

E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*:
A Passage to the Patria?

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This essay takes formulations of the literary imagining of 'the nation' as the starting-point for a reading of *A Passage to India*. In 1977 Regis Debray provided what Timothy Brennan¹ has called 'an explanation in literary terms of the nation's universal appeal', by identifying its two 'anti-death processes'. The first of these is the assigning (implicitly, the inventing) of origins, which in turn 'allows ritual repetition, the ritualization of memory, celebration, commemoration—in short, all those forms of magical behaviour signifying defeat of the irreversibility of time'.

The second founding gesture of any human society is its delimitation within an enclosed space. Here also there takes place an encounter with the sacred, in the sense of the *Temple*. What is the Temple, etymologically? It was what the ancient priest or diviner traced out, raising his wand heavenwards, the outline of a sacred space within which divination could be undertaken. This fundamental gesture is found at the birth of all societies, in their mythology at least. But the myth presence is an indication of something real.²

The first of these 'anti-death processes' characterizes the atavistic strand of English modernism found in the writing of Forster, Woolf, and Eliot, what Perry Meisel has called 'the recurrent desire to find origins or ground despite the impossibility of ever doing so for sure'.³ It is evident, for example, in the uses of the Cadbury Rings in *The Longest Journey* and of the wych-elm in *Howards End*. The second process has specific and crucial implications for this reading of *A Passage to India*.

1 Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p.51.

2 Regis Debray, cit. in Brennan, p.51.

3 Perry Meisel, *The Myth of the Modern* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1987), p.4.

Following the lead suggested by Gillian Beer's examination of Woolf's 'cultural imagining' of England,⁴ this essay will examine *A Passage to India* as the key text of Forster's narratives of the national other: *A Passage to India*, *Pharos and Pharillon*, *Alexandria: A History and A Guide*, and *The Hill of Devi*. I will suggest that it is a narrative essentially revelatory of a construction of England, imagined through and projected on places perceived as encoding 'distant, purely human, universal values'.⁵ I will propose that what 'Temple' signifies is an affirmation of the importance of the native place and the individual's attachment to it.

Commentators on *A Passage* have neglected the appearance in the 1899-1901 fragment 'Nottingham Lace' of the passage to India, expressed in terms which echo in the novel's description of 'a passage not easy, not now, not here, not to be apprehended except when it is unattainable'.⁶ In 'Nottingham Lace' Edgar Carruthers thinks

A telegraph to London seemed natural, but a telegram to India, passing over Europe, under the blue Mediterranean, under the Red Sea by the bones of Pharaoh's soldiers, out under the Indian Ocean, then over India itself, seemed a portentous thing that might lose its true meaning in its passage. Quickness of communication will never bring the ends of the earth together.⁷

Edgar is isolated in Sawston, location of the Sawston School, the town and school based on Tonbridge and Tonbridge school, where Forster was, by all accounts, a fairly miserable day boy. Both town and school are presented in Forster's fictions as nurseries of philistia, as symbols diametrically opposed to Forster's symbolic 'Cambridge': signifier of the civilizing⁸, the

4 Gillian Beer, 'The Island and the aeroplane: the case of Virginia Woolf' in *Nation and Narration*.

5 Martin Thom, 'Tribes within nations' in *Nation and Narration*, p.35.

6 *A Passage to India*, p.309. This and all subsequent references are to the Penguin edition (Harmondsworth, 1961).

7 'Nottingham Lace' in *Arctic Summer and other fiction* (London: Arnold, 1980), p.45.

8 E.M. Forster, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (1934; London: Arnold, 1973), p.52, p.89.

enlightening⁹, of 'personal relationships',¹⁰ of 'Grasmere, serious talks and walks, that sort of thing',¹¹ of the England of which Forster was an inventor, and which he valued.

Edgar's father is in India; unprotected, he is embroiled in a contest with the philistine Manchett, and aided by a young schoolmaster, Trent.¹² It is Trent who empowers him to telegraph his father in India for help. The language of the quoted passage strongly suggests the link between the impossibility of fulfilling relations—'connection'—between men, and physical separation; it also associates these things with the separation of England and India. The motif seems likely to have been produced by the association of Forster's own 'absent father' and Anglo-Indian fathers of Tonbridge boarder sons. This text predates Forster's relationship with Syed Ross Masood, usually¹³ thought to be the source of Forster's interest in India. There are strong intertextual connections between this 'passage' and the one described in a section of Forster's record of his 1945 journey to India:

6 October. Persian Gulf and my pen giving out. Since leaving Poole yesterday morning have summarized forty years—France—passed over St Rémy, and saw Toulon in the distance where I met Achille. Sicily—Taormina and mother,

- 9 Virginia Woolf, cit. in E.M. Forster, 'Cambridge' in *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London:Arnold, 1951), pp.358-9.
- 10 E.M. Forster, cit. in P.N. Furbank, *E.M. Forster: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1979), vol.II, p.124.
- 11 *A Passage to India*, p.251.
- 12 Trent's and Manchett's names signal their representative versions of 'Englishness'. Stoke-on-Trent is the city composed of the 'Five Towns' of The Potteries, and the origin of the Wedgwoods, a constituent family of the Clapham sect (with, among others, the Thorntons, from whom Forster was descended). Manchett's name apparently derives from his insularity: la Manche is the French name for the English Channel; the 'ett' ending of his name, half-way between the masculine 'et' and the feminine 'ette' endings in French, interrogates Manchett's version of English manhood just as the signposting of his insularity and the signalling of his 'foreignness' question the authenticity and adequacy of his philistine version of 'Englishness'.
- 13 See, for example, Ahmed Ali, 'E.M. Forster and India' in *E.M. Forster: Centenary Revaluations*, ed. J.S. Herz and R.K. Martin (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), p.279.

the dahlias in whose room and the honeysuckle on whose pillow must still be fresh. Egypt—Mohammed and my Alex circus, the Holy Land since we passed today over the Dead [Sea], mistaken even by a Brigadier for the Persian Gulf, and in the middle of the coming night, India. Few People alive can have such culture—practically all the enlightened Englishman's tradition.¹⁴

Egypt and India, then, are among the territories of the 'enlightened Englishman's tradition'. I will go on to propose a reading of *A Passage* which suggests that it narrates the negotiation of a return passage to Forster's England, and that that 'return'¹⁵ is closely linked to the idea of perfect connection with a desired masculine other, constructed in 'Nottingham Lace' as an absent father, in *Maurice* as a homosexual lover, in *A Passage* as an Indian 'perfect friend'.

It is clear that Whitman's 'Passage to India' had a significant influence on the final stages of the writing of the novel. While Forster apparently chose the title about 2 December 1923,¹⁶ the mere lateness of the taking of the unusual decision to appropriate the title of another literary work does not establish, as Stallybrass suggests,¹⁷ that the influence of the former on the latter must necessarily be slight. Indeed, the letter which Stallybrass cites as authority for his claim is ambiguous on the question of when Forster settled on the title. Further, Furbank presents evidence which suggests that the novel's final two chapters—two-fifths of 'Temple'—and the novel as a whole, were completed after 12 December 1923.¹⁸ By 27 January 1924 only part of the novel

14 E.M. Forster, *The Hill of Devi and other Indian Writings*, ed. Elizabeth Heine (1953, London: Arnold, 1983), p.243.

15 The formulation of the turn to the East, the re-turn to the West is made by the vapid missionary who accompanies Adela ashore at Port Said. Forster's 'The Life to Come', written while Forster was completing *A Passage*, uses a missionary to articulate the connection between imperialism and homoerotic desire of Englishman for 'other'.

