

Passage to India!
Lo, soul, sees't thou not God's purpose from thy first?
The earth to be spanned, connected by network,

These races, neighbors, to marry and to be given in marriage,
The oceans to be crossed, the distance brought near,
The land to be welded together.

Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass"

INTRODUCTION

The conception and perception of India as a place calls for a study from both a colonizer and colonized perspective. In what ways do we experience place? How does colonization influence what place means? What happens when multiple histories operating within a single place compete with one another, and where do people fit in such a scheme?¹ Place not only refers to India's physical landscape but encompasses its language, history, culture, and traditions. Understanding place begins with identifying the person, or group of persons who is appropriating the space, whether it be the colonizer or the colonized. Polar oppositions, such as "self" versus "other" and authenticity versus hybridity, lead to colonial discourse. Once the binaries are identified, senses of place are established and discourse is set in motion.

To name a space is to understand it and to control it. Language is the fundamental site of struggle for postcolonial discourse. This thesis will discuss and articulate examples of the colonizer's and the colonized construction of place and the discourses that arise by the use of language in terms of binary formations. The projection

¹ These questions were put forward in Dr. Cilano's course syllabus at UNCW Spring 2003 English 563: "History, Identity, and Place."

and representation of India as a “mystical place” is a stereotypical image reinforced over time in literary works. Language and literature are together implicated in constructing the binary of a European “self” and a non-European “other.” In examining E. M. Forster’s 1924 novel, A Passage to India, we see that British visitors, Miss Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore, come to India in search of the mystical, exotic, and “real” India. This study will question 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 ideas change. The Self/Other binary establishes where one is operating in one’s sense of place. In the first chapter, the dichotomy of the colonizer and the colonized is initially established through scenery, which foreshadows the binary constructions for the entire novel. Postcolonial literature attempts to counteract and dismantle these constructed binaries in conjunction with how postcolonial literature is also complicit in maintaining such dichotomies.

Forster creates the parallel of the unknown India via the Marabar Caves and utilizes the caves to symbolize the unknowability of a place. The caves have become symbolic of “other”: as they are complex, bewildering, and ungovernable. As for the characters, mystery and muddle surround the Marabar Caves, just as they do India itself.

THEORETICAL CONCEPT OF PLACE

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.

The people of India have had “others” name their space, and the naming of places in itself fuels discourse for both colonized and colonizer. The colonizer’s agenda of naming the “empty spaces” of India insinuates that, prior to colonization, the land was unnamed. This renaming of existing places begins the continual discussion of who has the authority to rename a place. But can India as a “place” truly be identified and labeled? Who and what is India? While such a label may be affixed to a map, the search for the “real” India is fruitless and cannot be contained. Places, like maps, are forever shifting, as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari suggest:

Maps are open and connectable in all its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, and susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. (12)

India as a place is equivalent to Deleuze and Guattari’s assertion concerning maps. Maps are a way of representing places; they are a mere depiction of locality. Yet, mapping or renaming spaces can be symbolic insofar as the colonizers are literally overwriting a culture, language or the indigenes themselves.

Edward Said is one of the first literary critics to document that the West has fashioned the East in its own image. In Orientalism, Said argues that the West generates a series of representations of the East as its “other.” Said further maintains in Culture and

Imperialism, no matter where one's sense of place, we live in a world of representation (56). Maps seem to be a revealing way to see the conceptions of the "other," thus ultimately revealing the writer, or the "self."

In order to understand the binaries employed in colonization, it is necessary to examine the fundamental source of Self/Other. To accurately identify oneself, one must first identify an "other." The concept of "other" can be best explained in its simplistic form: of anyone who is separate from one's self. As Bill Ashcroft suggests, "The existence of others is essential in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world" (Key 169). Constructing the identity of other people is a primary means of defining one's own identity.

As Said argues, the West generates a series of representations of the East so that England is constructed as its alterity. Representations can never really be "natural" depictions of the Orient. Instead, they are constructed images. An "other" (the colonized) exists as a primary means of defining the colonizer, or vice-versa, depending upon where one's "self" is in location to place.

The cultural images, formulated in British Self/Other binaries, typically favor the colonizer in their representation, whereas the negative opposition represents the uncivilized, colonized, or "Third World" India. Western thought in general sees the world in terms of binary opposition, which inherently establishes dominance of the colonizer in relation to the colonized. The British colonizer positions himself as the great civilizer whose duty is to bring morals and values to the uncivilized East. The West's construction of itself as the enlightened and refined is an important part of Eurocentric epistemology.

Colonized people were thought of as a people without any real history, culture and intelligence; this was to be rectified by the great civilizer. As David Spurr argues, the way of defining the Indian “as without history and without progress, makes way for the moral necessity of cultural transformation. The colonizing powers will create a history where there was none” (99). This position was a central tenet for the Eurocentric colonizer. As Said further articulates in Culture and Imperialism, “In this view, the Indians have no life, history, or culture to speak of, no independence or integrity worth representing without the West” (xix). This presumption, conscious or unconscious, is constructed as a Eurocentric binary and sees “self” as the center of the universe.

The Eurocentric “self” believes all cultural goodness is derived from within, which insinuates that all other cultures are lesser. Eurocentric binaries are not only behavior driven but spatially driven as well. The belief that Europe is the source of all cultural meaning reflects the assumption that Europe itself is the center and all “other” continents as peripheral. This Eurocentric view is portrayed in Forster’s novel when Mr. McBryde expresses his theory at Aziz’s trial “that all natives are criminals at heart... for the simple reason that they live south of the latitude 30” (184). McBryde, who maintains that anyone living below this latitude line is destined for criminality, further demonstrates this North/South, Self/Other dichotomy. He states, ““They are not to blame, they have not a dog’s chance— we should be like them if we settled here”” (184). As seen in this example, McBryde declares that if he himself were born in India instead of England, he also would be prone to criminal behavior. The opinion held by McBryde promotes Said’s assertion of the West’s construction of “other” is directly dependent upon one’s location to place.

