

PAINTINGS & PALANQUINS

THE LANGUAGE OF VISUAL AESTHETICS AND
THE PICTURESQUE
IN ACCOUNTS OF BRITISH WOMEN'S TRAVELS IN
INDIA FROM 1822 TO 1846



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St. Cross College, University of Oxford
Hilary Term 2017

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of English Language and Literature
Approximate Word Count: 90,000 including text and footnotes,
excluding abstract & bibliography



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17 January 2017

To the blind man's son, and the smart woman who married him

Abstract

This thesis explores the Picturesque as a visual aesthetic that is often self-consciously employed in the travel accounts of British women in India in the first half of the nineteenth century. It addresses how three women—Fanny Parks, Marianne Postans, and Emily Eden—made use of the language of aesthetics, in particular that of the Picturesque (a style deemed especially appropriate for women travellers) in a variety of ways: first, to help them understand and relate to their experiences in this foreign land; second, to convey these experiences to their audiences back home; and, third to carve out what frequently becomes a feminised space within the established (and predominantly masculine) field of travel writing.

The approach is largely historicist in order to situate the authors (and artists) within their contemporary cultural, social, and political context. My work builds upon that of literary scholars Elizabeth Bohls, Nigel Leask, and Sara Suleri in its interweaving of historical research and visual aesthetics with a literary analysis of travel writing and colonialism, bringing to bear their insights on authors previously little or not at all addressed in critical literature. Expanding on the notion of the “Indian picturesque,” which Leask begins to shape in his work, I bring Parks, Postans, and Eden into dialogue with the suggestions of Bohls and Suleri that women travel writers adapt the traditionally masculine ideal of the Picturesque aesthetic.

After an introduction and two chapters which explore the broader themes concerning the development of the Picturesque and its influence on British artistic

representations of India, I briefly summarise how this visual aesthetic came to be applied to written texts about travels in the region, beginning with the texts produced by male travellers, and with a specific focus on the travel narrative of Captain Godfrey Charles Mundy, whose accounts are referenced in Fanny Parks' work. My thesis then offers three case studies considering each writer in order of their arrival in India—starting with Fanny Parks' autobiography of her travels (published in 1850), followed by the published works of Marianne Postans in the 1830s, and through to those of Emily Eden, relating to her travels in the same decade and published in 1866. Aside from drawing on the aesthetics of visual art, the discussion of each author also addresses the importance of other sources to which they allude that enable aesthetic responses to India's landscape and peoples.

Acknowledgements

Before anything, I would like to thank my family, especially my dad, Ben, for always supporting and believing in me even if they did not always fully understand what I was doing and why. Daddy, you've given me a living example of what true strength and perseverance is and that has taken me through my tough times. I couldn't be prouder to be the daughter of this "kampung chicken." As Mummy would have said, "Not too bad for a blind man's son, huh?"

This thesis could never have been completed without the support and encouragement of my supervisor Professor Ros Ballaster. I am truly indebted to her for her guidance and most of all, for her patience over the years. Thank you, Ros, for being nothing short of amazing. On the topic of supervision and support, I would also like to thank Dr David Sergeant who co-supervised me in the early stages of my DPhil and for my college advisor, Dr Kate Scott for just being one of the kindest, most generous people I have ever met. I will never forget what you have done for me, Kate and I promise to pay it forward.

To Smita, you've been my best friend, my sister, my lifejacket. I've always said that you were God-sent. I could never have survived without you, and you know it. I can't even begin to express my gratitude so I'm just going to say that I love you more than tea (and *dosa*)! You are *my rock*.

To Peter and Victoria, you guys have helped me in so many ways that I can't enumerate them all. Thank you most of all for holding me up, for loving and hating

with me (even across the miles), and for reminding me that this is a marathon and not a race to the finish line.

To all the people I have worked with in my countless part-time jobs over my time in Oxford, especially Sheila, Lucile, and all my peeps at the Language Centre—you guys have been incredibly supportive and I couldn't have come this far without you. (How else would I have paid my rent?! But seriously, thank you.)

To my friends who have literally helped me put this thesis together in one way or another, who have offered me a place to stay when I was desperate, and a nice meal when I was down and out—Liza, Michael, Paola, Lidiya, Sam, Morgan, and Stephanie—I truly am grateful for all your time, effort, love and support (and food! Especially the food!) Thank you for everything.

Lastly, this thesis is also dedicated to my late mother. I miss you every day, Mummy. I wish you could have been here to see this but I also know that you've been with me all the way. Enjoy your dance with Patrick Swayze while you can because when I finally get there, I'm cutting in!

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Introduction

How much I enjoy the quietude of floating down the river, and admiring the picturesque ghats and temples on its bank! This is the country of the picturesque, and the banks of the river in parts are beautiful.

—*Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Vol. 1. 197¹

These words, written by Fanny Parks in 1831—approximately nine years into her twenty-four-year sojourn in the Indian subcontinent—capture the prevailing attitudes held by British travellers in India during the early half of the nineteenth-century. Influenced by the Picturesque mode of viewing landscape that had been popularised in Britain, these early nineteenth-century travellers eagerly transplanted the visual modalities they had become familiar with back home onto Indian soil. *Ghats*—or series of steps leading down into a body of water—and temples became not only sources of visual wonderment for bewildered travellers fresh off the European passenger ships, but also the means by which more seasoned (and often homesick) Anglo-Indians, as they came to be called, could draw lines of familiarity between elements of the Indian landscape and those in the homeland.²

At the most rudimentary level, the native temples came to take the place of Celtic ruins so prized by Picturesque observers in Britain, while excursions down the river Ganges could remind the traveller of floating down the Thames or the serpentine Wye. However, as Romita Ray reminds us in her study of the

¹ Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque During Four-and-Twenty Years in the East; With Revelations of Life in a Zenana*, Vols. 1 and 2 (London: 1850). Henceforth referred to as *Wanderings* in parenthetical references in the text.

² Throughout this thesis my usage of the term “Anglo-Indians” refer to the early British settlers in India, as opposed to the people of mixed-race descent.

development of the Picturesque in British India, despite the seemingly straightforward cross-referencing of elements of the Indian and British landscape, “these were complex exchanges keeping in step with colonial (and later imperial) strategies of reinvention and survival that enabled colonial Britons to hold on to their own cultural signposts while being mindful of their Indian settings.”³ Given the unique nature of the situation, Parks’ claim that India is “the country of the picturesque” is laden with more significance than might first appear. I explore in the thesis the complexity of these “strategies of reinvention and survival.”

The central aim of this thesis is to address the ways in which three women writers—Fanny Parks, Marianne Postans, and Emily Eden—made use of the language of aesthetics, in particular that of the Picturesque, to help them understand their experiences in India, to convey these experiences to their audiences back home, and to carve out what frequently becomes a feminised space within the established (and predominantly masculine) field of travel writing. In relation to the third point, I am specifically interested in how the Picturesque becomes (re)claimed by women writers as a means of exercising their creative (and at times even political) agency, as opposed to the view that sees the Picturesque as an aesthetic that limits female travellers’ engagement with their environment.

While the writers that I examine all adopt the Picturesque mode in order to position their writing in relation to the tradition of other contemporary travel

³ Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2013) 16; Many of the critics I quote in this thesis refer to India as a “colony,” and as part of the larger British “empire,” although this technically was not the case in the period in question. While I have become more cautious with my application of the terms “empire” and “colony” in my own discussions, I have however, retained the original wording when directly quoting from, or paraphrasing, my references.

narratives—both as a form of validation for their work and an attempt to appeal to an already established audience of readers—their manipulations of this (as I argue) very malleable aesthetic differ according to their own individual personalities as well as their various (often class-determined) relations to the British administration in India. It is, I demonstrate, the very variability of the Picturesque that allows these women creative agency.

I focus on the Picturesque in this literary thesis because it is the dominant category whereby travel writing and visual aesthetics are brought into relationship. The visual element inevitably forms a large part of the travel experience as travellers are repeatedly assaulted with new sights and unfamiliar visual terrains. Unsurprisingly, many turn to the language of the visual arts to describe what they saw and experienced in ways that would be most accessible both to themselves and their readers. Additionally, much of the initial contact that Europeans had with foreign lands took the form of interesting new visual stimuli in the manner of cultural artefacts, objects of trade, as well as images produced and copied by both professional and amateur artists. As a result, travellers arrived with aesthetic expectations of the destination formed even before the commencement of their journeys.

As the Picturesque became increasingly popular in the field of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century cultural knowledge through the widespread theories of William Gilpin and Uvedale Price, the visual experience of travel came to be even more important as travellers were encouraged to “see” and experience these

new sights in specific terms outlined by the theories of the Picturesque. As Hermione De Almeida and George H. Gilpin explain:

The picturesque as a popular idea soon gave rise to guidebooks that would help leisure travellers and tourists, many of whom were also amateur artists, to find and to view specific 'picturesque' places. The experience for these observers was reinforced by the belief that they would become educated in good taste by looking at a scene which had been previously declared to be 'picturesque' by authority.⁴

Consequently, many undertook journeys with that philosophy of observation in mind and the world therefore came to be experienced through the frame of a painting, just as it would later be seen and captured through the lens of a camera.

The Picturesque aesthetic also lends itself especially well to the literary form. Writers could make use of familiar Picturesque tropes to convey an image of the scenery in their descriptive passages, much as Romantic-era writers such as Ann Radcliffe had done in her descriptions of the sublime Italian landscapes in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). This rhetorical strategy worked because of the associative nature of the Picturesque aesthetic which functions by calling to mind images that already exist within the observers', or in this case, the readers' cultural frames of reference. In this sense, the Picturesque worked in the same way that literary allusions do when embedded within written texts—and indeed the writers I examine make use of both Picturesque references and textual allusions in their own works.⁵

⁴ Hermione De Almeida, and George H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 190.

⁵ Nigel Leask even goes as far as to call this "particular form of referentiality [...] the 'literary picturesque.'" See Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 188.

Moreover, while the Picturesque is generally seen as a visual aesthetic, even its original theorists recognised its applicability to other artistic forms. We see this especially in the manner in which they wrote about the Picturesque in its early stages of development. Instead of adopting the conventional treatise form, William Gilpin, for example, penned his examination of the Picturesque qualities of the gardens at Stowe in the manner of a fictional dialogue between two travellers, while Richard Payne Knight conveyed his ideas in the form of a poem entitled *The Landscape: a Didactic Poem* (1794).⁶ Similarly, Uvedale Price suggested that the aesthetic could be applied to music in his *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794).⁷

While these three main theorists of the Picturesque often differed in their understanding and explications of the aesthetic, what they have in common is their tacit acknowledgment of its variability and its ability to cross over to other artistic forms. Many contemporary scholars have also examined the implications of this aesthetic crossover both in more general studies of the Picturesque itself, such as in Stephen Copley and Peter Garside's *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics since 1770* (1994), and in works with a more narrow literary focus works such as Alexander M. Ross' *The Imprint of the Picturesque on Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (1986), as well as author-specific studies such as Eric G. Walker's *Scott's Fiction and the Picturesque* (1982).⁸

⁶ William Gilpin, *Dialogue Upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable the Viscount Lord Cobham at Stow in Buckinghamshire* (London: 1768).

⁷ Uvedale Price, *Essay on the Picturesque as compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: 1794).

⁸ Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Alexander M. Ross, *The Imprint of the Picturesque on Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier

My thesis similarly engages with the translation of the Picturesque into literary terms; however, since the Picturesque finds its origins in a visual aesthetic, I also discuss its function as a visual mode. In the context of British India, the visual and the verbal interact in the field of the Picturesque. In my reading of the Picturesque as it emerges in these travel accounts, I am particularly interested in how these authors transcend the Picturesque's use as a visual metaphor or simple visual allusion to engage with the ideas associated with the practice of the Picturesque, such as its capacity for aesthetic displacement, its manipulation of power and control, and its framing of the historical past in the present moment of consumption.⁹

I have chosen to focus on the works of Fanny Parks, Marianne Postans, and Emily Eden for a number of reasons. First, in each writer the Picturesque is an important and oft-cited aesthetic. Second, while general surveys of (female) travel writing are in existence, there is yet to be literary scholarship which examines these three writers as a group and in specific relationship to the Picturesque.¹⁰ Ketaki Kushari Dyson's *A Various Universe* (1978) was the first scholarly work to present the journals and memoirs of British men and women in India as a corpus worthy of study but the scope of her work was too wide to allow for concentration on any specific thematic or literary feature within these Indian accounts. Instead, Dyson's work takes the form of a general historical and chronological survey. Indeed the

University Press, 1986); Eric G. Walker, *Scott's Fiction and the Picturesque* (Salzburg, Austria: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg: 1982).

⁹ Throughout this thesis, I use the term "aesthetic displacement" to refer to the act of using art and aesthetics as a means of avoiding acknowledging the reality of the scene or image at hand.

¹⁰ To clarify, while references have been made to these writers in other scholarly works, this has largely been in the form of either a chapter or part of a chapter devoted to one or two of the writers I examine.

author herself acknowledges this shortcoming and explains that the aim of her book was to draw attention to a previously ignored body of work, thus leaving it to future critics to expand on thematic ideas.¹¹ Similarly, Rosemary Raza's *In Their Own Words: British Women Writers and India, 1740-1857* (2006)—though Raza focuses solely on female writers and within a slightly shorter time period than Dyson—also presents a comprehensive historical analysis of the life of the memsahibs but with necessarily limited scope for literary scrutiny.¹²

As a literary scholar, however, Indira Ghose offers an in-depth literary analysis of the writings of British women in India as she examines the trope of the gaze in *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (1998).¹³ While she examines the implications of the Picturesque on the accounts of female travellers, Ghose is predominantly concerned with the power dynamics that are exercised in ways of looking, of which the Picturesque is only one aspect. While parts of my thesis similarly address the power forces at play in the exercise of the Picturesque, I am also concerned with its other features and ideological underpinnings.

The three writers that I focus on demonstrate a range of manipulations of the Picturesque and also create interesting contrasts with one another. Their differences in social class and political backgrounds inform their varying points of

¹¹ Ketaki Kushari Dyson, *A Various Universe: A Study of the Journals and Memoirs of British Men and Women in the Indian Subcontinent, 1765-1856* (1978; repr., New Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2006).

¹² Rosemary Raza, *In their Own Words: British Women Writers and India, 1740-1857* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006). As a historian, Raza understandably did not provide a literary analysis of the travel texts she references.

¹³ Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

reference with regard to the Picturesque; Marianne Postans' writings demonstrate a more politicised engagement with the Picturesque modality as it stands opposed to 'scientific' ways of collecting and disseminating information, while Fanny Parks' work shows itself to be concerned with the dynamics of movement and stasis as they relate to her own conception of selfhood. Unsurprisingly, Emily Eden's privileged position as the sister of the then-Governor General of India sets her apart from Postans and Parks, and her writing reflects this entitlement and separation.

Discussion of these writers in this thesis is confined to their published works. By publishing their works, writers offer themselves to the public and inevitably contribute to the discourses circulating at the time. Sometimes their works support these prevalent discourses and at other times they contradict them. My interest is in the works that these writers chose to put into the public domain and which they framed as contributions to aesthetic debates as well as to the growing ethical debate about the British 'mission' in India.

To various extents, writers understand the implications of this inevitable involvement. For diverse reasons, be it personal gratification or the desire to actively contribute to public dialogue, the writers I examine all chose to publish their works, and therefore chose to make them available to a wider readership. This is not to assume that publication was the aim when they first drafted the writings on which the published works were (supposedly) based. For instance, Parks and Eden present their published texts as derived from private correspondence with family members. By contrast, the non-epistolary structure of Postans' work and the apprentice contributions she made to colonial journals, as well as the fact that she

emphasises the importance of travellers in India disseminating information to the reading public, indicates that her work was always written with the intention to publish, and accumulated from notes she had taken during her residence.

Nevertheless, because they were published, all the works discussed in this thesis went through an editorial process, which often included deletion or modification of the original text by the author or by the publisher with the author's knowledge. For this reason also, I have limited my discussions to works published by the writers themselves and, as in the case of Emily Eden's letters, not those published by a relative or trustee after their death.¹⁴

Furthermore, because I am interested in the ways in which the Picturesque functions in helping women writers understand their experiences in India as well as to convey these experiences to their audiences back home, whilst carving out a place for themselves in an established (and predominantly masculine) field of travel writing, it is important that the works under discussion be published. As the subsequent chapter shows, the Picturesque influenced large groups of people as well as private individuals and is therefore in itself as much a public aesthetic as it is a private one. This we see in the rise of mass domestic tourism in Britain in the eighteenth century as well as the effect the Picturesque aesthetic had on landscape gardening practices in the same period.

¹⁴ Two sets of letters were published after Eden's death: *Letters from India*, edited and published by Emily's niece, Eleanor Eden in 1872, and subsequently *Miss Eden's Letters*, edited and published by her great-niece, Violet Dickinson, in 1919. While Eleanor does claim in her Preface that she had begun arranging the letters while Eden was alive and under her direction, because the exact extent of Emily Eden's involvement in the editorial process cannot be ascertained, I have chosen to exclude them from the main discussion.

The temporal parameters indicated in my thesis title (1822 to 1846) are the dates between which the female writers I examine actually resided in India and during which their initial observations were made, although the edited texts themselves may have been published later. I have also deliberately chosen to restrict my discussions to travels taking place before 1857, taking the year as marking an important transition as other scholars have done.¹⁵ British attitudes (both social and political) towards India changed markedly after 1857 as a result of the Indian Mutiny and its surrounding consequences. To do a full analysis of the Picturesque before and after the Mutiny would require a longer piece of work than the scope of this thesis allows.

My research is situated in the interlocking fields of existing scholarship on travel writing, colonial discourses, and gender.¹⁶ The last decade of the twentieth century saw a significant rise in the level of theoretical engagement with the genre of travel writing, beginning with the publication of two seminal texts. Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), a work that has now become a staple for any scholar in the field, also examines the genre of travel writing alongside the politics of colonialism and imperial expansion. As Pratt explores how European travel and exploration writing was used in support of Western economic and political expansion since 1700, she introduces the idea of "contact zones," which she defines as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of

¹⁵ Both Dyson and Raza take 1857 as an end point for their analyses.

¹⁶ I would like to reiterate that while I am aware that India was technically not a colony during the period I refer to in the thesis, much scholarly discourse on India under the British administration has been contained within the discourse of colonialism.

domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today.”¹⁷ Not only is the term she coined now repeatedly used by other scholars in the area of travel literature and intercultural interactions, Pratt also established the important premise that travel texts themselves functioned as key instruments in shaping the attitudes of the reading public back in the European “home” countries—thus highlighting the significant role that these textual objects play in uniting the varied and disparate subject elements of colonialism (i.e. those living within and without the colonies, or in the specific case of India, those residing in areas that fell within British administrative control).

Sara Mills’ *Discourses of Difference* (1991), contributed to the field by being “the first book to set women travellers within the colonial context” and also the first to take women writer’s seriously within critical studies of colonial discourse.¹⁸ As the author explains, this relative critical neglect can be attributed to the “social conventions for conceptualising imperialism, which seem to be as much about constructing masculine British identity as it is about constructing national identity per se. For this reason, women as individuals and as writers are always seen to be marginal to the process of colonialism.”¹⁹ Mills’ study, while focusing on travel texts produced by women does not make claims to any essentialist ideas of female writing. Instead, she is concerned with the discursive frameworks in which women

¹⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 7.

¹⁸ Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), 3.

¹⁹ Mills, *Discourses*, 3.

both produced and received these texts—which she argues were sometimes different from those exerted on male writers, particularly in the colonial context (“because of the discursive frameworks which exert pressure on female writers, there may be negotiations in women’s texts which result in differences which seem to be due to gender”).²⁰ By examining the often-conflicting discursive pressures faced by women travel writers—namely nineteenth-century discourses of femininity and the predominant colonial discourses of (masculine) forms of authority and control—Mills also exposes some of the problems that emerge from within these frameworks; problems which can only be seen when the competing frameworks vie for equal attention in ways that they do in female travel writing of the period. While her work is predominantly theoretical, she does conclude with a set of case studies in which she briefly demonstrates how some writers manoeuvred within these discursive conflicts (to varying degrees of success and self-consciousness) and expose the strengths and frailties of the frameworks within which they are forced to write. It is this mode of analysis that I develop in my own close readings as I demonstrate how my three writers both test and push the boundaries of the Picturesque framework.

In its concern with the dominance of the Picturesque as a discursive framework for women travellers, my thesis is also indebted to Elizabeth Bohls’ *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818* (1995).²¹ In this text, Bohls brings into focus how women travel writers of the eighteenth to the

²⁰ Mills, *Discourses*, 3.

²¹ Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

early nineteenth centuries engaged with discourses of aestheticism, and the dynamics of power inherent in the exercise of aesthetic thought. She expounds on how aesthetic contemplation entails a gendered relationship which privileges the contemplating subject as being symbolically male, while the aestheticised object is gendered female. Bohls argues that by appropriating what would have been conventionally seen as a masculine prerogative, these women writers not only turn aesthetic discourse on its head by calling into question its constituent values and assumptions, but also succeed in using it to demonstrate women's problematic place in the power struggle, a contradictory position of being simultaneously the aestheticised object while fighting to claim a space as an aesthetic subject.

Although my research is different from Bohls' in that mine has a specific geographical focus on India, I share her methodology of examining how women travel writers used the language of aesthetics in order to challenge assumptions of knowledge and cultural power that are traditionally masculine. Like Bohls, I identify the Picturesque as an aesthetic that has been historically imposed on women travellers to guide (and at times regulate) their observational procedures. While Bohls' text focuses on a slightly earlier time period, I have nevertheless found many of her observations useful in my reading of the Indian travelogues between the years 1822 and 1846—namely the manner which the Picturesque in particular becomes a means of exercising female subjectivity in an otherwise male-ordered discourse.

In her chapter on 'The Feminine Picturesque', Sara Suleri in *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992) identifies the Picturesque as being part of "a long-standing

tradition through which British women in the colonized subcontinent were required to remain on the peripheries of colonization, collecting from that vantage point peripheral images of people and place.”²² She argues that these female Anglo-Indians were only allowed to enter into the public domain occupied by their male counterparts “in order to aestheticize rather than to analyze” and suggests that this often resulted in an ambivalence that is reflected in the problematic attempts to apply the Picturesque to life in India.

While I agree with Suleri’s understanding of the instability of the Picturesque as a representational aesthetic strategy especially when faced with the cultural realities of India, my thesis questions her assumptions regarding the marginality of women in India, as my case studies demonstrate that they in fact played important roles in the formation of Anglo-Indian discourse and society. Furthermore, I also suggest that rather than seeing the Picturesque as a limited and limiting mode of representation that cracks in the face of psychic stresses, some women travellers instead recognised the aesthetic’s capacity for variability and harnessed it to further their own agendas.

Critics Jacqueline M. Labbe and Jane Stabler have similarly addressed how women writers, particularly of the Romantic period, make use of the instabilities within the Picturesque to challenge and liberate themselves from contemporary regulatory practices against women, and my thesis directs our attention to a similar

²² Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 75.

process in the context of British India.²³ However, unlike Labbe and Stabler, I am interested in a very specific manifestation of the Picturesque—the ‘Indian Picturesque’ as it has been explained by Nigel Leask in *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770-1840* (2002), and developed more recently by Romita Ray in *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (2013).²⁴

As Leask explains, the Picturesque as it came to develop in British India took a different and unique form from the original practices back home.²⁵ Citing the scholarship previously carried out on the Picturesque by critics like John Barrell, Ann Bermingham, and Stephen Copley—whose works he summarises as focusing on “the links between aesthetics and social changes in the ownership of property, urbanization, and the gendering of domestic tourism” in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain—Leask argues that

analysis of the equivalent aesthetic in British India must look elsewhere for the social and ideological forces underpinning the picturesque movement, considering that Anglo-Indians in this period were forbidden from owning land, that tourism in the domestic ‘leisurely’ sense did not yet exist, and that urbanization was hardly an issue in the overwhelmingly rural and preindustrial society of South Asia.²⁶

He also adds that because of the peculiar political relationship that existed between India and Britain at the time, the Indian Picturesque “needs to be distinguished

²³ Jacqueline M. Labbe, *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Jane Stabler, “Taking Liberties: The Italian Picturesque in Women’s Travel Writing,” *European Romantic Review* 13.1, (2002): 11-22.

²⁴ Leask, *Curiosity*, 167; Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 6.

²⁵ Leask, *Curiosity*, 6.

²⁶ Leask, *Curiosity*, 167. See also John Barrell, *The Dark Side of Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rural Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley, Calif. and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, eds., *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

from the representational practices marking early nineteenth-century ‘settler colonialism’ in South Africa, Australasia, or North America.”²⁷

In relation to what Bernard S. Cohn had earlier defined as the “survey modality,” an investigative modality in which the British sought to accumulate knowledge about India through a range of scientific and quasi-scientific practices with the aim of ‘knowing’ India through these range of ‘facts,’ Leask suggests the presence of what he terms the “picturesque modality.”²⁸ According to Leask, the “picturesque modality” was meant as an antithetical visual discourse to the “survey modality,” and represented itself as being anti-utilitarian and seemingly uninterested in the cultural politics of British India as it sought simply to capture images of the Indian landscape for visual pleasure.²⁹ It also worked in the manner of creating a “painterly ‘screening effect’” thus insulating the European traveller from unsavoury Indian scenes of famine, poverty and squalor by allowing them to imagine the scenes before them as artistic representations rather than harsh realities.³⁰ The representational strength of these images can be seen in the popularity of Picturesque paintings sent back home to England by artists like William Hodges and Thomas and William Daniells, as well as the artists whom their works inspired.³¹

²⁷ Leask, *Curiosity*, 167-168.

²⁸ Leask, *Curiosity*, 163. See also Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4-7.

²⁹ Leask, *Curiosity*, 166-170.

³⁰ Leask, *Curiosity*, 169.

³¹ See Mildred Archer and Ronald Lightbown, *India Observed: India as Viewed by British Artists, 1760-1860* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum in association with Trefoil Books, 1982).

While this development of these Picturesque images is a subject which I elaborate on in Chapter 2, it suffices here to say that the export and circulation of these Indian images amongst the British public back home effectively created a commodity of the Indian landscape. As Pramod K. Nayar observes, these paintings of India “reminded the English that the distant exotic was now a part of the British empire, of the everyday, and of their imagination as well.”³² Moreover, the manner of viewing encouraged by the Picturesque in terms of dividing the land into its constituent parts (this will be further elaborated in the following chapter) meant that “the picturesque aesthetic set about ‘organizing’ British India for consumption in the imperial metropolis” just as administrative surveys had rendered parts of the Indian landscape open to British economic exploitation.³³ As a result, despite its seemingly disinterested stance, the “picturesque modality” was nevertheless still implicated within Anglo-Indian politics.

Before we look further at the politics of the Indian Picturesque in Chapter 2, we first take a step back in the following chapter and build an understanding of the Picturesque as it developed from its origins in Europe.

³² Pramod K. Nayar, *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire*, (Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 60.

³³ Leask, *Curiosity*, 169.

CHAPTER 1

The Picturesque: Origins and Development

There is a general consensus among scholars of the Picturesque that the word is an anglicisation of the French “pittoresque” and Italian “pittoresco”—generally meaning “in the manner of painting”—although it was in only the latter half of the eighteenth century that the term first began to be used in relation to landscape.³⁴ This came about as part of the process of the eighteenth century’s aestheticisation of land, in effect, the transformation of land into landscape. As Malcolm Andrews explains:

in the conversion of land into landscape a perceptual process has already begun whereby that material [land] is prepared as an appropriate subject for the painter or photographer, or simply for absorption as a gratifying aesthetic experience.³⁵

In her study of the rustic tradition in English landscape painting, Ann Bermingham suggests that the agrarian revolution in eighteenth-century England was a main catalyst for this conceptual shift.³⁶ Through the process of enclosure, more land came under cultivation, dramatically increasing the wealth of the landowning class, while the power and prestige associated with landowning also increased as smaller farms were bought out by larger ones. This, in turn, succeeded in widening the class division that would later become one of the underlying ordering

³⁴ Copley and Garside, *Politics of the Picturesque*, 3.

³⁵ Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

³⁶ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 9.

principles of the Picturesque. According to Bermingham, as the physical appearance of the English countryside changed with larger portions of land being “lost” to agricultural production, there occurred a simultaneous move towards “recovering” that loss in the form of artistic enjoyment.³⁷ The lyrical works of John Clare, George Crabbe, and William Wordsworth demonstrated nostalgia for rural values, while the topographical studies of Paul Sandby gained prominence in the pictorial arts, along with similar manifestations such as the outdoor conversation piece.³⁸

However, what is possibly the most obvious example of this “imaginative recovery” can be seen in the period’s development of the landscape garden. Affordable only to the more wealthy landowners, the landscape garden’s entire “aesthetic effect depended on a completely non-functional, non-productive use of land.”³⁹ Often sharing a border with agricultural lands, and separated only by a ha-ha (a deep narrow trench used in place of a fence or hedge), these gardens also represented the ultimate aestheticisation and commodification of the English countryside. The principles of symmetry and order that had governed the formal French style of gardens previously in England were replaced by attempts to recreate the “natural” environment that had been lost through enclosure. Ironically, as landscape gardens grew more extensive, more of the natural

³⁷ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 9.

³⁸ See also John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century*, (Baltimore; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1976); Chapter 4 of Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); I elaborate on the outdoor conversation piece and other styles of landscape paintings in Chapter 2.

³⁹ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 9, 13.

environment was destroyed to create this artificial “naturalness” to the point that “occasionally whole villages that stood in the way of a prospect or an improvement were destroyed and rebuilt elsewhere.”⁴⁰ As Bermingham observes, an inverse (and similarly ironic) relationship existed between landscape gardens and the enclosed plots of agricultural land in that

[w]hereas the garden put a premium on informal and irregular plantings and earthworks, enclosure divided the landscape and regulated its appearance. [...] As the real landscape began to look increasingly artificial, like a garden, the garden began to look increasingly natural, like the pre-enclosed landscape.⁴¹

The expertise of landscape gardeners like William Kent, and later Lancelot “Capability” Brown and Humphry Repton, became much sought after as landowners strove to fashion their properties after the existing taste. One such garden was Stowe at Buckinghamshire, where Brown himself received his critical training. It was in describing this garden that, as Andrews points out, William Gilpin’s first recorded published use of the term “picturesque” occurs.⁴²

Addison, Burke, and Gilpin

While Gilpin has often been credited as being one of the prime originators of the Picturesque, the aesthetic concept had in fact existed (in the public consciousness) even before his initial usage of the term. In his series of essays published in *The Spectator* in 1712, Joseph Addison had suggested that there are three sources of “pleasures of the imagination,” resulting from the sight of what is great,

⁴⁰ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 11.

⁴¹ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 13-14.

⁴² Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1989), 48.

uncommon, or beautiful respectively.⁴³ According to Addison, an encounter with “greatness,” which he defines as “the largeness of a whole view, considered as one entire piece” results in the spectator being “flung into a pleasing astonishment at such unbounded views, and feel[ing] a delightful stillness and amazement in the soul at the apprehension of them.”⁴⁴ Examples of such great sights include “the prospects of an open champaign [sic] country, a vast uncultivated desert, [...] huge heaps of mountains, high rocks and precipices, or a wide expanse of waters.”⁴⁵ Addison divides objects of beauty, however, into two categories—the kind of beauty that each organism finds within members of its own species, and the kind that exists outside one’s respective species but can be found within the several products of art and nature. When encountering the former, Addison claims that the spectator is struck “with an inward joy [which] spreads a cheerfulness and delight through all its faculties” and this results in the continued propagation of the species.⁴⁶ The second kind of beauty, he explains:

is apt however to raise in us a secret delight, and kind of fondness for the places or objects in which we discover it. This consists either in the gaiety or variety of colours, in the symmetry and proportion of parts, in the arrangement and disposition of bodies or in a just mixture and concurrence of all together.⁴⁷

Alongside these two categories, lies the “uncommon,” that which “raises a pleasure in the imagination, because it fills the soul with an agreeable surprise, gratifies its curiosity, and gives it an idea of which it was not before possessed.” Because of the

⁴³ Addison, *The Spectator*, No.412, June 23, 1712 from Addison, Joseph and Richard Steele. *The Spectator*. Vol. 3. edited by Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 540. All future references will be made to this edition.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Addison, *The Spectator*, No.412, June 23, *op.cit.*, 542.

⁴⁷ Addison, *The Spectator*, No.412, June 23, *op.cit.*, 543-544.

variation to human life that it offers, the uncommon, Addison argues, is not only a separate category on its own but is also one which has the ability to affect the other two, “improv[ing] what is great or beautiful, and afford[ing] the mind a double entertainment.”⁴⁸

Nearly half a century later, Edmund Burke, having read Addison while a student at Trinity College, developed these ideas in his own aesthetic treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757). While Addison’s essays emphasized the visual stimulation afforded by these aesthetic categories, Burke was concerned with a more holistic and corporeal reaction engendered by an experience of the sublime and the beautiful. In a manner similar to his predecessor, Burke explains that the smooth curves and delicate proportions of the beautiful appealed to male sexual desire, thus driving a species to reproduce itself. Burke’s Sublime (like Addison’s “greatness”) also elicits feelings of astonishment, which moves the spectator by appealing to his sense of self-preservation.

The key difference between the *Enquiry* and Addison’s essays lies in Burke’s dropping of Addison’s third category—the uncommon (also called “the new” or “the novel”). While Burke does address the appeal of novelty at the start of his treatise, he very quickly dismisses its resultant response, “curiosity,” as being “the most superficial of all the affections.”⁴⁹ This third category was then reclaimed by theorists like William Gilpin and more specifically, Uvedale Price, who would later

⁴⁸ Addison, *The Spectator*, No.412, June 23, *op.cit.*, 541-542.

⁴⁹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: 1757), 2.

propose the Picturesque to be an aesthetic category falling midway between the sublime and the beautiful.⁵⁰

In his *Dialogue Upon the Gardens...at Stow* (1748), Gilpin presents a discussion between two gentlemen, Polyphthon and Callophilus, upon visiting the country estate at Stowe. As they begin their leisurely stroll, the former very quickly proclaims the gardens to be “vastly picturesque,” and although Gilpin does not define the term here—he only begins to formally do so in his *Essay on Prints* (1768) and in his later writings—the *Dialogue* establishes the key ideas that will shape the Picturesque aesthetic as it comes to be manifested later on.⁵¹ For this reason, I have chosen it to be my starting point in my explication of the dominant characteristics of the Picturesque aesthetic according to Gilpin.

Before embarking on the *Dialogue* itself, Gilpin first lays out the aims of his project in his ‘Advertisement’. It is here that we get the first sign of the Picturesque’s capacity for moving beyond the realm of visual representation as the author describes what can effectively be called his verbal sketch, in terms of a visual image. In a self-deprecating gesture and by way of apology, he presents his work as a painting, with himself as the “mere Bungler” of an artist especially in relation to the master artists he compares himself with: Titian and Poussin. He then proceeds to take this painting analogy a step further by advising his readers that what he is about to present “is not designed to be considered as a Finished piece,” and claims that he would be happy if it were appreciated as a “half Draught [draft] or at best a

⁵⁰ This idea of the Picturesque being the midway was also already suggested (perhaps unconsciously) by Addison. Although he does not explicitly say so, in his expositions of each of the three “sources” of pleasure, he always places the “uncommon” in the middle.

⁵¹ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 5.

coloured Sketch.”⁵² He also further admits to the mistake of not having taken the “View [...] from the spot as it ought to have been, but [reproducing it] from [his] Memory and a few loose Scratches,” something he will later advise Picturesque tourists against doing when encountering Picturesque scenes.⁵³ Although critics often overlook it, this Advertisement is important; even before Gilpin presents his aesthetic observations, and therefore even before the term “Picturesque” is used, there is already the suggestion that the Picturesque is a category that can be applied to a variety of different aesthetic forms, in this case, the literary as well as the visual. From its earliest usage then, the Picturesque has a literary application, and it is this literary use of the Picturesque that this thesis examines as I explore how a visual aesthetic comes to be translated into the written form and applied to the context of British India.

Returning to the actual text of the *Dialogue*, we can see that Gilpin already begins to lay out what he deems to be the characteristic elements of the Picturesque: irregularity, roughness, variety, contrast and pictorial composition. Although he will develop the importance of each of these features in his later works they are briefly touched upon here. Callophilus, for example, explains to his friend that the ruin they come across very early on is a visually pleasing addition to the lake precisely because of its roughness and irregular outlines: “Regularity and Exactness excite no manner of Pleasure in the Imagination, unless they are made use of to contrast with something of an opposite kind.”⁵⁴ He also later

⁵² Gilpin, *Dialogue*, iv.

⁵³ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, iv.

⁵⁴ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 5.

enthusiastically proclaims that “[s]o great a variety of beautiful Objects, and all so happily disposed, make a most delightful Picture.”⁵⁵ The importance placed on the qualities of roughness and irregularity is explained in greater detail in Gilpin’s *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty* (1792), where he attempts to directly address the question “What is that quality in objects, which particularly marks them as picturesque?”⁵⁶ Before we look to his answer, it needs to be acknowledged that his formulation of the question is in itself a significant point in his understanding of the Picturesque. In his view, the Picturesque is something that an object possesses, be it intrinsically or after some physical change as a result of the passage of time, or from an external act of “improvement” on the part of the Picturesque artist. This idea of the Picturesque “quality” of an object will later come to be contested by Richard Payne Knight, who argues that it is not the object itself that is Picturesque, but the way of looking at it.

Drawing from Burke’s ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime, Gilpin however sees roughness as “that particular quality which makes objects chiefly pleasing in painting” and defines it against Burke’s view that “smoothness” is what invokes beauty.⁵⁷ Gilpin proposes the example of a piece of Palladian architecture, whose perfect proportions and smoothness make it “highly pleasing” but not good in a picture. According to him:

Should we wish to give it picturesque beauty, we must use the mallet,
instead of the chisel: we must beat down one half of it, deface the other,

⁵⁵ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 14.

⁵⁶ William Gilpin, *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape: to which is added a poem, on Landscape Painting* (London: 1792), 4.

⁵⁷ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 6.

and throw the mutilated members around in heaps. In short, from a smooth building we must turn it into a rough ruin.⁵⁸

Related to the quality of roughness is the amount of variety displayed by the object or scene in question. As Gilpin explains in his *Essay on Picturesque Beauty* (1792), rough objects tend also to have a greater variation in colour and in the ways in which the different surfaces catch and reflect light.⁵⁹ Similarly, when considering an entire scene, a greater variety of objects make for a more Picturesque composition as opposed to a vast unchanging vista. However, Gilpin is quick to clarify that, despite the varied elements, the focus should still be on the scene as a whole, with the varied elements being understood as functioning together to form a coherent picture. As he explains, “the province of the picturesque eye is to survey nature; not to anatomize matter [...] It comprehends an extensive tract at each sweep. It examines parts, but never descends to particles.”⁶⁰ Moreover, as Addison had suggested in relation to his explanation of the aesthetic appeal of the uncommon and the new, variety is also central to creating novelty as it results in an environment in which “the mind is every instant called off to something new, and the attention not suffered to dwell too long and waste itself on any particular object.”⁶¹ In Addison’s view, a singular object can also display variety by being in constant motion because it offers pleasant agitation and relief to a mind tired and

⁵⁸ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 7–8. What has often caused confusion and censure amongst both contemporary and modern scholars of the Picturesque is Gilpin’s usage of the combined term “picturesque beauty.” Uvedale Price is especially incensed by what he sees as an aesthetic misnomer. He offers his own definition of the term and objects to Gilpin’s term Picturesque Beauty because he sees the two as distinctly separate. According to him, the Picturesque is an aesthetic that exists mid-way between the Sublime and the Beautiful. He does, however, concede that a landscape can have components of all three aesthetics. See Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, 39.

⁵⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 20–21.

⁶⁰ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 26.

⁶¹ Addison, *The Spectator*, No.412, June 23, *op.cit.*, 541.

bored by fixity. Examples of such objects in motions include “rivers, jetteaus, or falls of water”; indeed, the characters in Gilpin’s *Dialogue* discuss how much more pleasant it would have been if the gardens had been adorned with “a crystal Stream, rolling over a Bed of Pebbles” as opposed to what Polyphthon derisively terms “this stagnate Pool.”⁶² Unable to effect this change, Polyphthon can only lament: “we cannot make Nature, the utmost we can do is to mend her.”⁶³

It is with this statement that Gilpin introduces one of the key paradoxes of the Picturesque: the idea that the viewer may appreciate nature and the natural, while simultaneously feeling the need to “improve” it.⁶⁴ Callophilus adequately summarises this conflicting impulse in the following remarks:

I am I find almost as enthusiastic a Lover of Nature as you are. Yet tho’ I can allow her to have excellent *Fancy*, I do not think she has the best *Judgement*. Tho’ Nature is an admirable *Colourist*, her *Composition* is very often reliable to Censure. For which Reason I am for her having placed under the Direction of *Art*.⁶⁵

Addison also provides an early example of this conflict in his observations about nature and art. In Paper IV of his essay, Addison first claims that the works of nature are more pleasing to the imagination than those of art, but then appears to contradict himself when he proclaims that “we find the works of nature still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of art.”⁶⁶ In an attempt to qualify his statement, he subsequently draws upon the distinction he had made at the start of his discussion between the primary and secondary pleasures of the imagination.

⁶² Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 23.

⁶³ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 23.

⁶⁴ Landscape gardeners like Capability Brown were often referred to as “improvers,” both by proponents of landscape gardening as well as their critics (in this case, the term was used ironically).

⁶⁵ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 25-26. Capitalisations and emphasis in original.

⁶⁶ Addison, *The Spectator*, No.414, June 25, 1712. *op.cit*, 549.

There, he had denoted the primary pleasures of the imagination as those “which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes,” while the secondary pleasures are those “which flow from the ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious.”⁶⁷ Based on these distinctions, he argues that works of nature which resemble art are superior because they evoke both primary and secondary sources of pleasure:

in this case our pleasure rises from a double principle, from the agreeableness of the objects to the eye, and from their similitude to other objects: we are pleased as well with comparing their beauties as with surveying them, and can represent them to our minds either as copies or originals.⁶⁸

It is this process of recollection and the act of tracing resemblances between nature and art that gives certain scenes in nature an added appeal. Thus, Addison is not so much arguing for the supremacy of art over nature as he is for a need to impose an aesthetic framework on nature. The Picturesque comes to provide this aesthetic framework.

Nature needs to be helped along if there is a desire for pictorial organisation, and Gilpin reminds us of this once again in his *Essay on the Art of Sketching Landscape*: “We must ever recollect that nature is most defective in composition; and must be a little assisted. Her ideas are too vast for picturesque use, without the restraint of rules.”⁶⁹ Because composition is of the utmost importance, in Gilpin’s view, the Picturesque artist has the same amount of power as Nature (and by

⁶⁷ Addison, *The Spectator*. No. 411, June 21, 1712, *op.cit.* 537.

⁶⁸ Addison, *The Spectator*, No.414, June 25, 1712, *op.cit.* 550.

⁶⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 67.

extension natural time) when it comes to creating or adapting a scene. As he explains in the same essay:

But whether I represent an object, or a scene, I hold myself at perfect liberty, in the first place, to dispose the foreground as I please; restrained only by the analogy of the country. I take up a tree here, and plant it there. I pare a knoll, or make an addition to it. I remove a piece of paling—a cottage—a wall—or any removable object, which I dislike. In short, I do not so much mean to exact a liberty of introducing what does not exist; as of making a few of those simple variations, of which all ground is easily susceptible, and which time itself indeed is continually making.⁷⁰

While this desire to control nature, or to “play God” in a sense, is evident in landscape architecture where nature is literally being shaped to the desires of the architect and property owner—for example in the creation of rolling hills and artificial lakes, as well as the strategic planting of trees to form the perfect framing apparatus—the obsessive desire for the perfect composition is most salient in the artistic theories of Picturesque painting.

Heavily influenced by the French and Italian artists like Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, Gaspard Dughet (Nicholas Poussin’s brother-in-law who later adopted his last name), and Salvator Rosa, the English Picturesque artists adopted and adapted these “classic” models of landscape paintings in their use of colouring and pictorial composition.⁷¹ While the mellow tints and “Italian” light that often illuminated these painted scenes gradually came to be replaced by ones more befitting the English landscape, the structural division of the landscape into foreground, middle-ground, and background largely remained unaltered. As

⁷⁰ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 68.

⁷¹ For more on the development of Picturesque painting, see William Vaughan, *British Painting: The Golden Age from Hogarth to Turner* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999); Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England: A Study Chiefly of the Influence of Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa on English Taste, 1700-1800* (London: F. Cass, 1965).

Andrews points out, “[this] tripartite structure was accompanied by the device of the repoussir object, the foreground framing trees, or the tree and the ruin, or mountain sides, to prevent one’s eye from straying outside the canvas and to push it into the middle distance.”⁷² Over time, these devices became conventions and it is these compositional conventions that make paintings of the Picturesque genre so easily recognisable.

As Andrews goes on to explain, what was also striking about these devices was the way in which their functions and terminology echoed those of the theatre: “[t]he simplification of Claude’s characteristic compositional pattern could only encourage analogy with the theatre—framing trees resembling the wings in a stage set.”⁷³ He also observes how theatrical terms like “side screens” and “distances” came to form the popular vocabulary of the Picturesque tourist, amateur artist, and landscape designer, and he attributes this aesthetic crossover (from stage to painting to landscape architecture) to the fact that “several prominent landscape painters in the eighteenth century worked for the theatre at some point in their careers.”⁷⁴ While this aesthetic crossover in itself serves as an example of the capaciousness of the Picturesque and its ability to embrace a variety of artistic sources and inspirations, what makes it particularly interesting in the context of the subject of this thesis is that we see this mixing of artistic genres happening again and again in the artistic depictions of India by European artists. This practice will be addressed in Chapter 2 where I examine how different artistic modes—of

⁷² Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 29.

⁷³ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 29.

⁷⁴ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 30.

which the Picturesque was just one, but one especially applied to the work of women (amateur) artists and women's response to landscape—came to be applied and modified in attempts to convey a visual image of India. Given the Picturesque's capacity for mutability, it is not surprising that it was one of the aesthetics that was translated into the Indian context.

Picturesque composition does not only employ theatrical terminology; it also invokes parallels with the theatre in its treatment of the observational gaze. Often metonymically referred to as the Picturesque “eye,” the gaze, as Gilpin explains in his *Essay on Picturesque Beauty*, is meant

to survey nature; not to anatomize matter. It throws it's [sic] glances around in the broad-cast stile. It comprehends an extensive tract at each sweep. It examines parts, but never descends to particles.⁷⁵

Earlier on in this chapter we saw how Gilpin believed a variety of objects should come together to form a coherent whole. The statement quoted above is based on this same principle, as the gaze he summons here is primarily concerned with the overall composition of the scene being looked at, much like the gaze of the theatrical spectator. The different compositional elements that form a Picturesque scene are also important only in so far as they interact with one another to form a coherent picture in a way that is similar to how the *mise-en-scène* of a theatrical performance works to create a desired effect imagined by the stage director.⁷⁶ The Picturesque scene thus becomes the equivalent of a visual tableau, as motion is

⁷⁵ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 26.

⁷⁶ Although now commonly used in contemporary film theory and criticism, the term was originally applied to the theatre.

arrested, or, in the words of Emily Eden, “nature [is] caught and fixed.”⁷⁷ If nature is fixed, it is done so for the consumption of the Picturesque viewer, whose appetite for Picturesque scenes is insatiable but paradoxically only met by this temporary fixing of a vista. As Gilpin also comments in the *Dialogue*, through the words of Callophilus:

After surfeiting itself with the Feast here provided for, the Eye, by using a little Exercise in travelling about the Country, grows hungry again, and returns to the Entertainment with fresh Appetite.⁷⁸

The personification of the ‘Eye’ and the depiction of its roving appetite effectively capture the consuming nature of the Picturesque gaze. What is ironic here is that while Picturesque landscape painting has been used, as Bermingham has observed, as a form of “imaginative recovery” for the loss caused by the extreme consumption of the English countryside through enclosure, a different kind of consumer attitude is now encouraged, albeit under the rubric of aesthetic appreciation. As Callophilus continues to explain, the Picturesque eye will not be content with “a Narrow Compass, but (as soon as the Novelty of the Sight is over) will begin to grow dissatisfied, till the whole Limits of the Horizon be given it to range through.”⁷⁹

Picturesque travel

Polyphthon, picking up on his companion’s words, compares the roving Picturesque eye to a wandering bee who remains “discontented, unless it be allowed to wander

⁷⁷ Emily Eden, ‘*Up the Country*’: *Letters Written to Her Sister from the Upper Provinces of India* (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), 147.

⁷⁸ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 54.

⁷⁹ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 54.

o'er the Country, and be its own Caterer."⁸⁰ This image of the wandering bee in search of new flowers to pollinate is significant in relation to Gilpin's contribution to the idea of Picturesque travel. In his essay on the subject, he offers Picturesque travel as an alternative end for those who travel without any important purposes. He states that the object of such forms of travel should be the search for "beauty of every kind, which either art, or nature can produce" and that upon finding them, the amusement of the traveller "arises from the employment of the mind in examining the beautiful scenes [he has] found."⁸¹ His treatment of travel as something solely concerned with the "attainment of the object" (with the object here being scenes of "picturesque beauty") is in line with the consuming attitude that the Picturesque mode seems to promote. Gilpin develops this further when he explains that the other source of amusement that arises from such travels comes from capturing the scenes in sketches so that they can be used to trigger memories later on. He even goes so far as to propose that "[t]here may be more pleasure in recollecting, and recording, from a few transient lines, the scenes we have admired, than in the present enjoyment of them," and justifies this claim by suggesting that:

tho [sic] it may be a calmer species of pleasure, it is more uniform, and uninterrupted. It flatters us too with the idea of a sort of creation of our own; and is unalloyed with that fatigue, which is often a considerable abatement to the pleasures of travelling the wild, and savage parts of nature.⁸²

Gilpin understands the aim of travel to be to obtain something, either for immediate consumption or for use later on. The idea of "travel for travel's sake" or

⁸⁰ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 54.

⁸¹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 42, 48.

⁸² Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 51-52.

the belief that the journey was valuable in itself had not yet gained popularity, and was certainly not within the purview of Gilpin nor the Picturesque explorers he encouraged. Moreover, the Picturesque scene is not to be valued for its own aesthetic appeal but rather for its relation to the observer. It is pleasurable first because the traveller has “obtained” it after the search (“After the pursuit we are gratified with the attainment of the object”), and second, because the observer (if he possess the necessary artistic talents) can capture that scene and transform it into “a sort of creation of [his] own.”⁸³ Once again, we see the paradox in that the aesthetic appreciation of land—which, as Bermingham points out, began as a form of imaginative recovery for the losses due to increased agricultural transformation—succeeds instead in transforming it into another kind of product for consumption.

While Gilpin’s *Essay on Picturesque Travel* provided a theoretical approach to the experience of travel, his guidebooks provided more practical advice on where and how to obtain such Picturesque scenes. Significantly, they directed enthusiasts to places within England and Wales, as opposed to the more “traditional” scenic spots in Italy or France. A shift towards local travel occurred as a result of the popularity of these guidebooks and many began to visit parts of the country that had largely been ignored up till then. On the one hand, as James Buzard has suggested, this increased proportion of travel within the British Isles

⁸³ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 48, 52.

was a practical result of the restrictions against travelling aboard caused by the wars in France.⁸⁴ Simultaneously, as Andrews has observed:

[t]he beginnings of Picturesque tourism in Britain in the middle decades of the eighteenth century coincided with strong challenges to the cultural authority of Greek and Roman literature, with attempts to give an English vernacular flavour to classical genres of poetry, and with experiments in alternative, native traditions, such as those exemplified in Gothic and Celtic revivalism.⁸⁵

As Andrews goes on to explain, while “[t]he earliest tourists tended to draw on the classical writers to enhance their descriptions of scenery,” this began to change as the eighteenth century progressed and there was a “growing impatience with the English neoclassical veneration of foreign cultures” along with a growing belief that what might be applicable to Italy, for example, might not be suited to England.⁸⁶ By the middle of the century, English poets like Milton and Shakespeare had almost supplanted Homer and Virgil in their cultural influence. Andrews cites Milton’s *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* as being particularly important to the formation of Picturesque tastes, as “[t]hese two poems, in their invocations to happiness and Melancholy, often celebrated landscapes which are recognisably more British than Arcadian or Italian.”⁸⁷ This process of national and cultural definition boosted the rediscovery of the natural scenery of England, as local travel became a celebration

⁸⁴ James Buzard, “The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840),” in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 37-52.

⁸⁵ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 4.

⁸⁶ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 11-12.

⁸⁷ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, p.12. This invocation of the English poets is also evident in the travel writings of the Eden, Parks and Postans.

of English national identity just as the growing popularity of the English landscape garden had asserted a sense of Englishness against the French.⁸⁸

Whether for reasons nationalistic or practical, Picturesque tourism in England offered an alternative to the Grand Tour. Traditionally the province of the upper classes, the Grand Tour offered an opportunity for privileged young men to obtain an education in manners and taste to complement the scholarly education they would likely have begun in institutions like Oxford and Cambridge.⁸⁹ As Buzard notes:

The most important destinations, without which the entire enterprise would lose its purpose, were Paris, and Italy (especially Rome, Florence, and Venice). The former was thought to be the natural habitat of refined manners and gracious behaviour necessary to civilised men. [...] The latter was not only 'Nature's Darling' to the visitor from colder northern lands, [...] but the home of classical civilisation, both in its original (ancient Roman) and its recreated (Renaissance) manifestations.⁹⁰

More than just the intangible benefits of culture and taste, a young man on the Grand Tour could, and was expected to, also acquire "cultural booty" in the form of physical works of art obtained from these cultural Meccas.⁹¹ These artefacts were to be displayed at his home and "would testify to the quality of his tastes and surround him with objective confirmations of his self-worth."⁹² In the more puerile

⁸⁸ For more on the English garden and national identity see Anne Helmreich, *The English Garden and National identity: The Competing Styles of Garden Design, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁸⁹ Note that many of these young men would not necessarily have finished their university education in these institutions. For more on the Grand Tour see Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour* and *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1992), James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) and Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

⁹⁰ Buzard, "The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)," 39.

⁹¹ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1997), 207.

⁹² Buzard, "The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)," 40.

sense, the Grand Tour was also a means by which these young men could indulge their sexual urges, sowing their wild oats in a foreign land before returning home and settling into a more sober lifestyle surrounded by physical mementos of their wild youth. In this manner, the cultural artefacts collected on the Tour would serve as socially acceptable substitutes for their sexual conquests in a language that would only be decipherable to those in the elite group of former Grand Tourists.

Given that the Grand Tour was steeped in this very specific set of cultural associations, what exactly did it mean for Picturesque travel within England to take its place?⁹³ As noted above, the Grand Tour was conventionally viewed as the privilege of the upper classes, although John Brewer observes that, by the last third of the eighteenth century, the Tour had become more accessible to members of the “less socially elevated and less well-educated people.”⁹⁴ Nevertheless, because Picturesque tourism of the kind touted by Gilpin was confined to the British Isles, the lower cost of such travel meant that it was more accessible to the masses in the way that the Grand Tour was not. This accessibility was also augmented by the fact that the focus of travel within the bounds of Picturesque tourism was different from that of the Grand Tour. Because the Grand Tour was predominantly a training ground for young gentlemen, the traveller was of prime importance and the landscape itself was secondary to the experiences that these youths were expected to accumulate for their own cultural education. In Picturesque tourism, however,

⁹³ While Buzard alludes to this question in his essay “The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840),” his focus lies mainly on a ‘third’ wave of travel—the phenomenon of mass tourism that, he argues, came about as a result of Picturesque tourism. My focus in the following section, however, is on the specific implications of Picturesque tourism itself.

⁹⁴ Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 632.

the focus appears to shift away from the traveller and onto the landscape itself, as travel was undertaken for the sole purpose of the appreciation of scenic views. However, as we have seen earlier on, the importance that Picturesque theory places on viewing perspective meant that the traveller still retained his position of prime importance even in Picturesque tourism. Land is only transformed into landscape with the ‘correct’ point of view, and Gilpin’s guidebooks aimed at instructing their readers on the precise viewing position to take in order to generate that transformation, regardless of their social status. In this way, Picturesque tourism could be seen as affording power and authority to people who had previously been denied them.

I turn at this point to comment briefly on how Picturesque travel functioned within the context of India, a place at once not entirely foreign because of the strength of British (and other European) presence, yet never adequately “home” because of its vastly different climate and lifestyle. Within the context of India, the process of travel came to combine selected elements of the European Grand Tour and the more local Picturesque agendas laid out by Gilpin’s guidebooks. By virtue of its geographical distance from Britain, mass tourism to the subcontinent at the level being carried out within the British Isles was virtually unheard of in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and travels to India were undertaken by a relatively small group of people. Moreover, the long and arduous nature of the sea voyage with its concomitant perils likened the journey to the more epic travels across the Alps, thus further reducing its availability. Once there, however, travellers in India could take advantage of the land routes between the various regions or sail along the river Ganges and its tributaries.

Duty and (the availability of) leisure, however, dictated the scope and extent of travels within the subcontinent. We see this being demonstrated in the different experiences described by the three writers examined in this thesis. Bound by her role as the Governor-General's sister and de facto "first lady" or "*Burra Memsahib*," Emily Eden was obliged to accompany her brother and his retinue on their political tour 'up country', while Fanny Parks' less socially-demanding position as the wife of a civil servant in the East India Company enabled her to travel extensively at leisure.

While the socio-economic makeup of the travellers within India was relatively wide (especially when compared to that of the traditional Grand Tour), with travellers being involved in a range of activities such as trade, commerce or politics, the geographical spaces open to these travellers, and by extension the kinds of experiences enjoyed by them, were sometimes limited by gender and status. Across gender lines, traditional "female" spaces like the zenana were not accessible to male visitors, while status often determined the extent to which British travellers had access to spaces occupied by Indian royalty and noblemen: Eden's position as the sister of the Governor-General, for example, enabled her to have an audience with the great Punjab ruler Ranjit Singh, while Postans and Parks could only gain access to the courts of lesser nobles.

