Charlotte Bartlett; Caroline and Lucy have both "'seen so little of life'" (ARV 214), desire more from it, and yet seek to deny the truth of their greater experiences; George Emerson is something of an intellectualized Gino; and, of course, as Forster himself declared, Cecil Vyse "has got something of Philip in him" (Furbank and Haskell 32-33). It is not, however, the protagonists but rather the minor characters of A Room with a View who suffer from the habit of seeing life as art. Miss Lavish, the supposed feminist and hack novelist, shares with Philip Herriton the tendency to romanticize life, but the terms of the discontinuity between reality and her illusions are not related as seriously since she is but a minor character, treated as a subject more for laughter than for serious scrutiny. Moreover, the authorial attitude in A Room with a View does not complicate the novel so much as it does Where Angels Fear to Tread. The kind of sympathy with which Forster depicts Philip Herriton is not so fully developed in his portrayal of Cecil and Mr. Beebe, and although Forster does occasionally implicate himself in their aestheticist habit of mind, ultimately his sympathies lie with his hero and heroine and the championing of truth and personal commitment to life that they come to represent.

But in a work which realizes that harmony between

head and heart which preoccupied Forster in his writings, one may wonder why A Room with a View was not his "preferred novel". Forster is ultimately ambivalent about the novel, regarding it as "thin" (qtd. in Stallybrass, Introduction to ARV 8) and he was troubled over the morality of a happy ending in modern fiction. "A hundred years ago, or fifty years ago, this would have seemed a very good answer," he commented in a 1906 paper, "Pessimism in Literature". But the modern novelist "wants to end his book on a note of permanence, and where shall he find it?Where shall such a man find rest with honour? Scarcely in a happy ending" (Albergo Empedocle 135). Yet he does pay tribute, however small, to his accomplishment, noting that "the characters seem more alive to me than any others that I have put together"(qtd. in Introduction, ARV 13) and he defended the novel against E. J. Dent's not so laudatory evaluation, declaring that "the character of Lucy, on which everything depends, is all right: she and Mr. Beebe have interested me a good deal"(qtd. in Introduction, ARV 14). But the marriage at the end of A Room with a View perhaps defined for Forster the novel's thinness, a matter "akin to morality"(qtd. in Introduction, ARV 13) because the happy ending represented an escape from rather than a confrontation with the reality the modern mind knows to exist:

Life is not a bed of roses. Still

less is it a bed with all the roses on one side of it, and all the thorns stuck into an expiring villain on the other. The writer who depicts it as such may possibly be praised for his healthy simplicity. But his own conscience will never approve him, for he knows that healthiness and simplicity are not, in all cases, identical with truth. (Albergo Empedocle 144)

The turmoil of the modern world requires separation, not a valedictory celebration, and in his recognition of what he viewed as an outdated solution, Forster reveals the distance he has placed between the newer sense of art as disclosure and emergence into the real and the old image of art as the construction of a fictive ideal. Already contained within the ideal of harmony is, however, a knowledge of reality which may in fact undermine it. In an essay of 1920, Forster remarks that in "the heart of every man there is contrived, by desperate devices, a magical island" which shields the mind from a psychically destructive abandonment of illusion, and that though we may call this island a "vision" in order to "lend it solidity", it is really not: "it is the outcome of our sadness, and of our disgust with the world that we have made" (AH 38). It is perhaps "by desperate devices" that A Room with a View compels the marriage of Lucy and George in the name of truth and the achievement of the ideal of personal relations, for the mind, as Forster admits, may need the palliation of a corrective illusion

even when it is seen to be deceptive. But it is this happy ending which is responsible for most of what is unsatisfactory in the novel. Potentially intricate and troubling developments such as the inconsistent motions of Charlotte Bartlett and Mr. Beebe, George's abrupt abandonment of his search for an answer to the Everlasting Why, and Lucy's final alienation from the love of everyone except the Emersons, are too neatly forgotten for the sake of the triumph of love and truth in George and Lucy's life. While the happy ending of A Room with a View does act, as Forster thought art should, "as an antidote against our present troubles" (TCD 7), it does not so much confirm his belief that "Art should be an expression of life in all its aspects" ("The Ivory Tower", Atlantic Monthly 55), since the aspects of unease and moral complexity which he recognizes in the modern world are those from which he rescues his protagonists at the end. The aesthetic analogues used in A Room with a View (such as Giotto's fresco, Lucy's music, and various other arts including poetry, novels, and sculpture) explore the sufficiency of art as a medium which offers both "an antidote against our present troubles" and "a support to our common humanity" (TCD 7). Forster's ultimate position seems to be the familiar one that art can provide both an escape from daily life and a confrontation with the truth. Because art is, in the ordered and coherent universe it presents, "not this

world" (TCD 91), it provides us with an escape, but because it can disclose to us essential and eternal truths of existence (the perception of which daily life seldom affords) it ultimately returns us to reality with a sharper comprehension of its beauties and complexities. While Forster is suspicious of those works of art which depict a turning away from life and of the proponents, like Cecil Vyse, of the aesthetic view of life, he is uncritically approving of those works of art which capture a vital spirit of life. For instance, unlike the fresco of Santa Deodata, the statues of Perseus and Judith, Hercules and Thusnelda, which stand in the Piazza Signoria, represent acceptable subject matter for art because they glorify figures who "have done or suffered something" and for whom "immortality has come. . . after experience not before" (ARV 78). An experience of life in all its aspects is what Forster ultimately demands from his protagonist; from art he demands an expression of the underlying truths of that experience.

The aesthetic analogues within the novel essentially operate as models of what art should or should not be, and suggest both the artistic errors Forster sought to avoid in his own art and the ideal toward which he was working. The many references to literature and to the act of writing suggest that this form of art can disclose to us the truths of existence, but that unless a comprehension of

those truths is gained through experience in life itself, literature can seem more of a simplification than a full disclosure of the complexity of life. When Mr. Emerson laments to Lucy that his son is perpetually despondent over "'[t]he old trouble'", that the things of the universe will not tally with one another, he attempts to elucidate the meaning of George's torment by quoting from Housman's "A Shropshire Lad" (stanza 32):

"From far, from eve and morning
 And yon twelve-winded sky,
 The stuff of life to knit me
 Blew hither: here am I." (ARV 47)

Mr. Emerson uses art to illuminate his understanding of life; he does not, like Cecil Vyse, see life as art. Indeed, Housman's words have so mingled with Mr. Emerson's own, that he recites the stanza not with the tones of a pedant or cultured aesthete but in "his ordinary voice, so that [Lucy] scarcely realized he was quoting poetry" (ARV 47). It is interesting that Mr. Emerson should recite the lines of a poet whom Forster himself admired for the "propping" quality of his art (TCD 74), its ability to capture "the vibrations, the motions of the heart" ("Ancient and Modern", The Listener 921). What Housman offers here is a disclosure, not an idealization of the essential nature of existence: "'that we come from the winds, and that we shall return to them; that all life is perhaps a knot, a tangle, a blemish in the eternal

smoothness'"(ARV 47). While this sense of the tininess and potential insignificance of human life is tragic and distressing for George, his father, who does not believe "'in this world sorrow'" proposes that we should "'rather love one another, and work and rejoice'"(ARV 47). Mr. Emerson would not conclude with the Reverend Mr. Eager, after Wordsworth, that "'the world is too much with us'"(ARV 71); although his position is not anti-Wordsworthian --indeed, throughout the novel he is the spokesman for the supremacy of nature, truth, passion, and instinct -- he does not have to retreat from life, as Forster believed Wordsworth did, in order to see its "loveliness" ("The Ivory Tower", Atlantic Monthly 57). When he paraphrases a line from Lorenzo de' Medici's poetry, "'Don't go fighting against the spring'"(ARV 84), he does so not to advertise his scholarship but to illuminate the real injustice of Mr. Eager's insistence that Phaethon and Persephone, the lovers who drive the carriage to Fiesole, should be parted. Mr. Eager responds not to the essential meaning of the poet's words but to Mr. Emerson's translation of them. Being unable to "resist the opportunity for erudition"(ARV 84), he corrects the translation to the more lofty but less immediate "'War not with the May'"', obscuring completely the original issue. Mr. Emerson's contention that "the same laws work eternally through both" (ARV 85) man and nature, and that we should

not go fighting against them, is adumbrated in Housman's poem and further expressed in George's allusion to that same poem: "'Everything is Fate. We are flung together by Fate, drawn apart by Fate -- flung together, drawn apart. The twelve winds blow us -- we settle nothing --'"(ARV 147).

