“NOTHING IN INDIA IS IDENTIFIABLE,”
AS A SENSE OF PLACE
IS NEITHER STABLE NOR UNCONSTRUCTED

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ABSTRACT

The naming of place is a way of naming our own belonging or identity. Understanding place begins with identifying the person, or group of persons, who name the space, whether it be the colonizer or the colonized. To name a space is to understand it and control it. Place, as belonging, is dependent upon self-definition. Self-definition is dependent upon the binary construction of Self/Other, “us” versus “them.” Each person’s binary construction contributes to one’s sense of place. Once the binaries are identified, senses of place are set in motion.

In examining E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India we see the British colonial, Miss Adela Quested, come to India in search of the mystical, exotic, and “real” Indian. The question is whether India as a “place” can truly be identified and labeled. Forster has detailed various people’s ideas of place throughout his novel, and, depending upon who is speaking in the narrative, the sense of place changes. The man-made construction of binaries influences one’s sense of place. Adela’s presumption that Dr. Aziz is an “authentic” Indian invokes her Self/Other constructed binary as she defines both “self” and place. Whether Adela is asking questions about India or the exact nature of the Marabar Caves, there is no clear-cut answer available. India is an ever-changing place in constant motion. The difficulties of sustaining an agreed upon sense of place is problematic not only with colonizer and colonized but is also characteristic of India itself.
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DEDICATION

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