Travelling in India also took various forms. Some, like the Eden family, travelled to form strategic political alliances, some for touristic pleasure, while others traversed the Indian regions for the sole purpose of obtaining information to aid in the British administration of the region. Marianne Postans, as we see in

Chapter 5, was an indirect example of the latter group as she sought to combat gendered restrictions and contribute to existing knowledge about India through her own writings.

Whatever the purpose, travellers in India were nevertheless assaulted with a barrage of images and other sensory stimuli that were very different from anything they had come to experience back home. As a result, many turned to the Picturesque as a useful means of processing this novel and unfamiliar terrain, or, in the words of Ray, “to come to grips with their foreign surroundings on their own terms.”⁹⁵ As an aesthetic, the Picturesque was perfectly suited for this role as it offered the comforts of home and the familiar while still remaining capacious and malleable enough to encompass, and manipulate, specifically Indian tropes. Its fluidity and the fact that, as Leask comments, “the picturesque already represented the British landscape in an exotic, Italianate idiom, [made it] particularly suitable for blending the aesthetic qualities of tropical with temperate landscapes in the Indian context.”⁹⁶ I elaborate on this in the next chapter, but before I do so, it is necessary to return to the development of the Picturesque and its concomitant politics within Britain before lines of continuity can be drawn to the practice of the Picturesque once it had been transplanted to India.

⁹⁵ Romita Ray, “The Memsahib’s Brush: Anglo-Indian Women and the Art of the Picturesque, 1830-1880” in *Orientalism Transposed: The Impact of the Colonies on British Culture*, eds. Julie F. Codell and Dianne Sachko Macleod (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 90.

⁹⁶ Leask, *Curiosity*, 166.

Price, Knight, and (the politics of) taste

The level of egalitarianism and populism encouraged by Picturesque tourism in Britain was problematic for aesthetic theorists Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, who adopted a more elitist attitude towards the exercise of the Picturesque and resisted “[w]hat they defined as the delicate and sophisticated taste of a select few [becoming] the popular pastime of the bourgeois.”⁹⁷ As Buzard observes, in Gilpin’s guidebooks, the author “treated the picturesque as a practical manner for increasing the enjoyment of travellers, not as a topic for abstract philosophising” and it was only upon writing his essay *On Picturesque Beauty* a decade later that an attempt was made at a theoretical definition of the term.⁹⁸ In comparison, Price’s and Knight’s ideas of the Picturesque were generally centred on more theoretical expositions as they chose to emphasise the importance of an artistic education to what they saw as the ‘proper’ understanding of the Picturesque.

In 1794, Price published his *Essay on the Picturesque as compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* in which he rails against what he views as the deplorable misunderstanding and misapplication of the Picturesque carried out by those uneducated in the principles of art and “taste.” He is particularly caustic towards landscape architects like Capability Brown, whose status as “improvers” he ironically questions, accusing them of lacking the necessary artistic education for the proper understanding of the Picturesque and the development of “the just principles of taste.”⁹⁹ According to Price, these can only be obtained from the study

⁹⁷ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 83.

⁹⁸ Buzard, “The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840),” 45.

⁹⁹ Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, 2.

of great works of art and he cites examples from artists like Rubens, Correggio, Claude and Reynolds in his essay, using their works to illustrate what he deems as the standards of good art:

In point of brilliancy, of such extreme splendour of light as is on the verge of glare, no pictures can stand in competition with those of Rubens: sometimes those lights are almost unmixed with shade; at other times they burst from dark shadows, they glance on the different parts of the picture, and produce that flicker (as it sometimes is called) so captivating to the eyes; but so dangerous when attempted by inferior artists and less masters of the principles of harmony than that great painter.¹⁰⁰

Correggio's principal attention (in point of form) was directed to flow of outline and gradual variation; of this he never entirely lost sight even in his most capricious fore-shortenings; and his style of light and shadow is so congenial, that the one seems the natural consequence of the other. He is always cited as the most perfect model of those soft and insensible transitions, of the union of effect, which, above everything else, impresses the general idea of loveliness.¹⁰¹

As he goes on to explain, despite being presented with the natural environment, it is important that artistic copies of nature be studied "that we may not lose the benefit of what is of such great moment in all arts and sciences, the accumulated experience of past ages."¹⁰² As a result, he advises landscape architects to draw ideas of good composition from existing works of art:

with respect to the art of improving we may look upon pictures as a set of experiments of the different ways in which trees, buildings, water, &c. may be disposed, grouped, and accompanied in the most beautiful and striking manner [...] many of those objects, that are scarcely marked as they lie scattered over the face of nature, when brought together in the compass of a small space of canvas, are forcibly impressed upon the eye, which by that means learns how to separate, to select, and combine.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, 113-114.

¹⁰¹ Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, 115.

¹⁰² Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, 4.

¹⁰³ Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, 5.

More than just being concerned with the correct methodology of Picturesque landscape design, Price was also interested in the social distinction that he saw as being linked with artistic practice. For example, while he advocates “view[ing] objects with a painter’s eye,” a footnote which explains the term betrays his elitism as he draws a distinction between those who simply profess to be artists and those who actually possess artistic sensibilities:

when I speak of a painter, I do not mean merely a professor, but any man (artist or not) of a liberal mind, with a strong feeling for nature as well as art, who has been in the habit of comparing both together.

A man of a narrow mind and little sensibility, in or out of a profession is always a bad judge [...] and possible a worse judge for being an artist.¹⁰⁴

For Price, sensibility is a quality possessed by a select few and no amount of instruction (professional or otherwise) can make up for the lack of this intrinsic superiority. Such comments echo those of Addison who in his first essay on the *Pleasures of the Imagination* famously claimed that

A man of polite imagination is let into a great many pleasures, that the vulgar are not capable of receiving. He can converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, they align Price with the gentlemen connoisseurs of the eighteenth century who, as Brewer remarks, sometimes saw themselves as having more authority on judging artistic merit than even painters themselves.¹⁰⁶

Price’s fellow Picturesque theorist, Richard Payne Knight was one such connoisseur. Like his counterpart, Knight too was critical of Capability Brown,

¹⁰⁴ Price. *An Essay on the Picturesque*, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 411, June 21, 1712, *op.cit.*, 538.

¹⁰⁶ Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 256-259.

whose methods of “false improvement” and “pretended taste” he criticises in *The Landscape: a Didactic Poem* (1794).¹⁰⁷ The work itself was dedicated to Price, whom he had originally approached to publish his poem alongside the latter’s *Essay on the Picturesque*. Price acknowledged this flattering gesture in his Preface, explaining that his decision not to accede to Knight’s suggestion was based on the fact that “[his] own work had then taken too much of a form and character of its own to be incorporated with anything else.”¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, he does admit that “the general tendency is so much the same, and our notions of improvement are upon the whole so similar, that my work may, in many points serve as a commentary upon his.”¹⁰⁹

While the pair had a mutual disdain for the contemporary practice of landscape modification under the mantra of the Picturesque, they did differ however in their understanding of the Picturesque itself. In both his *Essay on the Picturesque* and his later *Dialogue on the Distinct Characters of the Picturesque and the Beautiful* (1801), Price attempts to define the Picturesque as an aesthetic category that lay between those of the Sublime and Beautiful already defined by Edmund Burke.¹¹⁰ In doing so, he (and Gilpin before him) speaks of the presence of an innate quality in objects, which made them Picturesque.

Knight, however, censured this belief, claiming instead that the Picturesque (like Beauty) lay not in the object of view but in the mind of the beholder—that it

¹⁰⁷ Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape, a Didactic Poem in Three Books*, (London: 1794), lines 303-304.

¹⁰⁸ Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, v.

¹⁰⁹ Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, v.

¹¹⁰ Uvedale Price, *A Dialogue on the Distinct Characters of the Picturesque and the Beautiful: in answer to the objections of Mr. Knight*, (London, 1801).

was essentially a way of seeing that only a properly educated spectator could successfully achieve. As far as Knight was concerned, this elite group was essentially made up of connoisseurs who had the money and leisure to cultivate their tastes and educate their minds.¹¹¹ Knight himself was a member of the Society of the Dilettanti, which Brewer identifies as “the first English institutional embodiment of the culture of the connoisseur” whose rules of election “recognized the central place of the Grand Tour in the making of the connoisseur, and [whose] first members had all made their pilgrimages to the treasures of the Mediterranean.”¹¹² Given the prominence that both the Grand Tour and social and cultural connoisseurship associated with it played in Knight’s assessment of aesthetic taste, it is unsurprising that he, like Price, recoiled from the idea of philistine travellers seeking to judge the Picturesque merits of the English countryside.

Despite this cultural aversion, both theorists did share a common ground with Picturesque tourists: the belief in the principle of the association of ideas. As Andrew Ballantyne explains, “In eighteenth-century aesthetic theory the role of the association of ideas was seen as important in the appreciation of any art, whether it be painting or literature.”¹¹³ In its simplest sense, the theory illustrates how one idea was thought to follow another in consciousness if they were associated by a

¹¹¹ C. Stumpf-Condry, S. J. Skedd, “Knight, Richard Payne (1751–1824),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2014 [<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/15733>, accessed 7 Oct 2014].

¹¹² Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 256–257.

¹¹³ Andrew Ballantyne, “The Picturesque and its Development,” in *A Companion to Art Theory*, eds. Paul Smith and Caroline Wilde, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 3.

principle of similarity, contiguity or contrast.¹¹⁴ Knight's *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805) was guided by this theory as he sought to examine human sensory perception, association and emotion.¹¹⁵ Similarly, Price's emphasis on landscape designers following the artistic examples of painters in his *Essay on the Picturesque* was an expression of the same theory, albeit in a subtler fashion.

Likewise, the association of ideas was also practiced by Picturesque tourists. As Malcolm Andrews and Alexander Ross point out, Picturesque travel calls for a method of associating scenes from nature with already known paintings as "one of the chief excitements for the Picturesque tourist was the recognition and tracing of resemblances between art and nature" and "[w]hat a place brings to mind is often as important as its physical appearance."¹¹⁶ Addison himself had earlier identified this source of pleasure when he suggested that "we find the works of nature still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of art" because in that situation the observers obtain the same amount of pleasure "in comparing their beauties as with surveying them, and can represent them to our minds either as copies or originals."¹¹⁷ What Addison inadvertently pre-empts in his statement is the referential nature of Picturesque tourism as what was a secondary pleasure for Addison's man of taste, was the Picturesque tourist's primary source of enjoyment.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ For more on the 18th century theory of the association of ideas see Martin Kallich, "The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory: Hobbes, Locke, and Addison," *ELH*, 12.4 (1945), 290-315.

¹¹⁵ Stumpf-Condry and Skedd, "Knight, Richard Payne (1751-1824)."

¹¹⁶ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 39; Alexander M. Ross, *The Imprint of the Picturesque in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 52.

¹¹⁷ Addison, *The Spectator*, 25 June 1712, *op.cit.*, 550.

¹¹⁸ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 39.

However, this act of comparison also resulted in some trepidation, as tourists were “both attracted to the referential nature of picturesque viewing and repelled by the anxiety that such ‘borrowing’ renders their own experience less singular and authentic.”¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, Gilpin suggests that the tourists counter this fear by creating their own sketches of the objects before them, effectively consuming and transforming the scene into their own creation. When this occurs, the resultant product that is presented to the third party viewer (i.e. the viewer of the sketch or painting) is one that has undergone multiple layers of representations: we are faced with a scene that has been viewed through the tourist’s or traveller’s eye, and that was itself also seen through the lens of the memory of an earlier painting. By holding the original at this extended distance, the Picturesque becomes not only a means of framing the image, but also a protective mechanism to shield the tourist from potentially uncomfortable encounters. As Andrews acutely summarises,

The Picturesque tourist is typically a gentleman or gentlewoman engaged in an experiment in controlled aesthetic response to a range of new and often intimidating visual experiences. The new vocabulary, the methodological classification of different kinds of scenery, the development of technical skills in drawing and painting to enable the viewer to ‘fix’ a landscape, the establishment of Stations affording composed prospects—these all formed a subtle psychological protection to the tourist freshly exposed to daunting and often disorienting landscapes. Those terms ‘fix’, ‘station’, and ‘composed’ indicate precisely the nature of this protection, the stability given to these new experiences, by the selection and isolation of landscape components. Untamed landscapes can thus be controlled.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Jill Heydt-Stevenson, “The pleasures of simulacra: rethinking the picturesque in Coleridge’s Notebooks and ‘The Picture; or, The Lover’s Resolution’”, *The Free Library*. 2002 *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 17 Sep. 2014 <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+pleasures+of+simulacra%3a+rethinking+the+picturesque+in+Coleridge's...-a0208109695>.

¹²⁰ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 67.

This method of aesthetic displacement and selective screening is one of the central paradoxes of the Picturesque because, as much as the observer may seek to own, augment, or consume the landscape, he or she remains detached from the realities surrounding it. The Claude Glass, one of the most common accoutrements of the Picturesque tourist serves as a metonym for this strange relationship. Named after the French artist Claude Lorrain, whose landscapes were greatly admired for their melancholic tint, the optical device took many forms, the most common being a convex mirror made of tinted glass that miniaturised the reflected landscape. As part of the optical illusion, details in the distance were largely lost, forming instead an image closer to the beau idéal. This leaves the observer faced with an image that is both reflected and modified. Even times of the day and seasonal variations can be tinkered with by just a simple replacement of the colour and tint of the glass, thus giving the viewer near absolute control over the images/he sees. This artistic license was justified by the claim that one was merely pre-empting what Nature herself would have done with the same landscape in a few hours' or a few months' time.¹²¹ This idealising function of the Claude Glass, coupled with the fact that in order to make use of this device, the viewer would literally have to turn his back on the actual landscape, meant that the observer was always detached from the social and natural realities of what s/he was seeing.

¹²¹ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 70.

Problematic politics

This level of willing detachment and selective blindness was the basis of some of the central critiques of the Picturesque. As scholars have noted, prior to the eighteenth century, topography was regularly viewed in moral terms with feudal responsibilities relating landowners to their dependants.¹²² However, these moral and religious considerations gradually eroded as concerns with the aesthetic and sensuous properties of the land became more prominent and spectators took to topographical explorations as a means of refreshing the senses.¹²³ What suffered as a result of these novel attitudes towards landscape was the sense of obligation and compassion towards poorer members of rural society. This was replaced, as Carole Fabricant explains, by a feeling of contempt as members of the privileged class came to resent what they would have seen as the encroachment of the poor on otherwise pleasant scenes:

the bleakness and the relentlessness of the poor's existence, the tedium of their daily labours, and the grotesque fixity of their lives resulting from their entrapment in a web of circumstances beyond their control [meant] that their landscapes would have lacked appeal for the cultivated spectator, accustomed as he was to surrounding himself with scenery capable of offering constant relief from "so many repeated Shows of the same Things."¹²⁴

Gilpin himself advocated this exercise of selective sight and discriminatory representation, as illustrated in his *Essay on the Art of Sketching Landscape* (refer to indented quotation on page 29 beginning with "But whether I represent an

¹²² Carole Fabricant, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century" in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Ralph Cohen (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 49-50; Birmingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 73-75. See also Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, 3.

¹²³ Fabricant, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape," 49.

¹²⁴ Fabricant, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape," 63.

object, or a scene”). Here, we see that while he may not have advocated the introduction of “what does not exist” when depicting a scene, he does openly admit to removing objects which he “dislike[s]” from it.¹²⁵ This selectiveness of the Picturesque—in terms of what gets represented and how—is the direct result of the primacy placed on composition as Picturesque practitioners are encouraged to focus on the artistic appeal of the scene as a whole at the expense of any unpleasant details.

Similarly, the importance that the Picturesque placed on novelty, variety, and movement was also to be blamed for creating what Fabricant defines as “a visual restlessness and lack of concentration, a somewhat distracted wandering of the eye, legitimized as a submission to nature’s seemingly infinite variety and breadth.”¹²⁶ Such an attitude made it easier for the aesthetically displeasing scenes of rural poverty and suffering to be glossed over or ignored entirely.

This disdain for the plight of the rural poor was further compounded by the Picturesque’s usage of the frame as a conceptual device, as the aesthetics of the frame (metaphorical or otherwise) dictated what was to be focused on by the spectator and what was to be relegated to obscurity. As Fabricant explains once again:

The much discussed analogy between landscape and painting during the century performed a similar function by providing the poet, landscape designer, and spectator alike with a definite “frame” in every sense (a framework of values, a frame of reference) which comprehended within its bounds certain kinds of objects, arranged in particular configurations, while it exiled others to a precarious and nebulous existence beyond the frame, where things became not only invisible but in a very real sense

¹²⁵ This rule was not always adhered to by other Picturesque artists who often added scenic elements not naturally present in the original landscape in order to create a perfectly composed piece of art.

¹²⁶ Fabricant, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape,” 62, 64-65.

inconceivable as well. Architectural as well as landscape design during this period had the effect of relegating features in the environment to a realm of invisibility.¹²⁷

Images of poverty and ruin were often relegated to this “realm of invisibility,” or, if they were acknowledged within this framing device, they were often reconfigured as examples of quaintness and rusticity. In both cases, the stark realities of poverty and hardship were either ignored entirely or replaced with a bucolic idealisation that served to placate the conscience of the Picturesque observer.

What this selective blindness, detachment, and/or reconfiguration of harsh realities exposed was—to borrow John Barrell’s expression—“the dark side” of the Picturesque.¹²⁸ If “improvement” was the catchword of the day, the questions that follow would be “what to improve” and “to whose benefit?”

In the case of the rural poor, we see that aside from the Picturesque observers screening themselves from the suffering that they may have indirectly caused—as discussed earlier, many poorer farmers came to be displaced as a result of land annexation and enclosure—it also benefitted them to maintain this element of rusticity. By not improving the conditions of the rural dwellers, and transforming them into nostalgic symbols of the “simple life” instead, the Picturesque observers are able to recapture a time now lost, effectively creating a living museum of an idealised past that could be revisited at will.¹²⁹ In a similar way, this detachment and dehumanization also allowed the destitute members of society to be abstracted and thus function, as Raimonda Modiano suggests, “as

¹²⁷ Fabricant, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape,” 65.

¹²⁸ See Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*.

¹²⁹ As we shall subsequently see, this idea of the living museum resurfaces in relation to the representation of colonial landscapes and people.

[embodiments of] the landed gentry's ideals of self-sufficiency and independence."¹³⁰

The anti-utilitarian ethos of the Picturesque which placed a higher value on landscape as a commodity for visual consumption of a select few—as opposed to offering practical benefits to the larger society—was another, related problem of the Picturesque. Gilpin himself appears to address this issue in his *Dialogue* when he has Polyphthon and Callophilus launch into a mock argument about the benefits of transforming land for practical use.¹³¹ Polyphthon argues that the building of farmhouses and the mending of highways would be a better use of land, while his companion maintains that the construction of landscape gardens would be more desirable. The latter cites three reasons for this: first that such gardens serve the purpose of the “Improvement of public Taste,” which, he argues, correlates with the increase in public virtue; second, such gardens also provide pleasurable amusement and relaxation to labourers; and third, they serve to raise the opinion of England and its inhabitants in the eyes of foreigners who would otherwise consider them “a stupid, tasteless Set of People, and not worth visiting.”¹³² While Polyphthon appears to continue probing the strength of his companion’s arguments, the entire discussion is eventually rendered facetious when it is revealed that he was merely engaging his comrade in repartee until the rain had passed and that he had shared the latter’s views all along. Rather than engage his readers in a serious

¹³⁰ Raimonda Modiano, “The Legacy of the Picturesque: landscape, property and the ruin,” in *The Politics of the picturesque: literature, landscape, and aesthetics since 1777*, eds. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 196.

¹³¹ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 45-52.

¹³² Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 48-51.

consideration of the social and political ramifications of the Picturesque, Gilpin, as it turns out, simply sidesteps the issue altogether.

Nevertheless, what this particular section of the *Dialogue* serves to illustrate is the problematic nature of the classist considerations of the Picturesque. Although Gilpin's later promotion of Picturesque tourism displayed a more egalitarian approach to travel, the argument that Callophilus makes in the *Dialogue* still has its basis in upper-class privilege. As we have seen in our earlier discussions of the Picturesque views of Price and Knight, the discourse of taste in the eighteenth century was one which favoured an elite group of people with the financial means, education, and leisure with which to cultivate their tastes.

In the political arena, as Barrell explains in *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge*, the ability to think in abstract terms—which was thought to manifest itself in the exercise of “good taste”—was seen as a means of legitimising political authority in the period.¹³³ In order to think in such an abstract manner, however, an individual would first need to possess the independent financial means which would allow himself to be free from the vulgar concerns of personal gain in the pursuit of his livelihood, as only then would he be fit to govern the masses.¹³⁴ Such a system effectively ensured that those already in the upper echelons of society—and who thus already possessed the means to indulge in abstract thinking—would be guaranteed social and political control at the expense of their working class brethren. The rich would get richer (or at least more

¹³³ See John Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: The Macmillan Press, 1992).

¹³⁴ See Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora*, 42.

powerful) and the poor would be ignored or transformed into symbols of quaint rusticity.

Therefore, while Callophilus may seemingly speak for the public good, his comments on the importance of national taste actually bypass the concerns of the proletariat. Similarly, his argument that time spent at such pleasure gardens “makes the Sabbath appear more cheerful to the Labourer after a toilsome Week” naively presupposes a universal access to leisure that was often only affordable to members of the landowning class.¹³⁵

Related to the Picturesque’s attitudes towards class was its relationship with gender. With regard to the Picturesque gaze, critics have often understood the consuming nature of the gaze in gendered terms, with numerous studies published on the implications of the “male gaze” in art. Since this gendered interpretation of the gaze has become almost a truism in critical analysis, it needs little further discussion, other than to point out its relation to the historical development of the Picturesque, as well as its specific importance with regard to this thesis.

As clichéd as it may be, it is important to keep in mind that the aesthetic ideas surrounding the Picturesque were developed by male theorists at a time at which there were very different opportunities available to men and women, particularly with regard to land ownership. Women in the eighteenth century, when the Picturesque came to be developed and popularised, and even up to the period with which this thesis is concerned, had no rights to property, especially in

¹³⁵ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 50-51.

marriage—with the Married Woman’s Property Act only being instituted later in the nineteenth century.¹³⁶

Because the Picturesque was an aesthetic that was originally applied to the treatment of land, land ownership (whether actual or potential) was an important factor in its conceptualisation. As Kim Ian Michasiw has noted, the experience of the Picturesque (or any aesthetic relationship to land) is closely linked with the observer’s joy in surveying the land and dreaming of possessing it. According to him:

the difference between the improving landowner and the disempowered traveller [...] manifests itself in the seductiveness of the landscape. The landowner inevitably perceives his land as subject to him, as an extension of himself—the fiction of ownership banishes the otherness of the land and subsumes the figures of that land under legal categories: tenant, hireling, trespasser, poacher.¹³⁷

Although Michasiw is commenting specifically on the varying levels of engagement with the land—between landowner and traveller—the same can be applied to other pairings in which one of the two is disenfranchised. While it can be argued that the Picturesque relies on an imaginative response to the land and therefore the dream of land possession is just as important, if not more important, than the actual ownership of the land, the fact that the Picturesque was an aesthetic that had a very concrete transformative effect on the land (as demonstrated in the development of landscape gardens and the rise of Picturesque

¹³⁶ Two of the three women writers I address were married women who accompanied their husbands to India (the third was placed in the strange and unique position of being the equivalent of a wife or “First Lady” or *burra memsahib* to her Governor-General brother.) A study of their treatment of the Picturesque cannot therefore ignore their own complex positioning with regard to land and land ownership.

¹³⁷ Kim Ian Michasiw, “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque,” *Representations* 38 (1992): 84.

tourism) meant that the realities surrounding land ownership cannot be ignored when discussing an individual's relationship to his natural environment. Consequently, any anxieties about land possession—as a result of differences in class or gender—would inevitably impede the observer's ability to partake comfortably in the aspect of Picturesque viewing that aligns itself with the impulse to own and control.

While Barrell and Fabricant have focused on differences in class in discussing the politicised relationship between the Picturesque and land ownership, other critics such as Vivien Jones and Indira Ghose have taken the gendered approach in examining the implications of this specifically masculine mode of looking.¹³⁸ As Jones has rightly identified, “[a] set of flexibly analogous signifiers woman/estate/nature/nation—underlies the polemical import of [...] Picturesque theory.”¹³⁹ All four signifiers Jones lists share common relationships with the Picturesque in terms of ideas of conquest, possession and control. Not only are the attitudes towards these four elements often overlapping, but also the language used in contemporary discourse surrounding them. As Jones succinctly states, “In theories of the Picturesque, anxieties about private property and national identity are articulated in terms of voyeurism and sexual possession.”¹⁴⁰

We see this demonstrated in Gilpin's *Dialogue*, for example, when Polyphthon compares the Picturesque eye to a bee not being satisfied with just

¹³⁸ Vivien Jones, “‘The Coquetry of Nature’: Politics and the Picturesque in Women's Fiction,” in *The Politics of the Picturesque: literature, landscape, and aesthetics since 1770*, eds. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 120-144; Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India*.

¹³⁹ Jones, “‘The Coquetry of Nature,’” 121.

¹⁴⁰ Jones, “‘The Coquetry of Nature,’” 121.

pollinating the flowers within its vicinity: “Plant as many Flowers as you will near its Hive, yet still the little Insect will be discontented, unless it be allowed to wander o’er the Country.”¹⁴¹ Not only is Picturesque viewing described in reproductive, and by extension, sexual, terms; the Picturesque spectator is also significantly placed in the position of the more active and virile agent (the bee) who effectively fertilizes (or impregnates) the static flowers. Given the relationship that existed at the time between the notions of sexual agency, virility, and masculinity, it is easy to see how this analogy articulates the gendered association of the Picturesque gaze. This sexualisation of the gaze becomes problematic when the observer and Picturesque practitioner is a woman, not the least because women at the time were expected to be “protected” from anything overtly sexual and thus practically asexualised when it comes to addressing their own carnal needs, but also the fact that when they *were* sexualised, they were seen as objects of conquest and not the conquerors.

Theories of connoisseurship further complicated women’s place in this nexus of (sexual) ownership and conquest because they were often seen as the objects of collection as opposed to collectors themselves. Brewer addresses this conflation of the female with the collected work of art in *The Pleasures of the Imagination* as he observes that “[b]y the late eighteenth century the equation of the object desired by the collector and a beautiful woman had become commonplace.”¹⁴² Similarly, women were denied a place in the field of connoisseurship because of the access to the artistic education it entailed. Even if

¹⁴¹ Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 54.

¹⁴² Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 264.

they did possess the “right” sort of education in terms of knowledge of paintings and art, it was meant to be ornamental and their exercise of this knowledge was expected to be used only as a mark of their gentility.¹⁴³ Moreover, as Bermingham has observed in “The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship,” their display of their artistic knowledge was often carried out only within the confines of the domestic space where they were meant to be looked at and admired.¹⁴⁴ This itself also further problematised women’s place within the Picturesque especially when we take into account the priority of the voyeuristic gaze in Picturesque aesthetic practice.

Beyond the politics associated with certain groups of spectators, the Picturesque was an aesthetic that was also concerned with the politics of a nation at large. Earlier on I have addressed how the Picturesque functioned as a means of creating a sense of English identity through the celebration of the British landscape. While this emphasis on Englishness was important in relation to the previously admired classical ideals of ancient Rome and Greece, it was especially significant in relation to Britain’s greatest rival—France.

In the wake of the French Revolution, Picturesque images of the English countryside with its rural subjects were used to galvanise the British by promoting English values and to create “the image of a stable, unified, almost egalitarian society.”¹⁴⁵ Indeed the French Revolution also features in Knight’s poem *The Landscape* in which the author addresses the horrors of the Revolution in the

¹⁴³ Ann Bermingham, “The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship,” *Oxford Art Journal* 16. 2 (1993), 3-20.

¹⁴⁴ Bermingham, “The Aesthetics of Ignorance,” 4.

¹⁴⁵ Barrell, *The Dark Side of Landscape*, 5.

poem's final stanzas (lines 395–420) and pens an extended footnote reflecting on “the present great convulsion.”¹⁴⁶ While Knight does not make any clear connections between his thoughts on the French Revolution and his ideas of the Picturesque, the mere fact that he chose to publish his political ideas within the context of an aesthetic treatise speaks to recognition of the role that aesthetics can play in the political field.

Knight's attempt at political commentary can be seen as an inverse of Edmund Burke's own movement from composing his aesthetic treatise on the Sublime and the Beautiful in 1757 to political involvement. He published his own *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790, four years before the publication of Knight's poem. Notably, one of Burke's most prominent political roles was the part he played in the impeachment trial against Warren Hastings, accusing him of misconduct during his time as Governor-General of Bengal.¹⁴⁷ As Mildred Archer and Ronald Lightbown observe, the Picturesque also played a part in the impeachment with Burke “rhapsodising, using picturesque terms, how the pastoral idyll of ‘traditional Indian life’ had been cruelly subdued by the ‘great Moghul’ Hastings.”¹⁴⁸ This can be seen in the part of Burke's argument quoted from P. J. Marshall's *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Vol. VI:

Was not this country, prior to the dirty and miserable interference of English politics, so plentiful, so well cultivated and so rich as to deserve the name of the Eden of the East [...] But where was now this beautiful paradise? This delightful spot, the joint effect of nature and art, the united work of God and man, was no more. The country was extirpated. Haman Dowlah [‘the security of the state’], the well-known appellation

¹⁴⁶ Knight, *The Landscape*, 73, see footnote to line 415.

¹⁴⁷ Paul Langford, “Burke, Edmund (1729/30–1797)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2012. <http://ezproxyprd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/4019>, accessed 8 Jan 2015 [8 Jan 2015].

¹⁴⁸ Archer and Lightbown, *India Observed*, 83.

of Mr. Hastings in India, has reduced the whole to a waste, howling desert, where no creature could exist.¹⁴⁹

While the details of the trial itself are not directly relevant to this thesis, Burke's involvement in it not only highlights the fact that he arrived at his political analysis through an earlier engagement with aesthetic categories, but also that those politics were deeply implicated in the debate over Britain's administration in India. The role that the Picturesque played within Anglo-Indian politics is certainly tangible and here we turn next.

¹⁴⁹ J. Marshall (ed.) "India: The launching of the Hastings Impeachment, 1786-88" in *The writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Vol VI*, (Oxford: OUP, 1991), 466, quoted in Archer and Lightbown, 183.

CHAPTER 2

Anglo-Indian politics and the Indian Picturesque

In this chapter, we return to and develop the nature of Picturesque travel and its representation in India. While the Picturesque mode of travelling within Britain was predominantly undertaken in a leisurely manner, as explained in the previous chapter, individual travellers undertook Indian travels under a variety of circumstances. For example, travel in the subcontinent could also be taken for purposes of forming political alliances or the carrying out of administrative duties under the aegis of the East India Company, as was the case of Eden's travels. Neither of these, however, precluded the Picturesque from serving as a means of framing the traveller's engagement with India. Rather, the Picturesque's capacity for lending itself to politics—be it the politics of an individual, a group, or a nation—enabled it also to be harnessed as a flexible tool. As Ray explains in *Under the Banyan Tree*, in the context of British India, the Picturesque functioned as “an integral part of [both] colonial experiences and colonising processes [and became] the frame through which India was visualised from the outside, as well as the epistemology through which India was reconstructed on the ground from inside out.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 3.

Aestheticising India: The legacy of Hodges and Daniell

The Picturesque image of India that was disseminated to the British was largely articulated by the artistic creations of landscape painters who arrived in the subcontinent during the period starting from the late eighteenth century and lasting up until the late nineteenth century. As G. H. R. Tillotson observes:

[u]ntil that tradition began, the British public had no visual idea of India. Some earlier depictions existed, but were known to be fanciful. The supply of large numbers of detailed depictions of India by artists who had been there therefore became a powerful force in shaping British perceptions of India's physical aspects. But the painters themselves were not naïve recording instruments. They were creative artists, and they took with them to India their training and well-defined aesthetic.¹⁵¹

One such artist was William Hodges, the first professional British landscape painter to arrive in India. He first arrived in Madras in 1780 and travelled extensively before returning home from Calcutta in September 1783. A pupil of Picturesque artist Richard Wilson—known as the “English Claude” at the time—Hodges brought his Picturesque training to bear on his artistic representations of India, particularly in his treatment of the Benares landscape, where, as Tillotson notes:

[his]depiction of part of the city bears many of the hallmarks of the Picturesque treatment, notably in the varied and irregular outline formed by the buildings, further enlivened by tufted trees; in the sense of movement created by small, scattered details, such as the figures and boats at the *ghats*; and in the broken stabs of colour.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ G.H.R. Tillotson, “The Indian Picturesque: Images of India in British Landscape Painting, 1780-1880,” in *The Raj: India and the British 1600-1947*, ed. C.A. Bayly (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 1990), 141.

¹⁵² Tillotson, “The Indian Picturesque,” 142-143. See also Hermione De Almeida and George H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 115.

Upon his return to England, Hodges exhibited over twenty-five landscape paintings of India at Royal Academy exhibitions held between the years 1785 and 1794, and published his *Selected Views of India* in two volumes between 1785 and 1788.¹⁵³ In 1793 and again in 1794, he also published an account of his travels, entitled *Travels in India*. As Archer and Lightbown observe, what was particularly significant about this publication was that it was “the first account of India to flash verbal as well as visual pictures on the eye of the reader.”¹⁵⁴ The book which “has a little of the form of an explanation of plates skilfully interwoven into a personal journey,” sets the tone for other mixed-genre books—known as the Picturesque voyage or Picturesque travels—to follow.¹⁵⁵ As the editors of *India Observed: India as viewed by British artists 1760-1860* highlight:

A great number of books of views of India of one kind or another were to be issued between 1785 and 1860. If their interest were sometimes topical, more often they were issued to gratify the delight in landscape of a cultivated society which had made the enjoyment of natural scenery a principal occupation of the sensibility, but chose to form and guide its taste according to sophisticated pictorial concepts derived from the aesthetics of the picturesque and the sublime.¹⁵⁶

Given the prevalence and popularity of these books, it is likely that the writers I examine (all of whom profess strong interests in the visual arts) would have modelled their own works after these publications: they too mixed visual images with written narratives.

Following quickly in the footsteps of Hodges was Thomas Daniell, who arrived with his apprentice and nephew, William. While Hodges may have been

¹⁵³ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 105; Archer and Lightbown, *India Observed*, 9.

¹⁵⁴ Archer and Lightbown, *India Observed*, 74.

¹⁵⁵ Archer and Lightbown, *India Observed*, 74 and 79.

¹⁵⁶ Archer and Lightbown, *India Observed*, 79.

the first to frame India within the aesthetic of the Picturesque, it is often Thomas Daniell who is credited with popularising the idea of India as a Picturesque subject.¹⁵⁷ Uncle and nephew landed in Calcutta early in 1786: fuelled by Thomas' determination to emulate Hodges, they travelled extensively in India throughout the next seven and a half years, starting first in areas under British control.¹⁵⁸ As De Almeida and Gilpin note:

Thomas Daniell, like Hodges, had learnt as a young man to paint classical ideal landscapes but by the time he sailed for India, he had come under the influence of the taste in England for the Picturesque and the Sublime. In India he found these very qualities in the temples, mosques, tombs and palaces framed by banyan trees or palms. The great hills of the Himalayas, the mighty waterfalls of the Tinnevely district, the vast temples of the south and the rock-cut shrines of Western India were sublime in their grandeur. At the same time Thomas and his nephew were able to depict these subjects with topographical accuracy and in an easily acceptable style derived from the classical tradition of Claude and Poussin.¹⁵⁹

Working primarily in the British capital of Calcutta, the pair produced the first topographical series of prints of the city, entitled *Views of Calcutta*, over the period 1786–8, “which according to contemporary diaries and inventories proved extraordinarily popular among both an Indian and a European clientele.”¹⁶⁰ The Daniells finally returned to England in 1794, and between the years 1795 and 1808, produced a six-series volume of Indian views under the title *Oriental Scenery*. These one hundred and forty-four hand-coloured aquatint images of Mughal and Dravidian monuments, as well as land- and cityscapes proved to be immensely

¹⁵⁷ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 183.

¹⁵⁸ Tillotson, “The Indian Picturesque,” 144; De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 184.

¹⁵⁹ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 10–11.

¹⁶⁰ Natasha Eaton, “Daniell, Thomas (1749–1840)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/7126>, accessed 19 Jan 2015].

popular with the British public at home, as well as in Calcutta and Madras.¹⁶¹ Inspired by the success of *Oriental Scenery*, they then produced a smaller quarto version of the work in 1812–16, as well as two more sets of views entitled *A Picturesque Voyage by Way of China* (1810) and *The Oriental Annual* (1834–9).¹⁶²

Wielding the Picturesque: The aesthetic justification of the British role in India

While both Hodges and the Daniells were important for being the first to present real views of the Indian landscape to the British public, the political role that their Picturesque renderings played in framing India and thus supporting the British presence, is equally significant. In *Indian Renaissance*, De Almeida and Gilpin provide a detailed study of the twelve aquatints forming *Views of Calcutta*, observing that a strong political overtone is reflected in the series' final three engravings which depict the Council House, the Old Government House, and the then-newly finished St John's Church—representing not only British military and political authority, but cultural residency and religious occupation as well (see Figures 1 and 2).¹⁶³ As they explain:

[Thomas Daniell's] initial fascination with images of the vibrant and multicultural life of the streets soon gave way to a focus on public buildings of colonial rule and settled administration—and English (and Indian) Calcutta became British Calcutta in his (and his viewers) purview.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Eaton, "Daniell, Thomas (1749–1840)."

¹⁶² Eaton, "Daniell, Thomas (1749–1840)."

¹⁶³ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 186–187.

¹⁶⁴ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 187. Examples of those views, which focus on British achievement, are presented and discussed later in the chapter.

A similar level of political consciousness is also displayed in the second volume of *Oriental Scenery*. Once again, De Almeida and Gilpin provide an insightful discussion of the corresponding plates, calling their reader's attention to Daniell's written description accompanying the engraving of the Council House:

The Council House [...] is the principal place at the Presidency of Bengal, where the affairs of the English East India Company are transacted. The house, with pillars, has an example of a Virandah, or open Corridor; a mode of building of considerable utility in tropical climates.¹⁶⁵

As they rightly point out, Daniell's description draws the viewer's attention to the commercial and political importance of the building as an example of British power.¹⁶⁶ In fact, even when the quintessentially Indian architectural feature—the *virandah* (or veranda) is mentioned, it is done so in a way that emphasises its cultural strangeness while simultaneously acknowledging its usefulness. The cumulative effect of all this is the creation of a sense of national pride at the expense of “the primitive oddities of Indian life and culture.”¹⁶⁷

The interaction of text and image that appears in *Oriental Scenery* recalls the earlier text published by Thomas Daniell's predecessor, William Hodges, which too combined illustration and the written word. As Beth Fowkes Tobin notes, *Travels in India* was published in the final years of Hastings' nine-year-long impeachment trial; given that the latter was Hodges' patron, it is unsurprising that

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Daniell, *Oriental Scenery*, Part II, Plate III, quoted in De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 188.

¹⁶⁶ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 188.

¹⁶⁷ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 189.

the artist would seek to defend his benefactor.¹⁶⁸ Hodges begins his text by making repeated statements asserting the veracity of his account in his Preface:

It will, I flatter myself, not be disagreeable to my readers to be informed, that they consist of a few plain observations, noted down upon the spot, in the simple garb of truth, without the smallest embellishment from fiction, or from fancy.¹⁶⁹

The drawings, from which the plates for this work are engraved, I have already mentioned, were made upon the spot: and, to the utmost of my ability, are fair and accurate representations of the originals.¹⁷⁰

While these avowals of truth could, on the one hand, be seen as Hodges' response to the contemporary accusations being made against him by the Daniells concerning the accuracy of his topographical representations of India, they can also be seen as part of the artist's efforts to enhance his written testimony in support of his patron.¹⁷¹ This would then help boost the credibility of the passages within *Travels* in which Hodges forthrightly praises Hastings and his government. In reference to the effects on the native population in Madras of the British Second Mysore War (1780-1784) against Haidar Ali, for example, Hodges claims:

Our Government behaved on this melancholy occasion with their usual humanity and liberality; and not only publick [sic], but private relief was afforded them to a considerable amount.¹⁷²

Moreover, according to him, Calcutta's "magnificence [...] is indebted solely to the liberal spirit and excellent taste" of Warren Hastings.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 134, 138.

¹⁶⁹ William Hodges, *Travels in India, during the years 1780, 1782, 1782, and 1783* (London, 1793), iv.

¹⁷⁰ Hodges, *Travels*, vi.

¹⁷¹ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 119. For accusations against Hodges see also G. H. R. Tillotson, *The Artificial Empire: The Indian Landscape of William Hodges* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).

¹⁷² Hodges, *Travels*, 6.

¹⁷³ Hodges, *Travels*, 16.

Similarly, in a clear defence of Hastings' management of Bengal, Hodges skilfully employs georgic tropes in his description of the regions, as seen in the following passage:

From the apparent state of a country, a just estimate may generally be formed of the happiness or the misery of a people. Where there is neatness in the cultivation of the land, and that land is tilled to the utmost of its boundaries, it may reasonably be supposed that the government is the protector and not the oppressor of the people. Throughout the kingdom of Bengal it appears highly flourishing in tillage of every kind, and abounding in cattle. The villages are neat and clean, and filled with swarms of people.¹⁷⁴

Correspondingly, upon visiting the town of "Bauglepoor" (Bhagalpur), he has only praises for "[t]he care that was taken in the government, and the minute attention to the happiness of the people, [which] rendered this district, at this time (1781) a perfect paradise."¹⁷⁵

Aside from accusations of misgovernment, one of the specific charges made against Hastings during his trial was that his response to the insurgency led by Chait Singh—the rajah of Benares who protested the high levels of taxation imposed by Hastings—was unnecessarily harsh. As Tobin observes, what is conspicuously missing from Hodges' images is any depiction of the conflict between the company troops and Chait Singh; instead "only a serene and ancient India is pictured."¹⁷⁶ Tobin also points out that Hodges' illustrations of the hill-forts misleadingly present them as abandoned remnants of India's military past when they were in fact in active use by native insurgent forces:

The calm rusticity of the classicised, Arcadian landscape belies the violence of the company's encounters with Mughal and Hindu rulers,

¹⁷⁴ Hodges, *Travels*, 17.

¹⁷⁵ Hodges, *Travels*, 16, 27.

¹⁷⁶ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 136.

and Hodges' emphasis on picturesque ruins to describe Mughal grandeur attempts to fix India's days of military and state power in the past, sweeping away the threat of Indian insurgency as if it were a temporary inconvenience to be dealt with by the British in their quest for control.¹⁷⁷

Even Hodges' written text is devoid of any real description of the resistance, "focusing instead on the vigour and ingenuity of the British military expeditions that restored British order."¹⁷⁸ According to her, the ultimate expression of Hodges' political allegiance can be seen in his treatment of the siege carried out against Chait Singh at his fort in Bijaigarh. Significantly, the fort was also the residence of Chait Singh's mother and female relatives, and its violent siege and the corresponding attack on the property of these native women were repeatedly brought up by Burke in his speeches at Hastings' trial.¹⁷⁹ As Tobin notes:

Though Hodges witnessed the siege and its aftermath, his illustration does not hint at this kind of activity, nor does the narrative for that matter, which employs the trope of white men saving brown women from brown men, a trope that Gayatri Spivak argues is endemic to colonialism. Not portrayed in the illustration are British troops, Major Popham, Chait Singh, his mother and female relatives; the only figures are weary travellers who rest by the side of the winding road in the picturesque setting of a mountain pass.¹⁸⁰

Hodges' illustration of the fort can be seen in Figure 3 and his accompanying narrative is given below:

The camp was formed nearly four miles from the fort: there was, however, a rock about the height of the top of the mountains, and within gun shot, commanding one face of the fort, was a square. From this station the walls were battered; and after a practicable breach was made, the garrison sought fit to surrender. In the garrison were found the mother and other female relatives of Chait Singh, to whom every delicate attention was paid.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 132.

¹⁷⁸ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 136.

¹⁷⁹ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 134.

¹⁸⁰ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 135.

¹⁸¹ Hodges, *Travels*, 85-86.

As the passage shows, Hodges' reference to the treatment of Chait Singh's mother and female relatives are in direct contrast to Burke's accusation that Hastings

did stimulate the Army to Rapine and Outrage [...] by abandoning to the Soldiery all the Property of the said Women of every sort, contrary to the Practice of civilised Nations, and particularly offensive to the Manners of the East, and the Respect there paid to the Female Sex.¹⁸²

According to Tobin, Hodges' deliberate misrepresentation of the insurgency could be attributed to the fact that "[s]uch insurgency would not fit into the paradigm that Hastings and the men who surrounded him were in the process of developing;" this paradigm involved emphasising the British role as a cultural superpower which was in the best position to bring reason and order to India.¹⁸³ Indeed Hastings, despite his governmental shortcomings, was noted to have actively promoted the study of India's cultural heritage, supporting the formation of the *Asiatic Society of Bengal* for the accumulation of Oriental knowledge (the contributions of the society and its founder, William Jones, are briefly discussed in the later chapters). It is also apparent that Hodges saw himself as playing a role in that cultural order, as evidenced in the statement in his Preface that his text will "supply [...] this hiatus in the topographical department of literature."¹⁸⁴ As De Almeida and Gilpin argue:

Because of his cosmopolitan experiences, Hodges was most sympathetic to Hastings' humanistic argument for the study and appreciation of the different cultures of India, and he understood that his efforts as a

¹⁸² Edmund Burke. "Articles of Impeachment." *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*. Vol. 6. *India: The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment, 1786-1788*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). Quoted in Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 135.

¹⁸³ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 137.

¹⁸⁴ Hodges, *Travels*, iv.

landscape artist would be a contribution to the recovery work of the Calcutta circle of scholars.¹⁸⁵

This is evident in his call to future artists, at the end of *Travels in India*, to venture to the western coast of India where “much matter might be collected relative to the state of ancient India [which] would add greatly to [the] flock of knowledge relative to the Eastern continent.”¹⁸⁶ Here, it is sufficient to emphasise Hodges’ recognition and active promotion of the role that aesthetics can play in Anglo-Indian politics; for him, the Picturesque was not just a representative aesthetic but also a means of shaping the reality of the British presence in India (or at least its public image), of expressing one’s own political affiliations, and in turn, of establishing and defending one’s right to political commentary: something that the writers (and amateur artists) I examine in this thesis also recognise and seek to exercise in their own works.

Having thus far addressed how aesthetics in general, and the Picturesque in particular, functioned as a convenient and useful tool to control how India was presented to the outside world, I now examine how the Picturesque, in the words of Ray, “reconstructed [India] on the ground from inside out” with traditional Picturesque tropes being manipulated in its Indian context to suit the aims of the British administration.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 114.

¹⁸⁶ Hodges, *Travels*, 154.

¹⁸⁷ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 3.

The Picturesque rhetoric of ruins

One of the most prevalent Picturesque motifs adopted by artist-travellers in India was that of the ruin. In traditional Picturesque practice, ruins were sought after as visually pleasing subjects because of their roughness, irregularity, and singularity—as we have seen in the earlier chapter, these are all qualities prized by the Picturesque aesthetic. Derelict and abandoned landscapes also encouraged a sense of nostalgia for a lost (often rural) way of life, which “was in keeping with the period’s general elegiac mood and graveyard melancholy.”¹⁸⁸ The feeling of melancholia itself was also valued for showing the respondent to be capable of strong aesthetic feeling, and thus imbued with sensibilities akin to Addison’s “Man of Polite Imagination.” By extension, because of the perceived elite nature of this sort of artistic response, it was argued that individuals who possessed such aesthetic sensibilities were fitter to rule over the more “vulgar” masses. The ability to lament the decay of a landscape or the loss of a civilisation was therefore seen as a testimony to one’s ability to revitalise it.

In the case of the Indian Picturesque, these artistic responses towards ruins were co-opted in support of British political aims. For example, images of ruined Indian architecture were sought after not only because of their Picturesque properties of physical irregularities, but also, as a result of the Picturesque’s predilection towards melancholic observation, they served as symbols of the country’s past grandeur now lost. The politically tinged purpose served by these representations was tri-fold.

¹⁸⁸ Birmingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 70.

First, as Pramod K. Nayar argues, the difference between India and England is emphasised when “[t]he colonial exotic treated India’s ruins as indicative of past glories and present decadence, thereby distinguishing it from the (supposed) glory that was present-day England.”¹⁸⁹ This creation and emphasis of difference was crucial to the exercise of the British administration because it helped to reinforce British identity as well as “underscor[e] their possession of this space of difference.”¹⁹⁰ In the midst of fears surrounding potential European creolization, or “going native” (fears which were exacerbated by the behaviour of the returning *nabobs* who were seen as having been contaminated by their time in India), the difference between Europeans and the Indian “Other” required particular emphasis.¹⁹¹ As Ray explains:

engaging Otherness meant repeatedly *producing* difference, not just acknowledging or portraying it, a key imperial strategy that spatialised and historicised colonial dominance as seamless, natural, and progressive while entrapping the colonial subject within fragmented ontologies and histories. Seen in this way, the interest in inscribing signs of cultural difference implicates the aesthetic agendas and goals of the picturesque within the rubric of imperial authority.¹⁹²

Simultaneous with the creation and emphasis of cultural difference is the promotion of the idea of India as a decayed and decaying civilisation. We see this particularly in the images produced by William Hodges while he was accompanying Hastings on his military tour, and in the language he uses to describe the landscape in *Travels in India*. The watercolour drawing presented in Figure 4 (made after the original engraving published in *Travels in India*) shows an

¹⁸⁹ Nayar, *Colonial Voices*, 64.

¹⁹⁰ Nayar, *Colonial Voices*, 57.

¹⁹¹ See Leask, *Curiosity*, 177; Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 22.

¹⁹² Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 23.

example of Hodges' Picturesque ruins. The image depicts a view of a ruined fort at Agra and Hodges' accompanying text describing the city is given below:

The whole space between these two walls is one mass of ruins. The inner wall is in indifferent repair, and within it is easy to discern that it is chiefly composed of ruined buildings, except, indeed, towards the Delhi gate of the fort, where is the great Musjud [sic] or Mosque, built of red stone, but greatly gone to decay.¹⁹³

As Tobin notes in her examination of Hodges' text:

With these images of desolation and neglect, Hodges conveys a sense of pervasive ruin that haunts Mughal-ruled India. Not only is the natural landscape of northern India blighted by Mughal misrule, the cultural landscape with its architectural ruins bears the marks of this abuse of power. With the word "ruin," he links the decline in agricultural production to the decay of forts, palaces, cities, and monuments built by Mughal emperors.¹⁹⁴

The emphasis being made by Hodges is on India's former Mughal rulers as the leading cause of this desolation. The implicit extension of this argument was therefore that British rule was needed to bring about the restoration of order and the revitalisation of this once great civilisation.¹⁹⁵

Tobin also points out that Hodges typically fuses the natural environment with the ruin through images of vines encircling buildings, and weeds sprouting through the cracks in the stone edifices to suggest that the tropical climate, which gave rise to such luxurious growth, also encouraged the excessiveness that led to the fall of the Mughal empire.¹⁹⁶ An example of such an image is given in Figure 5. The suggestion here is that while ruin and decay are endemic to Indian native culture, it is not so for that of the British who, with their presumably more

¹⁹³ Hodges, *Travels*, 118.

¹⁹⁴ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 125.

¹⁹⁵ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 128-129.

¹⁹⁶ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 125.

temperate ways of government and living, will create a more sustainable civilisation. Even Hodges' verbal descriptions are structured to create a stark contrast as he compares "the flourishing district of Benares" (an area under British control) to what he describes as "the miserable appearance of all the territories which were under the absolute direction of Mussulman tyrants."¹⁹⁷

Propagating the image of a ruined India also had the insidious effect of divesting it of its present significance and transforming it into an artefact. In her comprehensive study of the appeal of ruins, Rose Macaulay observes that the ruin serves as an empty space into which the viewer can project his or her own meanings.¹⁹⁸ In the case of India, its ruined landscape served as a "living museum" of Britain's less-civilised past—an idea supported by the prevalent eighteenth-century theory of the stadial view of civilisations.¹⁹⁹ Developed during the Scottish Enlightenment, the stadial theory of history explained the development of societies as a series of stages from a primitive state to a more refined one. A society's position on this evolutionary scale was largely determined by its predominant mode of subsistence, with the different stages of economic development being loosely divided into the categories of hunting, pastoral, agricultural, and commercial. It was assumed that all societies went through similar stages but at different developmental rates and that some civilisations could be found to correspond with each stage of progress.²⁰⁰ Civilisations like India, for example, were thought to be

¹⁹⁷ Hodges, *Travels*, 107.

¹⁹⁸ Rose Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953), 37.

¹⁹⁹ Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 78.

²⁰⁰ For more on the stadial theory of civilisation see James Watt, "Scott, the Scottish Enlightenment, and Romantic Orientalism" in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, eds. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, Janet Sorensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Jane Rendall, "Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill" in *The Historical Journal* 25, no. 1 (Mar 1982), 43-69.

at an earlier stage of development, while western societies like Britain were assumed to have reached the zenith of this scale. By imposing what Tobin calls “the stasis of the eternal past” on India, artists like Hodges contributed to the spread of this attitude towards the subcontinent.²⁰¹ However, such an artistic gesture is not without its irony because by attempting to freeze time and capture the sense of the past on canvas, the artist paradoxically succeeds in invoking the very passage of time he first sought to halt. In other words, the image of the ruin itself, though presumably captured at the moment of painterly creation, ultimately still resists temporal confinement as it gestures to both an earlier period of time in which it first stood, as well as to the potential future in which it will be further ruined.

Collecting the Indian landscape

This emphasis on capturing or “taking” an image “in the moment” is one that was stressed by both Hodges and Daniell. In his *Travels*, the former declared that his drawings were made “on the spot,” while the latter used the term “taken” to describe the act of making his initial drawings, and the word itself significantly appeared in the titles of the first two volumes of *Oriental Scenery*.²⁰² The significance of the term is explained by De Almeida and Gilpin:

[The term] suggested that the scene was taken or held still—by the lens [of the Claude glass] or by the artist’s glance—as a passive entity that could be framed and reproduced [...] [It] soon became a mark of accuracy and of authenticity for the landscapes that the public was about to see; it signified the exact transfer of image or information from place to paper, the fact that the images or information could be reproduced anywhere by the artists of available knowledge at hand.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 129.

²⁰² Hodges, *Travels*, vi; De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 190.

²⁰³ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 190.

This reproductive capability, however, is only one feature associated with the act of “taking” landscape images. The other, related, element has to do with the drive towards collecting them. As discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of collecting views from Picturesque travels was one encouraged by Gilpin himself. When applied to the specific case of India, however, the Picturesque impulse towards collecting came to be implicated within the political nexus of the discourse of Company rule. In outlining the ways in which British authority was carried out in the Indian subcontinent, Cohn identifies what he terms as the “museological modality” as one of the “instrumentalities of rulership.”²⁰⁴

It was the British who, in the nineteenth century, defined in an authoritative and effective fashion how the value and meaning of the objects produced or found in India were determined. It was the patrons who created a system of classification which determined what was valuable, that which would be preserved as monuments of the past, that which was collected and placed in museums, that which could be bought and sold, that which would be taken from India as mementoes and souvenirs of their own relationship to India and Indians.²⁰⁵

By effectively ignoring the historical realities embedded in the landscape and transforming it into an object emptied of its cultural significance, or in the words of Suleri, by “transfix[ing] a dynamic cultural confrontation into a still life,” the Picturesque succeeded in denying the individual agency of the aesthetic object in question, thus allowing it to be assigned a value by its collector, in this case, the British.²⁰⁶

In “Collectors of Empire: Objects, Conquests and Imperial Self-Fashioning,” Maya Jasanoff posits the notion that the cultural property associated with

²⁰⁴ Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 9-10.

²⁰⁵ Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 77.

²⁰⁶ Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 76.

collecting and connoisseurship was a means by which individuals, and to a certain extent, the British empire at large, created an identity of power and prestige.²⁰⁷ Once again, the aesthetic practice of the Picturesque, which promoted the belief in the cultural superiority of connoisseurs, allows itself to be transformed into a political tool. Returning to the British artistic response to Indian ruins, we see that the melancholia associated with these representations of ruins, particularly as they are both visually illustrated and verbally described by Hodges in his *Travels*, was harnessed as part of yet another strategy for British control—one “characteristic of the process by which company officials positioned themselves as rightful inheritors of the rights, privileges, and duties of the Mughal imperium.”²⁰⁸ In this case, aesthetic sensibilities associated with an encounter with ruins are touted as symbols of British cultural eminence and were in turn used as testaments to the suitability of the British to rule over the presumably vulgar native masses. This relationship between collecting and British ideas of cultural superiority is an important one that I return to in my discussion of the Indian Picturesque’s treatment of spaces in the next section of this chapter.

Spatial reconstructions

In *Under the Banyan Tree*, Ray suggests that one of the problems faced by artists seeking to depict Picturesque images of places like Calcutta was the “disturbing proximity of the “native” presence in its mercantile and social enclaves.”²⁰⁹ Indeed

²⁰⁷ Maya Jasanoff, “Collectors of Empire: Objects, Conquests and Imperial Self-Fashioning” *Past & Present* 184.1 (2004), 109-135. Jasanoff’s argument is further elaborated in her book *Edge of Empire: Conquest and Collecting in the East 1750-1850* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006).

²⁰⁸ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 128 and 139.

²⁰⁹ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 22.

