

## Speaking through “the Wearisome Machine”: E. M. Forster’s “The Machine Stops”

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**Abstract:** This article aims to explore how E. M. Forster’s ground-breaking story “The Machine Stops” manifests the notion of space, the air-ship, and the machine as a metonymic extension of capitalist modernity and Anthropocene. In doing so, within the framework of spatial criticism, it examines the concepts of universal commodification and cultural hegemonization, regarding the imposed lock-down of the machine that leads to immobility in Vashti and her son Kuno’s lives. The mapping of space in the shape of a hexagonal cell of a bee transgresses the boundaries between the self and the machine because the buttons decode the satisfaction of such characters as Vashti, who feel in a hurry all the time. However, the result is limbo mobility and mass destruction in a crisis, emerging from Kuno’s individual desire to find his way out of the economic expansion of the world space. The machine’s cognitive mapping for Vashti, which is incompatible with Kuno, delineates the maladaptation of machine life to cultural practices of survival.

**Keywords:** “The Machine Stops,” spatial modernisation, Anthropocene, lock-down, modernist culture

E. M. Forster’s story “The Machine Stops” (1909) defines the twentieth century as the heterotopic pace of modernist culture in which “mechanical progress has been completed” (Beer 2007, 38). The transforming Machine has taken over natural life, because going out to the surface of the earth would be dangerous, as one needs a respirator to breathe. Therefore, an underground life has emerged for Vashti and her son Kuno, who live in similar bee-cell-shaped rooms in opposite parts of the world that provide full comfort for the residents with music, light, and ventilation. Owing to “advanced thinkers, like Vashti” (Forster 1968, 17), who value Machine life more than old natural life, it is not surprising to see in the story the abolishment of respirators and the re-establishment of religion that

gives omnipotence to the Machine. The characters live in a lockdown situation that leads to immobility and physical weakening, and this forces them to be submissive to the Machine. Vashti sees no advantage to living on the surface of the earth, which is covered in dust and mud, and she is ashamed of her son when he refuses to submit to the rules of the Machine. The Machine annihilates the self's right to survive by suspending his/her vigilance and destroying his/her autonomy. As Vashti claims: "But no advantage. The surface of the earth is only dust and mud, no advantage. [...] no life remains on it, and you would need a respirator, or the cold of the outer air would kill you. One dies immediately in the outer air" (Forster 1968, 3). However, Kuno dismantles the discourse of the Machine as he states that there are people who live on the surface of the earth (18). The Machine stops and its inhabitants face the apocalyptic end.

This study aims at examining how the era of Anthropocene influences the relationship between the self and the space regarding modernity that prioritizes rationalisation of the global Machine in E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops." The Machine is designed as a facilitator for humanity with its fictional dystopic feature of an underground global construction. Due to the murderously cold air of the outside world, the characters in the story have to wear respirators to travel from the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere, although they prefer to stay at home or rather in their moving armchairs that are all alike around the world. By referring to Foucault and Lefebvre's notions of space, the study seeks to find out whether it is possible for a generation that blindly believes in the rule of the Machine, promoting incarceration and sameness, to create something new to escape from its apocalyptic end. Is it possible to create, despite the commonness of the buttons that produce literature, and would it be possible to change society by reversing the hierarchies of power in a fictional space created by the Book of the committee of the Machine?

E. M Forster's "The Machine Stops" has been studied by many scholars, who brought new perspectives: Emelie Jonsson, for instance, reveals that the Machine life appears as "an inflexible system unable to cope with environmental conditions beyond its adaptive range" (2012, 174). Humanity's relationship to the environment is confusing in terms of its essence. The rural ideal and modernity contrast and are separated as the rural life (outside world) has no machinery to experience the environment (2012, 175). Jonsson compares the Machine Life to a "sinking ship," and "the evolution" (2012, 169) destroys that ship. Kuno's idea is that the ship never proceeds towards the goal of humanity. Vashti's in-

