

# **The Im/Possible Host/Guest: Hospitality in *A Passage to India***

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## **Abstract**

Travel is an act of border-crossing. The traveller crosses the geographical/cultural border and encounters the other in a foreign country. Being a stranger, the traveller receives the host's assistance, gift and hospitality. Accordingly, the interaction between the traveller and the host becomes the major factor of the significance of the journey. This host-guest relationship finds a sophisticated case in E. M. Forster's travel narrative, *A Passage to India* (1924), which the present essay explores with Jacques Derrida's theory of hospitality.

Derrida's concern with hospitality comes from Kant's universal hospitality, which Derrida characterizes as "conditional" for it is "dependent on and controlled by the law and the state police." For Derrida, the real hospitality is "unconditional hospitality," which requires the host open up his/her home to welcome the "absolute, unknown, anonymous other." In the light of Derrida's theory, the present essay argues that in *A Passage to India*, there are three invitations and two visitations respectively embodying conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality. Together they help focus on and reveal the novel's political/religious concerns, connecting the three major parts of the novel (Mosque [Islam], Caves [Christianity] and Temple [Hinduism]) into a complete structure.

On top of all these, the present essay argues that by presenting hospitality and the host-guest relationship, it becomes clear that the English hopes for a "more lasting home" in India fail. And consequently, the three invitations and the two visitations make the involved characters im/possible hosts and guests.

**Keywords:** host-guest; Jacques Derrida; hospitality; travel; invitation; visitation

## I. Travel and Hospitality

Travel is an act of border-crossing. The traveller crosses the geographical/cultural border to a foreign county, where he/she becomes the guest of the local residents. The hospitality of the local host and the interactions between the host and the guest are the key factors that help determine the significance of the entire journey.

Greek culture witnesses the practice of hospitality. Homer's *The Odyssey* characterizes how the host receives guests, provides them with food and shelter, helps them regain their energy, and keeps them away from danger and harm. These are the kinds of hospitality that help the travellers carry on their journeys. The Greek term "xenos" (homecoming) is closely connected with "xenia" (hospitality). As Derrida points out, "when Benveniste wants to define the *xenos*, there is nothing fortuitous in his beginning from the *xenia*. He inscribes the *xenos* in the *xenia*, which is to say in the pact, in the contract or collective alliance of that name. Basically, there is no *xenos*, there is no foreigner before or outside the *xenia*" (2000: 29). The incorporation of "hospitality" into "homecoming," therefore, marks the host's intention to make the guest feel welcome and satisfied at the reception, so as to form a good relationship with the guest. Upon departure, the guest's boat is full of precious gifts given by the host. These gifts declare the wealth and power of the host, and they foretell the guest's future payback. Following the gift are the host's name and prestige, along with the reciprocity between the guest and the host. Such connection represents business collaborations in time of peace and alliances in time of war.

In conclusion, the Greek Code of Hospitality can be summarized in the following seven procedures: (1) Unconditional Hospitality<sup>1</sup> ; (2) Welcoming Feast<sup>2</sup> ; (3) Asking the Identity of the Guest<sup>3</sup> ; (4) Gift-giving ; (5) Sending Off the Guest ; (6)

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<sup>1</sup> On his way home, Odysseus encounters a shipwreck. He drifts onto the coast of Phaeacians, where Princess Nausicaa finds him. To her maids who flee upon seeing Odysseus, Princess Nausicaa says: "Here's an unlucky wanderer strayed our way/ and we must tend him well. Every stranger and beggar/ comes from Zeus, and whatever scrap we give him/ he'll be glad to eat. So, quick, my girls,/ give our newfound friend some food and drink/ and bathe the man in the river,/ wherever you find some shelter from the wind" (6.226-32). Odysseus is then taken to the castle, where he meets the king. Until this moment, Princess Nausicaa offers "unconditional hospitality."

<sup>2</sup> When Odysseus is on his way to meet King Alcinoos, an old liegemen says to the King: "Come, raise him up and set the stranger now,/ in a silver-studded chair,/and tell the heralds to mix more wine for all/ so we can pour out cups to Zeus who loves the lightning,/ champion of suppliants—suppliants' rights are sacred./ And let the housekeeper give our guest his supper,/ unstinting with her stores" (7.192-98). Without asking any question, King Alcinoos offers foods, drinks, clothing and kindness to Odysseus. Like Princess Nausicaa, what King Alcinoos offers is "unconditional hospitality."

<sup>3</sup> After the feast, Queen Arete asks Odysseus: "Who are you? Where are you from?/ Who gave you the clothes you're wearing now?/ Didn't you say you reached us roving on the sea?" (7.274-76). By asking the identity of the guest and expecting him to repay the hospitality, the queen turns the Phaeacians' "unconditional hospitality" into "conditional hospitality."

To Reciprocate<sup>4</sup>; (7) Gift Effect: Spreading a Good Reputation. A brief introduction to the Greek Code of Hospitality is served as a basis for understanding the issue of hospitality demonstrated in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). As different as *The Odyssey* and *A Passage to India* are, the latter may be read in relation to the former in the aspect of hospitality.<sup>5</sup>

## II. Hospitality: Kant and Derrida

"Hospitality" has emerged as an urgent issue since the twentieth century. The surge of refugee immigration after the Second World War, the gender/race/nation identification, together with the rise of globalization, are the phenomena that give rise to the debate over multiculturalism, in which hospitality plays a crucial role. One of the theorists initiating the discussions over hospitality is Jacques Derrida, who takes the concept of universal hospitality proposed by Immanuel Kant as a starting point to meditate upon the many issues springing from the contemporary society.<sup>6</sup>

### A. Kant: Universal Rights and Perpetual Peace

In his article entitled "To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," Kant proposes "cosmopolitanism" to be the prerequisite for universal hospitality. Kant provides in this article basic definitions of universal hospitality: "hospitality (hospitableness) means the right of an alien not to be treated as an enemy upon his

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<sup>4</sup> King Alcinoos says to Queen Arete: "And I will give him this gorgeous golden cup of mine./ So he'll remember Alcinoos all his days to come/ When he pours libations out in his own house/ To Father Zeus and the other gods on high" (8.480-83). At the farewell party, Princess Nausicaa says to Odysseus: "Farewell, my friend! And when you are at home,/ Home in your own land, remember me at times./ Mainly to me you owe the gift of life" (8.518-20). The wise Odysseus responds: "Nausicaa, daughter of generous King Alcinoos,/ may Zeus the Thunderer, Hera's husband, grant it so—/ that I travel home and see the dawn of my return./ even at home I'll pray to you as a deathless goddess/all my days to come./ You saved my life, dear girl" (8.522-26). This pattern of expectation and promise for repaying courtesy, often seen in *The Odyssey*, formulates a common practice in Greek culture. Another case in point occurs when Telemachus visits Odysseus' friend Menelaos on his journey to find his father. Even though the two do not know each other, Menelaos says to him: "Never a fool before, Eteoneus, son of Boethous,/ now I see you're babbling like a child!/ Just think of all the hospitality we enjoyed/ at the hands of other men before we made it home,/ and god save us from such hard treks in years to come./ Quick, unhitch their team. And bring them in,/ Strangers, guests, to share our flowing feast" (4.35-42).

<sup>5</sup> In *Colonial Odyssey: Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel*, David Adams treats *A Passage to India*, among other modern texts, as "modern reappropriation of the odyssey myth". Adams argues that because of the structure and literary allusions of the specific modern texts, they "demand to be read in relation to the epic tradition" (back cover).

<sup>6</sup> The concept of "hospitality" is an issue explored by Derrida in his late years. From 1994 to his death in 2004, Derrida intensively presents his discussion over the topic in a series of publications, including *The Politics of Friendship* (1994); "Foreigner question" (1996); *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (1997a); *Of Hospitality* (1997b); *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001); *Acts of Religion* (2002). Derrida's preoccupation with the topic is rooted in the French exclusionism developed since the 90s. See Rosello's *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*.

arrival in another's country. If it can be done without destroying him, he can be turned away; but as long as he behaves peaceably he cannot be treated as an enemy." Everyone is entitled to have the freedom to visit other countries and be accepted. The land, jointly owned by us all, binds us and makes us citizens of the world. The cosmopolitanism that Kant advocates seeks perpetual peace instead of short-term armistice. For Kant, perpetual peace can be achieved through universal orders and ethics of hospitality, and the visitor, with his/her rights secured, will be kindly received. Kant says that "since the earth is a globe, they cannot scatter themselves infinitely, but must, finally, tolerate living in close proximity, because originally no one had a greater right to any region of the earth than anyone else" (118).

However, Kant also understands that the land has long been inscribed with all the traces left by its residents, cultures, institutions as well as nations. It no longer retains its pureness, its simplicity and its neutrality; it is no longer unconditionally open to all visitors (Derrida 2001: 21). Any metropolitan state that refuses to accept the visits of world citizens, refugees and shelter-seekers from other countries, or any country that "visits" other countries by means of residence, interference, or invasion, naturally puts the ideal of universal hospitality into jeopardy. As a consequence, Kant proposes two conditions in terms of the maintenance of universal hospitality: (1) He may request "the *right to visit*, to associate, belongs to all men by virtue of their common ownership of the earth's surface"; (2) He may request "the *right* to be a *permanent visitor* (which would require a special, charitable agreement to make him a fellow inhabitant for a certain period)" (118).

However, these two provisions offer no guarantees to protect people from violence and war. Kant thus deems reciprocal trade to be the ultimate way to maintain universal hospitality. He says: "for among all those powers (or means) that belong to a nation, financial power may be the most reliable in forcing nations to pursue the noble cause of peace." Kant further notices that with the mutual benefits shared between countries, "[t]he *spirit of trade* cannot coexist with war, and sooner or later this spirit dominates every people" (125). Being well aware that the difference between languages, religions and cultures may prevent people from integration, Kant believes that by awakening the spirit of trade, people can overcome their misunderstandings and hostilities and put universal hospitality into practice.

## **B. Derrida: Conditional Hospitality vs. Unconditional Hospitality**

When discussing Kant's universal hospitality, Derrida points out that "in defining hospitality in all its rigour as a law (which counts in this respect as progress), Kant assigns to it conditions which make it dependent on state sovereignty, especially when it is a question of the right of residence" (2001: 22). This type of "hospitality by

right, . . . law or justice” (2000: 25), according to Derrida, is “conditional hospitality.”

Derrida thus takes this “conditional hospitality” as a term to highlight the limits latent in Kant’s universal hospitality and characterizes it as an economic activity that requires payback. In opposition to conditional hospitality, unconditional hospitality requires the host receive the foreigner, the unknown, and the anonymous other with open doors, providing them space without asking his/her identity and signing contract for future payback. For Derrida, “[t]he law of absolute hospitality commands a break with hospitality by right, with law or justice as rights” (2000: 25).

Derrida understands clearly that unconditional hospitality is entirely altruistic; it cannot be put into real practice for its potential risk of becoming unbearable (1999: 70). Unconditional hospitality is absolutely idealistic; its “unconditionality” expects the arrival of any “other” other than the Messiah, making it the “Messianism without Messiah” (Lawlor 4). Nevertheless, Derrida insists that the entire concept of hospitality be built upon the concept of “altruism,” whose connection with hospitality is both “irreducible and indissociable” (2001: xi). Consequently, there exists an antinomy in the coexistence between “conditional hospitality” and “unconditional hospitality” (2000: 77).

### **1. The Risk of Unconditional Hospitality**

Unconditional Hospitality calls for an ideal, pure state, but not without its potential risk. Derrida notices how the concept of unconditional hospitality inevitably leads to violence: “Why did Kant insist on conditional hospitality? Because he knew that without these conditions hospitality could turn into wild war, terrible aggression. Those are the risks involved in pure hospitality” (1999: 71). On another note, Derrida says that the risk accompanying unconditional hospitality originates from the fact that “it (pure hospitality) should consist in this opening without horizon, without horizon of expectation, an opening to the newcomer whoever that may be. It may be terrible because the newcomer may be a good person, or may be the devil” (1999: 70). Under the rule of unconditional hospitality, one is obliged to accept his/her visitor, “whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female” (2000: 77).

Therefore, in order to put unconditional hospitality into practice, “you have to accept the risk of the other coming and destroying the place, initiating a revolution, stealing everything, or killing everyone” (1999: 71). On the one hand, this “unknown other” (2000: 25) enters your life, demolishes your house, challenges your habits, disturbs your sleep, ruins your appetite and disrupts your emotion. On the other hand, Derrida notes, “if you exclude the possibility that the new-comer is coming to destroy your house—if you want to control this and exclude in advance this possibility—there

is no hospitality” (1999: 70).