While the implications of Housman's poem may capture a truth with which Mr. Emerson agrees, they are ones which George finds difficult to understand. The poem amounts for him to a simplification of life which neither explains nor contains his despondency. In one instance, Forster suggests that it is easier to write, like Housman, about the puzzles and tragedies of existence than it is to experience them directly. Indeed, he notes the distance between literature and life when he comments about Lucy that "[i]t is obvious enough for the reader to conclude, 'She loves young Emerson.' A reader in Lucy's place would not find it obvious. Life is easy to chronicle, but bewildering to practise. . ."(ARV 161). Literature, he suggests, affords a privileged perspective which life seldom allows, a chance of seeing life clearly through the eyes of a writer for whom, as Miss Lavish remarks, "'there's no secret of the human heart into which [he] wouldn't pry'"(ARV 69). Just as Lilia of Where Angels Fear to Tread, duplicates to some

degree what Forster himself does in the enclosing fiction, so Miss Lavish's description of the outlines of her own novel sounds similar to the first part of A Room with a View:

"There will be a deal of local colouring, descriptions of Florence and the neighbourhood, and I shall also introduce some humorous characters. . . . I intend to be unmerciful to the British tourist."
(ARV 69)

Although Eleanor's exclamation that "'[o]ne doesn't come to Italy for niceness, . . . one comes for life'"(ARV 37) aligns her in theory with Forster's own humanistic values as they are expressed in his own novel, her claim that the "'true Italy is only to be found by patient observation'"(ARV 37) puts her in league with the likes of Philip Herriton -- those spectators of life who choose to romanticize rather than engage themselves in the flux of Italy. Moreover, in her own art, her novel Under a Loggia, she re-writes in romanticized "draggled prose"(ARV 179) what Forster had described, subtly and evocatively, as a moment of spontaneous passion between George and Lucy. When at Windy Corner Cecil reads the passage out loud in the presence of George and Lucy, Lucy, who "thought she had gone mad" (through suddenly realizing that the novel contains a description of a moment all too familiar to her), proclaims defensively that "'such rubbish . . . oughtn't to be allowed to be printed'"(ARV 179), denying to

art the license to depict, however badly, a fact whose significance she has tried to avoid. When she tries to extricate herself from the embarrassing situation by announcing tea time and scurrying down the path toward the house, George, "who loved passionately" (ARV 180) blunders against her and steals another kiss in a symbolic effort to confirm the reality depicted in the novel. But Lucy subsequently recoils from the truth and continues her life of latency and prevarication. It is perhaps this kind of moment of spontaneous passion described in literature that Miss Alan would object to in Lavish's not "'very nice novel'" (ARV 55), but Forster's use of it in A Room with a View suggests that literature can capture the scenes of life and that it should awaken in a reader a vital sensitivity to life, not a desire to snub art and keep it at a respectful distance. Indeed, as he remarks in "A Note on the Way", "art. . . musn't be brushed aside like a butterfly. It is not all gossamer, what we have delighted in, it has become part of our armour . . ."(AH 73). It is ironic that when Lucy explains to Charlotte how the incident of George's first kiss came about she should make the connection between art and life she subsequently tries to sunder: "'I am a little to blame. I had silly thoughts. The sky, you know, was gold, and the ground all blue, and for a moment he looked like someone in a book'" (ARV 93). Her vision of him as a figure from a book

perhaps proceeds from the same kind of defensiveness which made Caroline Abbott construe Gino as an actor on a stage, an illusion which serves to distance herself safely from the truth of her feeling for him. But here Lucy pays homage to an art's capacity to capture the beautiful vision she has actually had, and thus reveals that she is making those connections between art and life which will allow her to live out what her own art, music, urges her to experience.

While Lucy may find in books a truth which she will not readily accept, and while Mr. Emerson finds in poetry a confirmation of his view of life, Cecil Vyse, like Mr. Eager, finds little but surface meanings, quoting poetry only to flatter himself for his timely displays of erudition. Having lost Lucy's attention and interest during his long-winded declamation on the topic of Nature, he quotes to her, in a contrived manner, from Tennyson's "The Princess":

"Come down, O maid, from yonder
 mountain height:
 What pleasure lives in height
 (the shepherd sang),
 In height and in the splendour
 of the hills?" (ARV 119)

Ironically, what Cecil asks of Lucy is that which Forster would have Cecil himself do; that is, descend from the heights of contemplative detachment into the 'valley' of life and love. Just before Cecil quotes from the poem,

Lucy denounces furiously and unexpectedly Mr. Eager's hateful, petty nature -- a denunciation fueled by her recollection of his treatment of the Emersons --and in response to this eruption, Cecil reflects that there "was indeed something rather incongruous in Lucy's moral outburst over Mr. Eager. It was as if one should see the Leonardo on the ceiling of the Sistine" (ARV 118). Cecil has already admitted that he has no affinity with the likes of Tennyson's shepherds, who, he says, "'may have a tacit sympathy with the workings of Nature'" denied to townsfolk like himself, but who are "'the most depressing of companions'" (ARV 119). When Lucy asks what height it is from which she is requested to come down, one may as easily answer, "from the ceiling of the Sistine" as from the summit of moral outrage she has assumed, since Michelangelo's paintings, and the vitality and fruition they symbolize for Forster, come to be associated with George Emerson. Because Cecil does not, as does Mr. Emerson, "'know by experience that the poets are right: love is eternal'" (ARV 223), his quoting from Tennyson's poem serves as an ironic comment on his pedantry and detachment and, ultimately, on his wish to extinguish the flare of Michelangelesque vitality in his once-composed Leonardo. The quotation is also connected with the motif of ascent which, as Meyers observes, reverberates throughout the novel (Painting and the Novel 38). From

Giotto's fresco of St. John's ascension to Mr. Beebe's artistic rendering of Lucy as a kite and Charlotte as the bearer of the string, the motif is associated most clearly with Lucy, who will apparently be able to rise above pretense and convention once she has acknowledged and accepted the truth of her love for George. On one level, then, to descend to Cecil's level from the heights she attains when contemplating George is to plunge not into Tennyson's valley but into the depths of her fiancé's life-denying existence, one which closes off the possibility of her soaring to any greater heights of truth and meaning. On another level, the stanza from the poem operates implicitly as a model of what Forster often declared literature should be: a medium which reveals the inner energy of existence and which would ask that we submit to, rather than remain detached from, life. It is thus not only a thematic repetition of the core of A Room with a View's concerns but a representation of the ideal to which the enclosing fiction itself aspires.

The contrast between the championing of life and love offered by Tennyson and the Emersons and the bloodless evasion of it associated with those self-isolated intellectuals like Mr. Eager and Cecil, is also presented in terms of music. Furthermore, Forster's belief that the arts "act as an antidote against our present troubles" is well captured in his depiction of Lucy's devotion to music.

As she explains, "'I myself have worries, but I can generally forget them at the piano'" (ARV 48). But Lucy's music does not only provide her with an escape: far from separating her from the truth of her desires, it returns her to them again and again, urging her to actively experience what the melodies inspire in her. When Mr. Beebe hears Lucy playing Beethoven in the Pension Bertolini, he recalls the time he heard her play one of Beethoven's tragic sonatas in Tunbridge Wells and how she had emphasized the notes of victory:

Mr. Beebe was wondering whether it would be Adelaide or the march of The Ruins of Athens, when his composure was disturbed by the opening bars of Opus 111. He was in suspense all through the introduction, for not until the pace quickens does one know what the performer intends. With the roar of the opening theme he knew that things were going extraordinarily; in the chords that herald the conclusion he heard the hammer-strokes of victory. (ARV 51)

The hammer-strokes of victory foreshadow the harmonious conclusion of the novel, where Lucy has ostensibly learned to live as she plays and so, with George, can hear the song of Phaethon announcing "passion requited, love attained" (ARV 230). That Mr. Beebe's composure should be ruffled by her choice of music suggests that the side of victory on which she will play may not necessarily accord with his own definition of triumph. Still, it is not Mr. Beebe who is most disturbed by Lucy's music. A vicar, present at this

performance, articulates the view that art should confirm our complacency rather than assault it. "'I do not consider her choice of a piece happy'", he laments. "'Beethoven is usually so simple and direct in his appeal that it is sheer perversity to choose a thing like that, which, if anything, disturbs'"(ARV 51). Such a view of the function of art as a support for our need for happiness and simplicity is echoed in Miss Alan's appraisal of Eleanor's "realistic" novel: "'It was a novel -- and I am afraid, from what I can gather, not a very nice novel. It is so sad when people who have abilities misuse them, and I must say they nearly always do'"(ARV 55). It is perhaps not so surprising that this same Miss Alan should tell Lucy that there is no point in going outdoors alone to wander about Florence since "'[a]ll the galleries are shut'"(ARV 59), as if Italy were, as it is for Cecil's mother (ARV 142), only a museum of antiquities and art. Mr. Beebe attributes Lucy's desire to take this solitary walk to "'too much Beethoven'" and, we are told, his assumption is quite correct, for "Lucy never knew her desires so clearly as after music"(ARV 60). It is the parson's pet theory that if Lucy "'ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting -- both for us and for her'" (ARV 52). But the desires which Lucy finds confirmed in her music and which she eventually expresses in her life are more rebellious, ultimately, than any Mr. Beebe would have imagined. When

Lucy plays the piano she is able to escape the muddle of daily life which so confuses her desires and to find in music the greatness life does not yet afford her. Her art provides entry into "a more solid world" (ARV 50) than daily existence where she is "no longer deferential or patronizing; no longer either a rebel or a slave" (ARV 50). But Lucy's art offers her so much of an escape from the drudgery of daily existence that Forster claims that he will not attempt to describe in "the words of daily life" (ARV 50) over what it is that she feels victorious when she plays. It is perhaps because music is for Forster "the deepest of the arts and deep beneath the arts" (TCD 117) that he believes that the truths of music to some degree elude even his own art. As he says of Proust, "[h]e understood too much about music, and also about people to suppose that the relationship between them could be bottled up in words" (AH 100). Music is more 'real' than anything else to Forster because it embodies the essential truth of so complex a situation as Lucy's muddle. And music becomes, in the novel, an ideal to which life and Forster's own art can aspire.