tellectualism is empty, as her lectures are maintained by the Machine for its survival because the Machine feeds itself with the privacy of humanity. Likewise, Dominic Head in “Forster and Short Story” argues that the Machine is “like an early internet” facilitating “the acquisition of a banalized general knowledge and the means of its transmission” (2007, 81–82). Alvin C. Kibel is critical of some points in the story that are incompatible with the teleological drive: “air [is] [...] manufactured below ground rather than drawn in from above; and all this is accomplished with immobility” (1998, 129) in “The Machine Stops.” There are also metaphorical extensions of psychic space as Paul March-Russell foregrounds “the tunnel,” which first appears in the story when the Machine starts to hum (Forster 1968, 5). The tunnel is also used to exit and enter the bee-cell-shaped rooms. March-Russel argues that the tunnel:

is associated with both literal production of being displayed in human company – metaphorically, reproduction: the tunnel was a kind of fallopian tube. The Machine creates a womb-like space for its inhabitants, a patriarchal attempt to appreciate female powers of human creativity that ends disastrously: the Machine unlike the female does not create but merely maintains. (March-Russel 2005, 68)

Vashti is frightened of the tunnel and its curves and these tunnels may also be interpreted as the embodiment of ecological imperialism that displaces individuals from nature and their families so that every inch of the space is for the advantage of the global Machine. Vashti uses the tunnel first to visit her son and then to escape from her prison’s apocalyptic end. The tunnel may also be interpreted as a space between home and homelessness in which the notion of security is subverted with the signification system of the Machine, which is doomed to stop in the end.

Apart from these critical approaches about E. M. Forster’s “The Machine Stops,” there still seems to be a gap in scholarly studies regarding spatial criticism. This study explores the space creation in the story taking into account Foucault’s and Lefebvre’s notions of space to shed light on the problematic relation between the self and his/her environment regarding the technological advancement emerging from the humanistic ideal “Man as the measure.” This ideal redesigns not only the environmental structure of the world but also the collective unconscious of the masses that are forced to live voluntarily in isolation without any physical contact

with anybody. Modernity, expressed in the story, destroys the lure of Nature, and the connection between self and space becomes problematic despite the ergonomic design of the Machine, originating from the natural spatiality of honeycombs that integrate the existence of people to a colony-like life.

### **The Machine and Its Post-apparatus:<sup>1</sup>**

The mending apparatus of the Machine, on the other hand, never mends anything as its committee only accepts the complaints and forwards them to other officials. Yet the Machine-enchanted people of the earth are scared of a personal element that would revolt against the Machine being a King. This fear brings out the collective unconscious of the Machine supporters that counter-act an imaginary person meddling with the Machine, whose mission is to nurture, clothe and shelter the people. Ultimately, the Machine stops, and the last things that Kuno and Vashti see are the dead nations and the “untainted” sky that stand in contrast to the so-called omnipotence of the Machine. Forster’s story is about the breaking down of the independent space and its unchanging status. The global Machine life in the story lacks “distinction” (Head 2007, 82). This life controls the globe that has been seen as “emptiness” (Wells 2014, 3) or a “stage” (Shakespeare *As You Like it* II. Vii. 1996, 622) in terms of Cartesian thinking. The space now is ready to be reconstituted with a modern “positive” function despite its “discontinuous irregular” (Kern 2016, 19) aspect of real and unreal virtual mirror images.

### **Universal Commodification and Cultural Hegemonization**

The story suggests that “[s]pace is not a void but filled with energies or forces” (Holub 1992, 70). For instance, Kuno’s immediate reaction to the Machine’s

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1 This term refers to institutional, administrative mechanisms and knowledge structures that Foucault calls “power/knowledge and askeses or techniques of self” (McWhorter *Edinburgh Dictionary of Philosophy* 2005 177). However, the way Forster handles the machine-oriented life triggers the subversion of the constructed hierarchies in the novel. The destruction of the originary with Machine life paves the way for a period like post-colonisation as people realize that their admiration for the machine becomes void. Thus, the dispositive or rather the power of the Machine can be termed as a post-apparatus in a Foucauldian sense as it lacks the originary of humanity. That brings out a rupture between the Western scientific thought and the non-scientific thought. My term refers to the Foucauldian “dispositifs” of Machine oriented life in the story, which triggers the idea that hierarchical systems or periods that refute originality for the sake of capitalism, such as refuting Nature as a healing power, are prone to destruction.