## 2. Inversion of the Host/Guest Position

The host and the guest share a dialectical relationship. Together, they are mutually dependent. Without the guest coming from the outside, the identity of the host would be nonexistent. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida describes how the master of the house anxiously awaits the arrival of the other. As the other approaches, the master hurries forward, calling out: “Enter quickly, as I am afraid of my happiness” (2000: 123). Derrida explains:

As if, then, the stranger could save the master and liberate the power of his host; it's *as if* the master, *qua* master, were prisoner of his place and his power, of his ipseity, of his subjectivity (his subjectivity is hostage). So it is indeed the master, the one who invites, the inviting guest, who becomes the hostage—and who really always has been. And the guest, the invited hostage, becomes the one who invites the one who invites, the master of the host. The guest becomes the host's host. The guest (*hôte*) becomes the host (*hôte*) of the host (*hôte*). (2000: 123-25)

Here, the key to the inversion between the host and the guest rests not on the host's autonomy alone, but on the idea of “place, power, ipseity, and subjectivity” (Derrida 2000: 123) formed by the dialectical relationship between the host and the other. Taking Homer's epic *The Odyssey* by example: The hostess Penelope yields her “place, power, ipseity and subjectivity” to the suitors who occupy her homeland, making herself a hostage, so as to exchange for the time to wait for the return of Odysseus (“I am afraid of my happiness”). As a result, the suitors' statuses change from the guests to the hosts of the host(ess). When Odysseus finally returns home and finds his position as a host subverted, he manages to regain his position by outwitting the suitors and slaying them.

The inversion of the host/guest relationship can also be examined from etymology. The word “hospitality” in fact contains the opposite meaning it connotes. The word finds its roots in “the Latin *hospes*, which is formed from *hostis*, which originally meant a ‘stranger’ and came to take on the meaning of the enemy or ‘hostile’ stranger (*hostilis*) + *pets* (*potis*, *potes*, *potentia*), to have power” (Caputo 110). Therefore, “hospitality” designates both the host and the guest. Both are *hôte*; both give and take. The host gives his/her kindness to the guest; it is an effect of power, for the guest is also “someone hostile.” “Hospitality” is thus a series of combinations: of “hospitality, hostility, hostpality” (Derrida 2000: 45).

Colonialism, whose sole objective being invasion, witnesses this complex relationship between “hostility” and “hospitality.” Colonialism commences the inversion of the host/guest because those who originally occupy the position of the host and offer hospitality to the outsiders are now turned into the colonized by their colonizers. They are subject to their foreign “masters,” who usurp their homeland. On the other hand, as “the master,” the colonizers discover that they need to replicate their original home, in order to “be at home” (Forster 1952: 35)<sup>7</sup> at the home of the colonized.

### **3. The Conditions of Being a Host**

A host needs to preserve certain qualities to be able to practice (un)conditional hospitality:

#### **a. (Non-)Ownership, Restraining the Guest**

One crucial precondition for “the host” is that he/she needs to maintain his/her own mastery. Derrida says: “The host remains the master in the house, the country, the nation, he controls the threshold, he controls the borders” (1999: 69). To be able to practice hospitality, the host needs to have the ability to “be the master.” Hospitality thus requires that the host should own and maintain the right to his/her property, thereby constructing a self-identity. John D. Caputo stresses the importance of the host’s ownership to his/her land by stating that “[t]here is, after all, only a minimum of hospitality, some would say none at all, involved in inviting a large party of guests to your neighbor’s house . . . or in inviting others to make themselves at home, say, in Central Park or the Grand Canyon, or any other public place. A host is a host only if he owns the place, and only if he holds on to his ownership” (110-11).

Only when a host owns the land and manages to maintain his/her right to it can he/she “be the master.” Such a concept can be well verified by the expression “make yourself at home.” In essence, the expression is entirely self-contradictory. For if this really is your home, why do you need the host to remind you of it? “Make yourself at home” in fact contains a connotation declaring that “please feel at home, act as if you were at home, but, remember, that is not true, this is not your home but mine, and you are expected to respect my property” (111).

To preserve the ownership and to continue practicing hospitality, the host needs to put some restraints on the guest, whether tangible or intangible. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida explains that some restraints even surpass morality, such as closing the border, advocating nationalism, mobilizing nationalism, discriminating against certain groups (2000: 151-55). For if a guest exploits the host’s land, house or property to the extent

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<sup>7</sup> Subsequent references to *A Passage to India* are given parenthetically in the text by page number.

that it goes out of control, then the host will no longer be able to receive the guest and practice hospitality. Such is the precondition for hospitality.

However, in terms of unconditional hospitality, the host welcomes every visitor without imposing any preconceived judgments. He/She relinquishes the right to restrain the guest with the possibility of evil consequences. Derrida thus emphasizes that unconditional hospitality needs to be realized “with the best intentions in the world,” and that unconditional hospitality is not a concept of politics or law, but a concept of ethics (2004: 59).

### **b. (Not-)Waiting**

The host’s welcome to the other is not limited to those who have already arrived, as the guest might arrive without the host’s expectation and preparation. Therefore, the host needs to learn how to prepare and wait. Derrida points out the connection between hospitality and waiting: “the question of hospitality is also the question of waiting, of the time of waiting and of waiting beyond time” (2002: 359). In other words, hospitality “presupposes waiting, the horizon of awaiting and the preparation of welcoming [*accueil*]: from life to death” (2002: 361).

When waiting, a host who practices hospitality needs to prepare. He/She is waiting to give the other “the gifts, the site, the shelter and the cover” (2002: 360). Other than physical things, the host’s welcome needs to be developed into cultural imprints: “it must even develop itself into a culture of hospitality, multiply the signs of anticipation, construct and institute what one calls structures of welcoming [*les structures de l’accueil*], a welcoming apparatus [*les structures d’accueil*]” (2002: 361).

On the other hand, Derrida points out that the host who welcomes must “wait and not wait” (2002: 360) and “wait without waiting” (2002: 362). This is because if the waiting does not come from the willingness of the host, but from his/her responsibility, it goes against the host’s natural disposition. In instances like this, the waiting does not count for hospitality; the host needs to wait to welcome the other without finding it an obligation. Furthermore, the host needs to neither prepare nor wait to be overtaken by the “visitation” that transcends the welcoming apparatus. However, according to Derrida, what appears to be the opposition of the idea that “not to be overtaken by the visitation” is also true: “to be hospitable is to let oneself be overtaken, to be ready to not be ready” (2002: 361). Noting the paradox, Derrida goes on to explain:

Hospitality is, must be, owes to itself to be, inconceivable and incomprehensible, but also because in it—we have undergone this test

and ordeal so often—each concept opens itself to its opposite, reproducing or producing in advance, in the rapport of one concept to the other, the contradictory and deconstructive law of hospitality. Each concept becomes hospitable to its other, to an other than itself that is no long longer its other. (2002: 362)

#### **4. Irreducible and Indissociable**

Even though Derrida points out that Kant's universal hospitality has its limitations, and that it is in fact conditional hospitality, he recognizes that those limitations are the preconditions for the realization of unconditional hospitality. While the two kinds of hospitalities appear to be opposite, they are not mutually exclusive. In a way that the two cannot be reduced to be each other, they cannot be dissociable (Derrida 2001: xi). Together, they form into antimony (2000: 77).

Unconditional hospitality has its own risk. It is difficult to put into practice. As Derrida agrees, its chance to succeed is extremely slight: "An unconditional hospitality is, to be sure, practically impossible to live; one cannot in any case, and by definition, organize it. . . . And I well recognize that this concept of pure hospitality can have no legal or political status. No state can write it into its laws" (Borradori 129). However, if we only recognize conditional hospitality, the idea of "the other" will disappear: "without at least the thought of this pure and unconditional hospitality, of hospitality itself, we would have no concept of hospitality in general and would not even be able to determine any rules for conditional hospitality . . . we would not even have the idea of the other, of the alterity of the other" (Borradori 129). Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. comes to this specific point when he says that

What is at stake is the openness to the other, to that which is not the same and is not to become the same as 'myself.' It is precisely, we might say, the otherness of the other that is welcomed, that is received with hospitality, with certain gladness in contrast to the allergic reaction to the other that wishes to reduce the other to an extension or echo of oneself. Already in *The Other Heading* Derrida had formulated this as the question of a duty to welcome the other, the stranger, the foreigner, not in order to integrate or assimilate them (in that case to Europeanize them), but respecting, indeed in a certain way celebrating, their otherness or alterity. (111-12)

With the disappearance of "the other" and "alterity," there will be no guests from the outside. Without the guest, no one can be a host, and the whole idea of hospitality will

not exist.

As such, unconditional hospitality guides conditional hospitality with its openness, pureness and altruism: “conditional laws would cease to be laws of hospitality if they were not guided, given inspiration, given aspiration, required, even, by the law of unconditional hospitality” (Derrida 2000: 79).<sup>8</sup> In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida thus comments on the relationship between “unconditional hospitality” and “conditional hospitality”: “The two antagonistic terms of this antinomy are not symmetrical. There is a strange hierarchy in this. *The law is above the laws*” (2000: 79).

Nevertheless, Derrida does not recommend that we take unconditional hospitality as an ideal or strive to pursue this unattainable ideal. From Derrida’s perspective, as heterogeneous and indissociable as “the law” (unconditional hospitality) and “the laws” (conditional hospitality) are, they complement each other. On the one hand, “the laws” requires “the law” to correct its bias, its narrowness, and its short-sightedness. On the other hand, “the law” needs “the laws” to give it a form, making it more concrete and effective. “The law” also needs “the laws” to cut down its risk, lest the visitors should turn into intruders/colonizers. Or else, “the law” will risk being reduced to mere abstraction, fantasy or utopia, turning against itself and changed into a focused yet irresponsible desire. The fact that “the law” needs “the laws” is a constitutive requirement. “The law” needs to maintain this request, even though “the laws” never ceases to deny, threaten, corrupt and betray (2000: 79).<sup>9</sup>

### III. Hospitality in *A Passage to India*

*A Passage to India* (1924) is a canonical work written by British writer E. M. Forster. As the title suggests, the novel depicts the travel of Englishmen/women to India. Theoretically speaking, the English who come to India are visitors/guests. However, the political reality in which the English colonize India makes the English

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<sup>8</sup> La Caza, among many contemporary critics, thinks that “unconditional hospitality” helps bring positive effects on “conditional hospitality”: “Starting from Kant’s central insight that there is a universal right to hospitality, Derrida delineates both where cosmopolitanism is worthwhile and where it fails. The ethics and politics of hospitality Derrida develops promise to ameliorate the current situation of asylum-seekers and refugees. The notion of hospitality, particularly unconditional hospitality, is a useful corrective to the mean-mindedness of many contemporary governments” (322).

<sup>9</sup> Derrida expresses this view again and again. In *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, he says: “It is a question of knowing how to transform and improve the law, and of knowing if this improvement is possible within a historical space which takes place between the Law of an unconditional hospitality, offered a priori to every other, to all newcomers, whoever they may be, and the conditional laws of a right to hospitality, without which the unconditional Law of hospitality would be in danger of remaining a pious and irresponsible desire, without form and without potency, and of even being perverted at any moment” (22-23).

self-acclaimed hosts. Meanwhile, the Indians, now the reluctant guests of their English colonizers, attempt to reverse their role and reclaim their position as hosts. The main theme of the novel thus centers on the interaction between the English colonizer and the Indian colonized, or the connection between the English host/guest and the Indian host/guest in terms of their friendship, politics, and sensibilities.

Setting as the backdrop of the novel is an average small town near the Ganges River, called Chandrapore. Twenty miles outside this small town, there is the Marabar Caves. The narrator introduces Chandrapore as a filthy city:

The streets are mean, the temples ineffective . . . The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life. (7)

Meanwhile, the inland where the English gather presents an entirely different view: “There is an oval Maidan, and a long sallow hospital. . . . On the second rise is laid out the little civil station, and viewed hence Chandrapore appears to be a totally different place. It is a city of gardens.” The living areas of the Indians and the English, while adjacent, stand in opposition to each other: while the former is filthy and unruly, the latter is clean and orderly. As the narrator describes, the English section “shares nothing with the city except the overarching sky” (8). This division of “two-cities-under-one-sky” (Islam 43) reflects the English’s colonization of India: there is a rigid border setting the English colonizer apart from the Indian colonized. Any intention to cross this border is doomed to fail. At a crucial moment when the tension arises between the English and the Indians, the Chandrapore city collector Mr. Turton declares in an unequivocal way: “I have had twenty-five years’ experience of this country . . . and during those twenty-five years I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially. Intercourse, yes. Courtesy, by all means. Intimacy—never, never” (164). Mr. Turton does not explain why the English-Indian social intimacy results in disaster. He only emphasizes that the border between the English and the Indians needs to be followed without indicating that the rigidity of the border is to consolidate the power of the English colonial regime. His injunction on intimacy reveals the English’s general attitude towards the Indians; it sums up the principle guarding the social contact between the two parties.

For the English colonizers, the 1857 mutiny is a horrible memory and needs to be constantly reminded. Mr. McBryde, the English superintendent of police at Chandrapore, tells Mr. Cyril Fielding: “When you think of crime you think of English crime. The psychology here is different. . . . Read any of the Mutiny records; which, rather than the Bhagavad Gita, should be your bible in this country” (169).<sup>10</sup> By keeping the memory of the mutiny alive, the English colonizers rationalize their measure to keep a distance from the Indians, thereby reinforcing the border between the self and the other. The result is that they cannot develop a genuine and harmonious relationship with the local Indians, and the two parties cannot befriend each other.

After giving an introduction to Chandrapore in its geographical and cultural aspects, Chapter II cuts straight to the main theme and poses the question: Can the English make friends with the Indians?<sup>11</sup> The novel then continues in various attempts to answer this question. By setting up a series of visitations and invitations, the novel explores the possibility of friendships between the two parties.

