

A Metaphysical “Passage” to India: E. M. Forster’s Perspectives on Dostoevsky and Dante

インドへのメタフィジカル「パッセージ」
— E. M. フォースターのドストエフスキー考・ダンテ観 —

DRYDEN, Izumi *

ドライデン, いづみ

DRYDEN, Laurence M. *

ドライデン, ローランス

Keyword

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- ③ *Dante’s Divine Comedy*
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- ⑤ Gay themes in literature

Abstract

In this article we investigate and explain similarities in selected works of British writer Edward Morgan Forster and Russian novelist Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky from perspectives both sacred and profane. We consider why the two authors incorporated music into their works. In addition, we examine various influences on both authors, including the “trinitarian” structure of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Finally, we explore possible explanations for Forster’s interest in Dostoevsky works in relation to gay themes.

* 金城学院大学キリスト教文化研究所客員研究所員

Introduction

It is understandable that some scholars find similarities in the plots of *A Passage to India* (1924) by British writer E. M. Forster (Edward Morgan Forster, 1879-1970) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80) by Russian novelist Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881). Forster was a highly respectful reader of the Russian master. In fact, “List of the Books in E. M. Forster’s Rooms at King’s College, Cambridge, Compiled in June 1970” at Archive Centre, King’s College, Cambridge, includes the titles of several works by Dostoevsky in Forster’s possession at the time of his death (“List of the Books” 46). According to literary critic and Forster scholar Jeffrey M. Heath, “Forster first read Dostoyevsky’s novel [*The Brothers Karamazov*] in 1910” (Heath, *The Creator* 660). Significantly, this was the same year that Forster finished and published his fourth novel *Howards End* (1910), after which he did not publish another novel until *Passage* (1924), which proved to be his last novel to appear in his lifetime. Forster first read *Karamazov* in French in 1910 because an English translation was not published until 1912. Forster’s interest in Dostoevsky continued for many years onward.

Forster scholars note similar features that appear in *Passage* and *Karamazov*. To cite one telling example, Heath suggests that Forster was influenced by the story of “An Onion” in *Karamazov* to describe the scene in which Professor Godbole, a Hindu believer, sings a *raga* song of the “milkmaiden” in *Passage*. Heath draws the comparison:

The old woman’s selfishness in wanting to be saved, all alone, from the lake of fire (“It’s my onion, not yours”) [in *Karamazov*] bears a striking similarity to Godbole’s song [in *Passage*] of the milkmaiden, who asks Shri Krishna to “Come to me only.”” Krishna “neglects to come,” in Godbole’s wonderfully enigmatic phrase, because to come to one person, or even to a hundred, is to ignore the rest of humanity. (Heath,

The Creator, 660-661)

However, such tales that admonish listeners not to be “selfish” and “all alone,” which have appeared in many cultures through millennia, suggest that divine justice is a universal theme arising from certain continuities across world history and geography.

In the high Middle Ages of Dante (Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321), for example, such “justice” had already been introduced, according to Gordon in *Temples of the Orient*, as one manifestation in the long history of what is commonly known as “karma.” This divine justice was “one of the most remarkable doctrines in Sumerian theology” and was moreover “that of guilt bringing its own punishment of misfortune, or disease, for sins of omission and commission, which resembles that of KARMA [sic], emphasised alike in Buddhist texts, in Holy Scripture, and by Dante and Bunyan” (Gordon, *Temples of the Orient*, 291-293). Consequently, such a story of “divine retribution,” as told in the tale of “An Onion” in a chapter of *Karamazov*, was most likely not original to Dostoevsky but could be traced as far back as ancient Sumerian civilization, predated by Hinduism and followed by Buddhism in India. What such “karma” stories in various forms emphasize is that no one should be selfish—or “self-ish,” as it were—set apart from humanity and standing in desolate isolation.

It is more likely, however, that Foster adapted the story of the “milkmaid” and Krishna in *Passage* not from Dostoevsky’s “An Onion” but from Goldie’s identification of “the god Krishna,” i.e., “the god who like the Messiah was always promising to come but never came” (Moffat, *E. M. Forster*, 110). (A similarly anticipated but unfulfilled advent is re-enacted ironically in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, in which “little God,” in a bilingual French/English pun, is expected but fails to appear amid a bleak landscape.)