heterotopic virtual mirror image demonstrates that this energy of the body, as a space, has the power to reconstitute itself. His rebellious attitude affects the energies of Vashti who leaves her room and visits Kuno living on the other side of the world. In other words, Kuno’s wish to meet his mother face to face without the mirror image, showing both the real and the unreal paves Kuno and Vashti’s way to “encounter energies already in motion” (70). While travelling, Vashti observes the Himalayas, Caucasus, pink clouds, the brimming sun-like golden sea (Forster 1968, 8), although she utters that these authentic spaces in Nature never give her any ideas. Contrastingly, Kuno admits that the Machine does not “transmit nuances of expression” (Forster 1968, 3), which delimits the spatial realms of body as “representations of space, or ‘lived’ experience” in Lefebvre’s terms (Wegner 2002, 183). The Machine life starts with the origins of space as “inside and outside” and continues with different strategies of the “capitalist stage” (Wegner 2002, 199). Thus, it is essential to examine “The Machine Stops” now in the twenty-first century reconsidering the processes of lockdown and the notion of Anthropocene regarding Lefebvre’s term “spatial practices” that generalize “the concept of mental space” (Wegner 2002, 182).

Foucault’s investment of the body with respect to “power relations” would reinforce the idea that surveillance of the Machine life in the story has already reconstructed the global space with its airships travelling to the other side of the world. It is a power that reduces the communication to limited “ritualized spaces” (183) when the characters in the story prefer being thankful to the Machine instead of conceiving any ideas from the spatial realms of the natural world, including the mountain ranges, the sea and the beautiful limitless sky with stars, resembling human beings. Yet Vashti acknowledges Man as the measure despite turning her back to the natural space. That is to say, space and spatial differences of the Machine life reverses the identities; Vashti is faster than athletic Kuno and whenever they meet, she is always in a hurry and wants Kuno to act faster: “Kuno, how slow you are.” He smiled gravely. “I really believe you enjoy dawdling.” “I have called you before, mother, but you were always busy or isolated. I have something particular to say” (Forster 1968, 2). The intricacy of the mind-body relationship of Cartesian philosophy states that the human body is “an obstacle, surpassed by new technologies” because the physical body is “a prison compared with virtual bodies” (Zimmerman, Morgan 2019, 39). Kuno’s “embodied mind” rejects mind/body dualism because his athletic body both lives and encounters Vashti’s cognitive mapping that conceives modernity and Cartesian

thinking as absolute truth. Kuno's post-Cartesian thinking sees modernity as an illusion and seeks a more holistic view by his wish to reunite with Nature or rather the outside world. Thus, Kuno's ontological resistance to the Machine is the empirical reality that forces him to react to Vashti's illusionary utopian world, "I believe that you pray to it when you are unhappy. Men made it do not forget that. Great men, but men. The Machine is much, but it is not everything. I see something like you in this plate, but I do not see you" (1968, 2). The story, hence, foregrounds "an abstract space" in Lefebvre's terms that is fuelled with "the global trend in the history of capitalism" (Wegner 2002, 183). This global trend is constructed for the privileges of the Machine, and the pleasure principle of Man, which keeps him busy with buttons that produce music and literature.

