

“The earth didn’t want it:” Unruly Ecology as Counter-Memory in *A Passage to India*

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Abstract

Despite their emancipatory potential, studies in counter-memory have been predominantly anthropocentric in that they have taken the category of the human as the main frame of reference. Both Foucault’s body of work and contemporary approaches - material ecocriticism and posthumanism- address the field of memory as an entangled mesh of relations between human and nonhuman actors. E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* allows room for a study of memory in this respect as it maps out numerous instances where nonhuman members of the Indian ecosystem mount a counter-memorial resistance against colonialism. The human-centred definition of agency in Western philosophy is re-evaluated in the novel with an emphasis on nonhuman agents as well. Claiming visibility at any time in the functioning of daily life, these agents subvert the anthropocentric thinking that aims to shape the world of objects hierarchically with a firm belief in autonomous and rational subjectivity. The coupling of a post-anthropocentric approach with counter-memory opens up a space for an authentic mode of reading because in this way, the privileged position of the human can be interrogated not only in the “here and now” but also in the wider memory of the planet. This paper aims to focus on the counter-memorial challenges coming from other-than-human agents in the novel, and inspired by the works of Michel Foucault, Karen Barad and Serenella Iovino, it offers in the concluding part a new term, *counter-memorial intra-actions*, to the field of counter-memory studies.

Keywords:

counter-memory, E. M. Forster, Michel Foucault, Karen Barad, Serenella Iovino, *A Passage to India*, nonhuman, counter-memorial intra-actions

“Toprak istemiyordu bunu:” *Hindistan’a Bir Geçit* Romanında Karşı-Bellek Biçimi Olarak İtaatsiz Ekoloji

Özet

Özgürlük temelli bir potansiyel barındırmalarına karşın, karşı-bellek çalışmaları çoğunlukla insan-merkezlidir, zira bu çalışmalarda temel referans noktası olarak ‘insan’ kategorisi ele alınır. Hem Michel Foucault hem de maddeci ekoeleşitiri ve posthümanizm gibi çağdaş yaklaşımlar

bellek kavramını hali hazırda insan ve insandışı unsurların arasındaki dolanıklı ilişkiler bütünü olarak görür. E. M. Forster'ın *Hindistan'a Bir Geçit* romanı Hindistan ekosistemindeki insandışı unsurların sömürgeciliğe karşı geliştirdikleri sayısız karşı-bellek direnişini betimlemesi açısından böyle bir bellek okumasına olanak verir. Batı felsefesindeki insan merkezli eyleycilik tanımı romanda insandışı aktörleri de vurgulayarak yeniden ele alınır. Günlük yaşamın işleyişinde her an kendilerine yer açabilen bu eyleyici aktörler, insanın özerk ve hür irade sahibi olduğu inancıyla nesnelere dünyasını hiyerarşik çizgide şekillendirmeyi amaçlayan insan-merkezli düşünce biçimini tersyüz eder. Post-antroposantrik yaklaşım ve karşı-bellek birlikteliği bu bakımdan özgün bir okuma fırsatı sunar çünkü bu yolla insanın ayrıcalıklı konumunun sadece 'şu anda' değil gezegenin geniş hafızasında da sorgulanması olanağı doğar. Bu kuramsal birliktelikten hareketle ortaya çıkan bu çalışma, romandaki insandışı aktörlerden gelen karşı-bellek direnişlerine odaklanmayı amaçlar ve sonuç kısmında Michel Foucault, Karen Barad ve Serenella Iovino'nun eserlerinden esinle, karşı-bellek çalışmalarına yeni bir kavram – *karşı-bellek iç-eylemleri*- sunar.

Anahtar sözcükler:

karşı-bellek, E. M. Forster, Michel Foucault, Karen Barad, Serenella Iovino, Hindistan'a Bir Geçit, insandışı, karşı-bellek iç-eylemleri

Introduction

The concept of counter-memory, as seen in Michel Foucault's body of works in genealogy, denotes a counter-historiographic desire to challenge the hegemonic models of memory. Teleological patterns in conventional history-writing observe memory as a normative site of recording along a linear trajectory. They give structure to "a regime of truth" where the processes of remembering specifically include the practitioners of dominant discourses. This discursive system works under a dualistic frame of reference in that it observes constant negation between binaries such as mind/body, centre/margin, West/East, culture/nature, and human/nonhuman. While granting privilege to the 'mind', the 'West', or the 'human', hegemonic politics of remembering systematically excludes the repressed categories in the binaristic logic. In these terms, 'subaltern' groups are faced with fixed patterns of exclusion as well as "semiotic" (Krook) and "epistemic violence" (Spivak) under the totalizing power of the

privileged centre. Counter-memorial practices aim to engender the “insurrections of [these] subjugated knowledges” (Foucault, *Society* 9) and facilitate a critical understanding of historiography by claiming visibility for repressed and unregistered groups.