Beethoven is, for Forster, "unique in the annals of any art" because his music captures how "excited by immensities" he became while composing and performing -- "so excited at the approach of something enormous that he can only just interpret and subdue it" (TCD 133). Lucy too

is so "thrilled by things so huge" (TCD 133) as her desires, that she forgets herself and the world around her when she creates and is rapt into that region of dream where Forster claims every artist works (TCD 123-126):

She took no notice of Mr. Emerson looking for his son, nor of Miss Bartlett looking for Miss Lavish, nor of Miss Lavish looking for her cigarette-case. Like every true performer, she was intoxicated by the mere feel of the notes: they were fingers caressing her own; and by touch, not by sound alone, did she come to her desire. (ARV 51)

Significantly, when Lucy later plays for the Vyses, she chooses Schumann's, not Beethoven's, music. As Benjamin Britten has observed, Forster favours Beethoven over, for instance, Mozart, because he "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" ("Some Notes on Forster and Music" 84-85). The Schumann Lucy plays for the Vyses is labelled "querulous" by Forster --appropriately in tune with their peevishness -- and when Cecil asks Lucy to play Beethoven she refuses, unconsciously suggesting the inappropriateness of such vigorous music for her repressive audience. She resumes with Schumann:

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

...throbbed in its disjunct phrases,
and made the nerves of the audience
throb. (ARV 141)

On another occasion when Lucy plays before Cecil, knowing that George Emerson will be in her midst at any moment, she contemplates the guarantee she feels in the knowledge that "[h]er mother would always sit there, her brother here" (ARV 173), unconsciously realizing that they represent her only haven from the confusion she feels over Cecil and George. The music which she thereafter plays suggests her unwillingness to submit to experience and desire to withdraw into her old life that sheltered her from having to make decisions which correspond to her true desires. What the music also suggests is the kind of aimlessness and stagnation that a life of latency will mean for her:

She had seen Gluck's Armide that year,
and played from memory the music of
the enchanted garden -- the music to
which Renaud approaches, beneath the
light of an eternal dawn, the music
that never gains, never wanes, but
ripples for ever like the tideless
seas of fairyland. (ARV 173)

Cecil, not content with this music, asks her to play the garden music from Wagner's Parsifal but she refuses, closing the piano without a word. When she turns around she discovers that George Emerson had crept into the room without interrupting her and had witnessed the whole scene. Blushing at this, she re-opens the piano and attempts to

play a few bars of the Flower Maidens' Song from the work Cecil requested, but, distracted by George's presence, she cannot throw her whole being into the music and the piece comes off very badly." [D]isgusted at the scrappy entertainment", Freddy suggests tennis as an alternative and Lucy, once in her tennis frock and on the court contemplates "how much better tennis seemed" (ARV 175) than music: "How much better to run about in comfortable clothes than to sit at the piano and feel girt under the arms . . . [M]usic appeared to her the employment of a child"(175). In performing what may appear to be a laudable gesture of choosing life over art, Lucy is really revealing her awareness of how close she comes to the truth of her desire for George and loathing of Cecil when she plays her music. Indeed, after she receives her first kiss from George, she experiences a heightened awareness of "[a]ll her sensations, her spasms of courage, her moments of unreasonable joy, her mysterious discontent" (ARV 94), an awareness hitherto afforded only by her music. (As Mrs. Honeychurch declares, music has always made Lucy "peevish, unpractical and touchy" [ARV 61].) Confident that she and Charlotte can "disentangle and interpret" (ARV 94) all of her feelings, she vehemently refuses to play music for Miss Alan, thinking it to be "the employment of a child" (ARV 94). It is perhaps owing to Lucy's awareness that "she never knew her desires so clearly as after music" (ARV 60),

and her latent awareness that her very music would "disentangle and interpret" her sensations, that she turns away from the piano and looks to Charlotte Bartlett for consolation.

Having cast off both Cecil and George and having determined to travel as far away from George as possible, Lucy (in the chapter before the one in which she finally confesses to Mr. Emerson the truth of her love for George) sits wearily at Windy Corner's drawing-room piano, accentuating not the hammer-strokes of Beethoven's victories, but "tinkling at a Mozart sonata" (ARV 198). She ends the melody with the song Cecil has given her and which Lucy in Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor sings:

"Look not thou on beauty's
 charming --...
 Sit thou still when kings are
 arming,
 Taste not when the wine-cup
 glistens --...
 Speak not when the people
 listens...
 Stop thine ear against the
 singer --...
 From the red gold keep thy
 finger;
 Vacant heart, and hand, and eye,
 Easy live and quiet die." (ARV
 208-209)

The song glorifies resignation and retreat from life, a deliberate deprivation of the senses which amounts to an "easy life" of detachment and disengagement. Cecil would likely agree with Mr. Beebe's opinion that it is "'a beautiful song and a wise one'" (ARV 209), and while Freddy

thinks "[t]he tune's right enough. . . but the words are rotten'" (ARV 209) we are left with the irony that Lucy is actually living as she plays. The desire to turn away from the truth, to retreat into an aimless and simple life that "never gains, never wanes", and the urge to triumph over the repressive forces of convention through an enlargement of experience are two sides of a reality that Lucy's art fully contains. Her transition from Beethoven through Schumann to Mozart prefigures her decline into a future of sterility, yet the truths which each piece of music captures reflect the particular limits not only of Lucy's thinking but of art in general. The querulousness of Schumann, the aimlessness of Gluck and the weary turning away of Scott's sad song are all made to seem inadequate subjects for art because they do not suggest the potential for victory and vitality of the Beethoven Forster so admired.

The contrast between the vitality of Beethoven's music and the weary evasion of it associated with the other musical compositions Lucy turns to is also presented in terms of visual art. From the very beginning of the novel, the opposition between life and art is articulated in Forster's intimation that "the traveller who has gone to Italy to study the tactile values of Giotto. . . may return remembering nothing but the blue sky and the men and women who live under it" (ARV 35-36). Armed with Berenson's and

Ruskin's gospels on Giotto and Florence, it is Lucy who goes to Italy's museums with the intention of inspecting Giotto's tactile values. But before she lays eyes on the masterpieces about which they have pronounced final judgement, we are given a glimpse of what her natural aesthetic sense responds to. Standing alone in the Square of the Annunziata, she sees

in the living terracotta those divine babies whom no cheap reproduction can ever stale. There they stood, with their shining limbs bursting from the garments of charity, and their strong white arms extended against circlets of heaven. Lucy thought she had never seen anything more beautiful. . . .
(ARV 39)

Captured in the "living terracotta" and the robust limbs of the Della Robbia babies is a vitality whose suggestiveness is more immediately accessible to Lucy, a vitality and energy which she displays in her own art and which Forster would have her carry over into life. In Santa Croce, however, Lucy abandons her instinctive responses to art and brings a safer, intellectual approach to the fresco by Giotto, "in the presence of whose tactile values she was capable of feeling what was proper"(ARV 40). That Lucy's approach to art here is wrongheaded is confirmed by Forster's contention, expressed in "Anonymity: An Enquiry", that to study art, specifically literature, is to make it "subserve our desire for information"(ICD 94) and that it is only when "the glamour of creation ceases" to influence us that we ask remote questions like "'What is

the author's name?" (TCD 94). Forster insists that ignorance or knowledge of authorship does not signify (TCD 87) because a work of art attempts to create atmosphere, not to provide information, and is always proclaiming, "'I, not my author, exist really'"(TCD 92): "The signature, the name, belongs to the surface personality, and pertains to the world of information, it is a ticket, not the spirit of life"(TCD 96). "To forget its Creator is one of the functions of a Creation"(TCD 92) and to bring a studious mind to a work of art is to deny from the outset the work's capacity to inspire, to encourage our entrance into a "universe that only answers to its own laws, supports itself, internally coheres, and has a new standard of truth"(TCD 91). We may "learn a thousand things" in studying art, but "we have lost the pearl of great price -- and in the chatter of question and answer we forget the purpose for which creation was performed"(TCD 96). Benjamin Britten has noted Forster's "curious tendency to mock at any intellectual approach [to music] on the part of the listener" ("Some Notes on Forster and Music" 84) and this same kind of mockery appears in his description of Lucy's persistent desire to be guided in her evaluation of works of art by information about them rather than by her intuitive responses:

She walked about disdainfully,
unwilling to be enthusiastic over
monuments of uncertain authorship or

date. There was no one even to tell her which, of all the sepulchral slabs that paved the nave and transepts, was the one that was really beautiful, the one that had been most praised by Mr. Ruskin. (ARV 40-41)

Lucy is, however, still receptive to the "pernicious charm of Italy", and the spirit of life which its works of art capture exerts its influence so that "instead of acquiring information, she began to be happy"(ARV 41). Although she maintains that she likes Giotto because "'[i]t is so wonderful what they say about his tactile values'"(ARV 46), she admits that she warms more easily to works of art like the Della Robbia babies. Mr. Emerson's response to this admission ("'So you ought. A baby is worth a dozen saints'"[ARV 46]) is characteristic of his responses to art throughout the novel. When a small child stumbles over one of the sepulchral slabs "so much admired by Ruskin"(ARV 41), Lucy and Mr. Emerson come to his rescue, but their efforts to bring him to his feet prove fruitless. Mr. Emerson, always ready to esteem life over art, tells the little boy to "'[g]o out into the sunshine. . .and kiss your hand to the sun, for that is where you ought to be'"(ARV 41) and when an Italian lady imparts to the boy strength to stand, she has, for Mr. Emerson, "'done more than all the relics in the world'"(ARV 42).

Several critics have commented that Mr. Emerson is

an "author's pet" (Stone 218), "an idealized portrait of Forster's own humanist position" (Cox 75), but while Forster does for the most part imply complete approval of the character, at times Mr. Emerson is a subject for laughter. In Santa Croce, Giotto's fresco, The Ascension of St John the Evangelist, (See Appendix 137), elicits distinctly different approaches to art from Mr. Emerson, his son, and Mr. Eager, but Mr. Emerson's interpretation, based as it is on a literal appraisal of the 'truths' of human life depicted in the fresco, is not the interpretation which best captures the essence of the creation. His reading is as one-sided as that of the Reverend Mr. Eager, who parades a group of parishioners about the Peruzzi Chapel, exhorting them to remember the kind of "information" about Santa Croce which Lucy would have happily consumed:

". . . how it was built by faith in the full fervour of medievalism, before any taint of the Renaissance had appeared. Observe how Giotto in these frescoes -- now, unhappily, ruined by restoration -- is untroubled by the snares of anatomy and perspective. Could anything be more majestic, more pathetic, beautiful, true? How little, we feel, avails knowledge and technical cleverness against a man who truly feels!' (ARV 43)