However, it is also these invitations, along with this type of eager hospitality, that lead to misunderstandings. These invitations expose the plight of English colonialism and the problem with Indian culture, and eventually contribute to the disastrous outcomes, one of which is the breaking off of Mr. Fielding and Dr. Aziz’s friendship.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mr. McBryde thinks Mr. Cyril Fielding is misguided by the Indians: “Fielding, as I’ve said to you once before, you’re a schoolmaster, and consequently you come across these people at their best. That’s what puts you wrong. They can be charming as boys” (169). However, it is more likely that Mr. McBryde is the one who is misguided. For the record on the mutiny that he reads is built upon speculation, hostility, naiveté and misunderstanding of the English colonizers. In the article entitled “The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency,” Jenny Sharpe looks into the 1857 mutiny, which the English colonial regime regards as a case of rape and murder done unto the English by Indians. She explains that the reason behind this reading is that, during that time, the English colonizers failed to comprehend the essence of the mutiny. Their reaction attests to “the limits of an official discourse on native insurgency” (221). Based on such a conception, Sharpe reads *A Passage to India* as Foster’s way of questioning and criticizing the colonizing authority. The present essay proposes that Foster’s reference to the mutiny marks his attempt to search for friendship and hospitality unfound in the official discourse.

<sup>11</sup> After discussing the issue “whether or not it is possible to be friends with an Englishman” (10) with his Indian friends, Dr. Aziz concludes that “They [Anglo-Indians] all become exactly the same, not worse, not better. . . . All are exactly alike” (11). As similar as they are, the Anglo-Indians in the novel are not without characteristics. For example, Mrs. Turton is unusually arrogant; Miss Derek never says what she actually thinks. And Mr. McBryde distinguishes himself from the other Anglo-Indians by his professionalism. However, as a whole, the individual differences between the Anglo-Indians are overshadowed by the greater differences between the English colonizer and the Indian colonized. In this dual structure of differences, Mrs. Moore stands alone as the only exception.

<sup>12</sup> Regarding Aziz and Fielding’s interracial friendship, Peter Childs comments that “the English are not invited guests in India, and their desire for formality and for forms of exclusion will prevent Aziz and Fielding from being friends though they both want to be. The political realities of colonialism overpower the force of goodwill” (121). However, the present essay argues that the English colonialism alone does not create the barrier between them. There are personal and cultural factors as well.

### **Contact Zone: Visitation vs. Invitation**

In terms of form, the natural landscape of Chandrapore's "two-cities-under-one-sky" and the colonization of India reveal a world made out of binary opposition. However, the hospitalities demonstrated in the visitation and invitation between the English and the Indians destabilize such binarism. As Homi Bhabha points out, the working of colonial forces is never purely one-way; it is far more ambivalent and complicated than the binarism involved in Manichean allegory.<sup>13</sup> In fact, it is the practice of colonialism that commences the alteration in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Their interactions, culminating into colonial identification, develop the multi-layered "hybridity" (Bhabha 112-16).

Such a space of "hybridity" designates the "contact zone," which Mary Louise Pratt uses to indicate the encounter between the groups of people that are both geographically separated and culturally distinctive. As the word "contact" highlights the interaction between the two groups involved in colonization, "contact perspective" emphasizes that what constructs and affects subjectivity is the interaction of the two groups involved, rather than the exclusion of the other (6-7). When the two unequal forces confront each other in the contact zone, as much as people might get hurt and misunderstand each other, they might also be able to surprise or learn from each other.

In *A Passage to India*, what happens in the "contact zone" demonstrates itself through "visitation" or/and "invitation," whose distinction parallels what differentiates "unconditional hospitality" from "conditional hospitality." According to Derrida, the distinction between "visitation" and "invitation" is the other mode to explain that between "unconditional hospitality" and "conditional hospitality": "I regularly oppose unconditional hospitality—pure hospitality or a hospitality of visitation, which consists in letting the visitor come, the unexpected arrival, without asking for any account, without demanding his passport—to a hospitality of invitation" (2004: 59).

"Invitation" is the most common form of conditional hospitality practiced by individual, family unit and social groups. The host selects the guest to offer his/her hospitality and expects the possible payback; it functions on the condition that the other follows our rules, our lifestyle, our language, our culture, our political practice,

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<sup>13</sup> In the article "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," JanMohamed proposes "binarism" to be the essence of colonial thinking. For him, binarism constructs Manichean allegory. Referring to *A Passage to India*, Islam also says that "[t]he paradox of two-cities-under-one-sky, so often repeated in the colonial landscape, led Fanon to declare that 'the colonial world is a Manichean world'" (43). Based on the Lacanian vision of mimicry as camouflage, Bhabha's theory of "colonial mimicry" goes a step further by pointing out that the colonial rule is more ambiguous than Manichean binarism.

etc.<sup>14</sup> The guest in turn acknowledges the host's sovereignty by accepting the invitation and the condition therein. On a grand scale that is national, international and cosmopolitical, this type of hospitality culminates into standard ritual, common law and general custom. As Derrida concludes, invitation "remains a scrutinized hospitality, always under surveillance, parsimonious and protective of its sovereignty" (Borradori 128).

In contrast with "invitation," "visitation" does not select the guests, nor does it expect or prepare for the other's visit. Derrida explains that

If you are the guest and I invite you, if I am expecting you and am prepared to meet you, then this implies that there is no surprise, everything is in order. For pure hospitality or a pure gift to occur, however, there must be an absolute surprise. The other, like the Messiah, must arrive whenever he or she wants. She may even not arrive. I would oppose, therefore, the traditional and religious concept of 'visitation' to 'invitation': visitation implies the arrival of someone who is not expected, who can show up at any time. If I am unconditionally hospitable I should welcome the visitation, not the invited guest, but the visitor. I must be unprepared, or prepared to be unprepared, for the unexpected arrival of any other. (1999: 70)

In other words, while "visitation" might happen in the "contact zone," there is neither specific candidate nor predetermined time and place. Accordingly, the act of "contact" is given limitless possibilities.

By incorporating "invitation" and "visitation" into the reading of "contacts" in *A Passage to India*, it becomes clear that it is the invitations and the visitations that connect all the significant events in the novel. And in so doing, the present essay hopes to arrive at a more complete understanding of the novel.

The three invitations—the Bridge Party, the Tea Party and the Marabar Party—all mark the attempt to connect the Indians and the Englishmen, but none of the invitations ends well. There is always something wrong. At the Bridge Party, there is a nick in the cactus hedge; Mrs. Bhattacharya promises but fails to send the carriage for Mrs. Moore and Adela. At Fielding's Tea Party, the goddess Krishna is absent from Professor Godbole's song; the caves in the Marabar Party are empty and meaningless.

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<sup>14</sup> Odysseus considers himself as "guest" without really playing the role of a guest when he and his crew intrude into Polyphemus's cave and consume his food. In so doing, Odysseus transgresses the role of a guest and makes himself the host. This is because (conditional) hospitality has been activated since the host's food has already been taken by the guests themselves.

The first visitation (Visitation: Encounter at the Mosque) out of the two documents the friendship between Mrs. Moore and Aziz, one that surpasses the boundaries of race, religion, nationality and culture. Their interaction unsettles the absolute binarism between the English and the Indian, and it serves to “give guidance, inspiration and aspiration” (Derrida 2000: 79) to the three invitations. The second visitation (Visitation: Encounter in the Festival) explores the English/Indian friendship and the possibility of salvation for the English and the Indians.

The three invitations and two visitations respectively embody conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality, connecting the three major parts of the novel (Mosque [Islam], Caves [Christianity] and Temple [Hinduism]) into a complete structure. Together they prove that the interactions among the characters in the contact zone reflect the main theme of the novel.

### **A. Visitation: Encounter at the Mosque**

In his/her attempt to find an escapade and to seek for some peace, the Indian doctor Aziz and the English Mrs. Moore each finds his/her way to the mosque, where the two meet.

Receiving a note from the civil surgeon, Aziz rushes out of a gathering with his Indian friends to the civil surgeon’s bungalow. However, it turns out that the civil surgeon is not home and Aziz’s carriage is then occupied by the civil surgeon’s wife and an Englishwoman. The two soon drive away, forcing onto him “the inevitable snub” of the English colonizer (17). In search of a place that is familiar and peaceful, where he can alleviate his resentment, Aziz walks under the moonlight and finds himself in a mosque at the edge of the civil station. The serene and gracious mosque, located at the outer space of the colonial power, awakens his sense of beauty. In the mosque, Aziz finds relief as if he is at home: “Islam, an attitude towards life both exquisite and durable, where his body and his thoughts found their home” (19).

On the same night, in the English club, Mrs. Moore finds both the air and the English-exclusive performance of a play named *Cousin Kate* stifling. She walks out of the club, wandering towards the mosque—a space contradictory to the colonizer’s English club.<sup>15</sup> Mrs. Moore takes off her shoes and walks stealthily into the mosque. Her smooth wandering from the English club to the mosque renders the European memories of the Mediterranean<sup>16</sup> and the binarism of “two-cities-under-one-sky”

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<sup>15</sup> J. M. Rawa points out the differences of the two spaces: “The Mosque compares favorably to the British Club. The Mosque suggests inclusion while the Club suggests exclusion” (64).

<sup>16</sup> Syed Manzurul Islam thinks that Mrs. Moore “makes the journey from the club to the mosque as if carried along the smoothest of smooth passages, as if the barrier between the two cities has melted, as if she has long forgotten the memories of the Mediterranean waters” (54). Islam’s reading echoes Gilles Deleuze’s theory on anti-memory (1987: 16, 294). In contrast to Mrs. Moore’s anti-memory is the horrible memory of the 1857 mutiny, a memory constantly preserved and reinforced by the English colonizer. It makes them stand firm on the border between the self and the other. And as a result, they

nonexistent. For a Christian like her, the mosque is simply a dwelling place of god. She says, "God is here" (20). Her decision to enter the mosque is simply to worship god.

Mrs. Moore's movement startles Aziz, who indulges in the Islamic beauty. He yells: "Madam, this is a mosque, you have no right here at all; you should have taken off your shoes; this is a holy place for Moslems" (20).<sup>17</sup> The scene marks their very first encounter. Syed Manzurul Islam calls it "a meeting without precondition" (54), which is the prerequisite for "pure hospitality." As Derrida points out, "There is pure hospitality only when I welcome, not an invited guest but an unexpected visitor, someone who invades my privacy in a certain way, who comes to my house when I am not prepared for him" (qtd. in Carroll 73). This is because the absence of precondition keeps "encounter" from becoming an economic pact. It rules out the possibilities of the host selecting his/her guest out of material profits and/or spiritual return that the guests are required to offer. The host welcomes the guest not because he/she follows the social contract, nor owing to benefit exchange. Rather, the host does it because it is the right thing to do, the spontaneous attitude towards the other.

As a guest, Mrs. Moore does not approach Aziz with an air of arrogance commonly seen in the English colonizer. Instead, she treats him as an equal. It is the most simple and natural act coming from Mrs. Moore. During their conversation, Mrs. Moore and Aziz share mutual respect and understanding. Aziz senses in this joyous encounter that Mrs. Moore understands him, that she "know[s] what others feel." He experiences "[t]he flame that not even the beauty can nourish," that soon "burst into speech." He cries out suddenly to Mrs. Moore: "then you are an Oriental!" (23).<sup>18</sup>

For Mrs. Moore, the experience at the mosque puts her at ease. She sees the moon, "whose radiance stained with primrose the purple of the surrounding sky" (29). She detects a difference between the moon in India and the moon back in England: "In England the moon had seemed dead and alien; here, she was caught in the shawl of night together with earth and all the other stars. A sudden sense of unity, of kinship with the heavenly bodies, passed into the old woman and out, like water through a tank, leaving a strange freshness behind" (29-30).

This harmony with nature that Mrs. Moore experiences comes along not without reason, as it has its psychological foundation. The narrator of *A Passage to*

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cannot develop a harmonious relationship with the local Indians.

<sup>17</sup> Aziz yells to Mrs. Moore because the Islamic mosque is his world. Not being acquainted with Mrs. Moore, Aziz supposes Mrs. Moore to be non-Muslim but welcomes her nonetheless. Their encounter is accidental and uncalculated. Such is the precondition for "unconditional hospitality."

<sup>18</sup> At this point, Islam comments that "[i]t is also the only moment of encounter with the other without the paranoia of othering. Aziz is surprised, and says, 'the way you address me.' Along with the evaporation of boundaries, goes the old mode of address: 'she is no longer addressing as colonizer to a colonized. Aziz knows that Mrs. Moore has traversed the line and touched him in joyous encounter, and that she has become other' (54).

*India* explains that “Mrs. Moore had always inclined to resignation. As soon as she landed in India it seemed to her good” (208). Her first impression of India sets up spiritual foundations for her later experiences: “when she saw the water flowing through the mosque-tank, or the Ganges, or the moon, caught in the shawl of night with all the other stars, it seemed a beautiful goal and an easy one” (208). Gilles Deleuze calls this kind of spiritual foundation “preparation,” which is the precondition for the encounter with the other: “To encounter is to find, . . . but there is no method for finding other than a long preparation” (1987a: 7).<sup>19</sup> In terms of Derrida, this “preparation” is “unprepared”: “If I am unconditionally hospitable I should welcome the visitation, not the invited guest, but the visitor. I must be unprepared, or prepared to be unprepared, for the unexpected arrival of any other” (1999: 70).