Cohn also notes that many narratives written about India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries revealed an anxiety caused by the close proximity of the native.²¹⁰ Even Fanny Parks' husband, as she writes in her diary, succumbed to this fear: "My husband objects to accompanying me through the bazaars, because such a crowd collect after me; —he goes along quietly, but with me it is different: —the moment I stop to sketch, a crowd collects."²¹¹

One of the ways in which this disquietude about the native presence was counteracted was through the practice of creating Western enclaves or "white towns" within larger cities, as was the case in Calcutta. Even then, because of the practical necessity of native labour, the British were never totally insulated. Visually, however, artists were able to make use of aesthetics to provide their observers with a more secured sense of racial separation. We see examples of this in the works of Thomas Daniell. Returning once more to Figures 1 and 2, it is evident that while both images depict the native inhabitants of Calcutta carrying out various activities as they go about their daily lives, prominence is given to the government buildings which serve, as suggested earlier, as symbols of British/white spaces. Not only is there a marked difference in size—particularly in the second image—between the native figures and the buildings, with the former appearing to be placed so as to emphasise the scale of the latter, but also "whiteness" itself is literally being represented in the colours used. By having the native figures accompanied by colourful accoutrements like howdahs, palanquins or umbrellas, the plain white or light coloured European buildings are made to

²¹⁰ Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 10.

²¹¹ Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*, Vol. 1, 454-455.

appear even more stark and powerful. Moreover, if we look closely at Daniell's depiction of St. John's Church, we can spot two smaller edifices behind and to either side of the religious building. Based on their architectural designs, they appear to have been native temples, now in ruins and practically engulfed by overgrown foliage. Once again, the dominance of the newer, larger, and more architecturally solid building—which incidentally also hints at the presumably more solid European religion it represents—dwarfs its native counterpart(s) and the native is relegated to the sidelines.

According to Ray, the roots of this anxiety towards the proximity of the native in Calcutta lay in the fears associated with racial contamination, cultural blending, and the loss of a uniquely British identity, or in other words, the development of, to use Swati Chattopadhyay's term, the "self-as-native."²¹² In comparison to images of Calcutta, Ray observes that the presence of native figures is even more visually diminished, if not removed entirely, in the landscape depictions of Benares:²¹³

Whereas Calcutta's waterfront designed for resident Britons by the city's colonial residents produced ways of seeing rooted in the city's European identity, the Benarasi shoreline built mainly by Rajput and Maratha kings between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries released colonial spectators from the anxieties of "self-as-native," repositioning Britons instead as tourists who beheld the water's edge from afar.²¹⁴

This difference in visual ethos can be explained by the fact that, while Calcutta was understood to be a trading capital, the British conceptualised Benares

²¹² Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 22; See Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 33.

²¹³ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 29-30.

²¹⁴ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 29.

as a tourist spot: a “must-see” destination for every new visitor to India. In *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, Cohn illustrates this touristic attitude when he outlines what became the stock traveller route of the time:

by boat up the Ganges, then to Delhi and either further north into the Punjab or southwest through Rajasthan and Gujarat to Bombay, then down to Malabar, Ceylon, and up the east coast to Madras.²¹⁵

As he goes on to explain, the riverfront at Benares was one of the specific sights travellers were encouraged to see, along with the fort at Allahabad and places in Agra and Delhi.²¹⁶ In this instance, we see the principles of British Picturesque tourism coming to bear on the Indian landscape as the city came to be valued for a specific feature: its riverfront. Despite the fact that Benares was also a town like Calcutta, with its European settlements and activities of trade and manufacture, what came to be prioritized in the minds of European tourists was the belief in its supposed native “authenticity”—in this respect, the riverfront was the setting “that appealed to such sensibility with its imposing temples and mosques, its crowd of pilgrims thronging the *ghats*, and its unforgettable sounds of ritual.”²¹⁷

The repetition of visual images like the kinds produced by Hodges and Daniell (see Figures 6 and 7) and written descriptions of the waterfront, like that by Emily Eden, quoted below, all combined to transform the city into the quintessential Indian Picturesque landscape:

We arrived at Benares at ten, *lay to* all through the heat of the day, whilst the servants unloaded the flat, and then steamed up within view of the city, as far as the rajah’s country-house, Ramnuggur, and then dropped down again, thereby seeing the whole of the city. The glare was horrible,

²¹⁵ Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 6-7.

²¹⁶ Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 6-7.

²¹⁷ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 30.

but the buildings were worth all the blindness that ensued. Such minarets and mosques, rising one above the other to an immense height; and the stone is such a beautiful colour. The ghauts covered with natives, and great white colossal figures of Vishnu lying in the steps of each ghaut. Benares is one of their most sacred places, and they seem to spare no expense in their temples. We mean to keep our steamer here, and to go out sketching in it. But it would take a whole week to draw one temple perfectly; the ghaut where we landed was as pretty a sight as any.²¹⁸

Eden's description is quoted at length because it addresses three crucial ideas often emphasised by travellers to the city. First, she introduces the reader to the most common vantage point by which "best" to view the city—from a boat along the river and looking back onto the shore. As we can see from the images by Hodges and Daniells, this was the prime viewing position at which the quintessential Benares image could be taken. Once again, the influence of British Picturesque tourism is discernible as the specificity of this point of view reminds us of the discrete vantage points outlined in Gilpin's guidebooks. Next, Eden's expression of her desire to sketch the view is also symptomatic of how the city had been marketed for the tourist experience: this was not a city to be wandered through but one to be captured visually. Moreover, it was not enough just to see the view, one had to *sketch* it almost as proof of the visit and testimony that one was a "proper" traveller in India; a nineteenth-century version of the modern "I was there" snapshot. The third defining feature of Eden's passage lies in what she chooses to highlight in her description of the city: its Hindu elements. In fact, Benares's importance as a Hindu pilgrimage site was one of the ways by which British travellers celebrated the city's "authenticity" because by emphasising the

²¹⁸ Eden, *Up the Country*, 22.

city's ties to this "ancient" religion, travellers imaginatively freeze the passage of time and fashion Benares as a relic of an idyllic and idealised past.²¹⁹

Visually, we see this being demonstrated by Hodges' use of a sepia tint and blurred outlines which serves to evoke a dreamlike atmosphere of an indistinct past (Figure 6) (this can be contrasted to the sharp lines and more neutral colourings of Daniell's painting [Figure 7]). Where the two images do converge, however, is in their depictions of empty space. While Eden's account notes that the *ghats* were "covered with natives," this crowdedness is missing from both images. Instead of throngs of pilgrims, Hodges' and Daniell's *ghats* appear to be occupied only by sporadic visitors. Ray suggests that this portrayal of emptiness was a Picturesque device to create the sense of touristic exploration "by positioning the [viewer] as lone and intrepid."²²⁰ Recalling the prevailing fear of native contamination, it is equally possible that the illusion of empty space in this popular tourist destination was also used to provide an imaginative respite and metaphorical displacement, typical of the Picturesque aesthetic. Indeed it is worth noting that while Eden does draw attention to the native crowd, she nevertheless observes them from the "safe" distance of her steamer and even then, her narrative quickly jumps back to focus on the architectural landscape. The stone figures of the "great white colossal figures of Vishnu" appear to hold more appeal to her than the animated natives.

²¹⁹ Ray suggests that a similar imaginative correlation is being made between Hinduism and the vision of Benares as an "authentic" Indian city. See *Under the Banyan Tree*, 31.

²²⁰ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 39.

As Ray also notes, Benares' ties with Hindu practices were likewise exploited for their counteracting relationship with their Muslim past:

The impulse to localise Benares as an unspoiled Hindu landscape by splintering it from its connections with Islam was underscored by a broader colonial interest in exploiting the city's syncretic identity for political purposes. This included repeatedly invoking the familiar stereotype of Muslim rulers as oriental despots who had invaded and polluted this holiest of Hindu cities in order to legitimize colonial rule as a peacekeeping force among the city's "natives" who were still divided by the religious sentiments churned up by those tumultuous incursions.²²¹

Most often, the spatial feature that was used to visually emphasise this Hindu-Muslim contestation was the seventeenth-century mosque that we see being depicted in Hodges's painting. Its sharp visual juxtaposition against the holy *ghat*, as well as the narrative tradition which claimed that it was built on the site of the former Bindu Madhava temple which had been destroyed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, made it the perfect symbol of Muslim despotism.²²² Like in Hodges' paintings of Indian ruins, this image of Benares was one wherein the Picturesque aesthetics were carefully managed to support British interests.

Just as the Indian Picturesque was used to create and frame the identities of cities like Benares, as well as deal with the unease caused by native presences, so was it used to counteract anxieties associated with land ownership. In my discussion of the development of the Picturesque aesthetic in Britain in the previous chapter, I alluded to the garden conversation piece as one of the ways in which cultural concerns were being negotiated in the aesthetic realm. Here, I move

²²¹ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 31.

²²² Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 31.

on to address how the anxieties surrounding the Indian landscape were negotiated using a modified version of this genre of painting.

Conversation portraits in India

In *Colonizing Nature*, Tobin observes that conversation portraits were commissioned by landowners in Britain in an attempt to “restore an organic relation between landowners and their land, and articulate a sense of historical and traditional connection with their property.”²²³ In Gainsborough’s famous portrait of *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (1750) (Figure 8) we see an example of how such messages and ideologies were put to work in painting. The painting shows a typical conversation piece with a country house gentleman and his wife proudly displaying their land. Their mastery over their property is signified by the neat bushels of hay that line the field and the strategically placed bench that allows the landowners a place to rest while admiring the extent of their possessions. The composition of the painting is also significant in that the figures of the Andrews occupy only the left half of painting, while the entire right half is devoted to the fields and surrounding vista which extend into the horizon, thus not only giving the impression of limitless wealth and possession, but also working towards, to quote Bermingham, “an organicism in which man and nature partake of one another in an equilibrium suggested by even the painting’s balanced division of space between the two.”²²⁴ Moreover, the diagonal line of sight that the bundles of hay create thus leads the eye to the middle ground in which the sheep are left grazing. While the grazing sheep succeed in creating an image of an idyllic pastoral scene, the presence of the

²²³ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 88.

²²⁴ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 29.

fence that hems them in is a subtle reminder that the couple is still master over both the flora and fauna of the land.

As Tobin has noted, such conversation pieces often employ the use of formal correspondences between their subjects to create the illusion of harmony.²²⁵ Here for example, the tree trunk and body of Mrs Andrews appear to form a contiguous vertical plane, thus symbolising her presumed unity with the land. Likewise, the widely spread skirt of her dress invites parallels with the roots of the trees, creating, in turn, the impression of both fecundity and rootedness. Similarly Mr Andrews, though standing in a relaxed pose with his legs crossed and arm tucked into his pocket, is nonetheless aligned with the trunk of the oak tree, therefore alluding to his solidity as the man of the estate and possibly also his moral uprightness. The overall effect of such a painting is to underscore the connectedness between landowners and property, and legitimise the ownership of the land in the process.

A comparison can be made with the painting of *Mr and Mrs Hastings* (1783-7) (Figure 9) by Johan Zoffany, a friend and contemporary of William Hodges. Though German by birth, Zoffany arrived in London in 1760, where he established himself within the British artistic circle, starting out as a painter of theatrical scenes and portraits before gaining recognition for his skill at painting conversation pieces. He arrived in Calcutta in the summer of 1783, already a founding member of the Royal Academy and within a few months of his arrival, he

²²⁵ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 91.

became the leading portrait painter in Calcutta, receiving commissions from Warren Hastings and his circle.²²⁶

Painted in India just prior to the Hastings' return to England, *Mr and Mrs Hastings* depicts the then Governor-General and his wife in the garden of their house at Alipur. Like Gainsborough's painting, Zoffany's image is an example of a conversation portrait. This was a genre of painting popular amongst the British officials in India because not only did it give them a means to align themselves with their landed brethren back home, it also, as Tobin observes, "provided them with a way to express and resolve, at least on a visual level, some of the tensions produced by living in a conquered land."²²⁷

Given the moment of its hasty commission—just before Hastings returned to England for his impeachment trial—the painting carries with it strong political overtones. While it follows many of the conventions employed by the traditional English conversation piece—which Zoffany was also notably famous for producing—the artist includes distinctly Indian elements here, some of which ironically (and possibly unwittingly) undercut the vision of familial harmony and land security that lie at the heart of the English conversation piece.

One such element is the inclusion of the native servant girl, an element exceptional to conversation portraits painted in India. As Mary Webster observes, it was uncommon in Britain for masters and mistresses to be portrayed with their servants, while paintings in India frequently showed native attendants. One of the

²²⁶ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 132-135.

²²⁷ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 93.

likely reasons for this was the general exotic atmosphere these servants created, as well as the fact that they served as a reminder of the way of life the Anglo-Indians had enjoyed while in India.²²⁸ In the painting in question, a female native attendant stands by the side of Marian Hastings, and like the elaborately plumed hat that she is made to hold, the native girl appears in the form of an exquisite possession owned by the Hastings couple. This effect is intensified when the painting is compared to Gainsborough's conversation portrait, as it becomes clear that the servant stands in the place occupied by the Andrews' dog. Another of Hastings' prized possessions, his house at Alipur, is also included in the painting and while it was clearly meant to symbolise the couple's high standing, its rectangular structure makes it appear almost like a fortress, with the minute figures of the Company soldiers seeming to guard the residence. This inadvertently suggests the dispossession of this foreign encroachment on the native land instead.

Moreover, unlike Gainsborough's evenly balanced composition, in Zoffany's image, the figures of the Hastings, their native servant girl and the tree they pose in front of, occupy most of the space on the canvas. Having these figures painted very close to the foreground also increases the emphasis placed on them. Comparing this with Gainsborough's technique of placing the Andrews a little further back towards the middle ground, and thus forming a smooth transition between their figures and that of the vista behind them, Zoffany's figures appear to be very much the main subject of the painting. This inevitably undercuts the couple's supposed connection to the land. Their disconnection with the Indian

²²⁸ Mary Webster, *Johan Zoffany 1733-1810* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1976), 461.

landscape behind them is also made more pointed by the roots of the jackfruit tree which extend almost to the bottom right hand corner of the frame, effectively cutting the Hastings off from the land behind them. In fact, the species of the tree is also significant as unlike the sturdy oak (with its connotations of upright Englishness), Zoffany presents his viewers with a very foreign tree with its large, pendular fruit sprouting directly from the trunk—something contemporary British viewers of the painting would likely have seen as being strange and unsettling, though appealing in its exoticness.²²⁹ Similarly, the shape of the tree, with its spreading branches, does not allow for the impression of solidity and uprightness that the oak tree was able to lend to Mr Andrews.

Unlike his counterpart in Gainsborough's portrait, Hastings also appears to fail in his attempt at asserting his authority over the land. While Andrews stands in the relaxed posture of a man confident in his possessions, with his hand placed on the bench on which his wife (who could also be marked as one of his assets) is seated, Hastings' mannerisms appear more forced and deliberate. The straight line of his outstretched arm and the sharp triangle created by its connection with the walking stick he plants firmly in the ground, forcefully directs the viewer's eye to the landscape behind him in which his house is situated. The difference in the postures of the corresponding wives of the two men also augments this sense of uncertainty. While Mrs Andrews is seated demurely by the side of her husband's standing figure, Mrs Hastings stands imposingly at the centre of the group in a steadfast upright stance that contrasts with her husband's *contrapposto* pose

²²⁹ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 99.

which makes him appear the shorter of the two. The apex that she forms between Hastings and her servant girl, also underscores the power dynamics of the painting, an effect compounded by the fact that Hastings seems to be showing her their land, almost as an attempt to impress or placate her.

This painting, despite its obvious intent to resemble the English garden conversation portrait, subtly misses the potent messages of land rights, familial ties and organic connections with nature associated with the English model. While Zoffany, who had been introduced to Hastings by Hodges, probably had no intention to undercut his patron's authority, the ambiguities in the visual image may have nevertheless resulted from the uncertainties surrounding Hastings' activities in India; the painting, though started a few years before, was completed against the backdrop of Hastings' return to England and the formation of the groundwork for his impeachment. It is therefore possible that Zoffany may have recognised the difficulty of painting his subject within a genre that was so steeped in English ideas of rightful land ownership, hereditary ties and harmonious familial relationships. As Tobin highlights:

Zoffany's portrait was painted before the impeachment trial and Burke's attack on Hastings as the enemy of tradition, but well after Hastings's institution of rapacious land redistribution and revenue-collecting policies. That Hastings allowed or even encouraged Zoffany to employ the visual trope of estate parkland, which carried with it connotations of organic community, to represent this governor general of Bengal must have seemed outrageous, even scandalous, in its assertion of hereditary landed status.²³⁰

Similarly, Zoffany's curious visual treatment of Mrs Hastings can be explained by the contemporary gossip surrounding her marriage to Hastings, whose first wife,

²³⁰ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 98.

Mary, had died in 1759. Hastings met the then-married Anna Maria (known to Hastings as Marian) while they were on a voyage out from England in 1769. Marian eventually divorced her husband and the couple married in 1777. The scandalous circumstances of the union, along with Marian's extravagant tastes, caused her to be the centre of Calcutta gossip.²³¹ Nevertheless, Hastings was deeply devoted to his wife, and showered her with affection and expensive gifts, a fact well-known amongst the Europeans living in the city.²³² Zoffany's visual depiction of Marian Hastings as the dominant partner in the relationship was likely shaped by these known circumstances.

While Zoffany may have fallen short in producing an unquestioning testament of his patron's power, the loyal Hodges succeeded. In his 1781 painting, *Natives drawing water from a pond with Warren Hastings' house at Alipur in the distance* (Figure 10), Hodges creates an idyllic scene of natives labouring within a harmonious landscape, an image that is almost identical in its compositional elements to an earlier painting by British landscape artist Paul Sandby. Like the figures in Sandby's topographical view of *Hackwood Park, Hampshire* (1763-64) (Figure 11), the figures in Hodges' painting are strategically placed so as to guide the viewer's eye through the painting, taking them on a journey through this halcyon scene.²³³ In both paintings the eye is first drawn to the solitary figure, with his back facing the viewer, in the foreground. Following the semi-circular

²³¹ P. J. Marshall, "Hastings, Warren (1732-1818)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 [<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/12587>, accessed 9 Feb 2015].

²³² Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 100.

²³³ The following argument is based on Tobin's reading of Sandby's painting in *Colonizing Nature* (Chapter 3) although the interpretations of Hodges' work are my own.

trajectory created by the shiny patch of grass in Sandby's scene and the glittering pond in Hodges' painting, the viewer's attention is then drawn to the group of figures situated under the large tree in the middle ground.

In Sandby's painting, we have the image of reapers resting from their labours, in harmony with the land in which they have toiled, and with each other. As Tobin explains, "Hackwood Park is represented as an organic community that owes its existence, its productivity, and well-being to the stewardship of its landlord."²³⁴ Similarly, Hodges creates an image of contented natives leisurely drawing water for what was presumably their own sustenance, as indicated by the native hut towards the right. The culmination of these visual journeys are the respective mansion houses of the Duke of Bolton and Warren Hastings, both situated unobtrusively in the background, but functioning no less as clear symbols of the source of this harmonious scene. The subtle message being presented here is that if the labourers are happy, it was the result of the abundance of the land and the benevolence of its proprietors.

Negotiating the Indian interior

Along with the depiction of outdoor scenery, another way in which artists (and the Company officials who commissioned their works) made use of the aesthetics of the Indian Picturesque to negotiate (potentially) troubling aspects of life in the subcontinent was through the visual representations of indoor spaces. Once again, the works of Zoffany make for useful visual examples.

²³⁴ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 90.

In his 1786 conversation piece (Figure 12), Zoffany depicts the family of Colonel Blair in a sitting room of what can be assumed to be their residence in India. Like the traditional English conversation piece, this painting depicts an image of familial harmony while setting its subjects within the context of their possessions. With its European-style furnishings, Grecian pillar, and muted colours of its walls, the setting appears to be a British middle-class household. The presence of the pet animals and the elder daughter demonstrating one of her “feminine” accomplishments—playing the piano—add to the image of quiet domestic harmony and were it not for the two notably “foreign” elements—the young *ayah* or native nurse in the corner, and the paintings on the wall—the scene could well have been set in England.

Just as the garden conversation portrait served to provide a level of comfort to the displaced British official in India by evoking feelings of ease and familiarity, so too did the indoor conversation piece perform a similar function. Here we see the Blair family in their home away from home, a piece of England created within their four walls. However, as I subsequently demonstrate, this “England” appears to have been adulterated by its external environment, or more specifically, by India.

In her reading of the painting in *Picturing Imperial Power*, for instance, Tobin sees in it an example of how India has been carefully managed so as not to disrupt “the British order that dominates this interior space.”²³⁵ Tobin argues that

²³⁵ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

the *ayah*, being young and of an apparently similar age to the younger Blair daughter, is unthreatening, while the pictures hanging on the wall “are neatly framed packages of interpreted and reproduced India” and therefore similarly innocuous.²³⁶ My own interpretation of the painting as a whole takes a slightly different turn as I see it as not so much an image showing a comfortable containment of India, as one that, like Zoffany’s painting of Hastings and his wife discussed above, while *desiring* to put forth the idea of British control, nevertheless displays some of the potential cracks within this veneer of control.

Beginning with the *ayah*, I would argue that while her diminutive stature, and youthful appearance does allow her to appear harmless, the fiery red and gold of her shawl stands out sharply against the generally pastel coloured attire of the Blair family and therefore not only sets her apart from the group, but also pairs her against Colonel Blair, with his red and gold Company jacket. While Tobin reads Blair’s chosen attire as serving as a reminder of Britain’s military presence in India, I would contend that the visual pairing with the native scarf also subtly suggests that this power may not have been uncontested.²³⁷

Likewise, a closer examination of the paintings on the wall behind the family also reveals some subtle anxieties about the Blairs’ place in India. In her reading of the image, Tobin incorrectly summarises that these paintings “depict typical and exclusively Indian scenes of villages, temples, and elephants carrying people and packages.”²³⁸ However, this assessment is only true for the central piece

²³⁶ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 123.

²³⁷ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 125.

²³⁸ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 125.

which indeed represents a classic example of the Indian Picturesque: the composition of the image follows the Picturesque's division of spaces into foreground, middle-ground and background, and the painting contains not one but three commonly repeated (Indian) Picturesque tropes—the ruin, the elephant, and the banyan tree.²³⁹ Having said that, the two smaller paintings that flank it, though also representing commonly painted native scenes, are nevertheless strikingly different in their choice of subject matter. Both, in fact, represent images of Hindu rituals: the one on the left presents an image of *sati*, or widow burning, while the painting on the right is of a *churuk puja*, or “hook-swinging” festival as it was commonly referred to amongst the British.²⁴⁰

Descriptions of these ceremonies, whether witnessed first hand or as a relayed account, were popular in travel writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and even Hodges wrote about witnessing a *sati* in his *Travels*.²⁴¹ Reactions from travellers to seeing these native rituals generally ranged from fascination to disgust, or a mix of both, and depictions of them featured prominently in the visual imagination.²⁴² To that end, Zoffany's inclusion of them in his painting is unsurprising, even more so when we take into account that he too painted such scenes, and quite possibly the very one he depicts in this painting of the Blair family (for examples of paintings depicting *sati* see Figures 13 and 14). What does require

²³⁹ Romita Ray provides a compelling examination of the tropes of the banyan tree and the elephant in Chapters 3 and 5 of *Under the Banyan Tree*.

²⁴⁰ J. H. Powell notes however, that this term is a misnomer and that a literal translation of the native term would probably be closer to “wheel of worship” or “revolving ceremony.” See J. H. Powell. ““Hook-Swinging” in India. A Description of the Ceremony, and an Enquiry into Its Origin and Significance” *Folklore* 25.2 (1914), 147-197.

²⁴¹ Hodges, *Travels*, 79-84.

²⁴² For more on eighteenth and nineteenth century visual representations of *sati*, see De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 229-232.

deeper consideration, however, is that regardless of the contemporary attitudes towards these ceremonies, their execution involved violence being inflicted upon the body of the ceremonial subject—the widow and the devotee.²⁴³ Thus, having these images of violence hanging in the sitting room of a British family speaks to a number of possibilities.

First, it could attest to the level of confidence that Colonel Blair and his family—and by extension, the East India Company and the British community in India in general—had with regard to their ability to control and subdue the native populace. Second, as Norbert Schürer suggests in his discussion of representations of *sati*, treatments of these acts of violence on the part of the colonising power could also signal a (disturbing) level of aesthetic displacement and blocking of an emotional response—in this case the natural emotional response is being denied by the human subjects of the main painting. i.e. the Blair family.²⁴⁴ While Schürer attributes this reaction to “sentimental philosophy, as articulated contemporaneously in Adam Smith,” and Zoffany’s painting is dated just after the

²⁴³ For an insight into these rituals, as well as the contemporary reactions to them by the British see the following. On *sati*: Daniel J. R. Grey, ‘Creating the “Problem Hindu”: Sati, Thuggee and Female Infanticide in India, 1800–60’ *Gender & History*, 23.3 (2013), 498–510; Andrea Major, *Pious Flames: European Encounters with Sati* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006); Andrea Major, *Sovereignty and Social Reform in India: British Colonialism and the Campaign against Sati, 1830–60* (London: Routledge, 2011); Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998); also Mani’s earlier article of the same title published in *Cultural Critique* 7 (1987): 119–156; Norbert Schürer, “The Impartial Spectator of Sati, 1757–84,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42.1 (2008), 19–44; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” originally published in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1998), 271–313; Anand A. Yang, “Whose Sati? Widow Burning in Nineteenth Century India” *Journal of Women’s History* 1.2 (1989), 8–33. On *churuk-puja*: G. A. Oddie, “Regional and Other Variations in Popular Religion in India: Hook-Swinging in Bengal and Madras in the Nineteenth Century,” *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 3, no. 3., (1992), 191–200; Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Popular religion, elites, and reform: Hook-swinging and its prohibition in colonial India, 1800–1894* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1995); J. H. Powell, ““Hook-Swinging” in India,” 147–197.

²⁴⁴ See Norbert Schürer, “The Impartial Spectator of Sati, 1757–84” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42.1 (2008), 19–44.

time period Schürer focuses on in his article—1757-1784—his observations are still applicable to this image and our discussion of the Picturesque aesthetic.²⁴⁵

Schürer argues that such a level of detachment and “distanced observation” was the result of the British “coming to terms with their new relationship and [being] as yet unclear on how to treat the natives of India and their customs.”²⁴⁶ As a result, “British observers applied moral and aesthetic categories” when faced with native rituals like *sati*.²⁴⁷ Quoting from Adam Smith’s explanation of the term, Schürer explains that the “impartial spectator” is “a person quite candid and equitable, [. . .] one who has no particular relation either to ourselves, or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct [and] who considers our conduct with the same indifference with which we regard other people.”²⁴⁸ Based on this definition alone, Smith’s (and Schürer’s) impartial spectator could have easily been a Picturesque observer of the kind described by Gilpin—“examin[ing] parts, but never descend[ing] to particles.”²⁴⁹ To this extent, the two smaller paintings on the Blairs’ wall serve a Picturesque function: they distance the observer from the scenes being depicted, literally “framing” them in the process. Any hint of violence is sublimated and, in the words of Suleri, “subcontinental threats [are] temporarily converted into watercolours and thereby domesticated into a less disturbing

²⁴⁵ Schürer, “The Impartial Spectator of Sati,” 20.

²⁴⁶ Schürer, “The Impartial Spectator of Sati,” 26-27.

²⁴⁷ Schürer, “The Impartial Spectator of Sati,” 23.

²⁴⁸ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 2nd ed. (London: Millar, 1761), 1-2, 5, quoted in Schürer, “The Impartial Spectator of Sati,” 23.

²⁴⁹ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 26.

system of belonging” thus “allow[ing] the colonial gaze a license to convert its ability not to see into studiously visual representations.”²⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the positioning of these paintings—flanking the central “conventionally” Picturesque scene and strategically looming over the heads of Colonel Blair’s two daughters—points to, however unwittingly, the precariousness and artificiality of this forced distancing. Hanging on either side of a larger painting depicting an idyllic and clearly non-threatening image, the two smaller paintings hint that it is in fact *violence* which supports and effectively enables this veneer of stability. Seen in this light, they, like Colonel Blair’s military uniform, serve to remind the viewer of the level of force that is needed to subdue the native public and control the landscape.

Likewise, the positioning of these paintings behind the Colonel’s daughters is also significant. Ironically, Blair’s elder daughter, who appears to be of or nearing a marriageable age, is seated in front of the image of the burning widow, while the *churuk-puja* is made to resemble a grotesque and perverted form of a child’s merry-go-round by being positioned behind the Colonel’s younger child. Both girls’ apparent obliviousness to the paintings further intensifies this sinister message of enforced British control and the threat of native violence.

Returning for a moment to our earlier discussion of the British anxieties about native spatial encroachment, we see an ironic example of native presence encroaching on the most private of British spaces, the family sitting room. Not only

²⁵⁰ Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 75-76.

are images of the external native landscape being displayed on the wall of this private household, but the presence of the young *ayah* also indicates a forced merging of spaces as a native outsider is brought into the family fold. Furthermore, while she is placed on the periphery of the painting—just as she was presumably situated on the peripheries of familial activities—her gaze is nevertheless shown to reach out of the painted canvas, infiltrating the world of the (western) observer, just as she has infiltrated the world of the family she serves. Accordingly, Zoffany's painting ironically suggests that there is no real repose for the Blairs as their private world is unable to resist the invasion by external native forces. This ambivalence is further compounded by the suggestion that if containment of the native threat was being exercised through the smaller paintings, so too are the Blairs being framed and trapped within their own frame. If, as Nayar argues, domesticity was "[o]ne of the prominent elements of the discourse of control and dominance," then Zoffany's painting ironically, and quite possibly unintentionally, gestures towards the instabilities within this veneer of British control.²⁵¹

A few years after the Blair family portrait, Zoffany painted another conversation piece, although this time his subjects were not a family, but a group of friends. The painting in consideration was one of Colonel Antoine Polier and his friends Major Claude Martin, East India Company administrator John Wombwell, and Zoffany himself (Figure 15). The four gentlemen are painted in what appears to be Colonel Polier's library, and like Zoffany's earlier painting, this one also depicts smaller paintings shown hung on the main wall behind the sitters.

²⁵¹ Nayar, *Colonial Voices*, 115.

In her reading of this portrait, Ray, drawing from Cohn's explanation of colonial knowledge-gathering modalities, reiterates how these practices "relied on arranging and categorizing a vast and diverse corpus of information, thus neutralizing the threat of the unknown while also validating the authority of the European colonial gaze."²⁵² As she explains, these images were part of "the *visual* codification of information about 'native' India."²⁵³ She subsequently relates these knowledge-gathering practices to the act of collecting and the performance of gentlemanliness within this foreign context, by highlighting the involvement of Polier and his companions within the culture of collecting. Polier, as she explains, was a "Swiss engineer and collector whose affluence spills across the canvas," and points out that both he and Zoffany, were amongst the earliest members of the Asiatick Society of Bengal when it was established in 1784; Martin, the "French philanthropist, botanist and bibliophile," joined later in 1799.²⁵⁴

Established by Oriental scholar William Jones, and patronised by William Hastings, the Society sought to foster the development of Oriental scholarship in its widest form, bound only by "the geographical limits of Asia," with India as its centre.²⁵⁵ While the basis of the Society was predominantly intellectual, its pursuits were never far from the political thrust of British authority in India, which at the time of Hastings, recognised that a strong understanding of native practices,

²⁵² Romita Ray, "Inscribing Asymmetry: Johann Zoffany's *Banyan* and 'The Extension of Knowledge,'" *South Asian Studies* 27.2 (2011), 185. See also Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 3-15.

²⁵³ Ray, "Inscribing Asymmetry," 187.

²⁵⁴ Ray, "Inscribing Asymmetry," 185.

²⁵⁵ See J.M. Steadman "The Asiatick Society of Bengal" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 10.4 (1977), 464-483. Quotations taken from William Jones's "Preliminary Discourse on the Institution of the Society", published in *The Works of William Jones*. In Six Volumes. (London: printed for G. G. and J. Robinson; and R. H. Evans, 1799).

histories, cultural systems and ideologies was needed for a better control of the territories. Individuals like Polier and Martin were valued for their collections of Persian manuscripts and other native antiquities, while artists like Zoffany were recognised for their ability to capture aspects of Indian life and culture through the medium of visual art.

In Zoffany's image, Polier's manuscripts are displayed prominently on the table in the centre of the painting, competing with his other, rather different, though no less significant, collection: the produce from his Indian estate recently brought in by his native servants. On the other side of the central table stands Martin, pointing out his own (symbolic) collection: a watercolour of his house named "Farhat Baksh" (or "Pleasure Giving") to Wombwell.²⁵⁶ There he housed his native 'family' consisting of his Indian *bibi* (or native wife), some orphaned children, and a large Indian staff. In between Polier and Martin sits Zoffany with the tools of his trade, in the act of creating what will presumably be another addition to Polier's collection—a painting of a banyan tree with three ascetics underneath. As Ray points out, Zoffany's position in the image draws attention to his role within this group of collectors, "from within which he negotiates between his world of art-making and their world of collecting."²⁵⁷

Like the Blair family painting, this one also includes smaller "sub-paintings" of Indian scenes being displayed on the wall behind the men, which De Almeida and Gilpin identify as depicting a *sati*, pilgrims bathing in a river, a landscape with

²⁵⁶ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 77 and 140.

²⁵⁷ Ray, "Inscribing Asymmetry", 187 and 191.

elephants being washed by their keepers, a funeral pyre being prepared for a corpse, and a scene depicting sepoy soldiers battling an Indian figure on horseback.²⁵⁸ Once again, it is noteworthy that, like in the Blair family painting, the majority of these smaller paintings (three out of five) depict scenes of violence. However, while in the previous painting, the presence of such violent images within a domestic environment highlights the potential threat of native force even as it gestures towards efforts to contain it within the domain of domesticity, here, the presence of other objects of collection succeed in implicating those smaller paintings within the process of (Anglo-Indian) collecting.

As Maya Jasanoff observes, Britain, at the height of its territorial expansion, can itself be seen as a collector, with its various territories serving as part of its vast and ever-increasing collection.²⁵⁹ In this light, the violent images that are hung on Polier's wall call attention to the violence exerted in the acquisition of these territories. In fact, less than two decades after the creation of this painting, the East India Company opened the India Museum in the East India House in 1801, which housed both manuscripts collected by Company employees as well as displaying their trophies of war.²⁶⁰ In this singular space, like Zoffany's canvas, territorial collections and acts of violence are literally brought together in a visual display of power.

Drawing upon the aesthetics of looking, Ray also suggests that the paintings on the wall could be read as "fragmented imprints of a traveller's gaze," with "each

²⁵⁸ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 140.

²⁵⁹ Jasanoff, "Collectors of Empire," 113.

²⁶⁰ Jasanoff, "Collectors of Empire," 122. For more on the India Museum see Ray Desmond, *The India Museum 1801-79* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1982).

image juxtaposed with another construct[ing] multiple sites of visual pleasure.”²⁶¹

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the aesthetics of looking and travelling were closely associated with the practice of collecting, particularly in relation to the Grand Tour, and to a certain extent to Gilpin’s more localised version of Picturesque travel; Grand Tour travellers often brought back works of art as mementos of their expeditions, while local Picturesque travellers were encouraged to ‘capture’ scenes they encountered through amateur sketching. Because the Indian scenes being displayed in Zoffany’s painting were not the unfinished works of amateur artists but framed, and completed works of art (with the exception of the painting Zoffany is shown to be actively producing), Polier and his friends (along with their fellow collectors) become symbolically aligned with the gentlemen travellers of the Grand Tour and endowed with the power and prestige associated with connoisseurship.²⁶²

The link between collecting and connoisseurship is enhanced when we compare the compositional similarities between this painting and the last painting Zoffany completed in London before leaving for India. In *Charles Townley and Friends in His Library at Park Street* (Figure 16), Zoffany depicts the London collector of classical sculpture together with his friends and fellow members of the connoisseurship Society of Dilettanti, antiquarians Charles Greville and Thomas Astle, along with Townley’s protégé Pierre-Francois Hughes.²⁶³ Like the Polier painting, the subject here is of four men within an elite circle of friends, seated in

²⁶¹ Ray, “Inscribing Asymmetry,” 188.

²⁶² Jasanoff, “Collectors of Empire,” 118.

²⁶³ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 134.

a library and surrounded by articles of their collection. While, as De Almeida and Gilpin have observed, this earlier painting depicts a more serious image of connoisseurship, the Polier painting offers a parallel conception.²⁶⁴ As we have seen in relation to Hodges' artistic response to ruins, a claim to aesthetic sensibilities was often a means of justifying European superiority. In this instance, the connoisseurship practiced by Polier and Martin served to add to the political power they already possessed by being members of the East India Company.

In addition to the cultural power associated with it, connoisseurship also provided these men with a means of reinventing their identities. Already we have seen how the practice of connoisseurship aligns one with the gentlemanly class. Adding to this, as Jasanoff and Arpen both suggest, connoisseurship also allowed Polier and Martin to reshape their national alignments.²⁶⁵ This was of considerable importance given the contemporary suspicions against non-British European officials and the fact that both Polier and Martin were simultaneously tied to the service of the Nawab of Awadh, Asaf-ud-Daula.²⁶⁶ In this painting, both men are significantly dressed in their Company attire in a blatant show of allegiance while their associations with connoisseurship not only align them with the British collectors back home, but also the Company's approach of administrative control through knowledge acquisition. As Arpen acutely observes, the pile of manuscripts on clear display linked the men to the Company's "broader colonial agenda of

²⁶⁴ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 140.

²⁶⁵ Jasanoff, "Collectors of Empire," 110; Katherine J. Arpen, "Making History: The Constructions of Johann Zoffany's Colonel Antoine Polier, Claud Martin and John Wombwell with the Artist (1786-7)" (MA thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007), 10-16.

²⁶⁶ Arpen, "Making History," 7-8.

control and development of the empire.”²⁶⁷ The combination of these visual cues results in the construction of a British identity based on class membership and political allegiances.

In fact, the entire painting can itself be read as a study in identity construction with the central image of Zoffany calling attention to the very process of constructing an image.²⁶⁸ As Arpen points out, the presence of the painter painting a scene that is clearly not before him (and therefore likely an image taken from his memory or imagination), reminds us that the image of Polier and his friends could itself have been a construction.²⁶⁹ The artificiality of the scene is also enhanced by the fact that while there are a myriad of objects within the single frame, “each element is carefully positioned to allow for maximum visibility, creating an image that is both visually cluttered and compositionally neat.”²⁷⁰ Thus, the aesthetics of identity performance is also brought out through the way in which the painted figures themselves appear engaged in a kind of *tableau vivant*.

Given Zoffany’s earlier career as a theatrical painter, this manipulation of performative elements is unsurprising and is in fact repeated in his other Indian group paintings, an example of which will be addressed later on. What is noteworthy, however, is how the use of theatricality calls attention to the performative nature of British or English identity in India at the time. As Kathleen Wilson reminds us, “Englishness became a performance of non-English and even non-British peoples, a trope of white civilisation, maintained through social and

²⁶⁷ Arpen, “Making History,” 21.

²⁶⁸ Arpen, “Making History,” 4.

²⁶⁹ Arpen, “Making History,” 15.

²⁷⁰ Arpen, “Making History,” 13.

theatricalised practices and displays at all levels, that attempted to set itself off from ‘indigenous’ savagery.”²⁷¹ In this area, we see the aesthetics of the Indian Picturesque merging with the aesthetics of theatre as elements like performativity, staging, framing, aesthetic displacement, and spatial orientation are manipulated for the purposes of administering areas under British control. To appreciate the relationship between the two, one must first look into the role the theatre played in influencing early British conceptualisations of India and the “East.”

The Picturesque theatre of India

One of the most well-known and widely circulated seventeenth-century travel texts about India was written by François Bernier, a Frenchman who served as a personal physician to the Emperor Aurangzebe and who published his accounts under the title *Histoire de la dernière revolution des états du Grand Mogul, AD 1656-1668*. Bernier’s sensationalised tale of treachery and patricide in Shah Jahan’s court and the ascent of his only surviving son gave rise to John Dryden’s popular 1675 play *Aureng-Zebe*. Performed numerous times throughout the century, the play became a lasting influence on the British perception of India through its dramatisation of an opulent and exotic East.

Nearly thirty years later, another prevailing influence on the British image of the Eastern lands came in the form of the English version of Antoine Galland’s translation and expansion of the *Alf-layla wa-Layla* known as the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*. Published in twelve volumes between the years 1706 and 1717, this

²⁷¹ Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 17.

narrative sequence, popularly known as the “Grub Street edition” (because it was translated from the French by a variety of hack hands), took the British public by storm. By the end of the eighteenth century, there were at least eighteen English editions of the *Arabian Nights*, with the tales being widely adapted into chapbooks and stories for children.²⁷²

The image of the East that the tales propagated came to be seen as being representative of the landscape and identity of the general ‘Orient,’ with the *Arabian Nights* being almost looked at as a definitive travel guide for British travellers heading eastwards.²⁷³ The prevalence of this view can be seen in the ways in which travellers repeatedly referenced the text in their own travelogues.²⁷⁴ Emily Eden, for example, while writing about her visit to the palace of the Nawab of Lucknow, describes it as being “quite as *Arabian-Nightish* as I meant it to be,” and calling her sister’s attention to the incident “in the ‘Arabian Nights,’ [where] Zobeide bets her ‘garden of delights’ against the Caliph’s ‘palace of treasures,” asserts that “this was the ‘garden of delights.’”²⁷⁵

The conceptualisation of the ‘East’ created by the *Arabian Nights* was further propagated through the medium of the theatre. As Bridget Orr notes, dramatic adaptations of the tales were popular with the more “illegitimate” genres of theatre like the pantomime and melodrama in the 1720s and again in the last

²⁷² De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 55.

²⁷³ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 67.

²⁷⁴ See Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud, “English Travellers and the Arabian Nights,” in *The Arabian Nights in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of The Thousand and One Nights into British Culture*, ed. Peter L. Caracciolo (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1988), 95-110.

²⁷⁵ Eden, *Up the Country*, 60-62.

few decades of the eighteenth century.²⁷⁶ Not only did the aesthetics of the theatre allow it to give life to the image through the use of elaborate costume and spectacular scenery, but also, the theatre as an institution had the added advantage of being available to those with low levels of literacy, particularly through those seemingly “illegitimate” genres of theatre.²⁷⁷ This meant that these ideas of the East could be circulated through all levels of British society, and not just within the confines of an educated reading community. As John M. MacKenzie has observed, Oriental melodramas like Matthew Lewis’s *Timour the Tartar* (1811), Byron’s *Sardanapalus* (1821), and the numerous stage depictions of the Indian ruler Tipu Sultan that appeared around the time of the Napoleonic wars were popular not only in the metropolitan capital but circulated amongst the provincial theatres as well.²⁷⁸

Politically, the theatre had also established itself as a platform through which the ruling discourse could be both critiqued and strengthened. As Orr notes, drama on the Restoration and eighteenth-century stage “allowed for both critique of current political affairs in England and for the depiction of fascinating, threatening, and opulent Oriental empires with which England was engaged in trade and sometimes war.”²⁷⁹ Daniel O’Quinn has also observed how theatricalised treatments of imperial military successes helped in imperial consolidation in the

²⁷⁶ Bridget Orr, “Galland, Georgian Theatre, and the Creation of Popular Orientalism,” in *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context, Between East and West*, ed. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 104.

²⁷⁷ Orr, “Galland, Georgian Theatre, and the Creation of Popular Orientalism,” 108.

²⁷⁸ John M. MacKenzie. *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 182, 184.

²⁷⁹ Orr, “Galland, Georgian Theatre, and the Creation of Popular Orientalism,” 104.

1790s, while Jane Moody has demonstrated how such dramas were crucial in the formation of Oriental and Occidental identities.²⁸⁰

With regard to the British relationship with India, however, the aesthetics of the theatre combined with the Picturesque to play an added role in influencing the practice of Company administration. This was in part due to the British perception of the importance of ceremonies within the Indian society, which in turn, influenced how relationships between the British and the Indians—along with the establishment and negotiation of ethnic and political identities—were carried out.²⁸¹ For example, elaborate ceremonies and spectacular displays of power and diplomatic camaraderie were often held with the aim of consolidating Anglo-Indian relationships. Amongst the three female writers I examine, Emily Eden's unique position of having accompanied her brother on his official tour of the northern regions of India meant that she was not only directly involved in such theatrical displays of Company power—such as partaking in the *durbars* (or ritualised formal meetings) that her brother held with the native rulers—but was also in a position to reflect on (albeit unconsciously at times) the Picturesque manipulation of theatrical aesthetics. This, and more, are further addressed in Chapter 6 but for now let us turn to a visual representation of one such theatrical display of power, Zoffany's *Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match* (or *Colonel Mordaunt's*

²⁸⁰ Daniel O'Quinn, *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770–1800* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 312–848; Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 70–74. Both cited in Orr, 105–106.

²⁸¹ See Angelia Poon, *Enacting Englishness in the Victorian Period: Colonialism and the Politics of Performance* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2008) and her article entitled “Seeing Double: Performing English identity and imperial duty in Emily Eden's *Up the Country* and Harriet Martineau's *British Rule in India*” in *Women's Writing* 12 (2005), 453–470.

Cock Fight as it is sometimes called) (Figure 17), an image which provides a useful insight into Anglo-Indian relations and the (political) manipulation of the aesthetics of the theatre in the service of Company objectives.

The painting depicts one of the cock matches regularly organised by Colonel Mordaunt, the head of the Nawab of Awadh's guard, to entertain the native ruler. Hastings himself had been present at one such match, and subsequently commissioned a painting by Zoffany; and the painter, though having never witnessed the event himself, was nonetheless able to utilise the talents developed in his theatrical paintings to create an elaborate *mise-en-scene*. Given that the cock matches were specially staged events intended for the enjoyment of the Nawab and his court, Hastings' choice of painter was contemporarily apt, with the irony of that choice only being available to the modern viewer who may see the painting as a doubly refracted image—first created by a theatrical-like event staged by Mordaunt and the British officials, and then recreated by the painter.

In the centre of the painting are the key players Colonel John Mordaunt and the Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula, both gesticulating wildly at the proceedings of the cockfight. The impression that this event was a specifically staged one is enhanced by the crowd of spectators which surround the central 'action,' as well as the canopies and fabric ground covering which was used to demarcate the symbolic performance space. The central players—the Nawab, the European officials, and higher-ranking natives and members of the Indian court—occupy this main performance area, while the common rabble observe from the borders. The vitality and energy that leaps from the canvas is striking, and the sheer variety of images

being portrayed, along with the elaborate and very distinct gestures of each character, forms an impressive visual tableau.²⁸²

While at the outset, the image appears to be one of harmonious ethnic mixing, a closer examination of the spatial organisation of the painted figures reveals the racial tensions that underlie this scene. Drawing a vertical line down the middle of the image, we see that the European figures (with the exception of Colonel Mordaunt) are almost sequestered on the extreme right of the frame, occupying less than half the canvas. Significantly, most of them are situated under a double canopy that functions almost as an added layer of protection to the larger marquee which shelters most of the human figures, including the natives. The mob-like portrayal of the commoners that are situated outside this larger canopy suggests a possible threat to the European officials and makes it seem as if this second, smaller canopy is a necessary protection (however ineffectual). Furthermore, the feeling of anxiety regarding native proximity is enhanced through the positioning of the external viewer of the painting. Here, because of the gamut of information being provided in the single scene, the viewer is almost forced to take a step back and distance himself from the image being presented in order to comfortably digest the abundance of miniature scenes that are taking place.

²⁸² A version of the painting was still on display at the palace of the Nawab and was actually seen by Fanny Parks during her visit to Oude: "I joined a party, and processed to Daulut Khana, a palace built by Ussuf-ood-Dowla [...] to see a picture painted in oil by Zoffani, an Italian artist, of a match of cocks, between the Nawab Ussuf-ood-Dowla and the Resident, Colonel Mordaunt; the whole of the figures are portraits; the picture excellent, but fast falling into decay" (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 181).

Significantly, this manipulation of viewing distance is also one that unites the aesthetics of the theatre with that of the Picturesque. In the traditional theatre settings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, the audience is always removed from the action onstage by the existence of the proscenium arch, which forms an invisible divider between them and the actors. While they may be invited to partake in the emotions rendered by the performance, they are nevertheless symbolically ‘protected’ by the safety of this invisible screen or fourth wall.²⁸³ Similarly, the Picturesque viewer is also able to inoculate him or herself from potentially troubling scenes through the application of Picturesque displacement and aesthetic ‘screening’ with the crucial difference being that unlike the theatrical audience member, the protection that the Picturesque viewer seeks is against observable reality.²⁸⁴ This is an important element which I return to in Chapter 6 when I discuss examples of how Eden applies such Picturesque displacement in an attempt to disassociate herself from otherwise uncomfortable scenes around her.

As with his painting of Colonel Polier and his companions, Zoffany includes an image of himself amongst the European figures painted onscreen. Once again, he depicts himself staring directly out of the canvas, although this time there is no image of a semi-painted canvas to accompany him and he is situated near the corner of the frame rather than the centre. Nevertheless, the painter’s presence,

²⁸³ Some modern theatre theories, however, promote the removal of this “fourth wall.” See John Russell Brown, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), especially Chapters 8, 9 and 10 in 2001 edition.

²⁸⁴ Although one could argue that one of the functions of the theatre is to mirror reality, my argument nevertheless draws on the distinction between the real and the dramatised at the moment of observation.

along with the paintbrush that he significantly holds, once again reminds the viewers that the scene before them is but an artistic creation, a rendering from Zoffany's imagination. Just as in the Polier painting, the level of falsehood that this gestures towards also indirectly emphasises the performative nature of the characters' actions. The entire cock fight is thus revealed for what it is: a show staged for the differing purposes of the stakeholders involved—the Europeans and the Nawab act out their friendly rivalry, while the crowd is allowed to be entertained by the spectacle. As Cohn succinctly summarises in relation to the British administration in India, in this “colonial sociological theatre,” everyone had their proper roles to play and indeed we see a tacit acknowledgement of such role-playing being present in the accounts of the female travellers in question, particularly in the writings of Emily Eden.²⁸⁵

Up to this point my discussion of the visual representations of India has focused on the Indian landscape and the place of the Europeans within their new cultural context. I now conclude this chapter by addressing an equally crucial element of the Indian Picturesque, and one we see being repeatedly engaged with by travellers to the subcontinent: the (visual) treatment of the Indian people.

Picturesque peoples: Visualizing the native body

While William Hodges was the first professional *landscape* artist to arrive in India, the first European artist to depict actual images of the Indian people was Tilly Kettle. Kettle arrived in India in 1769, having developed his career in London as a

²⁸⁵ Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 10.

painter of theatrical portraits, a genre that came into prominence during the last three decades of the eighteenth century. He prospered tremendously while in India, and shipped back four of his paintings to be displayed at the Society of Artists in the 1770s.²⁸⁶ These paintings (depicting the Nawab of Arcot, a group of native female dancers, General Robert Barker together with the Nawab of Awadh and his sons, and an image of a *sati* scene) were important as the earliest professional images of India to be displayed to the British public.

Evidence that Kettle brought his aesthetics of theatrical painting with him when he arrived in the country is best demonstrated in his portrait of the *Dancing Girl of Faizabad* (1772) (Figure 18)—an image that bears striking similarities with his earlier portrait of British actress Mary Ann Yates both in terms of style and composition. In both paintings, emphasis is placed on the physicality of the central female figure's body, along with—as I elaborate in the subsequent paragraphs—its concomitant erotic undertones.

In Kettle's earlier portrait, the artist paints the actress in her role of Mandane, a Chinese official's wife, in playwright Arthur Murphy's adaptation of Voltaire's play *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755) (Figure 19).²⁸⁷ In this image, the elaborately-detailed Oriental-styled robes the actress is dressed in, together with her dynamic and distinctly theatrical pose—she appears in mid-action, using her right arm to keep someone at bay, presumably a fellow performer who is not

²⁸⁶ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 69.

²⁸⁷ Voltaire's play had, in turn, originated from a Chinese play first translated by Jesuit priest Joseph Henri Premare and then published by Jean-Baptiste Du Halde in his *Description Geographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, et Physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise* (1735). See Liu Wu-Chi, "The Original Orphan of China" *Comparative Literature* 5.3 (Summer, 1953), 193–212.

depicted in the painting—points clearly towards her acting profession, while the simple background she stands against invites close scrutiny of the primary tool of her trade: her body.

As Shearer West points out, while the importance of the body to the history of acting has long been established, the eighteenth-century discourse of connoisseurship also came to be applied to the theatre, thus increasing the attention paid towards the body of the performer.²⁸⁸ The corporeality of the performers' bodies was highlighted in critical discussions of their stagecraft, while parallels between (visual) art and acting also came to prominence with the application of the 'sister arts' theory and the subsequent use of aesthetic terminology such as "light and shade," "composition" and "sketching," in relation to the theatre.²⁸⁹

Simultaneous with this aesthetic appreciation of the performer's body, however, was the oftentimes-conflicting eroticism of the body of the actress. As West explains, "While direct references could be made in public print as to the sexual desirability of the actress's body, descriptions of actors' bodies were more frequently generic or unspecific."²⁹⁰ This was largely due to the traditional association of actresses with prostitution, where, "[t]he boundaries between the two professions were seen as fluid, partly because the practitioners were perceived

²⁸⁸ Shearer West, "Body Connoisseurship" in *Notorious Muse: The Actress in British Art and Culture 1776-1812*, ed. Robyn Asleson (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2003), 151-170.

²⁸⁹ West, "Body Connoisseurship," 151-152.

²⁹⁰ West, "Body Connoisseurship," 160.

to pursue their careers within the same urban spaces and several actresses were thought to have worked as prostitutes before making a career on the stage.”²⁹¹

Turning now to Kettle’s portrait of the *Dancing Girl*, we see a similar attention to female eroticism taking place as the artist depicts an image of an Indian *nautch* dancer—a figure that would come to be repeatedly illustrated, both visually and textually, by European travellers in India.²⁹² Like the eighteenth-century British actress, the Indian court dancer was often viewed as a sexualised object by these European observers.²⁹³ Indeed travellers who had observed these dances or *nautches* routinely remarked on (what they saw as) the erotic movements and gestures of the performers, which they described as being both drawn to and scandalised by. In more extreme cases, these *nautches* were even censured by male travellers for presumably assaulting the more ‘delicate’ sensibilities of their female counterparts. An example of such a reaction is found in the journal of Captain Godfrey Charles Mundy, a British soldier writing in India in 1828:

European ladies not unfrequently [sic] attend these spectacles; and, when the dancers are warned beforehand, they only witness a graceful and sufficiently stupid display; but, if thrown off their guard by applause, there is some danger of their carrying the suppleness of their body and limbs quite beyond the disgraceful, and even bordering on the disgusting. The situation of a gentleman in this case is irksome and uncomfortable; and he sits in constant and not unfounded dread lest

²⁹¹ Gill Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theatre 1768-1820* (New Haven Conn.; London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2007), 28.

²⁹² Notably, Kettle had also painted another portrait, this time with a group of three dancing girls, which he sent back to be displayed at the Society for Artists in the same year. While it is not known if the British public had a chance to see this painting of the single performer, it survives today as one of Kettle’s most iconic paintings and is an apt example of the artist’s adaptation of his painterly technique to suit his Indian experience.

²⁹³ *Nautch* dancers were often revered for their craft by the Indians themselves, who saw these dancers as a class distinct from courtesans. Many Europeans, not understanding this distinction, thus thought them to be sexually available and promiscuous.

these fair libérales in morality should commit some, perhaps unintentional, solecism against decency.²⁹⁴

Indeed, it is quite possible that Emily Eden may have been presented with an example of such a 'tamer' form of dancing, thus leading her to defend the art: "People may abuse nautching, but it always amuses me extremely. The girls hardly move about at all, but their dresses and attitudes are so graceful I like to see them" (UC, 124).

Returning to Kettle's two paintings, we see that a common eroticism is being hinted at by the compositional similarities of both images. Like Mrs Yates, the Indian dancer is situated close to the foreground of the painting and the vivid colours of her attire place her in stark contrast to the lightly coloured background she stands against. Even more striking are the corresponding poses of the female figures. Both women are depicted in mid-action, with their right arms outstretched and their right feet placed forward, and in a parallel gesture to her British counterpart, Kettle's dancer casts a look to the left of the frame, presumably at an unseen person(s). Like the figure of Mrs Yates, the *nautch* girl is depicted against a relatively simple background and while there are two secondary figures painted within the frame, they are depicted in the depth of the painting as well as partially obscured by the pillar. In contrast, the primary subject is painted close to the foreground and with her entire body on full display. Adding to this effect are the soft folds of her diaphanous bright red sari, which serve to emphasise the curvature of her body and blend harmoniously with the vase-like base of the pillar behind

²⁹⁴ Captain Mundy, *Pen and Pencil Sketches, Being the Journal of a Tour in India, In Two Volumes* (London: 1832), 91-92. Henceforth referred to as *Pen and Pencil* in parenthetical references to the text.

her. Likewise, the snakelike coils of the hookah pipe she holds, together with the crescent patterns of the rug beneath her feet, further accentuate her serpentine form. Associations of eroticism and forbidden sexuality are also presented through her gold *choli* (or sari blouse), which reveals half her torso, as well as the phallic mouthpiece of the hookah pipe, which is tantalizingly placed before her breast.