16 Oliver Stallybrass, introduction, *A Passage to India* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), p.xviii.

17 Oliver Stallybrass, p.xviii.

18 P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, II, 119-20.

had been sent to the publishers¹⁹, and on 1 April 1924 Forster wrote 'My Ms. is with the printers, but I hope to piddle a little urine over the proofs'.²⁰ The typescript of the novel is not extant and the manuscripts differ substantially from the published work,²¹ and in the published version 'passage' is substituted for 'salvation' in the portion of the manuscript which refers to 'emblems of passage'.²²

The final two chapters of 'Temple' were, it is thus clear, written after Forster's decision to connect the Whitman poem with his own novel had been made. Those two chapters contain the novel's 'mystical' resolution: the description of the Krishna festival when 'all men loved each other, and avoided by instinct whatever could cause inconvenience or pain' (p.299), and the culmination of the celebration of 'Infinite Love [which] took upon itself the form of SHRI KRISHNA, and saved the world' (p.283), annihilating 'All sorrow ... not only for Indians, but for foreigners' (p.283): the passage to perfect indivisibility and infinite love which is the meaning of the birth of Krishna. They also contain the text's thematic resolution: the recognition that perfect friendship between Fielding, and the other represented by Aziz—apt symbol of the perfect friend because he is a Moslem²³—is not to be achieved 'yet', or 'there'.

While the novel clearly shares mysticism with Whitman's poem, it also shares with it the idea of connection. It is important to note, too, that Whitman's mysticism is atavistic. 'Passage to India' is a hymn to the idea of the Orient as source of Western culture:

... myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,
 The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,
 The deep diving bibles and legends,
 The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;

19 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume Two, 1921-1970*, ed. M. Lago and P.N. Furbank (London: Collins, 1985), p.47.

20 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters Volume Two, 1921-1970*, p.53.

21 Stallybrass, pp.xx-xxi.

22 E.M. Forster, *The Manuscripts of A Passage to India*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), p.562.

23 See *A Passage to India*, p.315.

passage to India was a passage to the Forsterian *patria*.

In a 1942 BBC broadcast to India, Forster identified Whitman's capacity to make his readers experience oneness—with the whole of humankind and with death; he also identified Edward Carpenter as Whitman's finest disciple.²⁵ Shortly after Forster's first visit to India he stayed with Carpenter at Millthorpe, Carpenter's aggressively rustic pastoral retreat. As Furbank notes²⁶ Carpenter was not only a proselytiser of a William Morris-esque nostalgia for pastoral 'Englishness', and of tolerance of homosexuality, and profoundly influenced by Whitman; he was also influenced by 'Hindu mysticism'. Forster believed that *Maurice* was generated by the sensations produced on that visit when George Merrill—Carpenter's working-class lover—touched his buttocks:

I still remember it, as I remember the position of a long vanished tooth. It was as much psychological as physical. It seemed to go straight through the small of my back into my ideas, without involving my thoughts. If it really did this, it would have acted in strict accordance with Carpenter's yogified mysticism, and would prove that at that precise moment I had conceived.²⁷

This epiphanic quickening, remembered, is like Proust's madeleine. It was generated in an exaggeratedly 'English' realization of the *locus amoenus*. The association between this type of idealized pastoral construction of England, and the desire for the other, is traced most strikingly in Maurice and Alec's idealized retreat to 'the greenwood', and also in their batting stand during the Penge cricket match: quintessentially English, defending themselves against an England which attempts to deny both their Englishness and what is presented as their essentially English right: freedom. Given Forster's association of Carpenter with Whitman and 'Hindu mysticism', it is apparent that Carpenter and his version of Englishness had an influence on *A Passage*. The self-suppression by Forster of *Maurice* saw the

25 E.M. Forster, 'Some Books', B.B.C. Eastern Transmission, 24 June 1942.

26 P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, I, 256-7.

27 Cit. in P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, I, 257.

working-out of its central concern—the rapprochement between desire for a loved other and Englishness—in *A Passage to India*. There, however, the Indian signified the other; the passage to India the passage back to England. Alec's aborted sea-passage and the union of the lovers in a boat-house point to this projection.

In *History and Value* Frank Kermode describes middle-class novels about the proletariat in the 'thirties, calling them pastorals of desire. He refers to the 'great truth: that all knowledge of the other, all intercourse between opposites, is analagous to carnal knowledge'. According to Kermode, for the middle-class homosexual intellectual drawn to and drawn to write about the working class, this process embodies two ways of reaching the 'inseparable union', an ideal derived from Plato and Socrates and represented by the androgyne:

Homosexuals could think of themselves as belonging to Hirschfeld's 'Third Sex', as in themselves androgynous; heterosexual lovers are capable of imagining their union in the same way. These utopias are of all kinds, to be found ... in visions of the undivided society. Union with the Ideal Friend, union with the proletariat: these also could have the hermaphrodite as emblem.²⁸

The desire of Forster's middle-class characters is for 'connection' with proletarian and/or foreign other: Philip Herriton and his brother for Gino and Lilia, Rickie Elliot for Stephen Wonham, Lucy Honeychurch for George Emerson, Helen Schlegel for Leonard Bast, Maurice Hall for Alec Scudder, and Fielding and Adela—as revealed in her psychologically suggestive and disturbing conversation with Aziz about marriage on the threshold of the caves—for Aziz all share this pastoral dimension.²⁹

Biographical evidence about two failed close relationships with Indians, and about one with an Egyptian, prematurely curtailed (by distance, and by his death of tuberculosis), suggests

28 Frank Kermode, *History and Value* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p.31.

29 Lionel Trilling referred to Gino Carella as both the mould for Aziz and 'the mould of unEnglishness' in *E.M. Forster* (London:Hogarth, 1962), p.131.

the applicability of Kermode's analysis of the proletarian pastoral to Forster's narratives of the national other, his Orientalist pastorals. Forster's interest in India had been fuelled by his unrequited love for Syed Ross Masood;³⁰ he had visited Masood in India during his 1912-13 trip there. The first period of work on *A Passage*, which was abandoned for the writing of *Maurice*, followed this journey. In 1915 Forster wrote to Masood from Alexandria, where he spent most of the war years working for the Red Cross. The letter suggests, particularly through its use of 'at home', a strong feeling of attachment to India; but the usage of 'longing' implies that such attachment is experienced as desired, rather than achieved:

I do not like Egypt much—or rather, I do not see it, for Alexandria is cosmopolitan. But what I have seen seems vastly inferior to India, for which I am always longing in the most persistent way, and where I still hope to die. It is only at sunset that Egypt surpasses India—at all other hours it is flat, unromantic, unmysterious, and godless—the soil is mud, the inhabitants are of mud moving, and exasperating in the extreme: I feel as instinctively not at home among them as I feel instinctively at home among Indians.³¹

This early impression of Alexandria is transposed on to India during the second, 1922-4, period of work on *A Passage*. As Mohammed el Adl, rather than Masood, became the focus of Forster's emotional life, so the description of a place not loved is transposed on to the native place of the supplanted beloved, once the association of el Adl and Alexandria makes Alexandria the paradigm of loved place: the place of 'connection'; 'home'. In *A Passage* Forster follows 'mud moving' with

So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, sinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life. (p.9)

30 See P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, I, 171.

31 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume One, 1879-1920*, ed. M. Lago and P.N. Furbank (1983, London: Arena, 1985), p.233.