The lack of communication between the son and the mother can be traced in the modernized cultural space of the underground life that sterilizes and isolates the individual. Their cultural awareness and their rights and duties are in a clash that forces Kuno to question the function of the Machine. In this respect, the definition of culture by Gramsci would shed light on the cultural hegemony of the Machine life: Culture is "the attainment of a higher awareness, through which we can come to understand our value and place within history, our proper function in life, our rights and duties" (Gramsci 1994, xvi). The cultural moral ideological consent of the population to the prevailing economic and political system in the story manifests how human beings show consent to the rules of the Machine in order not to lose their connection to one another in a virtual environment. The Machine encompasses the physical, psychic, social isolation of the individual; these isolations are needed for the omnipotence of the Machine as an old-fashioned sovereign technological apparatus that pumps up the motto of Vitruvian man: "Man is the measure" (Forster 1968, 12). The hegemonic cultural tendencies of the Machine and the consequences can be scrutinized in terms of space that has been abandoned so that people can lead an illusionary life.

The immobility in Vashti's life is forced upon her as she fears to disobey the rules of the Machine:

"Better." Then with irritation: "But why do you not come to me instead?"

"Because I cannot leave this place."

"Why?"

“Because, any moment, something tremendous may happen.” (Forster 1968, 6)

The negative verb “cannot leave” in Vashti’s speech manifests the imposed immobility in Vashti’s life that has been arrested through the Machine. She wants to escape from that space, which is limited and surrounded with the boundaries of technology. Nonetheless, she encounters “reaction mobility” (Xiang et al. 2020, 5) as an advanced individual after her son’s wish for a face-to-face meeting. Having isolated herself from risks, Vashti thinks that she is safe inside her beehived hexagonally shaped room as she experiences self-surveillance, which is a rupture with the empirical reality of the outside world. She succumbs to physical isolation to protect herself by fencing off the natural environment. When her son insists on calling her, she encounters this “reaction mobility” (Xiang et al. 2020, 5) despite the fear of being exposed to homelessness. The Machine has transformed the global space into an unworthy sameness; travelling seems useless, as Vashti submits to be dislocated from her natural environment that has been reduced to a standardized modification of the Machine. This life transgresses the uncanny of the natural life, transferring natural phenomena to predictable, reasonable rationalization of the advancement of the Machine that utilises “rapid intercourse” and sameness in all representations of space in the story:

Few travelled in these days, for, thanks to the advance of science, the earth was exactly alike all over. Rapid intercourse, from which the previous civilization had hoped so much, had ended by defeating itself. What was the good of going to Peking when it was just like Shrewsbury? Why return to Shrewsbury when it would all be like Peking? Men seldom moved their bodies; all unrest was concentrated in the soul. (Forster 1968, 6)

### **The Honeycomb-Shaped Rooms**

Exposing one to cold air for not obeying the rules transforms Kuno’s society into a heterotopia that alienates and disturbs the rebellious ones. The Machine has created an underground world on earth by disciplining and punishing those who try to come to the surface. Everything is not bad in this system of the Machine, or at least there is an illusionary tendency, especially among the advanced

people, that the Machine has been helpful to them. They thank the advances in science and keep their images<sup>2</sup> to themselves in their rooms, feeling safe under endless surveillance: living in a lockdown situation forces people to abide by their own rules by excluding others who would disturb their safety, such as the homeless people. Therefore, advanced people like Vashti prefer to keep their images to themselves in their comfortable honeycomb-shaped rooms. The ones who are either rebellious or weak are excluded from society with either Euthanasia or Homelessness (being exposed to the cold air of the outside) because they cannot keep up with the high standards of the Machine life. Another punishment is given to those who fail to succeed in their lectures as they may submit to Euthanasia if the committee of the Machine accepts it. This is self-punishment and wilful acceptance of the sovereignty of the Machine, or an escape from the regression of the technologically clear-cut distinction. That kind of distinction, unfortunately, lacks the sense of a holistic view. The Machine never embraces the natural space as a part of a human being's psychic health and well-being; it imprisons people to bee-cells. This is a heterotopia of illusion.