E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924), which has been mostly read under labels such as modernism, liberal humanism, romanticism, psychoanalytic criticism, and (post)colonialism, provides a narrative of counter-memory in which muted voices emerge as disruptive experiences. These –isms, while often deploying sound arguments, have usually taken the category of the human as the main dispenser of meaning. Whereas the narrative evidently allows room for such inquiries due to the intricate plurality of voices it projects, I argue that the novel also attests to the possibilities of nonhuman matter which can function *autopoietically* – in a self-constituting manner beyond human control. During the course of the narrative, we observe that the English mind tries to comprehend and govern the Indian landscape with a recourse to familiar organizational strategies such as railroads and Western-style buildings, or by remaining committed to a load of nostalgic patterns and rational models. It is through these symbolic acts that the colonizing power tries to impose a discursive-material topography into the landscape at the expense of corroding the native texture in the memory of the indigenous space. However, this attempt is foiled with the revelation that the nonhuman constituents of the landscape - local fauna, vegetation, geographical formations like caves and rocks – all generate a broad range of expressions which dislocate the centrality of the Anglocentric ideals through images of “massive incomprehensibility” (Said, *Culture* 202). The absence of clear-cut boundaries in meaning-making processes in turn reminds the colonizer of the existence of nonhuman others which are normally held marginal and outside the regimes of signification in humanist systems like colonialism. This is to say, nonhuman constituents of the colonized space forge a counter-memory by asserting a material presence and revealing other-than-human realities, processes, and post-linguistic complexities that evade human understanding.

Numerous studies have argued that Forster’s text is an imperialist affirmation of colonial codes. Among these, Edward Said (*Culture; Orientalism*), Sara Suleri (“The Geography;” *Rhetoric*), and Serpil Oppermann undertake notable assessments. While Said charts the novel among a series of Western texts imbued with an orientalist discourse, Suleri (“Geography”) offers an incisive critique of its narrative violence which posits India as “an amorphous state of mind that is only remembered in order for it to be forgotten” (245). Oppermann, on the other

hand, observes a close affinity between anthropocentric ideals and Forster's environmental representation, stating that nature in the novel's course becomes "a symbolic inscription of the totalizing hegemony of the British and their culture over the colonized land and its people" (191). While these critical assessments undoubtedly provide valuable points for a critique of imperialist projects, the totalizing tone in them somehow leaves little space for an acknowledgement of the agential capacities that the nature possesses. Such inquiries do not account for the ways in which the ecological "actants" (Latour) perform acts of resistance against humanist assumptions of knowledge, power, and memory. Therefore, I aim to carry out my analysis by putting emphasis on the materiality of agency performed by nonhuman subjects.

This study is not the first one to make a survey focusing on nonhuman elements in the novel. The works of Wilfred Stone, Benita Parry ("Politics;" "Materiality"), Brian May, Barbara Rosecrance, Ram Narayan Panda, and Kelly Sultzbach have all proposed a different role for the nonhuman agents similar to my own. Especially Parry ("Politics") and Sultzbach provide aptly formed nonrepresentationalist and nonanthropocentric analyses of the Indian ecology, which have informed my reading of the nonhuman subjectivity in *A Passage to India*. However, while the existing scholarship offers a wide range of analyses focusing on the ecological constituents in the novel, the post-anthropocentric junction between ecology and counter-memory remains neglected. Therefore, this essay aims not only to enframe the nonhuman agency in the narrative but also highlight the close affinity between more-than-human agencies and counter-memorial instances. I will show that the novel is a counter-discursively dynamic narrative as it occasionally tries to move beyond the limitations of human-centred epistemological frameworks with its intricately consistent foregrounding of nonhuman elements that can produce shifting memorial perspectives along the narrative course.

Michel Foucault and counter-memory

Foucault's analysis of power and resistance urges us to understand the seamless continuity between these two domains. They are never independent from each other, nor do they simply produce one another. Instead, they are internally related and it is in this relation that we can pursue critical inquiries because each field produces knowledges and ways of knowing. The critical process never addresses a monolithic conception of terms such as memory, history, knowledge, power and resistance. Coming from every direction with no consistent traits, every

form of power and resistance incorporates a heterogeneous body of actions and reactions, so our attempts to understand them call for an ‘epistemic plurality’, which means that our habitual ways of thinking might also be undermined in the process of understanding the network of power relations. This is where a Foucauldian study of discourse differs from other conceptualizations of history and memory. While historiographic investigations mainly view power relations as continuous and uniform processes of domination and subordination, the Foucauldian strand – or *genealogical practice* – seeks to unearth the buried, fragmented, and discontinuous contents that have a potential to shed a critical light on the processes by which a *status quo* happens to represent an inevitable *telos*. As Foucault notes, genealogy “must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history” (*Aesthetics* 369). Requiring “a knowledge of details,” genealogy “rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’” (370) because “what is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity” (371-2).