While on the level of (presumed) sexual availability, the British actress would appear to stand as an analogue to the Indian performer (and vice versa), the subtle differences between Kettle's treatment of a female performer in India and that of a female performer in Britain, suggest a more complicated relationship. As she performs onstage, the eighteenth-century British actress renders her body open for male delectation, and sometimes this offer is extended offstage as well, with a number of female performers entertaining notorious sexual liaisons with their wealthy patrons. As a subject of a theatrical portrait, the actress then offers herself up to an even wider audience than those within the immediate confines of the theatrical performance. In both cases, the power dynamics are ostensibly on the side of the viewing audience, although, as Robyn Asleson suggests, "[t]hrough collaboration with artists, female performers gained a measure of control over the construction of their public images."²⁹⁵

In the case of Kettle's visual depiction of the Indian performer, however, such self-assured subjectivity is denied on the part of the sitter. Unlike the British

²⁹⁵ Robyn Asleson, introduction to *Notorious Muse: The Actress in British Art and Culture 1776-1812*, ed. Robyn Asleson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 2. See also Deborah C. Payne, "Reified object or emergent professional? Retheorising the restoration actress" in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-century English Theatre*, ed. J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah C. Payne (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1995), 13-38.

actress, the Indian dancer has no adoring public to court with her painted image, as her image is packaged and disseminated to a totally foreign viewing audience—as was the case with Kettle’s earlier image of the three dancing girls, which was sent back to Britain to be displayed at the Society for Artists. Unnamed and decontextualised, the native female then becomes transformed into another Picturesque curiosity for the visual delight of the European viewer.

The following passage from Eden’s *Up the Country* illustrates this process of Picturesque decontextualisation:

I wish my drawing paper would not begin to spoil already but it is turning into blotting paper. Luckily I cannot find anything to draw just now. It has occurred to me that when we go home I shall not be able to show you what an Indian woman is like, and to be sure we have seen very few; but some of the Paharee women are very pretty, who go about the hills cutting grass and wood. I met some yesterday and asked them to come and be sketched, and they said they would, but they have never arrived. Some of the nautch-girls in the bazaar are very pretty, and wear beautiful ornaments but it is not lawful to look at them even for sketching purposes, and indeed, Mr. N., one of the magistrates, has removed them all from the main street, so the bazaar is highly correct, but not half so picturesque as last year (*UC*, 300-301).

Eager to show her sister an example of “what an Indian woman is like,” Eden’s (albeit thwarted) attempt at sketching some “Paharee women” is representative of the manner in which the Indian people were often treated by British travellers as interesting curios to be (visually) captured and collected. Furthermore, the fact that she then tries to substitute these women with “nautch-girls” suggests that—at least in her mind—they are interchangeable in their function as representatives of Indian women.

Interestingly, Eden’s lament that she has been unable to sketch these performers because of the British administration’s endeavours to remove them

from public spaces (presumably because of the erotic threat they were deemed to pose) reveals her prioritisation of aesthetic engagement—which at times even superseded the larger aims of the British administration which she, as the Governor-General’s sister, was (ironically) supposed to uphold. This is a point that I elaborate further in Chapter 6 but in this particular instance, it is sufficient to highlight that Eden would rather British ideas of propriety be sacrificed in the name of aesthetic composition, and that the bazaars be less “correct” and more “picturesque.”

Coeval with this impulse towards collecting visual representations of Indian peoples, was an early thrust towards an “ethnographic” study of the people of India, which, as Leask notes, would culminate in the later part of the nineteenth-century with works such as *The People of India* (1868-75).²⁹⁶ In fact, Eden herself would go on to produce an amateur version of such a work in her own *Portraits of the Princes and People of India* (1844).²⁹⁷ As Chris Pinney explains, the driving force behind such studies arose from the nineteenth-century impulse towards order and classification:

India as it was viewed by the traveller, administrator and anthropologist, presented, paradoxically, both a confusion and a clarity of vision: a variety and a singularity, a kaleidoscope which eventually dissolved into meaningful order. Anthropology, particularly in its earlier ‘physical’ form (from which modern ‘social’ anthropology has consciously distanced itself) provided a means of comprehending this paradox, in which the initial bewilderment created by the variety of social groups in India gave way to a reassuring certainty that they were all identifiably distinct

²⁹⁶ Leask, 174. See footnote number 63; For more on *The People of India* see Suleri, 103-110 and Chris Pinney, “Colonial Anthropology in the ‘Laboratory of Mankind,’” in *The Raj, India and the British 1600-1947*, ed. by C.A Bayly (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 1990), 252-263; if I use the term “ethnography” tentatively here it is because its existence as a formal method within the larger field of anthropology had not been fully established at the time at which Eden was writing.

²⁹⁷ Emily Eden, *Portraits of the Princes and People of India* (London: 1844). I return to further address this work in Chapter 6.

elements which could be arranged legibly and clearly in the 'living museum of mankind.'²⁹⁸

Concomitant with this drive was a growing interest—led by the aesthetics of the Picturesque and starting formally with the 1773 publication of Thomas Jeffery's *Collection of the Dresses of Different Nations*—particularly *Old English Dresses*—in acquiring pictures of costumes and occupations of figures from around Europe and Asia.²⁹⁹ Seizing the demand for such images from India, Flemish artist François Balthazard Solvyns, who was living in Calcutta at the time, announced his plans for a *Collection of Two Hundred and Fifty Coloured Etchings: Descriptive of the Manners, Customs and Dresses of the Hindoos* in 1794.³⁰⁰ Divided into twelve parts, his etchings were published in Calcutta in 1793 and then again in greater numbers in 1799.³⁰¹ The venture, however, was a financial failure but that did not dissuade Solvyns from later issuing a Paris edition of the folio. Entitled *Les Hindous*, and coming out in 48 parts between 1808 and 1812, this new edition consisted of 248 plates, which included some etchings that had not been published in the earlier edition. Unfortunately this too proved to be unsuccessful.

Ironically, what did prove to be a success were the pirated editions of Solvyns' works, published by Edward Orme. Entitled *Costumes of Hindustan*, the

²⁹⁸ Chris Pinney, "Colonial Anthropology in the 'Laboratory of Mankind,'" in *The Raj, India and the British 1600-1947*, ed. by C.A Bayly (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 1990), 252-253.

²⁹⁹ Mildred Archer, "Balthazard Solvyns and the Indian Picturesque," *The Connoisseur* 170.638 (Jan 1969), 12-18.

³⁰⁰ For a comprehensive survey of the life and work of Solvyns, see Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., *A Portrait of the Hindus: Balthazar Solvyns & the European image of India 1760-1824* (Oxford; Ahmadabad: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³⁰¹ The exact dates of Solvyns' publications appear to be contested. I have reproduced them from Hardgrave's survey of the artist. Mildred Archer, and Ronald Lightbown claim, however, that "[Solvyns] began issuing the parts in 1793 and completed them in 1799, after which he continued to finish and deliver copies for some three years." See Archer and Lightbown, *India Observed*, 84.

first edition was issued in parts between 1804 and 1805, with the second edition following soon after, this time containing both French and English descriptions between each plate. Orme's publication proved to be so successful that a third edition emerged in 1807.

The primary reason often cited for the difference in levels of success between Solvyns and his rival was that Solvyns' depictions, though faithful, were far less Picturesque than Orme's.³⁰² As Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. explains, Solvyns brought to his prints "an immediacy that reduces the distance between the viewer and the subject."³⁰³ Furthermore, unlike Orme's figures, which were generally set against a white background, Solvyns' characters were set in context.³⁰⁴ Examples of their corresponding images are given in Figures 20, 21, and 22, all of which depict a native astrologer. Notably, Solvyns' two figures are sketched against the backdrop of the native hut, while the one produced by Orme is decontextualised entirely. The fact that Solvyns' works were less appealing to the public than Orme's suggests that such intimacy with Indian native subjects was avoided amongst the European audience, who preferred instead to maintain a level of Picturesque distance from these aestheticised objects.

Returning briefly to the passage from *Up the Country*, quoted above, we see this tension between truth and artistic representation being expressed in Eden's final comments about the state of the bazaar at Simla: "the bazaar is highly correct, but not half so picturesque as last year." While the context of the passage makes it

³⁰² See Archer, "Balthazard Solvyns and the Indian Picturesque," 15 and Hardgrave, *A Portrait of the Hindus*, 77.

³⁰³ Hardgrave, *A Portrait of the Hindus*, 86.

³⁰⁴ Hardgrave, *A Portrait of the Hindus*, 86.

clear that she is referring to *propriety* when she uses the word “correct,” Eden’s remark can also be read as (inadvertently) highlighting the opposition between what is accurate, or “correct” and what is Picturesque. Indeed, as I have discussed in Chapter 1, and will further explore in my readings of the accounts of Parks, Postans, and Eden, this tension between truth and representation is an aspect of the Picturesque that is often engaged with (in various ways) by practitioners of the aesthetic.

Up to this point, I have attempted to furnish the reader with a broad understanding of the early development of the Picturesque as an aesthetic, and how it evolved as it came to be transplanted onto Indian soil. I have also highlighted the manner in which it was often wielded as a political tool in support of the British administration in India. As the reader would have noticed, both the theorists and the key artists who facilitated the spread of the Picturesque have been male—an unsurprising fact, given the bias towards male intellectual endeavour.

While my thesis is not concerned with making a comparison between male and female writers in their use of the Picturesque—my focus lies rather in debating the claims made by scholars such as Suleri that the Picturesque tended to inhibit women’s aesthetic and political development when imposed on women travellers—it is useful to look at how this aesthetic has been utilised by a male traveller, particularly one whose accounts appear to have influenced one of the female writers I examine. Hence, in the following chapter I turn to the Indian travel writings of Captain Godfrey Charles Mundy (1804-1860)—a traveller whom, as the following passage taken from *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the*

Picturesque illustrates, Fanny Parks both admires and to whose accounts she compares her own:

I am reading Captain Mundy's "Sketches in India," a much more amusing journal than I can write. I have no tigers to kill, no hurdwar to visit; nor have I even seen the taj. His journal is very spirited, very correct, and very amusing; I am pleased to hear the praises bestowed upon it in England (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 268).

While I by no means read Mundy's journal as representative of the accounts of male travellers to India—indeed, the sheer number and varied nature of the travel texts produced by these men would require a separate study of its own—an examination of how this particular traveller employs the Picturesque in his writings enriches the discussion surrounding an aesthetic that had been shaped and manipulated (in the social and political realms) by men before it was adopted by (or in some cases, indirectly imposed on) women.

Furthermore, as Dyson notes, "[t]he contiguity of the Indian adventures of the British in time and space meant that cross-references are numerous" with "[m]any [travellers] referring to the same prominent personalities of the period, to one another, to one another's works."³⁰⁵ The temporal congruence of Mundy's travels to those of the female travellers I examine in this thesis, as well as the correspondence between the circumstances of his journey and Eden's in particular—similar to Eden in her *de facto* role as confidante to her Governor-General brother, Mundy served as an *aide-de-camp* when the then-Commander-in-Chief of the British forces was making his tour through India—offer interesting points of comparison and shed some light on the ways in which the Picturesque

³⁰⁵ Dyson, *Various Universe*, 29.

came to be (re)claimed by these women, not as a restrictive force but as a means of self-expression, self-definition, and even political engagement.

CHAPTER 3

From travelling artists to artistic travellers

In his chapter on “Indian Travel Writing and the Imperial Picturesque,” Leask offers a brief overview of the evolution of the Picturesque from a visual to a textual mode of engaging with India.³⁰⁶ Beginning, as I have done in the previous chapter, with the works of William Hodges and the Daniells, the scholar traces the influence of these early Picturesque painters to the written accounts of two widely-cited travellers: George Annesley, Viscount Valentia and Bishop Reginald Heber. The former produced *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt, in 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806* (1809), while the widow of the latter published her late husband’s accounts as *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-1825, with Notes upon Ceylon, an Account of a Journey to Madras and the Southern Provinces, 1826, and Letters in India* in 1828. As Leask explains, “[j]ust as both travellers depended on the routes and sights of picturesque painters like Hodges and the Daniells, so their texts in turn became reference points for subsequent nineteenth-century travelogues.”³⁰⁷ Their travelling routes and the peculiarly “Indian” images and experiences they described, such as temples and holy men, and even the occasional visit with lower-

³⁰⁶ Leask, *Curiosity*, 155-201.

³⁰⁷ Leask, *Curiosity*, 178.

ranking native noblemen, came to form what would eventually become the stock nineteenth-century European traveller's itinerary I alluded to in Chapter 2.³⁰⁸

Moreover, and more important for this thesis, is the fact that both these early travellers had begun to adopt the visual aesthetics of the Picturesque in their own written accounts. Accompanying Valentia, for example, was his secretary and draughtsman, the landscape painter Henry Salt, whose Picturesque scenes not only illustrated his employer's published travelogue but whose artistic style appears to have influenced the nobleman's experiences of India; as Leask notes, "there is considerable seepage of Salt's picturesque aesthetics into Valentia's journal narrative."³⁰⁹ Likewise, Heber, though travelling under different circumstances than his predecessor, similarly employed the aesthetics of visual art in his writings—so much so that a contemporary reviewer of *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* described him as possessing "the eye of a painter and the pen of a poet."³¹⁰

Moving further into the nineteenth-century, we then encounter what Leask calls the "military tourist[s]," consisting of "a new breed of Indian travel writers, mainly military men on leave, who explored, hunted, and sketched in their leisure time."³¹¹ One such traveller was Captain Mundy, who between the years 1825 and 1830, served as an *aide-de-camp* to Lord Combermere, while the latter was Commander-in-Chief to the British forces in India. During that time, Mundy kept

³⁰⁸ For more on the Indian travels of Valentia and Heber see Leask, *Curiosity*, 178-191 and Dyson, *Various Universe*, 159-162, 223-232.

³⁰⁹ Leask, *Curiosity*, 180.

³¹⁰ *Quarterly Review*, 37:102, 1828. Quoted in Leask, *Curiosity*, 184.

³¹¹ Leask, *Curiosity*, 218.

a journal of his adventures, which he later published as *Pen and Pencil Sketches, being a Journal of a Tour in India* (1832).³¹²

As its title makes clear, Mundy's work echoes those of his travelling predecessors in its inclusion of visual images along with written descriptions of the landscapes and people he encountered. Published as a two-volume work, his account presents the reader with no less than twenty-six examples of his own drawings, reproduced as smaller woodcuts of people and objects alongside larger and more elaborate engravings. Indeed, right from the start, Mundy already reveals his ambition for *Pen and Pencil Sketches* to invoke his audience's visual perceptions as he expresses his hopes that through his narrative, readers "may see enough of an interesting country to induce a wish for a second journey" (*Pen and Pencil*, viii, emphasis mine).

As addressed earlier in the thesis, the nature of travel within India varied from traveller to traveller, with duty and the availability of leisure dictating the scope and extent of travels within the subcontinent. In the case of Mundy, along with exercising his regular military duties, travelling in India took the form of an official "Tour of inspection of the military stations in the Upper Provinces" (*Pen and Pencil*, 1). To a certain extent, this restricted his geographical access to areas occupied by the British troops. Nevertheless, his position as Lord Combermere's *aide-de-camp* made up for these limitations by enabling him to enjoy experiences not commonly afforded to less "official" travellers. For example, travelling with the

³¹² See Ken Macnab and Russel Ward, "Mundy, Godfrey Charles (1804–1860)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mundy-godfrey-charles-2490/text3351>, published first in hardcopy 1967

Commander-in-Chief meant that Mundy was often formally received and elaborately entertained by Indian rulers and noblemen. In this way, his Indian experiences can be seen to parallel those of Emily Eden—not only in terms of the royal personages they both encountered, but also in that they both served as official representatives of the East India Company.

Indeed, as I discuss later in the chapter, this unique position, coupled with the author's military background, had an inadvertent effect on the traveller's relationship with India, making it difficult for him to disassociate the landscape he encountered from British military action and administration. However, before I address this further, I first examine his aesthetic sources, as these conjoin with his military background and official status effectively to shape both his own engagement with India and the image of the country that he paints for his readers.

Mundy, the aesthetic traveller

Like many travellers of his time, Godfrey Charles Mundy arrived in India already primed with cultural expectations, largely gleaned from the artistic products (both literary and visual) that he had been exposed to back home. As previously discussed, even before the popularisation of paintings by European artists who had travelled to the subcontinent, some of the most prominent influences on the image of India in Britain had already come from 'oriental' tales being circulated through textual sources like the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* as well as through theatrical productions like Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe* and Lewis' *Timour the Tartar*.

The effect that these narratives had on the author is made evident relatively early in his text when he describes the fireworks display provided by the King of Oude as creating a “truly oriental” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 33) scene which he deems “almost a realization of some of those splendid fictions in the Arabian Nights” (ibid). Likewise, when meeting with the Emperor of Delhi, Mundy is prompted to recall his childhood days when he had first been exposed to stories of the Mughal emperors through theatrical productions:

Almost the earliest recollections of my infant days were associated with the riches, splendour, heroism and *barbarity* of the Great Mogul—‘Timur the Tartar’ was the first play I ever saw, and my remembrance of every scene and incident is as vivid, as though the years had been abridged to minutes (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 366).

While the revelation of this childhood memory itself attests to the force of such cultural influences, what makes this reverie even more pointed, however, is the momentary blurring of fiction and reality that takes place as Mundy imagines himself “stand[ing] in the presence of [his] hero’s descendant and on the very spot where the dreaded Timur held his warrior court!” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 367). It is here that we are given a glimpse of the potent effect of such ‘oriental’ narratives on the British traveller to the extent that the materiality of his current situation is displaced as he is symbolically transported into a fictional ‘oriental’ space.

In a similar way, we see works of Romantic-period literature exerting a shaping influence on Mundy’s engagement with India. When coming across an old castle in the town of Burwah-Sauger, for example, he invokes the legacy of the early Gothic novels as he describes “the hoary old chateau, with its frowning towers and deep foliage” and declares that its “peculiarly romantic appearance remind[ed]

[him] of the scenes of some of Mrs Radcliffe's [sic] interesting horrors" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 113). Likewise, he later quotes from Byron's "The Siege of Corinth" ["As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead, When they scarcely could rise from the spot where they fed!" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 249)] in an attempt to adequately convey "[t]he blood-curdling picture" of the dead pilgrims being feasted on by scavengers as they tragically expired from their arduous journey to the temple of Juggernaut.

Significantly, Mundy's literary allusions also suggest a line of continuity between his Indian accounts and that of his predecessor, Reginald Heber. As Dyson notes, "Romanticism [became] a prominent feature of the Indian journal" with the publication of Heber's accounts, and Leask similarly observes that "Heber's writing also partakes of a particular form of referentiality which might be called the 'literary picturesque.'"³¹³ Moreover, while Mundy confesses that he had only properly read Heber's account after returning to England, his referencing of this earlier traveller during the course of his travels does suggest that he was at least aware of the reverend Bishop's contribution to the field of Indian travelogues. Describing his meeting with the Nawab of Dacca, for example, Mundy observes that "It is said that Bishop Heber—of whose Journal I have not yet been able to obtain a perusal—has spoken somewhat slightly of his Highness's royal insignificance" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 194) and in an accompanying footnote, goes on to add the following clarification:

I have, since writing the above, found opportunities of reading the lamented Bishop's interesting Journal; and I think that the handsome manner in which the Nawab's character and acquirements are spoken of

³¹³ Dyson, *Various Universe*, 225. See also Leask, *Curiosity*, 188-189.

ought amply to counterbalance any reflections of the Author of his Highness's assumption or retention of royal pomp (ibid, 195).

Indeed, like that of his literary predecessor, Mundy's narrative similarly displays the author's appreciation of visual aesthetics. At a certain level, this can be attributed to his social standing; being the eldest son born into a high ranking military family (his father was a Major-General and his mother was the daughter of a baron), it is highly likely that Mundy would have received a proper 'gentleman's education' of the time.³¹⁴ As referenced earlier in the thesis, such an education typically included a Grand Tour and exposure to, if not at least a cursory study of, works of art. Indeed, Mundy reveals his artistic knowledge on multiple occasions, often transposing 'European' images he was evidently familiar with onto Indian subjects. While dining in the palace of the King of Oude, for example, the writer relates the scene in front of him to "the background of Martin's famous picture of Belshazzar's Feast" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 32) and, at a later stage in the narrative, he identifies a likeness in the chief of Krassoo with "some of the great painters' representations of our Saviour—the same open forehead, gracefully waving hair and beard, gently arched brows, and straight, well-formed nose" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 305).

As we have seen earlier, this method of calling to mind images that already existed within the observers' cultural frames of reference was a prime feature of the Picturesque. Unsurprisingly, Mundy, like many travellers who were faced with a multitude of new (and often culturally strange) scenes, turned to the Picturesque

³¹⁴ See Ken Macnab and Russel Ward, "Mundy, Godfrey Charles (1804–1860)." In fact, Mundy himself makes multiple references to his time at Eton College. See *Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 101, 288, 335 and 357.

as a useful means of processing this novel and unfamiliar terrain. The associative nature of the Picturesque aesthetic allowed travellers to invoke the comforts of 'home' (or the familiar) while simultaneously appreciating the foreign environment they were in.

In certain instances, these associative techniques even resulted in attempts at physically replicating the British environment within the Indian context (to varying degrees of success). We see this for example, in the conversational paintings that depicted Anglo-Indian attempts to recreate a version (and a vision) of the British country-house on Indian soil. In fact, Mundy himself encounters such a phenomenon when he visits the home of the British Resident at Lucknow. There he observes that "[t]he farm and dairy reminded me much of 'sweet home,' the more so that many of the cows were English" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 35). Unfortunately, when he "looked in vain for the rosy-faced-and-elbowed dairymaids of Derbyshire" only to find that "[their] functions were ill sustained by moustachioed and half-naked natives" (*ibid*), he is quickly struck by the limits of such acts of recreation of the English landscape. Nevertheless, he persists in his attempts at searching for such landscape correlations—comparing the Himalayan regions to the Swiss Alps, certain parts of the native scenery to the Welsh countryside, and eventually concluding that "[t]he Ganges, though certainly magnificent as a river [...] must yield the palm of picturesque beauty to the Thames, the Liffy, or the Rhine" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 150).

However, in spite of Mundy's casual attempts to assert the superiority of the British/European landscape, there are still occasions in which he is drawn to the

uniqueness of the Indian environment and visibly influenced by the rhetoric of the (Indian) Picturesque. One such incident takes place when he visits the Hurdwar Fair and is prompted to compare it with its British counterparts. The resulting passages are quoted at length because they provide some insight into how the discourse of the (Indian) Picturesque came to bear on the traveller:

As I looked over the roofs of the booths upon the town, the mountains beyond, the hundred of temples, tombs, and ruins, the numerous and many-shaped little camps, the long array of elephants, camels, horses, &c., spread over the well-wooded plain, and the thousands of picturesquely-dressed people, I suddenly contrasted the scene before me with the last fairs I had witnessed, which happened to be those of Portsdown, and Donnybrook of head-breaking notoriety, both first-rate specimens of their respective countries.

In fun and frolic our British fairs of course bear the bell, [...] But in the picturesque properties of the scene, how greatly does this Indian assemblage transcend our own! Instead of red, rectangular buildings, square doors, square windows, formal lines of booths, and, what is worse than all, the dark dingy dress of the figures—with perhaps the rare exception of two or three red cloaks and redder faces among the country lasses, —we have here domes, minarets, fanciful architecture, and a costume, above all, flaunting in colours, set off with weapons, and formed, from the easy flow of its drapery, to adorn beauty and disguise deformity. —As if on purpose to refute me, there are passing at this moment the most disgusting troop of fanatic fakirs, who, with neglected hair and beards, distorted limbs, long talon-like nails, and hideously smeared visages and bodies, look more like wild beasts than human beings. But even these are picturesque! Every hut, equipage, utensil, and beast of India is picturesque, as has been shown by that clever and spirited artist, Chinnery: eastern manners, customs, attitudes, are picturesque: the language even, replete as it is with figure and metaphor, may be said to be picturesque (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 154-156).

Even at a cursory glance, the reader is already alerted to the potent influence of the Picturesque by the author's repetition of the term—particularly in the final sentence where the cadence rises as Mundy lists all the “picturesque” attributes of the Indian scene before him. The influence of this aesthetic strategy then becomes even more evident when we look further into the passage. Indeed right from the start we see Mundy's attention being drawn to some of the common visual

elements of the Indian Picturesque—"the temple, tombs, and ruins" as well as the elephants and people in native dress. Furthermore, when he compares the "red, rectangular buildings, square doors, square windows, [and] formal lines of booths" of the English country fairs with the "domes, minarets, fanciful architecture" and colourful costumes present in the Indian scene before him, what he is essentially doing is setting up the aesthetic properties associated with the Picturesque—such as variety and the preference for curvature and flow—against what can be taken as the 'anti-Picturesque' attributes of straightness and regularity. Likewise, his emphasis on the attractiveness of the native weapons—for him they serve to "set off" the beauty of the native garb—can similarly be said to support the anti-utilitarian ethos of the Picturesque as the weapons are not appreciated for their utilitarian value but as a form of aesthetic adornment. Finally, the author's allusion to the artist George Chinnery—an English landscape and portrait painter who was heavily influenced by the styles of Zoffany and Hodges—directly attests to his awareness of the Picturesque images of India that were in popular circulation.³¹⁵

However, what is possibly most striking in this passage is the point at which Mundy turns his attention to the group of "fanatic fakirs." Here, while he begins by using the language of the Grotesque to highlight their "distorted limbs, long talon-like nails, and hideously smeared visages and bodies," all of which he deems to be thoroughly "disgusting," he nevertheless concludes his observation with the proclamation that "even these are picturesque!" While at the outset, this statement

³¹⁵ For more on Chinnery, see De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 296.

appears confusing, an examination of the relationship between these two visual aesthetics serves to clarify Mundy's choice of words.

Though seemingly opposed to the Picturesque, the Grotesque shares some of its ethos. According to Philip Thomson, it is characteristically defined by “the confusion of heterogeneous elements laid out in a way that shows “the wilful disregard of the principal of mimesis or realistic reproduction of the familiar world, and [a] transgression against the laws of nature and proportion.”³¹⁶ While the early uses of the term were restricted to antique paintings and to the imitations of this style, which became popular in the sixteenth century, by the eighteenth century, the term had taken on a broader meaning to connote the ridiculous, distorted, and the unnatural.³¹⁷ In turn, by the nineteenth century, the Grotesque had begun to operate as a kind of polar opposite to the popular Picturesque while, ironically, serving also as its sister aesthetic. As Nancy K. Hill observes:

A narrow line separates the picturesque from the grotesque. Frequently what distinguishes one mode from the other is the perception of the observer, or the angle from which the scene is observed. Even a shadow passing over the sun rapidly transforms a scene of picturesque alpine beauty into a terrifying landscape full of grotesque possibility [...]

The grotesque inverts the picturesque. What seemed pleasing variety in one becomes unsettling chaos in the other. What evoked picture now evokes nightmare, [...] The same technique of juxtaposition produces in the picturesque an interesting congruence, while in the grotesque juxtaposition results in jarring discrepancy.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Philip Thomson, *The Grotesque* (London: Methuen and Co., 1972), 12.

³¹⁷ Thomson, *The Grotesque*, 13. See also Arthur Clayborough, *The Grotesque in English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1965), 6.

³¹⁸ Nancy K. Hill, *A Reformer's Art: Dickens' Picturesque and Grotesque Imagery* (Athens; London: Ohio University Press, 1981), 46.

Read in this light, Mundy's conflation of the Grotesque with the Picturesque is not only understandable but also recalls a similar artistic contribution that had taken place earlier in the century and around the time Solvyns and Orme were publishing their images of native characters. In 1806, artillery officer Captain Charles Gold, recognising and harnessing the contemporary taste for images of Indian costumes and manners, published *Oriental Drawings*, a collection that consisted of aquatints taken from sketches made while he was serving in the military campaigns against Mysore and Tipu Sultan between the years 1791 and 1798.³¹⁹ Unlike Solvyns and Orme, however, Gold featured a strong element of the Grotesque in his works. As De Almeida and Gilpin point out, misshapen and mutilated beggars and withered ascetics make up a large proportion of the latter's illustrations.³²⁰ A typical example of Gold's fascination with the Grotesque can be seen in Figure 23. Entitled *Barbarous Ceremony in honour of Mariatale, Goddess of the Smallpox*, the image is a representation of the *churruk-puja* ceremony in action (a ceremony which Mundy had also witnessed, and which is discussed below). In *Oriental Drawings*, this first image of the ceremony as a whole is immediately followed by a detailed close-up of the swinging devotee in the next plate.³²¹ This close-up depiction conforms with many other images of deformed or mutilated individuals in Gold's collection—often decontextualised by being depicted against a relatively plain background.

³¹⁹ Archer and Lightbown, *India Observed*, 584-584; De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 215.

³²⁰ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 217.

³²¹ Charles Gold, *Oriental Drawings: Sketched Between the Years 1791 and 1798*, London, 1806.

From the point of view of the observer, both the Picturesque and the Grotesque can be seen to perform the same level of aesthetic displacement or “screening effect.” For example, just as Orme’s decontextualised figures allow the viewer to appreciate his images while still maintaining a level of Picturesque displacement from the subjects being depicted, so do Gold’s, with the only difference being that the prevailing aesthetic he manipulates is that of the Grotesque. Returning to the passage quoted earlier, we see that Mundy employs this same method of aesthetic displacement in his treatment of the group of fakirs; while their presence threatens to disrupt the otherwise pleasing landscape around him, Mundy sublimates this potential threat by imposing upon it the veneer of the Picturesque, thus transforming it into an agreeable prospect instead. In a similar manner, his invocation of Byron’s horrific image of scavengers “mumbl[ing] the bones of the dead” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 249) in his description of the fate of the dead pilgrims of Juggernath can also be seen as another attempt at aesthetic displacement—this time using the medium of the Grotesque—as it provides him with an avenue with which to describe this terrible scene through the protective lens of Byron’s poem.

Notably, Byron’s lines also allow Mundy to reveal some of the horrors he himself had witnessed in battle, almost as a form of cathartic release. Immediately after quoting the couplet from “The Siege of Corinth,” for example, Mundy recalls his own recent participation in the siege of Bhurtpore as he admits that “[t]he blood-curdling picture, of which these two lines are only a small part, [...] I myself saw realised in all its horrible details, at Bhurtpore” (*ibid*). Having made a brief

foray into the realm of the Grotesque, Mundy then elaborates further on that image in the following passage:

He [i.e. Byron] has, indeed, most vividly portrayed the carnival of the wild dogs, the wolf, and the vulture beneath 'the leaguered wall;' but had he, as I have, shudderingly [sic] watched the gaunt and famished *swine* rooting and revelling with gory snouts among the 'tombless dead,' I think he would have devoted a couplet to immortalize *their* deeds! (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 250)

Significantly, this is also the only time at which the reader is allowed to experience the genuine horrors of the siege. Aside from the fact that Mundy's published journal begins well after the battle had taken place, when the author does reference the battle in hindsight, his allusions are largely couched in the language of British military pride. While I address these allusions later in the chapter, it suffices at this point to observe that the Grotesque appears to offer a brief space within which the British traveller is allowed to come to terms with otherwise disturbing thoughts and images.³²²

There is another instance in which the Grotesque and the Picturesque are conflated as the author turns to the relative safety of visual aesthetics when faced with a similarly disturbing scene. Upon coming across a Hindu cremation ceremony, Mundy, though evidently unsettled by the spectacle before him, attempts to reconcile it within the context of Picturesque amusement. Here, his grotesque description of an attendant callously striking the corpse and turning it over on the funeral pyre "like a beef steak upon a gridiron" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 258) is again sublimated as he calmly states that "[t]he scene was altogether wild,

³²² I develop this idea further in my discussion of Emily Eden's travelogue.

horrific, and yet picturesque” (ibid, 259). Further employing the language of visual aesthetics, Mundy even goes on to create an image which can be said to evoke—at least in the minds of the contemporary readers familiar with popular images of India in circulation at the time—a scene of a different kind of Indian cremation ceremony, that of a *sati* (recall Figures 13 and 14).

The evening was dark and stormy, and thunder-clouds were flying athwart the heavens in all directions: the angry surf dashed and foamed within a few feet of the sand-hill on which was raised the pile, whose bright blaze threw out in strong relief the wild-looking figures of the group, who, with their white garments floating in the winds, were singing and dancing with the most fantastical gestures round the flame. As a back-ground to the picture, the white cupolas and domes of the ‘gate of heaven,’ embedded in dusky foliage, were alternately lighted up by the red glare of the funeral pyre and the silvery and fitful gleams of the lightning; and still farther in the distance might be faintly discerned the snowy tower of the great temple of Juggernaut (ibid).

Significantly, Mundy muses about this ritual immediately prior to his description of the cremation, and while he confesses that he had never actually witnessed a *sati* first hand, he does point out that he had seen “the white column of smoke rising from the trees of the burning chitta” (ibid, 257) many times. Despite Mundy’s insistence that he was “not sorry to find that the body which was undergoing cremation had died previous to the ceremony” and that the “rude music” was not “drowning [...] the agonized cries of a living victim” (ibid, 257), the reader wonders if the author was not at least slightly curious to witness the ritual that he admits “has more than once been pointed out to [him] as the apotheosis of some loving pair” (ibid).

This suspicion is given partial credence by the fact that Mundy repeatedly demonstrates how much he enjoys being a spectator in this vivid theatre of India. He is delighted at having been given “a capital opportunity of witnessing that

ingenious religious ceremony of the Hindoos, styled Cherruck Poojah” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol.2, 210) and devotes two pages to detailing the mechanisms of this hook-swinging ritual. Likewise, while sailing down the Ganges, he relishes in “the moving panorama constantly before [him]” (*ibid*, 157) and even has his chair and telescope brought on deck so he can enjoy the view of Benares:

At ten o'clock this morning, the great city of Benares hove in sight. I therefore ordered my chair, my chattah, and my telescope upon deck, and during the hour which was occupied in sailing past this Indian Babylon, I found ample amusement and interest in the busy scene which the Ganges' bank daily presents at this hour. Great masses of building crowd, one below another, down to the water's edge: splendid modern palaces, gaunt and deserted ruins, Hindoo temples, Mahometan mosques, spacious ghauts alive with moving myriads of bathers; fat Brahmins, lean fakirs, hobbling and squabbling beldames, plump and taper damsels, all seemed to pass in review before me; and I was scarcely tired of laughing and admiring, sketching and spying (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol.2, 158)

Surprisingly however, despite Mundy's obvious concentration on the Picturesque properties of Benares—with its “gaunt and deserted ruins, Hindoo temples” and variety of natives congregating along the river's bank—the reader is never presented with any of the author's actual sketches of the city. While the occasional Picturesque images of a ruined castle or natives figures along a river bank are presented in the engraved plates (see for example Figure 24), what we are largely offered instead are multiple scenes taken from the author's various hunting expeditions (see Figures 25 and 26). Mundy attempts to justify this decision in his Preface by explaining that because “[t]he number of engravings [was] necessarily restricted, he has for the most part selected those bearing on Indian sporting, as presenting more of novelty to the English eye than the more hackneyed subject of landscape” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, viii).

While the limitations of space and the excessive proliferation of landscape illustrations within contemporary travel accounts can be seen as valid reasons for the author's exclusion of them, it is also possible to read Mundy's choice of his accompanying images as a self-serving and self-expressive one. Indeed, he openly admits that while the accounts of his hunts are "trifling and egotistical," he "make[s] no apologies for introducing them" because "egotism is necessarily the very essence of a journal" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 217). Furthermore, he clearly states at the start of his text that while others may have promoted the instructive nature of their published travelogues, "[n]o such public-spirited motive [...] influenced the pen and pencil of the writer of the following pages" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, vii).

Keeping within this framework that Mundy himself appears to have set out for his readers, it is therefore possible to view his choice of published illustrations as a way of conveying a more personal (as opposed to political or socially-centred) engagement with India. While I address Mundy's illustrations in the final section of this chapter, I turn my attention next to the author's military position and official role within the British administration of India, both of which, I argue, have a similarly profound effect on how he engages with the Indian landscape.

Mundy, the military man

When we first encounter Captain Mundy at the start of his text, it is November 1827 and almost two years have passed since a key point in his Indian military

career—the storming of the fort of Bhurtpore—had taken place.³²³ Led by his commander, Mundy had taken part in the siege held in order to reclaim the throne of the rightful heir, Bulwant Singh, from his usurping cousin, Doorjan Saul. As the former favoured the British, it was in the Company's interest to ensure that the young Rajah reclaimed his birth right and an attack was subsequently carried out on 18 January 1826. Not only was the charge successful, but the victory itself also proved to be an important one for British military confidence as the Company had earlier tried, and horribly failed, to capture the fort in 1805.³²⁴

Mundy's own pride in the battle and desire to remind his readers of his involvement in such a critical military campaign is evident in the numerous references he makes to it in the course of his accounts. While sitting in camp at Mynporee, for example, he proclaims that this was his “second new-year's-day [...] passed under canvass,” with his first having been “ushered in by a salvo of sixteen twenty-four-pounders, just put in battery against Bhurtpore, and fired, well shotted [sic], at the usurper's filagree [sic] palace” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 52). Likewise, just a few pages on, he highlights his “warlike visit to that fortress in 1826” (*ibid*, 55) and, when describing the meeting between his Commander and the Rajah of Bhurtpore, makes sure to underscore, in a parenthetical reference, the fact that this personage was “the same whom we had the honour of restoring to, his musnud, or rather *guddee*” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 64).

³²³ See Ken Macnab and Russel Ward “Mundy, Godfrey Charles (1804–1860).” For more on the siege, see “The Siege of Bhurtpore 1825”. The Museum of the King's Royal Hussars. 7 January 2015. <http://horsepowermuseum.co.uk/?p=227>. Viewed 1 June 2016. Also William Blackwood, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Volume 23, May 1828, 445–456.

³²⁴ Mundy, amongst other officers whom he refers to in the course of his narrative, was decorated for his services during the siege. See for example *Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 213, 260, 341, and 379.

Braggadocio aside, however, it is often the case that Mundy could not help but be reminded of the siege simply because of the landscape he traversed. He readily admits that “every tree and pool of water recalled to [his] memory some incident or accident of the siege” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 63), and notes that “[t]here was fine food for recollections on [their] road to the fort: almost every mound, tree, or ruined tomb had its incident” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 64-65).

In fact, it is not just the siege of Bhurtpore that is triggered in Mundy’s imagination as he scans the Indian landscape, but other examples of British military action as well. All through his march, Mundy is almost inescapably drawn to sites of military valour. To a certain extent of course the route that he travels on his official tour of the British armed forces in India does inevitably take him past many such locations. However, we also see a number of instances in which Mundy actually goes out of his way to pay homage to such battle sites. For example, he makes a pilgrimage to the remains of the fortress of Kalunga, which, as he explains, had initially “resisted and repelled a British army” only to be eventually ravaged by the Company troops who “left not one stone upon another” in retribution for their fallen comrades (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 192). Similarly, he and his commander obtained special permission to visit the fort of Gwalior, which, as he proudly proclaims, was “not proof against British enterprise [having] succumbed in 1780 to Major Popham” despite its “boasted impenetrability” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 72).

He then devotes the following two pages to regale the reader with the ingenious stratagem that had given rise to the British victory at Gwalior.³²⁵

While on the one hand, Mundy's almost compulsive attraction towards such battle sites can be attributed to his own military background and interests, it can equally be seen as an attempt at validating British strength and superiority, particularly when we consider the author's official position within the army in India. In fact, Mundy's text is filled with numerous instances in which the author can be seen to promote the efforts of the British administration of India. For example, he boasts that "the Company's monopoly of power in India preclud[ed] the necessity—which formerly existed—of every petty town being furnished with defences against the sudden attacks of the numerous predatory hordes which infested the country" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 24), and highlights how the British took it upon themselves to restore an important aqueduct in Delhi that had fallen into ruin:

This canal, upon which the Delhians alone depended for a supply of wholesome water, was, during the decline of the Mogul empire, neglected and choked up, remaining so for more than a century; when the Company, wishing to bestow some monument of beneficence on the country which Fate had placed in their hands, determined upon the restoration of this important aqueduct, with its lateral branches (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 361-362)

Notably, this particular testament to the Company's superior benevolence also occurs within the context of Mundy's narrative treatment of the ruins

³²⁵ See *Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 72-73. In fact, whenever possible, Mundy is eager to regale his readers with tales of British military valour, a number of which he admits to having collated from word of mouth: "Indeed, many of the historical anecdotes interspersed throughout this journal were gleaned—after the manner of an indolent, yet inquisitive traveller—more by asking questions than by consulting documents" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 32-33).

surrounding Delhi. It is here that he, in a gesture that is evocative of the associationist nature of the Picturesque, compares the locales of this ancient city with what he imagines to be their present-day English counterparts:

In the days of its prosperity, the ground upon which our camp is pitched was probably the Hampstead or Putney of the great capital; as the country round about is covered with the ruins of gardens and buildings, which were doubtless the rus-in-urbe residences of the ci-devant cits of ancient Delhi (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 359).

Recalling our discussion in the previous chapter, we are reminded that the Picturesque rhetoric of ruins served as an important aesthetic tool in support of the British administration in the region. Not only were images of ruined India used to emphasise the perceived differences between British and Indians (and thus counter the threat of cultural hybridism), they were also, and possibly more importantly, used to justify the British presence by promoting the idea of India as a decayed and decaying civilisation that needed the help of the Company officials to bring about the restoration of order and the revitalisation of its past greatness. Oftentimes, the alleged profligacy and philistinism of its former Mughal emperors were touted as the cause of such a decline, and the British, with their presumably more prudent modes of government were offered as the saviours of the Indian people and their lands.

Correspondingly, we see Mundy employing such politically-tinged Picturesque rhetoric when he contemplates how the “elegant domes of many time-worn tombs, tell melancholy tales of gone-by grandeur” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 358) and remarks that the ruins that he encounters are “objects which are much more frequently met with in the Mussulman States, than in those provinces which have

remained subject to Hindoo rule” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 367). Adding insult to injury, he goes on to observe that “[f]ew monuments of the munificence or taste of the latter people are now to be seen, though it is difficult to say whether they ever existed, or whether they have not been defaced and destroyed by the Mohammedan conquerors of the soil” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 368).

Returning to the passage in which Mundy describes the British restoration of the ruined aqueduct (quoted above and beginning with “This canal, upon which the Delhians alone depended”), we also see that the author makes a direct correlation between the reign of the Mughals and the canal being “neglected and choked up.” Furthermore, his portrayal of the Company as the benevolent—and practically heavenly mandated—new rulers, who “wish[ed] to bestow some monument of beneficence on the country which Fate had placed in their hand,” is in line with such propagandistic rhetoric. This is further accentuated by his description of the Company’s “reward” for their efforts:

The joyous gratitude of the natives must alone have been sufficient reward to the English government—not to mention the benefits accruing to their treasury from the fertilizing effects of the canal upon the provinces through which it passed. A most touching account is given of the tumultuous rejoicings with which the long-coveted waters were greeted as they approached the city. The grateful inhabitants thronged out to meet them, and threw garlands and sweetmeats into the stream in token of welcome, loudly lauding the government that had put them in possession of such a blessing (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 362).

Interestingly however, his passing comment about the Company taking advantage of the increase in agricultural revenue resulting from “the fertilizing effects of the canal upon the provinces through which it passed,” suggests that despite his patriotic proclamations, Mundy is not entirely naïve to the more selfish motives behind the Company’s undertakings. In fact, he occasionally ventures to question

some of the actions of the British administration such as when he debates the reasons and apparent hypocrisy behind the taxation placed on Hindu pilgrims by a “government which encourages the religious endeavour of hundreds of missionaries to convert the Hindoos to the Christian faith” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 254):

It is certain that the E. I. Company, by the pilgrim tax, secure to themselves an annual average amount of fifteen thousand pounds; that the collections are made by the Brahmins, and that in return for this extortion—startling fact—a Christian government agrees to keep in repair, and adorn with silks and broad cloths, a pagan idol; and to support for the private use of the graven image, a stud of elephants and horses! (Ibid, 254-255)

Nevertheless, Mundy rarely takes these criticisms much further, content in his role as a loyal Company servant. True to his proclamation early in his Preface, Mundy’s text, though revealing much of its author’s own artistic influences and political alignment, rarely deviates from what he confesses it to be: a text “selfishly and unambitiously [sic] scribbled for his own amusement” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, vii). In fact, nowhere is this egotism most self-consciously displayed than in Mundy’s choice of accompanying illustrations, and it is to these *visual* texts that I turn to now.

Mundy, the man in motion

Earlier on, I highlighted the fact that despite Mundy’s purported interest in capturing Picturesque scenes, he does not give us images of the scenes he describes in language. In truth, while a few of his illustrations can be categorised as images that are ‘conventionally’ Picturesque in their thematic and compositional elements, the majority of the engraved plates included within *Pen and Pencil*

Sketches appear to fall well outside this model. Veritably, the author himself proclaims that his choice of accompanying illustrations lay in them “presenting more of novelty to the English eye than the more hackneyed subject of landscape” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, viii). This statement, though seemingly straightforward, is in fact somewhat deceiving, because while Mundy appears to disavow the Picturesque at the outset, a closer examination of his choice of words suggests that he may not eschew its aesthetics altogether; rather, his emphasis on “novelty” in itself focuses on one of the key elements of the Picturesque, as outlined by its early theorists.

As discussed in the opening chapters of this thesis, novelty was valued as one of the prime features of a Picturesque composition. Tied to it was also the notion of variety—with the latter element being central to the former by creating a situation in which “the mind is every instant called off to something new, and the attention not suffered to dwell too long and waste itself on any particular object.”³²⁶ Correspondingly, both novelty and variety then come to be amplified within the aesthetics of the Picturesque in the element of motion; an element that also features prominently in both the early development of the aesthetic theory, as well as the ways in which it was subsequently practiced and transported to the Indian context. As Gilpin (and Addison before him) explains, an object in constant motion, such as a rolling stream, offers the variety and irregularity necessary for a pleasing Picturesque composition, while other, seemingly “static,” Picturesque features like ruins, signal a different kind of motion by serving as symbols for the

³²⁶ Addison, *The Spectator*, No.412, June 23, 1712, *op.cit.*, 541.

movement, or passage, of time. Even the Picturesque gaze is tied to the concept of mobility by encouraging a restlessness of vision on the part of the viewer, while the practice of Picturesque tourism involves the physical movement of artistic practitioners all “in search of the Picturesque.” In fact, Gilpin even goes as far as to suggest that the act of searching itself may be just as important as the attainment of the object of Picturesque beauty when he compares the pursuit of the Picturesque with a gentleman’s hunt:

The pleasures of the chase are universal [...] And shall we suppose it a greater pleasure to the sportsman to pursue a trivial animal, than it is for a man of taste to pursue the beauties of nature? [...] to wind after her along the vale? or along the reaches of the river?³²⁷

Furthermore, when the Picturesque is transferred to the context of India, these concepts of movement are further elaborated by early artists like Zoffany and Kettle who combined elements of theatrical portraiture (and its concomitant emphasis on physical mobility) with that of the “English” Picturesque to form the dynamic artistic creations that were to become part of the aesthetics of the Indian Picturesque.

Turning to Mundy’s illustrations, we see that his choice of Frontispiece, entitled “Starting for a Tiger Hunt” (Figure 27), sets the tone not only for the images that follow—which as the author explains, were largely “those bearing on Indian sporting”—but also for the most concentrated, and attractive, parts of his narrative: the passages depicting the native hunts. Mundy’s vivid descriptions of his hunts and his usage of mock heroic language as he recounts the ensuing battle

³²⁷ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 48.

between man and beast provides entertainment for the reader. Likewise, his dynamic illustrations of his escapades—with its depiction of animals caught in the violent throes of battle, along with the myriad human figures gesticulating wildly (see Figures 25 and 26)—serve to encapsulate the aesthetic appeal of motion even as they testify to their creator's virility and enterprise.

Notably, one of the most striking (and repeated) images within Mundy's illustrations is that of the elephant. Not only does the beast appear prominently in the Frontispiece, it also features in other images of the hunt, as well as in illustrations which clearly focus on the creature itself, such as Mundy's sketches of the Mahratta elephant of Hindoo Rao and his illustration of the Company's elephants crossed the river Betwa.³²⁸ While the elephant was clearly an essential component of a tiger hunt because of its sturdiness and elevated position from which the hunter could safely pursue his prey, Mundy's fascination with the animal goes beyond a simple recognition of its necessary role within his favourite pastime. Indeed, as he admits in a footnote in the second volume of his text, the elephant holds a special place in his heart: "The penetrating reader will, doubtless [...] have discovered the Author's penchant for the elephant" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 115). It is my conjecture that part of this preference stems from the association of the beast with dynamism and power, an idea which is itself reflected in Mundy's depictions of elephants overpowering dangerous jungle cats, and occasionally even endangering the human figures who ride them (as seen for example in the image

³²⁸ See *Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 62 and 114.

of the dipping howdah in Figure 26 and the mahout clinging onto the elephant's back in Figure 25).

Furthermore, as Ray has observed, by the nineteenth century, the elephant had not only “emerged as the most ubiquitous emblem of India” but was also “idealised as an exotic metaphor for travelling in the subcontinent [and] as living evidence of a distinctly Indian experience.”³²⁹ Appropriately, another prominent theme within Mundy's series of illustrations is that of travelling. Entitled “Travelling in the Himalayan Mountains” and “Travelling Dak” respectively, Figures 29 and 30 represent examples of the litter mode of travelling that Mundy takes pains to introduce his readers to in great detail at the beginning of his text.³³⁰ Accordingly, the suggestion that Mundy is as much, if not more, enamoured with the journey and the act of travelling as he is about the destination itself, is evident in his long lament at the end of his official tour:

Thus ended my last day in camp, with its diurnal change of site and prospect; the healthful daily journey, anticipating the sun; the busy bustle of the line of march; the diverging ramble from the direct route with cheetahs, greyhounds, or falcons; the amusing visits to royal personage at their glittering courts and still more exciting interviews with royal tigers in jungle realms; the half-sporting, half-reconnoitring stroll in the afternoon, with gun or pencil equally ready for its object; the roast rendered more savoury by exercise, and digested to the ‘interposing puff’ of the cozy, dozy hookah; the evening of whist-parties, [...] the constant and endless variety of climes and countries, customs and characters, scenes and incident—in a word, the roving, errant, gypsy-like life in which *novelty* rips up the heels of ennui, and adventure casts out the blue devils engendered by an enervating climate (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 143-144, emphasis mine).

As this protracted but no less rich passage makes clear, Mundy's true sympathies lie in the “diurnal change of site and prospect,” the “diverging ramble

³²⁹ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 202 and 208.

³³⁰ See *Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 2-3.

from the direct route,” and the “endless variety of climes and countries, customs and characters, scenes and incident.” Though seemingly indifferent to the Picturesque—indeed Mundy cynically comments that “Englishmen seldom venture in search of the picturesque without a provident eye to the wallet” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 94) and jokes that often in the “many rambles in search of the picturesque that [he] made in India during the cool season, [his] horse’s ‘dew besprent’ ears formed the utmost distance of the prospect” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 21)—his concern with “novelty” and constant movement not only aligns him (however unwittingly) with the Picturesque travellers but inadvertently also illustrates the variability of the Picturesque as an aesthetic.

Assuredly Mundy’s aesthetic concern with capturing movement is so marked that even when the subject of a sketch appears to be something static, the focus is often turned to action and dynamism. Turning to Figure 28, for example, we see that while the image itself has been labelled “Sangah in Valley of Dogolee,” the central focus of the sketch is not so much the valley as it is the mule tumbling into the river below—an incident which Mundy also spiritedly relates in his text.³³¹ Moreover, the violently crashing waters, together with the attendant throwing his hands up in despair as he balances precariously on the fallen tree, serve to intensify the energy that exudes from the scene.

In truth, Mundy would have found a kindred spirit in Fanny Parks, a traveller equally enamoured with movement and dynamism. As demonstrated in the following chapter, it comes as no surprise that her journal not only echoes the

³³¹ See *Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 277-279.

sentiments expressed by Mundy in the passage quoted above, but that the author also both relishes the “pleasure of vagabondizing [sic] over India!” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 192) and compares her own artistic pursuits with the activities of a hunter. As she proudly proclaims, “I have a pencil instead of a gun, and believe it affords me satisfaction equal, if not greater than the sportsman derives from his Manton” (ibid, 191). Equally comfortable with the vagrant lifestyle as Mundy was, and enjoying the freedom it allowed her, Parks too makes use of the Picturesque ideas of movement—albeit in a more conscious manner—to create an alternative identity for herself.

Having thus far explored the broader themes concerning the development of the Picturesque and its influence on British artistic representations of India, as well as summarised how this visual aesthetic came to be applied to written texts about travels in the region, beginning with the texts produced by male travellers such as Captain Mundy, the second half of the thesis focuses on the works of the three authors with whom I am primarily concerned with. I analyse how women travellers made use of the language of the Picturesque for their varying individual, social, and political ends. Following the discussion of Parks’ journals in the next chapter, I turn to the Indian travel writings of a rather different traveller, Marianne Postans. Like Mundy, Postans also picks up on the Picturesque’s concern with the historical past of scenes and landscapes, but, as I argue in Chapter 5, she, like Parks, successfully manipulates it to afford herself a level of creative (and in her case also political) agency. The thesis then concludes with a discussion of the works of Emily Eden, an individual whose own tour of the provinces of India shared some crossovers with that of Mundy, in terms of its more overtly political intent, and

thus offers some interesting points of comparison. More than this, however, Eden's writings further explore the possibilities offered by the proximity between the Grotesque and the Picturesque—ideas which Mundy tentatively broaches but does not fully develop.

CHAPTER 4

Fanny Parks

This river is very picturesque; high cliffs, well covered with wood, rising abruptly from the water: here and there a Hindoo temple, with a great peepul-tree spreading its fine green branches around it: a ruined native fort: clusters of native huts: beautiful stone ghats jutting into the river: the effect greatly increased by the native women, in their picturesque drapery, [...] But the most picturesque of all are the different sort of native vessels: I am quite charmed with the boats, Oh that I were a painter, who could do justice to the scenery! My pinnacle, a beautiful vessel, so unlike any thing [sic] else here, must add beauty to the river, especially when under sail.

—*Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Vol. 1, 333–334³³²

Frances Susanna Parks (or simply Fanny Parks, as she is more popularly known)—the wife of Charles Crawford Parks, a junior civil servant in the East India Company—lived in India between June 1822 and August 1845.³³³ During her considerable sojourn in the country, she kept a journal of her experiences for the benefit of her mother, and upon returning to England, published these accounts in 1850 under the title of *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque During Four and Twenty Years in the East, With Revelations of Life in the Zenana*. This copious travelogue, published in two volumes and lavishly illustrated with Parks'

³³² Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque During Four-and-Twenty Years in the East; With Revelations of Life in a Zenana*, Vols. 1 and 2 (London: 1850). Henceforth referred to as *Wanderings* in parenthetical references in the text.

³³³ There has been dispute about the spelling of Parks' name (Parks or Parkes). In the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Rosemary Raza notes that the transliteration of Parks' name from the Persian script which she signs off with in her journal produced the common misspelling of her surname as Parkes. For this reason, I have chosen to adopt the former spelling and for the purpose of consistency, will be spelling it accordingly throughout my references. See Rosemary Cargill Raza, "Parks, Frances Susanna (1794–1875)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 11 Apr. 2010 <<http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2117/view/article/40907>>.

own drawings, along with those of her friends and other Indian artists, is an animated melange of journal entries, transcribed newspaper reports, and second-hand travel accounts. It also includes a glossary of Hindustani terms, a compilation of proverbs, as well as an appendix which offers her readers advice on anything from recipes for producing strawberry ice cream and tobacco cakes, to instructions on the native manner of washing hair and a method of preserving small birds.

At the time of Parks' arrival, more than three decades before the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the British controlled large areas of India, but at the same time it was also a place where—in contrast to the cultural inquisitiveness and openness of the previous century—the British residents had begun to retreat into the cultural comfort of their sequestered Anglo-Indian communities and contact with natives was often limited to that with servants and merchants, and the occasional meeting with upper-class, often Western-educated Indians.³³⁴ Parks, however, enthusiastically pursued encounters with native figures in her travels, often exploring India independent of her husband who, despite being tied down with official duties himself, did not begrudge his wife her freedom to embark on her own exploratory journeys; she sailed in their pinnace (sailing boat) up the Jumna River to visit the Taj Mahal at Agra, up the Ganges to Fatehgarh, and spent nearly a year visiting Cawnpore, Meerut, Delhi, and Landour in the Himalayas.³³⁵ Ebullient and curious about India and its people, she became fluent in Urdu and

³³⁴ See William Dalrymple, "Porous Boundaries and Cultural Crossover: Fanny Parkes and "Going Native,"" in *Travel Writing and the Empire*, ed. Sachidananda Mohanty (New Delhi: Katha, 2003), 42-62 and Indira Ghose and Sara Mills, "Introduction," in *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque by Fanny Parks* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

³³⁵ Raza, "Parks, Frances Susanna (1794-1875)."

Persian, an ability that paved the way to more intimate interactions with natives from various walks of life—from fakirs and priests to aristocrats—and enabled her to avidly study native customs and religious beliefs, all of which she painstakingly details in her travel narrative.