To construct a sense of place, individuals and societies locate meanings in and associate shared memories with a variety of places, centering particularly on landscape. An example of positioning “self” over “other” can be seen in the very first chapter of Forster’s A Passage to India. This chapter characterizes the paradigm of the whole novel by describing the two-fold city of Chandrapore. Near the base of the murky, dirty river there are filthy alleys where the Indians live, whereas the Civil Station, which houses the English, literally is positioned on higher ground and has many beautiful gardens with flowers adorning the outside of homes with a beautiful view of the river (5). The scenery changes drastically when the narrative describes the civil station as opposed to the civil lines. Physically, the Civil Station is mounted on a hill. The Indians who live in Chandrapore and the English Colonials who also live in Chandrapore experience very different senses of place immediately by the juxtaposition of landscape, they “share nothing with [each other] except the overarching sky” (5). Lest one not forget, the river is expressed as being dirty, yet from the English’s removed “place,” they interpret the river as beautiful.

A sense of place can be embedded not only in landscape but also in cultural history and language. In Decolonizing the Mind, Ngugi wa Thiongo draws a parallel to Said’s theory of representations of place when he describes language as a way people have not only of describing the world but also of understanding themselves:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world. . . . Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and

character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture. (Ngugi 16)

Ngugi presents and establishes how each group's understanding of place helps them understand their own identity by illustrating how language constructs a sense of place.

Places and spaces have meanings and are indelibly linked to landscape through religious associations, historical events, and other cultural exercises. Landscapes have been the focus of meaning and memory, whether sacred or secular. The potential of tension arises when meanings conflict with one another. When meanings attached to a specific landscape are contested, individual and social identities are disrupted.

In Forster's novel, A Passage to India, for example, Dr. Aziz is called to the home of the Civil Surgeon Major Callendar (an Englishman) who lives within the civil borders of Chandrapore. As he cycles to the residence of the Civil Surgeon, Aziz crosses over the civil line, and an aura of depression hangs over him as he realizes the roads are named after victorious English generals and the roads themselves intersect at right angles. This renaming of roads strikes him as symbolic "of the net Great Britain had thrown over India. He felt caught in the meshes" (Forster 13). Aziz's sense of place has been overwritten and reconstructed by "others." This renaming of roads demonstrates that language is both a means of communication as well as a carrier of culture.

As we have seen, place not only refers to India's physical landscape but encompasses its language, history, culture, and people. The discourse surrounding the renaming of landscape and place has a deeper meaning than simply the identity of a place. The presumption that a place was a blank space prior to colonization also suggests

a concept that the indigenous people, who in essence are an extension of the landscape, also are a blank space. In his analysis of the absence of space, David Spurr surmises that the colonizer is thus attempting to establish authority over the colonized by demarking land through mapping. The outward absence invades the inner human condition, thus demarking the land extends to demarking the people as well (94). The colonizers in essence become the writers of history for the specified place, and attempt to bring England a little closer to their new home.

Once demarcation takes place, the concepts of place and displacement become crucial features of discourse, inasmuch as it reveals the interaction of language, history, and culture for both the colonizer and the colonized. On the one hand, the colonizer experiences a sense of displacement as he is removed from his homeland. On the other hand, the colonized recognizes that his placement has been overwritten, as we see in the example of Aziz's bicycling through the English part of Chandrapore. A place described in English does not accurately portray the experience of the colonized subject. Thus a gap is formed. Bill Ashcroft warns that this imposition of place, places named in English, creates a conflict for the colonized peoples because of their "lack of fit" (Reader 391). This gap or "lack of fitting in" with a place creates tension for both the colonizer and the colonized: "Place is thus a concomitant of difference, the continual reminder of the separation, and yet of the hybrid interpenetration of the colonizer and the colonized" (Ashcroft, Reader 179). Dr. Aziz's encounter with regard to the renaming of roads falls within this "lack of fit" as he is reminded of the separation between himself and the colonized. Place becomes more than land, it becomes language and since language is constantly mutating, discourse arises.

One of the most commonly used tropes in the colonizer and colonized linguistic relationship is the use of binary oppositions or dichotomies. Ferdinand de Saussure's idea on language structure lays the foundation for binary oppositions in colonial discourse. Many literary critics from Jakobson to Lévi-Strauss to Althusser to Foucault and Derrida trace their arguments back to Saussure's simple idea that the meaning of a word is to be understood through its relation to other words (Leitch 960). Saussure evaluates language as a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others (Saussure 965). He explains that language is a system of signs broken down into two distinct elements. The first element is the sound-image, the signifier, the second element is the concept of what the sound-image infers, the visual or signified (Saussure 963). In order for the signified to be effective, Saussure acknowledges that a community or group of people have to be in agreement with the term or signifier with the intended visual or signified.

Saussure contends that language must be considered a social phenomenon due to a system that is viewed synchronically and diachronically. The implication that terms are only significant in their oppositional use constructs the concept of binarism. In essence, as Saussure proposes, white cannot exist without its polar black, and good cannot exist without evil; civilized co-exists only with savage and finally, colonizer and colonized depend on each other for meaning, just as each term depends on one another for meaning. Such oppositions, each of which represents a binary system, are very common in the cultural construction of reality (Ashcroft, Key 23).

As one can see in Forster's example, signifier and signified can be different for different groups of people. Saussure calls these differences the arbitrariness of a sign

(965). At the heart of his discussion, no word possesses its meaning inherently; the bond “between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary,” (964) just as one’s sense of place is arbitrary in relation to the colonizer and the colonized.

Edward Said’s analysis of textual representations of the Orient in Orientalism, emphasizes the fact that representations can never be genuine or authentic because Westerners shape these representations:

In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence, or a representation. The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such. On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory (unnecessary) any such real thing as “the Orient.” (27)

Said’s understanding of the “Orient” accentuates the model created by Saussure in that Said recognizes it as a man-made construction of the East by Western imaginations, which can be arbitrary, depending upon one’s position of their sense of place.