This fecund mutability, this habit of the Indian climate of breaking down both the organic and the work of human hands into a teeming, sprawling, mutating entity, signals the opposition of Forster's perception of India to what Stone called 'the geographical eternal moment',³² a frequently recurring motif in Forster's work, and one which is an important marker of value. Its paradigm is perhaps the 'poetry ... [which] resides in objects Man *can't* touch—like England's grass network of lanes a hundred years ago'.³³ The Marabar Caves are the negative, the other, of the geographical eternal moment, as is signalled by Fielding's vision of the Marabar Hills at twilight from the verandah of the Club.

It was the last moment of the light, and as he gazed at the Marabar Hills they seemed to move graciously towards him like a queen, and their charm became the sky's. At the moment they vanished they were everywhere, the cool benediction of the night descended, the stars sparkled, and the whole universe was a hill. Lovely, exquisite moment—but passing the Englishman with averted face and on swift wings. He experienced nothing himself; it was as if someone had told him there was such a moment, and he was obliged to believe. (p.187)

Sara Suleri³⁴ has identified this quality of the caves in proposing that they lack metaphoricity for the western imagination, and are indifferent to experiential time. Alien, they are unavailable to the memory which seeks to use place and history, conflated, to fashion a transcendent symbol which resists time, constructing 'out of the bones of the past something more real and more satisfactory than the chaos surrounding [it]'.³⁵

32 W. Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford: Stanford U.P; London: Oxford U.P., 1966), p.195.

33 E.M. Forster, 'The Last of Abinger' in *Two Cheers for Democracy*, p.369. The image was first recorded in Forster's *Commonplace Book* in 1928.

34 Sara Suleri, 'The Geography of *A Passage to India*' in *E.M. Forster*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York, New Haven, and Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1987), p.173.

35 E.M. Forster, 'English Prose between 1918 and 1939' in *Two Cheers for Democracy*, p.288.

The text identifies this quality of the caves with 'Indianness' when it describes Adela, at the 'Bridge Party':

Miss Quested now had her desired opportunity; friendly Indians were before her, and she tried to make them talk, but she failed, she strove in vain against the echoing walls of their civility. Whatever she said produced a murmur of deprecation, varying into a murmured concern when she dropped her pocket-handkerchief. She tried doing nothing, to see what that produced, and they too did nothing. (p.43)

Benita Parry's analysis³⁶ of Adela's experience in the Cave gives particularly helpful pointers towards the relation between Indian otherness, sexuality, and English experiences of nationality. She argues that rape in British Indian writing was typically constructed as the rape by Indian male of British female, and that the India constructed by Raj discourse became a figure of sexual menace, threatening to violate British values. I would suggest that the embodiment of this construction in *A Passage* indicates that the emphasis on the Caves as 'void' springs from an anxiety about the nature of 'Englishness', as against colonial 'Anglo-Indianness'. 'Englishness' in India marks a subject position threatened by the experience of its imagined other. It is not the Anglo-Indians but Adela Quested and Cyril Fielding—for whom a Wordsworthian England is a touchstone of value—who find their senses of identity profoundly threatened by the India which the novel constructs. Ironically, of course, the threat to Adela, constructed as sexual, is presented as illusory. Her eroticized desire for connection with the other is both produced and frustrated by an ineradicable ignorance, as Forster suggests:

Between people of distant climes there is always the possibility of romance, but the various branches of Indians know too much about each other to surmount the unknowable easily. (pp.260-61)

The imperfect kiss between Fielding and Aziz at the novel's conclusion likewise describes nationality's defeat of a desire constructed as homoerotic.

36 Benita Parry, 'The Politics of Representation in *A Passage to India*', in *A Passage to India: Essays in Interpretation*, ed. John Beer (London and Basingstoke; Macmillan, 1985), p.154.

Gillian Beer³⁷ has identified the text's ideology as manifested in space—'the space between cultures, the space beyond the human, the space which can never be sufficiently filled by aspiration and encounter', and has identified in the opening section of the novel 'exclusion—which is extended as absence'. The absence, I would suggest, is the absence of Forster's construction of England, imagined as 'significant form' (p.275). The opening chapter demonstrates this as it dramatizes the perception of the geographical hierarchy of Chandrapore, and the resolutely sylvan—and thus to the English sensibility picturesque and scenic—way in which the inhabitants of the English 'rise' see, or rather do not see, Chandrapore.

Mrs Moore perceives that the 'snub-nosed worm' of envy released in her by the echo in the Caves is 'Before time ... before space also' (p.203). Adela's perception of the 'meaning' of the experience in the Cave is that 'In space things touch, in time things part' (p.189). The Cave is the paradigm of India: connection between Aziz and Fielding is resisted by time and place: it cannot happen yet; it cannot happen in India. Hamidullah, privileged by Forster in the novel because described as the only one of the company at Aziz's who 'had any comprehension of poetry' (p.103),³⁸ argues early in the novel that friendship between Indians and Englishmen is possible in England, while not in India. This claim is grounded in his own experience; he

... had been to that country long ago, before the big rush, and had received a cordial welcome at Cambridge. (p.12)

The novel later acknowledges the soul's incapacity, 'in fear of losing the little she does understand', to extend sympathy beyond

37 Gillian Beer, 'Negation in *A Passage to India*' in *A Passage to India: Essays in Interpretation*, p.46.

38 Forster wrote in 'Three Countries' that '... the book is not really about politics, though it is the political aspect of it that caught the general public and made it sell. It's about something wider than politics, about the search of the human race for a more lasting home, about the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and the Indian sky, about the horror lurking in the Marabar Caves and the release symbolized by the birth of Krishna. It is—or rather desires to be—philosophic and poetic'.

'the permanent lines that habit or chance have dictated' (p.240). It suggests the failure of Forster's proclaimed initial aim, to create in *A Passage* a bridge between East and West, to evoke the river of love which springs from the union of Ganges and Jumna. Only those who share a heritage can connect ; place is productive of heritage. The reference to Cambridge here suggests that the novel's acknowledgment of limitation is authorial and not just narratorial.

In 1902 Barres defined the *patrie* as *La Terre et les morts*,³⁹ emphasizing the connection between place, and history and memory—opponents of time and mutability—in the constitution of the 'native land'. In *A Passage* Forster's narrator claims that 'It's only one's own dead who matter' (p.240), and one of Forster's 'own dead', it will be suggested, had a crucial influence on the resolution of *A Passage*. On 8 May 1922 he wrote to Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson:

I have actually written a little. It is a curious experience. Sometimes I am pleased, at others so bored I could spit on the paper instead of inking it. I am bored not only by my creative impotence, but by the tiresomeness and conventionalities of fiction-form: e.g. the convention that one must view the action through the mind of one of the characters; and say of the others 'perhaps they thought', or at all events adopt their view-point for a moment only. If you can pretend you can get inside one character, why not pretend it about all the characters? I see why. The illusion of life may vanish, and the creator degenerate into the showman. Yet some change of the sort must be made [.] The studied ignorance of novelists grows wearisome. They must drop it. Also they must recapture their interest in death, not that they ever had it much, but the Middle Ages had it, and the time for re[-]examination is overdue. I can't make out what I feel <about death>, Mohammed is dying yet I don't care a damn so far. My mother's death would probably shatter me, but probably because of the alteration caused in my habits. All this needs mopping up by the novelists, and probably entails reconsideration of love and affection also, and fewer solemn pow wows about the development of character.⁴⁰