Foucauldian thinking emphasizes that the discursive practices which manufacture a conception of history and memory are never homogenous, nor are they devoid of internal tensions. These practices, in their attempts to assert authority, make visible the endless epistemic conflicts among disputing structures. In the fight over ‘truth’, some discourses gain the upper hand while others are “subjugated.” Foucault underlines two aspects of such knowledge which help us to find a critical potential for carrying out a dynamic process of resistance. First, subjugated knowledges are “historical contents that have been buried or masked in functional coherences or formal systematizations” (*Society* 7). This aspect highlights the existence of hegemonic practices that censor certain bodies of knowledge by producing privileged histories and dominant narratives. Second, subjugated knowledges are “a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naive knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity” (7). The emphasis on a ‘subordinate’ position implies that these knowledges are denied social currency due to their being labelled as “unqualified” among other forms of knowledge which decide on what really makes an epistemological framework a qualified one. Subjugated knowledges, however, are not simply “common knowledge or

common sense” that has been excluded from scientific practices; on the contrary, they are a particular knowledge that is “local, regional, or differential, incapable of unanimity and which derives its power solely from the fact that it is different from all the knowledges that surround it” (8). The particularity of subjugated knowledges is what grants them a subversive potential, and “the reappearance of what people know at a local level, of these disqualified knowledges, [makes] the critique possible” (8).

These characteristics find expression in material forms as well as discursive ones. José Medina observes in Foucauldian genealogies two aspects of subjugated knowledges; they are either “the buried but documentable historical knowledges” or “the locally scattered memories that were never allowed to amount to more than unqualified and dismissible experiences” (19). What lends real strength to a genealogical critique is “the coupling together of the buried scholarly knowledge and knowledges that were disqualified by the hierarchy of erudition and sciences” (Foucault, *Society* 8). Such couplings can uncover multiple histories and deviant memories from official narratives saturated with hegemonic discourses. By means of proceeding against the grain, they can foster the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (7) and invest in a new understanding of memory as “a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, and the personal” (Lipsitz 201). The totalizing structures of remembering can thus be replaced with a new historical consciousness which regards disparity not as a simply dissociative register but as a vibrant territory enmeshed with mobile forms that produce multiple perspectives and subjectivities.

Despite the far-reaching implications in Foucault’s critical venture, studies in counter-memory have been predominantly anthropocentric. The inherent plurality in Foucault’s epistemic framework has somehow been narrowed into a critical space which primarily aims to produce counter-discourses through power relations taking effect in a humanist context. The subjugated memories in this frame generally address the censored memories of human others. Minority groups and colonized people who are outside the systems of signification are the ones who are mainly deemed to be subjugated.

This essay does not aim to undermine the value of these undertakings since they evidently help interrogate the hegemonic models of remembering. On the other hand, Foucault’s own enterprise offers a wider range of possibilities to conduct counter-memorial investigations, in fact in a prospect going beyond a human-centred homogeneity. In “Nietzsche, Genealogy,

History,” Foucault states that the human relationship of domination is “fixed, throughout its history, in rituals, in meticulous procedures that impose rights and obligations. It establishes marks of its power and engraves *memories on things* and even within bodies” (*Aesthetics* 377, emphasis added). Here Foucault observes the scope of memorial inscription that is effective in human relations, which in fact addresses a location beyond the realm of the *anthropos*, a location extending towards the dynamic spaces of other-than-human subjects. If memories of domination are to be found within nonhuman subjects, then possibilities for a counter-memorial survey can also be raised among them, which hints at a Foucauldian understanding of relationality taking effect in nonhuman contexts as well¹. This is a point that Foucault further discusses in “Different Spaces.” Contemplating on the subversive potentials of deviant spaces, or *heterotopias*, Foucault highlights the power of space in giving meaning to human experiences. He claims that “we are living not in a homogenous and empty space but, on the contrary, in a space that is *laden with qualities*” (*Aesthetics* 177, emphasis added); it is a “heterogeneous space” incorporating “an ensemble of relations” (178). Heterotopias defy the logic of teleology and causality because, as opposed to the linear temporality of human relations, “heterotopias are connected with temporal discontinuities” (182). Meaning thus cannot be extracted from heterotopias through merely humanist signifying practices; they incorporate and produce meaning in discontinuous forms outside the spatiotemporal *logoi* of the human.