When she first arrives in India, Mrs. Moore feels for Adela Quested’s complaint: “we aren’t even seeing the other side of the world” (25). As someone who is “prepared to be unprepared,” however, “she did not take the disappointment as seriously as Miss Quested, for the reason that she was forty years older, and had learnt that Life never gives us what we want at the moment that we consider appropriate. Adventures do occur, but not punctually” (25). Mrs. Moore never seeks for fortuitous encounters, but they naturally happen to her. To Mrs. Moore’s encounter with Aziz at the mosque, Adela exclaims: “While we talk about seeing the real India, she goes and sees it, and then forgets she’s seen it” (31).

With Aziz’s escort, Mrs. Moore returns to the English club. At the gate, Mrs. Moore expresses her intention to invite Aziz in, without becoming aware that “Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore Club even as guests” (23). However, by then, Aziz no longer cares about such racial discrimination. He experiences an unknown exaltation: “As he strolled downhill beneath the lovely moon, and again saw the lovely mosque, he seemed to own the land as much as anyone owned it. What did it matter if a few flabby Hindus had preceded him there, and a few chilly English succeeded?” (23). Without doubt, Mrs. Moore’s “visitation” takes its effect on Aziz. It is also what Derrida calls “unconditional hospitality”: “Even if the other deprives you of your mastery or your home, you have to accept this. It is terrible to accept this, but that is the condition of unconditional hospitality: that you give up the mastery of your space, your home, your nation” (1999: 70).

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<sup>19</sup> According to Gilles Deleuze, “encounter the other” does not mean to become familiar with the other, or to interact with the other, but to respect the other and to establish an “intersubjective” relationship. From there, one goes on becoming. But what is this becoming? Deleuze explains that becoming” is not “become the other”: “[becoming] is not one term which becomes the other, but each encounters the other” (1987a: 6-7).

## **B. Invitation: Invitation (1): The Bridge Party—Official Hospitality**

Unlike the English colonizers (the Anglo-Indians), who have long lived in India, the “newcomer” Adela and Mrs. Moore do not enjoy the theatrical presentation featuring “English drama, Indian performance” in the English club. Both are disappointed with the dull life at Chandrapore: “They had made such a romantic voyage across the Mediterranean and through the sands of Egypt to the harbor of Bombay, to find only a gridiron of bungalows at the end of it” (25). For Adela, who has not yet adopted the “two-cities-under-one-sky” logic and its common practice, the recreational activities offered by the Anglo-Indians annoy her. She keeps saying “I want to see the real India” (24; 26). She wishes to be a unique traveller, who stays away from the regular tourist route and experiences something authentically Indian. She hopes to cross the racial/national/cultural borders and encounter the other. She believes that the shared brotherhood will bridge the gap between people: “There will have to be something universal in this country—I don’t say religion, . . . but something, or how else are barriers to be broken down?” (145).

When Mr. Turton hears Adela’s request to “see the real India,” he proposes “a party to bridge the gulf between East and West” (28). In keeping his words, he sends out invitations the next day. In the invitation, he states that on the following Tuesday, from five to seven in the evening, he will “be at home” (35) to welcome guests in the garden of the English club. Mr. Turton’s “invitation card” actually proves that the essence of the Bridge Party is of “conditional hospitality.” Mr. Turton makes specific the starting and ending time of the party, thereby declaring the temporality of his hospitality.

Other than setting a limited time for his hospitality, Mr. Turton also carefully selects his guests. Both the Indian gentry Nawab Bahadur and the local gentlemen receive the invitation to the party, but at the same time people of the lower social status are excluded (36-37). In response to Mr. Turton’s selection, the two English missionaries Mr. Graysford and Mr. Sorley offer their opinion, saying that “[p]erhaps it is futile for men to initiate their own unity, they do but widen the gulf between them by the attempt” (37). According to their preaching, “In our Father’s house are many mansions, they taught, and there alone will the incompatible multitudes of mankind be welcomed and soothed. Not one shall be turned away by the servants on that verandah, be he black or white, not one shall be kept standing who approaches with a loving heart” (37-38). They ask: “why should the divine hospitality cease here?” (38). However, when asked if hospitality can be extended to wasps, oranges, cactuses, crystals and mud, they immediately adopt the exclusive stance: “No, no, this is going too far. We must exclude someone from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing” (38). For the English colonizer, this kind of exclusion is necessary for the

sake of securing their power and authority. As Robert Young says: “the burden of English colonialism lies in the measures spent on the prevention of the integration between the colonizer and the colonized” (144). Ironically, the “necessity for exclusion” is contradictory to the purpose behind the Bridge Party. How can those who build the bridge possibly practice hospitality? Are those who build the bridge not the ones who destroy it?

Originally, the Bridge Party that congregates the Indians and the Englishmen serves as a force to connect the two parties. But the Anglo-Indian colonizers do not have the inclination to become acquainted with the Indians they invite. Their insincere invitation results in the failure of the party. When the party starts, Mrs. Turton claims: “Why they come at all I don’t know. They hate it as much as we do” (41), seemingly echoing Ronny Heaslop’s words: “The great point to remember is that no one who’s here matters; those who matter don’t come” (39). However, their words ring true during the party: people of the same skin color gather together, as if there is an invisible bridge separating the two races. The party that intends to bridge the gulf turns out to be a manifestation of racial segregation. A group of Indian ladies stand timidly next to a rustic summer-house; some even turn their faces to the bushes, with their backs to the company. Their male relatives stand a little far off, doing nothing but silently watching the surroundings (41). On the other hand, Mr. Turton shows no sincerity in the party he holds. After going through the standard ritual, he goes back to where most of the Anglo-Indians gather. Meanwhile, some other Anglo-Indians keep the tennis court to themselves as usual (47).

Rather than being a meager and despicable demonstration of hospitality, what Mr. & Mrs. Turton, Ronny and the Anglo-Indians (except Mr. Fielding) practice at the bridge party is “tolerance.” According to Derrida, even while it is often covered in noble kindness, “tolerance” in fact destroys hospitality. He says:

Tolerance is always on the side of the “reason of the strongest,” where “might is right”; it is a supplementary mark of sovereignty . . . Tolerance is actually the opposite of hospitality. Or at least its limit. If I think I am being hospitable because I am tolerant, it is because I wish to limit my welcome, to retain power and maintain control over the limits of my “home,” my sovereignty, my “I can” (my territory, my house, my language, my culture, my religion, and so on). (Borradori 127-28)

After the trial of the attempted rape at the Marabar Caves, the relationship between the Anglo-Indians and the Indians breaks off. Mrs. Turton then finds it no longer necessary to disguise her hatred and discrimination. Recalling her own “hospitality,”

she exclaims: “we’ve been far too kind with our Bridge Parties and the rest” (216). As one of the hosts of the bridge party, she shows “tolerance” to the Indian guests.

Under such tolerance from the hosts, and in a situation lacking of interactions, “[the Indians’] words seemed to die as soon as uttered” (39). In fact, “all the ladies were uncertain, cowering, recovering, giggling, making tiny gestures of atonement or despair at all that was said” (42-43). Adela tries to make them speak, but with little success: “Miss Quested now had her desired opportunity; friendly Indians were before her, and she tried to make them talk, but she failed, she strove in vain against the echoing walls of their civility” (43).

Mrs. Moore also attempts to make a conversation with the Indian ladies: “Please tell these ladies that I wish we could speak their language, but we have only just come to their country.” One of the ladies replies: “Perhaps we speak yours a little” (42). Mrs. Turton then discovers that the Indian lady who speaks English has visited Paris. She is westernized and might apply her westernized standard and judgment onto her [Mrs. Turton]. In consequence, Mrs. Turton reacts with even more coolness and indifference.

Instead of “being English,” this Indian lady who speaks English is “being Anglicized.” While her being Anglicized follows partially the Anglo-Indian colonization, it does not mean that she assimilates English language/culture to its entirety. Instead, she demonstrates a certain kind of “colonial mimicry.” She is “a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 86). Her identification is unstable, hybrid and ambivalent, producing different meanings and posing threats to the colonizing authority. It is endowed with the potential to disrupt the colonizer/colonized structure. Feeling threatened, Mrs. Turton finds it imperative to remind the Anglo-Indians: “You’re superior to them, anyway. Don’t forget that” (41). Acting even more indifferently to the other, she refuses to have further communication and integration with the invited Indians.

After the Bridge Party, Mrs. Moore questions her son Ronny about the Anglo-Indians’ attitude towards the Indians. He responds: “We’re out here to do justice and keep the peace. Them’s my sentiments. . . . We’re not pleasant in India, and we don’t intend to be pleasant. We’ve something more important to do” (50). Mrs. Moore refutes Ronny’s self-righteousness with “kindness”: “The English are out here to be pleasant. . . . Because India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other. God . . . is . . . love” (51). Here Mrs. Moore expresses her conviction that the personal is more important the political, that every human being is obliged to act out of kindness and goodwill.

At the time when Mrs. Moore tells Aziz “God is here” (20) at the Islamic mosque, she is pious and confident. However, right after the Bridge Party, a sense of

unease creeps onto Mrs. Moore. She no longer retains her old confidence. She says: “God . . . is . . . love” (51).

### **Invitation (2): The Tea Party—Personal Hospitality**

After witnessing the kinds of “contacts” at the Bridge Party, the new arrivant Adela feels angry and confused. She complains to Fielding: “This party to-day makes me so angry and miserable. I think my countrymen out here must be mad. Fancy inviting guests and not treating them properly!” (46). In response, Fielding invites Adela to his house for a tea party, where she has a chance to meet the Indians.

Compared to the official Bridge Party, Fielding’s Tea Party is personal. The sole purpose of Fielding’s Tea Party is to introduce his Indian friends to his English fellows. Aziz is much beside himself with joy when he receives the invitation from Fielding. Aziz recognizes “true courtesy—the civil deed that shows the good heart” from Fielding’s invitation and wastes no time responding with a passionate letter. Aziz expects to become acquainted with Fielding, hoping that “the one serious gap in his life was going to be filled” (60).

Fielding stands out among all of the Anglo-Indians. As the principal of a government-supported college, his humanistic temperament outshines his Anglo-Indian attribute. For him, “The world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of good will plus culture and intelligence.” He piously dedicates himself to education. He has no racial feeling and provides education for all students without discrimination (62). Overwhelmed by Fielding’s kindness and friendship, Aziz exclaims: “No Englishman understands us except Mr. Fielding” (101).<sup>20</sup>

When Aziz arrives at Fielding’s residence, the host is changing his clothes. By accident, Fielding stamps on his last collar-stud. Aziz immediately takes off his own collar-stud, which is the one he is wearing. Handing it to Fielding, Aziz lies that he

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<sup>20</sup> Fielding’s acts of kindness towards the local Indians can be seen together with his reception among the Anglo-Indian group. According to the narrator, “[Fielding] did succeed with his pupils, but the gulf between himself and his countrymen, which he had noticed in the train, widened distressingly. He could not at first see what was wrong. . . . Still, the men tolerated him for the sake of his good heart and strong body; it was their wives who decided that he was not a sahib really. They disliked him. He took no notice of them, and this, which would have passed without comment in feminist England, did him harm in a community where the male is expected to be lively and helpful. Fielding never advised one about dogs or horses, or dined, or paid his midday calls, or decorated trees for one’s children at Christmas, and though he came to the club, it was only to get his tennis or billiards, and to go” (61-63). Fielding acts on his own. On the one hand, he is alienated from Anglo-Indians; on the other hand, “He had found it convenient and pleasant to associate with Indians” (63). In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva’s reading of “the foreigner’s friend” can be applied to Fielding: “The foreigner’s friends, aside from bleeding hearts who feel obliged to do good, could only be those who feel foreign to themselves” (23). Fielding’s possession of the contradicting “kindness” and his “self-alienation” is presented delicately during his visit to Dr. Aziz’s sickbed.

has a spare one in his pocket.<sup>21</sup> Aziz's offer to Fielding is both generous and impulsive. It demonstrates the inconsistency between "truth of mood" and "verbal truth" (72). Such a kind of inconsistency becomes representative of the entire Tea Party: the partygoers fail to accurately comprehend each other's words, gestures and cultural messages. The next party, the disastrous Marabar Party, ensues mainly because of the failure of the Tea Party.

At the beginning of the Tea Party, Adela and Mrs. Moore want to know why an Indian couple, who invited them to their house, did not keep their words. At first, Fielding explains it to be a misunderstanding, and then he goes further by calling India a "muddle." In order to keep the English from concluding that "India is a muddle," Aziz finds it imperative to say that "[t]here'll be no muddle when you come to see me . . . Mrs. Moore and everyone—I invite you all—oh, please" (69). The invitation comes along as an impulsive act from Aziz. In fact, Aziz thinks of his bungalow "with horror": "It was a detestable shanty near a low bazaar. There was practically only one room in it, and that infested with small black flies" (70). Mrs. Moore accepts the invitation because she likes Aziz; Adela accepts it out of a sense of adventure. Aziz is surprised to find his words misinterpreted by Adela: "Good heavens, the stupid girl had taken him at his word!" (74). But Aziz carries on saying: "'Yes, all that is settled,' he cried. 'I invite you all to see me in the Marabar Caves'" (74).