Dostoevsky scholar Leonid Grossman (1888-1965) suggests that Dostoevsky

had overheard various Middle Eastern, Asian, and Oriental stories, including ones of Zoroaster, that spread to India and China, recounted by the Omsk prisoners during the years he served his sentence in Siberia between 1850-1854. As Grossman explains, “Dostoevsky related that he had many friends and companions among the prisoners, and he was interested in their stories, songs, and ethical problems” (Grossman, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Works*, 175). Furthermore, the editor and translator Wasiolek makes sense of the tale “An Onion” in *Karamazov* by examining various versions in the notebooks for *Karamazov*: “Scattered on the page are fragments of variations of the legend about the onion” (Wasiolek, *The Notebooks for The Brothers Karamazov*, 124). Consequently “An Onion” cannot be authenticated as an original creation of Dostoevsky, and it appears more likely that Dostoevsky incorporated into *Karamazov* one or more stories he had heard from Omsk prisoners during his years of penal servitude in Siberia.

Forster mentions Dostoevsky in his writings, letters, and talks that span several decades. In 1910, the year he first read *Karamazov*, Forster wrote in a letter to a fellow Bloomsbury associate—the English aristocrat, society hostess, and patron of the arts, Lady Ottoline Morrell: “I am reading *Les Frères Karamazov*, but am so far a little disappointed. . . . And so myself after reading *Crime and Punishment*. But Dostoieffskie [sic] always makes one feel ‘comfortable’—again difficult to define” (Lago and Furbank, *Selected Letters: Vol. One* 105-106). Let us consider again: “Dostoieffskie always makes one feel ‘comfortable,’” in relation to the assertion that Dostoevsky is “difficult to define.” It is worth reflecting on the reasons why Forster felt “comfortable” with Dostoevsky in ways that were nonetheless “difficult to define.”

To these ends, the present article aims to identify and interpret thematic similarities in the works of the two authors, Forster and Dostoevsky. First, both authors use musical themes and effects in their fiction and were especially fond of

Beethoven. In their novels, both authors show sympathy for themes of freedom and redemption that Beethoven was exploring musically. In addition, both authors admired Dante and adapted the “trinitarian” structure of Dante’s works to their own literary creations. Even though Dante consigned his gay mentor Brunetto Latini to the flames of eternal torment in the “Inferno,” the gay Forster nonetheless drew inspiration from Dantesque motifs.

Same-sex episodes in the works of Dostoevsky are likely to have appealed to Forster. These include three “kiss scenes” involving different pairs of men in *Karamazov*: The master [Father Zosima] and the servant, the resurrected Christ and the Grand Inquisitor, and the two (of four) Karamazov brothers, Alyosha and Ivan. Such scenes of intense male physicality may well have been what Forster longed to represent in his own novels. Forster’s posthumous novel *Maurice* (completed in 1914 but not published until 1971) presents gay themes imbued with the metaphysical and physical interests of the main character, young man Maurice. Moreover, these themes are intensified by references to the music of Tchaikovsky, the Russian composer (and agonizingly closeted gay man), (Pyotr I’lyich Tchaikovsky, 1840-93).

Consequently, it can be argued, the implicitly gay aspects in Dostoevsky’s works may have sustained Forster further in his pursuit of literary and musical interests beyond *Maurice*. These include his collaboration on the libretto of the opera *Billy Budd* (1951, 1960)—an adaptation of Herman Melville’s novel set in the men-only world of a British warship during the Napoleonic wars. Forster’s later work also includes his unfinished novel *Arctic Summer* (1980), which describes an attractive “perfect male character.”

The purpose of the current article is to investigate and explain some similarities in various works of Forster and Dostoevsky from perspectives both sacred and profane. First, we consider how music is skillfully used by Forster

and Dostoevsky and explore the reasons why the authors incorporated music into their works. Next, we examine various influences on both authors, including the “trinitarian” structure of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321). Finally, we explore the reasons why Forster found certain aspects of Dostoevsky works “comfortable” by examining gay themes in selected works of Dostoevsky and Forster.