Mr. Emerson interrupts Eager's declamation (a declamation which Forster couches ironically in the language of humanism), and to his angle on history he offers his own

socialistic retort: "'Built by faith indeed! That simply means the workmen weren't paid properly'"(ARV 44). Placing "truth" in the context of human actuality, Mr. Emerson concludes, "'as for the frescoes, I see no truth in them. Look at that fat man in blue! He must weigh as much as I do, and he is shooting into the sky like an air-balloon'"(ARV 44). Ultimately, Mr. Emerson's protest, although more charmingly direct and lively than Mr. Eager's lecture, does not really serve to undermine the clergyman's interpretation, it merely shifts the interpretive emphasis on to another plane. It is perhaps George's more imaginative interpretation of the work of art, which does not depend on a knowledge of art history, the life of St. John, or a distracting awareness of the empirical truth which the subject of the work refutes, that best captures the kind of sensitivity to human life Forster thought art should inspire:

"It happened like this, if it happened at all. I would rather go up to heaven by myself than be pushed by cherubs; and if I got there I should like my friends to lean out of it, just as they do here Some of the people can only see the empty grave, not the saint, whoever he is, going up." (ARV 44)

It is because Mr. Emerson believes, with Housman, that in death we will be returned to the twelve winds, that he sees Giotto's fresco as little more than an escapist fantasy, a "magical island" which negates the truth of existence. But for George, for whom this concept of human

life as a mere "'blemish in the eternal smoothness'"(ARV 47) is distressing, the fresco of St. John's ascension provides him with a glimpse of the human potential for transcending the sordidness of daily life in an imaginative perception of some eternal truth. Mr. Emerson's and George's different views perhaps reflect Forster's ambivalence about his own art and indicate, through the use of the aesthetic analogue, how A Room with a View might be read. Although the happy ending of A Room with a View may have seemed to Forster (as St. John's ascension did for Mr. Emerson) improbable in light of the actual torments and limitations of the modern world, George's reading of the painting can be seen to operate as an analogue of the ideal kind of approach Forster would have appreciated being brought to his own novel. Because Forster sees human freedom emerging through the assertion of creative individuality, he suggests that it is the human will to "go up" through one's own efforts, to transcend "the rubbish that cumpers the world"(ARV 153) and to submit to the truth of the heart's affections, which allows Lucy to be rescued from her self-delusion, and this is perhaps the "truth" of his own work of art which Forster would have us see. George is, to a degree, that "perfect spectator" or reader whom Forster said every work of art assumes to exist (TCD 126), since, by virtue of his "willing suspension of experience" (TCD 127), he is guided in his interpretation

by the imagination -- "our only guide into the world of words" and visual art (TCD 97). Ultimately Forster is on the side of both Mr. Emerson and George, since the novel suggests that life should come before art and also that art can capture the truths of existence. Mr. Emerson's interpretation is concrete and literal, but not unrealistic. He tells George that he "'will never go up'" (ARV 44), in an effort to make him realize that "'by the side of the everlasting Why there is a Yes'" (ARV 48), a Yes which affirms the possibility of happiness and love in our transitory existence on earth. But in that possibility of love is the chance for continuance on earth, a transcendence of the impersonal forces of time which George will find in his love for Lucy.

It is significant that one of the photographs which Lucy purchases, and which is stained by the blood of the man murdered in the Piazza Signoria, is of Giotto's fresco of St. John's ascension. It is one of the photographs which would not open "the gates of liberty" (ARV 61) for Lucy because, although it is beautiful, Lucy has yet to come across such beauty in her own experience. The photographs thus only capture vaguely, as they do for George, a latent desire to experience something greater than life has thus far afforded them. When "'something tremendous'" (ARV 64) is actually experienced by George and Lucy in the Piazza Signoria, art becomes secondary to life.

Remembering the blood-stained photographs he has tossed into the Arno, George reflects that it "was not exactly that a man had died; something had happened to the living"(ARV 66) and announces, "'I shall want to live, I say'"(ARV 66), indicating the awakening of his love for Lucy. Here life takes precedence over art, the flux and intensity of existence over the fixed and coherent world of images. Forster is not, however, consistent in his opposition of life and art. Ultimately, he will not relinquish the hold art has over Lucy and George. Indeed, they both have copies of Giotto's fresco in their respective English homes; moreover, Lucy's salvation, it is suggested, will be found in her living as fully and heroically as she plays her music. The suggestion, then, is that art can capture the truths of experience and desire, but that it must not be used as a substitute for life. It may not be easier, Forster suggests, to practise life than it is to disclose its essence in words and paint, but it is experience, not the safe world of semblances, which will provide answers to George's questions.

While characters like Cecil Vyse and Mr. Eager err in seeing life as art, Forster tolerates this same propensity in Lucy because, unlike the precious approach to life of the aesthetes, Lucy's tendency springs from a developing awareness, not a repressed avoidance, of the vital connections to be made between art and life. In

Santa Croce, she notices that George is healthy and muscular and, watching this "singular creature" pace the floors of the chapel, she will recall later seeing him "at Rome, on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, carrying a burden of acorns" (ARV 45). Michelangelo seems to be for Forster an artist whose images preserve a certain agreeable vitality, and it is thus implied that Lucy's aesthetic vision of the young Emerson is part of her growing, but still subliminal, awareness of her attraction to his sensual vigor. Indeed, as Forster notes in Maurice, it is difficult to separate aesthetics from desire; of one of Michelangelo's paintings, Clive Durham claims, "'I love it because, like the painter himself, I love the subject. I don't judge it with the eyes of a normal man'"(86). Forster himself, who admits that he responds instinctively to the subject matter of a painting rather than to its form and composition (because pictures "show landscapes where one would like to be and human beings whom one would like to resemble or adore" [TCD 140]), suspends judgement of Michelangelo seemingly because his subject so agrees with him. Indeed, in Where Angels Fear to Tread the crude but lively figures painted on the stage's drop scene at the opera "would have nodded to the young men on the ceiling of the Sistine" (WAFT 118), and in the bathing scene of A Room with a View Forster describes George as "Michelangelesque on the flooded margin" (ARV 149).The directness,

spontaneity, and sincerity of George are also captured in Lucy's realization that he is more real than anything ensconced by a frame:

It struck her that it was hopeless to look for chivalry in such a man. . . . his thoughts, like his behaviour, would not be modified by awe. It was useless to say to him, 'And would you -- ' and hope that he would complete the sentence for himself, averting his eyes from her nakedness like the knight in that beautiful picture. She had been in his arms, and he remembered it. . . . (ARV 65)

Such a turning away from the real and the true depicted in Millais's painting (See Appendix 138) is neither George's natural inclination, nor what Forster would have his characters do in his own art. The picture is, in a sense, a pictorial equivalent of "Look not thou on beauty's charming" -- the first line of the weary song of retreat and disengagement which Cecil gives to Lucy. Not surprisingly, it is actually Cecil who becomes Millais' Knight Errant when George scampers naked before Lucy after he has bathed in The Sacred Lake: "'Come this way immediately,' commanded Cecil, who always felt that he must lead women, though he knew not whither, and protect them, though he knew not against what" (ARV 151). What George offers to Lucy is not the chivalry of a protector but the kindness and affection of a comrade, a relationship not between "protector and protected" (ARV 173) but one which will allow her that much wished for "equality beside the

man she loved" (ARV 130). Lucy later berates Cecil for shielding her against people, a most grievous insult she declares (ARV 191), but one which we realize is the manifestation of a consciousness which can operate only within the confines of an ordered, unspontaneous world and which dictates the filtering out of those complex aspects of experience which threaten to contaminate his sterilized vision. When Cecil meets Lucy in Italy his attraction to her is neither sexual nor emotional, but purely aesthetic:

. . . Italy worked some marvel in her. It gave her light, and -- which he held more precious -- it gave her shadow. Soon he detected in her a wonderful reticence. She was like a woman of Leonardo da Vinci's, whom we love not so much for herself as for the things that she will not tell us. The things are assuredly not of this life; no woman of Leonardo's could have anything so vulgar as a 'story.'
(ARV 107-108)

Such an idealization of Lucy and reduction of her to an aesthetic object occurs again when, three months later, Cecil proposes to her "in bald traditional language" amid the flowers of the Alps:

She reminded him of a Leonardo more than ever; her sunburnt features were shadowed by fantastic rocks; at his words she had turned and stood between him and the light with immeasurable plains behind her. (ARV 108)

When Lucy refuses his hand he "walked home with her unashamed, feeling not at all like a rejected suitor. The things that really mattered were unshaken" (ARV 108).

Those things deemed consequential by Cecil are not people or emotions but, as Lucy says in her awkward defense of him, "'it is the things that upset him -- he is easily upset by ugly things'" (ARV 155). Whenever Lucy reveals any sign of deep emotion, Cecil is fully taken aback. Her sudden and angry pronouncement against Mr. Eager is construed by him as "incongruous" with the "wonderful reticence" of her Leonardesque nature. And when he announces that he has won Meredith's great victory for the Comic Muse and for Truth by inviting the Emersons to be Cissie Villa's next tenants, Lucy's expression of disgust at his pettiness disturbs him: "He stared at her, and felt again that she had failed to be Leonardesque. . . . Her face was inartistic -- that of a peevish virago" (ARV 136).