Overall speaking, the Tea Party is "light and friendly" (76), with its participants casually converse with each other. Under such atmosphere, the confusions, misunderstandings and gossips induced by the difference in race/culture become trivial. Mrs. Moore's kindness and Fielding's courteousness are interspersed with Aziz's excited words. For Aziz, the party is a dream occasion. Not only is he invited by Fielding, whom he admires, but he also reencounters Mrs. Moore, whom he adores. Words pouring out from Aziz's mouth, with which he freely touches upon any topic he desires. It is as if the taboo between races and social classes are erased, and Aziz feels like being a host in his own country soil. He owns and controls his world. He exclaims: "'Yes, all that is settled,' he cried. 'I invite you all to see me in the Marabar Caves'" (74).

However, Aziz's sense of autonomy is only transient, as Ronny's intrusion turns the atmosphere from the "secure and intimate note of the last hour" into "sudden ugliness" (77). Upon seeing his girlfriend Adela and his mother Mrs. Moore take part

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<sup>21</sup> Ronny, who later breaks into the Tea Party, notices that Aziz does not wear a collar-stud. He thus criticizes him by saying: "Aziz was 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 the race" (82). Even though Ronny might have a point, he takes a wrong example to demonstrate the idea.

in this reception of the Indians, Ronny is furious. He begins yelling, demanding that they leave at once with him. Aziz feels defeated, together with a sense of humiliation: “His wings were failing, but he refused to fall without a struggle” (77). Meanwhile, in the “non-truth of mood,” Aziz further offends Ronny with friendly “verbal truth” (72). Calling from his seat, Aziz says: “Come along up and join us, Mr. Heaslop; sit down till your mother turns up.”<sup>22</sup>

Even while Aziz’s act offends Ronny, he refuses to renounce his dignity and carries on struggling. When Ronny orders the servant to call Fielding back, Aziz volunteers to pass on Ronny’s words by explaining that “[h]e [the servant] may not understand that. Allow me—.” Aziz then fluently repeats Ronny’s order to the servant. Aziz’s reiteration of Ronny’s words equals to putting himself on the same level as Ronny. For Ronny, it amounts to a public insult. For Ronny, Aziz is not an individual thinker with his own thoughts; rather, he belongs to a certain type: the “spoilt Westernized.” Ronny knows that Aziz is “provocative” and that “[e]verything he said had an impertinent flavour or jarred” (77). Ronny concludes Aziz by telling Adela that “Aziz would make some similar muddle over the caves. He meant nothing by the invitation, I could tell by his voice; it’s just their way of being pleasant” (83).

As the host of the Tea Party, Fielding then apologizes to Ronny: “I’m awfully sorry you feel I’ve been remiss. I didn’t mean to be” (78). But actually, Fielding is not negligent during the party, and it is Ronny who makes the Tea Party end badly. What Fielding ought to do is to apologize to the invited guests, including Mrs. Moore, Adela, Aziz and Professor Godbole. For it is the host’s responsibility to properly control the guests and the visitors, while making sure that hospitality functions properly. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida constantly emphasizes the necessity of “the enactment of the host’s rights”: When a host’s land, house, property, country or/and lifestyle are violated by the visitors to the extent that the host cannot perform his rights and control the situation, he will not be able to carry out hospitality (2000: 151-55). When Ronny intrudes into the Tea Party, yelling and rudely ignoring Aziz and Professor Godbole, Fielding is away offering a tour of the college campus to Mrs. Moore. If he were present, would he restrain Ronny promptly and accordingly change the result? Although Fielding’s absence keeps him from seeing Ronny’s behavior and deprives him of enacting his rights as a host, is it necessary for him to apologize to

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<sup>22</sup> Regarding this point, Mike Edwards explains that “[o]n a footing of equality with Fielding, he sees no reason to adopt any other with Ronny. Unlike Godbole, he remains seated, and calls to Ronny as ‘Mr Heaslop’, in contrast to Godbole’s ‘sir’, to join the party. Forster describes this behavior with the oxymoronic ‘offensively friendly’” (89). The “non-truth of mood” in the present essay indicates that Aziz doesn’t really intend to invite the intruder Ronny to join the party. As a matter of fact, Aziz does not want to “be forgotten”; he is reluctant to let go of the “secure and intimate note of the last hour” (77). Meanwhile, “verbal truth” (72) reveals that the reason why Aziz calls Ronny “Mr. Heaslop” is because they do not really know each other. There is a great distance between them.

Ronny while sacrificing hospitality?

Being absent at that crucial moment, Fielding later attempts to seek explanations for these cross-cultural “misunderstandings”: “Every one was cross or wretched. It was as if irritation exuded from the very soil. Could one have been so petty on a Scotch moor or an Italian alp? . . . There seemed no reserve of tranquility to draw upon in India. Either none, or else tranquility swallowed up everything, as it appeared to do for Professor Godbole” (78).<sup>23</sup> The final answer to the problem seems to point to Professor Godbole: “his whole appearance suggested harmony—as if he had reconciled the products of East and West, mental as well as physical, and could never be discomposed” (72-73).

However, at this point, Professor Godbole and his god do not seem to have an answer. At the end of the Tea Party, Professor Godbole sings an Indian song to call forth his Indian god, Krishna. But Krishna refuses to come. This thwarted request of love is one of the permutations of the interactions between the host and the guest for it further anticipates the next invitation.

### **Invitation (3): The Marabar Party—Personal Hospitality**

When the host welcomes the guest, he/she commences the practice of hospitality. Based on such a mechanism, the precondition of a host is for one to acknowledge him/herself as the owner of a given land and house, so that the space can serve to welcome the other.

In terms of the relationship between home/space and hospitality, Derrida writes: “To dare to say welcome is perhaps to insinuate that one is at home here, that one knows what it means to be at home, and that at home one receives, invites, or offers hospitality” (1999: 15). However, within the social/economical structure of the English colonization, the Indians do not always own a presentable place where they can make it their “home,” or a place to welcome guests. As an Indian, Aziz lives in a filthy neighborhood where Indians gather. He is ashamed of the social/economical surroundings he finds himself in. His place is “detestable” and “infested with small black flies” (70), and he thinks that “[i]f he [Mr. Fielding] entered this room the disgrace of it would kill me” (101). It occurs to him that he would not be able to repay

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<sup>23</sup> On witnessing Ronny’s behavior, Fielding thinks: “Could one have been so petty on a Scotch moor or an Italian alp?” (78). Both “Scotch moor” and “Italian alp” indicate that Fielding’s mind is set on a certain spot and cannot cross “the between” that every traveller needs to pass (Islam 5). Indeed, as Islam points out, the Mediterranean Sea is always already present between Fielding and India (48), preventing the two from having spiritual connection. Because of this, Fielding is not too much different from the British superintendent of police at Chandrapore, McBryde. According to McBryde’s theory about climatic zones, “[a]ll unfortunate natives are criminals at heart, for the simple reason that they live south of latitude 30” (166-67). Both Fielding and McBryde project their racism unto spatial and geographical (climatic) difference; in other words, space and geography (weather) become the standard to identify the superiority/ inferiority of race.

the kind of English reception given in Fielding's Tea Party. In this Third World scenery that is his, Aziz cannot match up with the level of the First World.

Therefore, another type of relationship between home/space and hospitality is "welcoming the other in order to appropriate for oneself a place and then speak the language of hospitality" (Derrida 1999: 16). Since Aziz does not possess a fancy and comfortable house that can be used to welcome his English friends, he invites them to the Marabar Caves instead. With this, he creates for himself another space, where he can practice his hospitality. This space is the "contact zone" Aziz selects.

After the Tea Party, Fielding comes to visit Aziz's house without invitation. Fielding's act equals to a cross-over of privacy, exposing Aziz's personal space that he intends to hide from the outsider's gaze. "'Here's your home,' Aziz says sardonically. 'Here's the celebrated hospitality of the East. Look at the flies. Look at the chunam coming off the walls. Isn't it jolly? Now I suppose you want to be off, having seen an Oriental interior'" (115). But Fielding does not take his leave immediately, for Aziz suddenly shows him a photograph of his deceased wife's. Aziz says: "I showed her to you because I have nothing else to show. You may look round the whole of my bungalow now, and empty everything" (117). In so doing, Aziz actually declares his own impoverishment; he demonstrates the scarce provision that he can provide. As a host, Aziz can only expect to exchange kindness for the guest's kindness: "Mr. Fielding, no one can ever realize how much kindness we Indians need, we do not even realize it ourselves. But we know when it has been given. We do not forget, though we may seem to. Kindness, more kindness, and even after that more kindness. I assure you it is the only hope" (116-17).

Aziz is not aware that, like the other concept, "kindness" is not neutral. Rather, it is always subject to the joint effect of one's personal background and cultural context. A case in point is Fielding, who holds a different perspective on "kindness":

Kindness, kindness, and more kindness—yes, that he might supply, but was that really all that the queer nation needed? Did it not also demand an occasional intoxication of the blood? What had he done to deserve this outburst of confidence, and what hostage could he give in exchange? He looked back at his own life. What a poor crop of secrets it had produced! There were things in it that he had shown to no one, but they were so uninteresting . . . Meagre really except the equilibrium, and Aziz didn't want to have that confided to him—he would have called it "everything ranged coldly on shelves." "I shall not really be intimate with this fellow," Fielding thought, and then "nor with anyone." That was the corollary. (117-18)

Even though Fielding is capable of supplying kindness, the result of his kindness is to refrain from having contact with his subject. Isn't this type of kindness a kind of gesture, a format? Fielding has forty years of experiences living in Europe before his arrival in India. From the experiences, Fielding "had learnt to manage his life and make the best of it on advanced European lines, had developed his personality, explored his limitations, controlled his passions" (191). The culture of the Great Britain has formulated his everything. Even though detesting those fellow Englishmen who treat Indians with hostility and discrimination, he never really allows India to weaken his faith in English values. As such, Fielding's fixed "European lines" leaves little room for change.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the photograph of Aziz's deceased wife creates an intimate connection, a spiritual bonding: "they were friends, brothers." Trust and emotion get the upper hand. But this triumph has its limit in time and space: "for once in a way" (122).

The Marabar Expedition has been settled at Mr. Fielding's tea party. But Aziz, assuming that the others forget about his Marabar Caves invitation, does not start to prepare for the party until he hears that Mrs. Moore and Adela "had expected an invitation daily" (126). Aziz then is compelled to fulfill his invitation, as if the guest holds the key and asks the host to open the door to the host's house. The relationship between the guest and the host is thus in an unstable state. It is possible that the guest is always already the host, and that the host always already a non-host. The roles of the guest and the host are in constant reverse. Derrida says that "the master of the house is at home, but nonetheless he comes to enter his home through the guest—who comes from outside. The master thus enters from the inside as if he came from the outside" (2000: 125, italics original). The inversion of inside and outside, along with the switch of the role between the host and the guest, equals to question the autonomy of the host in his ownership of the house and the land. The Marabar Party is charged with the energy that reverses the role of the host and the guest. With the Marabar Party, Aziz is offered a chance to be the host.

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<sup>24</sup> In Chapter XIX, the narrator explains how Fielding is bounded by his past Western experiences: "he was content to help people, and like them as long as they didn't object, and if they objected pass on serenely. Experience can do much, and all that he had learnt in England and Europe was an assistance to him, and helped him towards clarity, but clarity prevented him from experiencing something else" (118). Another example in Chapter IX shows that when Aziz and a group of Indian friends question Fielding over the legitimacy of English colonization, he responds: "I cannot tell you why England is here or whether she ought to be here. It's beyond me. . . . I can't tell you anything about fairness." To the issue of the English overtaking job opportunities from the Indians, Fielding answers that "I needed a job. . . . I got in first." His words "were too definite and bleak. . . . its grammar wounded their ears and paralysed their minds." Even though Fielding does not want to provide the standard answer that "England holds India for her good" (112) like other Anglo-Indian colonizer, he seldom reflects on his privileged position as a colonizer. Consequently, the Indians are confused by Fielding's response, while Fielding is ignorant of his own "positional superiority" (Said 1978: 7).

The preparation for the party is long, trivial and troublesome. Aziz has to take one day off from work, prepare different kinds of foods and beverages, ask friends for servants and tableware, and even borrow an elephant through connections. All kinds of troubles encounter Aziz, for “he had challenged the spirit of the Indian earth, which tries to keep men in compartments” (127). In the hot weather, these Englishmen and Indians have the option to avoid the scorching sun by staying at their rooms. However, they accept the invitation to the Marabar Party and come to the outdoor. Little do they know that the sun laughs at them for their attempts to fight against segregation and their willingness to cross the border.<sup>25</sup>

One accident takes place before the party starts. When the train for the Marabar Caves starts to move, Aziz leaps on to the footboard of a carriage, hanging on to a bar and laughing. Assuring his safety to the spectators, he yells: “We’re monkeys, don’t worry” (130-31).<sup>26</sup> As the train gathers speed, Aziz sees Fielding, who is held up at the railway level-crossing. He screams to Fielding: “Jump on, I must have you” (131).