Foucault argues that the notion of space is one that imposes immobility or rather favours limbo mobility that restricts travel to the outside by arousing fear among the individuals. Thus, "The Machine Stops," is the overt critique of technological advancement which constitutes "space that is rigid and forbidden" and it is also "the space of metamorphosis: the other space—communicating, polymorphous, continuous, and irreversible" (Downing 2008, 60). The restrictions of the space increase the limbo situation of the individuals as they cannot move due to the fear that something terrible may happen. The space of bee-cell-shaped rooms is commodified only for virtual interaction; the outside world has been totally abandoned for the sake of the continuity of the Machine:

You know that we have lost the sense of space. We say "space is annihilated", but we have annihilated not space, but the sense thereof. We have lost a part of ourselves. I determined to recover it, and I began by walking up and down the platform of the railway outside my room. (Forster 1968, 11)

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2 Advanced people like Vashti prefer not to mingle with people who do not live underground by rebelling to the system so they keep their image to themselves by not mirroring the image of an outsider who would be considered as a threat to the existing system of hierarchies.

The progression of the Machine depends on the annihilation of space on the surface that has been damned as murderously cold. The term Anthropocene causes this problem, “stresses both the technologically mediated power, [...] its potentially lethal consequences for everyone” (Braidotti 2013, 6). Likewise, this technologically mediated power forces people to choose death as a consequence of their dissatisfaction with the Machine. Finding one’s own way out and a way of one’s own are seen as a threat. The Machine reacts to this situation by threatening Kuno with Homelessness. Kuno thinks he “could live in the outer air (Forster 1968, 16) with his preference to worship God rather than the Machine. Vashti calls her son’s choice “superstitious” (17). The mental space of the characters has been mapped cognitively with the utilities of the Machine that impressed its believers with “blue optic plates,” wormlike “mending apparatus,” lifts, the Book. Kuno compares the mending apparatus to a worm bringing out the unrealised possibility of the Machine’s “conditional situation” (Stockwell 2002, 95–96) through his speculation. Thus, he reverses the sacredness of the Machine so that he is ironically called “sinful” (Forster 1968, 19).

Being on the northern and the southern hemisphere and transgressing the sanctions pave the way for Vashti to encounter the apocalyptic end of the Machine. Being afraid of that tremendous thing, Vashti shows “reaction immobility” to avoid any risks and dangers caused by the Anthropocene, so she prefers to stay in her bee-cell-shaped room instead of having the committee members threaten her with “homelessness.” Kuno, on the other hand, has already been threatened by “homelessness” (10), meaning “death.” In such a situation, the victim is exposed to the air, which kills him” (10). Thus, the honeycomb-shaped rooms are the embodiment of heterotopia for Vashti and Kuno because the rooms metaphorically other their inhabitants to constitute a psychic space of colonisation by distancing them from the ecosystem. The Machine has the mission to adapt human beings to underground life to gain the most sufficient energy for the continuum of its dynasty.

### **Traces of Posthumanism and Eugenics**

The story delineates the subversion of Authoritarian Eugenics as the Machine imposes discrimination on its rivals by calling them “feeble-minded” to differentiate race, class, and gender positionings in the society (“Eugenics” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). This is done not to favour an athletic race; on the

contrary, being athletic is ironically seen as a disadvantage, which belittles physical strength to promote the power of the Machine. Athletic Kuno asks to be a father, but he is turned down by the Machine, which prefers the white-faced “swaddled lump of flesh” (Forster 1968, 1) of people always sitting in their rooms. The Machine regulates the peoples’ lives bio-politically. This way of life imposed on rebellious Kuno resembles authoritative eugenics, which involves “bans on marriage between particular groups, forced sterilization, and then internment in concentration camps for individuals belonging to groups deemed inferior” (“Eugenics” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). Blurring the boundaries between technological advancement and cultural expectations, the story subverts the distinction between weak and strong by belittling Kuno’s physical strength. It is obvious that the phrase “man is the measure” is void because it is made so through repetition. However, the different ones remain a residue for the population, so the Machine either punishes them with homelessness or the people ask for Euthanasia or failure in their performances.