The presence of things bearing the inscriptions of dominant memories and heterogeneous spaces located beyond human-centred coordinates suggest that a nonhuman aspect of memory is somehow available in Foucault’s body of work. Considering that he potentially provides us with a discursive means to interrogate human exceptionalism, the critical task of a Foucauldian genealogy should also consider nonhuman elements when employing counter-discursive strategies to challenge dominant memories. While power relations are explored predominantly in a human-centred context, it is through such non-humanist undertakings that the concepts of memory and counter-memory can be situated in a wider framework of references. Taking all these into account, this study aims to widen the scope of counter-memorial strategies towards the realm of subjugated others in a nonhuman context.

¹ See Lemke for a Foucauldian analysis of relationality taking effect between the human and nonhuman categories.

Dominant memories and the Indian landscape

Following Foucault, it is safe to argue that hegemonic structures of remembering operate on discursive dimensions as well as material ones, and *A Passage to India* mirrors the same pattern inherent in dominant memories. In the case of British imperialism, these memories help the colonial settlers implement ideological measures of knowing and distinguish themselves from their ontological others, be they human or nonhuman. The crudest forms of imperial memory are place names; “The roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India” (Forster 11). Forster here rightly understands the significance of naming in colonial practices and finds an imperial cartography - “the net over India”- in the physical infrastructure. As Ashcroft et. al asserts, “Place itself, in the experience of the post-colonial subject, is a palimpsest of a process in language,” and by naming things and places “imperial discourse brings the colonized space ‘into being’” (158-9). It is a “dynamic process” of knowing and controlling space through linguistic means because “it appropriates, defines and captures the place in language” (165). Indigenous memories face acts of mastery and control first and foremost in language, which means that the process of symbolization is given shape in favour of the colonial ideology. As symbolic codes supplement the cartography of imperial discourse, the rhetoric of superiority coupled with a “linguistic imperialism” (Philipson) acquires further empirical ground through architectural designs such as western-style buildings, railways, and tennis lawns, all suggesting the ubiquity of colonial presence in cultural and economic terms as well. Therefore, the endemic memory of the Indian landscape is confronted with a new set of functions and expressions working for the utilitarian comfort of the colonizers. In a Foucauldian sense, the constructive power of the colonial discourse is materialized through such expressions as they ultimately help to produce new spatial forms that are ‘governable’ at the discursive level.

Despite the presence of familiar facilities, the image of India is not benevolent for the settlers, though. On the one hand, it offers an “arid tidiness” in the Civil Lines (Forster 11); on the other, it is a “muddle” (61) filled with “fields, fields, then hills, jungle, hills, and more fields” (128). The rural qualities of India are evidently unlike the ones in England; they fascinate the viewer at first sight but “the superficial glamour soon goes” (22). The narrative at this point manifests a dualistic structure in spatial memory; whereas India offers “no tranquillity to draw upon” (71), the memory of England generates moments of temporary relief: “Ah, dearest

Grasmere!’ Its little lakes and mountains were beloved by them all. Romantic yet manageable, it sprang from a kindlier planet” (130). The negative connotations attached to the Indian landscape frequently resurface with images of incomprehensible vastness. The hills in Chandrapore, for example, can look “romantic” only “in certain lights and at suitable distances” (119). Adela and Ronny can get drawn together “among the grand scenery of the English Lakes” (76), but in India, “no one could romanticize the Marabar because it robbed infinity and eternity of their vastness” (141). The affective differences felt at the sight of these two “grand” sceneries provide a juxtaposition of contrasting spatialized memories. On the one hand, the colonial mind-set occasionally comes under the force of the soothing recollections from England; on the other, the Indian landscape offers no memories from a past that could somehow validate imperial projects:

Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile. The important towns they build are only retreats, their quarrels the malaise of men who cannot find their way home. India knows of their trouble. She knows of the whole world’s trouble, to its uttermost depth. She calls “Come” through her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. But come to what? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal. (128)

The known history of India can only add to the evacuation of discourses which claim they can impose a program with different results than the past. Considering the incompatibility between the past and the present, it is no coincidence that Ronny and Mrs. Moore remind each other of their reasons to be in India. While for Ronny it is “to hold this wretched country by force” (44), for Mrs. Moore it is “to be pleasant” (45), suggesting that the imperial memory cannot achieve an *ad hoc* consensus among its followers except blatantly endorsing the colonial project.