The construction in Forster’s description of Chandrapore as nothing but muddy rivers and filth filled alleys sets up the view of India as a land of dirt and disease. This implies the Self/Other construction that England must be the land of cleanliness and health. The British view of India as dirty and diseased is reminiscent of the fact that the Civil Lines at Chandrapore were built up on a hill, away from the “filth” of India.

Binary oppositions are structurally related to one another and clearly are important in constructing ideological meanings in general and even more specifically in

their relation to a sense of place. As seen in Ngugi's assertions, that naming of place is a way of our naming our own belonging or identity. There would seem to be no point in asserting a shared identity unless there is an identifiable "other" that stands in opposition to it, "us" versus "them." With binarism, the dichotomy presented in the language of "us" versus "them" becomes a staging point in colonial discourse.

Additionally, Said posits that the long-term images, stereotypes and general ideology about the Orient as "other," are not only constructed by generalizations of Western scholars, but these generalizations produce myths about the laziness, deceit, and irrationality of Orientals. These oppositional binaries, which ignite the discourse in colonization, are ever present in Forster's novel (Orientalism 18).

One such binary that is evident in respect to the myth of laziness is an assumption that for every primitive savage, there must be a civilized gentleman. The reader is privy to the true act of Aziz's generosity in giving away his own collar stud to prevent Cecil Fielding from embarrassment prior to the luncheon. Later, after the luncheon, Ronnie Heaslop attempts to convince Adela Quested that all Indians are lazy by nature. Ronnie speaks of Aziz as "exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats, but he had forgotten his back collar stud, and there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals their race" (Forster 87) inferred from Aziz's upturned collar. Again, Ronnie expands his theory of Indians being lazy in his reference to why the Bhattacharyas never sent their tonga for Adela and Mrs. Moore for a lunch date. Ronnie informs Adela that all Indians as a race are slack. "They're all – they all forget their back collar studs sooner or later" (103). Ronnie's perceptions of Indians exemplify

the binary formulation of the epistemic Western Self/Other dichotomy as Said suggests that the constructions of the Orient as imagined by the West.

With the presumption of Indians being part of a devious race, the Superintendent of Police warns Fielding, ““When an Indian goes bad, he goes not only very bad, but very queer”” (Forster 187). The Superintendent’s remark is in response to Fielding’s voicing his concern about whether or not Adela’s accusations of Aziz are true. Fielding, in speaking with the Superintendent, points to the quizzical manner in which Aziz had Adela’s field glasses in his possession. Fielding believes that if Aziz did in fact attack Adela, would he not rid himself of her field glasses? The Superintendent advises Fielding not to think as an “Englishman” and states that the “psychology here is different” (187). The Superintendent’s persistence in labeling all Indians occurs because, as a schoolmaster, Fielding only comes across the Indians “at their very best” (187). The Superintendent states that Indians “can be charming as boys,” and declares that, in his capacity as a Superintendent of Police, and having authority over Indians, he “knows them as they really are, after they have developed into men” (187). The Superintendent’s postulation is based on his place in regards to Self/Other binary, with the insinuation being that the Indian fools Fielding, that the Indian is really very devious.

In addition to Said’s idea that the West constructs the Orient as “other” concerning laziness and deceit, other critics have commented on the colonial constructs of Indians being inherently irrational. For instance, Alastair Pennycook argues against the notions of irrationality, held by the West, associated with the Orient as aspects resulting from the nature of their tropical climate (59). He contends that the English, in their construction of place possess the notion that heat causes irrational thoughts. An

application of Pennycook's argument concerning heat being the cause of irrationality can be found in a conversation between Mr. Turton and Adela. In response to Adela wanting to meet the Indians that Turton comes across socially as friends, Turton musingly corrects Adela and tells her that he does not, nor do any other Englishman, ever come across Indians socially. He jests, "India does wonders for the judgment, especially during the hot weather" (27). Turton deems that anyone under the belief that the English and Indian interact on an equal basis, or as friends, as delusional, and the tropical heat of a place causes this delusion or irrational thought. Turton's construction of place underscores Pennycook's claim that the West constructs the Orient as a place of irrational thought is directly linked to the climate.

Another significant polarity involving binary opposition is the Parent/Child dichotomy. This mode of thinking is closely linked to the binary of Civilized/Savage. Children are seen as a smaller version of adults, and the adults' job is to instill moral training and education to ensure maturity. In this sense the child is not just a smaller version of an adult but also is inferior to an adult. The constructs of the English as the civilizer and/or parent to the Indians who are uncivilized or childlike are illustrated in Forster's novel. Ronnie Heaslop reminds Adela Quested that Mr. Turton will give him a list of the "good" Indians to invite to the Bridge Party. Ronnie comments that Turton knows the natives better than he does, as he himself is still comparatively new. The Indians "know him – they know he can't be fooled" (27). Here Ronnie implies that all Indians are out to fool the English, and therefore cannot be trusted. Just as a child tries to fool his parents, Ronnie applies these same binary forces to the Indians. In their shared

belief that the Indians are devious, Ronnie subscribes to the same assertions as does the Superintendent of Police.

In addition, the English also perceive the Indian as a sexual deviant. Robert Young identifies sexualized discourse among the colonialists as stemming from the idea of colonization itself, which can be viewed as a discourse of rape and penetration (181). Prior to Aziz's trial, the Chandrapore Club becomes a safe haven for all the English women, even for those women whose husbands were of low rank and under normal circumstances are snubbed by the likes of Mrs. Turton. For instance, one such Englishwoman, although the wife of a mere railroad official, embodies the idea of pure Englishness. She states:

that she was afraid to return to her bungalow, in case the niggers attacked, [...] but this evening, with her abundant figure and masses of corngold hair, she symbolized all that is worth fighting and dying for; more permanent a symbol, perhaps, than poor Adela. (Forster 200)

The English Self/Other representation as purity versus sexual deviant is underscored in the description of the young woman's hair color. The Englishwoman's "blondeness" in deep contrast to the "nigger's" darkness is an example of the polarities in Self/Other as constructions of the West. The sexual union of different races haunts European colonizers as race is seen as the benchmark for who is "self" and who is "other." As Ashcroft asserts,

the fear of miscegenation thus stems from a desire to maintain separation between civilized and savage, yet that binary masks a profound longing, occluding the idea of the inevitable dependence of one on the existence of

the other. (143)

Both Young and Ashcroft clearly attest to the colonizers' insistence on keeping the races separate; miscegenation can lead to a disruption in the hierarchy of colonial power.