1. The Place of Music in the Works of Forster and Dostoevsky

A shared interest of Forster and Dostoevsky is their use of music for thematic purposes in many of their works. Forster was described as “our most musical author” by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), the British composer with whom Forster collaborated as a librettist on the opera *Billy Budd* (1951, 1960). Indeed, Forster uses music in virtually all of his novels and many of his short stories. In addition, he frequently refers to music in his essays and broadcasting talks. Perhaps the best-known scene of music in Forster appears in *Howards End* (1910). In a concert performance of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony (1804) the music inspires a character to imagine such fanciful images as a “goblin” roaming the earth. The literary critic Mike Edwards says that Forster “was fond particularly of Beethoven and Wagner, and tried to bring to his novels something of the thematic complexity of those composers by weaving ideas into the texture of his writing in a manner he described in *Aspects of the Novel* in the phrase ‘repetition plus variation’”(Edwards, *E. M. Forster: The Novels*, 11). The Forster scholar Izumi Okuyama (now Izumi Dryden, the co-author of this article) analyzes the main elements structuring Forster novels: “As Edwards explains, Beethoven and Wagner’s works are the main elements in Forster’s novels, and the structures of the novels are chiefly adapted from various Beethoven symphonies and piano sonatas and Wagnerian operas” (Okuyama, *Queer Christian Forster*, vii).

Similarly, Dostoevsky was fond of Beethoven, particularly the opera *Fidelio* (1805), according to Dostoevsky's widow Anna (Dostoevsky, A., *Dostoevsky Reminiscences*, 120). Grossman also explains that Dostoevsky "delighted in Beethoven. Such was the effect of this world of art upon Dostoevsky throughout his life, such was the inspiration that he drew from the 'land of holy miracles' to which he paid such glowing tribute in his last novel through the lips of Ivan Karamazov" (Grossman, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, 606-607). It may come as no surprise that Dostoevsky, who spent four years imprisoned in Siberia under conditions unimaginable to most modern readers, would respond with all his heart to Beethoven's paeans to freedom, most notably Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, which is set in a political prison.

In an explanation of Forster's use of music in his novels, Okuyama offers this catalog:

Forster purposefully inserted references to classical music as keys to understanding the novels' themes. These include passages from Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905); Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* and *Das Rheingold* in *The Longest Journey* (1907); Beethoven's "Piano Sonata, opus 111" in *A Room with a View* (1908); Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* in *Howards End* (1910); and the cave's echoes and the Indian *Ragas* in *A Passage to India* (1924). All of these musical elements serve to guide and control the reader's responses to the dramatic action of the novels. With the opera *Billy Budd*, of course, the ratio of music to literary language changes, but the essential purposes remain the same. *Billy Budd* retains and expands the serious concert-music elements of the novels. Even the strange acoustics of the cave's echo of "ou-boum" in *A Passage to India* evoke Billy's stammering "fou-ou-ou-ou-oundling" in *Billy Budd*. (Okuyama, *Queer*

Christian Forster, ix)

Forster uses opera, symphony, and song styles including voice and sound of nature in his novels. Burra points out “the symphonic structure of *The Longest Journey* and *A Passage to India*: with their three parts—‘Cambridge, Sawston, Wiltshire’; ‘Mosque, Caves, Temple’—are planned like symphonies in three movements that are given their shape and their interconnections by related and contrasted localities. In the later book the ‘Marabar Caves’ are the basis of a tour de force in literary planning. They are the keynote in the symphony to which the strange melody always returns” (Forster, *A Passage to India*, 325-326).

Forster himself discusses the ways that Dostoevsky used music in his novels. In *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Forster explains the musical characteristics of Dostoevsky’s writing style in *Karamazov*: “What matters is the accent of his voice, his song” (Forster, *Aspects*, 123-124). Focusing on “his voice” and “his song,” Grossman also considers Dostoevsky works from musical perspectives:

Dostoevsky uses great finesse in applying the metaphor of musical modulation to the plan of a literary composition. The story is constructed on the basis of an artistic counterpoint. The psychological torture inflicted on the fallen girl in the second chapter answers to the insult inflicted on her tormentor in the first, and at the same time her meekness is in contrast to his feelings of offended and angered vanity. This is indeed contrapuntal. It is different voices singing the same theme, with a difference. It is polyphony, displaying the manifold images of life and the manifold complexities of human existences (Grossman, *Dostoevsky*, 316).