In attempting to deny the Michelangelesque vitality of Lucy, Cecil also implicitly denies art the license to depict life in all its aspects, and his attitude thus represents the artistic error Forster himself seeks to avoid. Like Philip Herriton, Cecil tries to manipulate the scenes of life so that they conform to some predetermined vision of his own making. Out of some obligation to follow the conventions of courtship and to fulfil his imagined role of the brave and manly suitor, he considers that he should request a kiss from Lucy -- a "scheme" which he thinks quite "practical" (ARV 126) at this stage in their affair. Because Lucy's response to his request does not

coincide with what he had imagined, he finds "time to wish that he could recoil"(ARV 127) from the whole scene and start all over again. The embrace is absurdly awkward and self-conscious and, as he admits, a failure, but in order to shield himself from its implications, he retreats into a corrective illusion:

He recast the scene. Lucy was standing flower-like by the water; he rushed up and took her in his arms; she rebuked him, permitted him, and revered him ever after for his manliness. (ARV 127)

By having both Cecil and Eleanor Lavish recast and rewrite the scenes of embrace he has created and, more importantly, by mocking their efforts to do so, Forster effectively closes off the possibility that in his own art he will rewrite the truth and offer a compensatory return to the ideal: the very possibility which the novel's happy ending seems to incorporate rather than refute. Although Forster knows that such reconstructions of life are not identical with truth, he seems sympathetic to the impulse to create order, for he acknowledges that the mind may need the shield of a corrective illusion -- "a magical island" -- even when it is seen to be incongruous with the truth. Like Cecil, Lucy tries to order and arrange her experiences so that she can hide the truth of her feelings for George from both herself and others. She constructs an imaginary scene in which she greets, with incredible self-possession,

the young Emerson who has recently moved into the neighbourhood, but when the meeting actually takes place she forgets how to conduct herself and has to be told to bow. She was prepared to appear aloof and composed before the George she knew to be "shy or morbid or indifferent or furtively impudent" but she had never imagined one who would be naked and jubilant, greeting her "with the shout of the morning star"(ARV 153):

How often had Lucy rehearsed this bow, this interview! But she had always rehearsed them indoors, and with certain accessories. . . . [S]he reflected . . . that it is impossible to rehearse life. A fault in the scenery, a face in the audience, an irruption of the audience onto the stage, and all our carefully planned gestures mean nothing, or mean too much. (ARV 153)

While art can arrange life according to the dictates of a controlling vision, while it offers a universe which is stable, coherent and unified, the unpredictable nature of actual life insistently demands that Lucy and Cecil submit to its flux. Forster responds to the recognition of the underlying disorder and unpredictability in the nature of things by comparing it to the human capacity to invent, to take existence itself into the mind and rewrite it according to the images of desire. But Forster seems to show that he is aware of the idea that fictions and artistic creations are not real things, and this awareness is expressed in his use of Cecil's and Lucy's respective

efforts to compose their own stage scripts, to erect an illusion which will somehow allow them to forget the truth. Their creations are consciously articulated entities, not transparent reflections of the truth, and this is why the blows of experience that come to them make them feel the disparity between artistic illusion and sordid fact. While "[e]very man" may have "'something of the artist in him'" ("The Claims of Art", The Listener 743), the "artist" in both Lucy and Cecil makes them attempt to freeze and arrange unmanageable life; in mocking their attempts to do so, Forster again draws attention to the distance between art -- "the one orderly product which our muddling race has produced" (ICD 101) -- and actual life.

It is mainly through the character of Cecil that Forster explores the insufficiency of art as a replacement for life. While Cecil is not as consistently abhorrent as Mr. Eager, and while Forster does not depict him with the sympathy he gives to Philip Herriton, he is, on occasion, given a modicum of humanity. After Lucy's moral outburst over Mr. Eager, Cecil longs to tell her that "muscular rant" is not becoming in a woman whose attractiveness, he has decided, lies in mystery, but he then considers that "possibly rant is a sign of vitality":

it mars the beautiful creature, but shows that she is alive. After a moment, he contemplated her flushed face and excited gestures with certain approval. He forebore to repress the

sources of youth. (ARV 118)

It is actually Charlotte Bartlett who is, more than Cecil, eager actively to repress the sources of youth. She seldom lets Lucy speak or decide for herself, discouraging, throughout the novel, the development and articulation of her feelings for the "exploitive" George. Like so many characters in the novel, Charlotte is defined in part by the art with which she is associated. In one scene, a particularly pushy vendor of photographs, who "was in league with Lucy -- in the eternal league of Italy with youth", binds together the hands of Charlotte and Mr. Eager "by a long glossy ribbon of churches, pictures and views" (ARV 73), in a gesture which suggests their slavish confinement to an ordered world of surface appearances. Charlotte's inability to rise above this world, and her tilted way of looking at life in general, is also captured in the scene where she learns that Mr. Emerson has moved in his career from being a mechanic to being a journalist, and responds with a sigh, "'[h]ow wonderfully people rise in these days!'" (ARV 74) while toying with a model of the leaning Tower of Pisa which she will later purchase. Charlotte's potential to rise in the world seems to have been thwarted when she, thirty years before Lucy, entered "the vast armies of the benighted" (ARV 194) by denying the truth. And it is her single-minded vision, which seems to be founded in her own narrow experience, which spurs her on

to keep Lucy away from George and to create order around her. In so doing, she works "like a great artist" to whom a clear vision of the world has finally appeared -- a "complete picture of a cheerless, loveless world in which the young rush to destruction until they learn better" (ARV 99-100). It is Charlotte's power to manipulate Lucy in the direction of her own vision which makes her operate like a great artist and which ultimately aligns her with her creator who pulls Lucy in the opposite direction. As the various aesthetic analogues in the novel suggest, art and artists lead us to think in certain ways about the social and moral facts of life. And while Forster may find agreeable the visions of life offered by Michelangelo or Tennyson, he here suggests that "artists" can simplify life and make it conform to the dictates of their controlling vision rather than allowing that vision to be informed by the demands of life. It is because Charlotte Bartlett has at some point in her life "sinned against Eros and Pallas Athene" (ARV 194), because Lucy will not acknowledge the truth of her passion for George, and because Cecil does not want to accept the truth of his essential sterility, that they all work like artists to erect a plan or vision which will subserve their need to feel in control of their worlds. While Forster thought art should capture the truths of existence and that the process of creation should involve a gazing inward on the part of the artist, the

process of creation should involve a gazing inward on the part of the artist, the process of creation as depicted in the novel is an act of turning away from existence into a vision which may suit the creator but which does not tally with the truth. This seemingly paradoxical phenomenon is really a straightforward manifestation of Forster's valuing of life over art; on another level it suggests that he was aware of the pitfalls which may attend his own creative processes.

Indeed, Cecil's defensive habit of translating life into art is shared to a minor degree by his creator. Just as Lucy is to Cecil a woman of Leonardo da Vinci's, so Cecil is to Forster "a Gothic statue": "He was medieval

he resembled those fastidious saints who guard the portals of a French cathedral" (ARV 106). The difference between the art and life analogies drawn by Cecil and those drawn by Forster is that Cecil's are life-denying and self-serving while Forster's carry a moral resonance. As he comments further, lest we should miss the point, "[a] Gothic statue implies celibacy, just as a Greek statue implies fruition" (ARV 106). To some degree, he even undercuts his own aesthetic analogy by showing that Cecil's character can be equally well captured in less sophisticated, more immediate, terms: "Freddy, who ignored history and art, perhaps meant the same when he failed to imagine Cecil wearing another fellow's cap" (ARV 106).

does Where Angels Fear to Tread. Even though Cecil finally learns to see the 'real' Lucy -- "a living woman, with mysteries and forces of her own, with qualities that even eluded art"(ARV 191)-- and though he finally emits a spontaneous and genuine response he is still, regardless of this alteration, cast off in the end. In Cecil, Forster has narrowed the breadth of a character type who represents, as Wilfred Stone observes, his rejected self (229), the counterpart of Philip Herriton and Rickie Elliot. Cecil's defeat stands as an affirmation of the humanistic ideal of commitment to personal relations and an evasion of the contradictions it generates in Where Angels Fear to Tread. It is interesting in light of the paradoxical conclusion of Where Angels Fear to Tread, that Cecil should emerge most forcefully at the moment of his final withdrawal, achieving his own kind of ascent:

[Lucy] watched him steal upstairs, while the shadows from the banisters passed over his face like the beat of wings. On the landing he paused, strong in his renunciation, and gave her a look of memorable beauty. (ARV 193)

The extent of Forster's identification or sympathy with Cecil's type perhaps becomes most clear in "A View Without a Room" (Forster's 1958 postscript to A Room with a View), where, as Stone observes (233), Forster attributes to Cecil his own kind of "mischief and culture" and sends him to Alexandria in 1914, a year before he himself journeyed

there.

The undertone of sympathy for Cecil's aestheticism is not, however, altogether vanquished in the novel -- traces of it do remain. Forster describes Mr. Beebe as ascetic and aesthetic, as the bearer of those attributes he repudiates in Cecil Vyse, with whom the parson admits affinity when he comments that they are both ideal bachelors, "'better detached'" (ARV 104). But Forster seems to tolerate Mr. Beebe's inclination to see in images and tableaux. The image of Lucy sitting at the piano, her hands poised over the keys, while her mother bends over her and Freddy reclines at her feet, reminds Mr. Beebe, "who loved the art of the past", of a favourite theme,

the Santa Conversazione, in which people who care for one another are painted chatting together about noble things -- a theme neither sensual nor sensational, and therefore ignored by the art of today. (ARV 208)

What the art of today ignores or refutes is the chimerical notion that such perfection and peace will last. "A hundred years ago, or fifty years ago", Forster remarks in "Pessimism in Literature", such an image of healthiness and simplicity may have been acceptable in art, but the modern mind knows that it is not now identical with truth. "Why should Lucy want either to marry or to travel when she had such friends at home?" (ARV 208), Mr. Beebe asks himself. His attempt to overlay the truth with an outdated image of

lasting happiness springs perhaps from the same kind of desperate desire to create a magical island, free from the pressures of time and change, which Lucy clings to in times of muddle:

Her mother would always sit there, her brother here. The sun, though it had moved a little since the morning, would never be hidden behind the western hills. (ARV 173)

Mr. Beebe would have Lucy keep to the theme celebrated in the Santa Conversazione, to continue to cling to "the free, pleasant life of her home, where she was allowed to do everything, and where nothing ever happened to her" (ARV 77). But Lucy, and Forster, know differently -- they know that "[i]t will not last, this cheerfulness" (ARV 173), and that more is needed for a full life. Indeed, at the novel's end, Lucy loses her paradise; and Forster verifies its disappearance in his 1958 postscript. Windy Corner did not long flourish after the death of Mrs. Honeychurch, for Freddy, the heir, became an "unsuccessful yet prolific doctor" (ARV 232) and was obliged to sell the family inheritance: "Windy Corner disappeared, its garden was built over, and the name of Honeychurch resounded in Surrey no more" (ARV 232).