Just as the English perceive India as dirty, which in turn implies England as a land of cleanliness, the colonizers' perceive the colonized as sexual deviants, which in turn they perceive themselves as sexually desirable. During the trial, when Aziz is questioned about the events in the cave, McBryde, the Superintendent of Police, with all his implied authority, opines, "the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not vice versa" (Forster 243). The jurors see his statement not as an opinion but as scientific fact. The colonizers' thought that the colonized is without sexual desirability is refuted by Adela's quiet fascination and sexual attraction to the punkah wallah sitting in the court. The sexual depiction of the punkah wallah in the courtroom counters this element of colonial discourse. McBryde's perception that all Indians have insatiable sexual appetites is a confirmation of what Young and Ashcroft assert by supporting the illogicality of the English characters' dominant voiced views of the Indians' sexuality as uncivilized.

Spurr further supports this idea with his argument that the colonizer's "insistence on difference from the colonized establishes a notion of the savage as other, the antithesis of civilized value" (7). The woman with "corngold" hair is the embodiment worth fighting for and even dying for, but the Mohammedan women of India are her polar opposites. They are described as invisible or as an "absence of productive human relations," or the antithesis of civilized value noted by Spurr. Before Aziz's trial,

a number of Mohammedan ladies had sworn to starve themselves until the prisoner [Aziz] was acquitted; their death would make little difference,

indeed, being invisible, they seemed dead already” (Forster 238).

This “other” binary constructed by the English reaffirms the Eurocentric view that whatever happens outside one’s “self” does not matter.

What is unique about each binary construction, as it contributes to a sense of place, is the collected false presumption that a place is fixed or authentic, as seen in Adela Quested’s search for the “real” India. The crux of E. M. Forster’s novel, A Passage to India, is Adela’s continual drive to see the authentic Indian and India. The implication that a place is authentic implies that the culture is not subject to change. Yet, as Salman Rushdie asserts, the idea of an authentic culture is futile:

one of the most absurd aspects of this quest for national authenticity is that - as far as India is concerned, anyway - it is completely fallacious to suppose that there is such a thing as a pure, unalloyed tradition from which to draw. (67)

India is not one place or one culture or one type of people, but hundreds of places, hundreds of cultures, and hundreds of different types of people, though Adela has subscribed to the British notion that India is a pure, fixed, exotic “other.”

Although authenticity was once associated with the concept of essentialism, which represented the notion of pure, original cultures, authenticity has since moved away from this theory particularly in the realization that all cultural formations are largely hybrid (Thieme 21). Adela’s fixation on an “authentic” India is reverberated through her countless cries to see the “real” India.

Homi Bhabha stresses the interdependent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. He repudiates the notion of pure original cultures as Indian history and

culture alter over a period of time. Indian culture becomes a melting pot of sorts. The culture and colonization of India are related in that no culture can remain uninfluenced by surrounding factors. Rushdie's argument against the notion of a pure authentic culture resonates with Bhabha's analysis of hybridity.

Bhabha's term "third space," where one's sense of place is neither one nor the other, can best describe this hesitating relationship ("Commitment" 2395). Bhabha's in-between-ness can be understood as the "moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside [...]" (Locations 1332). His term "in-between-ness," uses the image of the stairway that was a part of an architectural installation called Sites of Genealogy, Bhabha theorizes the in-between:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white.

(Locations 1333)

The colonial process indelibly links the colonizer and the colonized, in that both colonizer and colonized cultures change. The theory of hybridity challenges the notions of language and cultural authenticity. The colonized people are not solely affected by hybridization, as the colonizer's language also becomes hybrid; this hybridity redefines their sense of place. In Foster's novel, the ladies at the club incorporate Indian words to their vernacular; terms such as tonga, Burra Sahib, pukka as well as calling themselves memsahib become part of their colloquial speech.

Since not all Indians share the same culture one cannot presume that a hybrid culture is of two distinct cultures. The meeting and interacting of various cultures, with the addition of English culture to the mix, creates yet a deeper blurring for colonized peoples in finding their “true” or “authentic” culture. As seen in Forster’s novel, Aziz and Dr. Godbole are polar opposites with regard to their religion, customs, and dress. Aziz, a Muslim who dresses in modern clothing, and Godbole, a Hindu who wears “a turban and dhoti” (77), cannot be considered one and the same India, neither individually nor collectively.

In Edward Said’s phrase, colonizer-colonized relationships are made up of “overlapping territories, intertwined histories” (Culture 1). Hybridity is a social construction that is created as a by-product of colonization. It defies the notion of authenticity on a whole. Said additionally posits, “that there is no way in which the past can be quarantined from the present” (Culture 4). The resulting hybrid characteristics challenge the assumption of “pure” and “authentic.” Said also reiterates Bhabha by maintaining, “The past and present inform each other, [...] each implies the other” (Culture 4). That is, colonialism is deeply connected with European culture as they are forever intertwined.

The idea of an authentic culture or of identifying an authentic culture has been the center of many debates. The expectation of a real India is the assumption that India is a fixed place, and the emergence of certain fixed, stereotypical representations of culture remains a danger. In Forster’s novel, one can see the magnitude of authenticating another’s sense of place. Discourse ensues as Mr. Turton, the Collector, boasts that his “twenty-five years experience of the country” entitles him to speak with “the whole

weight of... authority” (181). He suggests that he knows the real or authentic Indian in his assertion of Aziz’s guilt. Turton, like the Superintendent of Police, perpetuates the stereotypical English claim that all Indians are sexually devious, and this image of an authentic Indian or India can be summed up with one event. Aziz’s guilt, whether factual or not, cannot represent a race, “No one is India” (76). One event cannot authenticate a place or people.