Grossman observes the polyphonic aspect of Dostoevsky works, and this idea is extended by Dostoevsky critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) who describes *Karamazov* as a “polyphonic novel.” In musical terms, “polyphony” means “many

sounds” and “music in which several simultaneous voice or instrument parts are combined contrapuntally” (Kennedy, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 570). Bakhtin says, “Dostoevsky’s particular gift for hearing and understanding all voices immediately and simultaneously, a gift whose equal we find only in Dante, also permitted him to create the polyphonic novel” (Bakhtin, *Problems*, 30). Indeed, Dante’s influence on Dostoevsky’s works was noted by Turgenev (Ivan Sergeyeovich Turgenev, 1818-1883) who described Dostoevsky work as “Dantesque” for its polyphony (Grossman, *Dostoevsky*, 258).

Bakhtin refers to another Dostoevsky scholar Komarovich to explain polyphonic music: “the five voices of a fugue, entering one by one and developing in contrapuntal harmony, remind one of the ‘harmonization of voices’ in a Dostoevskian novel” (Bakhtin, *Problems*, 21). Indeed, Dostoevsky’s voice and song create “harmonization of voices” in his works, particularly in *Karamazov*. Forster says, “Mitya is – all of us. So is Alyosha, so is Smerdyakov” and Mitya “is merely Dmitri Karamazov, but to be merely a person in Dostoevsky is to join up with all the other people far back” (Forster, *Aspects*, 123). Each character’s voice harmonizes with others’ and such “harmonization of voices” constructs a Dostoevsky novel. Forster also explains that Dostoevsky’s novel “gives us the sensation of a song or of sound” (Forster, *Aspects*, 125). Dostoevsky frequently uses “songs” in his novels, as does Forster. Songs are used in operatic ways in Dostoevsky novels. Grossman repeats, “Dostoevsky was very fond of music” and “His favorite composers were Mozart and Beethoven and, of Russians, Glinka and Serov, especially the latter’s opera *Rogneda*” (Grossman, *Dostoevsky*, 375).

Grossman cites Dostoevsky’s niece Masha’s description of Dostoevsky’s use of music in his novel: “I once played a German song after Heine’s well-known poem *Du hast Diamanten und Perlen* in Fyodor Mikhailovich’s presence. Fyodor Mikhailovich liked it very much . . . and after that he began to hum it

quite often. . . . perhaps it occurred to him later, when he was writing the fifth chapter of *Crime and Punishment*, to put the words of this song into the mouth of the dying Katerina Icanovna Marmeladova” (Grossman, Dostoevsky, 375-376). The speculation by Dostoevsky’s niece Masha that her uncle made use of popular songs in his novels gains further support from Grossman, who observed that the music of Russian composer Glinka (Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka, 1804-1857) was incorporated in the novel *The Eternal Husband* (1870). Grossman says that in this work, “Dostoevsky recreated one of the most vivid musical experiences of his life” (Grossman, Dostoevsky, 136).

What then were the likely intentions and purposes of Forster and Dostoevsky for incorporating particular musical pieces in their novels? By doing so, both writers seem to have used contrapuntal structures to connect two oppositions, which Forster attempted in *Howards End* as suggested by his famous epigraph “Only connect.” In addition, by adapting counterpoint with musical pieces, voices in the works can be more functional. Through musicality, Dostoevsky and Forster developed polyphonic novels. Consequently, their works tend to be similar in the structure along with musical motifs. In addition to the polyphonic style of novel, as Burra pointed out the symphonic structure of three parts in *The Longest Journey* (1907) and *Passage* (1924), three aspects simultaneously form polyrhythm in Forster novels. “Polyrhythm” means “several different rhythms performed simultaneously” much as “Mozart combined three different dance-rhythms simultaneously in *Don Giovanni*” (Kennedy, *Oxford Concise Dictionary*, 570). Three-part structure in Forster’s novels also suggest three different rhythms or patterns of human interaction by which the characters “only connect.”