If Forster evinces any sympathy for Mr. Beebe's aesthetic vision of the Honeychurches, it perhaps springs more from a sad realization that such an image of simplicity and perfection is no longer identical with the

truths of the modern world. The difference between Forster and Mr. Beebe lies in the fact that it is Forster who continually looks behind appearances and discovers there the truths which Mr. Beebe's aesthetic visions ignore. Although the parson's artistic rendering of his conception of Charlotte and Lucy's relationship ("'Miss Honeychurch as a kite, Miss Bartlett holding the string. Picture number two: the string breaks.'"[ARV 112]) is a vision which captures the essential truth of Lucy's need to break away from Charlotte and the pretense and repression she represents, it is a vision which also denies the truth of Mr. Beebe's own complicity -- the fact that "he had given surreptitious tugs to the string himself"(ARV 112). In so relating Mr. Beebe's art to the real, Forster suggests, and demonstrates, that his own art will not erect images founded only in half-truths.

If simplicity and healthiness belong to an art of the past and to an art which covers up the whole truth, then Forster's own art, by implication, should move away from such a vision and capture the truths of imperfection and inconsistency existing in the modern world. On one level, the authorial attitude to Mr. Beebe complicates the novel's meaning because it combines sympathy with judgement. On another level, however, such a conception can be seen to be a symptom of Forster's realization that "the old stable ego of the character"¹ is truly a thing of

the past. Indeed, of the characters in Proust's fiction, Forster claims that "[w]hen they contradict themselves they only become more real" (ICD 232), and of Tolstoy's fictional characters, he asserts that their inconsistencies and violations of probability are what make them more convincing: "Tolstoy is conscientious over his characters, he has a personal responsibility to each of them, he has a vital conception of them, and though they are full of contradictions, these contradictions are true to life" (ICD 164). In spite of these pronouncements, Forster's characterization of Mr. Beebe, particularly his about-face at the novel's denouement, has provoked much critical perplexity². He is sympathetically depicted as a clergyman who "seems to see good in everyone" (ARV 30), who "laughs just like an ordinary man" (30), and who displays "tolerance, sympathy and a sense of humour" (ARV 55). And although he is associated with a vital and organic life force in the novel's bathing scene, there are hints throughout the novel which indicate his more disturbing qualities. He is "somewhat chilly in his attitude" (ARV 54) towards women; indeed, he "inwardly curs[es] the female sex" (ARV 32), and he confesses that he finds it "'so difficult . . . to understand people who speak the truth'" (ARV 29). Unlike Mr. Emerson, he believes in celibacy, which Forster associates with Cecil's knight-errantry (ARV 207), and, as is revealed at the novel's denouement, he

will not acknowledge passion. Forster has hinted at the reasons behind Mr. Beebe's sudden reversal by these earlier suggestions and he verifies them in his later assertion that Mr. Beebe's belief in celibacy "alone explains his action subsequently, and his influence on the action of others" (ARV 207). Yet the turnabout is still experienced by readers as something of a mystery. After Lucy has confessed to him the truth of her love for George, the horridness of Mr. Beebe's transformation into "a long black column" and the force of his permanent conviction that it is "'lamentable, lamentable -- incredible'" (ARV 225) (a conviction which influences Mrs. Honeychurch's attitude toward the affair) cast a shadow on the harmonious conclusion. Perhaps this is Forster's way of withholding full approval from the happy ending he has given to his own art. In the character of Mr. Beebe he demonstrates that his own art will not erect an untruthful image of consistency and simplicity. Moreover, Forster's use of the aesthetic analogues in A Room with a View suggests that he is aware of the state of ideality as something unreal, and the novel's conclusion indicates the extent to which he was hesitant about embracing the ideal his own fiction has tried to realize. While the concept of an ideal that may be actually unattainable is perhaps something threatening and destructive for Forster, part of the conclusion suggests that the ideal has not really been, and perhaps .

cannot be, attained. Indeed, the harmony which the union of George and Lucy celebrates is contaminated by the condition of alienation they must endure at the cost of their mutual happiness. Although the conclusion neatly slots George and Lucy into the novel's pattern of emergence into the truths of life and love, what survives this pattern are the intriguing complexities of character which cannot be stifled by the constricting demands of Forster's vision.

Charlotte Bartlett, along with Mr. Beebe, provides a direct suggestion of those questions of moral complexity which the novel's conclusion does not adequately answer. Like Mr. Beebe, at the novel's denouement she makes an about-face, apparently aiding the lovers she has tried to separate. In "A View Without A Room", Forster gives her his support, announcing that she had left the lovers "her little all. (Who would have thought it of Cousin Charlotte? I should never have thought anything else)" (ARV 231). While his characterizations of Charlotte and Mr. Beebe do demonstrate that he is paying homage to the truth of inconsistency and complexity in existence, this very demonstration blocks the movement toward happiness he has tried to effect at the novel's end and confuses the oppositions he has erected between the worlds of pretense and truth, repression and spontaneity whose divergence elsewhere made the path toward happiness relatively

straightforward. By allowing the happy ending to coexist uncertainly with a vision of greater moral complexity, Forster seems to circle round the question of whether art should offer a magical island divorced from reality or a full disclosure of the truths of existence.

The novel ends on the very note of permanence in which Forster said a writer would not find rest with honour. But in other places in A Room with a View he suggests that that same note of permanence and completion is the work of art's strength. Of the broken melody Lucy plays on the piano, Forster remarks that it bespeaks "the sadness of the incomplete -- the sadness that is often Life, but should never be Art" (ARV 141). More importantly, what also "should never be Art" is, according to Forster, a "falsification" of life which not so much "contradicts" the "sadness that is often Life", but which runs completely counter to the truth of human instinct and moral complexity. Depicted in Millais' The Knight Errant, in Cecil's image of Lucy as a Leonardo, in Mr. Beebe's Santa Conversazione and in his picture of Lucy as a kite and Charlotte as the holder of the string, is what Forster conceives as not only a subject which evades the truth, but as one which encourages our turning away from the vital life force celebrated in Beethoven's music, in the Della Robbia babies, and in Michelangelo's paintings. Forster's attitude toward the creative process and those works of art

in the novel which provide an escape from the truth is ultimately both critical and sympathetic. Mr. Beebe's Santa Conversazione, Cecil's recasting of his scene of embrace, and Lucy's rehearsal of her meeting with George, all attest in a way to the power of the aesthetic imagination to overcome difficulty and to envision as present something which is not real or true. Yet the novel also recognizes the naivete of believing that imaginary representation actually makes present something which is only a projection of desire and which, in a literal sense, is not there at all. As Forster well understood, the urge to create a magical island, to escape into a vision of happiness, simplicity, and order, is a powerful one, so powerful that it constantly unsettles our attempts to accept the truth. In Cecil's vision of Lucy as a Leonardo and in Mr. Beebe's vision of the Santa Conversazione Forster suggests that aesthetic images are the products of consciousness rather than reflections of reality. In mocking such images he suggests the tragicomic powerlessness of the aesthetic imagination outside its own sphere of creation, and thus the disparity between aesthetic illusion and sordid fact. Forster is not suggesting, however, that all aesthetic images are incongruous with the facts of experience. He mocks the attempts of Cecil, Mr. Beebe, and Lucy to construct aesthetic images into which they can retreat because for

them it is an act of escaping the truth, the truth which Beethoven, Housman, Tennyson, Della Robbia and Michelangelo were able to comprehend and capture. While Forster does suggest that it is easier to chronicle the truths of existence in words and paint than it is to experience them, he makes an effort, particularly in the characterizations of Mr. Beebe and Charlotte Bartlett, to capture instead of simplify the complexities of experience. In one scene where Lucy is playing bumble-puppy with Mr. Beebe's niece Minnie, Forster constructs a jumbled and nearly incoherent sentence but then remarks: "[t]he sentence is confused, but the better illustrates Lucy's state of mind, for she was trying to talk to Mr. Beebe at the same time" (ARV 130). Although this does not mark him as a stream-of-consciousness writer in the manner of Virginia Woolf, it does attest to Forster's urge to have his own art explain and contain the confusion and complexity of life. "Man lives and ought to live", he asserts, "in a complex world, full of conflicting aims, and if we simplified them down into the aesthetic he would be sterilized" (TCD 98). It is perhaps because A Room with a View is ultimately not a gross simplification of life that the characters seemed "more alive" to Forster than any he had ever put together.

At the end of A Room with a View there resound the very notes of triumph which Lucy accentuates in her playing of Beethoven. Beethoven's music, like Forster's novel,

already contains notes of tragedy, the realization that "Life is not a bed of roses", but, "they can triumph or despair as the player decides"(ARV 50), and Forster, like Lucy, decides to confront and then skate over them into the roar of victory. The ideal which Lucy reaches in her music is made to seem more than just the self-created sustenance of a sad and muddled mind. It is a universe which holds for her "a new standard of truth" (TCD 91) which, would she but translate it into human action, would show her that art tells the truth and that the images and ideas expressed therein can be attained in life. Forster urges Lucy to live as she plays; and in the mingling of art and life that she finally achieves, he has embodied his own concern that art should capture life and inspire in us the desire both to transcend "the rubbish that cumpers the world" and to submit to vital experience.