The transposition of Forster's initial distaste for Alexandria on to

39 Martin Thom, p.38.

40 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume Two, 1921-1970*, p.26.

the India for which he earlier expressed his intense love to Masood, clearly derives, as I have said, from Forster's switch of allegiances from Masood to el Adl, an Egyptian with whom, in wartime Alexandria, Forster had his first consummated love affair. The relationship persisted until el Adl's death, which occurred as Forster was completing *A Passage*. In a long 'letter' to el Adl written after his death, in March 1923, Forster responded to the experience of being unable to make el Adl's image 'real' in England, despite wearing his lover's bequest of a ring:

You are dead, Mohammed, and Morgan is alive and thinks more about himself and less of you every word he writes. You called out my name at Beebit el Hagar station after we had seen that ruined temple about two miles from it that no one but us seems to have seen. It was dark and I heard an Egyptian shouting who had lost his friend: Margan, Margan—you calling me and I felt we belonged to each other, you had made me an Egyptian. When I call you on the downs now, I cannot make you alive, nor can I belong to you because you own nothing. I shall not belong to you when I die—only be like you.⁴¹

The period of Forster's and el Adl's Alexandrian relation coincided with Forster's work on the materials for the only 'book-length' writings which he published between *The Celestial Omnibus* (1911) and *A Passage to India: Alexandria: a History and a Guide* and *Pharos and Pharillon*. They are both tributes to what has been called the 'capital of Memory'; they construct Alexandria as a 'geographical eternal moment'.⁴² The separation from el Adl, and a renewed sense of 'Englishness' produced by association with place imbue the quotation from the 'posthumous letter' reproduced above. There are other acknowledgments of the importance of the sense of place to the production of *A Passage*. In a diary entry of 12 April 1922 Forster records that:

At Leonard's [Woolf's] advice have read my Indian fragment with a view to continuing it. Then [in 1913] I trusted people more, and was slower to impute criticism. My practical

41 Cit. in P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, II, 115.

42 See, for example, E.M. Forster, *Pharos and Pharillon* (1923; London: Michael Haag Limited, 1983), pp.50, 54, 59, 88, 89; E.M. Forster, *Alexandria: A History and a Guide* (1922; London: Michael Haag Limited, 1982), p.xx.

experiences at Dewas⁴³ have made me both cuter and stupider. I no longer make the emotional appeal that is necessary to call out the best from an oriental, real or imaginary. The philosophic scheme of the fragment still suits me. Must try to recover my dormant sense of space. Earthy self-consciousness.⁴⁴

In April 1924, in a letter which suggests that he was still proposing amendments to the proofs of the novel, he wrote to J.R. Ackerley

I meant to go abroad, but really don't think my state of mind necessitates it—a dreary remark, but Europe always presents herself now to me as a necessity or a superfluity, never as a romance. Perhaps if I go down into Italy, all might be wonderful again, though I doubt it, I do so deplore the Fascisti. And for Jerusalem, Azaz, Rum, and Jeddah, which I do want to see, I have not yet the money or time. The East has spoiled Europe for me, though not England.⁴⁵

This seems to refer to his recent West Country tour, which included visits to T.E. Lawrence and Thomas Hardy. Similarly, he identified the best, 'esoteric' writing of the inter-war years as taking one of its impulses from the response of the 'sensitive' to the destruction of feudal, agricultural England by the machine.⁴⁶

The separation from el Adl and a new sense of connection with England had an influence of the conclusion of *A Passage*. So too did Forster's increasing sense of estrangement from India during his 1922 visit, and the evidence—recorded in the 'Kanaya' manuscript—which that visit provided of the unbridgeable gulf between him and India, as embodied in the servant of the Maharajah of Dewas who was effectively provided as a prostitute to Forster: 'I knew his silly little soul was incurable. I just felt he was a slave, without rights, and I a despot whom no one could call to account'.⁴⁷ Even on Forster's first

43 Forster's experiences while employed as Secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas State Senior in 1921 are chronicled in *The Hill of Devi*.

44 Cit. in E.M. Forster, *The Manuscripts of A Passage to India*, p.xv.

45 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume Two, 1921-1970*, p.53.

46 E.M. Forster, 'English Prose between 1918 and 1939'.

47 Cit. in the Abinger Edition of *The Hill of Devi and other Indian Writings*, p.324.

visit to India, indeed, in a letter to Forrest Reid, Forster associated a Hindu symbol of mystical oneness with his own incapacity to enter into the spirit of India:

India is full of such wonders [as the waters of the river that rises from the middle of the earth to join the Ganges and Jumna where they meet] but she could give them to me.⁴⁸

During the second period of the novel's composition, and three months after el Adl's death, Forster wrote—the prose suggests in a way intended to wound—to Masood that:

When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has had to go, my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable. I think that most Indians, like most English people, are shits, and I am not interested whether they sympathize with one another or not. Not interested as an artist; of course the journalistic side of me still gets roused over these questions.⁴⁹

Rustom Bharucha quotes from an important letter from Masood to Forster which suggests the nature of that 'bridge of sympathy'

... you are about the only Englishman in whom I have come across true sentiment and that, too, real sentiment even from the oriental point of view.⁵⁰

Masood goes on to urge Forster to cultivate a faculty that every 'true and well bred oriental' possesses—*Tarass*. For Masood, *Tarass* is the capacity to enter the feelings of another, and absorb the atmosphere of a place.

In 1922 Forster wrote to Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson on the subject of the Krishna festival:

I am anxious to see the celebrations, and shall take up my residence for part of the fortnight in the Old Palace, until the bugs and mosquitos expel me or all my socks are worn out, for in the Old Palace it is not permissible to wear boots. But how will the externals help me to the underlying fact? I only want

48 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume One, 1879-1920*, p.188.

49 Cit. in P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, II, 106.

50 Rustom Bharucha, 'Forster's Friends' in *E.M. Forster*, ed. Harold Bloom, p.155.

to touch the fact intellectually, in order to understand with these folk and have done with them. I don't want want the fact intellectually and emotionally, and there you are! Therefore, I shall never touch it, H.H. will say.⁵¹

This letter contains several references to source material for 'Temple'. Forster's incapacity to enter and render Indian mysticism is as precisely signposted as is the failure of connection—to other, and other country—which is the novel's *fons et origo* as well as its *telos*.

The text—and particularly its delineation of the connection between Godbole and Mrs Moore, and its construction of 'Hindu mysticism'—further confirms the essential Englishness of Forster's vision in *A Passage*. There is a pattern of association between Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson and Mrs Moore, whose connection with Godbole—mediated through the wasp—has been frequently read as an exemplum of the communication between members of different races promised by the Krishna miracle. The bases of Mrs Moore's character are suggested in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*: they are Dickinson himself, and Mrs Moor and Mrs Webb, his 'two great women friends'. Dickinson accompanied Forster in his first visit to India, their responses to it differed widely,⁵² and their dialogue on the 'Indian question' continued. A letter from Dickinson to Mrs Moor, written from India and quoted from by Forster in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, suggests a possible source of the wasp motif.⁵³ Correspondence between Dickinson and Mrs Moor published in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* shows that the discussion of philosophical and religious questions

51 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume Two, 1921-1970*, p.10.