Robert Young, in his discussion of colonial desire and miscegenation, along with Anne McClintock, whose analysis in sexual aspects, both share the same point of view in regards to the concept of hybridity being a social construction produced by the West. Both theorists argue that place is a major site of cultural discourse.

Although Bhabha has many postcolonial theorists in his camp, there are other critics who disagree. One of his most ardent critics is Aijaz Ahmad. Ahmad charges that Bhabha’s theory ignores the social status of Indian people, and his hybridity theory includes only those of privilege, like Bhabha himself. As Ahmad contends,

the line of demarcation between the so-called ‘colonial’ and ‘postcolonial’ intellectuals was that the ‘colonial’ ones spoke from positions imbibed from metropolitan culture while ‘postcolonial’ ones spoke from *outside* those positions. (278)

Ahmad’s greatest concern is the relationship between academic practice and its site of production, in which he postulates that all theorists who live and benefit from Western or “First World” contact are not capable of theorizing Third World discourses (Mongia 14). Ahmad’s concern can be equated with the exchange of the Superintendent of Police and Fielding in Forster’s novel in reference to Fielding, as a schoolmaster and an intellectual,

comes across Indians only “at their very best” (187). In essence, the Superintendent believes that his sense of place as an “objective” Englishman holds the true perception of the real Indian or India, just as Ahmad believes he holds the true “objective” perception of India.

Although the site of production is vital in the theorization of postcolonialism, it is not an absolute that only theorists who live in Third World nations are effective postcolonial critics. If one follows Ahmad’s theory, that the only effective postcolonial critics are those who live in the Third World, one realizes that he relies on the presumption of an “authentic” postcolonial critic.

Binary oppositions of how the West constructs the third world as “others,” assists in the production of knowledge. The construction of “other” can also be delineated in the act of educating and mimicry of the colonized people.

Although maps are usually examined as representations of space, they can also be seized as spaces of representation – fields of opportunity, waiting to be cultivated. The colonizers’ presumption of an Indian absence of language and history allows the colonizer to fill this empty space with their perspective on culture and life. Language is a fundamental site of struggle for postcolonial discourse because the colonial discourse itself begins with language. Language provides the signifier by which reality may be represented; it provides the name by which the world may recognize a place, such as roads renamed after victorious generals.

One of the most accurate illustrations of the power of language is the means by which it provides, through naming, how a colonized place or person is widely known. Even though the colonizer and the colonized both speak English, there is a sense of

displacement between language and place. The displacement of the colonized space into colonizer's place occurs because the words to describe a place cannot be agreed upon. In addition, place is represented through language and that place's meaning is dependent upon who is utilizing that language at the moment. Outsiders to any group will feel displaced by that group's representation of place, as a sense of place is always in flux.

Bhabha further develops his theory of hybridity and the discourse that transpires through ambivalence. As the colonized people show reluctance in subscribing to the colonizer's absolute authority, the colonized people are experiencing ambivalence. The colonized is split between complicity and resistance to the colonizer ("Commitment" 2382).

Education in the colonial system encourages the colonized subject to think like, act like, and believe as the colonizer does. Education encourages the adoption of the colonizers' cultural habits and assumptions. Homi Bhabha posits the contradictions in colonial discourse in his essay, "The Commitment to Theory," in order to underscore the colonizer's ambivalence in respect to his position toward the colonized "other."

The colonizer's ambivalence, or mimicry, can be analyzed in two different ways, by either mockery or plain imitation. Stuart Hall examines the issue of mimicry as being an overt goal of imperial policy, and as increasingly evolving under the terms ethnicity and post-colonialism, because it has come to describe the hesitant relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (28). In Hall's sense of the word, mimicry can be a clever weapon of anti-colonial civility, an ambivalent mixture of deference and disobedience. Ashcroft suggests, "Mimicry locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behavior of the colonized" (Key 140).

From the colonizer's idea of place as "self," the colonizer has a desire to civilize the colonized people. This ideal is in conflict with the actuality of colonial mimicry. This is because mimicry is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics.

Bhabha asserts that mimicry is a subject suggesting inferiority, such as "almost the same, but not quite" (Locations 1335). His thought is that mimicry by the colonized is never a simple reproduction of those traits held by the colonizer. Rather, the result is a blurred copy of the colonizer but is not quite threatening as Hall suggests. Bhabha argues that postcolonial consciousness is born out of a dislocated sense of space, and suggests that the colonized are not only a shadow or mimic of Englishness, but parallel the structure of Englishness ("Commitment" 2397). The shadow or mimicry of Englishness can be seen in Forster's novel at Aziz's trial. As the prosecutor paints that all Indian men in general are sexually attractive to English women, a spectator shouts, "Even when the lady is ... uglier than the gentleman?" (Forster 243). The magistrate, an Englishman, orders the disruptive heckler to leave the courtroom. Although the heckler is never definitively identified, the native policeman, who mimics the Magistrate, grabs the first Indian he sees, and roughly escorts him out. The Magistrate is operating on the binary assumption that no Englishwoman could be more ugly than the Indian "other." But more importantly, the native policeman mimics the English binary under the Eurocentric Self/Other, with his presumption that the heckler must have been an Indian, as only an uncivilized Indian would disrupt and disgrace the court. The native policeman has defined his sense of place parallel, or in shadow of, the English's sense of place. In

essence, he has adopted the same mode of binary construction of Self/Other, placing himself as part of the English “self.”

ADELA QUESTED’S SENSE OF PLACE

In what ways do we experience place? How does colonization influence what place means? What happens when multiple histories operating within a single place compete with one another, and where do people fit in such a scheme?

There are many distinct ideas of place operating in Forster’s novel. Each character operates and subscribes to his/her own sense of place. For example, Adela, the Ladies of the Chandrapore Club, Ronnie, and Aziz each experience their own sense of place based on the location of their space within the binary formation of Self/Other, North/South, Center/Marginal, Parent/Child and Colonizer/Colonized. Adela has an idea of India as a “mystical” place, whereas the wives of the British Raj have a very different perception of India and Indians as their sense of place is in polar opposition to a civilized England. Ronnie operates and mirrors Turton and McBryde’s idea of place, in which they center themselves within the Eurocentric Self/Other. Aziz’s idea of place interestingly enough is the reversal of the standard Center/Marginal binary as he inverts the location of center.