On the one hand, the happy ending of A Room with a View may have seemed immoral to Forster because it offers more of a magical island, "an antidote against our present troubles", than a reflection of the turmoil of the modern world. But the way in which he uses aesthetic analogues in the novel suggests that the function of art is also to provide a "support to our common humanity" (TCD 7) by offering a world, which, while not identical to our own, bears a distinct likeness to it. The world created by art "exists neither in space nor time though it has semblances

of both; it is eternal and indestructible . . . It is not this world, its laws are not the laws of science or logic, its conclusions not those of common sense. And it causes us to suspend our ordinary judgements" (TCD 91). Forster would hold out the hope that not only would we suspend our ordinary judgements when entering this world, but that we would allow ourselves to be inspired by the enduring truths depicted therein, and bring that inspiration to our comprehension of the temporal world. Art can thus be both an escape from and a confrontation with reality: far from separating us from the real world it returns us to reality fortified against it. Indeed, A Room with a View "may fairly be called the nicest" of Forster's novels because it is the only one which, in its optimistic vision, fortifies us against the turmoil of that reality. More importantly, however, it does not also simplify that world; its harmonious conclusion is a qualified one and ultimately adumbrates a truth which Forster cannot ignore -- "it will not last this cheerfulness".

Conclusion

Forster's conception of art and the imagination as a spiritual "armory" and as the one lasting order amid circumambient confusion and flux creates a tension in his novels between the pursuit of the life of the emotions and personal relations on the one hand, and an interest in the orderly, solacing world of art and the imagination on the other. The self-realization that both Philip Herriton and Lucy Honeychurch achieve is brought about by what both art and personal relations communicate to them. But it is a measure of the difference between Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View that Lucy's art gives her the strength to act on her desires whereas Philip's final aesthetic vision precipitates his withdrawal into an emotional seclusion which affords him the wisdom of knowing what the flux of life requires of him and of others, but not the instinct to act bravely upon the truth. Forster seems to be aware in both novels of the disparity between art and life, between the images and ideas engendered by the creative imagination and sordid fact, yet he will not surrender his belief in the power of the imagination to erect images which may deviate from nature, but which are justified in so deviating by their unique capacity to disclose the inner energy and underlying truths of

existence, a capacity which makes them "the one orderly product which our muddling race has produced" (TCD 101).

In the succeeding novels, Forster is equally concerned with aesthetic representation and with the function of the imagination in relation to external reality, and many of the ideas expressed therein reiterate his contention that art acts both as a "support to our common humanity" and as an "antidote against our present troubles" (TCD 7). The crucial antithesis between art and life articulated in the Italian novels is also developed in The Longest Journey, where Rickie Elliot's father collects art objects "mechanically, not in any impulse of love" (25), never having "thought one single thing that had the slightest beauty or value" (26), and in Howards End, where Leonard Bast sees the Schlegel sisters as "denizens of Romance, who must keep to the corner he had assigned them, pictures that must not walk out of their frames" (129). Art does, however, hold a vital place in the lives of the characters in the later novels. Rickie Elliot finds solace in the short stories he writes, and his half--brother, Stephen Wonham, has a symbolic painting of Demeter, that he will not part with, hanging in his bedroom. Moreover, in Howards End, Forster relies on artists such as Böcklin and Beethoven to convey his vision and, particularly in his use of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to depict the variant nature of aesthetic reponse, he shows how much art can "touch the

hearer with a sense of his own weakness" (API 107). The goblin that Helen Schlegel hears "walking quietly over the universe from end to end" (46) tells her "that there was no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world" and fills her with "panic and emptiness" (46). Just as the Beethoven Lucy plays leads her "out of the darkness" ("The Claims of Art" The Listener 742) and into a discovery of the depth of her true desires, so Beethoven's music "summed up" to Helen "all that had happened or could happen in her career" (47).

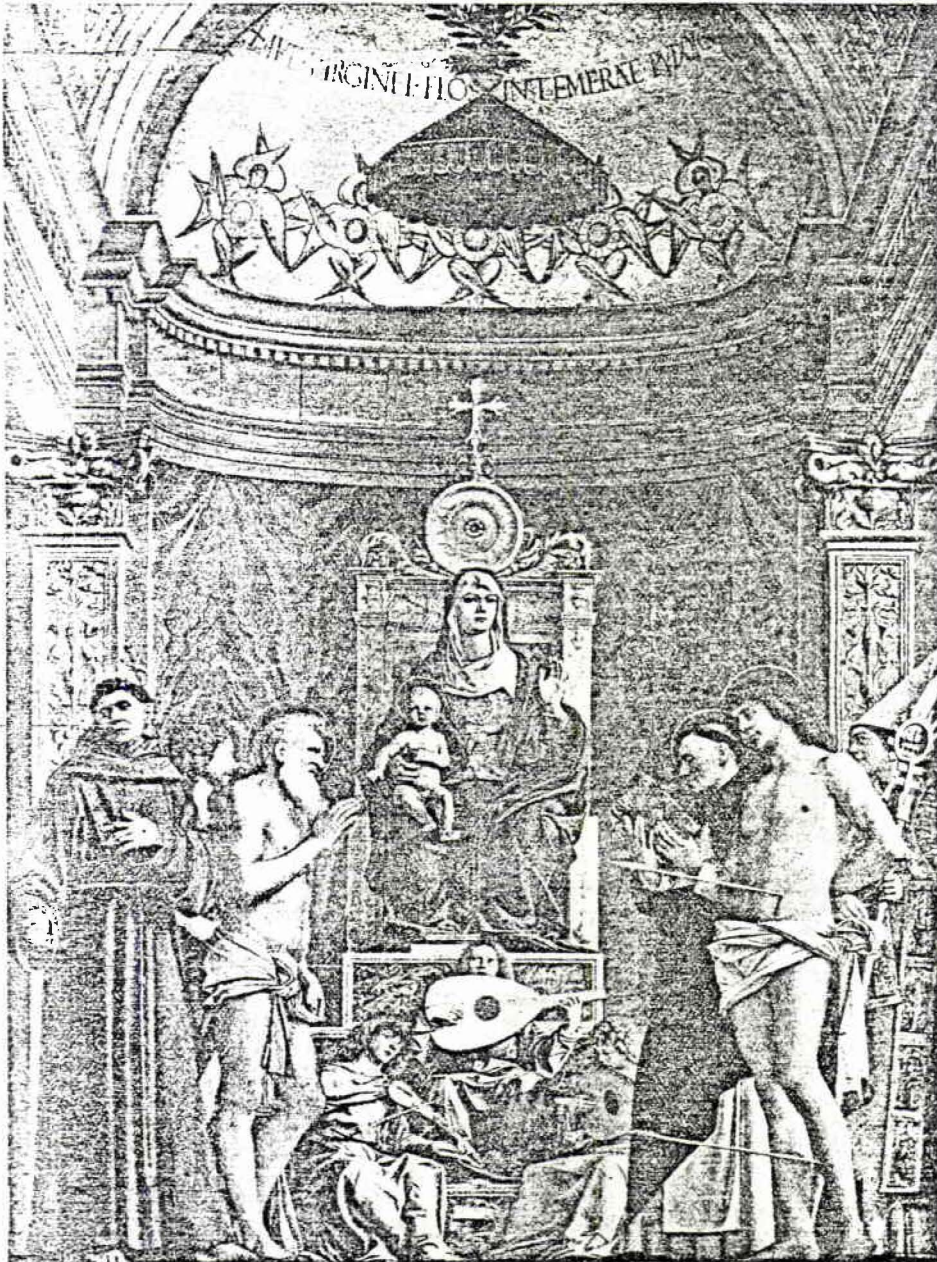
The world of art continually holds for Forster's characters "a new standard of truth", and although this standard of truth does not evade reality but captures its underlying essence, his characters still can escape from reality into the world of art in order to find there the truths they need to confront and act upon in life. Although Forster's attitude toward personal relations moves from a plea for personal commitment and the need to "only connect" in his earlier novels to the final articulation of a metaphysic in A Passage to India based on "our loneliness nevertheless, our isolation", his attitude toward art as a passing reminder of the salvation we are neglecting -- "a breath from the divine lips of beauty, a nightingale between two worlds of dust" (API 108) -- remains relatively consistent in his fiction and non-fiction alike. Indeed, because Forster acknowledges that "this is the twentieth century and the clock says no" ("The Ivory Tower" Atlantic

Monthly 54) to the hope of permanent escape from life, he must continually concentrate on a level of existence at which it is possible to perceive some kind of order and meaning in life. Ultimately, the fervidness with which Forster asserts his view about art and the imagination as "the cry of a thousand sentinels, the echo from a thousand labyrinths . . . the lighthouse which cannot be hidden" (TCD 101), has a certain sadness about it, since it proceeds partly from a realization that the ugliness of facts and the pathos of existence are inescapable except through a willed withdrawal from life itself into an ivory tower of the imagination, a tower from which one can be promised a vision of the "nightingale between two worlds of dust", but from which one cannot easily submit to the perils and joys of personal relations about which Forster had once been so idealistic.