52 See E.M. Forster, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, pp.112-7; P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, II, 124, 126.

53 In a letter written to Mrs Moor from India Dickinson wrote 'A wasp has been depositing paralysed spiders in a hole in one of the tables, laid her eggs, and carefully sealed it up with wax. What a thing nature is! How do the spiders feel? Let's hope they're unconscious! In the face of these things, most religious talk seems "tosh". If there's a God, or gods, they're beyond my ken. I think perhaps, after all, the Hindus took in more of the facts in their religion than most people have done'. (Cit. in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, p.116). It is not clear when Forster became aware of the letter's substance.

formed the basis of their friendship. Mrs Webb, like Mrs Moore in *A Passage*, was a practising Anglican, and Dickinson's description⁵⁴ of Mrs Webb is strongly suggestive of the link between him, Mrs Webb, Mrs Moor, and Mrs Moore:

... all this leaves her as it were unsullied, uncomplaining, the most beautiful soul perhaps I have known or shall know, except, it may be, my sister Janet⁵⁵ and Mrs Moor. She also has a strong and sincere mind, which prevents her swallowing any humbug. She is a member of the Church of England and the widow of a parson. But what she believes now I do not know, nor I think does she. But she has 'faith' in the sense of courage, love and hope. These are the last great qualities that abide when all other things go, and we can but wait our passage to annihilation or whatever else there may be.

While this pattern of connection is suggestive and not probative, other material points to the connection between Dickinson and Mrs Moore. Harold Bloom⁵⁶ has written that Mrs Moore is the true heroine of 'a narrative of Neo-Platonic spirituality'. He suggests that the 'spirituality' in question is a Plotinean version of Hinduism; Dickinson's fellowship dissertation sought to compare and harmonize the doctrines of Plato and Plotinus.

Forster could be describing Aziz's perception of Mrs Moore when he writes of Dickinson that

His anxiety to learn, his great conversational powers, his intelligence and gentleness, his interest in religion, his readiness to enter into every point of view, made him popular with Indians of various types.⁵⁷

As with Mrs Moore, however, the experience of India moved Dickinson—uncharacteristically—to cynicism and a querulous despair:

For the hard worked and conscientious Anglo-Indians I met I

54 Cit. in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, p.48.

55 Janet was an early name for Adela (Oliver Stallybrass, introduction, *The Manuscripts of a Passage to India*).

56 Harold Bloom, introduction to *E.M. Forster's A Passage to India*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York, New Haven and Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p.5.

57 *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, p.114.

felt a sympathy tinged with a kind of despair. For it seemed almost that the more conscientiously they did their work, the further they were from the native sympathy and mind. But that too may be illusion. I am, however, pretty sure that the irony that brought the English into contact with the Indians is only equalled by that which brought them into contact with the Irish. The barrier, on both sides, of incomprehension is almost impossible. I feel this incomprehension very strongly myself. Indian art, Indian religion, Indian society is alien and unsympathetic to me. I have no sense of superiority about it, but one of estrangement. What indeed is there or can there be in common between the tradition of Greece and that of India;

There is no solution of the problem of governing India. Our presence is a curse both to them and to us. Our going will be worse. I believe that is the last word. And *why* can't the races meet? Simply because the Indians *bore* the English. *That* is the simple adamantine fact.⁵⁸

Like Mrs Moore, India and Indians made Dickinson long 'vainly, to be alone'.⁵⁹

The wasp, then, is a marker of difference which overrides sympathy, rather than a vector of oneness. The text identifies Mrs Moore's encounter with the wasp as confirming her 'otherness' in India. It is true that she has experienced a brief 'sense of unity, of kinship with the heavenly bodies' (p.30) between the encounter with Aziz in the mosque and the sighting of the wasp. However the text emphasizes the brevity of this epiphany, and its connection with the sky rather than with the Indian earth: she is 'caught in a shawl of night, together with earth and all the heavenly bodies'; the sense of kinship with the stars passes in and out of her 'like water through a tank, leaving a strange freshness behind' (p.30). Her response to the wasp identifies its 'un-Englishness'; her expression of sympathy for it is banal and saccharine, and is productive of uneasiness, not harmony. Similarly, the encounter in the mosque emphasizes the separation between her and Aziz, despite their sympathy for each other.

It is Aziz's 'Englishness', if you like, his conformity to the

58 Cit. in *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, pp.114, 117.

59 *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, p.114.

ways in which the English liberal middle classes behave, which makes him accessible and attractive to Mrs Moore and Adela, just as it is their determination to be guided by 'liking' which makes them assimilable into 'oriental' types by him. This attitude to Aziz is perhaps most suggestively sketched in the pattern of the encounter between Aziz and Mrs Moore at the mosque, where, until (English) conversation commences, each is the feared or hated, unidentifiable, unknown to the other, and the mosque is said (and here the narrator moves into Aziz's perspective) to ignite Aziz's pleasure and imagination because it is a mosque of Islam. It is Islam, rather than any place, which is Aziz's 'home'. The narrator has, just before this, described part of the mosque as creating the 'effect ... of an English parish church whose side has been taken out' (p.20). At this moment the narrator may be speaking from Aziz's point of view: the description certainly comes in the middle of a group of sentences which describe Aziz's feelings and reactions; but the syntax and choice of words in this sentence suggest, somewhat ambiguously, that the narrator, for all his sympathies with Aziz, is fixing him, describing him, and calling on the English architectural vernacular to do so. This necessitates a withdrawal from the position of displaying Aziz's perspective. This separation of perception, it seems, is inevitable, and brings with it a failure of sympathy.

Godbole's envisioning of Mrs. Moore and of the wasp is equally an indication of separation. His call to God to 'come' (p.286) when he imagines himself in Mrs Moore's position, is answered by the "No, not yet," and ... "No, not there," of the novel's conclusion. India and time resist connection, enforcing division, as is acknowledged when it is noted by the narrator that Godbole's sympathies are with internationality. Despite the fact that Godbole thinks that it makes no difference whether Mrs Moore, envisioned, 'was a trick of his memory or a telepathic appeal' (p.286), he is undermined by the narrator's claims that:

Not only from the unbeliever are mysteries hid, but the adept himself cannot retain them. He may think, if he chooses, that he has been with God, but as soon as he thinks it, it becomes history, and falls under the rules of time (p.283)

under which rule, of course, 'things part'. Memory is,

paradoxically, acknowledgement of loss, marker of separation.