In such an unruly ecology hardly steeped in imperial victories, the feeling of insecurity is imminent for the colonists. Somehow realizing that it is important to keep the memories of the motherland fresh, the settlers in the English Club stick to familiar codes. Theatre ironically provides one such chance to support the insular counter-society of the club. The members put on a play, *Cousin Kate*, by which they attempt “to reproduce their own attitude to life upon the stage, and to dress up as the middle-class English people they actually were” (34). The play evidently functions in mnemonic ways that contribute to the psychic integrity of the settlers; it also helps to keep the national narrative intact, with the national anthem played after the

performance. In this context, it provides aesthetic means to grapple with the embodied “hostility” in the colonial setting.

What we observe through the presence of a play combining middle-class values and naturalist representation is the merging of colonial ideology with aesthetic instruments. However, this is an ironic opportunity as it deconstructs itself immediately. If we are to speak further in theatrical terms, we can say that plays like *Cousin Kate* – plays that claim to represent a world in its entirety – can be classified as what Nietzsche calls “Apollonian” since they pertain to logic, purity, reason, and rational organization. These qualities have an organic relation to the worldview that the English colonialism and its representatives in India adhere to, so the fact that they find another expression through a stage play is not surprising. Nevertheless, in the grand theatre of sublime energies, that is, the “Dionysian” landscape of India which incorporates infinite flux and excess, the sterile qualities of the club hardly validate themselves since they are constantly tested by the potent ecological forces in the colonial geography. India is a place where no animal “has any sense of an interior. Bats, rats, birds, insects will as soon nest inside a house as out; it is to them a normal growth of the eternal jungle” (23). Among the irrational and chaotic forces such as the fierce climate, sublime mountains, eternally hollow caves, and the ever-present “animal kingdom” (Forster 80), the Apollonian sterility of the English club and the alleged superiority of its members face a continuous erosion. In other words, the ubiquity of unprogrammable elements produces an alternative semiotics against the grain and subverts the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy, much to the colonizer’s dismay. What seems like a naïve attempt to remember the national identity through theatre ultimately turns out to be a self-destructive act that evacuates the very same national mythology.

Counter-memories along the “hostile” ecology

As previously stated, the Foucauldian line of thinking aims to extract “subjugated knowledges” from locally scattered memories. Considering the contrasting images of English sterility and Indian complexity, we can say it is through the memories and agencies “distributed” (Bennet) along the Indian landscape that counter-memorial practices take place in the novel. Stacy Alaimo claims that “the existence of anything - any creature, ecosystem, climatological pattern, ocean current - cannot be taken for granted as simply existing out there” (21). The material environment is not merely a container of human activities; instead, it articulates an

“incalculable” series of interplay between various agencies, transformations, and self-constitutive forces². Karen Barad conceptualizes this type of communication as “intra-action”, the continuous process of interaction in which things emerge out of their relations. The concept of intra-action, which Barad develops from quantum physics, rejects the ontological framework where “things” precede their relations. For Barad, “relata do not preexist relations; rather, relata-within-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions” (140) which can be understood as “*the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*” (33, original emphasis). Baradian “onto-epistemology” holds the view that, rather than preceding their interactions with diverse agencies, causal relations in the material world are manufactured within entangled materializations and the intra-activities they are nested in. Following this line of thought, plant life, local fauna, lithic formations like rocks and caves, mountains, climate, and even non-material phenomena like sounds perform agential roles through their intra-actions in *A Passage to India*.

In her essay “Landscape, Memory, Forgetting,” Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands observes the connection between memory, body, and landscape. She argues that remembering “is not solely a question of the remembering subject. Both the written page and the storied landscape are *warehouses of memory* that are external to the individual body” (274, emphasis added). Addressing the interrelatedness between the human subjects and the environments they inhabit, Serenella Iovino observes a Baradian strand in Mortimer-Sandilands’s proposal. For Iovino, the relations between memory, body, and landscape incorporate “a mutual porosity, an intra-action, between individuals and their landscapes” (105). She contends that “material agency and discursive practices mingle in shaping the human and nonhuman world—bodies, landscape, and memory” (106). The relation between the human and nonhuman does not take place along a unilateral direction; in fact, “There is a strong, deep, and complex interrelation between the agency of natural forces and the agency of cultural practices” (106). As such, “The landscape of discourses, words, and conceptual descriptors melts with the landscape of elements, of geology, of telluric and atmospheric agencies, of biotic and ecosystemic balances” (106). All these Baradian commentaries on the agential connections between the human and nonhuman

² See Iovino and Oppermann (“Theorizing”; “Introduction”) for a discussion of how ‘matter’ is “storied” through its entanglements within vast networks of relations. Rather than *narrative*, I prefer to see the *performative* aspects of the flow in agential energies since *performance*, unlike *narration*, hints further at the possibilities of nonhuman agencies materializing beyond the need for human mediation.

memories also suggest that any type of political action, that is, any kind of counter-memorial challenges, should be taking these entangled agencies into consideration.