Despite the monumental nature of Parks' published journal, and the fact that her accounts span such a considerable amount of time, relatively little critical work has focused on it, with more consideration being given to her contemporary female travellers in India, such as Emily Eden, whom Parks crossed paths with while the latter was in India with her then Governor-General brother. Unlike Eden's travel narrative, which saw four republications after its initial release in 1866—the latest edition by Virago Press was as recent as 1997—Parks' book has only been reprinted once in full since its original publication in 1850, and no archive of her original journal or letters appear to have been preserved.³³⁶

Parks and the Picturesque

As Parks' direct reference to the Picturesque in the title of her work, her repeated usage of the term in her text (in the short passage quoted at the start of the chapter,

³³⁶ See Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1975). Critical editions such as the one edited by Indira Ghose and Sara Mills, and William Dalrymple's more populist abridged version of Parks' text, *Begums, Thugs and White Mughals – The Journals of Fanny Parkes* (London: Sickle Moon Books, 2002) have been published but these only include selections of the narrative. Likewise, the anthology produced by Pickering and edited by Indira Ghose (*Nineteenth-Century Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the Era of Imperial Consolidation, 1835-1910*. Volume 3: India. [London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003]) also only includes a selection of the original published text. References have been made to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, the National Register of Archives and the Bibliography of British and Irish History. Critics have referred to the 1850 publication of Parks' journal as the earliest possible textual reference and I have done the same for the purpose of my study, along with consulting the subsequent reprints of abridged versions.

for example, the Picturesque is mentioned no less than three times), and her familiarity with its aesthetic conventions clearly testify, the Picturesque played an important role in shaping her engagement with India.³³⁷ Indeed, scholarly commentaries on Parks' writings, such as that by Ghose and Mills in their introduction to their critical edition of *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, have repeatedly identified the Picturesque as being the "main discursive strategy" with which Parks frames her narrative.³³⁸ In her chapter on the "Feminine Picturesque," Suleri also devotes much of her discussion to the function of the Picturesque in Parks' travelogue, arguing that the author turns to its "alternative politics" to express her ambivalent role in the politics of the British administration of India.³³⁹ In a similar way, Leask reads Parks' writings as an example of "the female picturesque" as it stands in counterpoint to the "survey modality' of male empire-builders."³⁴⁰

However, despite the centrality of the Picturesque to these discussions, critics have largely neglected the significance of movement to the aesthetic in favour of the more common associations of the Picturesque with the ideas of fixity and containment. Suleri, for example, bases her reading of the Picturesque in women's travel accounts of life in India and the colonies on the premise that it was "synonymous with a desire to transfix a dynamic cultural confrontation into a still life," and in her discussion of the interest that Parks takes in the native zenanas, consequently claims that this desire was simply part of "the (P)icturesque's

³³⁷ Her awareness of the aesthetic conventions of the Picturesque is evidenced in the quoted passage in her desire to capture the Indian landscape onto a printed medium as well as her referencing specific elements of the Indian Picturesque, such as temples, ruins, and *ghats*, together with native flora and people in traditional attire.

³³⁸ Ghose and Mills, "Introduction," 7.

³³⁹ Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 83.

³⁴⁰ Leask, *Curiosity*, 203-241.

narcissistic urge to see itself through the eyes of other modes of confinement.”³⁴¹ Continuing on this line of argument, she then interprets Parks’ initial disappointment upon her first visit to the zenana as symptomatic of “a narcissistic failure to locate a cultural mirror-image for her oppression in the (P)icturesque.”³⁴²

In a similar fashion, scholars who seek to address another prominent element in Parks’ text, her voracious appetite for all things Indian, are often unable to comfortably reconcile the author’s acquisitive desires with the stasis and stability they associate with the Picturesque: Ghose, for example, reads Parks’ “insatiable collection” as being at odds with the “tranquil recollection” she deems appropriate for a Picturesque response, while Leask, although actively contending with Suleri’s position that the Picturesque necessarily confined India and the female traveller within an aesthetic stasis, simply praises Parks’ “drive to collection,” for its capacity to act as a corrective to what he deems as “the dead stasis of the female [P]icturesque.”³⁴³

As illustrated in the previous chapter, movement features prominently within the practice of the Picturesque. However, by extension, its antithesis, stasis, also exerts equal sway: we see this being demonstrated in the Picturesque urge to capture a particular moment in time. Consequently, because both movement and stasis function jointly in the exercise of an aesthetic that is as much concerned with the roaming eye and the wandering traveller, as it is about fixing an image on paper, writers (or artists) who choose to adopt the Picturesque framework in their

³⁴¹ Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 76, 93.

³⁴² Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 94.

³⁴³ Ghose, *Women Travellers*, 42; Leask, *Curiosity*, 231.

artistic creations (whether textual or visual), are free to engage with either or both of these aesthetic elements—movement and stasis—as they see fit. Hence, by building upon the critical establishment of the Picturesque as the dominant discursive structure in Parks’ text, and focusing on the oft-neglected element of Picturesque movement, my chapter examines how Parks engages with ideas of movement and dynamism within the Picturesque framework available to her in order to establish a sense of independent identity within the context of British India.

It is important to note that while critics have previously alluded to examples of self-representation in Parks’ text, a direct relationship between Parks’ identity formation and the aesthetics of the Picturesque has yet to be fully explored. Taking Ghose and Mills’ introduction as an example, we see that while they acknowledge that Parks adopts a self-representational mode “by categorising herself as a ‘picturesque traveller,’” their discussion remains focused on the link between the Picturesque and amateur aestheticism as they quickly conclude that this act of self-representation was simply a means for Parks to proffer herself as an amateur and thus avoid censure in the process.³⁴⁴ Nandini Sengupta on the other hand, addresses what she sees as Parks’ creation of a hybrid cultural identity in her discussion, but argues that readings which make use of the Picturesque as a focal point necessarily negate this formative aspect of Parks’ text by overly concentrating on the “acquisitive instinct” of the aesthetic as displayed by Parks’ drive towards

³⁴⁴ Ghose and Mills, “Introduction,” 10.

collecting.³⁴⁵ My chapter directly contends with this assumption by offering a reading that argues for the centrality of the Picturesque to the formation of Parks' independent selfhood. Moreover, contrary to Sengupta's view, I also demonstrate that it is precisely this "acquisitive instinct" of Picturesque that allows Parks to realise and exercise an independent identity and to carve a place for herself within the larger world of the British presence in India and within Britain's expansionist project.

Picturesque wanderings and identity formation

In *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, restlessness of vision encouraged by the Picturesque is literally translated into an all-encompassing restlessness. Right from the outset, the title of the work, with its emphasis on "wander[ing]," and "search[ing]," already reflects this need for constant movement, while its quasi-religious connotations similarly suggest a desire for action. Not a quiet worshipper but an active "pilgrim," Parks openly rejects fixity, preferring "the pleasure[s] of vagabondizing [sic] over India" (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 191) instead. Correspondingly, she is avowedly disappointed when she is forced to trade her tent for "the form and stupidity of life in a house," declaring that "the idea of having any roof over my head but that of a tent fell like a nightmare on my spirits; and the giving up hunting for old wells was a complete sacrifice" (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 186-187).

³⁴⁵ Nandini Sengupta, "The British Woman Traveller in India: Cultural Intimacy and Interracial Kinship in Fanny Parks's *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*," in *New Readings in the Literature of British India, c. 1780-1947*, ed. Shafquat Towheed (Stuttgart: ibedem-Verlag, 2007), 98.

In fact, her entire attitude towards her stay in India hinges on her ability to exert herself in vigorous activity. When the climate is favourable, thus allowing her to ride, walk and explore, Parks is effusive about the beauty of the country and the experiences open to her (“How much is there to delight the eye in this bright, this beautiful world! Roaming about with a good tent and a good Arab one might be happy for ever in India” [*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 191]), but when prevented from such excursions due to sickness or inclement weather conditions, her bewailing is equally forceful and melodramatic (“How weary and heavy is life in India, when stationary! Travelling about the country is very amusing; but during the heat of the rains, shut up in the house, one’s mind and body feel equally enervated” [*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 57]).

Turning once again to the passage quoted at the start of the chapter, we see that of all the Picturesque elements Parks enumerates in the passage, it is the native boats—a mode of transport—that she identifies as being “the most picturesque of all.” Having said this, she then immediately draws her own vessel into the Picturesque fold by envisioning that it “must add beauty to the river, especially when under sail.” While on the surface, these remarks can be discounted as first, a passing expression of aesthetic preference, and second, a vainglorious comment about the aesthetic appeal of her own vessel, when read alongside the other incidents in the text in which Parks expresses her delight in travelling, it becomes clear that her partiality towards these boats forms part of her larger interest and engagement with Picturesque movement, and by extension, the possibilities for self-actualisation that it allows.

In fact, it is through the very process of sailing up to Agra that Parks enjoys repeated opportunities to redefine herself as not only an intrepid traveller, but also one that pushes the boundaries of her gender. Barely a week into her voyage, for example, she describes being on deck and dressed “after the fashion of men,” while “firing a pellet-bow at some cotton boats *en passant* for tamasha” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 326).³⁴⁶ Delighting in such crossings of traditional gender boundaries, she then goes on to boast that the natives who came on board “looked much surprised at seeing a ghulel (a pellet-bow) in feminine hands” (*ibid*). Likewise, while recounting the reaction of one of her fellow countrymen upon hearing of her travels, Parks reveals that she is equally proud of her ability to confound even Anglo-Indian residents with her apparent gender transgressions:

An acquaintance, the hon. Mrs. R—, has just arrived at Allahabad from England; nothing could exceed her astonishment when she heard I had gone up the Jumna alone, on a pilgrimage of perhaps two months or more to see the Taj, not forced to make the voyage from necessity” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 339-40).

Dissatisfied with having just astounded her acquaintance, she then proceeds to do the same to her reader by proclaiming:

Could I follow my own inclinations, I would proceed to Delhi, thence to the hills and on to the source of the Jumna; this would really be a good undertaking. “Capt. Skinner’s Travels,” which I have just read, have given me the most ardent desire to go to the source of the Jumna (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 339-40).

Here, the fact that she draws inspiration from an account of a male traveller is consistent with other examples in the text in which she compares herself to her male counterparts. After having read “Captain Mundy’s “Sketches in India,” for

³⁴⁶ She explains in an earlier passage that “tamasha” meant “fun” or “sport” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 93).

example, she laments that she had “no tigers to kill, no hurdwar to visit” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 268), and when musing about the various amusements available in India, she remarks that “a man might possibly enjoy his dog, his gun, and his beaters, with an open country to shoot over” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 191). Nevertheless, by cleverly inverting Mundy’s own proclamation that he constantly had his “gun or pencil equally ready” for action, she consoles herself (and her reader) with the fact that “[she has] a pencil instead of a gun” and insists that this capacity for aesthetic representation “affords [her] satisfaction equal, if not greater than the sportsman derives from his Manton” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 191).

As we have seen earlier, this association between Picturesque pursuits and the sport of hunting had already been identified by Gilpin. Likewise, in *The Search for the Picturesque*, Andrews reiterates the connection between the two, observing that:

There is something of the big-game hunter in these tourists, boasting of their encounters with savage landscapes, ‘capturing’ wild scenes, and ‘fixing’ them as pictorial trophies in order to sell them or hang them up in frames on their drawing room walls.³⁴⁷

Parks, however, in her typically intense fashion, pushes the limits of this analogy in her travels. During her voyage up to Agra, for example, she writes about being on the “look out for the picturesque,” (*Wanderings*, Vol.1, 326) and when she encounters a group of crocodiles and ferocious alligators basking along the river’s edge, categorically states that “[she] would willingly have taken the voyage for this one sight of alligators with crocodiles in their native wilderness; the scene was so

³⁴⁷ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 68.

unusual, so wild, so savage” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 328)—an admission consistent with her earlier gleeful description of how she had “prepared” and “stuffed” an alligator that was caught below her house (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 301).

While Parks’ beloved pinnacle played an important role in enabling her peripatetic lifestyle, another element that contributed to her mobility and self-definition was her skill at horsemanship. Not only (as seen in the comments quoted earlier in the chapter) did she relish her freedom to ride, Parks also often made use of her equestrian abilities to set herself apart from other (namely female) travellers. While in the Himalayan regions, for example, she writes that in a single day she had ridden “twenty-six miles, up and down hill,—a pretty good distance for a lady” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 248), before proudly recounting how her fellow traveller, “a Captain A,” had commended her on having made the arduous journey, in comparison to another female traveller who appeared to have merely sent an attendant in her place:

I proposed to Captain A—to visit the summit of Bhadraj, seven miles off. The rest of the party thought the exertion too great, and would not join us [...] After much toil we arrived at the flag-staff on the top of the hill [...] A little further on, we found a Hindu idol, rudely cut in stone; this idol is now neglected, but was formerly much worshipped. Near it is a large stone, on which is chiselled. “Lady Hood, 1814:” on speaking of this to the political agent, he laughed and said, “You were more enterprising than Lady Hood; you visited the spot,—she only sent a man to chisel out her name, and that of Colonel B—on the top of Bhadraj; she never visited the place in person” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 248).

In a similar way, she also reminds her reader of her apparent uniqueness amongst women by transcribing a portion of a letter written by another (notably male) companion who praises her adept handling of her fallen horse:

This evening, while cantering at a sharp pace round the Mahratta Bandh, my horse fell, and my companion thus described the incident in a letter

to his brother. "Kabul came down upon his nose and knees; nineteen women out of twenty would have been split. The Mem Sahiba sat her horse splendidly, and pulled him up like a flash of lightning" (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 465).

In terms of the beast's (both literal and symbolic) importance, Parks' passion for horses invites a comparison with Mundy's own admitted penchant for elephants. Like her male counterpart, Parks also provides her readers with an image of her beloved animal, as seen in Figure 31. However, unlike Mundy's more literal depictions of elephants, Parks, in a manner that is typical of her interest in Hindu religion, chooses to offer a more representational and allegorical image of the animal. In Figure 31, for example, we are presented with an image of the Hindu god Krishna, riding on a horse made up of the mythological female figures—the *gopis*—who were said to serve him. Interestingly (in terms of drawing another point of comparison between Parks and Mundy) this image is paired with the Frontispiece of the second volume of the published text, with this other image depicting the *gopis* coming together to form the shape of an elephant (see Figure 32). For the benefit of her readers unfamiliar with the mythology of the *gopis*, Parks offers an explanation of both images in the following passage:

So devoted were the gopis to Krishnu the beloved, that if he wished to ride an elephant, the lovely ladies, with most extra-ordinary dexterity, assumed the shape of the animal and bore him off in triumph. The frontispiece to the second volume, entitled "Kaniya-jee and the Gopia," is a fac-simile of an old Hindoo painting commemorative of this feat: the style in which the figures are grouped is very clever, and does much credit to the artist; the original is as highly finished as a miniature painting. The chatr, the emblem of royalty, is borne over his head; peacock's feathers form the ornament for his forehead; and in his hand is the ankus (the elephant goad) and a lotus flower. The gopis carry with them their musical instruments; they are adorned with jewels, and the tail of the animal shows the beauty and length of their hair.

The second plate of Kaniya-jee represents the victorious Heri on a steed formed of the gopis, bounding and capering beneath their precious burden, while their musical instruments and songs enliven his triumphal

career. This is also a fac-simile of an old Hindoo painting, finished with wonderful delicacy and minuteness. (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 121).

As Ray elaborates in her chapter devoted to the visual significance of the elephant within the context of British India, the elephant served as “living evidence of a distinctly Indian experience” as well as a “mobile picturesque curiosity.”³⁴⁸ The uniqueness of the beast as a mode of travel within the Indian subcontinent, along with the strangeness of its form (to the European eye) therefore made it a particularly symbolic animal for travellers in the region. Moreover, as the image of the *gopis* in elephant form and the physical appearance of the Hindu god Ganesh (whom Parks famously invokes in her introduction) testify, the beast also held great significance within Hindu religious iconography and mythology. In consequence, given Parks’ voracious appetite for both the Picturesque as well as all things Indian/Hindu, it is no surprise that she inserts two more images which also feature elephants in her travelogue. This time, however, they are images of her own artistic creation as opposed to facsimiles taken from Hindu paintings.

Like the Frontispiece discussed above, one of these images, entitled “Lachmi, the Goddess of Beauty” (Figure 33), is an allegorical one in which Parks imagines the Hindu goddess Laksmi being gently showered with water by four elephants as she rests on a lotus flower. Here the combination of the balanced composition, the calm waters upon which the lotus flower rests (we can almost make out the reflections of the figures on the still surface of the water), and the

³⁴⁸ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, 208.

gentle slopes of the elephants backs and limbs, succeed in evoking an atmosphere of tranquillity and harmony.

In a direct contrast, however, the violently crashing animals depicted in Figure 34, with their entangled limbs evoking dynamism and danger (the latter being enhanced by the image of one of the mahouts lying prone on the ground and therefore vulnerable to being crushed by one of the fighting beasts) suggest chaos and wildness. While the elephants in this image vastly differ from the gentle beasts being depicted in Figure 33 or the quiet repose of the statue of Ganesh that forms the Frontispiece to the first volume, their appeal to the author is no less evident. Not only does Parks deliberately include the image of the fighting elephants in her published text, she also devotes an entire subsection, entitled “The Elephant Fights” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 176) to describing the event, where, in a reflection of the dynamism displayed in her visual illustration, she details the exact physical movements of the animals and the danger they pose to anyone in their vicinity:

At length two elephants, equally matched, were guided by the mahawats on their backs to some distance from each other, and a female elephant was placed midway. As soon as the elephants turned and saw the female they became angry, and set off at a long swinging trot to meet each other; they attacked with their long tusks, and appeared to be pressing against each other with all their might. One elephant caught the leg of the other in his trunk, and strove to throw his adversary or break his fore-leg. But the most dangerous part appeared to be when they seized one another by their long trunks and interlaced them; then the combat began in good earnest [...]. The situation of a mahawat during the fight is one of danger. The year before, the shock of the combat having thrown the mahawat to the ground, the elephant opposed to him took a step to one side, and, putting his great foot upon him, quietly crushed the man to death! Sometimes the elephant will put up his trunk to seize his opponent's mahawat and pull him off: skill and activity are requisite to avoid the danger (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 176-177).

Parks and the dynamic female

If Parks was indeed a woman attracted to dynamic action, it comes as no surprise that she should form a close relationship with another independent and dynamic female who was incidentally also an equestrian enthusiast: the deposed Mahratta queen, the Baiza Bai. As Parks explains in her second volume of her journal, the Baiza Bai ruled the kingdom of Gwalior for nine years after the death of her husband, the late Maharaj Daolut Rao Scindia, leaving her city only upon threat of death resulting from an insurrection led by her adopted son. It was while the former Queen of Gwalior and her supporters were seeking British protection in Fatehgarh that Parks first became acquainted with her.

At the time, the author had been staying with a female companion and both women had been invited to pay their respects to the deposed ruler. The Baiza Bai, after discovering she and Parks shared a love for horses, subsequently invited her to return later that week to demonstrate the English ladies' method of riding side-saddle. The latter acquiesced and arrived two days later to begin what would quickly become a long and mutually affectionate friendship—one that allowed both parties to not only embark on cross-cultural discussions but to also engage in a number of exchanges regarding female selfhood, particularly as it was linked to freedom of movement and Picturesque (self-) possession.

In fact, the circumstances of this next meeting—in effect their first proper one, the earlier encounter having been more of an introduction—can be seen as setting the tone for the rest of their relationship. Following Parks' riding demonstration, the Baiza Bai's granddaughter, the Gaja Raja, displayed in turn “the

Mahratta style of riding” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 6) which involved sitting astride rather than side-saddle. She then invited Parks to imitate her and the latter’s reaction upon being introduced to this new style of riding—“I thought of Queen Elizabeth and her stupidity at changing the riding style of women. *En cavalier*, it appeared so safe, as if I could have jumped over the moon” (ibid)—is not only symbolic of her impulse towards freedom of movement but is also the first of many comments in which the author, often prompted by interactions with the Baiza Bai and her ladies, effectively questions, and attempts to redefine herself against, some of the dominant gendered discourses at the time.

One of the discourses called into question was the assumption that British women enjoyed greater freedoms—both physical and economic—as compared to their Eastern sisters. As colonial scholars have repeatedly noted, the supposed imprisonment of the Indian women in the forced seclusion of *purdah*, was often used to justify the need for British involvement in India under the rhetoric of liberating local women from such ‘barbaric’ native practices. Against such a backdrop, Parks’ comments regarding the practice of riding side-saddle limiting a British woman’s freedom on horseback stands in the face of contemporary Anglo-Indian rhetoric by suggesting that British ideas of proper femininity often involved a similar restriction of female movement.

This is further exacerbated when she laments the restrictiveness of the British female attire (in comparison to the freedom offered by native clothing), noting that before she could ride astride, she needed to first “put on proper [Mahratta] attire” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 6) as it presumably allowed her more

mobility than that afforded by her British riding habit. Similarly, when visiting a zenana within the Gardner household, her enchantment with the beauty and grace of its chief occupant, Mulka Begum, prompts the following remarks about the clothing worn by her fellow Europeans:

In Europe, how rarely—how very rarely does a woman walk gracefully! Bound up in stays, the body is as stiff as a lobster in its shell; that snake-like undulating movement, —the poetry of motion— is lost, destroyed by the stiffness of the waist and hip, which impedes the free movement of the limbs. A lady in European attire gives me the idea of a German manikin; an Asiatic—in her flowing drapery, recalls the statues of antiquity (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 383).

Likewise, during a brief return to England following the death of her father, she is equally scathing in her observations about the ugliness and limitations imposed by the English dress:

I have not seen a graceful girl in the kingdom: the girls who would otherwise be graceful are so pinched and lashed up in corsets, they have all and every one the same stiff dollish appearance; and that dollish form and gait is what is considered beautiful! Look at the outline of a figure; the corset is ever before you (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 332).

Having thus established Parks' aversion to forms of female containment, I pause at this point to highlight how the traveller's own visual illustration of a "Bengalee woman" in traditional attire (Figure 35) captures precisely this "snake-like undulating movement" that she sees lacking in her fellow country(wo)men. In this image, not only is a clear emphasis being placed on fluidity and grace, but strikingly, the composition of Parks' "Bengali woman" also closely parallels that of Tilly Kettle's *Dancing Girl* (see Figure 18) particularly in terms of the female figures' S-shaped poses, the ways in which the curves of the human bodies are reflected in the corresponding inanimate objects (the hookah pipe in Kettle's image and the water jug in Parks'), as well the visual emphasis being placed on the texture and

flowing nature of the native attire. While I am not claiming any direct line of influence between Kettle and Parks—indeed there is no textual evidence to suggest that Parks had even seen the earlier painting or was familiar with the artist’s work—the similarities between the two images do suggest that Parks was at least aesthetically in tune with the centrality of motion emphasised by this early artist of the Indian Picturesque.

However, a crucial difference separates both images. While Kettle’s dancer casts her gaze to the left of the frame, Parks’ Bengali woman looks directly at the viewer: a gesture that both displays a certain amount of self-possession on the part of the painted subject, as well as supports Parks’ claims for female subjectivity—claims which she develops through the image of the Indian female such as the Mahratta women (as we have seen above) and the figure of Kali (discussed later in the chapter).

As Phyllis G. Tortora and Keith Eubank identify in their *Survey of Historic Costume*, along with being denied the right to vote, “[a]nother symbol of the oppression of women to some [nineteenth century] feminists was fashion, particularly those fashions that tended to confine and hamper women.”³⁴⁹ While Parks does not comment specifically on female voting rights, her remarks on female attire do suggest an early form of feminism, as does her dissatisfaction with how British women are educated and encouraged to communicate and behave in

³⁴⁹ Phyllis G. Tortora and Keith Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume* (New York, N.Y. Fairchild, 2010) 5th edition, 302. While Tortora and Eubank identify the years between 1851 and 1854 as the time during which dress reform was actively advocated by the suffragists, it is possible that women living and commenting in the earlier decades could have possessed similar attitudes towards fashion.

certain social situations. Frustrated at the restrictions imposed on British feminine speech, Parks writes:

The rules of female education, both of the governess and of after life, prevent a lady's knowing whether such an out-of-door animal as a buffalo attacks people with its head or tail, and a lady should betray no nearer acquaintance with the horrible creature than that implied in the form of speech above appointed for adoption. [...] If a lady is to speak of a fashion she will leave out scientific terms, as will the gentleman if he is talking of a race; and I see no objection to the language of the man and woman being exactly similar (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 284).

Likewise, having enjoyed the freedom to traverse India on her own, it is only to be expected that she is incensed at being censured for having attended a horticultural show at Plymouth unaccompanied:

I went to the place alone, and the people expressed their surprise at my having done so—how absurd! As if I were to be a prisoner unless some lady could accompany me—wah! Wah! I shall never be tamed, I trust, to the ideas of propriety of civilised Lady Log (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 334).

Commenting on Parks' "uncompromising feminism," Leask points specifically to her references to the subject of women's oppression in England, particularly in her conversations with the Baiza Bai ("We spoke of the severity of the laws of England with respect to married women, how completely by *law* they are the slaves of their husbands, and how little hope there is of redress" [*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 8]).³⁵⁰ Along with highlighting the poignancy of Parks' coupling of marriage and slavery in her address to a "colonised" Asian woman," Leask also draws attention to the "biting subversion" of "liberal colonial[ism]" present in her invocation of *sati* in another passage lamenting the plight of the Englishwoman:

³⁵⁰ Leask, *Curiosity*, 237.

The laws of England relative to married women, and the state of slavery to which those laws degrade them, render the lives of some few in the higher, and of thousands in the lower ranks of life, one perpetual sati, or burning of the heart, from which they have no refuge but the grave, or the cap of liberty, —i.e. the widow's, and either is a sad consolation (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 420).³⁵¹

Although the practice had already been banned by the British by the time these lines were written—Parks' journal entry was dated 29 November, 1844 and the abolition took place in 1829 under the purported rationalisation of protecting native women from barbaric native customs—*sati* was still very much present in the consciousness of the British living in India. Moreover, as Parks' account from her husband's eyewitness testimony of a *sati* in action attests to (if we are to believe its veracity), sporadic acts of the ritual were still being carried out in parts of the country, albeit under official watch.³⁵² Leask opines that Parks refers to the practice “to question the hegemonic liberal ideology which oppressed women in Britain and colonial India alike.” This is a valid point given that Parks makes numerous remarks regarding the lamentable fate of *all* women regardless of their background; for instance, she comments that “Women in all countries are considered such dust in the balance, when their interests are pitted against those of the men” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 162) and that “It is the same all the world over; the women, being the weaker, are the playthings, the drudges, or the victims of the men; a woman is a slave from her birth; and the more I see of life, the more I pity the condition of the women” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 56-57). However, I posit that

³⁵¹ Leask, *Curiosity*, 237.

³⁵² See *Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 91-95 for the account; for more on the colonial discourse of *sati*, see footnote 95 in Chapter 3.

Parks' reference[s] to *sati* point[s] to a deeper level of aesthetic engagement with the ritual and what it signified for the female as both aesthetic object and subject.³⁵³

***Sati* and Kali: Aesthetic stasis and female liberation**

As a ritual involving the immolation of a widow on a funeral pyre, *sati* represented the ultimate (female) stasis of death. Likewise, as a tool of Anglo-Indian rhetoric (with the barbarism of *sati* being used as justification for the British 'civilizing mission') *sati* came to serve a similarly suppressive function because, as Lata Mani observes, "the women who burned were neither the subjects nor even the primary objects of concern in the debate on its prohibition."³⁵⁴ Additionally, as we have seen in Chapter 2, visual depictions of the ritual also featured prominently amongst the British artistic representations of India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, as De Almeida and Gilpin highlight, occasionally even accompanied nineteenth-century missionary tracts.³⁵⁵ In both cases, *sati* came to signify something other than itself—be it a curious example of the Indian Picturesque or simply a shocking visual representation of native heathen practices—thus forcing the burning female into another realm of confinement and denial of subjectivity.

Parks' engagement with *sati* appears to lie somewhere between complicity in this enforced female stasis and rallying against the ideology of female oppression. As evinced in her comments about female attire, education and other social restrictions (such as those which are brought upon by marriage), Parks'

³⁵³ Leask, *Curiosity*, 238.

³⁵⁴ Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, 2, see also Chapter 5 of Mani's text.

³⁵⁵ De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 232.

feminist politics often resulted in her railing against female stasis and confinement. Yet at the same time, her metaphorical comparison of the predicament of the married English women to “one perpetual *sati*” can also be said to be complicit with this forced feminine stasis by similarly denying the subjective plight of the Indian widow and simply using *sati* as a metaphor to highlight the wretched state of the married British female.

What is even more ambiguous is her almost compulsive need to visit places associated with *sati*—such as the Temple of Bhawani, the patron goddess of *satis*, and the *sati* graves—as well as to possess the material objects associated with the practice.³⁵⁶ Oftentimes, these were the *kalsas*, or ornaments that are placed atop the mounds created to commemorate an immolation, while at other times she also recounts how she carried off the stone idols placed at these *sati* graves, the largest being a carved figure of a *sati* which she places in her pinnacle and surrounds with daily offerings of flowers and rice.³⁵⁷

However, as Leask also observes, Parks cannot be accused of romanticising the ritual like other male travellers before her.³⁵⁸ Her description of how a woman escaped death by jumping out of the funeral pyre and into the Ganges river is gruesome in its detail and later on she is clearly shaken when she comes across some “ten to twenty *sati* mounds” off the village of Beerpur, stating that “the idea of what those wretched women must have suffered made me shudder”

³⁵⁶ The word *sati* is used interchangeably to refer to both the ritual of widow burning as well as the victim of the ritual.

³⁵⁷ In this particular incident, her servants stole the idol for her but Parks, despite some initial guilt, did not strongly protest against having been gifted it either. See *Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 25.

³⁵⁸ Leask, *Curiosity*, 238.

(*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 66). Moreover, the suggestion that Parks did recognise (however vaguely) the moral dilemma in her actions can be gleaned from an extended piece of narration in which she explains how she made a clandestine arrangement with a local fisherman in order to obtain some of these *sati* ‘curiosities’:

Lugaoed at Barrah, a small village on the right bank: climbed the cliff in the evening; a fisherman who resided there showed me two sati mounds on the top of it [...] I gave a small present to the people, and took away one of the kalsas of mud as a curiosity: a number of broken idols of black stone had been dug up, and placed on the sati mound of the Brahman, —I was anxious to have two of them, and determined to ask the fisherman to give them to me. [...]

Ten P.M.; I have just returned from the sati mound, accompanied by the old fisherman, who brought with him two of the idols of black stone from the Brahman’s mound, on which there were about twenty; the old man gave them to me the moment I asked for them; I gave him a present afterwards, therefore he did not sell his gods, but he requested to be allowed to bring them to the boats during the darkness of the night (*Wanderings*, Vol.2, 417-418).

In this case, given the care she takes in ensuring that the acquisition of these idols at least had the *appearances* of a gift exchange rather than an act of looting or even a monetary-based transaction, along with other parts in her narrative in which she repeatedly prides herself on her respect for native traditions, how then can we explain her almost insensitive appropriations of these *sati* monuments?³⁵⁹ An answer to this, I would suggest, lies in her engagement with the goddess Kali (a fiercer and more terrible incarnation of the patron goddess of *sati*).

³⁵⁹ Examples of Parks’ claims to cultural sensitivity include her violent reaction to the news that the Taj Mahal might be sold (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 220), her outrage at what she sees as the European desecration of the Taj and the sleeping apartments of the former Empress Noor-Jahan (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 355 and 365), and the pride she exhibits in claiming, “I study the customs and superstitions of the Hindoos so eagerly, that my friends laugh and say, “We expect some day to see you at pooja in the river!”” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 212).

Parks first became aware of Kali and the myths and practices associated with her worship after having first been introduced to the practice of Thuggee—a cult that robs and strangles travellers and whose followers uphold the goddess as their titular deity.³⁶⁰ Following an incident in which her servant prevented her from drinking water from a well that had been supposedly contaminated by the body of a Thuggee victim, Parks admits to being “very much interested” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 122) in the cult and offers her readers no less than five transcribed accounts detailing their practices.³⁶¹ The connection between the Thugs and Kali is then laid out in the first account, entitled “The Confessions of a Thug,” which describes how a portion of the Thuggee spoils is devoted to the goddess in return for her continued favour. In the second account, presented in a chapter entitled “The Thug’s Dice,” the reader is then further informed that

[the goddess] is worshipped under her four names, Devi, Kalee, Doorga, and Bhawani, and [that] her temple at Bindachun, a few miles west of Mirzapore on the Ganges, is constantly filled with murderers from every quarter of India, who go there to offer up a share of the booty acquired from their strangled victims in their annual excursions (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 153).

While Parks’ fascination with Thuggee is already discernible from these detailed transcriptions, as well as her procurement of the “thug’s dice”—a drawing of which is presented to the reader—she also makes it a point to signal her interest in Kali herself in a postscript to the chapter. With the original journal entry being dated October 1830, she highlights that “[i]n 1844 [she] visited the famous temple of Bhawani at Bindachun, near Mirzapore” and directs her readers’ attention to

³⁶⁰ For more on the British attitudes towards Thuggee see Kim A. Wagner, *Thuggee: banditry and the British in early nineteenth-century India* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

³⁶¹ Four of these accounts were taken from contemporary governmental and newspaper reports and one was an anecdote from a friend.

“the portrait of the Devi, entitled “Bhagwan” and the sketch of the “Temple of Bhawani,” in the Second Volume” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 158). In the chapter immediately following, she then proceeds to describe the Dewali festival, which, as she explains, was also called “Kalee-pooja” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 162) and celebrated in honour of the goddess.

To provide her readers with a visual image of the goddess (in her most common form of representation), and to explain the myth associated with her worship, Parks offers the following passage:

The goddess is represented as a black female with four arms, standing on the breast of Shivu. In one hand she carries a scymitar; in two others the heads of giants, which she holds by the hair; and the fourth hand supports giants' heads [...] Kalee had a contest with the giant Ravuna, which lasted ten years; having conquered him, she became mad with joy, and her dancing shook the earth to its centre. To restore the peace of the world, Shivu, her husband, threw himself amongst the dead bodies at her feet. She continued her dancing, and trampled upon him. When she discovered her husband she stood still, horror-struck and ashamed, and threw out her tongue to an uncommon length. By this means Shivu stopped her frantic dancing, and saved the universe (*Wanderings*, Vol.1, 165).

Here, in a remarkable inversion of the *sati* ritual in which the widow immolates herself on the body of her dead husband, Kali is represented as having triumphed over both the (notably male) giant and her own husband, the god of destruction—whose body she significantly stands on, with “one leg on [his] breast” while “rest[ing] the other on his thigh” (*ibid*)—thus making her victory one that was not only over the male hegemony but also over death and destruction itself. Adding another element to this feminine triumph is the fact that Kali’s power (or at least the power of her myth) extended into the material world, where she induced a

combination of fear and worship amongst the Thugs, and where she also became associated with human sacrifice.

Like her obsession with *sati*, Parks displays an intense fascination with Kali; dwelling on the circumstances of the human sacrifices purported to have been made in honour of the goddess, and, as she does with the *kalsas*, taking pains to procure images of the deity for her own collection. Examples of both are given in the singular passage quoted below:

When we were residing in Chowringhee, we heard of the body of a man, who had been sacrificed to the goddess, having been found before the image at Kalee Ghat. It was supposed he was some poor wanderer or devotee, possessing no friends to make enquiries concerning his fate. When a victim is sacrificed, it is necessary to cut off the head at one blow with a broad heavy axe.

At Benares I purchased thirty-two paintings of the Hindoo deities for one rupee! And amongst them was a sketch of the goddess Kalee (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 164).

What is interesting about these lines is the juxtaposition of the account of the sacrificial victim (in which a violent episode is relayed in a strangely prosaic manner) and Parks' delight in having obtained an image of the goddess (and for such a cheap price). This suggests that part of the allure of Kali for Parks may in fact lie in this (male-directed) violence, a suggestion that can equally be applied to Parks' fascination with the Thugs. As Daniel J. R. Grey has observed, the intended victims of the Thugs were always male as "[t]o harm women or girls was strictly forbidden by the rules set out by the[ir] patron goddess."³⁶² Correspondingly, I would argue that the practice of the cult can be thought of as a perverted way of

³⁶² Daniel J. R. Grey, "Creating the 'Problem Hindu': Sati, Thuggee and Female Infanticide in India, 1800-60," *Gender & History* 25.3 (2013), 505.

restoring an imbalance caused by *sati*: if through *sati*, a female life is unnecessarily taken in the name of Bhawani, then through Thuggee the gendered balance is restored by having a male life claimed in the honour of Kali.

As an idol, a mere object in Parks' varied collection, Kali can also be read as representing the quintessential Picturesque object—a curiosity whose existence is frozen in time, captured within the aesthetic frame of the art form, in this case, that of sculpture. However, the violence associated with her myth and carried out as part of her worship—along with the power represented by her triumphant stance as she stands on the body of her dead husband (whom she unwittingly trampled to death in the force of her frenzied excitement) and the fact that she bears the trophies of giants she slew and symbolically consumed in her bloodlust—points towards an image that is constantly threatening to break the boundaries of its symbolic confinement in this aesthetic vision. If the *sati* (and here I refer to the victim herself) represented a model of both Picturesque and feminine stasis, then Kali embodied an extreme example of Picturesque movement and female empowerment.

Arrested in a poignant scene where her unbridled frenzy becomes abruptly halted and she is made to face the consequences of her actions, this image of the goddess appears to suggest a kind of warning against unbounded female energy and the dangers of unrestricted (female) mobility. Nevertheless, Parks' overwhelming fascination with Kali and her desire symbolically to possess the goddess through acquiring her idols and visiting her sites of worship can then in turn suggest an unarticulated desire to partake in a similar kind of animated power

which she can only hope to gain by association or by indirectly ‘consuming’ the goddess through appropriating her image.

Within this framework, Parks’ compulsive accumulation of the material objects of *sati* can be seen as a similar act of (re)appropriation and transformation. Unlike the British reformers who sought to codify *sati* as an inherent part of the Hindu religion, Parks recognises it as a patriarchal attempt at controlling the property of women, a fact she voices more than once in her narrative. For example, while relaying the story of the woman who had narrowly escaped death by jumping out of the funeral pyre, Parks dryly remarks that she was “possessed of some property, for the sake of which her relatives wished to put her out of the world” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 93). Similarly, while alluding to the prohibition placed on *sati* later in the text, she simply states that she “rejoice[s] no more widows are to be grilled, to ensure the whole of the property passing to the sons of the deceased” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 162). Under these circumstances, Parks’ collection of *kulsas* can be read as an attempt at reclaiming the *sati* into the realm of feminine possession.

Picturesque collections and mobile identities

Having briefly introduced elements of Parks’ varied collection in my discussion of her fascination with *sati* and Kali, I turn now to address the subject of her collection as a whole and consider the ways in which it allowed Parks to engage with different varieties of movement and similarly served as a means of self-definition.

In a recent case study carried out as part of the “East India Company at Home, 1757-1857” project, Joanna Goldsworthy, anchoring her discussion on Maya Jasonoff’s argument that collections offered collectors a means of fashioning their own identities, proposes that Parks’ collection of curiosities similarly “gave her an entrée to a social world to which she might not otherwise have been admitted.”³⁶³ Taking my cue from Goldsworthy’s study, the following section is also concerned with a similar act of self-fashioning. However, while Goldsworthy centres her discussion on the upward social mobility that Parks’ material collections afforded her upon her return to London—arguing that “it is hard to see a conscious self-fashioning in her actions [...] while she was living in India” and that “[i]t was not until she returned to the metropole that her collection lent her authority in an almost exclusively masculine society”—I begin by addressing the social changes that Parks enjoyed whilst in India.³⁶⁴ Additionally, I also attend to an element that has hitherto been largely side-lined in discussions of Parks’ collections—namely her *cultural* collections as opposed to the oft-discussed material collection of the objects in her ‘cabinet of curiosities.’

As Sengupta observes, “[Parks] resolutely places herself not at the periphery of Indian spaces but at their centre and experiences intimately the various coordinates of Indian life: religion, history, culture, architecture and the people.”³⁶⁵ Labelling this interaction as Parks’ “cultural intimacy with India,” Sengupta goes

³⁶³ Joanna Goldsworthy, “Fanny Parks (1794 – 1875): her ‘Grand Moving Diorama of Hindostan’, her Museum, and her Cabinet of Curiosities,” *East India Company at Home* (June 2014), 2, <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/fanny-parks-case-study>. See also Maya Jasonoff, *Edge of Empire*.

³⁶⁴ Goldsworthy, “Fanny Parks,” 2.

³⁶⁵ Sengupta, “The British Woman Traveller in India,” 96.

on to address this cultural inquisitiveness while specifically arguing “against established readings of Parks’ text that claim that the impulse to possess, map and acquire propels her travels around India.”³⁶⁶ While Sengupta is adamant that reading Parks’ text through the lens of a Picturesque framework focuses undue attention on the “acquisitive instinct” of the aesthetic at the expense of the author’s cultural sensibilities, I posit that the two cannot be dissociated as Parks is *both* a cultural interloper and a collector, with each aspect of her identity enabling the other. In other words, Fanny Parks was not simply a collector of objects but also one of words and cultures and it was this cultural collection that facilitated her movement through various spaces (both real and imaginative) in India and back home in London.

A perfect indication of the relationship between the two is given early in Parks’ narrative. There, not only does Parks’ glossary of Hindustani words and list of “Oriental Proverbs and Sayings” literally bookend the first volume of her text, but her sporadic and sometimes inappropriate use of these proverbs as epigraphs for her chapter or as interspersed, and even occasionally illogical, comments within her narratives, speak to the indiscriminate nature of the collection. Parks herself even openly admits to treating these articles of language as material objects when she reveals that “[c]ollecting Persian and Hindostani proverbs and sayings, and having them cut in seals, was another of [her] amusements” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 134).

³⁶⁶ Sengupta, “The British Woman Traveller in India,” 95-97.

Nevertheless, Parks' fame as a collector of languages is also what opens her up to a world of social interactions in India, both amongst the natives as well as within the closed circle of the Anglo-Indian social elite. Because of her fluency in Urdu and Persian, for example, Parks was often asked to act as an interpreter, such as when Emily Eden first held an audience with the Baiza Bai. Additionally, her familiarity with the native expressions and ways of speech also made her amiable to the locals, thus paving the way for more intimate interactions. Midway through the first volume, for example, she describes an incident in which she impresses a Brahman with her local knowledge and cultural openness:

In one of the temples near the Circuit bungalow, I was surprised at seeing two small brazen figures of Krishna and his love Radha, or, to speak more correctly, of Radha Krishna dressed up in silks and satins. Making a reverence, "Salamut," I exclaimed, in Hindostani, "yah! yah!" "Oh, my father, what a beautiful Krishna is this! and there is Radha the beloved. This is, indeed, a Krishna; I never saw so beautiful a fellow!" The old Brahman made many salams and reverences, exclaiming, "There is an excellent mem sahiba! she understands all, she understands every thing! [sic]" (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 212)

Having affected the Brahman in such a manner, it is possible that Parks' fluency in the local dialects also aided her in acquiring some of her physical collections. In reference to the incident in which Parks arranges to obtain some *sati* ornaments from a local fisherman under the cover of night, Goldsworthy speculates that the author would have spoken to him in "heavily accented Hindi," —a likely possibility given that Parks makes no mention of having another go-between to translate her requests, nor could one have expected the fisherman to have communicated in English!³⁶⁷ In a similar way, Parks also successfully convinces a priest of the Temple of Bhawani, whom she imagines could have also been a dangerous Thug ("for at

³⁶⁷ Goldsworthy, "Fanny Parks," 23.

this shrine all castes worship”) to hold a lamp for her while she sketched the image of the goddess at the shrine (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 449-450).

Aside from enabling her to move more easily through different social circles in India, Parks’ cultural collection also allowed her to create an alternative identity for herself. No longer the “griffin” (an Anglo-Indian term for a new comer) she once was, Parks quickly incorporates native words (like *tamasha*) into both her everyday speech and her writing, and thoroughly embraces her role as Memsahib, even addressing herself as such in the third person: “Patience, mem sahiba, you are only eight miles from Etaweh” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 334). While she jokes by saying that “I study the customs and superstitions of the Hindoos so eagerly, that my friends laugh and say, “We expect some day to see you at pooja in the river!”” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 212), she does perform the ultimate act of native assimilation by signing her name in Persian on the title page of *Wanderings of Pilgrim*—a gesture she would subsequently repeat with all her illustrations, as well in the booklet she later would produce for her ‘Grand Moving Diorama of Hindustan.’³⁶⁸ In that single gesture, Parks essentially completes her identity transformation particularly because unforeseen by her, even her English name would be transformed further as a result of mistranslations by scholars working from the original Persian script.³⁶⁹

Having illustrated how Parks’ cultural collection enabled her to move within her immediate social world of India, I now turn my attention to how it allowed her to situate herself within the larger sphere of the British presence in

³⁶⁸ Fanny Parks, *Grand Moving Diorama of Hindostan, displaying the scenery of the Hoogly, the Bhagirathi, and the Ganges, from Fort William, Bengal, to Gangoutri, in the Himalaya* (London: 1851).

³⁶⁹ See Raza, “Parks, Frances Susanna (1794–1875).”

India. I posit that Parks not only sees herself as performing a cultural duty to educate her readers back home, but also possessed similar Orientalist aspirations which she sought to realise through her Picturesque pursuits.

Parks appears to write mainly for the benefit of her mother, her friends, and to some extent for her own personal gratification:

My journal is a constant source of pleasure; it not only amuses me to record passing events, but in writing it I perform a promise given ere I quitted England. Letters from home assure me of the delight with which it is received, of the pleasure with which they follow me through my wanderings and of the interest they feel in all those scenes that pass before me (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 147-8).

Addressing the relational aspect of her writing, she goes on to add that like herself, her friends were similarly interested in the Hindu religion and specifically requested for more information on the subject, to which she claims, in a manner of mock distress, that “however difficult the task, it must be performed” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 147-8).

However, having set her narrative up in such a manner as to avoid being censured for over-indulgence, she then launches into a detailed description of all the central figures within “the Hindu Pantheon” that spans over thirty pages. Here, in a manner resembling that of an Oriental scholar, Parks provides a concise summary of the myths and practices associated with each of the major Hindu deities (and their constituent incarnations), while repeatedly reminding her reader of her own collection with each successive repetition of the phrase “I have:”

I have a brazen image representing Vishnu reposing on a serpent with seven heads; perhaps intending to represent Sesha, the vast thousand-headed serpent [...] (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 151)

I have a curious and highly-illuminated Hindu painting of this first avatar, representing Vishnu as a black man, with four arms, issuing erect from the mouth of a large fish [...] (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 153)

I have an illuminated painting, which I purchased at Prag, representing Mahadeo as a black man [...] (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 163)

Consequently, while she ends the chapter with a seemingly modest proclamation that the preceding passages were meant to give her reader “some idea of the mythology of the Hindus,” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 181) before directing them to more authoritative sources and providing a footnote referring the reader to an appendix, the confidence she wields in each of her mini explications and the never ending reminders of how each deity was represented in her collection suggests that Parks entertained aspirations beyond that of simply an amateur ethnographer and Picturesque collector.

In fact, relatively early in her text Parks reveals her Orientalist inclinations by offering her readers a Hindustani song which she has copied in a Persian script. While she appears to adopt a self-deprecating attitude in her feigned hope that it “may amuse the dear friends in the hearth of [her] childhood’s home” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 133), there is also a subtle sense of her apprehension at having ventured out from the realm of feminine Picturesque recordings in both her appeal to “the oriental scholar [...] to draw the veil of kindness over any incorrectness in the Persian calligraphy” (*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 133) and in the affected submissiveness with which she refers to herself as merely “a poor haji in search of the picturesque” (*ibid*). Over time (and the course of her journal), however, this initial tentativeness is lost, leading her to openly “imagine the white marble images in [her] possession are the same as those mentioned in the “Annals and Antiquities of Rajah’s tan,”

(*Wanderings*, Vol. 1, 325), a seminal text written by Oriental scholar James Tod.³⁷⁰

This confidence then reaches its peak when upon a return to England, she compares her collection with that of the British Museum and concludes that hers was vastly superior:

Visited the British Museum; the new rooms that have been added are handsome, and well filled with Egyptian curiosities; mummies in crowds, and very fine ones. The Elgin marbles, in a handsome hall, are also shown to great advantage. My collection of Hindoo idols is far superior to any in the Museum; and as for Gunesh, they never beheld such an [sic] one as mine, even in a dream! Nor have they horns that will compare with those of my buffalo, or birds to vie with my eagles, which are superb (*Wanderings*, Vol. 2, 334).

As Jasanoff observes, not only can the British Empire itself (or in this case, the British presence in India) be seen as a collection of disparate lands, the British themselves also effectively reinvented their identities through their collections and pretensions to connoisseurship.³⁷¹ Likewise, Goldsworthy remarks that Parks had “collected an empire” for herself that liberated her from the constraints of life in the metropole” and “gave her a status in a metropolitan, masculine society.”³⁷² What is also worth noting is that along with enabling her to participate in the imperial (collecting) project, Parks’ act of collecting also allowed her to liberate herself from the gendered strictures traditionally imposed on collecting and connoisseurship. As previously discussed, the practice of connoisseurship was one that was particularly inaccessible to women, with the female often being seen as the object, rather than the subject, of aesthetic contemplation and collection. Seen

³⁷⁰ See Stephen Wheeler, “Tod, James (1782–1835),” rev. Roger T. Stearn, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2015 [<http://ezproxyprd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/27486>, accessed 4 Oct 2015].

³⁷¹ Jasanoff, “Collectors of Empire,” 111,

³⁷² Goldsworthy, “Fanny Parks,” 82, See also Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, 5.

in this light, Parks' enthusiastic foray into the world of collecting enables her to actively transcend the stasis imposed on women in the world of connoisseurship. Far from being a passive object of collection, Parks is instead an active collector, complete with the mobility and dynamism of the hunter.

While Parks was indeed remarkable in her ability to not only transcend the perceived limitations placed upon female travellers in India at the time but to also make use of the Picturesque to achieve female subjectivity, hers was not the only way with which to do so. The following chapter examines the work of a similarly enterprising and progressive figure, Marianne Postans, who, while travelling in a circumstantially different manner from that of Parks, still shared the former's drive to carve out a space for herself within the established field of travel writing (albeit in a more overtly political manner) and was able to similarly manipulate the possibilities offered by the malleability of the Picturesque in order to do so.

CHAPTER 5

Marianne Postans

On the road between Mandavie and Bhooj, Khaira is the only town of any interest and being remarkable for its manufacture of cotton clothes, may deserve perhaps a rapid sketch. The approach to the town, which is itself on the plain, is distinguished by a Mahomedan tomb or temple; which, being erected on a slight elevation, overlooks a fertile and pleasing landscape: in the middle ground, are the fortifications of the old castle, and the foreground is occupied by groups of weavers, busily engaged in weaving a variety of gaily-coloured cloths.

—*Cutch*, 27

Born in Pimlico, London, on 4 January 1811, Marianne Ridgway married Thomas Postans, an officer in the Bombay native infantry, on 9 February 1833 and returned with him to India, where they would remain, with the exception of home leave, until Thomas' untimely death in 1846. Early in 1834, the couple settled in Cutch, a remote area in western India. It is there that Marianne would gather material on the region and its peoples, their customs, religion, manufactures, and literary and musical traditions to be published as *Cutch, or, Random Sketches* (1838). Her later work, *Western India in 1838* (published in two volumes in 1839), covered the wider area of the Deccan, Surat, the Saurashtra peninsula, and Bombay.

In 1839, Thomas received a posting to Sindh where, after a brief return to England, Marianne joined him in 1840. The couple then spent three years together in Sindh and Balochistan before sailing home on leave to England in 1842. Marianne's time in Sindh gave rise to a number of articles which she published in the *Asiatic Journal* from 1842, many of which were later reproduced in *Facts and*

Fictions Illustrative of Oriental Character, published in 1844.³⁷³ This three-volume publication also included articles about other areas of India and places she had travelled *en route* back to Europe. That same year, the Postans returned to India but their sojourn was cut short by Thomas' death at Deesa in December 1846. After his passing, Marianne married an army surgeon, William Henry Young (who, incidentally, had attended her late husband during his dying days), whom she accompanied to the Crimean War in 1854. Her experiences with William Young led to the publication of *Our Camp in Turkey and the Way to it* (1854) and *Aldershot, and all about it, with gossip, literary, military, and pictorial* (1857). In 1857, Marianne also published her final work, entitled, *The Moslem Noble*, in which she calls for a more sympathetic British response to the Muslim population in India. This, however, was not very well received in the anxious aftermath in both Britain and India as a result of the Indian Mutiny that same year.³⁷⁴

Like many other travellers to the subcontinent, Postans arrived with a set of pre-existing strategies with which she interpreted her new experiences. As the language she uses in the quotation at the top of this chapter demonstrates, the Picturesque aesthetic played a prominent role in guiding both her visual

³⁷³ The Asiatic Journal was published in London and should not be confused with the Asiatick Researches, the Journal of the Asiatick Society founded by Sir William Jones. Rosemary Raza, Introduction to *Travels, Tales, and Encounters in Sindh and Balachistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003.)

³⁷⁴ Rosemary Cargill Raza, "Young, Marianne (1811–1897)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48646>, accessed 15 May 2012]; Because *The Moslem Noble* was published in the aftermath of the Mutiny, it lies outside the immediate temporal focus of my thesis. For this reason, the majority of my discussion of Marianne Postans' work in this chapter will be largely confined to her first three publications, although I will make some references to this later work. An in depth examination of *The Moslem Noble* would be more suited to a study of travel texts published during and after the Mutiny. (In comparison, Eden's *Up the Country*, although published in 1866, was clearly written before the Mutiny and is therefore within the immediate scope of my analysis.)

conception and verbal description of the Indian landscape: she characterises her brief description of the town of Khaira as a “rapid sketch,” adopts the Picturesque ideas of visual composition in her observation of landscape/figural elements in the “middle ground” and “foreground,” and narrows in on a typical (English) Picturesque trope, the ruined castle, as well as its Indian counterpart, the derelict “tomb or temple.”

While passages like this appear frequently in her texts, Postans’ engagement with the Picturesque was far from simply mimetic. Rather, as this chapter demonstrates, she was also interested in the broader aesthetic concerns surrounding the use of the Picturesque, such as the manipulation of aesthetic knowledge and cultural authority, as well as the strictures that confined women travellers and their writings within the realm of Picturesque aesthetic engagement. Additionally, as this chapter will make apparent, rather than focusing on its visual referents, Postans was also deeply concerned with the Picturesque’s application to textual and verbal aesthetics.

Authorial “intent,” narrative style and critical reception

Unlike Fanny Parks and Emily Eden, Marianne Postans always had public consumption in mind when she wrote her travel accounts—in contrast, Parks wrote her (later published) journals for the benefit of her mother and Eden’s selection of published letters were first addressed to her sister.³⁷⁵ Additionally,

³⁷⁵ I do, however, take into consideration the possibility that while Eden may have been writing to her sister, she would likely still have been conscious of her position as a public figure and may, in turn, have been cautious of members of the general public reading her letters someday.

while some travel writers, including Parks and Eden, have attempted to conceal the editorial processes that would have undoubtedly been carried out by any author prior to publication, Postans, though advertising *Cutch* as resulting from observational records of her experiences in India, makes no claim that the text possessed the immediacy of having been written “on the spot.” Rather, in its opening passage, she clearly lays out the deliberate and constructed nature of her text by explaining that “[t]hese pages are the result of a series of notes, taken during a residence of some years in Cutch; during which I have enjoyed unusual opportunities of being acquainted with the general and domestic manners of the populations in its various castes” (*Cutch*, viii). In *Western India* she does claim that her work is being offered to the reader “in the simple form in which they were originally written” (*Western India*, Vol. 1, viii), but also urges travellers to write about their experiences as part of their duty to inform the public about India:

Every individual who visits India, whether his sojourn is for a brief, or a lengthened period; whether he possess the pen of an accomplished writer, or a more humble talent, that of careful observation, may yet afford some valuable information, if he but faithfully describe all that may have interested or attracted his attention; and this, without any reference to the degree of literary ability which he may possess (*Western India*, Vol. 1, vi–vii).

As the passage above shows, for Postans, literary or artistic concerns are secondary to instrumental knowledge. This is not to say, however, that she did not take an aesthetic stance in relation to her subject. On the contrary, as I argue in subsequent discussions in this chapter, she was an erudite writer and astute in her understanding of aesthetic conventions. Nevertheless, as she outlines in her introductions to both *Cutch* and *Western India*, the social and political bent of her writings are her priority and she explains that she was not interested in describing

European society in the East, but rather “the characteristics of the country, and of the various tribes which compose its native population” (*Cutch*, vii). Moreover, she is adamant that there was still more that needs to be conveyed to the English reading public about the social conditions of India as she discusses the possibility of introducing British colonial settlers (*Western India*, Vol. 1, vi) and while she claims that she makes no attempt at “any description in scientific terms,” she does state that her works will contain “such reflections as were suggested by the occasion” (*Cutch*, viii). While Postans was not unique in adopting this public voice—as Raza notes other female travellers like Maria Graham and Emma Roberts had done so as well,—the deliberate nature of her writing, along with its direct address to public readership is important for the discussions in this thesis, especially when compared to the largely epistolary forms adopted by the other two writers, Eden and Parks.³⁷⁶

The political, and sometimes polemical, nature of *Cutch* and *Western India* was also recognised by contemporary critics, who, while warm in their praise for her writing style—“She has much liveliness, is a felicitous sketcher, frequently there are proofs of superior acuteness, while there is a predominance of common sense, that renders the work valuable as well as amusing”—were nonetheless still uneasy about the overtly political nature of the works themselves.³⁷⁷ The patronising tone in the *Monthly Review*’s praise for “Mrs. Postans [having] some sensible observations regarding the use which might be made of the imitative faculty and the ingenious tendencies of these comparatively ignorant people,

³⁷⁶ See Raza, *In Their Own Words*, Chapter entitled “The Published Word”.

³⁷⁷ Anon., *Monthly Review*, 1839: 1.1, 2.

towards raising their character and advancing their civilisation,” is topped only by its dismissal of her apparent “blue-stockings, where the display exceed (sic) the necessity of the occasion, and only serve to gratify the ear when there is not much in the matter.”³⁷⁸

These comments reflected the contemporary view that women should remain as aesthetic observers and not participate in the political discourse of the British administration. Even if women were encouraged to participate in activities beyond the realm of domesticity, it was most often in the form of missionary work, which, by making the woman missionary responsible for delivering Christian education and morals to the uneducated, and presumably unprincipled, native, remains an activity that still places her within the protected domestic sphere despite her engagement with the public body. Hence there is favourable recognition of Postans’ expositions on the subject of native education—a politicised topic at the time.³⁷⁹ Nevertheless, as the reviewer’s emphasis on Postans’ “talent for seizing upon descriptive points” imply, women like her were still judged by their aesthetic talents, rather than their political insight, or as Suleri argues, “[women were encouraged to] sketch landscape and capture physiognomy as long as they remained immune to the sociological conclusions of their own data, entering the political domain in order to aestheticize rather than to analyse.”³⁸⁰

Despite this seeming appreciation of Postans’ writing style and aesthetic prowess, the reviewer of *Cutch* chooses to end his commentary by highlighting a

³⁷⁸ Anon., *Monthly Review*, 1839: 1.1, 2 and 7.