The above-quoted passage clearly has its source in Forster's reading of Proust. On 26 April 1922, when el Adl's death in May was anticipated in Forster's diary in terms which echo the disconnections which are the pattern of *A Passage*,⁶⁰ Forster wrote to Joe Ackerley about Ackerley's poem 'Ghosts', and about Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann* (part of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, which Forster claimed influenced the second stage of *A Passage*'s production). The letter suggests the reason for the attractiveness of the Hindu myth which promises 'oneness', and that there is a conflict between such 'oneness' and the connection provided by memory:

This business of remembering a past incident. The horror, beauty, depth, emotional and mental insecurity, that is thus introduced into our lives, and that we can neither avoid nor recall. I have been reading Proust who knows all about it too and like you rejects the ordinary explanation. 'Je trouve très raisonnable' he remarks, 'la croyance celtique que les âmes de ceux que nous avons perdus sont captives dans quelque être inférieur dans une bête &ct ... —perdus en effet pour nous jusqu'au jour, qui pour beaucoup ne vient jamais, où nous nous trouvons passer près de l'arbre, entrer en possession de l'objet qui est leur prison. Alors elles tressaillent, nous appellent, et sitôt que nous les avons reconnues, l'enchantement est brisé. Délivrées [par] nous, elles ont vaincu la mort, et reviennent vivre avec nous'. It's just the same, he goes on to say, with our past; it's a chance whether we happen to hit on the object that recalls it. I don't know whether you and Proust are right in your explanations. 'Out of death lead no ways' is more probably the fact. But being right is of little importance. What you have done is to drive home the strangeness of a creature who is apparently allowed neither to remember nor to forget and who sees in the stream of his daily life, piteously disordered, the recurrence of something that was once beautiful and that passes as inevitably away now as it did then. No—of course you don't quite do this, because your poem ends in unalloyed remembrance, if such a condition exists. But I don't suppose that you—i.e. the narrator—supposes that the remembrance is permanent. The moment a

60 Cit. in P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, II, 108.

memory is registered by the intellect is its last moment.⁶¹

The difference between memory and telepathic appeal is significant, then, and Godbole, and Hindu mysticism, and internationalism are identified with the latter; Forster's April 1922 diary entries about el Adl's impending death suggest that the association of memory and separation from the other has its source in the relationship with el Adl:

I want him to tell me that he is dead, and so set me free to make an image of him. Latterly my great love prevents my feeling he is real.

Determined my life should contain one success I have concealed from myself and others M's frequent coldness to me. And his occasional warmth may be due to politeness, gratitude, or pity. The prospect of his death gives me no pain.⁶²

In letter and diary entries we see the beginning of the transition from the privileging of 'oneness' over 'memory', to the acknowledgement that memory is accessible, 'oneness' with the other impossible. At the same time memory, which for Forster is the intersection of time and space (rendered as connection with place) in the 'geographical eternal moment', is associated with profound separation from the other. For the English Forster, memory is English; oneness Indian, muddled, unknowable.

The felt conflict for Forster between the 'moment' and the Hindu 'emblem'—like the 'little images of Ganpati, baskets of ten-day corn, tiny tazias after Mohurram—scapegoats, husks, emblems of passage' (p.309) or the wasp—is evident in the quotation from *A Passage* (p.283) made above. There is evidence in the quotations from Forster's diary to suggest that emblemization was much on Forster's mind in April 1922. As we have seen, a year later, after el Adl's death, he found an 'emblem' of el Adl—a ring bequeathed by him to Forster—unable to bring him alive in memory. This experience occurred during a walk on Chertsey Meads, and Forster wrote in his diary: 'What was so appalling on the Meads was the belief that I had

61 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume Two, 1921-1970*, p.24.

62 Cit. in P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, II, 108.

better forget my friend: this had never come to me before'.⁶³ The 'letter' to his dead friend, describing a time spent together in Egypt has previously been cited. In a place near a ruined temple, it reveals, Forster had been called by the friend, had felt that he belonged to him and to his place. Later, in England, el Adl could not be recovered; he was not Forster's 'own dead'. This is reflected in *A Passage*: for all that India 'calls 'Come' through her hundred mouths' (p.135) 'the spirit of the Indian earth ... tries to keep men in compartments' (p.127). The cry of 'come' repeats Maurice's cry from the window of the Russet Room at Penge: then it was answered by Alec; in India it is unanswered.

If Mrs Moore is essentially Plotinian, and thus essentially English in the 'Cambridge' sense, so, too, is Forster's construction of Hinduism.⁶⁴ As John Drew has noted:

From the time of Alexander the Great, India has been associated in the European mind with the philosophic life ... The philosophy the Greeks saw practised in India they likened to that of Pythagoras and Plato and the respectful attitude of the Neo-Platonists to India encouraged later European Orientalists to single out the mystical Vedanta as India's principal philosophical system and to discern an almost total identity between it and Neo-Platonism.⁶⁵

Drew claims that 'shortly before publishing' *A Passage*, Forster 'subscribed quite consciously' to the idea of Neo-Platonism's identity with the mystical Vedanta. He notes that Forster had read a translation and summary of the *Enneads* of Plotinus while working on *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*, and that

63 Cit. in P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, II, 115.

64 Trilling wrote that '... the Indian gods are not [Forster's] gods, they are not genial and comprehensible. So far as the old Mediterranean deities of wise impulse and loving intelligence can go in India, Forster is at home; he thinks they can go far but not all the way, and a certain retraction of the intimacy of his style reflects his uncertainty. The acts of imagination by which Forster conveys the sense of the Indian gods are truly wonderful; they are, nevertheless, the acts of imagination not of a master of the truth, but of an intelligent neophyte, still baffled'. (Lionel Trilling, *E.M. Forster*, pp.124-5. See also P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, I, 217).

65 John Drew, 'The Spirit behind the frieze?' in *A Passage to India: Essays in Interpretation*, p.81.

Dickinson was 'the only lucid English commentator on Plotinus' before the publication of MacKenna's five volume translation and commentary (1917-30). The philosophy of the 'Orient' then, is one imagined as identical to the philosophy which is 'the enlightened Englishman's tradition'. If the Marabar Cave is a metaphor for Plato's cave, ordinary, unenlightened individuals can only see in it and apprehend as real the shadows of themselves and their fellows; can only envisage the other as shadow of self, and can only suppose, if the wall of the cave reflects sound, that these echoes of their own voices are the voices of the shadows.⁶⁶ It is significant that in Plato's cave analogy, the illusions with which the occupants of the cave are beset include 'all works of poetry and art'.⁶⁷

Finally, there is the significance of the joining and separating horsemen of the novel's closing scene. This is metonymically connected with the 'hit' of polo which Aziz and the subaltern have on the maidan. On that occasion, the comradeship of men in the physical pleasure of sport is celebrated; briefly, at least, the mood generated by such an encounter banishes nationality, separation. Later, at the club, the subaltern launches into a diatribe about the superiority of Indian troops in India. Drunken and confused, he is yet the articulator of the scene's irony, as his reference to 'Barabas Hill' warns. He is the foil for the beautiful, fecund, 'cow-like', intensely female Mrs Blakiston, who has become the sentimental focus of Anglo-Indian hysteria and has voiced it in her 'if only there were a few Tommies' (p.181). In an intensely comic moment, the subaltern recalls his 'hit' of polo with Aziz, saying

... he was all right. Any native who plays polo is all right.
What you've got to stamp on is these educated classes. (p.181)

The subaltern probably owes his origins to the subaltern Kenneth Searight, whom Forster met en route to India in 1912. Well-read and romantic, he was what Lago and Furbank call a

66 See Plato, *The Republic*, tr. H.D.P. Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), p.279.

67 Plato, p.275, p.370.

'dedicated homosexual'.⁶⁸ Forster wrote to Florence Barger that Searight was 'very intimate with natives, and might show me a lot'.⁶⁹ Furbank records him 'astonishing' Forster 'with some of his 'minorite' [i.e., homosexual] anecdotes'. After lavish and boisterous hospitality was showered on Forster and his travelling companions Trevelyan and Dickinson by Searight's unit at Peshawar—including a dinner during which Searight made Forster dance with him—Forster wrote

I feel compelled to alter my opinion of soldiers, these were so charming, and without the least side, and their hospitality passes anything I could have imagined ... In spite of their folly, many of them were sensible talkers and had even read a good deal.⁷⁰

This material suggests the impulse for Forster's attempts—in 'Arctic Summer', *Maurice*, and *A Passage*, to reconcile the 'heroic' and the 'civilized' Englishman, whose opposition was represented by the Clesant/Martin dichotomy in 'Arctic Summer'. It also suggests why men's sporting contacts were used as a symbol of connection in *A Passage to India*.