Aziz’s reaction to Fielding and Professor Godbole’s missing the train is to claim that “I am to blame. I am the host.” Fielding’s absence allows Aziz a chance to enact his power. Leading the whole group of people on an expedition, Aziz “felt important and competent. . . . if Fielding had come, he himself would have remained in leading-strings.” Fielding’s presence would only jeopardize Aziz’s role as the host. What Aziz wants to prove is his capability to be the host: “‘Indians are incapable of responsibility,’ said the officials, and Hamidullah sometimes said so too. He would show those pessimists that they were wrong” (132). Judging by this, Aziz’s comment that “‘This picnic is nothing to do with English or Indian; it is an expedition of friends’” (161) is obviously an excuse and is contrary to what he thinks. For everything involved in the Marabar Party, in fact, has something to do with (the English/the Indian) nation, race, and culture.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Chapter X depicts the relationships between the people and the hot weather in India: “domes of hot water accumulated under their head-gear and poured down their cheeks. Salaaming feebly, they dispersed for the interior of other bungalows, to recover their self-esteem and the qualities that distinguished them from each other. All over the city and over much of India the same retreat on the part of humanity was beginning, into cellars, up hills, under trees. April, herald of horrors, is at hand. . . . [The sun] was not the unattainable friend, either of men or birds or other suns, he was not the eternal promise, . . . so debarred from glory” (114-15).

<sup>26</sup> Maria Davidis thinks that Aziz’s behavior demonstrates that he is a monkey going through “colonial mimicry”: “His desire to please the English causes him to transform himself into precisely that which the majority of Anglo-Indians believe him to be” (263). Indeed, in his affinity for and hostility toward the Anglo-Indians, Aziz, a western-educated Indian, acts as what Bhabha has called the “mimic man.” Before engaging in a mutiny against the English colonial regime, Aziz presents mimicry as a way of resistance. If the reason behind Aziz’s mimicry is because “that’s what the Anglo-Indians believe him to be,” isn’t it enough to prove that Aziz is capable of seeing through the Anglo-Indians?

<sup>27</sup> When Aziz describes the Marabar Party, he emphasizes no other than the connection with the English/the Indian: “The expedition was a success, and it was Indian; an obscure young man had been allowed to show courtesy to visitors from another country, which is what all Indians long to do—even cynics like Mahmoud Ali—but they never have the chance” (142).

During the party, Aziz practices hospitality by imitating Mughal Emperor Babur. Not only is Emperor Babur generous and benevolent, Aziz emphasizes that “never in his whole life did he betray a friend” (144). By imitating the Eastern conqueror, Aziz makes himself equal, or even superior, to the English conqueror of the West in the twentieth century. Upon seeing Fielding arrive later at the Marabar Caves in Miss Derek’s car, Aziz calls him “Fielding,” instead of “Mr. Fielding,” “dropping the ‘Mr.’ for the first time” (155). The sudden gesture shows that Aziz wants to treat Fielding equally as a friend. Aziz believes that the Marabar Party is a success, and “he had given his guests as good a time as he could” (160). As a host, he is “unassailable”: “The wings that uplifted him did not falter, because he was a Mogul emperor who had done his duty” (159).

Aziz thinks that he has demonstrated hospitality by treating his guests with sincerity and consideration: “Hospitality had been achieved, they were ‘his’ guests; his honour was involved in their happiness, and any discomfort they endured would tear his own soul.” However, little does Aziz realize that he “overrated hospitality, mistaking it for intimacy, and not seeing that it is tainted with the sense of possession” (142). Perhaps it is owing to this reason that he experiences “a joy that held the seeds of its own decay,” despite the fact that he enjoys watching Mrs. Moore sipping his tea and receiving his hospitality. Perhaps it is also this sense of possession that propels Aziz to make the party a successful one. He tells Mrs. Moore: “You cannot imagine how you have honoured me. I feel like the Emperor Babur” (143). Aziz contrives to demonstrate his hospitality to the extent that hospitality is turned into a dull task.

In one of the dull moments, Aziz suddenly asks Mrs. Moore: “Do you ever remember our mosque, Mrs. Moore?” Mrs. Moore then recalls her encounter with Aziz at the mosque, and she appears “suddenly vital and young” (143). How happy they were back then. In fact, it is only natural that their encounter at the mosque becomes the topic of their conversation. Compared to the delicate contour of the mosque, the Marabar Caves is not “an attractive place or quite worth visiting, and [Mrs. Moore and Adela] wished it could have turned into some Mohammedan object, such as a mosque, which their host would have appreciated and explained.” Compared to the spontaneous “visitation” at the mosque, the “invitation” of the Marabar Party is tainted with purposes. As a host, Aziz concentrates only on his deliberate hospitality, without noticing anything about the interior of the caves. As an Indian, Aziz is ignorant and powerless about the Marabar Caves.<sup>28</sup> He has no idea how to deal with

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<sup>28</sup> Throughout the expedition, Aziz remains preoccupied with acquitting himself honorably as a host, noticing nothing of his extraordinary surroundings. He is quite uninterested in caves and even as they depart, he asks his relative, Mohammed Latif, “What is in these caves, brother? Why are we going to see them?” (138). When he accompanies Adela to a group of caves, his deeper thoughts are with the breakfast.

“this particular aspect of India” (141). For Aziz, the Marabar Caves is a “non-knowledge.” In cross-culture encounter, the alien culture often appears in various forms of “non-knowledge.” As Derrida says, there is a close connection among “non-knowledge,” “hospitality,” and “stranger.” And this “non-knowledge” is “the element of friendship or hospitality for the transcendence of the stranger, the infinite distance of the other” (1997a: 8).

Nevertheless, as an Indian host, Aziz cannot make good use of this “non-knowledge.” He fails to answer Adela’s question: “What are these caves?” (75), for the simple fact that he never visited the caves before. Also, it is because the pattern of the caves “never varies.” All of the caves look similar; there is no way to distinguish different caves: “no carving, not even a bees’-nest or a bat distinguishes one from another.”<sup>29</sup> The caves do not have any formal characteristics; they resist signification: “Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation—for they have one— does not depend upon human speech” (124). If, however, the guests become curious and stubborn, and wish to explore the meanings of the caves by adopting methods other than language, “nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil.” The Marabar Caves is not reflective of any transcendental or substantial reality. It does not “represent” or refer to anything other than itself. Rather, it “mirrors its own darkness in every direction infinitely” (125), and cannot serve as a metaphor or metonymy to any other things: “they bear no relation to anything dreamt or seen.” Such mysterious and eccentric quality that the Marabar Caves gives cannot be properly named; it can only be called “The Marabar Caves Effect”: “Having seen one such cave, having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen, twenty-four, the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all” (124).

There is nothing inside the caves; they are “bubble-shaped” with “neither ceiling nor floor” (125). Without exception, the descriptions about the caves are all negative words—there is nothing; they are nothing. When Professor Godbole describes to Adela about the Marabar Caves, he only mentions that “[t]here are no sculptures at Marabar” (75), and then remains silent. Adela does not understand the underdrift in Professor Godbole’s silence (76); she asks Aziz to “tell me everything you will, or I shall never understand India” (75). As a foreigner coming from England, Adela worries that her experience in India would become superficial. She also worries that after marrying to Ronny, “[s]he and Ronny would look into the

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<sup>29</sup> The Marabar Caves is known for the similarities between different caves, making it difficult to tell one apart from the other. To this, the English official Ronny says: “in the future they were to be numbered in sequence with white paint” (199). The English colonizer attempts to apply Western cognition to resolve the Indian “muddle/ mystery,” regardless of its geography and culture essence. According to the narrator: “their reputation—for they have one—does not depend upon human speech” (124).

club like this every evening, then drive home to dress; they would . . . invite them and be invited by them, while the true India slid by unnoticed” (47).

One evening, from the upper verandah of the club, Adela finds an angle to overlook Marabar hills, which “look romantic in certain lights and at suitable distances” (126). She believes that there must be something that provides a certain trueness that would make her understand and “see the real India” (24; 26). Adela errs by declaring her intention to “see the real India.” She presumes that there exists an essentially “real India” that can be distinguished from the one formed by the English colonizing power, and that it can be seen through representation. Little does Adela know that the so-called “real India” is but a mere projection of her desire and imagination. It does not occur to her that to the “invaders who cannot find their way home,” India has called “come!” through “her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august” (136).

As Aziz leads Adela to the caves by climbing the rocks, Adela enters one of the caves, “thinking with half her mind ‘sight-seeing bores me,’ and wondering with the other half about marriage” (153). What goes into the cave with Adela is the problems of “anti-tourism” (Buzard 315) and marriage. The entry into the Marabar Caves marks her first experience of staying in a space with an Indian. Prior to this, she is always in company with Mrs. Moore, Ronny or/and other Englishmen. This time, being alone allows Adela to think hard of the issue of marriage. As she enters the cave, she realizes that she and Ronny do not love each other. She then blames herself: “Not to love the man one’s going to marry! Not even to have asked oneself the question until now!” (152). On the other hand, like “a mountaineer whose rope has suddenly broken” (152), Adela discovers that the Marabar Caves, which she originally thinks would help her understand India, is a non-knowledge, a truth that cannot be understood through representation. She fails to comprehend the truth of the Marabar Caves, which transcends the Western “representational order” (Islam 52). She cannot comprehend this unknown other—India. Adela breaks down in the cave; she feels like being trapped by a “shadow” (193). As regards this point, Alan Wilde writes that “Forster lays fully the bases for the belief that Adela has suffered a hallucination, induced by her confused and repressed thoughts about love and marriage. . . . But the echo remains, and one is led to feel that, whatever the external causes of Adela’s delusion, the more fundamental ones lie in the breakdown of her ability to cope with the strangeness around her” (140).<sup>30</sup> Indeed, India never opens the possibilities of

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<sup>30</sup> Claude J. Summers shares the same opinion, pointing out that “Adela’s breakdown is a response to her own feelings of ambivalence toward India. . . . She fears that in marrying Ronny, she may acquire the mentality of the Anglo-Indians, a mentality that she has tried to avoid but which may express the psychological ambivalence she shares with her fellow exiles. The ‘shadow, or sort of shadow’ that she sees in the cave may be the Jungian shadow of her repressed unconsciousness. This shadow may so threaten her persona—her social self—that she hallucinates a sexual assault, which expresses both a

comprehending Indian mystery to the foreigners or adventurers: “Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile. . . . She knows of the whole world’s trouble, to its uttermost depth. She calls ‘come’ through her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. But come to what? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal” (136).

Like Adela, Mrs. Moore, who spends her entire life in England, shivers in front of the chaos conveyed by the Marabar Caves. While going in and out of the caves, Mrs. Moore realizes that there is no difference between things that allows people to tell things apart: “Coming at a moment when she chanced to be fatigued, it had managed to murmur, ‘Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value. ‘If one had spoken fileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same—‘ou-boum.’” (149). While western civilization bases its cognition model on distinguishing differences, the echoes in the caves cancel out such differences and “in some indescribable way” undermine Mrs. Moore’s “hold on life” (149).

Adela runs out of the cave; her body is wounded all over by rocks and cactuses. In the Anglo-Indian community, Adela’s English fellows quickly jump to the conclusion that Aziz makes an attempt to rape her. Through the imagination of English ethnocentrism, Adela is turned into the prototype of a white virgin: “an English girl fresh from England” (165), and Aziz the “appetitive racial other” (Christensen 167) who lusts after the pure white virgin. To Adela’s wounds and suffering, the Anglo-Indians only offer a few hours’ sympathy and self-reflection: “why had they not all been kinder to the stranger, more patient, given her not only hospitality but their hearts?” (180). For they soon discover that this is a chance that allows them to return to the scene where the Indians rebel in 1857. It confirms what is contained in the Great Britain’s historical discourse: That the desire for mutiny is rooted in the Indians. It further justifies the English’s colonization over India. As Ian Baucom observes, the English community at Chandrapore “discover in Adela’s sufferings less an outrage than an opportunity to return to the ‘stirring days’ of 1857, to discover in this act of ‘betrayal’ confirmation of their treasured narrative of imperial belonging, to contemplate the pleasurable possibility of turning and firing at the crowd” (133). When Fielding tries to sort out the incidents at the Marabar Caves, what the British superintendent of police Mr. McBryde suggests to Fielding is to read the Indian “Mutiny records” (169). During the trial of the attempted rape, Mrs. Turton also refers to the record of the 1857 mutiny to express her opinion. She thinks that the court ought to take serious measure against the Indian suspect, imposing severe

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deep-seated fear and an unacknowledged desire. As a result of the alleged assault, Adela abandons her theoretical love for India and embraces the familiarity of Anglo-India, a fate that she may subconsciously desire” (213).

punishment on the Indians: “Why, they ought to crawl from here to the caves on their hands and knees whenever an Englishwoman’s in sight, they oughtn’t to be spoken to, they ought to be spat at, they ought to be ground into the dust” (216). Mrs. Turton’s hysterical expression is not a mere exception; instead, it represents the collective phenomenon in the Anglo-Indian community. Even though everything at Chandrapore seems normal, the Anglo-Indians gather in the club to discuss their next move, “in case the ‘niggers attacked’” (181). The Anglo-Indian club becomes a space paying homage to the mutiny: “The club was fuller than usual, and several parents had brought their children into the rooms reserved for adults, which gave the air of the Residency at Lucknow” (180).