³⁷⁹ See Anon., *Monthly Review*, 1840: 1.1, 80.

³⁸⁰ Anon., *Monthly Review*, 1839: 1.1, 8; Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 75.

section which he criticises as being “inferior to the general features of the book.”³⁸¹

The following passage is quoted at length in the review and thus deserves some attention here:

Delusion is aboard; tourists write, and artists paint, heedless of fact; anxious only to bathe a favourite spot in all the light of graceful beauty, and the bright hues their own glowing and poetic imaginations suggest. But surely, if it be once admitted that truth alone is the keystone of knowledge, and consequently the only associate of good taste, it were better, where facts really exist, that ornament should be deemed superfluous and ill placed; and I have no doubt that, as real knowledge increases, its vanities will be seen, and the simple and vivid delineation of truth be held in most esteem, and constitute the real triumph of literature and the fine arts. Teniers will find more admirers than Nicholas Poussin, and those writers gather greatest fame, who

“Pour out all as plain
As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne.”

Then will nature be worshiped as she alone deserves, divested of the meretricious garb which only veils her beauty; and she will be sought for by the path of knowledge, science will be the ministering flamen of her mysteries, and the many will feel the harmony of her simple beauty. The institutions of man will be purified by her influence, his mind will recognise its powers, facts will appear, opinions will change, systems will arise, sincerity and benevolence will radiate throughout the world; and, reaching even the palmy shores of India, may plead the cause of the poor Hindu within the heart of man, and prove

“That where Britain’s pow’r
Is felt, mankind will feel her mercy too.” (*Cutch*, 93–4)

While the reviewer claims that his critique of this extended passage lies in the extent to which Postans has “laboured unusually to make it beautiful” in comparison to other sections of *Cutch*—which he praises her for the apparent ease of writing—he goes no further to substantiate his claim.³⁸² Instead, a closer reading of the passage (through the eyes of the modern reader) reveals other, more likely,

³⁸¹ Anon., *Monthly Review*, 1839: 1.1, 8.

³⁸² Anon., *Monthly Review*, 1839: 1.1, 8.

explanations for why it would have been troubling for the contemporary (male) reviewer. Understanding this however first requires an account of the central argument within this long passage.

Postans begins by first criticising the overly aesthetic approach that has often been taken by contemporary travellers, denouncing them for being “anxious only to bathe a favourite spot in all the light of graceful beauty, and the bright hues their own glowing and poetic imaginations suggest,” rather than engaging with India as it truly was. As discussed previously, Leask has defined this approach as “the Picturesque modality,” deriving the term from the Picturesque mode of landscape depiction popularly practiced among European visitors to India at the time. Because of the seemingly innocuous and inconsequential nature of this politically disengaged act of visualising and representing the Indian landscape, women were not just encouraged but almost *expected* to represent their Eastern experiences in such a manner. As Suleri explains:

Her [i.e. the Anglo-Indian woman] function was to produce both visual and verbal representations of India that could alleviate the more shattering aspects of its difference, romanticizing its difficulty into the greater tolerability of mystery, and further regarding Indian cultures and communities with a keen eye for the picturesque. For the female as colonizer, the picturesque assumes an ideological urgency through which all subcontinental threats could be temporarily converted into watercolours and thereby domesticated into a less disturbing system of belonging.³⁸³

By critiquing this artificial and superficial mode of engagement, Postans in a way removes herself from this gendered prescription to instead advocate searching for “true” knowledge, in which she sees science, and other similar epistemological (and

³⁸³ Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 75-76.

more commonly deemed ‘masculine’) approaches to the accumulation of facts, as the preferred manner of engaging with India.

Indeed, like many of her countrymen at the time, Postans subscribed to the belief that the world she inhabited was knowable in an empirical fashion, and that India, “like [the other British colonies] could be known and represented as a series of facts.”³⁸⁴ This ambition was attended by the idea that administrative power was determined by the efficient collection and use of these facts, a conviction that Postans articulates in her many suggestions of ways in which India could be aided in its progress towards civilisation and moral improvement.

Moreover, as a keen supporter of the Orientalist researches undertaken by the Asiatick Society of Bengal, and an ardent admirer of the Society’s founder, Sir William Jones, Postans also believed that every traveller to India should feel culturally obliged to contribute to the existing knowledge about the subcontinent. Consequently, in her dedication to *Western India*, the second of her published accounts of her travels in India, she professes her hopes that her own writings will “afford a valuable addition to [the] present knowledge of India and of the means by which her condition may be efficiently improved” (*Western India*, Vol. 1, vii-viii).

However, despite her enthusiasm to contribute to this Orientalist scholarly project, Postans was restricted from directly participating in what Cohn terms as “investigative modalities,” as these were confined to her male counterparts,

³⁸⁴ Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 4.

including her own husband, who, as an officer of the East India Company was tasked with recording his researches in reports to learned bodies and works of largely professional interest.³⁸⁵ Unlike them, Postans—and other women writers like her—was excluded from engaging in the range of scientific or pseudo-scientific enquiries that were being practised in India, such as archaeological analyses, topographical surveys, or even the systematic and formal documentation of local languages and customs and the formation of historiography. Given such circumstances, it is possible to read Postans' spirited championing of the pursuit of "knowledge" and "facts" over superfluous ornamentation, in the passage quoted by the reviewer, as a subtle indictment of the restrictions she faced as a woman writing about the subcontinent.

This resistance to a woman's confinement within the realm of Picturesque aesthetic engagement is then linked to another (possibly troubling) aspect of the passage: that of Postans' relationship with aesthetic authority and connoisseurship. Through the use of quotation and referencing, Postans exhibits her erudition, which in itself would have been unproblematic had she not taken the added step of adopting the language of the artistic connoisseur in her discourse of "good taste" and the "real triumph of literature and the fine arts." As Bohls explains in *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1716-1818*:

Women's relation to aesthetics in eighteenth-century Britain was an equivocal one. They were not totally excluded from aesthetic reception or production: while they did not write treatises, they did publish picturesque tours. [...] Much more common for ladies of Britain's privileged classes, however, was amateur aesthetic activity. The general accomplishments that occupied ladies' enforced leisure and enhanced their value on the marriage market included drawing and the

³⁸⁵ Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 5; Raza, "Young, Marianne (1811–1897)."

appreciation of scenery, as well as music and needlework. As literate Britons (though denied a classical education), they read the canonical aesthetic texts: Addison on the pleasure of the imagination, Burke on the sublime and the beautiful, Gilpin on the picturesque. Women were included in the practices of taste, but marginally. They were tolerated as second-class practitioners or passive consumers, like Gilpin's numerous "lady admirers" and drawing pupils.³⁸⁶

The aesthetic norms of the eighteenth century Bohls describes prevailed through the nineteenth century. As a result, it is possible to see how Postans' exposition on the value of truth in art, as well as the opinions she expresses on subjects such as "knowledge" and "good taste" (traditionally the domain of the male connoisseur), could have appeared somewhat troubling.

By the end of the passage, Postans' attention also turns from artistic detachment to a tone with new urgency as she switches to a more politically charged oration on the "institutions of man," culminating in a direct reference to Britain's relationship with India and its moral responsibilities towards it. Once again, such rhetoric could have been unsettling for the contemporary reviewer, given that women at the time were generally discouraged, if not prohibited entirely, from partaking in political discourse, particularly in relation to the Company's activities.

Significantly, Postans concludes her political remarks with a quotation from William Cowper's "The Task." This gesture can be read in several ways. On the one hand, by virtue of her source text being a poetic work, Postans' inclusion of these lines can be read as a form of retraction which allows her to pull her discussion

³⁸⁶ Bohls, *Women Travel Writers*, 2. For more on the cultural distinctions that were made between the masculine role of the connoisseur and the more feminine achievements of amateur aesthetic activity in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, see also Ann Bermingham's "The Aesthetic of Ignorance" (cited above).

back into the safely “feminine” realm of aesthetic discourse and avoid being criticised for her political comments. On the other hand, quoting Cowper’s lines immediately after her comments on the British responsibility towards India could also be a claim that her own aesthetic knowledge was enough to render her competent as a political commentator, just like the eighteenth-century ‘Man of Polite Imagination’ was thought to be suited to political power.

The fact that ‘The Task’ was also a politically charged work in which Cowper engages with social and moral topics of his day is no less significant. Like Cowper does in his poem, Postans too makes use of an aesthetic product to engage with political discourse. This was a delicate line to tread because as a female traveller in India, she was encouraged to “aestheticise and not analyse,” while also being restricted from trespassing into the aesthetic domain of the connoisseur.³⁸⁷ Moreover, besides having to carefully manoeuvre between Picturesque and political discourse, Postans was also forced to manage her own desire to contribute to the British administration and the accumulation of knowledge within the restrictions that prevented women from doing so. Thus, it is my conjecture that she balances these often-conflicting urges by first engaging her readers with an aesthetic perspective and then subsequently steering them into obtaining an instrumental knowledge of India.

In this next part of this chapter, I demonstrate how Postans does so through the means of narratives like legends and fables, as she adopts the role of storyteller in order to first reach out to her audience before becoming an informant on

³⁸⁷ Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*, 75.

oriental knowledge and a commentator on Anglo-Indian affairs. I then move on to discuss Postans' fascination with the bardic institution and how it relates to both the aesthetics of storytelling, as well as to her understanding and application of the Picturesque aesthetic. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of Postans' own reconfiguration of the Indian Picturesque, one that manoeuvres between representations of the physical landscape and the local people, ideas of history and the past, as well as the threat of latent violence.

In all these areas, I attend to Postans' allusions and references to other established authors in the construction of her own (verbal and visual) aesthetic engagement with India, a practice we have already seen in the passage discussed by the *Monthly Review*.

Stories and storytelling: The language of legends and fables

As Raza observes in *In their Own Words: British Women Writers and India 1840-1857*, "[m]uch of what women wrote about India, whether specifically for publication, or mediated by personal communication, included elements of fiction as well as fact" and Postans, as Raza also points out, is a prime example of a writer who "often incorporated in [her] work stories about Anglo-Indians, and tales of India, drawn from myth, history or the contemporary world."³⁸⁸ Indeed one of the most striking elements of Postans' writing is the way in which she merges the seemingly contradictory elements of fiction and fact, often using the aesthetic

³⁸⁸ Raza, *In Their Own Words*, 11.

appeal of the former to first engage her readers before leading them into an instrumental understanding of a particular element of Indian history and/or culture. This is a technique she employs first in *Cutch* and then turns to again, as the title of the work itself suggests, in *Facts and Fictions*.

In both these works, Postans takes on the role of storyteller; both of her own narrative, and those of others. Although *Cutch* arranges its information thematically rather than in the linear form characteristic of a diary or series of letters commonly used in many other contemporary travel accounts, the manner in which Postans begins the work is nevertheless akin to that of a chronological account. Her opening lines, for example, recount the precise moment at which she first embarked on her journey to Cutch:

It was early in the month of January, that, under the promise of a fair and freshening breeze, we embarked on board a Cutch Kotia, and left our anchorage in the Harbour of Bombay (*Cutch*, 1).

Having thus established this specific point of departure (of both her own literal journey, as well as the imaginative journey of the narrative that she invites her readers to undertake with her), she then proceeds to describe the scene vividly, stimulating her readers' sensory perceptions as she outlines the sights and sounds that surrounded her:

The morning was bright and beautiful; the sun just risen, had shed its early radiance on the wooded summits of Elephanta; the fishermen were returning with their spoils; the merry capstan songs resounded from the decks of the English merchantmen [...] few scenes can present so much interest, and beauty, enlivened as it is by the bright sunshine of a tropical climate, and the joyous shouts which re-echo from numerous fishing boats, as their laughing crews outstrip the heavier vessels (*Cutch*, 1-2).

Here, Postans effectively paints a visual image in her readers' imaginations through her choice of words. The references to the brightness of the tropical light and the details of the native fishing boats recall Picturesque paintings characteristic of artists discussed in the previous chapter, such as William Hodges and Thomas and William Daniells. This sort of visual reference is something her contemporary readers would likely have been familiar with, and which Postans alludes to again when she talks of the "most accomplished masters" who had rendered the "natural loveliness of the island-skirted harbour of Bombay [...] familiar to the imagination, by [their] pen and pencil" (*Cutch*, 2).

It is worth noting at this point that Postans makes no attempt at creating an actual (visual) sketch of the scene she describes, or if she did, chose not to include it in her publication. Instead, she relies on her verbal prowess to evoke the image in the minds of her readers. This gesture not only speaks to her recognition of the textual qualities of the Picturesque, which, as we have seen earlier, were already acknowledged by the aesthetic's early commentators, but also hints at the specific way she chooses to engage with the Picturesque in her writing. This will be developed in greater detail later on in the chapter.

Returning to Postans' narrative technique, we see that after having captured her audience's interest with this appeal to their aesthetic sense, and established a bond through their shared cultural understanding, she immediately transitions into a passage that is less visually descriptive but replete with proto-British commentary:

An additional interest is now given to the harbour of Bombay by the presence of the fine steam-packets which have lately been appointed to

advance the interests dependent on an overland communication. True, they add little to its picturesque effect, but they do far more: they afford a promise of civilisation to the shores of India, such as no other means could compass; and, to the minds of her English sojourners, a hope which makes the exile's "heart sing for joy" (*Cutch*, 2).

While Postans had earlier enthusiastically claimed that "few scenes can present so much interest, and beauty" as that of the native boats "crossing, recrossing, and chasing each other, in the harbour and "skim[ming] like sea-birds on the surface of the deep," her rhetoric now switches from one that was mainly aesthetically appreciative to one that is more pragmatically inclined. The "[a]dditional interest" that she now alludes to here is derived not from any aesthetic appeal that the steam-packets offer—in fact, she admits that they "add little to [the scene's] picturesque effect"—but rather, from the utilitarian value they bring in terms of facilitating communication between England and India. The comparative statement that this value is "far more" important; the patriotic rhetoric she employs in her reference to the "promise of civilisation" that the steamboats represent; her allusion to the Anglo-Indians as being in lamentable "exile" from the motherland: all three elements come together here to signal a distinct shift from the aesthetic vision that had characterised the opening of *Cutch*.

These lines, however, reveal the heart of Postans' narrative concerns. As Raza observes, Postans was primarily concerned with what she saw as the civilising mission of the British and the obligations that England had towards improving the economic and educational status of areas under their control. For Postans, beginning with an aesthetic engagement with India becomes a useful means for her to then lead into a more overtly political rhetoric, in which she would otherwise have been restricted from engaging. Her comment about the utilitarian value of

the steam ships is one such example. However, having ventured into such political commentary, she quickly returns to the more aesthetically focused style of narrative, as she describes the feelings of a traveller upon leaving Bombay:

Few persons can leave Bombay without regret [...] and when duty commands that he should resign his pleasures, the voyager does so with a sigh, and as his boat recedes from the shore, and the gay tents on the esplanade dwindle to mere specks, full many a wistful glance does he cast back to that distant scene of life and enjoyment (*Cutch*, 3).

What is significant in this passage is the movement that Postans makes from describing her own departure from Bombay to describing a similar voyage of another, albeit imagined, traveller. While the effacement of her own personal experience from the narrative puts Postans at risk of losing the credibility often afforded to travel narratives which highlight the veracity of first-hand knowledge, she compensates for this by choosing to temporarily adopt the third person *male* pronoun (as opposed to using a generic third person pronoun such as ‘one’). This rhetorical move has the effect of both de-gendering, if not briefly masculinising (or de-feminising), both her own travel experience as well as her constructed narrative voice, thus reminding her reader that in the space of her narrative, she is to be seen as a representative traveller, both male and female.

Having thus ‘set the scene,’ and established the generality of the travelling experience, Postans proceeds to tell a story of this imagined traveller; first evoking the nostalgia of leaving Bombay, then outlining the perils of sea travel. “At this point,” she observes, “adverse winds frequently spring up; the boat, long out of sight of land, pitches and rolls, and is yet unable to make way,” but eventually she describes the welcome calm that settles thereafter and comments that “a calm sea

and a favourable breeze tend materially to restore both his appetite and his tranquillity” (*Cutch*, 4). The literary construction of her text is highlighted here as Postans employs a variety of narrative techniques. For example, beyond simply adopting a different gendered position when speaking of the unnamed “traveller,” as mentioned above, Postans also presents “him” as a sort of Everyman figure, whose trials and tribulations on board the native ships are to be sympathised, and identified, with.

Similarly, her use of the present tense in the short, broken lines in the passage describing the nautical discomforts the traveller has to endure, increases the tension of the scene, just as the quote from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* adds to the dramatic effect with its hyperbole:

At this point adverse winds frequently spring up; the boat, long out of sight of land, pitches and rolls, and is yet unable to make way; the servants, suffering and useless, lie rolled up in their blankets upon the deck; the spray extinguishes the fire; and the poor, sick, weather-wearied voyager would willingly, like Gonzalo, “give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground, long heath, brown furze, any thing,” [sic] so intolerable has his state become (*Cutch*, 3).

Conversely, the longer run on lines in the two paragraphs that follow serve to evoke the gradual settling down of the tempest and the eventual onset of peace:

In a few days, however, matters improve; a favourable breeze carries him within sight of the opposite coast, and the Portuguese cook, who is always the earliest convalescent, pops up his black head, and commences culinary preparations.

A dogged state of patient endurance succeeds one of actual suffering; and although the long sandy line of coast which lies under his view can present nothing to attract the interest of the voyager, a calm sea and a favourable breeze tend materially to restore both his appetite and his tranquillity (*Cutch*, 3-4).

The narrative point of view is also in constant shift in this opening chapter, as the narrative voice interchanges between adopting the first person pronoun, “I,” and the third person pronoun, “him,” in reference to the imaginary traveller. Likewise, the occasional subjective interjection, in which Postans offers her readers her own personal experiences as a point of comparison, often punctuates the third person narration. We see this, for instance, in the passage in which she begins by first describing how the “constrained traveller [...] suddenly finds himself, his servants, and all his worldly possessions on board a native cotton-boat,” and then immediately switches the narrative stance to describe the boat in which she and her travelling party embarked for Cutch, lamenting that “It has been my fate to be a frequent voyager in native boats, which are always dirty and inconvenient, but I have never seen any so rife with offence as a Cutch Kotia” (*Cutch*, 4-5), before reverting once more to adopting the point of view of the omniscient narrator as she explains that the boats are:

so infested [...] with rats, and every other description of the most uncompanionable vermin, that the sensitive voyager must either occupy the hold in joint tenure with his horses, dogs, and luggage, or devote himself to a dull endurance of their attacks in the little den courteously yclept a cabin (*Cutch*, 5).

These carefully managed shifts in narrative stance and style make for a more aesthetically interesting read, framing the passages of instrumental knowledge she inserts throughout the chapter—such as her explanation of the construction of the boats and the general behaviour of the native crew.

Moreover, her usage of the word “yclept” in the passage quoted above also signals a level of authorial posturing, as according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*

the word was “much affected as a literary archaism by Elizabethan and subsequent poets.”³⁸⁹ Used in this context, it not only demonstrates Postans’ own mock medievalism, but when coupled with her description of the weary traveller taking shelter in the den-like cabin, also evokes the opening lines of John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678).³⁹⁰ Given her earlier usage of the Everyman figure in her personification of the unnamed traveller, the allusion here to Bunyan’s text is befitting. By aligning her travelogue with this well-known text in Western literature, Postans not only claims a similar level of artistic merit for her work, but also presents her own travels as akin to the spiritual journey towards salvation and enlightenment told in Bunyan’s seminal text.

Having thus set up her first chapter in such a way, Postans adopts a similar approach in the rest of *Cutch*; one which begins by engaging her readers’ aesthetic senses and subsequently leads them to an instrumental understanding of the topic at hand. Correspondingly, this opening chapter of the text also establishes the way in which Postans chooses to engage aesthetically with her readers by adopting the role of storyteller. While this is most obvious in *Cutch* because of her retelling of the numerous legends, fables and bardic tales of India, Postans also reprises this role of storyteller in *Facts and Fictions*.

In defence of her choice to inject *Cutch* and *Western India* with interpolated native stories gathered in the course of her sojourn, Postans explains that:

³⁸⁹ “yclept | ycleped, adj.”. *OED* Online. September 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/231389?redirectedFrom=yclept> (accessed May 27, 2014).

³⁹⁰ “As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream.”

A legend is recognised throughout Cutch as its sufficient explanation [for the existence of unusual landscape features]; and although the introduction of mere local fables would be useless impertinence where other information existed, I cannot think that, in the absence of facts, any subject which tends to illustrate the character, or habits of mind of a peculiar people, will be thought uninteresting, or be despised as the insulting imposition of “an old woman’s tale” (*Cutch*, 123-4).

Little is known of the early history of the Upah Kote; yet that little, is replete with the legendary lore so charming in Indian history (*Western India*, Vol. 2, 135).

Two pertinent issues are brought up in these quotations. First, while Postans states the importance of legends to the people of Cutch, she also acknowledges the prejudices that her British readers would have against the accumulation and presentation of such fables. In response to this prioritising of ‘fact’ over ‘fiction’, Postans instead argues that fables are actually valuable means of illustrating, and by extension understanding, the character and culture of a specific group of people. She recognises the importance of legends in the formation of the histories of the natives and thus argues that like historical ‘facts’, such legends and ‘fictions’ are also useful inclusions in the accumulation of Anglo-Indian knowledge. Second, as the lines from *Cutch* demonstrate, Postans is conscious about her own reception as a writer, as being aware of the association of fables with female storytellers and the derision that often results (the dismissiveness of “an old woman’s tale”), she defends herself against possible accusations of frivolity.

In the advertisement to her *Facts and Fictions*, Postans similarly begs her readers’ indulgence for having “dipped [her] pencil in the colours of romance” (*Facts and Fictions*, viii) and justifies her inclusion of seemingly fictitious tales with the fact that they were all based on truth:

I am not aware of a single instance in which truth does not form the canvass on which I wrought my tale, while, in the arrangements of the incidents, I have laboriously sought to adhere most strictly to known characteristics (*Facts and Fictions*, viii-ix).

She then goes on to explain that oftentimes she uses the mask of “fiction” merely to protect the identities of specific personages and places, thus drawing attention to her conscious use of aesthetics as a protective veneer. Given what we know of Postans’ promotion of knowledge and facts over superfluous ornamentation (from her earlier remarks in *Cutch*), it is reasonable to conjecture that there may also be another reason for her choice to mix “facts” with “fictions” in this publication. This other, unspoken reason can be gleaned from what she writes at the start of the advertisement to this text.

She begins by lamenting the fact that the reading public has lost interest in India, a point which she attributes to “a very ill-concealed lack of sympathy [that] existed towards the people of the East” (*Facts and Fictions*, viii). She also calls attention to her own attempts “to popularise Indian subjects as much as was in [her] power” (ibid), namely through the articles she published in the *Asiatic Journal*, but concedes that in order to counter the (British) public’s lack of interest with India, one would need to first increase their sympathy with the Indian inhabitants. Taking these comments at face value, it is possible to read Postans’ usage of the device of stories and storytelling as an attempt to increase such sympathetic feelings. By making use of the (ostensibly less serious) literary form of the tale, Postans is able to reach out to readers who have been exhausted by the gamut of ‘hard’ information that would have already been disseminated to them by the time of her work’s 1844 publication date.

Moreover, if one were to recall the ways in which ideas of the East were first introduced to the British public through tales like *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, Postans' attempted return to this familiar narrative form would make sense if her goal was to appeal to the public sympathies. Her awareness of these popular tales and the connections she draws between them and the image of India are apparent in her observation of the native talent for storytelling:

The natives are celebrated for their talents as raconteurs [sic]; and since the time of Scheherazade, this seems to have been the favourite Indian, as well as "Arabian Nights' entertainment" (*Western India*, Vol. 2, 152-3).

Also, the fact that she too conceptualised her own Indian experiences against these tales is clear in her description of her visit she takes with an Armenian female friend to a Jewish household:

Leaving our residence for this purpose together, we threaded the crowded and narrow ways of a portion of the populous bazaar until then unknown to me, and as the palkees neared each other, and I caught occasional glimpses of my veiled companion, her gorgeous tiara, and flashing jewels, the strange locality, and the novelty of the expedition, brought the inimitable tales of the Arabian nights strongly to remembrance; and I almost imagined myself attending the splendid wife of Haroun al Raschid, through her ancient city of Tabriz (*Western India*, Vol. 1, 121-122).

Similarly, Postans also acknowledges the cross-cultural role that Eastern tales have played in relation to Western society, as evidenced in her observation that Persian tales "have also been appreciated all over Europe, by means of imitation and translations" (*Cutch*, 210). Accordingly, her own translations of native stories can be seen as an attempt to actively contribute to this cross-cultural exchange. Indeed, we see an example of this as Postans mimics the aesthetics of Eastern storytelling in her translation of one of the tales from the *Anwar Soheili*, a collection of Persian stories. In doing so, she states that she "found it necessary to

obey the injunctions said to have been given by the Emperor Akbar to Abul Fazel, and have abridged many of its superfluities” (*Cutch*, 212). (She explains in an accompanying footnote that Abul Fazel was a “translator of many Persian and Sanskreet (sic) works” who was often prone to digression.) Her remarks on her own attempts to abridge the recounted tale, though tongue-in-cheek, nevertheless gesture towards an acknowledgement of a legacy of storytelling that had already existed in India, which she, as a Western imitator, should respect.

It is useful at this point to briefly attend to Postans’ other narrative attempt at incorporating what she sees as native aesthetic techniques into her work—through her publication of *The Moslem Noble* in 1857. Here, as with *Facts and Fictions*, Postans observes that the British public has become rather “bored” with the subject of India and she likewise laments this lack of cultural appreciation and understanding that exists towards the Indian inhabitants, particularly by British subjects who have never travelled to the region (*Moslem Noble*, 3-6). Once again, seeing “sympathy” as the cure to this distressing state of affairs (“Now what can alter this lamentable condition of the general mind? Evidently sympathy” [*Moslem Noble*, 3]), Postans sets out to foster this sympathetic feeling through her work. While her strategy in *Facts and Fictions* was to do so through the familiar medium of stories, in *The Moslem Noble* she adopts a slightly different, though not wholly unrelated approach.

As she states in her Apology to the work, she frames her text in the form of “gossip” (*Moslem Noble*, 1). According to her, gossip is loved by everyone, and is the strategy that great writers have used to appeal to their audience. Additionally,

Postans also adds that she chooses to adopt this direct and intimate form because “the spirit of Oriental gossip [was] strong upon [her]” (*Moslem Noble*, 4). While she does not elaborate on this aspect further, this slight revelation could nevertheless imply that she had (once again) recognised a form which was already familiar in the British imagination in relation to the image of the Orient. Like storytelling, Postans sees “Oriental gossip” as an aesthetic employed by Indians to pass on valuable information. Given that her text calls for an increased cultural understanding between the British and the inhabitants of India, this gesture of cross-cultural aesthetic usage is also particularly appropriate.³⁹¹

‘Masculine’ models: Herodotus, William Jones and Walter Scott

While adopting the roles of storyteller and transmitter of local gossip may have been useful for establishing familiarity with her audience, in doing so however, Postans also bore the risk of reducing her credibility as a serious contributor to Oriental scholarship. To counter this and to bolster herself against misogynist criticism, Postans forms literary relationships with prominent male authors through her use of quotations, epigraphs and subtler allusions. As seen above, she incorporates poetic lines from William Cowper, and both *Cutch* and *Western India* are strewn with references to Shakespeare, Ovid, and Dante. While the allusions to these prominent male literary figures help to display her erudition and, by

³⁹¹ While it is evident from the text that Postans’ sympathies leaned more towards the Muslims, she nevertheless also advocated for the Hindus despite her criticisms of their cultural practices. See Chapter 3 of *The Moslem Noble* for an example of Postans’ cross-cultural views.

extension, enhance her verbal authority, they also suggest her interest in fables and tales of transformation and discovery. To further understand Postans' verbal aesthetics in particular relation to her use of fables and legends, we need to turn our attention to her allusions to Herodotus, William Jones, and Walter Scott, and how these writers served as aesthetic models for her own writing.

It is no coincidence that all three of these male figures are alluded to in her first re-telling of a local folktale: the "Legend of Vere and Vicramaditya, Grandsons of Indra." This story is told in the course of her description of the coastal town of Mandavie and begins with Gundhurvu-Senu, the son of Indra, King of the Gods, being transformed into an ass as punishment for his sexual misconduct. While on earth, he befriends a poor potter, whom he convinces to approach King Dharuru and request the hand of his daughter on his behalf. After some persuasion, the king agrees but his queen replaces the princess with a waiting-woman at the last minute. The queen and the princess spy on Gundhurvu-Senu one night and after finding out that he is able to doff his ass's hide during the night, the princess takes her rightful place as his wife. One night, her father burns the hide, causing the smoke to ascend to Indra in heaven, who finally releases his son from his curse. The second part of the legend is concerned with Vere and Vicramaditya, the sons of Gundhurvu-Senu, and how the latter outwitted the demon Aguah Beytal and came to be crowned King.

As Postans explains in her discussion of the ruined site of the ancient city of Mandavie prior to introducing the legend:

Coins are found amongst the ruins, bearing the image of an ass; and as the natives can account for so singular an impress, on what was probably

the current coin, or for the desertion of the city, only by a “Legend,” the tale may be considered worth recording (*Cutch*, 17-18).

Having explained her reason for “recording” this legend, she then launches into narrating it, which she does under a separate heading, but not before opening the section with a quote from Herodotus’s *Histories* —“I know not what the truth may be, I tell the tale as told to me” (ibid, 18). In this subtle gesture of aligning herself with the classical male historian, whose own *Histories* was a mixed record of the traditions, politics, geography, and the various cultures of ancient Greece and the surrounding Mediterranean, Postans justifies her choice of blending factual records with imaginary tales in the creation of her own quasi-historiographical narrative.

Moreover, by inadvertently linking India to the ancient Greeks, Postans also subtly implies that this Indian legend is as important for European cultural knowledge as Herodotus’ presentation of the Greco-Persian war. By prefacing her narration of this tale (the first of numerous native tales she records) with Herodotus’ words, Postans suggests that, like her male counterpart, she too understands the importance of accumulating local legends and stories to form an understanding of the history and culture of a people. As we have seen earlier, this act of transcribing and retelling local stories is something she replicates in her later work.

Equally important are the details of the legend itself, as contemporary readers may have recognised parallels between this story and other European stories such as the tale of *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius. Like its Roman counterpart, the protagonist of Postans’ native tale is transformed into an ass as punishment for

his folly and a series of incidents has to take place before the magical curse is lifted. Additionally, the incident in the native legend in which the befuddled wife discovers the true nature of her husband through spying on him at night, also recalls the story of *Cupid and Psyche*, which is incidentally a shorter tale embedded into Apuleius' larger narrative. Another identifiable European parallel is with the tale of the donkey as related by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. As in the legend of Vere and Vicramaditya, the human prince in the Grimm brothers' tale is also released from his donkey shape by his father-in-law burning his hide.

Given the existence of these narrative parallels, Postans' choice for her first interpolated tale in *Cutch* could therefore have stemmed from her recognition of its resonance in European culture. In this respect, we can also identify traces of influence from William Jones, who argued for parallels between Indian and European cultural history. In fact, Postans directly references Jones immediately after her re-telling of the tale when she moves from narrating the mythology of the king Vicramaditya to providing details about his historical persona:

The brilliant reign of Vicramaditya has entitled it to be called the Augustan age of India, and it is known to have been that in which Hindu literature was most cultivated. In Vicramaditya's court were the poets celebrated as the "Nine Gems," and "Calidasi," the chief of these, was the author of "The Fatal Ring," translated by Sir William Jones (*Cutch*, 23).

While Vicramaditya himself may likely have been unfamiliar to her audience, "Calidasi" or Kālidāsa (as he was more commonly known) had become popular amongst the reading public owing to the scholarly legacy of Jones, whose translation of "the Fatal Ring" (otherwise known as *Sakuntala*) went into six editions between 1790 and 1807, after its first publication in 1789, and received, in

the following century, no fewer than forty-six translations in twelve different languages. Postans therefore not only moves her narrative from the realm of fictional storytelling to that of historical account, but by subsequently bringing in Kālidāsa and Jones as reference points, she also succeeds in taking her text to a new level by linking the legend to something that her contemporary readers would have been familiar with.

In fact, not only is there a rhetorical shift taking place—from storytelling to historical narrative—but also a temporal shift from the timeless world of the legend, to the historically specific reign of Vicramaditya (and life of Kālidāsa), and finally to the field of contemporary experience (i.e. that of William Jones and the spread of *Sakuntala*'s popularity in Europe). Thus, by situating the legend within the nexus of historical fact and contemporary knowledge, Postans makes up for its incredible nature and raises its level of import beyond that of a simply amusing vignette.

Postans next quotes directly from a poem by Charles Grant, a Fellow of Magdalen College, Cambridge. Entitled 'On the Restoration of Learning in the East' (although Postans cites it as 'On the Restoration of Oriental Learning'), the poem won Grant the poetry prize awarded by Reverend Claudius Buchanan, vice provost of the college of Fort William in Bengal in 1804. The work illustrates three periods in the history of Oriental learning—its peak of greatness, its downfall, and its subsequent revitalisation by the British.³⁹² Ostensibly, the section that Postans

³⁹² See *The Critical Review: Or, Annals of Literature*, Vol. 4. (London: 1805) Ed. Tobias George Smollet, 411-420.

quotes is meant to illustrate how the arts flourished under the reign of Vicramaditya.

However, the allusion to the poem is also an acute authorial move on her part. Effusive in its praise about the contributions made by Jones and other members of the Asiatick Society, Grant's poem also aligns the great writers of India with those of the West, echoing once again Jones' arguments for reading and appreciating Indian literary works in a manner comparable to that of the classical Greeks and Romans. This is demonstrated in the lines quoted below:

While Asia's voice her Calidasa blest
Hark! Kindred spirits answered from the west.
There all his lofty tones Lucretius gave,
And epic transports burst on Mincio's wave.³⁹³

In the light of this, Postans' allusion to Grant's poem not only justifies her own inclusion of this Indian legend, but also anchors her own re-presentation of this ancient Indian legend within the nexus of these Orientalist scholars, and thus validates herself as a legitimate purveyor of oriental knowledge removed from considerations of gender.

As a means of signalling the end of the tale, Postans simply states: "Such is the legend; and it will be curious, perhaps, to trace the threads of truth, on which this fabric of nonsense is woven" (*Cutch*, 22). This statement has a twofold purpose. First, it transitions her readers from the realm of fiction back to the realm of reality, and second, it reminds them that Postans herself is firmly grounded in that reality—she is aware of the fictional nature of the legend, but also acknowledges

³⁹³ Charles Grant, *A Poem on the Restoration of Learning in the East* (Cambridge: 1805).

the importance that lies within it. To further strengthen her claim of the “truth” beneath the “nonsense,” Postans reminds her readers of the archaeological evidence related to the story—the copper coins with the imprint of the ass—this time providing their local name (“Gundhurvu Pice”) along with a visual sketch.³⁹⁴ Once again, we see that by first capturing her readers’ attention through the aesthetic appeal of the narrative, Postans is then able to engage them at a more instrumental level. The latter is done through the use of an authoritative footnote in which she explains that:

It may be observed, that all the Raos of Cutch possess the privilege of striking coins in their own name; consequently, these coins throw much light on the history of ruins in which some of the earlier coinage are found, and are, frequently the only means by which to judge of their antiquity (*Cutch*, 22-23).

Having addressed the ways in which Orientalist writers William Jones and Herodotus serve as models for Postans’ (verbal) aesthetic engagement with India, I now move on to discuss another author who proves similarly significant to her framing of her accounts: Walter Scott. Postans’ first allusion to Scott is brief and subtle, and appears in the quotation from Herodotus that she uses to preface the story she retells of the legend of Vere and Vicramaditya. Significantly, that same quotation had also been earlier used in Scott’s *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.³⁹⁵ Published in 1805, the same year as Charles Grant’s piece, the *Lay* is a narrative poem which tells the story of a sixteenth-century Border feud through the narrative of an ageing minstrel who recites the tale in gratitude for the hospitality he receives at Newark Castle. The lines from Herodotus are quoted just after the minstrel’s description of

³⁹⁴ See Postans, *Cutch*, 22.

³⁹⁵ See *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, canto ii, stanza 22.

the strange and unworldly noises heard after one of the principal characters, William of Deloraine, takes the magic book from the wizard Michael Scott's grave. It is also one of the many instances in which the narrator breaks the flow of his narrative to directly address his audience. In addressing the fantastical nature of the account, the minstrel, rather than insisting on the veracity of his tale, focuses instead on his role as a storyteller and his duty of not only carrying on the tradition of telling the tale, but to pass it on accurately ("I cannot tell how the truth may be; I say the tale as 'twas said to me"). Here, the story he narrates is held up as an object of importance in and of itself, along with the minstrel's act of (re-)narration.

For Scott, as it was for Herodotus, stories are a valuable commodity as they are key to understanding the history and culture of the people from which they come—in Herodotus' case, the ancient Greeks and their neighbours, and for Scott, the Scottish highlanders. In fact, in his advertisement to the *Lay*, the latter clearly states that "The Poem, now offered to the Public, is intended to illustrate the customs and manners which anciently prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland." By offering such an argument, Scott in effect argues for the role that an artistic product, like his poem, can play in providing instrumental knowledge to his readers. As we have seen thus far, Postans also adopts this stance as she seeks to "illustrate the character, or habits of mind of a peculiar people" through her own collection of legends (*Cutch*, 124).

Moreover, as James Anderson notes in his discussion of Scott's approach towards history and historiography, legends, poetry, plays and other seemingly "inaccurate sources" were valued by Scott for not only serving as valuable guides

to the “mental atmosphere” of a period or class, but for also being active contributors to the formation of history.³⁹⁶ As Katie Trumpener observes, Scott’s own historical novels are “made up of many different textual media: letters, a personal journal, third-person narrative, oral inset tales: none of these takes narrative precedence but together they explore the conditional nature of historical recollection.”³⁹⁷ We see echoes of this philosophy in Postans’ writing which is itself an amalgamation of different types of narratives from a multitude of sources. Writing about a native legend connected to the worship of snakes, Postans remarks:

It is interesting to trace the legendary lore of an unsophisticated and barbarous people to its source; and a philosophical inquiry into the origin of legends, combined with the histories of their ballads and war-songs, would, perhaps, throw a light on their early mental and physical state, more valuable than can be derived from any investigation of their unconnected and unauthenticated manuscript details of governments and conquests (*Cutch*, 109).

While I return to both the legend and the context in which it appears later in the chapter, it is necessary now to simply accentuate how Postans’ remarks not only articulate her shared belief in the importance of discerning the mental state of past dwellers, and the role that legends play in its formation, but also highlights another area in which such knowledge can be gathered: through “ballads and war songs.” Significantly, this was also the focus of Scott’s earliest published works. Here, the figure of the bard is central to the formation and propagation of both these artistic forms, and indeed Postans’ keen interest in the bardic figure is

³⁹⁶ James Anderson, *Sir Walter Scott and History: with Other papers* (Edinburgh: Edina Press, 1981), 7-9.

³⁹⁷ Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 104.

demonstrated in the attention she pays to native bards (or “*bhats*”) and their aesthetic products in her texts—an entire chapter in *Cutch* is dedicated to the native bards and their bardic tradition, another, related, chapter focuses on the practice of minstrelsy in India, while her interactions with local *bhats* are also noted in *Western India in 1838*.³⁹⁸ The following section therefore attends to Postans’ bardic interest as it relates to both her aesthetics of storytelling as well as her reconfiguration of the Picturesque.

Postans and the bardic institution

Writing about the role of the bard in *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*, Trumpener explains:

Responding in particular to Enlightenment dismissals of Gaelic oral traditions, Irish and Scottish antiquaries reconceived national history and literary history under the sign of the bard. According to their theories, bardic performance binds the nation together across time and across social divides: it reanimates a national landscape made desolate first by conquest and then by modernization, infusing it with historical memory. A figure of both the traditional aristocratic culture that preceded English occupation and of continued national resistance to that occupation, the bard symbolises the central role of literature in defining national identity.³⁹⁹

Trumpener’s summary catalogues multiple ideas associated with the bardic figure, all of which are relevant to our discussion of Postans’ work. The passage touches on the act of reclaiming oral traditions, the importance of such traditions in the formation of a national history, and the role of the bard as both a unifying

³⁹⁸ Postans explains that term “bhat” refers to both a certain form of native stories as well as the native bards who tell them (See *Cutch*, 193-194.) According to Postans, the term “Bhát, or Bhât, is derived from the Sanskreet Bártà, signifying a word” (*Cutch*, 194). The similarities between the English and the Sanskrit is tantalizing but an investigation into their etymologies would be more suited to a linguistic scholar.

³⁹⁹ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, xii.

figure as well as a symbol of resistance in the process of nationalism. The bard is represented as a figure standing astride the past and the present, functioning as both the repository and propagator of cultural and historical knowledge. The place of the bard in literature, and subsequently the role of literature in national politics are also highlighted. Finally, the bard is conceptualised alongside the physical landscape of a place, as he appears to revive or “reanimate” it.

To varying degrees, Postans engages with each of these bardic associations in her writings. As discussed above, her own recognition of the importance of oral traditions to the formation and gathering of history is demonstrated by her acts of recording the native legends she encounters. Additionally, she takes pains to not only translate these stories but also to occasionally even transcribe them in their Cutchee language (such as in her transcription of an “Ode in Praise of Lackaphoolanee” [*Cutch*, 196]) so that her readers may properly appreciate the rhymes and rhythms of the speech pattern. This indicates her recognition of not only the importance of the act of narration, but more specifically, the dynamics between the oral and the aural. While it can be argued that her very act of transcribing this oral knowledge into a written form detracts from its authenticity, it is also arguable that Postans does attempt to retain the spirit of the oral narrative through her deliberate adoption of the aesthetics of storytelling and, in her later work, gossip.

As a storyteller, Postans can be seen as adopting and modifying the bardic role of repository and propagator of cultural knowledge as she gathers oral traditions from the Indian past to be disseminated (albeit in written form) to her British reading public. Moreover, as a British woman in India, Postans also stands

astride both Indian and British culture, uniting the two, or at least attempting to do so, through her writings. Her texts repeatedly call for cultural understanding and unity, and she deliberately attempts to promote that understanding through her own writing as well as through the stories she recounts. Commenting on the surge in popularity of bardic narratives after the publication of James Macpherson's Ossianic poems, Trumpener observes how the Ossianic poetry offered the English readers "new possibilities for sympathetic identification with a defeated people and a dying culture" in the midst of a time of largely anti-Scottish sentiment: "*Ossian* drew English readers into an unfamiliar, threatening, and alien cultural world, making it appear to them, for the first time, as sublime, heroic, and tragically doomed."⁴⁰⁰ As we have seen in relation to the narrative strategy she adopts in *Facts and Fictions*, Postans attempts to replicate a similar effect in relation to shaping her British readership's perceptions of India.

Similarly, by both recounting the history of the bardic culture in Europe before launching into an explanation of the nature of the Indian *bhats*, as well as drawing parallels between the European bards and the eastern ones, Postans strives to bridge the gap between India and the West. Moreover, by asserting that "[t]he taste [for bardic literature] appears to have been independent of climate, and to have arisen as much from the mental necessities and warlike spirit of men, as from a state of physical indolence induced by a high degree of temperature" (*Cutch*, 188-189), Postans both recalls and subtly undercuts the contemporary stereotype of the indolent native commonly used to disparage the locals and enhance the

⁴⁰⁰ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 76.

notion of British cultural superiority. This is not to say that Postans opposes this view altogether because as her comments on “the effects of the climate” (*Cutch*, 189) in creating people who were “indolent by nature” (*ibid*) demonstrate, she was very much still influenced by the discourses of her time. Nevertheless, she does go on to suggest a more positive corollary of this ‘natural indolence’ as she attributes that same “physical temperament [combined] with exuberance of fancy” (*Cutch*, 189) as a reason for the continued preservation of bardic literature in the East. This, combined with her lamentation that the European civilisations have not been greatly successful in preserving “genuine specimens of bardic style” (*ibid*), speaks to her partiality towards bardic culture and its aesthetic products regardless of its ethnic and cultural origin.

At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that one of Postans’ strategies to subtly participate in the discourse of Anglo-Indian knowledge-gathering was to use aesthetics to guide her readers towards instrumental knowledge. Continuing on that line of argument, I would like to suggest that part of the reason for Postans’ interest in bardic culture lay in the capacity of the bard to manipulate aesthetic products for non-aesthetic and often political ends, creating historical testimony while functioning as a voice of resistance in the wake of foreign conquest.

This particular aspect of the bardic institution was emphasised in the late eighteenth-century bardic revival, which, as Trumpener explains, “[gave] new emphasis to the social rootedness and political function of literature, as to the inseparability of literary performance from specific institutions and audiences.”⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰¹ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 6.

In relation to the development of Scottish nationalism, the bard was also held up as “the mouthpiece for a whole society, articulating its values, chronicling its history, and mourning the inconsolable tragedy of its collapse.”⁴⁰² It is my conjecture that Postans picks up on these aesthetics of resistance and nationalism and shapes them to suit her own narrative purposes. To demonstrate this, it is necessary to return to the context of Postans’ comments about the importance of bardic artistic products (quoted above and beginning with “It is interesting to trace the legendary lore”).

The passage appears in a chapter in *Cutch* that is ostensibly about the religious festivals of the region. Having glossed over other native festivals like the “Hooli” and the “Taibout” because she deems them to be already “well known” (*Cutch*, 100) and “too frequently described to require further attention” (*Cutch*, 99), Postans chooses instead to give her readers a detailed account of the celebration associated with “the worship of the Naga Pachami, or Cobra Capella” which, as she attests, “deserve[s] notice from its peculiarity” (*Cutch*, 100) and which she has witnessed firsthand. As she explains, “In the absence of historical record [with regard to] this singularly conducted worship, the natives have again recourse [sic] to an ingenious legend for explanation” (*Cutch*, 104). Unlike her earlier retelling of the legend of Vere and Vicramaditya, Postans does not narrate this story under a separate heading, choosing instead to incorporate it seamlessly into the body of her text. This long legend, spanning some five pages, concerns a powerful magical snake that successfully defeats all human attempts to capture it,

⁴⁰² Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 6.

travelling the land to eventually settle on the hill at which the religious ceremonies now take place. In exchange for ceasing to terrorise the human inhabitants, the snake requested that its power be worshipped—thus explaining the ceremonies which are annually attended by the Rao of Cutch and witnessed in turn by Postans.

While not a *bhat* in the traditional sense—Postans explains that the legend was conveyed to her by “an intelligent native well acquainted with the traditions of Cutch, and himself a Brahmin” (*Cutch*, 109)—the story she recounts can arguably be considered alongside more conventionally recognised bardic narratives: it bears characteristics similar to that of a ballad, appears to be passed down orally, and functions to transmit a specific element of the history and culture of the people of Cutch. Picking up on the socio-political functions of bardic stories, Postans, like she did with the legend of Vere and Vicramaditya, then makes use of this tale as a starting point from which to engage with her readers at an instrumental level. In my discussion of Postans’ treatment of this first legend, I argued that she makes use of the authority of established male authors—like Herodotus, William Jones, and Walter Scott—to validate her use of native tales as a means of contributing to Anglo-Indian knowledge-gathering practices. Here, I argue that having thus established her own authority by this point in her text, Postans is able to venture into more overtly political terrain after relaying the legend of the Cobra Capella.

She first muses on the possibilities of understanding native culture through such stories, stating that “a philosophical inquiry into the origin of legends, combined with the histories of their ballads and war-songs, would, perhaps, throw

a light on their early mental and physical state” (ibid), and from that point up until the end of the chapter (in a section that spans approximately six pages) launches into politically charged commentary about the cultural development of societies and Britain’s responsibility as conquerors. By suggesting universal possibilities for the development of idol worship and superstitious beliefs, as well as drawing examples from the Vikings and ancient Greeks, Postans employs the stadial view of history popularised during the Scottish Enlightenment, along with its cultural relativism—or what David Brown defines as “the attempt to evaluate historical societies without debasing them through hindsight”—in her interpretation of Indian cultural practices.⁴⁰³

After a brief retreat into the language of aesthetics—demonstrated in her use of poetic verses taken from Scott, her invocation of Aristotle’s doctrine of substantial forms (her own footnote highlights this specific reference for her readers), and her allusion to Michelangelo’s famous quotation on the role of the sculptor in releasing a statue from within a block of marble—Postans returns to political commentary as she embarks on a disquisition on the duties of Britain as conquerors.⁴⁰⁴ Directly addressing latent fears of native insurrection, Postans challenges her readers with the following lines:

Here rests the question; and it should be fairly investigated, without
subterfuge, and without delay: Will our interests permit us to civilize the

⁴⁰³ David Brown, *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 199.

⁴⁰⁴ The verses she quotes are actually taken from the epigraph of Chapter XL of *Kenilworth*. It is uncertain whether Scott wrote those lines himself, but in the text he attributes them to an “Old Play.” Unlike the passage (discussed earlier in the chapter) in which Postans quotes from William Cowper’s *The Task*, I have not been able to identify any political relationship between Scott’s text and Postans’ discourse on British colonial duty. This, coupled with her immediate, and similarly random allusions to Aristotle and Michelangelo, has led me to believe that Postans was simply quoting these verses for aesthetic effect and to display her erudition.

Hindus? Shall India wear her plumed and jewelled turban with an air of peace? Or are [sic] her civil warfare, and her darkened policy, necessary to our wealth and safety? We are the conquerors, and in our power it rests (*Cutch*, 112-113).

Alluding to the contemporary controversy about the religious conversion of the Indians, Postans also boldly states, “[w]e know we cannot convert them to Christianity, as a people” (*Cutch*, 113) and advocates focusing on the “intellectual” and “moral” improvement” of the natives instead (*ibid*). Addressing British political insecurities once again, she offers the possibility that a civilised India might be bound to Britain by “the social band of gratitude and reverence” to allay fears of being “spurn[ed],” “trample[d],” and “expel[led] from their rich and growing land” (*Cutch*, 113). Her tone is similarly confident as she advances her opinions on how the existing state of civil administration has been detrimental to India, explains how India’s riches have been diminishing due to this mismanagement of resources, and stridently suggests that a change is needed:

Such is the effect of the system we have long acted upon in India; but the present is not the time calculated to support its continuance. [...] Thus, at this particular epoch in the history of our Indian possessions, the question of native improvement appears to carry with it considerations of very high political importance (*Cutch*, 114).

Discussing the possibility of making India into an official colony, and reminding her readers that Britain’s colonies should “share the influence of her civilising power” even if only for the purpose of “political security,” Postans concludes her discourse, and her chapter, with another extended quotation from Charles Grant’s poem “On the Restoration of Learning in the East” (*Cutch*, 114-115).

While she had similarly quoted from Grant’s poem in the section in which she recounts the legend of Vere and Vicramaditya, then its primary function

appeared to have been to serve as an added allusion to the authority of William Jones and to anchor her own re-presentation of the Indian legend within the nexus of these Orientalist scholars that the poem celebrates. This time however, Postans engages with what can be seen as the political message of the poem: the role of Britain in aiding India's intellectual development. Additionally, the final section of the poem, from which she takes her quoted verses, prioritises the spread of education in India over the conversion of the natives to Christianity, thus echoing Postans' own earlier claims.

An added irony that might have been apparent to Postans' contemporary readers was that the father of the poet, Charles Grant the elder, held political ideas that would have appeared to have been opposed to the political views Postans voices in the preceding passages: the need for a change in the (East India Company's) management of India, and the call for education over religious conversion. Grant (the Elder) was himself a staunch supporter of the Company's policies—holding the post of both Director and later, Deputy Chairman of the East India Company (to which he was elected in 1794 and 1804 respectively)—as well as an ardent defender of Christian evangelisation in the subcontinent.⁴⁰⁵ His son, Charles Grant (the Younger), was also president of the East India Company Board of Control from 1830 to 1834, and was responsible for the renewal of the East India Company charter in 1833. Likewise, he was a possible contender for the position of Governor-General of India in 1834 (four years before the publication of *Cutch*)

⁴⁰⁵ Penelope Carson, "Grant, Charles (1746–1823)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11248>, accessed 27 May 2014].

although he was never actually elected to the post, being made the secretary of state for the colonies instead in 1835.⁴⁰⁶

Given the conspicuous political associations of both these men, particularly in relation to the government of India, Postans' allusion to the younger Grant's youthful poem can be read as a bold move on her part, especially in her manipulation of the poem to suit her own political agenda. It is probably no coincidence that the poem she chooses to support her political concerns with both starts and ends with the figure of the bard as in a manner true to the bardic aesthetics she admires, Postans too becomes a variant voice of political resistance and mouthpiece for her nation; she resists the gendered restrictions placed on her writing and uses aesthetics as a tool to overcome the male hegemonic control of information, advocates for change in the Company's administration of India, and calls for a modified conceptualisation of British history to one that takes into consideration their duties towards the regions under their control.

Thus far we have seen how Postans engages with the bardic institution on various levels including its reclaiming of oral traditions, its ability to function as both cultural unifier as well as symbol of resistance, and its capacity to manipulate artistic products into political rhetoric. I now conclude this section with a brief examination of another key aspect of the figure of the bard and one that bears particular significance to the Picturesque: its relationship to the physical landscape.

⁴⁰⁶ Ged Martin, "Grant, Charles, Baron Glenelg (1778–1866)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11249>, accessed 27 May 2014].

The bardic landscape

In the passage quoted from the Introduction to *Bardic Nationalism* at the start of the section, Trumpener states that one of the functions of bardic performance was to “reanimate(s) a national landscape made desolate first by conquest and then by modernization, infusing it with historical memory.”⁴⁰⁷ To fully appreciate this relationship between the bard and the landscape, particularly as it was emphasised during the Celtic revival in Britain, and consequently in the ways it was adopted by Postans, it is necessary to return to what is commonly regarded as the key text in introducing the Celtic revival in eighteenth-century English literature, Thomas Gray’s *The Bard* (1757).⁴⁰⁸

As Sam Smiles and F. I. McCarthy explain, Gray’s composition is based on an account, later discredited, of Edward I’s slaughter of the Welsh bards after his conquest of Wales in 1282, and is told from the point of view of a sole survivor.⁴⁰⁹ The poem is striking for its setting and theme, or what McCarthy terms as its famously “British in History theme set in a truly British landscape.”⁴¹⁰ While Gray ostensibly chose the classical form for his “Pindaric ode,” McCarthy acutely highlights:

[his] choice of theme was made in direct analogy with the tendency of the Italian artists of the Renaissance who chose classical Roman subjects for their History paintings. Gray’s idea was to build up the greatness of England’s past in her true ‘classic’ civilisation, that of the ancient Britons, and to show how its representative, the Welsh Bard, stood as the

⁴⁰⁷ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, xii.

⁴⁰⁸ Sam Smiles, *The Image of Antiquity: Ancient Britain and the Romantic Imagination* (New Haven, Conn; London: Yale University Press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1994), 48.

⁴⁰⁹ Smiles, *Image of Antiquity*, 48; F.I. McCarthy, “*The Bard* of Thomas Gray, its composition and its use by painters,” *The National Library of Wales Journal* XIV.1 (1965), 105-113.

⁴¹⁰ McCarthy, “*The Bard* of Thomas Gray,” 105.

champion of liberty and independence; on the other hand, the wild and romantic scenery of Snowdon was featured in contrast to the romantic classicism of the Roman Campagna.⁴¹¹

While these elements already align the poem with some of the driving energies behind the development of the Picturesque aesthetic in Britain at the time, as discussed in Chapter 1, the relationship between Gray's poem and the Picturesque becomes even more pronounced when we consider that the poet himself drew from pictorial images as models for his central figure—namely God the Father in Raphael's *Vision of Ezekiel* and the figure of Moses in Parmigianino's *Moses breaking the Tablets*.⁴¹² By translating these painterly models into a text which in turn evokes a striking visual image in the minds of the readers, Gray inadvertently employs the textual-visual dynamic that also underpins the Picturesque aesthetic.⁴¹³ Moreover, his own composition gave rise to multiple paintings such as those by Thomas Jones in 1774 and John Martin in 1817 (Figures 36 and 37).⁴¹⁴

What is immediately noticeable about these images is the way in which the surrounding landscape is almost given pride of place over the figure of the bard itself. Referring to Martin's image, McCarthy comments:

In this painting, huge in size, landscape overpowers all other impressions, and the rocky cliffs, towering peaks, eagles, chasms, and

⁴¹¹ McCarthy, "The Bard of Thomas Gray," 105.

⁴¹² McCarthy, "The Bard of Thomas Gray," 106. See also Smiles, *Image of Antiquity*, 50.