The articulation of the association of the other with the homoerotic, and the significance of Forster's abandonment of the notion of the possibility of connection across 'national', or rather, 'originary' lines are evident, too, in biographical material which suggests the source of Forster's choice of the polo game as emblem of trans- or supra-national connection.⁷¹ Forster's 'emblem' was associated both with friendship with a man of another nation, and with family, home, England, history,

68 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume One, 1879-1920*, p.141.

69 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume One, 1879-1920*, p.140.

70 E.M. Forster, *Selected Letters, Volume One, 1879-1920*, p.155.

71 P.N. Furbank (*A Life*, I, 248-9, 252-4) reports incidents which suggest other sources for the choice of the concluding image of separation of Englishman and Indian on horseback; the second of these, and another encounter described by Forster in a 21 November 1912 letter to his mother (*Selected Letters, Volume One, 1879-1920*, p.159) suggest additional bases for the association of the erotic and of masculine connection, respectively, with riding.

memory. In *Two Cheers for Democracy*, describing books bound by his aunt, Laura Forster, and left to him, Forster wrote:

The most ambitious of all her bindings—the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*—I gave away after her death to an oriental friend. I still miss that lovely book and wish I possessed it. I still see the charming design with which she decorated its cover—polo players adapted from an ancient Persian miniature—a design for which the contemporary dust jacket is a poor substitute.

However I am contemporary myself and I must get on to myself and not linger amongst ancestral influences any longer.⁷²

Laura Forster died about a month before the publication of *A Passage*.⁷³ Furbank records her fetishizing of tradition in place: rooms at her house, 'West Hackhurst', were named for loved places. She also planted a tulip tree at 'West Hackhurst'—which was built by Forster's father and which Forster inherited from her—because there had been one at 'Battersea Rise', the Thornton family house. Forster uses the tulip tree as the insignia of the continuity of English tradition, and a marker of the involvement of the writer in that tradition, in his 'Abinger Pageant'.

If Laura Forster's death marked a return to England in the life—prompted by the inheritance of what was in a curious sense Forster's 'father's house'—then so does the motif of horse and rider in *A Passage* signal a return in the works to the boundaries of the *patria*. The consciousness of retreat is signalled by the way in which the *patria's* other—the 'motherland'—is employed in the text. On both occasions it is associated with Aziz and with his conception of 'Oriental womanhood'. It is also specifically identified with nationalism. Pressed by Fielding to propose an alternative to English government of India, Aziz is forced to abandon his proposal that her rulers should be 'the Afghans. My own ancestors' (p.316), entailing as it would the suppression of Indian divisions, and of the Hinduism which has become the novel's metaphor for internationalism. Finally

72 *Two Cheers for Democracy*, p.310.

73 Forster had, however, frequented her house in his childhood and adolescence.

he remembered that he had, or ought to have, a motherland. Then he shouted: 'India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort! Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and all shall be one! Hurrah! Hurrah for India! Hurrah! Hurrah!' (p.317)

The narrator then speaks from Fielding's perspective:

India a nation! What an apotheosis! Last comer to the drab nineteenth-century sisterhood! Waddling in at this hour of the world to take her seat! She, whose only peer was the Holy Roman Empire, she shall rank with Guatemala and Belgium perhaps! Fielding mocked again. (p.317)

The antipathy of Fielding and the narrator to the idea of 'nation'—in the sense of nation-state—is clearly marked here. Earlier, the narrator—here not expressing a character's perception as if it was his own, and thus signally authoritative—says of Aziz's poems:

they struck a true note: there cannot be a mother-land without new homes. (p.289)

The text, though, signals the impossibility of new homes, the force of attachment to the old. And there is a further irony. The narrator notes that Aziz 'did not truly love' (p.289) the motherland; his poems are all on the topic of 'Oriental womanhood' (p.289)—an 'other' almost entirely absent from the novel—and Aziz's model project for Oriental womanhood is based on a version of feminism which suggests Adela. Sara Suleri has identified Adela's function as 'conduit or ... passageway for the aborted eroticism between the European Fielding and the Indian Aziz'⁷⁴; the motherland is a passage to the *patria*; the woman a passage to the man; the freedom of woman a passage to a reflection of Englishness.⁷⁵

As Aziz's home is Islam,⁷⁶ so Fielding's is England's 'green and pleasant land', as his name suggests. The return to the

74 Sara Suleri, p.174.

75 Aziz is said to envy 'the easy intercourse [of the English] that is only possible in a nation whose women are free'.

76 Aziz is described as being 'rooted in society and Islam. He belonged to a tradition which bound him ... Though he lived so vaguely in this flimsy bungalow, nevertheless he was placed, placed'.

knowable, the *patria*, articulated in Forster's 'Temple', is a return to the known as embodied in place. The nature of that place is twofold, and emphasized in the final chapters of 'Cave': the sacred sites of the 'enlightened Englishman's tradition', and an England of which Wordsworth is the inventor.⁷⁷ The inauguration of the 'spot of time' (prefigured in 'Tintern Abbey') marks the connection of time and space which is used by Wordsworth to invent England for pastoral purposes, which blots out evidence of recent industrialization and of community breakdown, appropriating and suppressing their traces to reinstate the *heimlich*, erase the *unheimlich*.

In the novel, response to 'the lakes' is used as a symbol of the capacity to 'connect'. It is a point of connection for Mrs Moore and Adela on the trip to the Marabar; their exchange dramatizes the forces which shape the English person's ways of seeing:

'... I must admit that England has it as regards sunrise. Do you remember Grasmere?'

... Ah, dearest Grasmere!' Its little lakes and mountains were beloved by them all. Romantic yet manageable, it sprang from a kindlier planet. Here an untidy plain stretched to the knees of the Marabar. (pp.136-7)

In an interval of 'decency', of generosity and ethical conduct, Ronny is described in this way:

He might force his opinions down her throat, but did not press her to an 'engagement', because he believed, like herself, in the sanctity of personal relationships: it was this that had drawn them together at their first meeting, which had occurred amongst the grand scenery of the English lakes.(p.82)

Later, condemned by Forster:

Ronny's religion was of the sterilized Public School Brand ... he retained the spiritual outlook of the Fifth Form (p.250)

77 See Marjorie Levinson, 'Insight and oversight: reading "Tintern Abbey"' in *Wordsworth's great period poems: Four essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1986), pp.14-56. Forster admitted that 'Wordsworth is in the background ... in the reference to Grasmere' (James McConkey, *The Novels of E.M. Forster* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1957) p.83).

he disparages Grasmere; he is tellingly placed by the tone of rationalizing self-pity in which his reflection is couched:

She had killed his love, and it had never been very robust; they would never have achieved betrothal but for the accident to the Nawab Bahadur's car. She belonged to the callow academic period of his life which he had outgrown—Grasmere, serious talks and walks, that sort of thing. (p.251)