Within this serious and yet secretly celebrative atmosphere, Fielding decides to openly support Aziz by refuting the Anglo-Indian’s fantasy on mutiny. Standing alone in front of the many club members, he declares: “I believe Dr. Aziz to be innocent” (189). Fielding’s declaration not only suggests that the Marabar case should be carefully looked into so as to reveal the truth, but also describes to the Anglo-Indians that this crisis might serve as the beginning of new friendship, not as a repetition of violence.

However, no one can save the British Empire with a smile, as Fielding soon regrets taking sides: “To slink through India unlabelled was his aim. Henceforward he would be called ‘anti-British,’ ‘seditious’—terms that bored him, and diminished his utility. He foresaw that besides being a tragedy, there would be a muddle” (175). Prior to this event, Fielding had many experiences of Indian “muddles.” The narrator tells us that Mr. Fielding’s liberal creed of “good will plus culture and intelligence” (62) does not befit Chandrapore. Fielding’s experiences tell him that at Chandrapore, “kindness” is often turned into “muddle.”

The Marabar Party is one case in point; it begins with kindness and ends up with a muddle.

### **C. Visitation: Encounters at the Festival**

After the trial of the Marabar case, Aziz leaves Chandrapore. He moves to a town named Mau, “some hundreds of miles westward of the Marabar Hills” (283). Moving away from the Anglo-Indian neighborhood, he does not want to befriend Englishmen anymore. He tells himself: “I am an Indian at last.” Destroying Fielding’s letters unopened, Aziz decides that his friendship with Fielding was “a foolish experiment”: “though sometimes at the back of his mind he felt that Fielding had made sacrifices for him, it was now all confused with his genuine hatred of the English” (293).

Two years later, on the eve of a Hindu festival (to celebrate Krishna’s birthday),

Fielding and Mrs. Moore's son, Ralph Moore, meet Aziz at an army fort on the outskirts of Mau. As if to manifest the meaning of the fort, a swarm of bees chase after the two English visitors. Aziz seems to be a little rejoiced; he humbly takes the sting out of Ralph's wrist. When discovering that he misunderstands Fielding by assuming that he takes Adela as his wife in England, instead of expressing his apology, Aziz turns his regret into resentment. He yells: "Please do not follow us, whomever you marry. I wish no Englishman or Englishwoman to be my friend" (303). This open demonstration of his own feeling proves that Aziz now wants to be more outspoken in front of Fielding. He feels that he is an equal to Fielding, not a humble civilian in front of his ruler.

At Chandrapore, "hospitality" was Aziz's moral code of practice; it was the expression of his passion for life and the center of his life. At Mau, Aziz's attitude toward Fielding is worth pondering. Aziz tears apart Fielding's letter that announces his arrival at Mau. Deliberately, he neglects the basic living requirement of Fielding's visit to Mau. Upon seeing Fielding, Aziz pretends not to know the difficulties of Fielding's living condition:

"Not a soul's been near us since we arrived."

"Really."

"I wrote beforehand to the Durbar, and asked if a visit was convenient. I was told it was, and arranged my tour accordingly; but the Guest House servants appear to have no definite instructions, we can't get any eggs, also my wife wants to go out in the boat."

"There are two boats."

"Exactly, and no oars."<sup>31</sup> (300-01)

Fielding is under the mission to inspect the schools in the central area. He receives warm receptions everywhere, and expects to be well treated at Mau. Little does Fielding expect that Aziz would treat him in an indifferent way as if to mock "hospitality." For Aziz, the precondition for hospitality is the loyalty between the host and the guest, or between friends. Aziz imitates the hospitality of Emperor Babur, who "never in his whole life did he betray a friend" (144). Now that Fielding betrays him, there is no need to practice or honor hospitality.

However, Aziz promises Mrs. Moore to treat her children nicely if he ever meets them. Ralph happens to be Mrs. Moore's son; moreover, he is stung by the bees. Aziz therefore decides to go to the "guest house" where they stay. In the guest house,

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<sup>31</sup> Aziz knows that the oars are "hidden to deter the visitors from going out" (312), but he doesn't tell Fielding.

Aziz applies medicine to Ralph's wounds, and he makes the medicine a present to him. He tells him that "I must give you one little present, and it is all I have got; you are Mrs. Moore's son" (311). Later, of his own accord, Aziz proposes to take Ralph out for a boat ride to watch the fire parade of the festival. Aziz understands that one kind act always leads to another, and that his hospitality will pour forward like the running river. He thus warns himself of making the same mistake, reminding himself not to befriend the Englishman. For even though Ralph is the son of Mrs. Moore, he is also Ronny's brother from a different father (311-12). Aziz's first contact with Ralph is thus clouded in suspicion and reluctance. Aziz tells Ralph: "I wish you were not with officials, then I would show you my country, but I cannot" (312).

Consequently, Aziz decides that all he can offer is to take Ralph out on a boat ride for half an hour. Even though he often rows boat on the lake, Aziz discovers some previously unseen scenery with a brand new perspective. This is owing to the presence of Ralph on the boat. Aziz feels that, instead of being the guest, Ralph is the guide leading him on. While he knows that Ralph is Mrs. Moore's son, he does not understand him and cannot by any means enter his world, until he offers Ralph his real concern (313). As their boat slowly approaches the procession of the ritual, suddenly, "in the interstice he heard, almost certainly, the syllables of salvation that had sounded during his trial at Chandrapore" (314): Mrs. Moore's name is turned into the name of an Indian goddess, Esmis Esmoor (225).

With the chanting of "the syllables of salvation," do Aziz and the Hindus achieve salvation? A servitor walks into the dark water, pushing a tray with the clay statue of a god on it. He keeps pushing forward until it slips and gutters in the rain. At this moment, a huge wave appears, and there is a yelling of "take care!" with an English accent (315). Aziz's boat crashes with another boat, on which boarded Fielding and his wife Stella Moore. They again unexpectedly encounter each other. All of the members on the boats fall into the lake, and the letters (which belong to Ronny and Adela) Aziz hides inside of his clothes scatter all over the surface of the lake. The rain drenches everyone and everything, and everything that needs to happen happens—this is the climax of the festival. The crows of Hindus return to the town in the sound of drums, thunder and the trumpeting of the elephants (315-16). Aziz and Fielding put away their past misunderstandings. They are friends again (317).

The statue on the tray functions as "little images of Ganpati, baskets of ten-day corn, tiny tazias after Mohurram—scapegoats, husks, emblems of passage; a passage not easy, not now, not here, not to be apprehended except when it is unattainable" (314-15). The collision of the two boats during the festival functions as a metaphor of this passage to India. All the important characters and themes appear: Aziz and Fielding restore friendship; Aziz finally treats Ralph with hospitality; Professor

Godbole watches the scene from the bank; Ronny and Adela participate in the festival in the form of epistles; Mrs. Moore appears by way of the Indian Goddess Esmiss Esmoor, her son Ralph and her daughter Stella. In this festival, every encounter has something to do with Mrs. Moore.

In the guest house, Ralph answers “yes” to Aziz’s question: “Can you always tell whether a stranger is your friend?” Aziz exclaims: “Then you are an Oriental” (311). On hearing himself say these words, Aziz shudders. These are exactly the same words he says to Mrs. Moore during their first encounter at the mosque. True, this is a cycle. This is Aziz and Ralph’s chance encounter. Like Aziz and Mrs. Moore’s encounter at the mosque, Aziz and Ralph’s produces instinctual, unconditional and spontaneous spiritual interactions. And, when Aziz reaches out his hands to bid farewell to Ralph, he recalls the beautiful memory of the mosque. Aziz then realizes that he feels nothing until his heart is involved (313).<sup>32</sup>

During the festival, Professor Godbole suddenly remembers Mrs. Moore. When he is at an emotional turmoil, Mrs. Moore appears by chance (286). He is a Brahmanist, while she a Christian. She is not important to him, and he never deliberately chooses her. Whether it is the workings of memory, or the induction of premonition, Professor Godbole and Mrs. Moore encounter by chance in the spiritual world. For Professor Godbole, his responsibility is to put himself in god’s position to love her, and then put himself in her situation to call out to God: “come, come, come, come” (290-91).

The emptiness of the Marabar Caves and the disaster of the Marabar Party prove that the passage to India is an “unattainable” one (315). However, as Professor Godbole repeatedly points out, “absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence, and we are therefore entitled to repeat, ‘Come, come, come, come’” (178).<sup>33</sup> Those who belong to absence/nothingness and those travellers who engage in the uneasy journey can both make a plea for God to “come” (178; 291). This imperative “Come” directed at God is a lament for lack of a more lasting home and, therefore, a plea for homecoming and salvation.

With this plea of “come,” the invitations (of the Tea Party and the Marabar

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<sup>32</sup> When Ralph tells Aziz that he can always tell whether a stranger is his friend, Aziz is overwhelmed with surprise. Aziz claims he does not understand the workings of mind. Asking himself what the “eternal goodness” of Mrs. Moore amounts to and why she steals into “the depths of his heart,” Aziz admits that they are not susceptible to “the test of thought.” She has always remained a potent force in “the depths of his heart” and he has “always adored her” (312).

<sup>33</sup> The interpretation of Godbole is based on the “double vision” in Hinduism. During the festival, Professor Godbole and other chanting worshippers gather at the bank and praise the god, at the same time getting ready to abandon the god (314). The ritual is a representation of the double vision: the past and the present, presence and absence, being and non-being all exist simultaneously. The god in Hinduism “is, was not, is not, was” (283). To their god, the Hindus worship and renounce at the same time.

Party) and the visitation (of Encounter at the Festival) meet at the contact zone, leading to further connections.

#### **IV. The Effect of Travel/ Hospitality**

Other than being a host, the precondition for hospitality is to have the other as a guest. The significance of hospitality lies in how to treat and interact with the other. To practice hospitality is to “encounter the other.” If the host sees the other as “an extension or echo of oneself” (Jennings 112), the other disappears and the host will not be able to “encounter the other.” Like the inseparable Greek words “xenos” (homecoming) and “xenia” (hospitality), the effect of “hospitality” needs to be accentuated by “homecoming.” The homecoming concludes the traveller’s encounter and interaction with the other; it is reflective of the hospitality between the traveller and the other. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss the following questions: In *A Passage to India*, what is the effect of hospitality on the three English people travelling to India? Do they encounter the other in their journey? What are the significances of their homecoming?

##### **A. Mr. Fielding: Half Dead and Half Blind**

After the trial of the attempted rape at the Marabar Caves, Fielding goes back to England for vacation. The Mediterranean Sea witnesses the route of his homecoming and his failure to cross the border. Facing the Mediterranean Sea, the dividing line between him (the West) and India (the East), Fielding again discovers “the joys of form”—“Form” indeed is the true threshold distinguishing the West from the East:

He had forgotten the beauty of form among idol temples and lumpy hills; indeed, without form, how can there be beauty? . . . something more precious than mosaics and marbles was offered to him now: the harmony between the works of man and the earth that upholds them, the civilization that has escaped muddle, the spirit in a reasonable form, with flesh and blood subsisting. Writing picture post-cards to his Indian friends, he felt that all of them would miss the joys he experienced now, the joys of form, and that this constituted a serious barrier. They would see the sumptuousness of Venice, not its shape, and though Venice was not Europe, it was part of the Mediterranean harmony. The Mediterranean is the human norm. (282)

For Fielding, the beauty of the Western (Venice) form is foregrounded by the ugliness

of the east: “The building of Venice . . . stood in the right place, whereas in poor India everything was placed wrong” (282). As he celebrates “the joys of form,” Fielding again strengthens the border between the West and the East, the self and the other.<sup>34</sup> During the vacation in England, Fielding comes to know Mrs. Moore’s daughter Stella through Adela. They get married. The now married Fielding admits that he cannot travel light as he once said: “Any man can travel light until he has a wife or children” (121). However, what really keeps Fielding from travelling light is the heavy luggage brought along by the English tradition and values, which Fielding relies on to get him by. Marrying Stella, Ronny’s sister from a different mother, makes Fielding understand that “He had thrown in his lot with Anglo-India by marrying a countrywoman, and he was acquiring some of its limitations” (319).

Now that Fielding is burdened with the English tradition and values, how can he travel light? He feels sad, and he doubts what goes wrong with his forty years’ life. He feels that “he ought to have been working at something else the whole time,—he didn’t know at what, never would know, never could know, and that was why he felt sad” (191). What is this “something else”? Isn’t this “other” that is India the “something else” which he fails to recognize? When Aziz shows Fielding a photograph of his deceased wife’s, Fielding is surprised by the sudden trust and emotional overflow from Aziz. Fielding feels that he is like “a traveller who suddenly sees, between the stones of the desert, flowers. The flowers have been there all the time, but suddenly he sees them” (116). Isn’t the flower, which he looks at but does not see, similar to this “other” that he does not understand and cannot see?

Fielding fails to encounter the other. In the years he spends in India, he always feels like being an alien. This “sense of being alien” is most evident during his trip to Mau. His wife Stella and Ralph are both fond of Hinduism, but they never discuss its related issues with Fielding. Fielding then asks Aziz to talk to them about it, but Aziz refuses. Fielding understands that the issue “isn’t in words at all” (320). He says: “I feel half dead and half blind” (318).