The categorization of Man implemented by the Machine brings out the reversal of Cartesian thought. The body as a space that introduces power is no longer fashionable in the story because:

[b]y these days it was a demerit to be muscular. Each infant was examined at birth, and all who promised undue strength were destroyed. Humanitarians may protest, but it would have been no true kindness to let an athlete live; he would never have been happy in that state of life to which the Machine had called him; he would have yearned for trees to climb, rivers to bathe in, meadows and hills against which he might measure his body. (Forster 1968, 11)

Provided that the relationship between Vashti and her children is constituted by the Machine, it not only demonstrates the Cartesian concept of the Machine as a Man-measured apparatus but also moves beyond to reveal a post-apparatus. This post-apparatus exceeds its limits to satisfy the needs of its creator as far as the jarring music, cold air, and the disappearance of the beds are concerned. As Lefebvre states “the Cartesian concept of ‘machine,’ embraces the possibility of unpredictable effects, and rejects all strict mechanism, all hard-and-fast and unilateral definition” (1991, 195). The connection of the Machine to humanity promotes a post-humanist perspective; however,

the holistic view that brings together technology and humanity is incompatible with the insatiable desire of Man to continue his lineage and travel to expand his hegemonic discourse. Homelessness, Euthanasia or getting permission to be a father, exclusion of athletic people or physically strong babies from society are means of reconstructing a hegemonic space that depends on sexualization, racialisation, classification of human beings. Ironically, the characters in the story, except for Kuno, think that the Machine provides them with everything they need to overcome the effects of the Anthropocene. The Book of the Machine demarcates new borders for the reduction of natural spaces into controlled reconstructions. With its regulations, the Book also fuels limbo mobility and self-surveillance for the continuum of the Machine. Forster’s story delineates the surveillance and the manipulation of the Machine life by the book of the Machine by referring to the use of body and space for global needs as raw materials: ““Parents, duties of,” said the book of the Machine,” cease at the moment of birth. P.422327483” (Forster 1968, 6).

### **Modernisation and Spatial Reconfigurations of the Machine**

“[T]he modernist desire for machine-living” (Childs 2008, 122) means submitting blindly to the spatiotemporal realms of Man-measured rules that distribute power to different parts of the world in the twentieth century. In that respect, Vashti in Forster’s story is the embodiment of “the New Woman” (Childs 2008, 220), who is capable of breeding and attending conferences as she has more than one child who live in different parts of the world: “True, but there was something special about Kuno – indeed there had been something special about all her children – and, after all, she must brave the journey if he desired it” (Forster 1968, 6). The constructed image of the successful “New Woman” is kept alive as long as the Machine survives. Ironically, the lockdown of Vashti and her adherence to this incarceration stand in direct contrast to her so-called emancipated position as an “advanced” (11) person.

Another advanced person in his lecture comments on a similar subject of freedom and “direct observation” foregrounding subjective thought instead of spatiotemporal realms that bring out “first-hand ideas” (Forster 1968, 17). With the Enlightenment, space is seen as a static constructor of a reified thing (Wegner 2002, 182), but there comes forth also a psychic space in which the unconscious unfolds as a return of the repressed in the story:

[T]here will come a generation that had got beyond facts, beyond impressions, a generation absolutely colourless, a generation *seraphically free from taint of personality*, which will see the French Revolution not as it happened, nor as they would like it to have happened, but as it would have happened, had it taken place in the days of the Machine. (emphasis added, Forster 1968, 17)

The applause after this lecture elucidates that the machine life is based on an object that causes desire: this thought is totally against individual, cultural differences, so it synthesizes the events in accordance with the rules imposed by the Machine. The lure of the Machine totalizes a discourse among the lecturers to constitute new restrictions that reduce the space they need to do their research. They celebrate the notion of being colourless instead of displaying plurality in a colourful way. The sameness of space never integrates the characters as they are forced to live in isolation in underground bee-cell-shaped rooms pressing on buttons to activate schemata.