⁴¹³ Gray's bard is introduced in the following terms:

*On a rock, whose haughty brow
Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,
Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the poet stood;
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air)* (lines 15-20)

⁴¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the pictorial influence and development of Gray's *The Bard*, see McCarthy's article.

dramatic treatment of light produce a scene that is cosmic in scope and a bard that is apocalyptic in intent, though small in comparative representation with the landscape.⁴¹⁵

In a similar vein, Smiles observes that “[t]he bard is now a creature of these mountains, the genius loci of that wild, untamed landscape which stands in opposition to the urban, lowland culture bent on subduing it.”⁴¹⁶ Not surprisingly, the popularity of these images and of the poem itself drew public attention to Mt Snowdon, and when picturesque tours became the vogue, “many [took to] recording their quest for the actual scene where Gray’s Bard stood, comparing reality with the poetic creation and quoting Gray’s lines.”⁴¹⁷

The suggestion that Postans picked up on this particular association of the bard with Picturesque landscape can be seen in the following passage:

The hill-forts of India are usually the most picturesque features of its scenery; and there is a grandeur in their isolated position and rugged outlines, which carried the mind irresistibly back along the tide of time, and fills it with remembrances of wild and savage beings who made these strong-holds the scenes of tyrant treachery, when might constituted right, and the robber chief, under the protection of these fastnesses, laughed to scorn the fury of the oppressed. Many such are still to be seen in various parts of India, frowning in their gloomy might over gay and smiling valleys; and wild tales, and spirit-stirring traditions, are told of the daring and violent men, who, sweeping from their louring portals with a fierce and warlike train, ravaged the fair plains, plundered the helpless, and returned in triumph, to enjoy the fruit of their devastation (*Cutch*, 29-30).

In the first few lines of the passage, her description of the scenery and what she conjectures to be its previous inhabitants appears to evoke an image like the kind produced by Jones and Martin (in which case, the bard would be one of those “wild and savage beings”). Reading on, however, we see that Postans delicately

⁴¹⁵ McCarthy, “*The Bard of Thomas Gray*,” 111.

⁴¹⁶ Smiles, *Image of Antiquity*, 57.

⁴¹⁷ McCarthy, “*The Bard of Thomas Gray*,” 111.

plays with this image of the bard particularly in terms of its association with righteous political resistance. Instead of the highlands being the only refuge from the oppressing lowland powers (as described by Smiles in the quotation above), here the dynamics of control are inverted. Moreover, it is not the bard, but the “robber chief” and his band of thieves who inhabits the highlands and terrorises those below, and even what would have been categorised as conventional bardic products—the “wild tales and spirit stirring traditions”—are told in celebration of these barbaric and unjust acts of violence rather than honourable acts of war.

While Postans’ tone of admiration in the final line of the passage may initially seem incongruous with the more savage image invoked earlier (particularly when we consider her partiality towards the bardic institution), her position becomes clearer when we consider her comments regarding bards and their aesthetic products later in *Cutch*. Not only does she open her chapter “On the bards and bardic literature of Cutch” with the assertion that “[t]he talent for narration seems essentially the art of barbarous times” (*Cutch*, 188), she also later laments the possible decline of the bardic tradition because “the warlike spirit of the people has become less energetic, from the influence of political circumstances” (*Cutch*, 202) and the incursion of more civilised and less primitive forms of literature:

In addition to provincial poets, bards from Hindustan are retained in Cutch by the Rao and other great men; those bards having, by means of oral communications, become acquainted with many of the ingenious fables and graceful love stories to be found in Persian and Sanskreet literature. As these are becoming rapidly engrafted on the more simple and national products of Cutch, it is probable that, after a few more years of peace, little vestige will remain of the original Bhats, which are at least curious, as the genuine compositions of an unlettered and simple people (*Cutch*, 202-203).

What is made clear from these comments is that Postans sees barbarism and wildness, even to the threat of martial violence, as necessary ingredients for the formation of bardic literature. For her, the process of harking back to an earlier stage of civilisation is necessary in order to retain some aspects of aesthetic energies that would have been lost otherwise. As I demonstrate in the next, and final section of this chapter this attitude towards primitivism and savagery is also closely linked to Postans' conceptualisation of the Picturesque.

Postans and the Picturesque

Recalling our discussion on the Indian Picturesque in the earlier chapters, we have seen that the British engagement with India falls into two broad categories. In the first category lies the socio-economic engagement with the landscape, through which aesthetics have been harnessed for political ends. Elements within this broad category include the representation of ruins, and the treatment of various spatial territories (e.g. British versus Indian; homeland versus foreign soil). Captain Mundy, for example, in the manner true to that of a loyal Company servant, makes use of the (Indian) Picturesque rhetoric of ruins to actively promote the idea of India as a decayed and decaying civilisation that needed the help of the Company officials to bring about the restoration of order and the revitalisation of its past greatness. The second category is concerned with the engagement with, and the representation of, groups of people. Within this category of interaction lie issues to do with identity and identity performance, as well as the focus on the corporeal aspects of the native body, including its sexuality and capacity to unsettle the observer with its grotesque forms.

In a similar way, Postans' engagement with the Picturesque in her texts can be divided into two areas of focus: her representation of people and her representation of landscape. Within these two areas, Postans' aesthetics of representation can be further subdivided into two categories: native history, and consequently the stories that make up that sense of history, and the aesthetics of wildness and latent violence. Sometimes, these two aspects converge, as in the case of her treatment of the bardic culture in *Cutch* where she engages with both the stories they tell as well as the savage past they represent. What emerges from all this is a sense that Postans' idea of the Picturesque was one that was very much alive and one that has been converted from a seemingly static, disinterested aesthetic to something that actively engages with life and reality.

Wild lands

Unsurprisingly, this was an approach to the Picturesque that was also adopted by one of her literary models, Walter Scott. As James Reed observes in *Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Reality*, Scott's understanding and treatment of the Picturesque was unique in that:

[is] interest [...] is not a philosophical one, but purely, even severely, practical; passive adoration is not enough, because for him a view is a context, not a canvas; it is a world of action, not an object of contemplation; it is an environment with all the associations of history, heredity and legend.⁴¹⁸

This approach, which Scott himself terms "picturesque in action" was in direct contrast with what Reed saw as elements of William Gilpin's theory of the Picturesque which he reads as "offer[ing] no life", "concern[ed] only with the

⁴¹⁸ James Reed, *Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Locality* (London: The Athlone Press, 1980), 14.

pleasing arrangements of objects” while treating them like “museum pieces, [...] dead, fossilised history.”⁴¹⁹ This is not to say, however, that Scott rejected the Picturesque aesthetic as it was conventionally employed at the time—many of the descriptive passages on landscape in his fiction reflect this appreciation of Picturesque composition—but rather, that he saw in it possibilities for mutability and expansion. More than just visually pleasing articles, Scott saw elements of a landscape, such as ruins, as valuable “catalyst[s] of the historical imagination” which allowed the viewer to cast his/her mind back to the past, and not just the past, but specifically the “human past of the landscape.”⁴²⁰ As Reed explains further, “[w]hat [Scott] does is see man, and the works of man, in a total landscape: land, buildings, people, manners, history, fused by time.”⁴²¹

Indeed, we see echoes of this specific approach to the Picturesque in how Postans applies the term to Indian ruins. It is in these passages that her conceptual unification of landscape (or a specific feature of the landscape, in this case, ruins), story, history, and the Picturesque are most clearly articulated. A simultaneous examination of two such passages will be helpful in illustrating this. The first such passage is the one already quoted above, in which Postans describes the hill forts around the city of Bhooj (the passage beginning with “The hill-forts of India are usually the most picturesque features of its scenery”). The second example occurs in the context of Postans’ contemplation of the castles in Cutch:

⁴¹⁹ Quotation taken from Scott’s 1808 *Memoirs* as quoted in Eric G. Walker, *Scott’s Fiction and the Picturesque*, (Salzburg, Austria: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1982), 21, and David Hewitt, ed., *Scott on Himself* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982), 37; Reed, *Sir Walter Scott*, 12.

⁴²⁰ Walker, *Scott’s Fiction and the Picturesque*, 20-21.

⁴²¹ Reed, *Sir Walter Scott*, 9.

They are well built, and usually in very picturesque positions; sometimes on the banks of a sedgy river, or on the wooded borders of a tank. Their site is generally on a gently sloping eminence, their turreted battlements overlooking a bright and fertile plain, in which the husbandmen are labouring in their fields, and the oxen bearing their full mussochs from the shaded wells. Such are these strong places in the time of peace: a picturesque addition to a pastoral scene, a bold back-ground to a landscape full of repose and beauty; but, let the mind of the observer revert to other days—let it recall these fortresses, as they would have appeared to him in times of aristocratic and desolating tyranny, when each petty chief denied his allegiance to his sovereign, and here sheltered himself with his immediate retainers, protecting the robber and the outlaw, and saving the murderer from the price of blood; let it recall the time, when the fierce and rebellious lords of these strong forts swept from beneath their portals, through these valleys, now so peaceful, and by the power of the most unjust oppression, wrested the labour of his hand from the cultivator, massacred his flocks, and carried fire and desolation into his dwelling; then indeed, will the scene appear to darken, and contemplation bring with it sweeping remembrances of evil, which overshadow the present, and load it with dismay (*Cutch*, 139-40).

In both these passages, we see Postans employing the same rhetorical structure. She begins by first introducing the concept of the Picturesque and outlining how these ruins serve to exemplify the visual elements of this aesthetic—roughness, irregularity, and singularity—through their “isolated position and rugged outlines” and being on “the banks of a sedgy river, or on the wooded borders of a tank.” In the second passage, she goes a step further and describes the surrounding landscape in a manner that echoes the composition of paintings created within the Picturesque style: we are invited to imagine the perspectival composition in which the castles are positioned in the background, while the rugged fields peopled by a group of labourers are set in the foreground.

Moreover, her comment that the presence of the castles serves as “a picturesque addition to a pastoral scene” also functions not only as a gesture to the artistic conventions of another style of painting, the pastoral, but also signals an awareness of the way in which India has often been (mistakenly) “pastoralised” in

the eyes of British observers. Assuredly, in *Western India*, she later comments on such a mistaken viewpoint, observing that:

We may think as we will of a pastoral life, passed beneath the spreading palm trees of a tropic land; our imaginations, revelling amongst the lovely scenes of an ideal picture, may seduce our judgement and persuade us that on the teeming soil of this genial clime, the labour of life must be trivial, and its necessities few; a knowledge of facts, however, which are the only truth tellers, unhappily dissipate such poetic fancies (*Western India*, Vol. 1, 191).

Because of her awareness of this popular (mis)conception of India, Postans' descriptions of the wild and savage past associated with these ruins become even more striking for their contrast. She introduces this counter image by first inviting her readers to cast their minds "back along the tide of time," moving on from the passive contemplation of the visual features of the ruins (and the surrounding landscape) to interacting with the scenery in a more active manner. Mimesis has now turned to diegesis and what began as a Picturesque image in purely visual terms now becomes more narrative-focused as Postans invokes the "wild tales, and spirit-stirring traditions" which these ruins metonymically represent. Not only is the human past of the landscape highlighted, but even the ruins themselves become humanised as she describes them in anthropomorphic terms: the hill forts are "frowning in their gloomy might over gay and smiling valleys" and possess "louring portals." No longer are these ruins passive objects of human contemplation; instead they have become active agents contributing to the dynamic world of men "sweeping [from them] in a fierce and warlike train." This humanising approach to landscape allows Postans to subtly direct her readers away from a superficial appreciation of the aesthetic features of the scenery and introduce them to a slightly deeper understanding of the history of India, which

would have been lost had she chosen to simply depict the scenery in purely visual terms without invoking their imaginative past.

Turning for a moment to the man responsible for popularising the Picturesque image of ruined India, William Hodges, we see that like Hodges, Postans too begins by engaging the viewer (or in her case, the reader) with an artistic response before moving onto political commentary. What is different however, is that Postans celebrates the martial element of a ruined landscape's past, which, as we have seen in the Chapter 2, Hodges deliberately bypasses.

Similarly, rather than Hodges' approach of invoking passive nostalgia, Postans' treatment of ruins actively evokes the stories that accompany them. Significantly, just as she creates a hypothetical narrative history involving the ancient human dwellers of these ruins (assuming them to have been "robber chief(s)" and "rebellious lords"), she also simultaneously implies a sense of shared cultural memory between herself, her British readers, and the Indian natives. This is similar to Mundy's approach when he muses that "[w]ith a little activity of imagination, a retrospective abridgement of time and space, we might fancy ourselves back to the 'good old' feudal times of merry England; and that the grim and lordly turrets, under whose shade we almost daily pitch our tents, were the goodly castles of those burly barons" (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 109-110) but in direct contrast to the sense of cultural Otherness created by Hodges' ruined images. Just as in the earlier passage Postans explains that the ruins "carried [her] mind irresistibly back along the tide of time, and fills it with remembrances of wild and savage beings," so does she later invite her reader to let his "mind [...] revert to

other days [and to] recall these fortresses, as they would have appeared to him in times of aristocratic and desolating tyranny.”

Despite the obvious temporal and geographical displacement (between the nineteenth-century British observer and the natives of the medieval Indian past that she invokes), Postans’ (and Mundy’s) claims for a collective cultural memory would have been familiar to contemporary educated readers because of the dominance of the stadial theory of civilisations at the time of *Cutch*’s publication. As a result, the recognition that Britain too had been in a similarly primitive state in the past can account for Postans’ admiration for this savagery, and indeed she directs her readers to the connection in her opening lines to her chapter on the “Military Tribes of Cutch” where she reminds them that she has “already remarked on the similarity of the government of Cutch to that of the feudal times in England” and directs her readers to her footnote in an earlier chapter (*Cutch*, 131).

Notably however, while Mundy’s nostalgic hearkening to the feudal order favours the “burly barons” with their “goodly castles,” Postans—in a manner consistent with the feminine resistance she has hitherto displayed—appears to be drawn to the rebels who threaten that very order. Indeed, as I demonstrate in the next, and final sub-section of this chapter, this attraction towards wildness and latent violence is also one that extends to her appreciation of the native people and helps to frame her image of a Picturesque India.

Picturesque people

Like many other travellers of her time—and consistent with the author’s personal desire to educate her readers about the culture and customs of India—Postans’

texts are strewn with descriptions of the “picturesque” costumes, occupations and general physical bearings of the people she encounters. While these range from caricatures of Arab sailors and Parsee women, to (textual) portraits of religious figures and members of the Indian aristocracy, what is significant—particularly in terms of the actual visual illustrations that appear in her publications—is the amount of attention paid to figures that evoke a certain level of violence (see for example Figures 38 through 40).

While the affinity that the style of her illustrations share with the pictorial depictions of Solvyns and Orme, as well as the Company Paintings that had risen to prominence by the early nineteenth century—the central figures of each image for example, are often set against a plain background and bearing the accoutrements that clearly demarcate his or her occupation—make clear that Postans was attempting to work within an already established visual idiom, her concentration on specific types of figures hints at the parts of India that most appealed to her and her vision of the Picturesque.⁴²² For example, just as many of Mundy’s and Parks’ illustrations demonstrate the authors’ interest in the dynamism that India offered, so do many of the images in Postans’ texts display her attraction towards of a particular form of martial violence.

Notably, a significant proportion of her drawings depict native men in battle regalia with her choice of Frontispiece for *Cutch* (Figure 38) setting the tone for

⁴²² For more on the Company school of paintings, see Mildred Archer, *Company Drawings in the India Office Library* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1972) and Mildred Archer, *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British Period* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum in association with Mapin, 1992).

many of the images that follow.⁴²³ Confronted at such an early stage with this interesting, though rather intimidating figure whose sword and long-barrelled rifle are given visual prominence, the reader is thrown headlong into the wildness and latent violence that Postans repeatedly returns to in her text.

As her textual description of the “Durbar horseman” elucidates, Postans draws a direct line of association between such images of (latent) violence and the Picturesque:

The Rao, on occasions of ceremony, is generally attended by about five hundred of these men, whose appearance, with that of elephants, banners, and other insignia of Eastern royalty, produces a picturesque and splendid, if not an absolutely imposing effect (*Cutch*, 45).

The use of the term Picturesque is again repeated when, in recounting the approach of the Rao and his royal cortège to the site of worship of the Cobra Capella, for example, Postans proclaims that “their fine horses, decorated with silken and many-coloured trappings, their tall spears, graceful dress, and magnificently bossed shields, were admirably picturesque” (*Cutch*, 101-102).

Significantly, the author follows this description with lines quoted (albeit somewhat inaccurately) from Walter Scott’s *Marmion*. Written immediately after the *Lay*, but published in 1808, *Marmion* is an epic poem set in the context of a significant moment in Scottish history: The Battle of Flodden Field in 1513, in which the English army defeated the Scots. The lines that Postans quotes [“Bandrol, and

⁴²³ From my own count, four out of the eight coloured plates in *Cutch*, for example, depict images of native men in military costume and/or battle regalia. Because no other accreditation is given to them, I will assume, for the purposes of this thesis, that they were taken from illustrations made by Postans herself. The majority of the central plates featured in the two volumes of *Western India*, however, are accredited to other artists. Nevertheless, of the five coloured plates provided, three of them display native men in military costume and/or battle regalia.

scroll, and pennon there; O'er that processions flew" (*Cutch*, 102)] originally appeared in the context of the description of the English Camp in Canto IV.⁴²⁴ Once again, Scott's influence is evident in the way in which Postans confidently displays her fascination with this form of martial violence. As Simon Bainbridge has observed, Scott explored the "potential of the picturesque as a means of making war aesthetically pleasing" and in a similar way, Postans adopts this approach in her reactions to what could otherwise have been considered an as-yet-unrealised native threat.⁴²⁵

Interestingly, while the majority of the natives visually illustrated in both *Cutch* and *Western India*, fall within this category of Picturesque savagery, the figures that appear in *The Moslem Noble* hail from more benign occupations like that of a washer woman or mango seller (see for example Figure 41). Although I explained at the start of the chapter that the post-Mutiny publication date of this particular text means that it falls outside the direct scope of this thesis, I would nevertheless like to posit that the exclusion of such images in this later text could have been a deliberate move on the part of Postans and her publisher. After all, given the circumstances surrounding the 1857 revolt, it could hardly be expected that Postans' glorified description of the sepoys as it appeared in *Western India*, would have been favourably received by the contemporary British public:

In speaking of mere costume, however, that of a Hindostan sepoy is most particularly distinguished for its beautiful and picturesque effect [...] The easy grace with which the tasteful attire of the Indian soldier is worn is combined with an inexpressible dignity of manner, indicative of high caste, and produced by a train of conscious satisfactions, and well

⁴²⁴ See *Marmion*, Canto IV, Stanza xxvii, lines 566-7.

⁴²⁵ Simon Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Visions of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 125.

recognised distinctions, influencing the native mind. When, however, the silken ankrika, with its pendant sleeves, the well draped doputta, and the graceful turban is laid aside for the uniform of a mercenary in the British service, the character of the sepoy appears to undergo a change, and his general aspect becomes that of a constrained automaton, moving in a state of passive indifference to all that concerns his family, his country, and himself (*Western India*, Vol. 1, 137).⁴²⁶

Nonetheless, Postans was not unique in her equation of native savagery with the Picturesque, as Emily Eden, the final subject of the thesis, appears to do so as well. An example can be seen in her description of a troop of native warriors called the Akalees:

There is a troop of Akalees close by, an alarming class of people, who make it a rule never to live on anything they have not gained by plunder or force. They have occasionally set fire to whole villages and Runjeet even cannot control them, so he has incorporated some of them with his guards, but they wear their own dark blue dresses, with quoits of steel hanging all over them, which they fling at anybody and everybody. The other day, at the review of Runjeet's own guards, a small troop of Akalees marched past with the others, but all Runjeet's sirdars gathered round him as they went by, and some of the Akalees abused them, and others called to G. that they were going to take down Calcutta. They were very quiet with us to-day, but in the morning they had been very violent against Captain X. and Captain P. They are very picturesque" (*UC*, 230-231.)

However, whereas Postans embraces the violent energy that emanates from the native warriors she encounters, Eden, as we see in the following chapter, appears more cautious of it and more conscious of the precariousness of the situation of the British within India. Additionally, while like Postans and Parks before her, Eden is similarly in tune with the artistic philosophy of the Picturesque as it was conventionally applied to India, her texts push the boundaries of this

⁴²⁶ While the pre-Mutiny publication date of both *Cutch* and *Western India* meant that Postans' comments on the "picturesque" nature of native savagery or the threat of native violence were likely to have been seen by her (immediate) reading public as relatively innocuous, the modern reader (reading these texts with the historical knowledge of the 1857 Mutiny) cannot help but feel a slight sense of unease after reading Postans' description of the sepoy turning into a soulless automaton when made to don the English habit.

aesthetic category as they test its effectiveness when applied to more troubling circumstances. This, together with the author's attempts at balancing her role as a public figure and official representative of the British administration and her own personal artistic inclinations and aesthetic sensibilities, are what I address in this next and final chapter of my thesis.

CHAPTER 6

Emily Eden

I love hills but I have discovered by deep reflection that we are such artificial animals, that the recollections of art are much more pleasing and stronger in my mind than those of nature. In thinking over past travels, Rubens' 'Descent from the Cross' at Antwerp, and Canova's 'Magdalene,' and one or two Vandycks at Amsterdam, and parts of Westminster Abbey and of York Minster, come constantly into my thoughts; and I can see all the pictures at Panshanger, particularly the Correggio, and many of these at Woburn and Bowood, as clearly as if they were hanging in this room. [...] How do you feel about nature and art? Don't you love a fine picture? After all, it is only nature caught and fixed.

—*Up the Country*, 146–147

It is clear, even to a reader unfamiliar with *Up the Country* (1866), that the author of these lines must have been schooled in the finer points of aesthetics and culture. Whether we believe Eden's claim to be more sympathetic to art than nature, or simply dismiss the statement as exaggerated, it is undeniable that the writer is deliberately emphasising the importance of art to her worldview, and creating an image of herself as an art enthusiast, if not a connoisseur. The projection of such an image would not have come as a surprise given the author's social class at a time at which women of the middle and upper classes, were expected to display a knowledge of art as part of their array of "feminine" accomplishments.⁴²⁷ However, when placed in the context in which it was written—in the physically hostile environment of a foreign land, and while the author was engaged in carrying out

⁴²⁷ For more on the subject see Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000).

official duties associated with British rule—this passage may appear to be starkly incongruent. However, far from being anomalous, the ideas expressed in these lines were in fact in accordance with the narrative's concern with aesthetic exploration, an area that has often been overlooked in readings of *Up the Country*.

While the past two decades have seen engagement with Eden's text in a range of critical work on British India, most critical scholarship has remained focused on the author's political, social, and national identity. In her book-length study of the participation of women within the textual construction of empire and British identity in Victorian writing, Deirdre David devotes a chapter to Emily Eden and her fellow Whig, Thomas Macaulay, in which she highlights Eden's political affiliations and compares her narrative to Macaulay's account of the imperial enterprise in India. Distinguishing their differences in rhetoric, David then attributes these variances to "the forms of social and discursive power dictated by Victorian gender politics," and observes that Eden's letter writing, a more intimate and private (and feminine) form of discourse, enables her to suggest, in certain oblique passages, the alarming possibility that racial roles could be reversed, a liberty that Macaulay's (masculine) public rhetoric does not indulge.⁴²⁸ Similarly, Jo Robertson, commenting on the tensions surrounding Eden's private thoughts and public persona, argues that while Eden participated in "this official performance of the imperial body politic," the repeated images of disease, death

⁴²⁸ Deirdre David, *Rule Britannia: Women, Empire and Victorian Writing* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 37, 42.

and dereliction in her narrative point to her awareness of the vulnerability of the British position in India.⁴²⁹

While each of these readings acknowledges the conflicts Eden may have faced as a public figure—a salient point which I will also return to in the course of my own discussion—what has been largely ignored is the author’s identification with the world of aesthetics, a crucial element embedded in her very act of writing. In the most recent analysis of *Up the Country*, Pablo Mukherjee briefly engages with Eden’s use of the Picturesque as a mode of representation and highlights how its representational strategies fissure because “[Eden’s] troubled imaginations about death and empire cannot be accommodated within [its tranquil and soothing] norms.”⁴³⁰ However, his discussion does not probe further into this, as he chooses instead to read Eden’s reactions to the decay she witnesses as a critique of Victorian modernity and its effects on human existence. Likewise, Angelia Poon’s examination of how Eden makes use of particular narrative strategies, such as contrasting English and Indian reactions to visual displays of authority and power, to “perform” English identity and convey her sense of duty, acknowledges performativity as a visual trope but nevertheless remains focused on the political significance of Eden’s writing and largely neglects its aesthetic implications.⁴³¹

It is only in discussions of Eden’s published series of lithographs entitled *Portraits of the Princes and People of India* (1844) that her artistic sensibilities are

⁴²⁹ Jo Robertson, “Anxieties of Imperial Decay,” 111.

⁴³⁰ Pablo Mukherjee, “Touring the Dead Lands: Emily Eden, Victorian Famines, and Colonial Picturesque,” *Critical Survey* 21 (2009), 36.

⁴³¹ Poon, “Seeing Double,” 453–470.

commented on.⁴³² Paradoxically however, these discussions largely ignore Eden's textual commentaries about India (aside from the descriptive texts that appear alongside the images in *Portraits*) despite the fact that the initial sketches for these images were, in fact, first created while she was writing in her same journals that would later be published as *Up the Country*: indeed sections of text in *Up the Country* even focus on Eden writing about her drawings and her sitters, alongside the circumstances which allowed her to depict them. Consequently, an examination of *both* texts as they relate to each other is necessary to obtain greater insight into Eden's aesthetic strategies. This chapter takes on precisely that critical approach.

As the following discussion demonstrates, *Up the Country* is as concerned with aesthetic practice as it is with politics, and therefore, it is important to understand Eden's aesthetic sensibilities in terms of the more nuanced light they can shed on her public role as well as the way in which India was being framed for the contemporary British audience. While I return to many of the textual examples highlighted by earlier scholars, my own discussion, however, (re)frames these examples as representative of Eden's aesthetic engagement with India.

⁴³² Emily Eden, *Portraits of the Princes and People of India* (London: 1844). Henceforth referred to as *Portraits*; See for example, Romita Ray, "The Memsahib's Brush: Anglo-Indian Women and the Art of the Picturesque, 1830-1880," in *Orientalism Transposed: The Impact of the Colonies on British Culture*, eds. Julie F. Codell and Dianne Sachko Macleod (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 89-116; Susan P. Casteras, "With Palettes, Pencils, and Parasols: Victorian women artists traverse the Empire," in *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*, ed. Pomeroy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 11-26; Jordana Pomeroy, "We got upon our elephant & went out after our subjects": Capturing the world in Watercolour," in *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*, ed. Jordana Pomeroy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 39-50.

To illustrate my argument, this chapter is organised as follows: after a brief biographical summary, I turn to consider the ways in which aesthetics offer Eden a convenient and effective way to both come to grips with her situation in India, as well as to communicate her experiences with her reader(s). The remainder of the chapter focuses on Eden's engagement with the Indian Picturesque, as I offer an analysis of its significance within Eden's works and of the role it played in shaping Eden's textual and visual representations of India.

Emily Eden: The artist and aristocrat

Emily Eden was born on 3 March 1797 at Old Palace Yard, Westminster, as the twelfth of fourteen children in an influential aristocratic Whig household. Her father was diplomat William Eden, first Baron Auckland and third son of a Durham baronet, and her mother, Eleanor Elliot, was sister to the first Earl of Minto, a Governor-General of India. After their mother's death in 1818, Emily and her sister Frances set up house with their brother George Eden, Lord Auckland, in London, and when George was appointed Governor-General of India in 1835, both sisters, together with their nephew William Godolphin Osborn, accompanied him to Calcutta, where they arrived in March 1836. As George was unmarried, Emily and Frances carried out the official duties of the First Ladies, with Emily, the elder, assuming the chief role of supporter and confidant(e) to her brother.

In October 1837, they left Calcutta for a diplomatic tour of the Upper Provinces of India with an extensive caravan of elephants, camels and horses, and an entourage of over 12,000; the aim was to solidify ties with the native rulers and

allies in these provinces. This journey, which took over two years, formed the basis of a series of letters from Emily to her sister, Mary Drummond, which Eden published almost thirty years later under the title *Up the Country*. However, by the date of its publication in 1866, Eden had already established herself as a writer, having published two fictional novels, *The Semi-Detached House* in 1859 and *The Semi-Attached Couple* in 1860. Her artistic enterprises had also included painting and sketching, activities which she carried out with great enthusiasm during her time in India, and which formed the basis for her *Portraits of the Princes and People of India* published in 1844.

As detailed above, *Up the Country* comes fourth in the series of Eden's publications, and is the only selection of letters that she published during her lifetime—the other two collections, *Letters from India* and *Miss Eden's Letters* were posthumously edited and published by her niece and great-niece respectively.⁴³³ As explained in the Introduction, because these later works were published posthumously and with little (or no) editorial contribution by Eden herself, I have deliberately chosen to focus on *Up the Country* and *Portraits of the Princes and People of India* as more reliable representatives of Eden's aesthetic practices.⁴³⁴ While all these works have been consulted to form a holistic view of Eden's aesthetic style and views on India, my textual examples have been largely limited

⁴³³ Emily Eden, *Letters from India*, Ed. by Eleanor Eden (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1872) and Emily Eden, *Miss Eden's Letters*, Ed. by Violet Dickinson (London: Macmillan and Co Limited, 1919).

⁴³⁴ In the preface to *Letters from India*, Eleanor justifies her publication of her aunt's letters by reassuring the reader that she had begun arranging these letters under her aunt's direction when she was still alive and that Eden had expressed her desire for her to continue with the work. However, she also admits to her having made her own editorial choices, "omit[ing] all remarks of a personal nature which might be painful to any of Miss Eden's former friends in Calcutta" and inserting extraneous material "in order to render the narrative more complete."

to passages from *Up the Country* and, where necessary, the descriptive texts that accompanied images from Eden's *Portraits*.

***Up the Country*: The published text as aesthetic product**

Given her prolific correspondences and the delay of approximately three decades between original writing and later publication, Eden's reasons for publishing *Up the Country* when she did makes for an interesting puzzle. A clue to this might be found in the title page of the first edition of the text, where authorship is attributed to "The Hon. Emily Eden, Authoress of 'The Semi-Detached House' and 'The Semi-Attached Couple.'"⁴³⁵ This gesture, while highlighting Eden's status as a published writer, also subtly suggests that *Up the Country* could be read as a unified narrative, as were Eden's fictional productions.

Like her novels, Eden's travel text begins with a marked point of departure, the start of her journey, and concludes with a fixed ending, her return to Calcutta, thus providing the clear line of narrative progression common to the conventional narrative form. The narrative also begins almost *in medias res*; Eden is onboard the 'Megna' flat having already begun the first stage of her journey, and this—coupled with the opening lines which quote Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* ("Once more upon the waters, yet once more"[*UC*, 1]) and thus recall another famous literary journey—establishes *Up the Country* as a kind of epic tale of which Eden is the hero(ine).

⁴³⁵ See Emily Eden, *'Up the Country': Letters Written to Her Sister from the Upper Provinces of India* (London: Richard Bentley, 1866). First edition.

This heroic mode of representation is in line with the image Eden presents in her dedication to the published text. There, not only does she describe herself and her nephew as “the only survivors of the large party that in 1838 left Government House for the Upper Provinces” (*UC*, xxi), thus suggesting a sort of grand, heroic narrative, but the elegiac tone with which she laments the changes that have taken place in India since her sojourn in the country also leaves the reader with a potent sense that Eden is about to relate a story set in time now lost to history.

More than just a “critique of Victorian imperial modernity,” which Mukherjee identifies as a prevailing theme in Eden’s narrative, I would argue that *Up the Country* is a text that is conscious of its creation within an important historical moment and utilises that fact as a commercial selling point.⁴³⁶ As Poon notes, “the impact of Victorian gender ideology on colonial knowledge production meant that the female writing subject was typically forced to legitimise her position by asserting production of novel or more acceptably feminine forms of knowledge.”⁴³⁷ Included within these socially acceptable forms were written accounts of zenanas or female quarters that male travellers would not have access to, and in fact Raza points out that “the ability of British women to penetrate the purdah and reveal the truth of what lay behind was a selling point for several authors.”⁴³⁸ Fanny Parks’ subtitling of her *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the*

⁴³⁶ See Mukherjee, “Touring the Deadlands,” 36-37.

⁴³⁷ Poon, “Seeing Double,” 454.

⁴³⁸ Raza, *In Their Own Words*, 6.

Picturesque with the added note *With Observations of Life in the Zenana*, serves as one such example.⁴³⁹

Eden, however, concentrates instead on the masculine privileges she was able to indulge in, such as being privy to the social and political interactions between the British and the native rulers, as well as being the Governor-General's chief confidant(e). Thus, when she writes that "the splendour of a Governor-General's progress is at an end" (*UC*, xxi) and that "these contrasts of public grandeur and private discomfort will probably be seen no more, on a scale of such magnitude" (*UC*, xxii), she reinforces the idea that her journey was one of the last of its kind, and that therefore her narrative is one that needs to be passed on for posterity. By advertising to readers that more than a factual correspondence, hers is a story of a place (and people) now forever lost, Eden not only adds aesthetic weight to the tale her letters will tell but also justifies the delayed publication of her edited text.

The impression that *Up the Country* was a deliberately crafted artistic product packaged for a reading public becomes more evident if we consider Eden's admission that "[m]any passages [...] have of course been omitted," while simultaneously reassuring the reader that "not a word has been added to descriptions which have little merit" (*UC*, xxi). In other parts of the text, she also deliberately tries to make up for missing sections by replacing them with other pieces of correspondence, explaining, for example, that "(a) portion of the Journal being lost, these letters of the same date are here inserted, to carry on the narrative"

⁴³⁹ Raza, *In Their Own Words*, 6.

(UC, 153). While these disruptions of narrative unity do occasionally break the aesthetic flow of *Up the Country*, they nevertheless serve to call attention to Eden's editorial processes and by extension, the self-consciously constructed nature of the text.

More than just editing after the fact, Eden also displays a level of authorial awareness in the process of writing her journals. While we cannot be certain if she had already anticipated publishing her letters at the point at which she was writing them, her conscious musings on her writing style can nevertheless be seen in the following comments:

My Journal must be so very dull here, that I am thinking of converting it into a weekly paper. [...] I was thinking how much journals at home are filled with clever remarks, or curious facts, or even good jokes, but here it is utterly impossible to write down anything beyond comments on the weather. [...] I see in Sir James Mackintosh's *Life*, which I am just finishing for the third time, that, in his Indian journal, there is nothing but longings after home, and the workings of his own brain, and remarks on books; whereas in his English and Paris journals, there are anecdotes and witticisms of other people, and a little mental friction going on (UC, 144).

Interestingly, she compares her journal to one that has already been published, thus suggesting that the thought of publishing her own writings may have crossed her mind. Alternatively, she may have simply recognised the possibility that her journals may be read by a wider audience at a later stage or even published posthumously, like Jonathan Swift's *The Journal to Stella* (1766), which she hyperbolically claims to have read "for the 180th time" (UC, 314) and which she admits to giving her inspiration to continue writing in her own journal at a later stage in her journey.

While we can only speculate about Eden's original intentions towards publication, what is made clear from her writing is an authorial awareness of style and reception. This consciousness could be attributed to the fact that Eden had already written her first novel even before arriving in India. As Pam Perkins notes, *The Semi-Attached Couple*, although officially published in 1860, had in fact been originally written shortly before 1829.⁴⁴⁰ Given this knowledge, Eden's awareness of textual stylistics is unsurprising, as she had already made her own foray into the world of aesthetic production.

***Up the Country* and aesthetic conventions**

At the heart of it all, *Up the Country* is a travel text and Eden is mindful of her place within an established lineage of travel accounts by women writers and the conventions of that specific subgenre. As Jana Nittel highlights in relation to women's travel writings about the East, "[d]espite a personal self-awareness which enabled women to put thoughts into writing, there still reigned a feeling of intrusion into the male sphere which demanded apology."⁴⁴¹ In accordance to the contemporary conventions of female travel writing, and as a stylistic nod to the writers that have come before her, Eden begins her dedication with a typically self-effacing comment addressed to her nephew—"I know no one but yourself who can now take any lively interest in these Letters" (*UC*, xxi). Postans also makes a similar gesture when she writes in her dedication to John Fitzgibbon, the late-Governor of

⁴⁴⁰ Pam Perkins, "Eden, Emily (1797–1869)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2117/view/article/8449>, accessed 14 Jan 2013].

⁴⁴¹ Jana Nittel, *Wondrous Magic: Images of the Orient in 18th and 19th centuries' British women Travel Writing* (Glienicke, Berlin: Galda & Wilch Verlag, 2001), 29.

Bombay—and by extension to the general reader of *Cutch* as well—that it is her “anxious hope, therefore, that, should the ensuing pages be found deficient in actual importance, they may offer something for the amusement for a few leisure hours” (*Cutch*, vi). Likewise, Fanny Parks pre-empted any possible criticism against her seeming to have “dwelt too much on [her]self, [her] own thoughts, feelings and adventures,” with the apologia that her journal had been written “for the affectionate eye of her to whom nothing could be so gratifying as the slightest incident connected with her beloved and absent child” (*Wanderings of a Pilgrim*).

In a similar vein, Eden also explains that many parts of her diary had been “written solely for the amusement of [her] family,” (*UC*, xxi) thus insulating her text from censure by asserting its more intimate nature. However, the impression that her utilisation of such self-effacing statements was merely formulaic is given by the fact that she almost immediately undermines them. As discussed above, she not only deliberately chooses to publish her text (despite claiming to not have faith in its value) but she also goes on to present her journey as a heroic one.

Eden’s awareness of aesthetic conventions was not only restricted to the stylistics of published travel writing, but also applied to her consciousness of the cultural framework in which she would have been expected to view and verbally represent these Indian scenes to others. As discussed in Chapter 2, *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* had one of the most prominent influences on the image of India in the eyes of the British public, with many travellers treating this text as a pseudo guidebook for their own Eastern explorations. Oriental tales like Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh* enjoyed a similar shaping influence and Eden, following in the

footsteps of these other observers of the East, compares scenes she witnesses with images drawn from these two texts; the palace of the king of Lucknow was “quite as *Arabian-Nightish* as I meant it to be” (UC, 61), his garden was like “Zobeide[’s] [...] ‘garden of delights,’” (UC, 62) and the emerald parting gift they presented to Runjeet Singh was akin to “the fruit in Aladdin’s garden”(UC, 178). She also (hyperbolically) claims to have identified “the real Shalimar where Lalla Rookh recognised Feramorz” (UC, 223). Other recognisable Oriental literary references include her quotation from James Morier’s oriental novel *Zohrab the Hostage* published in 1832, just a few years prior to her arrival in India.⁴⁴²

While it is arguable that these literary allusions could have been used by Eden simply as a matter of authorial convention, or as an attempt to create audience rapport by drawing upon her readers’ shared cultural expectations, it is her references to less commonly cited literary texts that betray her own particular artistic concerns and the ways in which aesthetics becomes a tool which allows her to not only convey her experiences to her readers, but to also make sense of them for her own benefit. Eager to keep abreast with the aesthetic developments in England, Eden repeatedly expresses her gratitude upon receiving copies of the latest literary products from home, however outdated they may be as a result of shipping delays (“I am so obliged to you for these extracts from Charles Lamb. I had seen that about the two hemispheres in some newspaper, and have been longing for the book ever since” [UC, 63]). She even goes as far as to advocate for pirated editions so long as they allow her to satiate her literary desires:

⁴⁴² See Eden, *Up the Country*, 23.

We had an arrival two days ago of a box of new books; that is, new to us. [...] To think of our only having just received in this legal, direct manner, the eighteenth number of *Pickwick*! We finished it six months ago, because it was printed and reprinted at Calcutta from overland copies. [...] what should we have done, if we had waited for the lawful supply, to know *Pickwick's* end? I see you making a great fuss about copyrights, &c., which I cannot understand, as we see it only by bits and scraps; but I beg to announce that I am entirely for piracy and surreptitious and cheap editions, and an early American copy of an English novel for three rupees, instead of a late English one at twenty-two shillings (*UC*, 167-168).

More than just a means of passing the time, however, these texts function as ways in which this displaced traveller is able to maintain a connection with her homeland. By discussing their literary merits with her sister and recounting some of her favourite sections, she is able to connect with her at the level of a shared reading experience, as illustrated in the two passages below:

I am glad that in your last letter you deigned for once to comment on the 'Pickwick Papers.' I collected all the stray numbers, and began reading them straight through to-day, because hitherto I have never had time to make out exactly what they were about delightful as they were. I wish you would read over again that account of Winkle and the horse which will not go on—'Poor fellow! Good old horse!'—and *Pickwick* saying, 'It is like a dream, a horrid dream, to go about all day with a horrid horse that one cannot get rid of.' The book makes me laugh till I cry, when I am sitting quite by myself (*UC*, 5-6).

It is odd how long you were writing about *Pickwick*, and yet I felt all the time, though we are no judges of fun in this place, that it must be everywhere the cleverest thing that has appeared in our time. I had laughed twenty times at that book. Then there is always a quotation to be had from *Pickwick* for everything that occurs everywhere (*UC*, 63-64).

The final lines of each passage also suggest two other reasons for Eden's attachment to her books. The first is a poignant one, implying that these written texts occasionally served as surrogates for the human companionship she so desperately yearns for. Dislocated from her home and her familiar networks of friends and family, reading her books when she is alone has become a substitute avenue for emotional exchange and human connection. In fact, Eden directly

expresses this sentiment when she tells her sister that reading Charles Lamb's *Life and Letters* "sometimes does almost as well as you to talk with for five minutes" and that the text appeals to her because "there are such good little bits of real feeling" (UC, 107).

This substitutory relationship of a written text in lieu of human companionship also applies to Eden's own journal as she describes the process of writing as a comforting release: "When I am tired, or tented, or hot, or cold, and generally when I am in India, I have at least the comfort of always sitting down to tell you all about it" (UC, 23); "Do you like writing to me? I hate writing in general, but these long letters to you are the comfort of my existence" (UC, 67). Significantly, as comforting as it may have been to receive news from home, Eden stresses that it was the act of *writing* that gives her solace—considering the copious letters she wrote, along with the two fictional texts she authored, her claim that she "hate[d] writing" could be taken as mere authorial posturing—thus giving weight to the argument that it is by forming an aesthetic response that she comes to terms with her position in India. Writing as a form of artistic creation becomes a way for Eden to negotiate with her surroundings and her experiences.

Indeed, as the final line in the second passage (quoted above) indicates ("there is always a quotation to be had from Pickwick for everything that occurs everywhere"), the ability to conceptualise one's environment through aesthetic engagement is vital to Eden. Upon witnessing a native cavalry fighting display, she muses that "Walter Scott would have made some fine chapters out of them," and when lamenting her uncomfortable journey to Lucknow, she references another

popular author, Frances (Fanny) Burney, when she writes that “the road was so awfully bad, we were shaken about the carriage most uncomfortably and covered with dust. I felt so like Madame Duval in *Evelina*, after the captains had shaken her and rolled her in the ditch” (*UC*, 57-58). Her sensitivity to aesthetic influences is similarly displayed in her desire to redesign her tent— she yearned to paint the acorn and oak leaf designs out of its lining because the “occasional mistake in the pattern [...] distracts [her]” and because she sees “such an association of dust and bore and bad health with those acorns” (*UC*, 165).

Along with purely textual references like the allusions to Walter Scott and Frances Burney, Eden also makes numerous remarks on the theatrical nature of scenes she either witnesses or partakes in. Immediately after commenting on how Scott would have written about the cavalry display she was present at, she adds that “Astley would hang himself from the total impossibility of dressing and acting like them” (*UC*, 72). A similar remark was made in relation to Runjeet Singh’s followers: “I really never saw so dazzling a sight. Three or four Sikhs would look like Astley’s broke loose, but this immense body of them saves their splendour from being melodramatic” (*UC*, 205-206).⁴⁴³ Based on the contexts of these quotations, it is likely that Eden was referring to John Conway Philip Astley (1768–1821), the son of equestrian performer and circus owner, Philip Astley (1742-1814), who carried on his father’s legacy. Astley (the Elder) established Astley’s Amphitheatre, which showcased equestrian circus performances, while John played a significant

⁴⁴³ For the purposes of consistency, I use Eden’s spelling of the Maharaja’s name (Runjeet Singh) as opposed to the historically correct spelling (Ranjit Singh).

role in the development of the hippodrama, or horse drama, a theatrical show that combined spectacular equestrian performances with theatrical melodrama.⁴⁴⁴

Matthew Lewis' *Timour the Tartar* was one such hippodrama and its influence on Eden's conception of India is evinced by her repeated allusions to it.⁴⁴⁵ The first reference occurs in the context of her visit to the Rajah of Benares' country house, the second is made in relation to her encounter with a native officer, and the third can be found in her description of her visit to the ruined city of Delhi. Aside from the general influence that the play (and other similar Oriental melodramas) had on the popular image of India amongst the British audiences (see Chapter 2), Eden's engagement with theatrical aesthetics in each of these episodes reveals much about her own particular conceptualisations of her Indian experiences. I cite all three examples here for ease of comparison:

The Rajah met us at the ghaut, and we were all carried off to the elephants, and got on them to go and see his garden, though it was nearly dusk. But the first sight was very striking.

Eighteen elephants and crowds of attendants, and then crowds as far as we would see of natives, going on 'Wah! Wah! Hi Lord Sahib.' We rode about till it was quite dark, and then the rajah proposed we should return; and when we came to the turn of the road, the whole of the village and his castle, which is an enormous building, was illuminated. It was the largest illumination I ever saw. We went on the elephants through the great gateway, in a *Timour the Tartar* fashion, into the court. Such torches and spearmen and drums and crowds, like a melodrama magnified by a solar microscope; it was the sort of scene where Ellen Tree would have snatched up a doll from under Farley's sword, and said, 'My boy, my boy, my rescued Agib!' or words to that effect, while the curtain fell slowly (*UC*, 27-28).

⁴⁴⁴ Marius Kwint, "Astley, Philip (1742–1814)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/821>, accessed 7 June 2015].

⁴⁴⁵ See Daniel O'Quinn, "Torrents, flames and the education of desire: Battling Hindu Superstition on the London Stage," in *Romantic Representations of British India*, ed. Michael J. Franklin (London: Routledge, 2006), 65-83.

We have had a beautiful subject for drawing the last two days. A troop of irregular horse joined us at Futtehghur. The officer, a Russaldar—a sort of sergeant, I believe – wears a most picturesque dress, and has the air of Timour the Tartar, with a touch of Alexander the Great—and he comes and sits for his picture with great patience. All these irregular troops are like parts of a melodrama. They go about curvetting and spearing, and dress themselves fancifully, and they are the most courteous-mannered natives (*UC*, 71).

They followed us into the court of the temple, which is surmounted by an open arched gallery, and through every arch there was a view of some fine ruins, or of some part of the King of Delhi's palace, which is an immense structure two miles round, all built of deep red stone, with buttresses and battlements, and look like an exaggerated scene of Timour the Tartar, and as if little Agib was to be thrown instantly from the highest tower, and Fatima to be constantly wringing her hands from the top of the battlements (*UC*, 95).

In the first passage, Eden begins by occupying the position of a spectator, an outsider marvelling at the images before her (“the first sight was very striking,” “crowds as far as we would see,” “It was the largest illumination I ever saw”) but midway, her perception shifts as she recognises herself as a participant within this visual spectacle. What begins as a stereotypical image of Indian rulers bedecked with finery and possessing a proclivity towards pomp and pageantry now becomes complicated when the roles are blended and it is not just the native ruler, but also the British delegates themselves who take on the collective role of the conquering Eastern potentate entering the city in a show of triumph. Now both sides—British and Indian—appear to be performing for the crowd.

Significantly, Eden also refers to the “crowd” three times in this description, a gesture that suggests that she was not just overwhelmed but quite possibly also slightly uneasy about the whole situation. Very quickly however, this discomfort is sublimated by her forceful reclamation of the role of spectator as she projects an image from *Timour the Tartar* onto the scene. Now it is no longer her, but the

actors Ellen Tree and (Charles) Farley who are performing as they read their lines and interact with a doll in place of a human child, and as the “curtain [falls] slowly,” Eden is safely on the audience side of the proscenium arch.

In the second passage, we see the concept of the Picturesque being introduced as a direct textual link is created between Eden’s notions of theatricality and that of the Picturesque. Turning back to our discussion of the Picturesque in Chapters 1 and 2, we will recall that performativity was a key feature in the formation of the Indian Picturesque, both in terms of aesthetic representation as well as in relation to the exercise of British governance. In this instance, Eden describes the Russaldar officer she draws as being both “picturesque” and invoking a melodramatic character, thus suggesting her recognition that the qualities of “picturesque-ness” and theatricality are related. Like the previous passage, this second one also showcases Eden partaking in a certain level of aesthetic displacement in the face of a potentially uncomfortable situation. Despite the sublimated violence in the native troops’ martial exercises, Eden describes their “curvetting and spearing” as mere performances and she reassures her reader that they were really “the most courteous-mannered natives” as opposed to a potential threat to her safety.

A similar strategy of aesthetic displacement is being employed in the third passage whereby Eden, prompted by the ruins she sees, immediately calls to mind a scene from *Timour the Tartar*. The fact that she chooses to invoke such a violent and distressing scene suggests, however, that there is something about the ruinous image which troubles her. More than simply an aesthetic backdrop, the ruins

appear to trigger a problematic psychic reaction from Eden, and one which she tries to resolve by attempting to (re)contain them within the bounds of aesthetic appreciation—in this case, by projecting on them a clearly “exaggerated scene” which she is able to dissociate from by virtue of its melodrama. This discomfort in the face of ruination is a reaction that recurs repeatedly in Eden’s writing, and which I return to in the final section of the chapter where I discuss Eden’s attempts at Picturesque displacement to counter her sense of unease.

Having thus far established the importance of artistic philosophy to Eden’s conceptualisations of and reactions to India, the rest of this chapter will be concerned with Eden’s engagement with the Picturesque as a specific aesthetic category. As the examples above have demonstrated, Eden’s conception of the Picturesque was closely associated with her ideas of theatricality and the aesthetics of performance. In consequence, my subsequent discussion of the Picturesque in Eden’s works will also call attention to the (theatrical) aesthetics of performativity, spatial awareness, and viewing perspective. I then conclude my chapter by examining how Eden’s writings test the effectiveness of the Picturesque as a means of aesthetic displacement.

Eden and the Picturesque

In the previous chapter, I discuss how Marianne Postans manoeuvres between the “picturesque modality” as it was commonly associated with anti-utilitarianism and gendered segregation of aesthetic practice, and her own desire to participate in Anglo-Indian discourse by offering her readers instrumental knowledge. I suggest

that by finding a midway between the two, Postans effectively embraces the political implications of the Picturesque—implications which I have engaged with in Chapter 1 and further developed in relation to the British administration of India in Chapter 2. Emily Eden, however, cuts a markedly different figure, as unlike Postans, she is reluctant to partake in Anglo-Indian politics despite being embroiled in it by virtue of her position in the Governor-General's official party. Where Postans eagerly seeks to augment her knowledge of native culture and Indian life, Eden, with a tinge of her characteristic irony, proudly states that she “never ask[s] questions” because she “hate[s] information” (UC, 62). In this way, Eden's engagement with India bears a level of similarity to that of Mundy as the latter, despite also travelling in an official capacity, appears relatively disinterested in accumulating “useful” information on Indian culture and practices.

Similarly, in contrast to Postans' zeal to educate her British readers on Indian culture, believing that it was her public duty to do so, Eden, as we have already seen, uses her letter writing for more personal motives. When she does provide a brief description of native mannerisms, she often does so flippantly, with remarks such as “These little traits are to give you an insight into the manners and customs of the East, and to open and improve your mind, &c” (UC, 19)—indicating that she was less concerned with contributing to the field of (textual) Anglo-Indian knowledge as she was with maintaining a connection with her homeland by way of communicating her experiences.

However, what she *does* seem to be concerned with relaying are her artistic impressions. Upon first experiencing a *nautch* dance, Eden is quick to pass

judgement on their aesthetic attributes and is eager to convey that image to her sister back home: “Most of them were ugly, but one was I think the prettiest creature I ever saw, and the most graceful. If I have time, I will send a little coloured sketch of her, just to show the effect of her dress” (UC, 28). Likewise, she frets about her drawing paper spoiling because that would prevent her from “show[ing] what an Indian woman is like” (UC, 300).

Furthermore, not only does she desire to convey these artistic impressions to her reader(s) back in England, she is also keen on capturing them for their own sake. She repeatedly expresses her frustration when her party is forced to travel quickly through areas that she would otherwise have liked to sketch, and occasionally laments that there was no professional artist around to capture certain images for posterity. Remarking on the apparel worn by Runjeet Singh’s Sikh deputation, for example, she cries, “Their dresses were beautiful, particularly the *squatting* group in the centre, and it is a great pity there was no painter here” (UC, 132).

In this area, the aesthetics of the Picturesque, as it functions as a representational strategy, shows itself to be influential. Very early on in her text, for example, Eden enthusiastically proclaims that she means “the ‘moral’ of [her] Indian experience to be, that it is the most picturesque population, with the ugliest scenery, that was ever put together” (UC, 12). While the second part of this statement can be seen as slightly facetious given that Eden had already shown herself to be attracted to certain landscape features, and correspondingly seeks to capture them in drawing, her claim that her focus lies on the *people* of India can

be supported by the interest she displays in the native people and the often detailed and sympathetic descriptions she gives of them.

While at times she expresses her dissatisfaction with the natives, her complaints appear to stem mainly from her homesickness and her frustrations at having to be constantly on the move. However, when she is unburdened and in a more positive mood, she is much more forgiving of the inconveniences she experiences and it is on these occasions that her sympathies with the people of India are displayed. Before she encounters her tents for the first time (and is consequently dismayed by their appearance), her spirits are still high and she is full of praise for the natives she encounters. Dismissing her travelling companions' concerns about their safety, she and her brother visit a horse fair at "Bullhga" where she is enchanted by the native costumes, insists that she "never saw such a civil, submissive set of people," and proclaims that "[t]hey are civil creatures, and I am very fond of the natives" (*UC*, 18). She even jokes with her sister about the aesthetic superiority of Indian children, saying "I wish you would have one little brown baby for a change; they are so much prettier than white children" (*UC*, 11). It is only after their march has properly begun, and time and exhaustion have taken their toll, that she begins to project her frustrations on the natives. Understandably homesick on Christmas Day, for example, she laments her situation in the following passage:

I don't know why, but I am particularly Indianly low to-day. There is such a horrid mix of sights and sounds for Christmas. The servants have hung garlands at the doors of our tents and (which is very wrong) my soul recoiled when they all assembled, and in their patois wished us, I supposed, a happy Christmas.

Somehow a detestation of the Hindustani language sounding all round us, came over me in a very inexplicable manner (*UC*, 53-54).

When she is not “Indianly low”, however, she marvels at the “picturesque” appearance of some of the people she encounters; she admires the appearance of the Russaldar officer (see above) and even admits an attraction to the Rajah of Nahun: “He is one of the best-looking people I have seen, and is a Rajpoot chief, and rides, and hunts, and shoots, and is active [...] and if the rajah fancied an English ranee, I know somebody who would be very happy to listen to his proposals” (*UC*, 119).

However, what is perhaps most reflective of the artistic draw she feels towards the Indian people is that her first “Indian travel” text to be published was not only a visual representation of her journey, but more specifically, one which focused on the Indian *people* as opposed to the landscape. Published in 1844, just two years after her return to England and two decades before the publication of *Up the Country*, Eden’s *Portraits of the Princes and People of India* offers not only a striking example of her artistic talents, but also a glimpse into her attitudes towards the Indian personages she encounters, particularly when considered alongside the remarks she offers in *Up the Country*.

In its presentation of a series of images of native “types” dressed in their local costume, Eden’s *Portraits* resembles the ethnographic studies made popular by the publications of Balthazar Solvyns and Edward Orme. What sets her *Portraits* apart, however, is that many of her subjects were important members of the Indian political elite and who would therefore not have been accessible to the common British viewer. It is this feature of her text which highlights the uniquely political

nature of Eden's experiences, as it was her position within her brother's diplomatic party that allowed her access to these drawing subjects.

While many of the textual descriptions in the work serve to directly emphasise the political relationship between the Indians and the British, the publication refrains from being an overtly political one because of Eden's sympathetic treatment of her subjects. Likewise, her usage of Picturesque artistic distancing in these images falls midway between the intimacy of Solvyns and the total detachment of Orme. Like Solvyns, Eden presents her subjects with a contextual background and setting. However, her usage of light and shade succeeds in framing her main subjects of focus by directing the viewer's eye to them. A literal frame is even employed in the title page where a lattice border encloses the image of the son of the Nawab of Bandar (Figure 42). Commenting on this, Romita Ray observes that

[t]raditional portraiture fixes a person within a painting by providing clues to his/her place in society. The lattice border encircling Banda's heir takes this concept even further by framing the colonial native. It compels the viewer to focus entirely on the image that leaps out of the centre of the page, thereby enabling a British spectator to let his/her eye roam over the figure resplendent in opulent regalia. The sitter, however, can only be looked at, but cannot look back.⁴⁴⁶

Ray also reminds us that by choosing what, or in this case, *who* to draw, and essentially deciding who makes for "a good picture" (Eden remarks, for example, that Shere Singh "made a very good picture" [UC, 223]), Eden "reveals to what

⁴⁴⁶ Ray, "The Memsahib's Brush," 99.

extent the Picturesque—originally a landscape aesthetic—came to be applied to the human exterior of the Indian subcontinent.”⁴⁴⁷

However, despite the strong Picturesque presence in Eden’s use of framing and subject choice, the necessary level of artistic distancing is sometimes undercut by the textual descriptions which accompany the portraits. A case in point would be Eden’s textual and visual representation of the young Purtab Singh. A photographic reproduction of the image is given in Figure 43 and the accompanying description is transcribed below:

Purtab Singh was a boy of ten or twelve years old, of remarkably fine spirit and promise, with large expressive eyes, and manners which could be perfectly composed and dignified, or boyish and playful, at will. He was a great favourite with the whole of the Governor General’s party; and with them, a sincere personal regret for his untimely end must be mingled with the horror which the circumstances of his death must universally excite (*Portraits*, “Purtab Singh”, No. 19).