The landscape in *A Passage to India* attests to the above-mentioned sensibilities. One counter-memorial trait embedded in the material agency of the landscape is that things defy the logic of identification in the Indian ecosystem. Faced with the “vibrant” existence of nonhumans in a “political ecology of things” (Bennet), the imperial power to sustain a functional linguistics is limited in the colony because “Nothing in India is identifiable, the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge into something else” (Forster 78). Ronny and Adela, the briefly engaged English couple, try to identify a bird in one scene without much success, so Ronny suggests checking an “illustrated bird-book” (78) for further information. His suggestion is a clear indication of their dependence on the mediating function of archival information when faced with ecological ambiguities. From a Foucauldian perspective, the idea of government as “the right dispositions of things arranged so as to lead to a suitable end” (*Security* 96) is overrun linguistically and semiotically in such instances where the discursive borderline between the sovereign and the marginal is effaced. Given this lack of ability for stable linguistic arrangements, it can be inferred that colonial memory does little to help the couple give meaning to their experiences with ecological others unless they remain committed to familiar epistemic tools. Even when they do so, it is not certain that they can fully comprehend their relation to the space because “civilization strays about like a ghost” (239) in India.

Climatological conditions also present counter-memorial challenges to the colonizers since “tales of the heat” (43), functioning like the “locally scattered memories” in a *Aesthetics* Foucauldian sense, add to an environmental consciousness in which the limitations of the human ideal in an ever-dynamic surrounding are exposed. The more-than-human world grants no autonomy to the human subjects as the climate imposes a presence beyond pastoral comforts. In order to illustrate the power of the atmospheric conditions, Ronny says to her mother, Mrs. Moore, “There’s nothing in India but the weather” which is “the alpha and omega of the whole affair” (43). Traditionally, ideal humans in humanist systems are those who can bend nature to their will and produce conditions that would articulate the human power to shape things and natural phenomena. The rootedness of such assumptions becomes visible when Fielding, the liberal humanist principal of the government college established to “educate” the Indians, welcomes the cold storage technologies: “Even mangoes can be got in England now,” puts in

Fielding. “They ship them in ice-cold rooms. You can make India in England apparently, just as you can make England in India” (66). However, this statement stands in stark contrast to the image of the human inextricably bound up with India’s natural cycles: “April, herald of horrors, is at hand. The sun was returning to his kingdom with power but without beauty—that was the sinister feature. If only there had been beauty! His cruelty would have been tolerable then” (106). No sooner Fielding expresses his humanist illusions of control than nature performs its overwhelming agency. Here is a climate where “the early sun is highly dangerous for heads” (130). Therefore, the human population including the English always has to keep in mind the vital fact that weather conditions can always interfere in their relations to their lived experiences. This explains why the majority of the action in the novel takes place against the backdrop of countless allusions to the climate’s far-reaching effects in human life. “Tales of the heat” then lay bare the buried incapacities of the human ideal in imperial tales. As opposed to the pastoral tales of England’s mild climate, “tales of the heat” produce “a postpastoral narrative with an animate environment that speaks in its own voice and dictates the comings-and-goings of human journeys” (Sultzbach 29).

The second part of the novel, “Caves,” has been widely interpreted in terms of its position in the psychic make-up of the characters. The materiality of the unsettling experience in the caves, especially for Adela and Mrs. Moore, suggests that this setting uncovers the frailties of the Western metaphysics “impoverished” by the “repression of the irrational and the unseen” (Stone 18). The ambivalent experiences in the caves constitute the location as a kind of “heterotopia” in the Foucauldian sense in that it fundamentally deviates from the anthropocentric logic of organization between places and individuals in colonialism. What makes this place “a site of counter-memory” (Legg) is that it functions as a kind of memorial site which can retrieve primordial realities that could wield huge influences over the human capacity to remember conveniently. As the narrator states,

Having seen one such cave, having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen, twenty-four, the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all. He finds it difficult to discuss the caves, or to keep them apart in his mind, for the pattern never varies, and no carving, not even a bees’ nest or a bat distinguishes one from another. (Forster 117)

The general ability of India to defy the logic of identification resurfaces in the caves as well. Since their “reputation [...] does not depend on human speech” (117), they constitute an extra-linguistic reality beyond human comprehension. This is one of the reasons why both Adela and Mrs. Moore cannot fathom their experiences in the caves. The fact that both characters are heavily disturbed by the echo during their stay adds more layers to the agential capacities of this space. The narrator says, what spoke to them was something “before time [and] space” (198), affirming that the experience cannot be explained with the spatiotemporal models of knowing in humanist discourses.