Mozart used the number “three” as a structural device in his opera *The Magic Flute* (1791). According to a musicologist Michelle Fillion, “Forster admired [a] 1920 [production of] *The Magic Flute*, which recasts Mozart’s

characters in a pessimistic ‘allegory of contemporary life and human destiny’ that was also a veiled apologia for homosexual [sic] love” (Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm*, 5). With three different rhythms and a recurring motif of three repeated notes in its score, *The Magic Flute* uses the sacred trinitarian number to suggest a range of themes. According to *The Magic Flute Libretto* by Ian Thomson, these themes included rebellion against power and Christian apocalypse: “the imminent apocalyptic return of Christ” (325, 352); “Good prevails over Evil (Protestants over Catholics)” (312); the Resurrection; and “asexual man-woman” or “an hermaphrodite” (111). Forster and Dostoevsky themselves incorporated rhythms of “three” in their works. Dante’s use of a trinitarian structure—Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso—served as an inspiring model for Forster and Dostoevsky, among many other artists, as will be examined in the next section.

2. Dante’s Influences on Forster and Dostoevsky

In the end of *Passage*, the British male character Fielding asks the Indian male character Aziz, “Why can’t we be friends now?” (Forster, *Passage*, 316). However, the story ends with the denial response by the “sky”: “The sky said, ‘No, not there’” (Forster, *Passage*, 316). Why does the “sky” say “No”? The answer may be found in the conversation between two contrastive male characters in an earlier Forster novel *A Room with a View* (1908): a physically attractive male character George Emerson and an unattractive bookworm Cecil Vyse. George recalls that his father “says that there is only one perfect view—the view of the sky straight over our heads, and that all these views on earth are but bungled copies of it” (Forster, *A Room*, 147). Then Cecil responds to George, “I expect your father has been reading Dante” (Forster, *A Room*, 147). Since only “sky” can have “one perfect view,” a perfect view is not attainable on earth. As George’s father says, “perfect view” is described in “Paradiso” in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*

(1307-1321). Therefore, the ending of *Passage* suggests that the two men are still far from the perfect world of the *Divine Comedy*, even though their dialogue refers to Dante's own native city of Florence.

Forster openly acknowledges his debt to Dante in the broadcast "A Book that Influenced Me" in 1944: "On looking back upon my own half-century of reading, I've no doubt which my three greatest books have been. They have been Dante's *Divine Comedy*" (Heath, *The Creator*, 278). Heath gives a supplementary explanation: "The earliest stages of his research on Dante are preserved at King's in a document described in the Handlist as 'Notes and thoughts headed 'Dante''" (Heath, *The Creator*, 680). In addition, Forster hid his secret notes with Dante's work titles in three lines on two separate pages in the bound script of his unfinished novel *Arctic Summer* (written in 1912-1913, published posthumously in 1980), suggesting his novels' hint ("Draft of 'Arctic Summer,' Archive Centre, King's College, Cambridge, 59-60; 63-64).

Forster says that the *Divine Comedy* and other two novels are "monuments," and "over Dante I put quite a lot of work" (Heath, *The Creator*, 278). In "The Celestial Omnibus," Dante the character says, "I am the means and not the end. I am the food and not the life" and "I cannot save you. For poetry is a spirit; and they that would worship it must worship in spirit and in truth" (Forster, "The Celestial," 45). Stone states, "In spite of Dante's sensible reminder ('I am the means, not the end. I am the food and not the life')—which echoes not only Jesus's words but Forster's belief that one cannot truly live in art—the story makes a total separation between 'society' and 'art'" (Stone, *The Caves and the Mountain*, 151-152). In a sense, such story as "The Celestial Omnibus" is Foster's own version of a Dantesque allegory.

According to the Dante critic and scholar Robert Hollander, "Almost every Dante commentator since the fourteenth century has read the *Divine Comedy*

as though its essential allegorical principle were that of Prudentius” (Hollander, *Allegory in Dante’s Commedia*, 4). Hollander explains, “This tradition of allegory is, in religious terms, the spirit of gnosticisim, in which the objects of perception have value only as they lead us toward the ineffable, toward salvation through wisdom—as if they are clues to the spiritualized, non-tangible, abstract essence of the universe” (Hollander, *Allegory in Dante’s Commedia*, 5). Hollander defines what works count as “allegories”:

In all such works [of allegories] the reader is made to understand that *this* is not actually happening; it serves only to represent *that*. The dream is public and the dreamer is the author, or the dreamer in the fiction, or you the reader. And all such allegories, no matter how densely and beautifully detailed they may be, begin and end with the understanding that they are not at first remove to be confused with actuality: that they are the record of the struggle within one idealized soul which stands for all Christian souls; that the trappings of external reality stand only and surely for the sacramental spiritual truths in which we must all be instructed. We can see the continuance of this medieval and later literary tradition in some contemporary literature, particularly in Dostoevski and in Kafka. (Hollander, *Allegory in Dante’s Commedia*, 6)

The connection between Dante and Dostoevsky becomes clearer through an examination of how the authors use allegory. According to Jesper Hede, “Hollander suggests that while Beatrice is a Christ-figure, Vergil is related to John the Baptist, ‘whose desert voice leads to Christ, and who performs the first baptism’” (Hede, *Reading Dante*, 146). In Dostoevsky’s works, there are also characters who serve as Christ-figures and John the Baptist characters. In Dostoevsky’s case, however, it is more likely that the Christ-figure is Christ Himself. For example, Sonya leads Raskolnikov to Christ in *Crime and Punishment* (1866). And of course, it is the

risen Christ Himself who appears in the Grand Inquisitor chapter of *Karamazov*.

In Dante, however, the focus tends toward the unity of the Trinity. Hede notes, “According to Seung, the basic structural element of the *Commedia* is not the account of a journey; it is the coherent vision of universal order. The hero of the epic drama is not Dante the traveler, but the Holy Trinity (Hede, *Reading Dante*, 130). Then, what does “the Holy Trinity” represent? Hede gives the Seung argument of “three supernatural virtues (faith, hope, and charity)” (Hede, *Reading Dante*, 130). Thus, Seung asserts that “the essential theme of the *Commedia* is the Trinity” (Hede, *Reading Dante*, ix).

On the other hand, Stone mentions Forster’s perspective of “trinity”: “trinity is the basic structure of his thought and art: its elements must work together—and toward harmony. Whenever Forster gives us a novel divided into threes he is striving for that result” (Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain*, 59). In *Commonplace Book* (1978), Forster writes about Dante along with *Divine Comedy* in 1930: “The social fabric, Personal relationships, Our place in the Universe, and Dante’s come quite right. These are the three subjects for serious literature” (Gardner, *Commonplace*, 82). In *Passage*, Forster’s imitations of the three primary subjects can be traced through two contrasting male characters Fielding and Aziz. Even though sky says “No” to their friendship at the end of the story, their connection reminds us of the relationship between Dante and Virgil in the *Divine Comedy*. In *Passage*, it is more likely that Fielding experiences a physical passage to India and Aziz a metaphysical or spiritual one. In another work, Forster asks, “Why does he [Dante] always incline us to follow him, and, whether he preaches or not, seem to be walking excitedly ahead?” (Gardner, *Commonplace*, 83). This confession of Forster suggests that he composed *Passage* in some ways, conscious or subconscious, under the influence of Dante. In that sense, composing *Passage* was “a passage to Dante” for Forster. Similarly, Dostoevsky may have preceded

Forster in making “a passage to Dante” in composing *Karamazov*. As Dostoevsky critic and scholar Joseph Frank argues, “Dostoevsky imparts a monumental power of self-expression to his characters that rivals Dante’s sinners and saints” (Frank, *Dostoevsky*, 848). The light (or shadow) of Dante seems to cast its influence profoundly on the authors of both *Passage* and *Karamazov*.

3. Suggestions of Gay Themes in Works of Forster and Dostoevsky

The Dostoevsky critic and scholar Steven Cassedy introduces “Vladimir Solov’ev (1853-1900), the dazzlingly precocious philosopher who was a friend and companion to Dostoevsky from 1873 till the end of the novelist’s life” (Cassedy, *Dostoevsky’s Religion*, 4). Cassey explains, “The intellectual relationship between Solov’ev and Dostoevsky was said to be reciprocal, and some have said that Solov’ev was the real-life prototype for both Alyosha and Ivan Karamazov” (Cassedy, *Dostoevsky’s Religion*, 4). Cassey continues to present the influence of Solov’ev:

After Dostoevsky died, the religious philosopher paid tribute to him in his *Three Discourses in Memory of Dostoevsky*, published between 1881 and 1885. Solov’ev attempts to define what kind of Christianity his late friend represented. There are three possible types of Christianity, Solov’ev explains: what he calls temple Christianity, domestic Christianity, and universal Christianity. . . . Dostoevsky’s is of the third type, which is to say “a free, all-humankind unity, an all-world brotherhood in Christ’s name.” (Cassedy, *Dostoevsky’s Religion*, 4)

Dostoevsky’s “universal Christianity” may be best exemplified in Father Zosima’s comment in book six of *Karamazov*: “Zosima tells of an encounter with a former servant. . . . ‘I had been his master and he my servant, but now, as he and I kissed each other with love and spiritual tenderness, a great human unity arose

between us. . . . Can it really be inaccessible to the mind that this great, simple-hearted unity might arise, in its own time and universally, among our Russian people?" (Cassedy, *Dostoevsky's Religion*, 5). Such kissing interaction of "the master and the servant" is developed into the kiss scene of "Christ and the Grand Inquisitor" and of "Alyosha and Ivan" in Chapter 5 in Book Five. This trinitarian set of kiss scenes of the fusion or merger of two oppositions serves to create "trinitarian" harmony in *Karamazov*.

Such scenes of the fusion of two male characters, however, suggest a wealth of possibilities. It may represent the merger of "good and evil" in the male-only world of the opera *Billy Budd* on which Forster collaborated. By contrast, in Chapter 5 of *Karamazov*, Ivan refers to Dante and says, "It was customary in poetic works to bring higher powers down to earth" (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 248). Ivan's words may mean that "poetic works" have a function to connect heaven and earth. In *Passage*, Dr. Aziz is also a poet in the mode of Dante. Therefore, he remains as a source of hope to connect two oppositions and harmonize three aspects with the suggestion of being friends with Fielding at the end of the novel. Literary and cultural critic René Girard considers such relationships involving three aspects among male characters as "triangular desire to homosexuality [sic]" (Girard, *Deceit*, 47) in reference to Dostoevsky's *The Eternal Husband* (1870). In the story, along with "the most vivid musical experiences of his life" the lyrics of "I want to kiss, kiss, kiss!" is repeated (Grossman, *Dostoevsky*, 136). Forster may well have felt "comfortable" with such implicit suggestions of gay themes in Dostoevsky's works.

Conclusion

In *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Forster contends that the heart of Dostoevsky's philosophy is "love and pity" based on Christian philosophy (Forster,

Aspects 118). (The Eastern Orthodox form of Dostoevsky's Christianity, of course, is salient, with its special devotion to the Holy Trinity.) By the time he was writing *Aspects*, Forster himself had long since moved beyond conventional Christianity. Forster scholar Wilfred Stone clarifies the paradoxical mix of Forster's abiding memory of his Christian upbringing with his mature agnosticism: "The Biblical language is itself a reminder of the inheritance from Clapham that Forster can neither wholly accept nor wholly reject" (Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain*, 60). Nevertheless, despite Forster's departure from Christian orthodoxy, Biblical phrases frequently appear in *Passage*, suggestive of Forster's endeavor to reconcile his own divided mind over the Anglican faith of his upbringing from which he had strayed in young adulthood. The mature, classically educated Forster might have seen in Dante a way to reintegrate the spiritual realm into his life. Girard observes, "One of the greatest examples of literature leading to Christianity is Dante. The experience is expressed symbolically by the role of Virgil in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. . . . in the Middle Ages, Virgil was regarded as a prophet of Christ" (Girard, *Mimesis & Theory*, 263). To follow Dante, Forster needed to take "a passage to Christ" mediated by the pagan poet Vergil. After *Passage*, Forster may have attained a certain spiritual reintegration through his work on the libretto of the opera *Billy Budd*, in which he highlighted Melville's protagonist, the seaman Billy, as a Christ-like sacrificial victim, a vicarious sufferer who willingly goes to his execution and thereby atones for the sins of the other characters in the shipboard drama. In particular, Billy's sacrifice atones for the sins of Captain Vere, who, as Pontius Pilate did to Jesus, ambivalently condemned Billy to his unjust fate.