In examining E.M. Forster’s novel 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, sense of place changes as one’s binaries change.

What is Adela's sense of place? How does her sense of place provide her with a feeling of belonging and imply her self-definition? Adela's idea of place is constructed as India being the exotic "other," and she desires to see India in its purest form, thereby relying upon her own constructed binary of Self/Exotic as a sense of place. In Adela's ignorance or naïveté, she partly believes that India is there solely for her in order to experience exotic tastes. Adela's desire for a mystical India proves that she subscribes to her own conception and construction of an "authentic" India. Her nonsensical wish for a "real" India further advances the notion and myth of authenticity that she created.

When Adela asks Ronnie at the Club to see the real India, with real Indians, she is under the delusion that there is such a person or persons as the purely authentic. Adela perpetuates this freeze like understanding once she meets Aziz. In his promise to reveal the "real" India, Adela "accepts everything Aziz says is verbally true. In her ignorance, she regards him as India [...] she places him on a pinnacle" (Forster 76). She is under the assumption that Aziz is the authentic Indian, and given enough time with him, she will be able to unlock his country's secrets. What Adela does not understand is that Aziz cannot satisfy her desire of locating a "real" India due to Aziz's own hybridity.

As Adela considers what it means to be Anglo-Indian, she recalls the conversations held at the Bridge Party. The Ladies at the Club are labeled Anglo-Indian, as they are in between England and India with English citizenship living in India. Adela takes note as Mrs. Turton, the hostess, complains to her husband and other colonialists that she does not know what to do with the Indians, as she did not fully expect them to actually come to her party. Mrs. Turton further debases the Indians by her continuous lament that she will not shake hands with any one of them (Forster 41). The fact that

Mrs. Turton will not shake hands with any Indian further exemplifies the negative tropes in colonial discourse as Mrs. Turton holds the Self/Other hegemonic view of Indians as being dirty. In observing Mrs. Turton's contemptuous comments, Adela becomes confused by her own sense of place within the colony.

As Adela and Mrs. Turton walk over to the Indian group, Mrs. Turton reminds Adela that she is to remember that she is superior to all Indians (Forster 42). Adela sees her countrywomen placing themselves above all Indians, Adela is young, plain, and earnest and longs to know the "real" India. She tries to disregard the taboos and snobberies of the British circle that she witnesses at the Club.

Upon climbing the entrance to one of the Caves with Aziz, Adela mentions that if she marries Ronnie Heaslop she would become an Anglo-Indian. Aziz is angered by the description and asks her to "take back such a horrible remark" (Forster 161). Adela replies, "It's inevitable. I can't avoid the label. What I do hope is to avoid the mentality'" (161). Although Adela does not want to become part of the discourse of colonization, she is fearful that over time she will not be strong enough to reject the binaries characteristic in Self/Other as she has witnessed with the Ladies at the Club.

What Adela has not realized, possibly in her unconscious, is that she has yielded to the Ladies at the Club's representational practice. Adela recalls Mrs. Turton speaking of the number of wives each Indian has when Turton comments, "Mohammedans always insist on their full four" (169). When Adela questions Aziz to the number of wives he has, she is already shifting her place in Self/Other. Although she consciously abhors the likes of the Mrs. Turton's of India, she crosses over in her unconscious by acknowledging

and giving credence to Mrs. Turton's remark about Mohammedans as fact. Adela is subscribing to the same formations and parallels as the ladies at the Club.

COLONIALISTS' SENSE OF PLACE

For some, the received cultural assumptions about the identity of the place become more entrenched, as the portraits of the members of the English Club in Chandrapore clearly show. The novel demonstrates that Adela's understanding of place is not the only one in operation. The dominant sense of place shared by the colonial contingent in the novel are best described by the Ladies of the Club. When Adela asks Ronnie to show her the real Indians, Mrs. Lesley snidely interjects, "As if one could avoid seeing them" (Forster 25). Adela responds that she has not spoken to any as of yet, again, Lesley quips, "Lucky you for not speaking with any" (25). Mrs. Callender adds, "Let them all die, because they give me the creeps" (26). Adela further realizes that the English colonials consistently refer to Indians as "them," which further causes Adela to give pause as to her sense of place in respect to India and England. Adela's dissatisfaction with the Club Ladies' sense of place is apparent.

Other women at the club suggest that the Indians should not be allowed to be in close contact with civilized people. All in unison degrade the Indian. The Ladies of the Chandrapore Club operate at a very different level from Adela. Those who occupy the posts of authority, like the Callenders and the Turtons, epitomize the "ideal" British attitude as when Mrs. Turton reassures Mrs. Moore that "[y]ou're superior to everyone in India except one or two of the Ranis, and they're on an equality" (Forster 42). The

long-time English colonialists continually warn Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested about the dangers of interacting with the natives in any social or intimate way because the contact may contaminate them.

Mr. Turton, the Collector, originally suggests the Bridge Party so Adela can see for herself the “real” Indian, although he cautions her that under normal circumstances the English never socialize with the Indians (Forster 26). The Collector, along with his wife formulate their idea of place in relation to colonizer versus colonized, an “us” versus “them” binary. They deeply subscribe to the binary that Indians are savages and should not mingle with genteel people like themselves.

While the Turtons’ actions personify the North/South, English/Indian binary, not all colonialists subscribe to the same binary formations. In speaking with her husband, Mrs. Turton insinuates Adela’s last name Quested is not “English” enough, “Miss Quested, what a name! [...] She wasn’t pukka” (Forster 26).² This description of Adela not being pukka reiterates Mrs. Turtons idea of place. She sees Adela as “other,” as Adela does not fit into her perception of “self.” Though Adela and the Ladies at the Chandrapore Club are considered part of a whole Self/Other binary, the contrast in views within the “self” are quite different.