Since people use respirators in the open air, it is certainly murderously cold, so the characters are locked-down in underground bee-cell-shaped rooms both in the northern and the southern hemisphere. This brings to mind the effects of the Anthropocene in the story. Against the backdrop of the restrictions imposed by the Machine, the room is furnished with the moving armchair and the buttons that facilitate the accommodation designed for the interest of the resident. The communication system, based on virtual integration that supports isolation, annihilates the coexistence between human beings but with an a-synchronic impact, increasing simultaneity for interaction with “pneumatic post” and “blue plate” (Forster 1968, 2), on which the characters can communicate. The blue plate is the embodiment of the mirror for Kuno and his mother that reveals the cross-binary of absence/presence of the mother and the son in their rooms as they are communicating. The absence of nuances of expressions during communication masques the intimate feelings. Or rather the Machine manipulates the senses, so that social spaces are reduced to bee-cell-shaped rooms as heterotopic spaces. These produce displaced images of self-surveillance and punishment for docile bodies like Vashti. The relationship between Vashti and her children indicates obstructed coexistence despite the simultaneity of communication provided by the Machine.

The social space is limited to the room, a heterotopic space that “secretly undermine[s] language,” blocking the possibility of giving a name at once to

“this and that,” shattering and intertwining common names and, above all, destroying the very logic of syntax: not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things to hold together (Vidler 2014, 69). Vashti and Kuno’s conversation indicates that their words and meaning do not hold together:

“It is contrary to the spirit of the age,” she asserted. “Do you mean by that, contrary to the Machine?” “In a sense, but —” His image in the blue plate faded. “Kuno!” He had isolated himself. For a moment Vashti felt lonely. (Forster 1968, 3)

The absence of Kuno defers the transmission of meaning through the blue plate, as the words do not hold together to create meaning when he isolates himself suddenly during their conversation. This causes estrangement for Vashti. The blue plate and the room are also heterotopic in the sense that they prevent Vashti and Kuno from going to the surface of the world. They are restricted like prisoners, retired people, ill people in hospitals who are considered to be deviating from the norms of society.

The epoch of the Machine in Forster’s story constitutes an epistemic category inclusive for those who seek an artificial holistic view of life rather than a teleological drive, emerging from nature and aiming at keeping the balance of nature and culture that sustains an ontic resistance to repression. Only when the Machine shelters people from the coldness of the outside world do human beings adhere to the technology: Vashti escapes from her prison and her alienated body, experiencing the apocalypse of the Machine life, seeing the dead bodies exposed to the natural air and light, sensing the spatio-temporal rhythms of “the whispers [...] and the little whimpering groans” of pain. “They were dying by hundreds out in the dark” (Forster 1968, 22).

To conclude, the fragmentation of the honeycomb-shaped rooms as the metaphoric extension of the stopping of the Machine demonstrates a space of “what has no place” (Lefebvre 1991, 163) within the creation of Nature. That is also the end of the colony created by the Man who always fears something tremendous may happen. The absence of the essence for spiritual connection is hidden in Kuno’s susceptible corporeity that has been uncoded by the Machine. The underground distant lives of the population are scattered all around the globe. This provides surveillance for the governmentality of the world but obstructs mutual

understanding, the essence of spiritual creation, the loss of a traditional culture that has been transmitted through verbal space from generation to generation due to the Anthropocene.

Kuno and Vashti have previously lost their originary language by speaking through the illusionary blue plate that never transmitted the nuances of expression. “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold” (Yeats 1979, *The Second Coming* I iii) because “the Machine stops” (Forster 1968, 23), but Kuno is still content as he can speak face to face with his mother. Kuno’s last words emphasize the body as a space that reconstitutes power; the power once promoted incarceration and sameness with the Machine. As Kuno tries to reconstruct the agency between himself and Nature, he utters his last words: “Quicker,” he gasped, “I am dying – but we touch, we talk, not through the Machine” (Forster 1968, 25). One can sense that, for Kuno, it is possible to create, despite the commonness of the buttons that produce literature, and it is possible to try once again for a new verbal space that connects by counteracting to the epistemic and ontic violence of the Machine that reverses the hierarchies of power. “The wearisome Machine” eradicates both the liveliness of earth and a generation who believes in its advancement. Forster is once more critical of imposed hierarchies that obstruct any kind of connection between the people in “The Machine Stops.”

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