At Mau, Fielding recalls the past, and he “already felt surprised at his own past heroism.” He is convinced that if there was a second chance, he would not challenge his English fellows just to protect a stray Indian. To Fielding, Aziz is ultimately “a memento, a trophy” (319). Fielding’s choice carries out the English colonizer’s mission to reign and to assimilate the colonized Indian by way of education. Ronny’s comment on Fielding’s “[coming] into line with the Oppressors of India to some extent” (307) comes across as a great irony to the humanist Fielding.

After the boat incident, Fielding and Aziz regain their friendship with smiles, as

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<sup>34</sup> Prior to Fielding’s trip to Venice, the narrator has already highlighted the western emphasis on the “form”: “they desire that joy shall be graceful and sorrow august and infinity have a form, and India fails to accommodate them” (211).

if nothing happened (317). However, deep down they both know they will never meet each other again in the future. In fact, “socially they had no meeting-place” (319). The “contact zone” between them is fleeting without a permanent address. Their last encounter fully attests to the fact that what essentially gets in the way of their friendship is the politics of English colonialism. Aziz expresses with assertion that only when the Indians take the position as masters can he encounter with the English, forming an equal host-guest relationship: “Clear out, clear out, I say. Why are we put to so much suffering? We used to blame you, now we blame ourselves, we grow wiser. Until England is in difficulties we keep silent, but in the next European war—aha, aha! Then is our time. . . . and then . . . you and I shall be friends” (321-22).

### **B. Miss Adela Quested: the Mediterranean Clarity**

If the Mediterranean Sea stands for “the human norm” (282), then how can Adela survive without surrendering to it? On Adela’s way back home, one fellow passenger, an American missionary, mentions to her the role “returning home” plays in terms of the entire journey: “‘To what duties, Miss Quested, are you returning in your own country after your taste of the tropics?’ The missionary asked. ‘Observe, I don’t say to what do you turn, but to what do you return. Every life ought to contain both a turn and a return.’ . . . ‘I see,’ she replied. Suddenly, in the Mediterranean clarity, she had seen” (265-66).

However, does Adela understand the meaning of “returning home” in the context of travel? If the meaning of “returning home” is dependent upon the value system of the Mediterranean (the West, Europe) and it can only be seen through “Mediterranean clarity,” how can Adela really encounter the other? As Fielding analyzes, Adela cannot really encounter the Indian, for she has “no real affection for Aziz, or Indians generally” (259). During the trial of the attempted rape at the Marabar Caves, Adela sees Aziz: “There he sat—strong, neat little Indian with very black hair, and pliant hands. She viewed him without special emotion” (220). When withdrawing the case, Adela feels “no passion of love for those whom she had wronged” (245); in the meantime, the Indians do not fail to detect the cold indifference in Adela’s heart. After Aziz leaves Chandrapore, looking back to the past, he realizes that “[t]his pose of ‘seeing India’ which had seduced him to Miss Quested at Chandrapore was only a form of ruling India; no sympathy lay behind it” (306).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> During the trial, Adela gradually realizes that her request for a simulated India in fact involves her in the oppression apparatus. Looking around at the crowd in the court, she notices: “Beneath her were gathered all the wreckage of her silly attempt to see India—the people she had met at the Bridge Party, the man and his wife who hadn’t sent their carriage, the old man who would lend his car, various servants, villagers, officials, and the prisoner himself” (220). Inside the court, a humble Indian man rhythmically pulls the punkah. His act shakes Adela: “Something in his aloofness impressed the girl from middle-class England, and rebuked the narrowness of her sufferings.” Adela ponders: “In virtue of

Even though Adela does mature after going through the trial of the attempted rape, she soon falls back to her old familiar self and decides to go back to her England hometown. She tells Fielding that she is a public nuisance in India, but she will not be astray in England, for she actually fits in there: "I have sufficient money left to start myself, and heaps of friends of my own type. I shall be quite all right" (262). According to Brian Massumi, there will be two situations when a person acquires the transformational forces. He/She may revert to the familiar self and renounce the opportunity to "becoming-other," or he/she may decide not to look back and set out on the path of "becoming-other" (95). Adela's case certainly belongs to the former.

Adela's failure to encounter the other is not merely a result of her personal problem; to some extent, it also represents the English colonizers' mindset. Before Adela returns to England, Fielding, who perceives the situation, tells her: "The first time I saw you, you were wanting to see India, not Indians, and it occurred to me: Ah, that won't take us far. Indians know whether they are liked or not—they cannot be fooled here. Justice never satisfies them, and that is why the British Empire rests on sand" (260). As pointed and pungent as Fielding's words are, they come about only too late. Adela is ready to go back to England, and nothing can be undone. No one can alter the course of her homecoming, and she is destined to go back to the Mediterranean value system.

### **C. Mrs. Moore: Her Body Falls Another India—the Indian Ocean**

At the Marabar Caves, Mrs. Moore experiences a great shock. The caves respond to different kinds of sounds with the same echo "ou—boum" distinguishing neither the noble from the humble, nor the good from the evil. Such coexistence of binarism attacks her Christian beliefs, and it also initiates her "Indian vision." According to Professor Godbole, the "Indian vision" includes "double vision": "Good and Evil are different, as their names imply. But, in my humble opinion, they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in the one, absent in the other, and the difference between presence and absence is great . . . Yet absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence" (178).<sup>36</sup> The double perspective of such vision

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what had she collected this roomful of people together? Her particular brand of opinions, and the suburban Jehovah who sanctified them—by what right did they claim so much importance in the world, and assume the title of civilization?" (218). She experiences the first hatred she has against the colonialism that commences her trip to India. Originally, she thinks that the Indians she meets at the Bridge Party and Fielding's Tea Party, including Aziz, are "India." But now she becomes aware of the blind spot of her means of Western representation. She realizes that "no one is India" (72). Adela thus decides to withdraw the accusation, admitting her mistake by saying "Dr. Aziz never followed me into the cave" (229) and becoming what Fielding calls "a real person" (245).

<sup>36</sup> At the moment when Mrs. Moore is about to leave India, she demonstrates the "double vision": "She had come to that state where the horror of the universe and its smallness are both visible at the same time—the twilight of the double vision . . . in the twilight of the double vision, a spiritual muddledom is set up for which no high-sounding words can be found; we can neither act nor refrain from action,

promises the possibilities of encountering countless others (Islam 54); it has the potential to transform. At this crucial moment of transformation, Mrs. Moore abandons her past identification with the European value system and changes her ideas and beliefs about religion, love, marriage, family and personal relationship.<sup>37</sup>

Mrs. Moore's homecoming witnesses her transformation: "Her son couldn't escort her to Bombay, for the local situation continued acute, and all officials had to remain at their posts. Antony couldn't come either, in case he never returned to give his evidence. So she travelled with no one who could remind her of the past. This was a relief" (209). Mrs. Moore's anti-memory marks a de-territorialization. She ceases revisiting her past bond with the fixed value system and its structural relation. And the past no longer obstructs her. Now she freely and continually encounters the other in the brand new time and space, pursuing new conditions in life.

On her way home, Mrs. Moore wistfully watches the Indian continent from the return ship to England: "She longed to stop, though it was only Bombay, and disentangle the hundred Indias that passed each other in its streets." She only has a glimpse of India. She even hears "thousands of coconut palms appeared all round the anchorage and climbed the hills to wave her farewell": "'So you thought an echo was India; you took the Marabar Caves as final?'" (210). Her experience at the Marabar Caves is merely one India out of many others, not the final answer. However, Mrs. Moore does not intend to take control of India through the violence of representation. She can finally look at an object through another object. Calmly, she "watched the indestructible life of man and his changing faces, and the houses he has built for himself and God, and they appeared to her not in terms of her own trouble but as things to see" (209).

Mrs. Moore dies of a heart attack on the board. It is significant that she never reaches her return destination: her body is symbolically incorporated into "another India" (256). Ocean, the smooth space<sup>38</sup> for the travellers, buries her body: "Dead she was—committed to the deep while still on the southward track, for the boats from Bombay cannot point towards Europe until Arabia has been rounded; she was further

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we can neither ignore nor respect Infinity" (207-08).

<sup>37</sup> After long preparations, it is the moment of Mrs. Moore's "becoming-other." Massumi explains: "Becoming is an equilibrium-seeking system at a crisis point where it suddenly perceives a deterministic constraint, becomes 'sensitive' to it, and is catapulted into a highly unstable supermolecular state enveloping a bifurcating future. . . . Although the indeterminacy of the supermolecular state invites the use of such words as 'choice' and 'freedom,' it is not a question of a consciously willed personal decision. Becoming is directional rather than intentional" (95). This is also the reason why Mrs. Moore says to Adela: "If you don't know, you don't know; I can't tell you" (200).

<sup>38</sup> Deleuze and Guattari analyze that "the sea became the place of the fleet in being, where one no longer goes from one point to another, but rather holds space beginning from any point: instead of striating space, one occupies it with a vector of deterritorialization in perpetual motion. This modern strategy was communicated from the sea to the air, as the new smooth space, but also to the entire Earth considered as desert or sea" (1987b: 387).

in the tropics than ever achieved while on shore, when the sun touched her for the last time and her body was lowered into yet another India—the Indian Ocean” (256). Fittingly, Mrs. Moor, who encounters the other, mediates forever between India and Europe. Her passage is incomplete, but her spirit remains a link between the two cultures.

## V. The Im/Possible Host/Guest

*A Passage to India* chronicles a process in which the Englishmen leave their familiar European hometown and arrive in India. It serves as a modern Colonial Odyssey.<sup>39</sup> However, in Homer’s *Odyssey*, Odysseus successfully returns home and becomes once again the master of Ithaca. The travellers (Adela and Fielding) in *A Passage to India*, on the other hand, do not return home with glory; instead, their journeys end with frustration and the feelings of foreignness.

This is mainly because Odysseus leaves home with the purpose of returning. Even though he strays to foreign lands for many different reasons, he always holds the idea that Ithaca is his only home. On the other hand, the Englishmen in *A Passage to India* attempt to reproduce their home in India. In the English club where the Indians are not allowed, the English continually present all kinds of plays that they have long grown tired of seeing back in England, all in order to “make England in India” (73). The English ideology requires constant performance to secure: “They had tried to reproduce their own attitude to life upon the stage, and to dress up as the middle-class English people they actually were” (40). In the meanwhile, they confine themselves within the thick brick walls and fences while excluding the Indians.

What they try to duplicate in India is their English home, and it does not require the participation of the local Indians. They live in the garden of the inland, eating only imported English foods and dining only with their English friends (47). In an environment that lacks “contact zone,” although the English rule India with “fear” (173), they also become the most immediate victim of “fear.” They think of India as a poisonous country (171), and among the Indians, “no one ever told ... the truth” (54). The English believe that the Indians want to kill them all, and they fear the geographical environment of the unknown India. When “they looked out at the palisade of cactuses stabbing the purple throat of the sky,” they “realized that they were thousands of miles from any scenery that they understood” (180). When they gaze at the Marabar Hills, they find that the hills appeared to be “lovely, exquisite moment—but passing the Englishman with averted face and on swift wings” (191).

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<sup>39</sup> See David Adams, *Colonial Odysseys: Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel*.

They fear that their destiny would be like their predecessors, but “[t]he triumphant machine of civilization may suddenly hitch and be immobilized into a car of stone, and at such moments the destiny of the English seems to resemble their predecessors’, who also entered the country with intent to refashion it, but were in the end worked into its pattern and covered with its dust” (211). They remind themselves to sing the national anthem of the colonizing army, strengthening their own power to combat their days in India (26).

How can they “be at home” (35) and comfortably become the host in India, when all they seek is to replicate in India their home back in England? The English occupy the land in India, and then send invitations to Indians, while calling their action practice of hospitality. They do not know that ultimately they will not be able to become the master. They do not know that India understands their bewilderment, and that “[t]he important towns they build are only retreats, their quarrels the malaise of men who cannot find their way home” (136). In fact, those Indians who are seen as others by the English that stay at their homeland are the exact ones who ought to assert the roles of the hosts and offer hospitality. During this switch of roles between the host and the guest, the reluctant Indians are none other than “the impossible guest.”

In *A Passage to India*, only the encounter at the mosque (between Mrs. Moore and Aziz) and the spontaneous interaction at the festival (between Aziz and Ralph) cross the border between races, nationalities, religions and cultures. While encountering the other, the involved characters make themselves the possible hosts/guests.

Taking hospitality as a main topic, the present essay discovers that there is strong tension in the relationship between England and India, and that the interaction between the host and the guest demonstrates many different facets, whether they are fixed or constantly changing. Moreover, by presenting hospitality and the host/guest relationship, *A passage to India* highlights the intentions and difficulties underlying people’s pursuit of “home.” The desire for home is constantly thwarted: Fielding fails to find a sense of belonging; Adela fails to replicate an English home in “the real India”; the English colonizers intrude into the Indians’ home. At the same time, Forster also proposes that home belongs to a metaphysical realm. Home is no longer a particular household, but a metaphor for love, mutual understanding and harmonious intersubjectivity. Thus, instead of returning back to England, Mrs. Moore mediates between India and Europe. E. M. Forster tells us: “The book is not really about politics . . . It’s about something wider than politics, about the search of the human race for a more lasting home, about the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and the Indian sky” (1983: 298).

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