Adela’s intended fiancé, Ronnie Heaslop, further represents the Self/Other binary construction in relation to a sense of place. Ronnie informs his mother that there is “doubleness” (Forster 33) in everything an Indian does. He lectures his mother, Mrs. Moore, that behind every remark an Indian makes, there is an ulterior motive. Ronnie’s construction of “self” confirms Spurr’s critical analysis of how “the colonizer’s insistence

² The term *pukka* is defined as an Anglo-Indian expression being of absolute first class, superior, genuine or real in Webster’s New World Collegiate Dictionary.

on difference from the colonized establishes a notion of the savage as ‘other’, the antithesis of civilized value” (7). Ronnie’s Self/Other binary depicts himself as honest; therefore the “other,” the Indians, must be dishonest and corrupt. These stereotypes confirm the positional superiority of the West over the positional inferiority of the East (Said, Orientalism 35). Ronnie’s insinuation that all Indians have “doubleness” about them sustains the constant emphasis of British superiority.

As the British construct a sense of themselves they have to create an “other” beyond the seas. To describe one as enlightened and civilized means that someone else had to be deemed as savage. “Such alterity, what one might call the creation of doubleness, was an integral part of the Enlightenment project”(Pennycook 56). David Spurr further reflects that,

colonial discourse requires the constant reproduction of these images in various forms – a recurring nomination of the abject – both as a justification for European intervention and the necessary iteration of a fundamental difference between colonizer and colonized. (78)

Ronnie charts Spurr’s analysis of debasement when, upon leaving the Club at nightfall, Ronnie walks over to the edge of the second floor verandah and without lowering his head, he “calls out firmly to no one but the moon and orders his Sais to bring his trap around front” (28). He does not even lower his head to make eye contact with his driver.

Ronnie’s marginalization of the Orient “other” illustrates the dichotomy that implies colonizers’ superiority over the colonized. This debasement is on the heels of Ronnie insinuating that when he first arrived in India, he too was once as naive as Adela.

He has interpreted his space from the Turtons of the world and formulates his relationship with the Indians through binaries that parallel the Ladies at the Club.

Ronnie incessantly debases the Indians as depicted in the conversation on the ride home from the Club with his mother and Adela. When Ronnie realizes that his mother was speaking to an Indian doctor in the Mosque he responds in disgust, “A Mohammedan!” (Forster 30). He wishes that she had not removed her shoes in the Mosque in an effort to instill superiority over a Mohammedan. In essence, he was wishing his mother had committed a sacrilege against the Muslim. This illustrates Ronnie’s Eurocentric construction of the Self/Other binary in his premise that the Christian religion is superior to the Mohammedan’s religion.

Adela’s dissatisfaction and frustration intensifies with her fiancé’s gross amusement at the Bridge Party. Ronnie laughs, “Indians in topi and spats!” (Forster 38). He implies that the Indians look foolish attempting to look “civilized.” Ronnie is blind to the idea of hybridity as he is locked into an idea of the eternal savagery of the colonized. In his construction of the Orient, he believes that they, the colonized, cannot be “improved.” Adela’s continual dissatisfaction with the Colonialists’ sense of place primes her for meeting Aziz and for his offer to produce the real India.

DR. AZIZ’S SENSE OF PLACE

Forster’s novel undermines Adela’s presumption that Aziz is the “authentic” Indian as illustrated through Aziz’s hybridity. As readers, we come to realize that Aziz cannot satisfy Adela’s desire to identify a genuine Indian as his sense of place shifts.

Aziz, too, is prone to defining place according to the same “formula” as Adela and the colonizers. Aziz’s idea of place is a reversal of the Center/Marginal binary.

Aziz speaks of all Englishmen as the same; in this, he is operating from his idea of place within the binary of Self/Other. In some aspects Aziz rejects how colonial discourse has “othered” him when he sees himself as “self.” When Aziz is arguing with Mahmoud Ali, he describes all Englishmen as one, “Be he Turton or Burton. It is only the difference of a letter [...] All are exactly alike” (Forster 7). In a reversal of the standard colonial binary, Aziz is the “self,” while *all* Englishmen are “other.”

Aziz is full of his own prejudgments about his Hindu countrymen. As he tells Adela and Mrs. Moore in explaining why the Hindu family’s invitation fell through, Aziz admonishes,

“Slack Hindus – they have no idea of society; I know them very well because of a doctor at the hospital. Such a slack unpunctual fellow! It is well you did not go to their house, for it would give you the wrong idea of India. Nothing sanitary.” (62)

Aziz’s prejudices about Hindus and his insistence on their racial difference from himself as “other” replicates the colonizer’s positioning of Self/Other. Aziz’s mode of operation of place is consistent with the English.

Aziz broadens his Self/Other binary to include Englishwomen as well. Aziz believes, “‘Granted the exceptions’, all Englishwomen are haughty and venal” (Forster 33), the exception being Mrs. Moore. This disdain is, of course, amply reciprocated, and as Mrs. Callendar, the wife of the local civil surgeon, observes: “the best thing one can do to a native is to let him die” (Forster 44).

Although Aziz lectures with an air of confidence as to his position in place, he confides to Fielding that he likes to wear English clothing. He remarks that the police do not stop him as much on the street as he cycles down the road when he is in English attire as opposed to Indian dress (Foster 69). Aziz is aware of his place as seen by the Westerners' position of Self/Other. He is aware of his spatial borders and knows the English considers him "other," yet he knows he can blend in through the use of hybridity.

Due to the nature of hybridity, the "in-between-ness" as Bhabha pilots, Aziz shifts from Self/Other to Other/Self when the two ladies from the club take his carriage and ignore his very existence by giving him "the inevitable snub" (Forster 11). Aziz thinks: they "turned instinctively away" upon seeing him and, when "he called courteously" to them, they "did not reply, being full of their own affairs" (11). In this example, Aziz does not center himself in the Self/Other binary. He perceives himself as marginal and "othered." Aziz sees his invisibility as yet another binary operation with the Ladies of the Club, since his invisibility denies him status as a human being, just as the Mohammedan women who threatened to starve themselves prior to Aziz's acquittal were invisible.