The horrific circumstances which Eden refers to here is the beheading of the young prince after his father, the Maharaja Shere Singh, was betrayed and brutally murdered by contenders to the throne.⁴⁴⁸ Upon reading this descriptive note, the sketch of the boy whose fragile frame barely fills the chair he is seated on is transformed from a mere ethnographic image of a young Indian aristocrat into one that is filled with poignancy.

This effect is further intensified when we consider the passages in which Eden describes the child sitting for his portrait in *Up the Country*:

We had little Pertâb to sketch this morning, and he was very pleasant. I asked him to fix his eyes on Captain M., who was acting interpreter. After

⁴⁴⁷ Ray, “The Memsahib’s Brush,” 99.

⁴⁴⁸ See Harbans Singh, *The Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, Vol. IV (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1998), 109-112.

a time he began to fidget, and his stern old Sikh tutor (you don't want a Sikh tutor for your boys by chance? —if so, I can safely recommend this man for a remarkably good manner of teaching, besides having a beard half a yard long) reproved him for it. Pertâb declared he could not help it, — he was told to fix his eyes on M., and 'this is the way he moves his head,'—and then mimicked M. turning from one to the other and interpreting, in such a funny little way. We gave him a diamond ring, which seemed to delight him (*UC*, 217).

This light-hearted, comic episode not only reasserts the young prince's childlike nature but also encourages feelings of parental sympathies in the adult reader, particularly in the light of Eden's address to her own sister's maternal concerns. Her fondness for the young boy is also evident in how she constantly refers to him (in *Up the Country*) in endearing terms and indulges his playfulness. Having formed such a bond with the child, it is unsurprising that Eden would express that affection in her visual representation of him.

Subtler but no less moving, is Eden's treatment of the image of Runjeet Singh, whom she praises for his quiet manners and simplicity of dress in comparison to the ostentatious attire of the other chiefs and courtiers who surround him. Unlike her representations of the other Indian rulers whom she had painted amongst their royal trappings, Eden's portrait of Runjeet captures him in a moment of quiet and contemplative regality, looking out at what could imaginably have been the vista of his kingdom (see Figure 44).

Her respect and admiration for the sovereign is also apparent in her description of his one functioning eye "which [though] age, and a hard life of exposure and excesses, had dimmed at the period now spoken of [...] still retained the traces of the vigour and penetration for which he was remarkable" (*Portraits*, "The Late Maha Raja Runjeet Singh", No. 13). Moreover, rather than presenting the

Sikh ruler as simply a picturesque object devoid of an individual personality and subjectivity, Eden puts forth instead an example of the peculiarity of his character:

He had a curious and constant trick, while sitting and engaged in conversation, of raising one of his legs under him on the chair, which he used in compliance with the customs of his European visitors, and then pulling off the stocking from that one foot (*Portraits*, "The Late Maha Raja Runjeet Singh", No. 13).

By offering her readers this rather unusual, though not off-putting detail, Eden constructs a compassionate image of the Sikh ruler and inadvertently encourages her readers to view him in a similarly sympathetic manner. Like her bond with the young Purtab, Eden's fondness for Runjeet Singh is what also prevents her from adopting the artistic distance necessary for an ethnographer and a Picturesque artist.

Significantly, Ranjit's image is also the only portrait to be given in profile, a circumstance likely explainable by the fact that unlike the other Indian aristocrats, the Sikh ruler never offered Eden a private audience to construct his portrait. Instead, she sketches him while she is present at a review of the Sikh troops and her short description of the episode, given below, reveals a tension between Eden's artistic and political concerns:

The review was picturesque, but rather tiresome; however, I did not much care, for I changed places with E., and got a quiet corner from which I could sketch Runjeet. I was on his blind side, but they said he found it out, and begged I might not to be interrupted (*UC*, 228).

Right from the opening of the passage we see a distinction being drawn between Eden's aesthetic interests and her attitudes towards the political role she is forced to play. While she finds the ceremonial event "tiresome," —a sentiment

similarly expressed by Mundy when he was first given an audience with the Emperor of Delhi (“The ceremony, though interesting and novel, was irksome and fatiguing” [*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1. 84])—she is nonetheless able to appreciate it for its aesthetic appeal and chooses to occupy herself in an artistic manner.

In fact, *Up the Country* is filled with numerous instances in which Eden deliberately removes herself from official situations, preferring to partake in an aesthetic pursuit instead. At the durbar organised to greet the Prince of Lucknow, for example, she remarks that it was “tedious” but concedes that “it was a fine sight” (*UC*, 55). She then promptly explains how she “got Mr. D to change places with [her], and made an excellent sketch of this immensely fat prince with his pearls, and emeralds and gold” (*UC*, 55). In a similar manner, she recounts a comic incident in which ceremonial protocols threatened to intrude upon her artistic pursuits:

F. and I went to sketch in the gardens in the afternoon. They are a thick grove of orange and limes, so that they are cool at all times. G. settled that he would go too and take a quiet walk and look about him, with only an aide-de-camp. Deluded creature! Inexperienced traveller! The instant he got on his elephant, bang went a gun. Shere Singh and Lehna Singh with their trains appeared, a troop of Sikhs wheeled up and began playing “God save the Queen,” with every other bar left out, which makes rather a pretty air. Mr. C was sent for to interpret. His lordship went on to the gardens, where we saw him disembark, and a train of devoted gardeners met him with baskets of fruit. We made him a sign not to come and interrupt our sketching, but from the opposite walk there debouched Kurruck Singh, and Ajeet Singh, and the old fakeer, sent by Runjeet to see that all was right. The brothers Kurruck and Shere don’t speak, and G. said it was horrible to see the agitation with which Shere Singh clutched hold of him, and Kurruck laid hold of the other hand, and they handed him along towards us, oversetting our tonjauns, and utterly discomposing our perspective (*UC*, 223-224).

Here, as Angelia Poon has observed, “Eden adopts an ironic tone of mock distress to signify how she, her brother and her sister are much put upon in this

land of perpetual cultural misreading, where the Indians “discompose” their “perspective” in more ways than one.”⁴⁴⁹ While Poon’s argument ultimately focuses on the difference between British and Indian identities, or what she terms as “the former’s desire for unobtrusiveness versus the latter’s susceptibility to outer show and spectacle,” her statement inadvertently draws attention to Eden’s familiarity with the language of art and the Picturesque concerns of perspective and composition. In fact, more than simply functioning as guiding rules for her visual representations of India, Eden’s aesthetic understanding of perspective and composition is what allows her to interpret social and political situations in a more acute manner.

As an artist, Eden is understandably steadfast about the importance of perspective and composition to the creation of works of art. She observes that the Delhi miniaturist working from her sketches “knows no perspective, so he can only copy” (*UC*, 264) and is perplexed that the native painters “put full eyes into a profile, and give hardly any shade” (*UC*, 228). As a traveller however, her consciousness of these concepts allows her to take a step back and view her experiences through the eyes of those around her. Reflecting on how their march must appear to the natives, Eden declares:

We feel so certain that people who live in houses, and get up by a fire at a reasonable hour and then go quietly to breakfast, would think us raving mad, if they saw nine Europeans of steady age and respectable habits, going galloping every morning at sunrise over a sandy plain, followed by quantities of black horsemen, and then by ten miles of beasts of burden carrying things which, after all, will not make the nine madmen even decently comfortable (*UC*, 248).

⁴⁴⁹ Poon, “Seeing Double,” 485.

Considering that the whole purpose of the march was to impress the natives with a sense of British grandeur, Eden's ability to not only recognise but to admit the "extraordinary folly" (ibid) of the whole situation speaks to her level of introspection and candidness. Likewise, when reflecting on their time amongst the Anglo-Indian society in Calcutta, she shrewdly remarks that they were simply "an amusement to [the society]. They liked our balls and parties, and whatever we did or said was the subject of an anecdote; and if we said or did nothing they invented something for us and it served all to wonder at" (UC, 2-3).

While she may not always be at ease with it, Eden is nevertheless mindful of the need to keep up appearances. She dutifully takes up her place at the official ceremonies and, as critics have noted, faithfully defends her brother's political standing. Poon argues that Eden is noticeably silent about the disastrous consequences of Lord Auckland's role in provoking the First Afghan War and points out that Eden instead claims that "his government here has hitherto been singularly prosperous" (UC, 337).⁴⁵⁰ However, Elizabeth Claridge contends that at the time at which Eden made that comment she had no reason for believing otherwise as the insurrection in Kabul had only begun later in 1841.⁴⁵¹

While the period of time covered by the journals Eden published in *Up the Country* end in March 1840 upon her return to Calcutta, the letters that were published in the later collection, *Letters from India*, reveal more about Eden's thoughts concerning the conflict in Afghanistan. Here we see that despite

⁴⁵⁰ Poon, "Seeing Double," 460.

⁴⁵¹ See Elizabeth Claridge, Introduction to *Up the Country* (London: Virago, 1997), xviii.

commenting in these letters on the atrocities being committed, she is still careful to avoid implicating her brother, stating only that he was “very much harassed by anxiety for the fate of all there” (*Letters*, Vol. 2, 281).⁴⁵² Moreover, she insists that the insurrection “could not have been foreseen” (*ibid*, 268) and blames it on “local mismanagement” (*Letters*, Vol. 2, 297). She even takes pains to maintain that George still enjoyed the support of the general public despite the situation in Kabul:

At a time when we have been refusing all parting fetes on account of that Cabul calamity, there never was anything like the enthusiasm for him at the public meetings which have been held. At this moment the whole court is filled with the carriages of people coming up with the address. The lowest as well as the highest are here, pouring in subscriptions for his statue (*Letters*, Vol. 2, 297).

In this situation, Eden’s defence of her brother, though slightly oblique, calls to mind the silences and deliberate misrepresentation practiced by William Hodges when he was witness to the military confrontation between Warren Hastings and Chait Singh. There, as discussed in Chapter 2, Hodges deliberately employs the Picturesque as a political tool with which to shield the violence of his patron’s military campaign and present an image of a harmonious India under Hastings’ leadership. Likewise, Captain Mundy, despite the hints at his own misgivings regarding the practices of the British administration, ultimately makes use of the Picturesque rhetoric of ruins to present the British as the necessary ‘saviours’ of India and its people.

⁴⁵² All citations refer to Emily Eden, *Letters from India*, Ed. by Eleanor Eden (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1872).

In a similar way, Eden also employs the screening power of the Picturesque at the earlier stages of the British campaign against Dost Muhammad Khan. After referring her sister to “Sir A. Burnes’s [sic] letters,” where she might find “a picturesque description of the business” (*UC*, 290), Eden then transcribes another account written by her brother’s Political Secretary, William Macnaghten. Like Hodges’ illustrations, this exaggerated and unquestionably skewed report is dutifully filled with patriotism and replete with Arcadian images that suggest the British brought about this state of “paradise”:

The contrast is now great; the good things of this life are abundant: luxurious crops, which will be ready for the sickle in three or four weeks; extensive plains of green sward for the cattle; endless gardens and orchards; the rose-trees grow wild [...] rivulets flow through the valley; the birds are all song birds and the air rings with their tones (*UC*, 291-2).

However, despite these initial allusions to the Picturesque, the aesthetic category is notably absent from Eden’s descriptions after the insurrection has taken place. Instead, her writings reveal a genuine struggle to come to terms with the violence being committed, while still maintaining a level of political distance. As the next and final sections of the chapter illustrate, Eden’s attempts at Picturesque detachment often fail when she comes face to face with the marks of (or occasionally even the threat of) violence and destruction. It is on these occasions that she is forced to turn to alternative modes of representation by way of coping with the reality of the situation at hand.

Picturesque ruins and the Picturesque in ruins

In Chapter 2, I describe how the Picturesque engagement with ruins played an important role in framing India and thus supporting the British expansion. As I

explain, the melancholic feelings such ruins incite serve to show that the British respondents possessed strong aesthetic sensibilities and, by extension, were suitable for ruling over the supposedly vulgar native masses. Additionally, ruins were used to emphasise the cultural differences between Indians and the British, as well as symbols of India's past grandeur now lost forever. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, this Picturesque treatment of Indian ruins is best exemplified in the works of William Hodges, and is later also engaged with by Mundy—with the visual representations of the former playing a significant role in promoting the idea of India as a decayed and decaying civilisation, as well as attributing this destruction to the excessiveness of its former rulers. Underlying this was the implication that because ruin and decay were endemic to Indian culture, the British would serve as saviours of the land.

In some ways, Eden's Picturesque engagement with the Indian ruins is comparable to that of Hodges (and Mundy). Upon arriving in Delhi, for example, she marvels at the ruins of the city and states that it "has quite equalled [her] expectations" (*UC*, 94), thus suggesting that she already possessed a preconceived notion of how the city would look like—quite possibly as a result of having earlier encountered images like those by Hodges. Likewise, when she visits the palace of the Emperor (Eden refers to him as a "king") her remarks display a similar level of cultural conditioning as she combines the discourse of melancholy with Oriental referencing:

In the afternoon, we all [...] went to see the palace. It is a melancholy sight — so magnificent originally, and so poverty-stricken now. The marble hall where the king sits is still very beautiful, all inlaid with garlands and birds of precious stones, and the inscription on the cornice

is what Moore would like to see in the original: 'If there be an Elysium on earth, it is this, it is this!' (*UC*, 97)

Looking out of the lattices, she sees the Emperor of Delhi seated with his attendants and describes how “the garden is all gone to decay” while “the old king [...] had a forlorn and darkened look” (*UC*, 97). Nevertheless, she observes that “All our servants were in a state of profound veneration; the natives all look upon the King of Delhi as their rightful lord, and so he is, I suppose” (*UC*, 97).

Here, notwithstanding the fact that the image Eden paints of the decrepit ruler aligns with the Anglo-Indian rhetoric of a decaying India, her acquiescence with the Emperor being the “rightful lord” of the native people ends up subtly betraying her uncertainty about the authority of the British rule. This impression is then further compounded by Eden’s concluding remarks regarding the fate of Delhi under the British:

In some pavilions belonging to the princes there were such beautiful inlaid floors, any square of which would have made an enviable table for a palace in London, but the stones are constantly stolen; and in some of the finest baths there were dirty charpoys spread, with dirtier guards sleeping on them. In short, Delhi is a very suggestive and moralising place—such stupendous remains of power and wealth passed and passing away—and somehow I feel that we horrid English have just ‘gone and done it,’ merchandised it, revenueed it, and spoiled it all (*UC*, 97-98).

This passage is significant because while the earlier image of the aged emperor may have served to suggest the passing away of an archaic form of native rule and an inadvertent celebration of the British with their new modes of government, that suggestion is almost immediately undercut by Eden’s implication that the British too played a part in the destruction of Delhi, and with their attempts at modernisation no less. As Mukherjee rightly observes, “India is spoilt

because of the mercantile dynamics of colonial capital” and Eden is acutely aware of this.⁴⁵³

Significantly, Eden’s unease with the practices of the British administration in India appears to echo that of Mundy. Like Eden, Mundy also sympathised with the condition of the Emperor of Delhi, commenting that despite the tiresome nature of the ceremonies, “it is hard to grudge the poor old fallen king this little meed of mockery, or to deny the descendant of Tamurlane the shadow, whilst we possess the substance, of monarchy in India” (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 84). Likewise, upon meeting with the potentate a second time, Mundy claims that

when we salaamed a farewell to the venerable descendent of Timor, who cast upon our retiring forms a listless, melancholy gaze of dotage, I felt my heart swell with involuntary respect and pity for the fallen state of the imperial pensioner, who, to counterbalance the loss of the wealth and power of his ancestors, possesses one sole advantage, namely, a tolerable chance of dying a natural death (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 1, 366).

In both incidents, it is evident that Mundy recognises the extent of the British power in India and its concomitant (negative) effects on the native rulers of the country. Nonetheless, despite offering the occasional critical remark about the British administration, his writings largely reflect (at least overtly) a support of the work of the Company. In contrast, Eden, despite being reluctant to critique her brother’s imperial actions, is less reserved about expressing her concerns about the British administration as a whole.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵³ Mukherjee, “Touring the Deadlands,” 37.

⁴⁵⁴ It is interesting to consider that while on the one hand Eden’s critical reactions can be seen as being at odds with her privileged position within the British elite, at the same time, one could also attribute her willingness to express her opinions (however negatively they reflected her fellow Company officials) to the social security that that very same privileged position offers her.

Even Eden's dedication, written nearly three decades after the passage quoted above (beginning with "In some pavilions"), reflects this aversion to British modernity and points to her recognition of its disastrous effects. There she laments that India "has fallen under the curse of railroads" (*UC*, xxi) and ironically predicts that

[t]he Kootûb will probably become a Railway Station; the Taj will, of course, under the sway of an Agra Company (Limited, except for destruction), be bought up for a monster hotel: and the Governor-General will dwindle down into a first-class passenger with a carpet-bag (*UC*, xxii).

Summarising Eden's critical remarks on the subject, Mukherjee explains that the reader is given a "sense that Eden offers [...] the discomfoting notion of a Victorian modernity as 'limited in everything, but destruction', precisely because of its structural reliance on 'revenueing and merchandising', that is, on colonial capital that spreads insecurity everywhere."⁴⁵⁵ In his concentration on the relationship between Eden's writings and "the contours of later Victorian famine debates" (*ibid*) however, Mukherjee overlooks a crucial feature of Eden's engagement with India and its ruins: the realisation that the British were equally vulnerable to being "ruined" in India themselves, and therefore unequal to the task of being the 'saviours' they professed to be. While Mukherjee does acknowledge Eden's preoccupation with images of death and disease in her narrative as a whole, he reads these images as being merely symptomatic of the author's "burden of guilt."⁴⁵⁶ Jo Robertson however, identifies this death preoccupation as an anxiety

⁴⁵⁵ Mukherjee, "Touring the Deadlands," 37.

⁴⁵⁶ Mukherjee, "Touring the Deadlands," 36.

about the deterioration of imperial bodies, and by extension, the imperial body politic.⁴⁵⁷ As she summarises, “Eden’s writing casts India as a literal burial ground which figuratively comes to represent a site of premature death and imperial decay—a colonial mausoleum not for India “past glories” but for British ones.”⁴⁵⁸

Developing Mukherjee’s and Robertson’s arguments, I now propose reading the parallel images of the ruinous landscape and the ruination of the Anglo-Indian body in Eden’s text through the lens of the Picturesque, and suggest that this approach offers an added insight into Eden’s recognition of the instability of the British administration.⁴⁵⁹ To illustrate this I return to the passages in which she describes her visits to the ruins of Delhi.

Because of the nature of their diplomatic affairs, Eden and her party visit the city of Delhi twice in the course of their journey. Each time, the author is forthcoming with her admiration of the landscape, proclaiming that “It is certainly the place in the plains I should like to live at” (*UC*, 262), and “I am glad to be at dear Delhi again; it is the only place in the plains I have ever seen worth looking at” (*UC*, 344). Similarly, in a manner characteristic of the European traveller’s aesthetic engagement with and temporalisation of Eastern lands, she compares the ruined city to ancient Babylon (“It has a feeling about it of ‘Is not this great Babylon?’ all ruins and desolation, except a grand bit or two of magnificence kept

⁴⁵⁷ Robertson, “Anxieties of Imperial Decay,” 110.

⁴⁵⁸ Robertson, “Anxieties of Imperial Decay,” 115-116.

⁴⁵⁹ As highlighted above, Mukherjee alludes to the Picturesque in his article but does not probe further, referring to Eden’s writing simply as “unevenly Picturesque.”

up by the king” [UC, 262]; it looks grandeur and more ‘great Babylonish’ than ever” [UC, 344]).⁴⁶⁰

However, despite her attempts at aestheticising the landscape, Eden is unable to contain it within a Picturesque framework because the realities of sickness, disease, and the ruination of the human body constantly oppose any attempt at aesthetic detachment. For example, while she may see Delhi as a “grand” place, she eventually admits that it is also a diseased one. In fact, just a few days after having first marvelled at the city’s melancholic beauty, Eden, employing the language of contemporary medical geography, proclaims that “Delhi turned out to be a very unwholesome place. All the servants had been taken with attacks of fever and sickness; the sudden hot days after the cold weather disagree with them” (UC, 102).⁴⁶¹ Moreover, it later becomes apparent that it is not only the native servants who fall ill, but even Eden and her fellow British officials as well. This greatly affects their activities and in the passage quoted below, Eden describes how her plans to go sketching with her sister were thwarted by their frail health:

We made a pretty arrangement yesterday to go to a small private camp at Toglichabad; a very old town with some splendid ruins about it, and there had been a road made for us, and supplies sent; but then F.’s cold was still bad. And my Delhi illness was worse than ever. So we gave it up [...] X. says there was a quantity to see and sketch. I have only been able to make four sketches since we left Simla, for dearth of subjects; but I am glad we did not go, I had such a headache. Half the camp was poisoned at Delhi (UC, 347).

⁴⁶⁰ For more on the temporalisation of ancient lands, see Leask, *Curiosity*, 2.

⁴⁶¹ For more on European medical geography and its application to the colonies, see Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore, Md.; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), Chaps. 1 & 7.

In this episode alone, we are given an example of India's landscape successfully resisting Picturesque containment by making it literally impossible for Eden to capture it on paper. If, as suggested earlier, aesthetic sensibilities were seen as proof of the British right to rule, it would therefore follow that an inability to adequately carry out such aesthetic pursuits must signal an imperial resistance by the very landscape they sought to capture. In this light, what the passage above shows is not just the failure of the Picturesque as representative aesthetic in the face of suffering and disease, but also the failure of the Indian Picturesque as a mode of controlling India.

In my earlier discussion, I also argued that one of the other ways in which the Picturesque was used to reflect the British management of India was through the treatment of spaces. Anxieties regarding the disturbing proximity of natives were allayed through the physical demarcation of spaces such as the "White" and "Black" towns in Calcutta, as well as the imaginative separation of spaces that appear in the visual representations of Benares. In Eden's text however, the reader is repeatedly reminded of the fragility of these spatial divisions. Acknowledging an ironic inversion of "native" and "British" spaces early in her narrative, Eden describes how their tents "covered [them] up in every direction, just as if [they] were native women" (*UC*, 23). As time goes on, her remarks about the tenuousness of the British position in India escalate in seriousness and violence. Musing about the Sunday church service held in their tents, she ominously remarks:

It was odd and rather awful to think that sixty Christians should be worshipping God in this desert, which is not their home, and that 12,000 false worshippers should be standing round under the orders of these few Christians on every point, except the only one that is of any importance;

the idolators, too, being in their own land, and with millions within reach, who despise and detest our faith (*UC*, 35).

Similarly, at the ball held in honour of Queen Victoria, she appears to speak triumphantly about the history of the British conquests, but her comments suggest that she is still acutely aware of the precariousness of their position:

Twenty years ago no European had ever been here, and there we were, with the band playing the ‘Puritani’ and “Masaniello,” and eating salmon from Scotland, and sardines from the Mediterranean, and observing that St. Cloup’s potage à la Julienne was perhaps better than his other soups, and that some of the ladies’ sleeves were too tight according to the overland fashions for March, &c.; and all this in the face of those high hills some of which have remained untrodden since the creation, and we, 105 Europeans, being surrounded by at least 3,000 mountaineers, who, wrapped in the hill blankets, looked on at what we call our polite amusements, and bowed to the ground if a European came near them. I sometimes wonder they do not cut all our heads off, and say nothing more about it (*UC*, 293-294).⁴⁶²

Likewise, Mundy, remarking about the guards of the young Rajah of Gwalior, expresses some comparably disturbing sentiments:

It was impossible to avoid feeling at that moment, how completely we were at the mercy of a people who only a few years back were considered the most lawless and unprincipled marauders in India; and who must up to this period cordially hate the sight of those white faces and red coats, which put an end to their devastating piracies, and reduced them to a state of comparative dependence (*Pen and Pencil*, Vol. 2, 59).

However, the crucial difference between the two writers lies in the fact that despite the chilling nature of Eden’s remarks, what remains constant—and thus diffuses the threat of violence—is her sardonic tone. Indeed, critics writing about *Up the Country* have repeatedly highlighted Eden’s use of irony; Poon, for example, summarises that “Eden’s letters are an uneven mixture of ironic observation,

⁴⁶² Poon also remarks on the threat of violence present in Eden’s remarks. See Poon, “Seeing Double,” 459-460.

humour, acidic commentary and glib generalisation,” while Ghose simply terms her as the “ironic traveller.”⁴⁶³

While Eden’s ironic wit does add to the entertainment and aesthetic value of *Up the Country*, I argue that there is more to Eden’s use of irony and satiric humour than simply functioning as a rhetorical device to appeal to her readership. I propose instead that Eden attempts to use ironic humour as an alternative aesthetic category through which she is able to come to terms with potentially threatening situations, as well as to diffuse their threat (although, as we shall see, she was not always successful in doing so).

Aesthetic substitutes: humour, irony and the Grotesque

Returning, for example, to Eden’s first visit to Delhi, we see that while she begins to aestheticise the landscape by calling attention to its Picturesque ruins and then superimposing a theatrical image from *Timour the Tartar* onto them, the imaginative violence of the Lewis’ scene (she describes an episode in the play whereby a child was to be thrown from a high tower) is soon replaced by a reminder of the actual historical violence of military conflict (“We passed the building in which Nadir Shah sat for a whole day looking on while he allowed his troops to massacre and plunder the city” [UC, 95]). Consequently, when she is unable to free herself from this brutal image of the ravaged city, Eden is instead led to make an imaginative comparison with a British city: “These eastern cities are so much more thickly inhabited than ours, and the people so defenceless, that a massacre of that

⁴⁶³ Poon, “Seeing Double,” 460. Ghose, 71.

sort must be a horrible slaughter” (*UC*, 95). Recognising that she is caught in this cycle of violent imagery, she then attempts to release herself (and her reader) from it with the ironic conclusion that while a full-scale massacre would be horrific, “a little simple plunder would be pleasant” (*UC*, 95-96) before changing the subject to that of the local jewellers.

Later in her narrative, Eden also employs a similarly ironic tone when she enumerates the various illnesses striking the members of her party:

It is absurd to hear people talk of their fevers. Mr. M. was to have joined us a month ago, but unfortunately caught ‘the Delhi fever’ coming up: he is to be at Hansi. Z. caught ‘the Agra fever’ coming up; hopes to be able to join us at Hansi, but is doubtful. Then N., our Hansi magistrate, looks with horror at Hansi: he has suffered and still suffers so much from ‘that dreadful Hansi fever.’ I myself think ‘the Gugga fever’ a more awful visitation, but that is all a matter of opinion (*UC*, 254).

Not only does this passage make light of the various “fevers” that the Anglo-Indians were subject to, Eden also goes on to joke about how “one ought to be allowed a change of bones in India: it ought to be part of the outfit” (*ibid*). Thus, by making use of humour and her acerbic wit to lighten the atmosphere, Eden attempts to soften the blow for her sister who would be reading her letter and who would have otherwise been worried for her sibling’s health and safety.

A similar attempt at using irony and comic relief to draw attention away from a potentially threatening situation is demonstrated in the passage in which Eden writes about being left alone in the house at Simla. Here, she begins by first describing how she sees “the little green Ghoorkas [...] mounting guard, with all sorts of outlandish noises,” (*UC*, 166) before explaining how she is surrounded by native servants who do not “understand a word of English” (*ibid*). While she jokes

about not being able to communicate effectively even if an emergency should arise (“I have a great mind to call out ‘fire!’ and ‘thieves!’ as loud as I can, to see what will become of it—it will only break up the game of pucheese; and the hikarus will think I have gone mad, and respect me accordingly” [UC, 166-167]), the attentive reader will be aware that Eden’s real fear arises from the “Ghoorkas” whom she had, in an earlier passage, described as “excellent soldiers [who] beat our troops [at a hill station similar to Simla] twenty-five years ago, and killed all the officers sent against them” (UC, 113). While Eden reassures her reader that “[now] they are our subjects they fight equally well for us” (UC, 113), the threat of violence is never truly dissipated. This is especially so when the reader is reminded of an earlier incident of rebellion which Eden describes as having taken place amongst the native troops in Bareilly:

The regiment is made up of families. Each Russaldar has at least six sons or nephews in his troop [...] and they will do anything for their chief if their prejudices of caste are respected. But there have been some horrible tragedies lately, where young officers have come out with their St. James’s Street notions of making these men dress like European soldiers.

Amongst other things, one young officer persuaded his uncle, a Colonel E., to order them to cut off their beards—a much greater offence than pulling all their noses. The men had idolised this Colonel E., but the instant they heard this order, they drew their swords—and cut him to pieces. There was great difficulty in bringing the regiment into any order again (UC, 76-77).

While at the time at which Eden’s family was likely to have first read her original letters (in the 1830s), the memory of the description of this earlier rebellion would have weighed against the potential threat of the Ghoorkas, the contemporary reader of *Up the Country* (reading the text when it was published in 1866) would also have had the added contextualisation of the Indian Mutiny with

which to intensify the threat. Because of this, Eden's attempt at comic relief ends up having a contradictory effect as it ironically intensifies the danger around her; more than just the threat of "fire" or "thieves," Eden's safety is clearly dependent on the loyalty of the Ghoorka troops.

Moving on from Eden's use of irony and humour as a coping mechanism and a tension-diffusing device, I conclude the chapter by discussing the other aesthetic model that our author turns to in the absence of the Picturesque: The Grotesque. As addressed in Chapter 3, the relationship between the Picturesque and the Grotesque is a unique and interesting one; while seemingly on opposite ends of the aesthetic spectrum, in fact, as Hill notes, a very thin line separates the two, with a simple difference in viewing angle, observer's perception, and the (over-)use of variety and juxtaposition (significantly, elements which also helped to define the Picturesque) tipping the scale from one aesthetic category to the other.⁴⁶⁴

The relationship between the two aesthetic categories is also further complicated by the Grotesque's relationship to realism. While the Grotesque displays a disregard for the laws of nature, the visceral reaction that an encounter with its representations provokes is nonetheless tied to its rootedness in the world of reality. Commenting on the role of the Grotesque in literature, Phillip Thomson explains how an image can only be deemed Grotesque if it is still connected with reality, simply because in a closed fantasy world, it would have been otherwise

⁴⁶⁴ Hill, *A Reformer's Art*, 46.

dismissed as a flight of fancy.⁴⁶⁵ The Picturesque, on the other hand, while seemingly more mimetic in nature, is nonetheless more closely aligned with the fanciful and the unreal in its impulse to alter the original image and make it suitable for Picturesque representation, such as in Hodges' 'picturesque' views of India in the midst of conflict between the British and the native rebels.

In comparison to this deceptive capability of the Picturesque, the Grotesque had been already employed by artists like William Hogarth to expose the harsh realities of society to eighteenth-century viewers with the intention of bringing about moral reform, and by the nineteenth century this was in turn taken up by the writer who saw himself as Hogarth's literary successor, Charles Dickens.⁴⁶⁶ As numerous critics have noted, Charles Dickens performed the function of a Victorian Hogarth in his manipulation of the visual Grotesque to further his call for moral reform in society.⁴⁶⁷ As Hill observes in her study of Dickens' use of picturesque and grotesque imagery, "[w]ith grotesque imagery Dickens leads us behind varnished and placid surfaces into a world of tumultuous realities unacknowledged by the picturesque."⁴⁶⁸

While he develops it more strongly in his later novels, Dickens already introduces this strategy in *The Pickwick Papers*, which, as Hills suggests, satirises the Picturesque and its concern with surface truths through the narrative's

⁴⁶⁵ Thomson, *The Grotesque*, 23.

⁴⁶⁶ David Bindman, *Hogarth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981).

⁴⁶⁷ See Hill, *A Reformer's Art*; Michael Hollington, *Dickens and the Grotesque* (London: Groom Helm; Totowa, N.J: Barnes and Noble, 1984); John Dixon Hunt, "Dickens and the Traditions of Graphic Satire," in *Encounters: Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (London: Studio Vista, 1971).

⁴⁶⁸ Hill, *A Reformer's Art*, 44.

overarching theme of a traveller in his search of varied and interesting scenery.⁴⁶⁹

However, despite being predominantly a comic novel, the Grotesque makes an appearance very early on in the description of the sickly pantomime actor in ‘The Stroller’s Tale’:

He was dressed for the pantomime, in all the absurdity of a clown’s costume. [...] His bloated body and shrunken legs—their deformity enhanced a hundred fold by the fantastic dress—the glassy eyes, contrasting fearfully with the thick white paint with which the face was besmeared; the grotesquely ornamented head, trembling with paralysis, and the long, skinny hands, rubbed with white chalk—all gave him a hideous and unnatural appearance, of which no description could convey an adequate idea⁴⁷⁰

Significantly, we see this passage being echoed in Eden’s own description of the fakirs:

After that we went to see a Sikh temple, where there was a great festival, and about a hundred fakirs, the most horrid-looking monsters it was possible to see. They never wear any clothes, but powder themselves all over with white or yellow powder, and put red streaks over their faces. They look like the raw material of so many Grimaldis (UC, 113).

While Eden had expressed great respect and admiration for *The Pickwick Papers* and its author numerous times in her letters, asserting that “there is always a quotation to be had from Pickwick for everything that occurs everywhere” (UC, 64), the similarities in these passages extend beyond the language and imagery.

Noteworthy is the common reference to the figure of the clown. In Dickens’ narrative, the reader is presented with a real clown, while in Eden’s, the oblique reference to it comes in the allusion to the nineteenth-century actor, Joseph Grimaldi, who became famous for popularising the character of the clown in his

⁴⁶⁹ Hill, *A Reformer’s Art*, 20-26.

⁴⁷⁰ Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*. The Oxford Illustrated Dickens (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 36.

Drury Lane pantomimes.⁴⁷¹ Simultaneously amusing because of its comic antics, and revolting for its bawdiness, the clown epitomises the Grotesque in its conflation of conflicting reactions. As Thompson explains, the Grotesque insists “on a confusion between a sense of the comic and something—revulsion, horror, fear—which is incompatible with the comic.”⁴⁷²

Moreover, the dual identity embedded in the figure of the clown—one who is simultaneously an actor and a character on stage—emphasises the tension between appearances and reality that the Grotesque draws out. While the Picturesque seeks to conceal, the Grotesque exposes reality by its very act of exaggeration. Consequently, for Eden, the Grotesque becomes the more appropriate aesthetic mode of representing the realities of India, when the surface of the Picturesque cracks in the face of harsh realities like starvation and death, such as in her oft-quoted descriptions of the famine-ravaged Cawnpore:

You cannot conceive the horrible sights we see, particularly children; perfect skeletons in many cases, their bones through their skin, without a rag of clothing, and utterly unlike human creatures. [...] The women look as if they had been buried, their *skulls* look dreadful (*UC*, 65).

As discussed in Chapter 3, Mundy made similar use of the Grotesque when faced with disturbing images (like that of withered fakirs, burning corpses, and bodies of dead pilgrims being devoured by scavengers) that could not be contained within the aesthetic conventions of the Picturesque. However, while Mundy’s exploration of the Grotesque is a tentative one which largely limits the use of the

⁴⁷¹ Moody, Jane. “Grimaldi, Joseph (1778–1837),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 8 Apr. 2010 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11630>>.

Dickens himself wrote Grimaldi’s biography *The Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi* (London: 1838).

⁴⁷² Thompson, *The Grotesque*, 7.

aesthetic to its ability to provide a screening effect and to sublimate a potential threat, Eden use of the Grotesque is more expansive.

In fact, it is through the alternative aesthetic of the Grotesque that Eden finds a way to voice her more controversial opinions about the British involvement in India as well. As we have seen earlier, after her visit to the ruins of Delhi, she expresses regret at the consequences of the British exploitation of India, lamenting how “we horrid English have just ‘gone and done it,’ merchandised it, revenueed it, and spoiled it all” (*UC*, 98). But nowhere is the force of her dissatisfaction and discomfort with the British administration more vehement than in her apocalyptic description of a ruined London:

Perhaps two thousand years hence, when the art of steam has been forgotten, and nobody can exactly make out the meaning of the old English word ‘mail-coach,’ some black Governor-General of England will be marching through its southern provinces, and will go and look at some ruins, and doubt whether London ever was a large town, and will feed some white-looking skeletons, and say what distress the poor creatures must be in (*UC*, 66-67).

This surprising passage, which also significantly follows Eden’s remarks about the Cawnpore famine, has been quoted by readers as a vision of reverse colonialism stemming from Eden’s colonial guilt, and Deirdre David attributes Eden’s frank expression of this fear to the liberties allowed her by gender and the more personal and private nature of her correspondence.⁴⁷³ However, if we are to believe that Eden was conscious of the possibility that her letters would have been read by a wider audience, compounded by the fact that despite her (admitted)

⁴⁷³ David, *Rule Britannia*, 37.

edits, she deliberately chose to let this passage stand, then David's explanation would be inadequate.

What is more probable instead is that the Grotesque imagery she had already made use of in her descriptions of the starving natives as "perfect skeletons" with protruding skulls, gives her the license to pose what would have been a contentious possibility because she is protected by the very fact that the Grotesque aesthetic is based on irreconcilables—therefore not only allowing, but even encouraging her to express conflicting (and contesting) views.

However, when Eden makes use of such jarring imagery, she succeeds in committing the very act which she had indicted her literary model for—that of picturing "horrors" too realistically. When in reading *Nicholas Nickleby* she protests, "I wish [Dickens] would not take to writing horrors, he realises them so painfully" (UC, 174), what she is in fact crying out against is not so much the force of Dickens' descriptions but the horrific truths they unveil. Just as her lament was made in the context of the author's grotesque, but disturbingly correct, descriptions of the conditions faced by boys in some English schools, so is her own "horrific" passage guilty of exposing the real destructiveness of British rule which she fears could potentially lead to the downfall of the British themselves. In fact, as numerous places in Eden's letters demonstrate, this decay had already begun to take place—British Indians appearing to age faster than those who remained in England, their lifespans being radically shortened, and the survivors existing as mere shadows of their former selves.

But it is also here that the Grotesque offers a solution to its own problem. Turning once again to Thompson's exposition of the term, we see that one of the common functions served by the Grotesque is its "attempt to control and exorcise [...] the demonic elements in the world."⁴⁷⁴ Because of its representational quality, the Grotesque, like the Picturesque, is still able to function as a screen—albeit a more permeable screen than the Picturesque, but a screen nonetheless—thus enabling unsavoury realities to be seen as representative images rather than depictions of the real objects or occurrences.⁴⁷⁵ As the images of starvation and extreme desperation would undoubtedly have been a shock to Eden's psyche, her recourse to the Grotesque would have been a viable way for her to come to terms with her surroundings, just as it gave her a more accessible way to relate these scenes to her readers.

In effect, this entire section of Eden's text can be read as a microcosm of her larger attempts at using art and aesthetics as a medium through which she could both come to terms with her Indian experience, as well as convey that experience to her readers in a manner that would preserve its accuracy while still maintaining an aesthetic composure that would ensure that either party is not unduly unsettled. Having been forced to relinquish the Picturesque for the Grotesque in her initial description of the famine, she makes a brief attempt to regain it (and the British control that it represents) by musing on the pleasing artistic possibilities offered by the surrounding ruins: "This is a great place for ruins, and was supposed

⁴⁷⁴ Thompson, *The Grotesque*, 18.

⁴⁷⁵ Leask, *Curiosity*, 169.

to be the largest town in India in the olden time, and the most magnificent. There are some good ruins for sketching remaining, and that it all" (*UC*, 66).

Her success at evoking the Picturesque is short-lived however, because as we have seen earlier, ruins provoke a contrary reaction from Eden, causing her to psychically descend into thoughts of human ruination, sickness, and death. Once again, she turns to a different aesthetic model (applying the Grotesque to her image of a future London) and regains her composure fully by concluding her entry within the safety of the written word. While still entrenched in the image of ruinous future, she imagines her "black" counterpart writing back home to her sister in India, an image which successfully shakes her out of this disturbing reverie and prompts her direct address to her sister, "Do you like writing to me?" and her admission that "these long letters to you are the comfort of my existence" (*UC*, 67). Having successfully exorcised her inner demons and anxieties through writing, Eden can return (however temporarily) to the safety of her aesthetic domain, because as she observes, "it would be unwholesome to suppress a thought before breakfast" (*ibid*).

Conclusion

In the words of Romita Ray, the Indian Picturesque was “an aesthetic transplanted in India and adapted to the historic contingencies and geographical peculiarities of its surroundings.”⁴⁷⁶ As this thesis has shown, the malleability of the Picturesque not only allowed it to be adapted as such by travellers seeking to find comfort and familiarity within a foreign land, but also enabled it to be harnessed as a tool for both political and personal expression. The capacity of the Picturesque to cross over aesthetic forms is also a key element in facilitating these different interpretations. Just as the artists discussed in Chapter 2 were able to focus on different elements of the aesthetic as introduced in the first chapter—such as its ideas of movement and stasis, composition, the use of space, and the manipulation of Picturesque tropes like the ruin—so were travellers able to adopt and adapt these modes of representation in their writings. While predominantly a ‘masculine’ aesthetic category at the start, the Picturesque came to be used as an aesthetic imposed onto women travellers to limit their methods of expression.⁴⁷⁷ However, as the second half of my thesis has shown, the capaciousness and malleability of the Picturesque enabled it to be (re)claimed by women writers as a means of exercising their creative (and at times even political) agency.

These acts of reclamation were themselves various and creative, but we can trace some continuities as well as variances. Fanny Parks interpreted the

⁴⁷⁶ Ray, *Banyan Tree*, 261.

⁴⁷⁷ By calling it a ‘masculine’ aesthetic category I am referring to how it was originally theorised by male thinkers and commentators, applied by male artists, and came to be used by the earlier male travellers.

Picturesque as a dynamic concept, which she then synthesized with her interest in the religions and customs of India. In doing so, Parks established an identity independent of her husband and traditional notions of British womanhood. She successfully reclaimed *sati*—a topic that had been previously appropriated by (male) Picturesque painters discussed in Chapter 2 back into the realm of feminine self-possession and, in a gesture that stands against male ideas of connoisseurship, established herself as both a collector and purveyor of Indian knowledge and culture.

In a similar way, Marianne Postans used the Picturesque to challenge cultural structures and norms that confined women (travellers) to the private sphere and more ‘feminine’ forms of knowledge. Despite the rigid gender stereotypes of the time, Postans made herself a viable contributor to the field of travel writing and an authority on Indian culture. By harnessing the textual qualities of the Picturesque along with related ideas and attitudes towards history and primitivism, Postans presents herself as a variant (bardic) voice of resistance. Like Parks, Postans resists the gendered restrictions placed on her writing and uses aesthetics as a tool to overcome the male hegemonic control of information. She advocates changing the ideology of the Company’s administration of India by calling for a modified conceptualisation of British history, one that takes into more serious consideration the empire’s duties towards regions under its control.

For Emily Eden, the Picturesque offered an effective way to balance her role as a public figure and official representative of the British administration with her own personal artistic inclinations and aesthetic sensibilities. While her texts

demonstrate that the Picturesque has its limitations as a representative category, particularly when travellers are faced with forcefully disturbing images or threatening situations, they nevertheless open up discussions about how different aesthetics, including the alternative visual aesthetic of the Grotesque, can be used in its place.

Like the work produced by the early pioneers of the (Indian) Picturesque discussed in Chapter 2—such as William Hodges’ *Travels in India*, and the Daniells’ *Oriental Scenery*, which, though to a lesser extent than Hodges’ text, also draws on both the painted image as well as the accompanying explanatory notes—both image and the written word interact in the texts produced by all three writers. Each of these women use both verbal and visual sketches that draw on her understanding of the Picturesque to mediate and activate her unique experience of India. As we have seen, Fanny Parks both reclaimed and reshaped some of the visual tropes used by the early painters, including the representation of dynamic action and the portrayal of the (native) female body. While the influence of the former can be identified in her own sketches, the impact of the latter is more evident in her textual engagement with the politics of the female body. Marianne Postans, on the other hand—while displaying a deeper concern with transcending the Picturesque’s use as a visual metaphor to engage with the ideas associated with the practice of the Picturesque, such as its concern with and invocation of the historical past—is nonetheless also shaped by the early painters’ interest in capturing both the uniqueness and sometimes even cultural strangeness of individual native figures. This we see in both her textual descriptions as well as in the sketches that accompany her texts.

A similar line of influence can be traced in Emily Eden's *Portraits of the Princes and People of India*. Like Solvyns and Orme, Eden presents her audience with a visual catalogue of native figures bedecked in their respective identifying costumes. However, she is not always able to adopt the level of artistic distancing employed by the early painters because her personal sympathies sometimes emerge in her accompanying textual descriptions. Interestingly, Eden is also never fully comfortable with invoking the Anglo-centred rhetoric associated with the (Indian) Picturesque representation of ruins. For her, ruins (in India) do not bring to mind a triumphant conviction at the British ability to 'civilise' and bring prosperity to a desolate land. Instead, they conjure images of Britain's own (possible) destruction and a realisation that the British presence in India may have brought about more harm than good. To combat this, she is forced to turn to the alternative aesthetic of the Grotesque (an aesthetic category also utilised by early artists such as Gold) and while the Grotesque does not feature in her visual representations of India, it is a prominent aesthetic category in her written text.

The intersection between the Picturesque and Grotesque offers the possibility for future research in the field of travel writing in India. Although the scope of this thesis is limited to travels undertaken and travel accounts (originally written if not published) before the Mutiny, it would be intriguing to consider the effectiveness of alternative aesthetics such as the Grotesque in representations of travels in India both during and after 1857. For the moment, this thesis has demonstrated the variety and adaptability, as well as the attraction, of the aesthetic of the Picturesque for British women writers seeking to shape their responses to their experiences of India in the early nineteenth century.

Appendix



Fig 1. Thomas Daniell, *Old Government House*, 1788, Aquatint, *Views of Calcutta*, Plate 10., British Library Online Gallery.



Fig 2. Thomas Daniell, *St. John's Church*, 1788, Aquatint, *Views of Calcutta*, Plate 12, British Library Online Gallery.



Fig 3. Benjamin Thomas Pouncy, after William Hodges, *A View of Bidjegur*, from Plate 10 of William Hodges, *Travels in India, during the years 1780, 1781, 1782, & 1783*, 1793, British Library Online Gallery.



Fig. 4. Anonymous, *A View of Agra Fort*, by a Calcutta artist after William Hodges, c.1800-1810, British Library Online Gallery.



Fig 5: William Hodges, *View of a Mosque at Raj Mahal, India*, c.1781 or 1787, Government Art Collection, London.



Fig. 6. William Hodges, *A View of Benares*, 1781, Copyright: The British Library Board.



Fig. 7. Thomas Daniell, *Dusasumade Gaut, at Benares*, Plate 16, *Oriental Scenery*, Vol. 1, 1796, British Library Online Gallery.



Fig. 8. Thomas Gainsborough, *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, c.1750, The National Gallery, London.



Fig. 9. Johan Zoffany, *Mr. and Mrs. Hastings*, 1783-7, Victoria Memorial Museum, Calcutta.



Fig. 10 William Hodges, *Natives drawing water from a pond with Warren Hastings' house at Alipur in the distance*, c.1781.



Fig. 11. Paul Sandby, *Hackwood Park, Hampshire*, 1763-4, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund.



Fig. 12: Johan Zoffany, *Colonel Blair with his Family and an Indian Ayah*, 1786, Tate Britain, London.



Fig. 13. Johan Zoffany, *Sacrifice of a Hindoo Widow upon the Funeral Pile of her Husband*, c. 1795, Private Collection.



Fig.14. James Atkinson, *A Sati or Widow-Burning*, 1831, British Library.



Fig. 15. Johan Zoffany, *Colonel Polier and his friends at Lucknow, 1786-1787*, Victoria Memorial Museum, Calcutta.



Fig. 16. Johan Zoffany, *Charles Townley and Friends in His Library at Park Street, Westminster*, 1781–1790 & 1798, Towneley Hall Art Gallery & Museum.



Fig. 17. Johan Zoffany, *Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match*, c.1784–6, Tate Britain, London.



Fig. 18. Tilly Kettle, *Dancing Girl of Faizabad*, 1772, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.



Fig. 19. Tilly Kettle, *Mrs Yates as Mandane in 'The Orphan of China'*, exhibited 1765, Tate Britain, London.



Fig. 20. Balthazard Solvyns, "A Dybuck." Solvyns, *A Collection of Two Hundred and Fifty Coloured Etchings* (1799), Sec. I, No. 13.

Image taken from the collection of Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr.

The Solvyns Project: <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/solvyns-project/>



Fig. 21. "A Dybuck." *The Costume of Indostan* (Orme pirated edition), engraving after Solvyns, No. 3.

Image taken from the collection of Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr.

The Solvyns Project: <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/solvyns-project/>



Fig. 22. Balthazard Solvyns, "Dy buck, Astronome." *Les Hindoûs* 1.3.2.

Image taken from the collection of Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr.

The Solvyns Project: <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/solvyns-project/>



Fig. 23. Charles Gold, *A Barbarous Ceremony*, from 'Oriental Drawings', engraved by Thomas Medland (1755-1823), published 1806 (colour litho). Image taken from Bridgeman Education.



Fig. 24. Captain Mundy, 'Palace of the Chief of Khoté-kie' c.1825-1830, *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, Vol. 1, 259.



Fig. 25. Captain Mundy, 'The Lion and the Elephant,' c.1825-1830, *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, Vol. 1, 331.



Fig. 26. Captain Mundy, 'Elephant Charging Tiger,' c.1825-1830, *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, Vol. 1, 162.

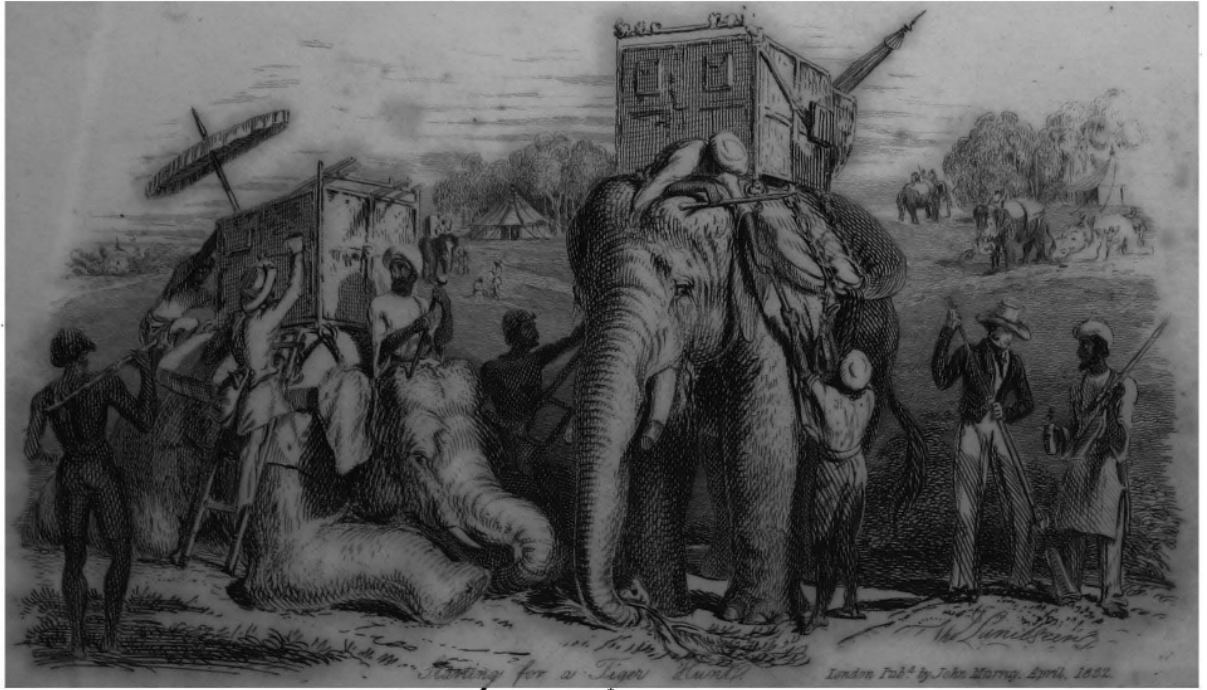


Fig. 27. Captain Mundy, 'Starting for a Tiger Hunt,' c.1825-1830, *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, Vol. 1, Frontispiece.



Fig. 28. Captain Mundy, 'Sangah in Valley of Dogolee' c.1825-1830, *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, Vol. 1, 281.



Fig. 29. Captain Mundy, 'Travelling in the Himalaya Mountains' c.1825-1830, *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, Vol. 1, 313.



Fig. 30. Captain Mundy, 'Travelling Dak,' c.1825-1830, *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, Vol. 2, 230.



Fig. 31. Fanny Parks, "Kaniyā-jee and the Gopis," c.1826-1850, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Plate XXXII, Facsimile of an old Hindu Painting.



Fig. 32. Fanny Parks, "Kaniyā-jee and the Gopis," c.1826-1850, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Frontispiece, Vol. II, Facsimile of an old Hindu Painting.



Fig. 33. Fanny Parks, "Lachmi, the Goddess of Beauty," c.1826-1850, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Plate XX.



Fig. 34. Fanny Parks, "Elephant Fights," c.1826-1850, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Plate XVIII.



Fig. 35. Fanny Parks, "A Bengalee Woman," c.1826-1850, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Plate VIII.



Fig. 36. Thomas Jones. *The Bard*, 1774, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales.



Fig. 37. John Martin, *The Bard*, c.1817, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection



DURBAR HORSEMAN,
In the service and pay of the Rao of Cutch.

Fig. 38. Marianne Postans, "Durbar horseman," 1839, *Cutch*.



Fig. 39. Marianne Postans, "Arab Soldiers," 1839, *Cutch*.



Fig. 40. Marianne Postans, "Syed Mercenary," 1839, *Cutch*.



Fig. 41. Marianne Postans, "Parbutti Dhobun," 1857, *The Moslem Noble*.

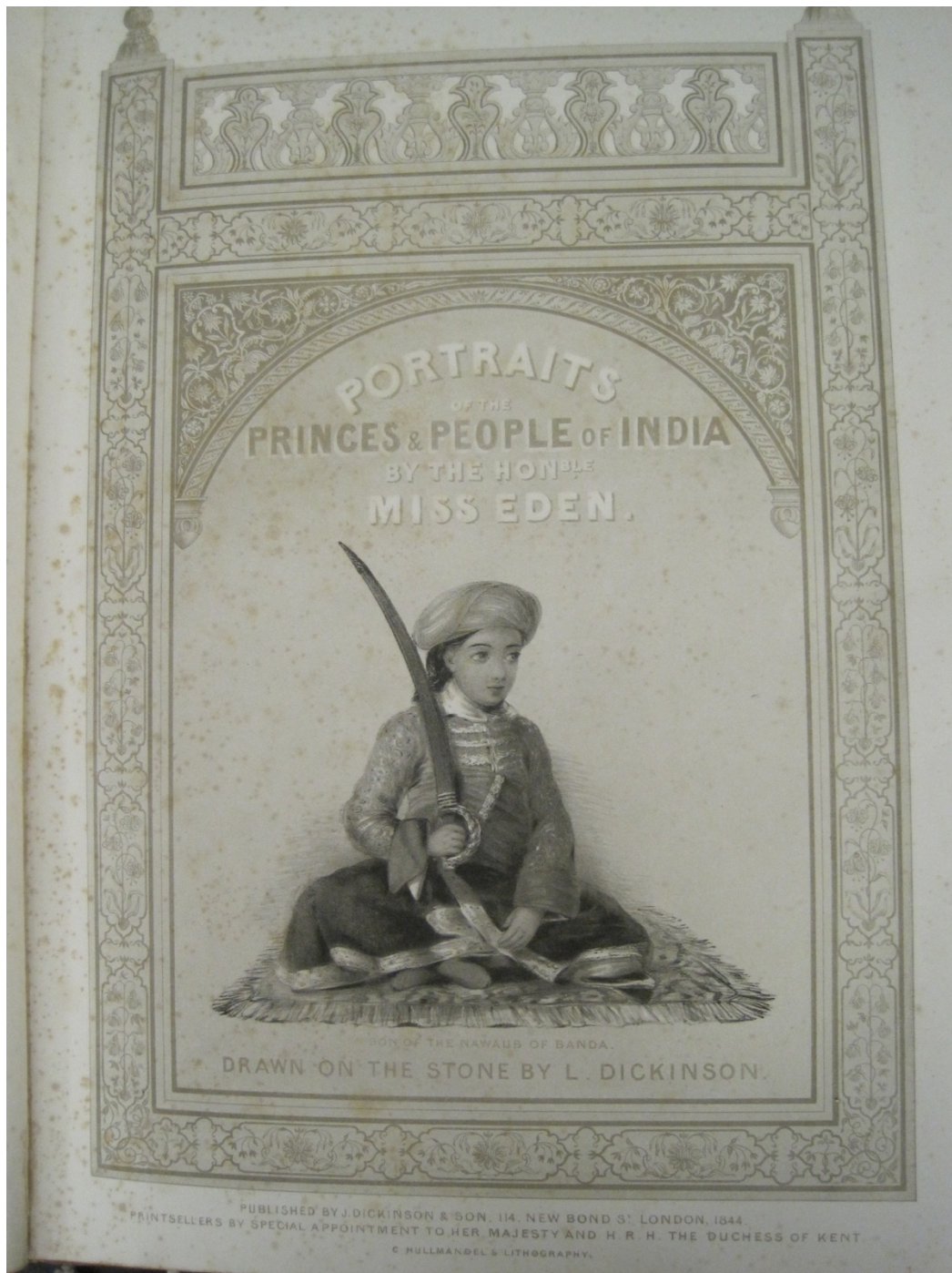


Fig. 42. Emily Eden, "Son of the Nawaub of Banda," 1844, *Portraits of the Princes and People of India*, Title page.



Fig. 43. Emily Eden, "Purtaub Singh," 1844, *Portraits of the Princes and People of India*, Plate XIX.



Fig. 44. Emily Eden, "The Late Maha Raja Runjeet Singh," 1844, *Portraits of the Princes and People of India*, Plate XIII.

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