The only thing the female characters can remember is the power of the echo itself. Regarding Mrs. Moore, the narrative says, “The crush and the smells she could forget, but the echo began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life” (140). In this respect, the acoustic event in this primeval space can be considered in the context of what Ute Jekosch calls “audio semiotics.” For Jekosch, “each acoustic event can be perceived as a sign carrier through which information about the world is communicated” (193). Any type of “acoustic communication” can produce effects in subjectivities since the process of subject formation is given shape by a wide array of sign carriers, be they auditory or visual. The caves evidently provide Mrs. Moore with memorial instances of contact with an atemporal condition, “a distance before language” that “wipes out distinctions - all the distinctions on which Anglo-India built its culture and empire” (Stone 22). The transformative impacts of the primordial acoustics in the caves are audio-semiotic ones that are sodden with pre-human conditions, and this is why they put a lot of strain on Adela and Mrs. Moore’s identities, especially their capacities to remember and comprehend things.

It is through the affective quality of the caves that the counter-memorial challenges in the Indian landscape pose ontological questions as well. Contrary to common feelings, affects are Forces -visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion- that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability. (Seigworth and Gregg 1)

The affective power of the caves stems from their capacity to undermine human expectations and intentions. One could even argue that these harrowing acoustics form an example to Julia

Kristeva's conception of "*chora*", a "nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated" (25). *Chora* is a "rhythmic space" of signification that can only be expressed through a non-linear signifying practice. It reintroduces the subject as a space caught in processes and perpetual movement. In this respect, since such delineations posit a vibrant ontological model *contra* the patterns of immutability in humanist frames, the agency of the caves becomes "a coextensive discourse between human memory, heard voices, and the site of shared physical trauma" (Sultzbach 72). The diminishing of human language into the incomprehensible "ou-boum" sounds invest in the construction of a space full of intensity. This atmosphere reminds the foreign visitors of a state of existence where the human used to be located within a continuous flux of vital energies and reciprocal relations as opposed to the linear grammar of humanism and its segmented configuration of life. It is due to the involuntary participation in the *chora* and its nonhuman rhythms that female characters have to undergo a traumatic experience³.

Inert matter projects another counter-memorial register where the seemingly inactive network of matters does in fact articulate the feebleness of human agency. The encounter between the human and the geography of things reposition the former as simply one element in the ensemble of natural actors. For Foucault, "to govern means to govern things" (*Security* 97); however, the inanimate environment, mainly hills, rocks and stones, generates during the touristic journey a protean web of relations gliding between a vague sense of sovereignty and much insecurity. As the tourist group moves towards the Marabar hills, the affective atmosphere begins to change "with a new quality" (Forster 132). Contrary to the buzzing sounds of the city, "a spiritual silence" holds sway across their route, "which invaded more senses than the ear. Life went on as usual, but had no consequences, that is to say, sounds did not echo or thought develop. Everything seemed to cut off at its root, and therefore infected with illusion" (132). A temporal discontinuity and disruption in the teleological flow emerge again in the journey towards the hills, so the material agency of the landscape opens a new trajectory which demands a different understanding of the relationship with nonhuman others. Apprehension of the silence

³ There are a number of interpretations regarding the female experience in the caves. Sara Suleri, for instance, considers the series of events as images in continuum with Forster's Orientalist tendencies. Wilfred Stone, on the other hand, claims that Mrs. Moore and Adela are "shattered by the mysteries" of the caves because they are the only ones who cannot deal with such mysteries. Following Stone, it could be argued that the female characters are the only true 'outsiders' in the convoy since the male characters are all somehow familiar with the lived experiences in such spaces.

requires a substantial shift in the human perspective; the divergent network of meaning can be grasped only when it is dealt with a non-hierarchical mode of appreciation. Sultzbach argues that this is “an ethical understanding of our relationship with the more-than-human world” as it “requires an openness to new forms and an acceptance of uncertainty” (73). Therefore, the journey towards the rocky hills, that is, the odyssey alongside an assemblage of matter from a heterotopic beyond, is also a kind of rite of passage from the familiar registers of human sensation to the unknown becoming of the natural others, ultimately producing a reconfigured vision of the human.