As these binaries take hold, colonized people are marginalized as colonizers are centered or privileged. Marginalized groups do not necessarily endorse the notion of a fixed center, in which resistance then becomes a process of replacing the center. The breaking down of binary formation is the result of disrupting the flow of opposition. Binaries assume a movement in one direction, a "movement from the colonizer to the colonized, from the surveyor to the surveyed" (Ashcroft, Key 27). The disruption of

binaries becomes an increasing factor in understanding “self” and place, as with Aziz presenting the Marabar Caves as the all-knowing guide to the English colonials.

Through the sightseeing tour of the Marabar Caves, Aziz attempts to regain some status or authority. Aziz’s actions can be construed as pandering to the English as he is seeking approval from the English to deem his place, India, as worthy. In Aziz’s quest for acceptance by the English, he believes he will once again become the center of the Self/Other binary.

CAVES

The mystifying Marabar Caves not only serve as an important space, but they also provide a binary “other” for the English tourists, especially for Adela in believing that the Caves are the means to unlocking the key of the mystical “other” India that she has constructed. She suspects that she will get her opportunity to unlock all of India when Aziz invites her and other English colonials on a trip to the Marabar Caves inside the Marabar Hills. Adela originally views the Marabar Caves as the purest form of the exotic “other” for the reason that the Caves are not man-made but are part of the landscape. She contends that the Caves will represent the “real” India, as the Caves are fixed objects

The Marabar Caves themselves are the mystical “other,” not only from the English point of reference but for the Indians’ location in space as well. The Caves’ “otherness” draws attention to Adela’s dependence upon binaries as they define her sense of place, just as Aziz also depends upon the Caves to define his sense of place. Equally,

both Adela and Aziz are misguided in believing the Caves are the authentic India because the Caves are fixed objects.

Miss Quested and Mrs. Moore come to India in search of the mystical, exotic, and “real” India. With the very first sentence of Forster’s novel, he lures the reader into thinking the Caves are mystifying. Forster foreshadows the importance of the Marabar Caves within the first line in the novel: “Except for the Marabar Caves – and they are twenty miles off – the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary” (3).

The unknowability of India is crystallized in the Marabar Caves. Adela has subscribed to the “mystery” of India, and the Caves symbolize the “mysteriousness” of a place. It seems that Mrs. Moore is the only one to fully accept that the echo in the Caves is the closest truth to represent India; which is India cannot be represented. The Caves have become symbolic of “other.” They are complex, bewildering, and ungovernable. Mystery and muddle surround India, which is embodied by the Marabar Caves. Adela is subscribing to her sense of place as orderly and plain in opposition to her constructed exotic “other,” India. She vigorously asks Professor Godbole to tell her everything about the Caves ““or I shall never understand India”” (79). Godbole assures her that he would like to do nothing more, but as he searches for the right words to express the Caves, he himself is puzzled. Godbole is awestruck at his own weak attempt to accurately describe the Caves and joking responds to Aziz, ““Well, why are they so famous? We all talk of the famous Marabar Caves. Perhaps that is our empty brag”” (80). Aziz’s attempt to describe the Caves feebly collapses as well. In essence the Marabar Caves become a center of ambiguity and unidentifiable “other.” Half way through the novel, the Marabar Caves are finally described:

A tunnel eight feet long, five feet high, three feet wide, leads to a circular chamber about twenty feet in diameter. This arrangement occurs again and again throughout the group of hills [...]. The visitor finds it difficult to discuss the caves, or to keep them apart of his mind. (Forster 137)

Alan Wilde suggests that the caves are “extraordinary, precisely because they are so vacant, so tedious, so totally inexpressive [...]. Their effect is to frustrate the seeker” (137). Wilde’s assertion that the Caves are frustrating lends to Adela’s frustration in attempting to access India through these frustrating Caves. Adela eventually grasps the idea that the Caves cannot be tapped. She finally accepts her own limitations as it applies to her sense of place regarding the Caves, but unfortunately she cannot apply this same logic of unknowability to a place – India. Adela cannot see that India is something else than her preconceived construction.

Forster emphasizes the unknowability in the Marabar Caves through the echoes it produces. “If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would be the same- ‘ou-boum’...no one could romanticize the Marabar because it robbed infinity and eternity of their vastness” (165). The echo of a cave is the absence of original sound; this absence indicates a lack of authenticity. Original sounds are transformed into meaningless disorder as the narrator suggests:

There are some exquisite echoes in India; there is the whisper round the dome at Bijapur; there are the long, solid sentences that voyage through the air at Mandu, and return unbroken to their creator. The echo in a Marabar Cave is not like these; it is entirely devoid of distinction. (Forster 163)

The details and events surrounding the incident in the Cave are deliberately vague. The reader is left with only the knowledge of Adela having some physical confrontation in one of the Marabar Caves and flees from them. The only piece of information the reader collects is that Aziz may not have been with Adela when she lost her field glasses. His possession of the field glasses can be misinterpreted as evidence against him, but ultimately the reader is not privy to what really happened in the Cave. Just as the events in the Marabar Caves cannot be fully identified, India cannot be identified either. Ultimately, the Caves function as a challenge to a stable sense of place.

In his book, The Rhetoric of Empire, David Spurr points out “[t]he absences and negations: the absence of productive human relations, of meaningful institutions, even the essence, at the center of the narrative, of knowledge of what really happened in the Marabar Caves” (Spurr 101). In Forster’s novel the idea of India finds its objective correlative in the horrifying emptiness of the echoing Caves; according to Sara Suleri, “the essence of India is represented as embodied by these mysterious inner spaces which can be described but not interpreted, so that if they have any meaning at all, they stand for the utter absence of meaning” (qtd. in Spurr 102). Via the Marabar Caves, Forster creates the parallel to the unknown India by utilizing the Caves to dismantle the concept of a fixed authentic place. The Caves illustrate the fruitlessness of trying to fix the identity of any place.