The return to England is at first identified implicitly -

Making sudden changes of gear, the heat accelerated its advance after Mrs. Moore's departure until existence had to be endured and crime punished with the thermometer at a hundred and twelve. Electric fans hummed and spat, water splashed on to screens, ice clinked, and outside these defences, between a greyish sky and a yellowish earth, clouds of dust moved hesitatingly. In Europe life retreats out of the cold, and exquisite fireside myths have resulted—Balder, Persephone—but here the retreat is from the source of life, the treacherous sun, and no poetry adorns it because disillusionment cannot be beautiful. Men yearn for poetry though they may not confess it; they desire that joy shall be graceful and sorrow august and infinity have a form, and India fails to accommodate them. The annual helter-skelter of April, when irritability and lust spread like a canker is one of her comments on the orderly hopes of humanity. Fish manage better, fish, as the tanks dry, wriggle into the mud and wait for the rains to uncover them. But men try to be harmonious all the year round, and the results are occasionally disastrous. The triumphant machine of civilization may suddenly hitch and be immobilized into a car of stone, and at such moments the destiny of the English seems to resemble their predecessors', who also entered the country with intent to refashion it, but were in the end worked into its pattern and covered with dust (p.206)

and then explicitly -

Turning his back on it yet again, he took the train northward, and tender romantic fancies that he thought were dead for ever flowered when he saw the buttercups and daisies of June (pp.275-6)

with a return to assurance of seasonal rebirth. The connection between the pastoral impulse and seasonality is suggested in the contrast between the Indian dry season and England:

All over the city and all over much of India the same retreat on the part of humanity was beginning into cellars, up hills, under trees. April, herald of horrors, is at hand. The sun was turning to his kingdom with power but without beauty—that was the sinister feature. If only there had been beauty! This cruelty would have been tolerable then. Through excess of light, he failed to triumph, he also; in his yellowy-white overflow not only matter, but brightness itself lay damned. He was not the unattainable friend, either of men or birds or other suns, he was not the eternal promise, the never-withdrawn suggestion that haunts our consciousness; he was merely a creature, like the rest, and so debarred from glory. (pp.111-2)

India's incapacity to provide renewal, and the desired other, is contrasted with a pastoral vision of desire attainable in England. The novel suggests this is because 'death interrupts' (p.299) less in India than in England; death interrupting is identified as a characteristic of the modern world, suggesting the impetus for the development of the modernist *locus amoenus* as a function of memory, anchored in familiar, circumscribed space and past time. The English mind cannot 'take hold of such a country' (p.135) as India; it has not the apparatus for describing her.

The gender specificity of the pastoral return to England is signalled by its being Fielding's passage, not Adela's. She thinks that 'we ought all to go back into the desert for centuries and try and get good' (p.193). Unsurprisingly, Fielding re-embarks for Europe from Alexandria and proceeds through Greece and Italy.⁷⁸ Mrs Moore's ghost—female—fails to enter the Mediterranean, lacking, perhaps, the 'enlightened Englishman's tradition'. Having abandoned the idea of love, of connection with the friend, she is portentously cast off at Egypt.⁷⁹ Given her association with the Plotinian, the casting off of the (albeit Anglocentric) fantasy of oneness between Europe and the Orient is thus signified.

78 Forster had long associated Italy with the homoerotic, calling it that 'beautiful country where they say "yes"' (see P.N. Furbank, *A Life*, I, 90-91, 96.

79 Forster's embarkation point at the end of his last visit to el Adl (en route from India) was Port Said.

Fielding finds in the natural and monumental Alexandria, in Greece and in Italy, the sources of his civilization's tradition of beauty of form, identified as foreign to India and Indians. In celebrating 'the harmony between the works of man and the earth that upholds them, the civilization that has escaped muddle, the spirit in reasonable form with flesh and blood subsisting' (p.275) the narrator proposes—employing highly self-conscious rhetoric to do so—that for an Englishman of Fielding's—and the narrator's—class, educated as he has been, there is no choice as to the places that he will have imaginative access to, and will value. The suggestion is that the knowledge of and the way of seeing the 'native place' are the forces which generate these patterns of understanding and valuing:

Writing picture post-cards to his Indian friends, he felt that all of them would miss the joys he experienced now, the joys of form, and that this constituted a serious barrier. They would see the sumptuousness of Venice, not its shape, and though Venice was not Europe, it was part of the human norm. (p.275)

By contrast, Aziz sees India as shaped by 'the architecture of Question and Answer' (p.69), but this perception is intermittent and—characteristic of the novel's construction of the 'Oriental'—it lacks conviction. What follows the quotation above, in its change in tense, in its absoluteness, signals its significance:

The Mediterranean is the human norm. When men leave that exquisite lake, whether through the Bosphorous or the Pillars of Hercules, they approach the monstrous and extraordinary, and the southern exit leads to the strangest experience of all. (p.275)

The passage through Suez to India⁸⁰ is to the strangest of these 'monstrous and extraordinary' destinations—the uncanny, the *unheimlich*. England—a destination for which Fielding entrains from, rather than exits from the Mediterranean, is, then, perceived of as one with it.

The process of Fielding's abandonment of a hope, a belief that he can be intimate with Indians, is sketched in the chapter's final sentence:

80 Whitman's 'Passage to India' was, of course, written to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal.

Turning his back on it yet again, he took the train northward, and tender romantic fancies that he thought were dead for ever flowered when he saw the buttercups and daisies of June. (pp.275-6)

The opening participle enacts the reluctance and inevitability of this movement in its form and meaning respectively. The reluctance to admit failure is held in the opposition between the rejection inherent in 'turning his back' and the sense of (past) possibilities of 'yet again'.

At the beginning, so at the end. Like Aziz and Fielding in the closing chapter, the civil station of the opening chapter 'shares nothing with the city except the overarching sky' (p.10); place, 'something racial' (p.254) separate them like the colour of their skins: 'coffee-colour versus pinko-grey' (p.254). To a non-Indian, because he is a non-Indian, 'nothing in India is identifiable' (pp.83-4). 'Nothing embraces the whole of India' (p.143) for a mind which England, not India, 'bore, shaped, made aware'⁸¹; because India is itself divided it is constructed as the place for the revelation of division. Sara Suleri has claimed that *A Passage* 'most clearly delineates the desire to convert unreadability into unreality, and difference into an image of the writing mind's perception of its own ineffability'⁸² The frequent shifts of the narratorial voice into characters' subject positions, though, subverts any possibility of ineffability and dramatizes how local are any claims to it. For all its transcendental politics—perhaps because of them—the novel can only write England's narrative: re-tell 'Tintern Abbey', not the *Vedanta*. It displays what John Beer⁸³ has called 'the tendency of the mind that has become aware of an uninterpretable void to concentrate on finding a firm point of organization, if possible in terms of space and time': in short, the *Temple*, the 'sacred space', and the 'ritualization of memory', which the closing chapter of 'Caves', and 'Temple', explicitly and then implicitly describe.

The evidence set out above of Forster's responses to the death

81 Rupert Brooke, 'The Soldier'.

82 Sara Suleri, p.171.

83 John Beer, 'A Passage to India, the French New Novel and English Romanticism' in *E.M. Forster: Centenary Revaluations*, p.128.

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of el Adl and the relationship with 'Kanaya' demonstrate that these embodiments of the other had been 'unknowable' and had led him to the loss of his conception of himself for which the encounter in the Marabar was a metaphor. This negative 'pastoral of desire', *A Passage to India*, describes its negative *locus amoenus* as the shadow of its ideal, an England both signified by and signifier of the 'greenwood' imagined in *Maurice*.