Despite the evidence that the supposedly dead matter -rocks and stones- is clearly alive and productive, the colonial mentality finds it hard to give in to its affective force. This manifests itself in the disparity between the narrative voice and the perspectives of the characters. On the one hand, the granite is “very dead and quiet” (Forster 133) for Adela; on the other hand, the narrative perspective somehow realizes the vitality of the stones which confront the humans with peculiarly expressed assertions that they are “almost alive” (142). The fact that the inert matter comes to express its material agency in unanticipated ways makes the human subjecthood inadequate against the lithic forms of agency. In his superbly written book *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen points at such potentials in lithic forms. For Cohen, stone “discloses queer vivacity” (6) and despite the common belief that it is a lifeless substance, stone “arrive[s] with specific histories attached” (7). While it is “A universal and a specific entity at once, or a certain time and yet a materialization of time out of memory,” stone “challenges small segment” but at the same time, it carries “a past surpassing human enframing” (7-8). In a similar vein, the lithic materiality in the novel defies any logic of historiographic classification since it possesses sublime qualities that refuse to lay out an origin:

There is something unspeakable in these outposts. They are like nothing else in the world, and a glimpse of them makes the breath catch. They rise abruptly, insanely, without the proportion that is kept by the wildest hills elsewhere, they bear no relation to anything dreamt or seen. To call them “uncanny” suggests ghosts, and they are older than all spirit. (Forster 116-7)

The lack of a historical segmentation confronts the visitors with the fact that the temporal regime in humanist models finds no expression in the nonhuman world. It also keeps reminding them that the ecology and the landscape have their own memories which transcend the

boundaries of the *anthropocene*. This is where the human anxiety surfaces: the realization that human sovereignty is a construct rather than a historical given brings about an existential crisis, an almost metaphysical state of hollowness which inevitably effaces the demarcations in dualistic thinking and calls for a new vision of diversity.

The so called ‘enlightened’ separation of culture from nature discloses itself as an ontologically precarious state as the human can find no serenity within the temporal multiplicity of the more-than-human world. Striking a match in the caves, for example, almost as an allegorical trope, cannot enlighten this dark space because the moment the visitors spark a flame, it “moves towards the surface like an imprisoned spirit” (117), instantly leaving the caves in their original mode of becoming. In this respect, what the narrative reminds the colonizer is that “a more truthful relationship with the world requires acceptance of fluidity and flux” (Sultzbach 73), not an attachment to a linear segmentation of time, space, history, and memory. The counter-memorial strategies in the narrative keep reminding the colonizers of different trajectories in the life of the landscape. They keep fresh the idea that despite the ubiquity of human forces, the nonhuman world has been there since before the time of the humans, even time itself. By relocating the human in a humbler mode of existence through the memories of pre-human realities, the more-than-human world invites the *anthropos* to inhabit a new ethical co-existence. An egalitarian ‘amity’ between various agents is possible only when such an ethically maintained co-location is sought after. Otherwise, as the finishing lines of the novel suggests, we’re still “not there”:

But the horses didn’t want it- they swerved apart; the earth didn’t want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn’t want it, they said in their hundred voices, “No, not yet,” and the sky said, “No, not there.” (312)

Conclusion

In arguing for a wider apprehension of memory, this study has tried to highlight the significance of counter-memorial strategies in *A Passage to India*. Drawing on vocabularies provided by Foucault, material ecocriticism, and the nonhuman turn in humanities, the main purpose in this reading has been to suggest that the alleged uniformity of hegemonic memories can in fact face the complex web of agency spanning across a number of powerful ‘actants’.

Nonhuman constituents of an ecology, as is the case in the narrative, can find novel ways of expression against the centrality of dominant discourses. In doing so, they can produce counter-discourses that rework hegemonic memories as contested sites of recording. Against the ontological fixities in dominant models of remembering, counter-memorial approaches can take movement among nonhuman agents as the main territory where the potentials for political transformation can be found. Inspired by the works of Foucault, Barad, and Iovino, I would prefer to call these dynamic movements *counter-memorial intra-actions, the infinite flow of agentially entangled forces among a series of actants, human and nonhuman, which can potentially challenge the dominant norms of remembering in a given material-discursive space*. By widening the scope of memory towards nonhuman fields, studies of counter-memorial intra-actions can offer novel ways of investigations that can help to unearth buried memories in a wider framework covering the nonhuman as well as human memories. Moreover, since they present infinite potentials with multiple trajectories, they can resist the danger of surrendering to dominant discourses which always attempt to render deviant knowledges ineffective. In this way, counter-memorial inquiries can offer epistemic plurality in their search for forgotten memories while also rejecting the totalizing prescriptions of humanist approaches. This plurality found among counter-memorial intra-actions can provide us with critical means to interrogate the human exceptionalism in hegemonic discourses and develop an ethically reconfigured understanding of the human.

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