Indeed, it might be useful to read Dante's *Divine Comedy* alongside Dostoevsky's *Karamazov* in order to make sense of Forster's *Passage*. Grossman identified Dostoevsky's central aesthetic principle, which was

the basic idea of all nineteenth-century art: *the restoration of destroyed man*, who is crushed by the unjust yoke of circumstances, by the stagnation of centuries and of social prejudices; the *justification of the humiliated and all the outcast pariahs of society*. (Grossman, *Dostoevsky*, 211)

Dostoevsky's pity for the unjustly oppressed certainly had its roots in the writer's own condemnation to four years of exile in a Siberian prison, Dostoevsky saw a much wider vision in the story of the passion of Christ. Grossman continues:

Dostoevsky believed that by the end of the [nineteenth] century a great work of art would surely appear which would express this idea as fully and immortally as Dante's *Divine Comedy* expresses the cherished ideals and beliefs of the Middle Ages. (Grossman, *Dostoevsky*, 211)

Both Dostoevsky's *Karamazov* and Forster's *Passage* might be possible candidates for such a great reintegrative work, one that Dostoevsky hoped would serve in his own time as Dante's *Divine Comedy* had served in the fourteenth century.

Turning to Forster's *Passage*, the acquittal of Dr. Aziz recalls certain episodes in *Karamazov*, particularly the Atonement in the chapter of "The Grand Inquisitor" as well as the wrongful conviction of Mitya who is innocent of killing his father but who, in a miscarriage of justice, is sent to Siberia. Moreover, Heath compares the unjust accusation and trial of Dr. Aziz with the trial for the murder of old Karamazov:

Forster's account of how difficult it is to assign blame for the murder of "old Karamazov" is suggestive of Dr. Aziz's much shorter trial in *Passage* and of the various attempts, by the English, to single out one culprit for the "attack" on the young Englishwoman Adela. Godbole knows that "When evil occurs, it expresses the whole of the universe.

Similarly when good occurs.” (Heath, *The Creator* 661)

Although innocent, Dr. Aziz was lucky to escape the British authorities’ search for a useful “example” or scapegoat for the imagined offense of an “attack” on a young Englishwoman. In a world of colonial power and racism, innocence is often no defense.

As a closeted gay man, Forster was always potentially a scapegoat and a “pariah of society.” He struggled to live an outwardly conventional life while concealing his gay identity at a time when British law severely punished anyone convicted of “gross indecency,” as it was called. The prevailing laws were the very same that were used to make a scapegoat of Oscar Wilde and send him to prison under the Labouchere Amendment of 1885 (Moffat, *E. M. Forster*, 33-34). The laws that destroyed Wilde were still legally binding in Britain until 1967, i.e., less than three years before Forster’s death. Forster spent most of his life in peril of the same ignominious fate endured by Wilde and countless other victims of an unjust social order.

The title, *A Passage to India*, has most commonly been understood as “a journey to India,” with multiple levels of possible meaning. Similarly, the likely source of the novel’s title—the poem “Passage to India” by the nineteenth-century American poet Walt Whitman—was meant to encourage readers to make a journey to India (if not physically, then at least imaginatively through Whitman’s poem). Such a journey would become a spiritual pilgrimage which culminated in absorbing the wisdom of Indian philosophy and religion and thereby attaining ultimate understanding. As Whitman wrote: “Passage to India! Lo, soul, seest thou not God’s purpose from the first?” (“Passage to India,” 1871, section 2).

In the year of his first actual journey to India, 1912, Forster asked, “Did Our Saviour ever go to India?” (Gardner, *Journals*, 41). God or something like Him was in the works, even then. Forster himself visited India three times, in 1912,

1921, and 1945. In broader terms, for Forster, visiting India might have been “a passage to Dante” mediated by Dostoevsky’s Virgilian guidance. Literally, Dostoevsky led Forster to Robert Buckingham, when the subject of Dostoevsky arose during their first fateful meeting when Forster had already settled into middle age. Bob became the person that Forster “believed in” (as he wrote, “I believe in Bob” in his “Locked Diary” in 1943), a fact also cited by Gardner in *The Journals*, 97. Bob Buckingham was the beloved person to whom Forster was devoted for the rest of his life. Indeed, through Bob, Forster might have reached Dante’s “Paradiso” that “sky” which would say “Yes” along with Zosima’s teaching of a “blessed” view of life that invites us to “only connect,” in relations that are same-sex or mixed, to create a heaven realized in our limited mortal time on Earth.

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