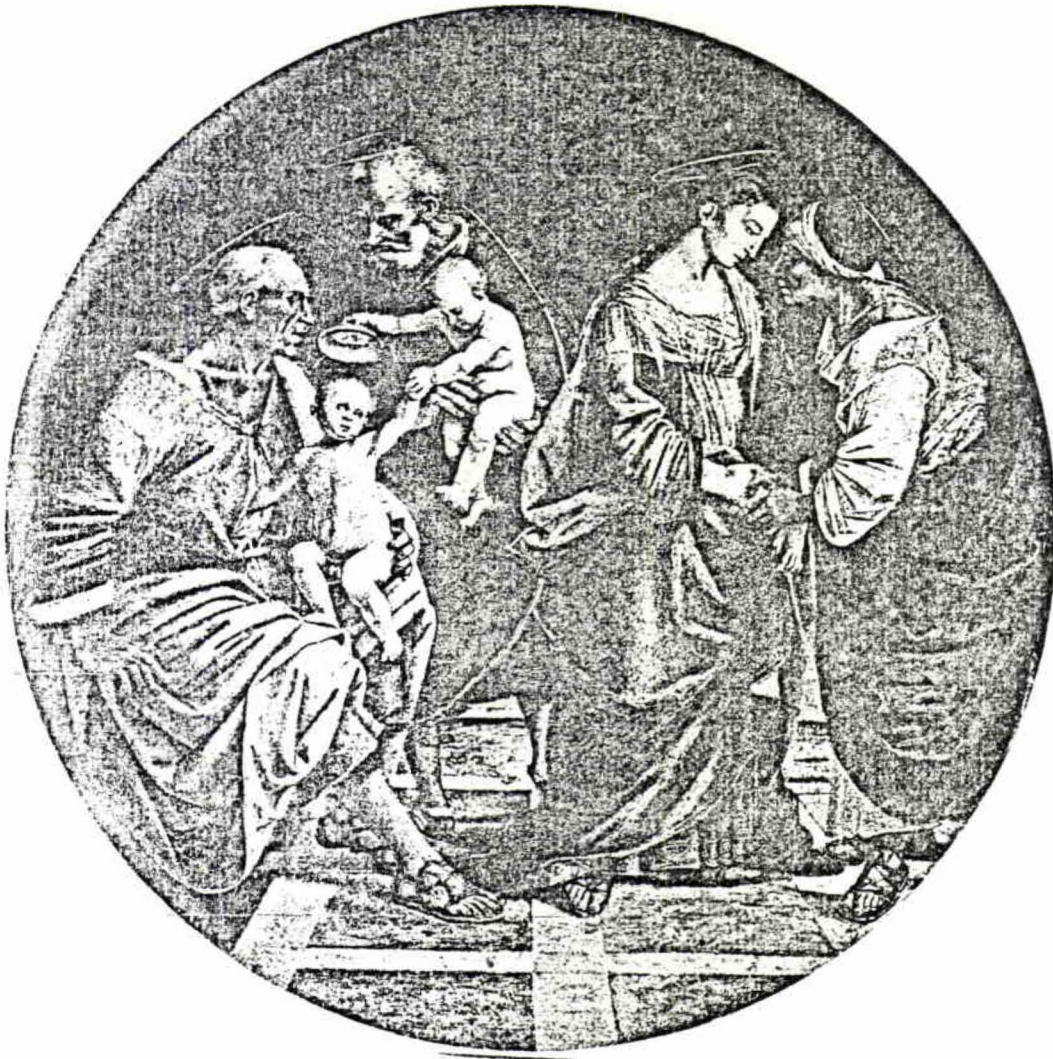
Appendix



Domenico Ghirlandaio. St Gregory Announces the Death of Santa Fina (1475). San Gimignano Cathedral. Plate in Ghirlandaio by Ernst Steinmann. Beilefeld and Leipzig: Delhagen & Klafing, 1897.



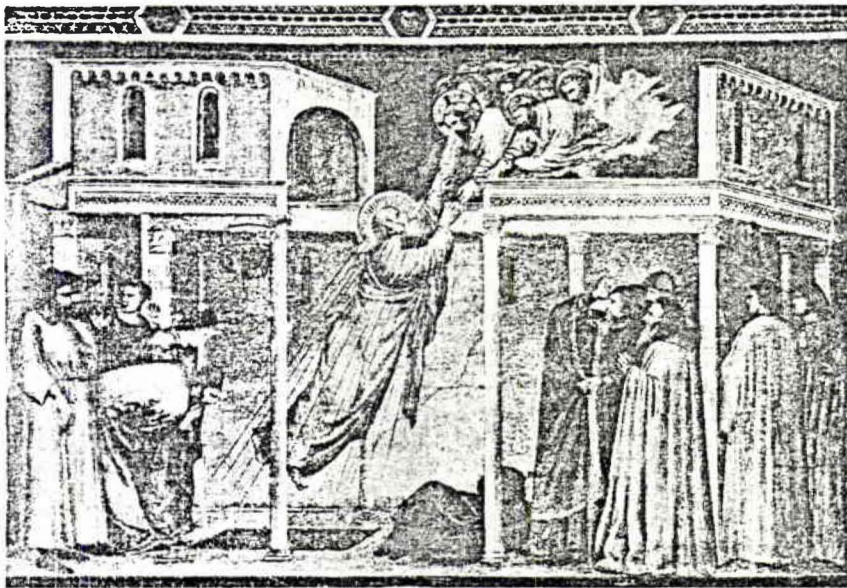
Giovanni Bellini. Altarpiece of S. Giobbe. Academy, Venice.
Plate 16 in Giovanni Bellini by Roger Fry. London, 1899.



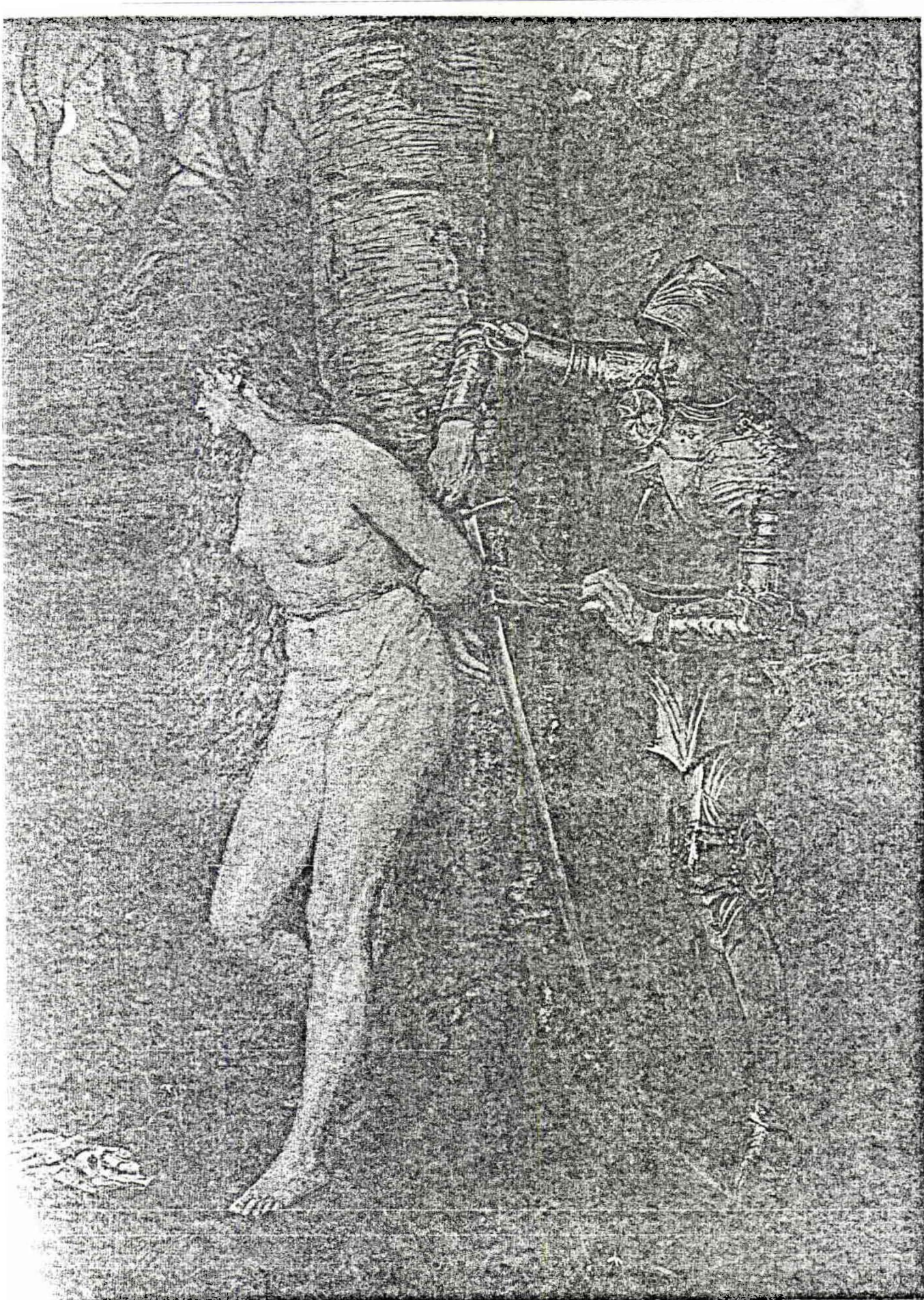
Luca Signorelli. Holy Family and Visitation (1498).
Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, Berlin. Plate 75 in
Signorelli by Luitpold Dussler. Berlin and
Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Ansalt Stuttgart, 1927.



Lorenzo di Credi. Adoration of the Shepherds. Uffizi,
Florence. Plate XXXII in A Study of Lorenzo di Credi
by Robert Brewer. Firenze: Tipografia Giuntiana, 1970.



Giotto di Bondone. The Ascension of St John the Evangelist
(c. 1311-14). Peruzzi Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence.
Plate 134 in Giotto by Luciano Bellosi. N.P.: Harper
& Row, 1981.



John Everett Millais. *The Knight Errant*. London National Gallery. Plate 9 in *John Everett Millais* by Arthur Fish. London: Cassell & Company Limited, 1923.

Notes

Introduction

¹E. M. Forster, "Happy vs. Sad Endings." (Undated and unpublished manuscript lecture.) Qtd. in Watt 48.

¹In "George Crabbe and Peter Grimes", Forster remarks that "[a] composer is under no obligation to stick to his original: his duty is to be original himself Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor owns only the wildest obligations to Sir Walter Scott" (TCD 189). One of the ways in which Donizetti's opera strays from Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor is in its expression of vitality and passion; for Forster, Scott's works expressed nothing of the sort: "He has neither artistic detachment nor passion, and how can a writer who is devoid of both create characters who will move us deeply? [T]hink how all Scott's laborious mountains and scooped-out glens and carefully ruined abbeys call out for passion, passion, and how it is never there! [H]e only has a temperate heart and gentlemanly feelings, and an intelligent affection for the countryside; and this is not basis enough for great novels" (Aspects of the Novel 44).

Chapter Two

¹D. H. Lawrence, Letter to Edward Garnett, June 5, 1914.

²See Trilling 108-109; Stone 231-231; Stallybrass Introduction to A Room with a View 17; Meyers "Vacant Heart and Hand and Eye: The Homosexual Theme in A Room with a View" 181-192.

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