Beyond Fellow-Feeling? Anglo-Indian Sympathy in the Travelogues of Eliza Fay, Maria Graham, and Fanny Parks

Elena Spandri

Abstract
The article reads the Indian travelogues of Eliza Fay, Maria Graham, and Fanny Parks along the trajectory of a discourse of sympathy that the writers employ as a *via media* between sentimental participation in and detached appreciation of cultural difference. Thanks to intellectually engaging and ethically nuanced approaches, these narratives offer examples of a new sensibility in action in the community of Anglo-Indians undergoing the transition from colonising subjects to imperial agents. Despite the markedly nineteenth-century tone of their rhetoric, Fay's, Graham's, and Parks endorsement of colonial sympathy draws extensively on its most sophisticated and authoritative eighteenth-century British apologists, namely Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, and William Jones. Their composite outlook on the Indian question throws an interesting light on the complex and, as yet partly uncharted, cultural revolution that accompanied the rise of imperial liberalism in Britain. The paper intends to show how sympathy accommodates a double-edged discourse, caught between imperial gaze and anti-conquest rhetoric.

1. The Empire of sympathy

According to recent historiography and cultural criticism, imagination presides over the nation-building process just as it does over empire-building. It "creates ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labour prospects" (Sollors 1989: xii). Imagination plays an affective and even unorthodox role in such processes, in that, instead of promoting an escape from history, contingency and situatedness, it works as their primary and most effective agent (see Anderson 1983, Appadurai 1996). In Britain the solidarity between the discourse of nation and the discourse of empire was

the offspring of early Romantic culture and was mostly predicated on Scottish Enlightenment modes of thinking. Between the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, an abundant scholarly apparatus encompassing philosophies of moral sentiments, stadial theories of societal development, and conjectural histories lured writers, philosophers, and political administrators into the belief that the gap between domestic and alien spaces could be bridged by subscribing to an ideology of sympathy that de-emphasised distance and cultural difference and overstated the relevance of sentimental bonds among strangers. By the time the Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded in Calcutta (1784), in addition to being a national project, sympathy had grown into an imperial promise (Pitts 2005; Rudd 2011).

In an investigation into the modes of sympathy in Romantic and early-Victorian Anglo-Indian literature, travel writing occupies a prominent place as a multivalent and inherently conflictual discursive field, engaged in an effort "both to put something alien into the words of a shared language for someone else at home and to put oneself in the Other's place abroad in order to speak on its behalf" (Porter 1991: 14-5). In the transition from colonial to imperial policy, travel writing contributed to rendering the Anglo-Indian encounter as a sympathetic discovery of an Emersonian wide world, while simultaneously mapping out actual and fictive territories for the exercise of British political, economic, cultural, and moral jurisdiction. Indian travel presented a territorial and imaginative exploration in which spectatorial attitudes bordered on and at times merged with active participation in Indians' lives and histories[1]. Female-authored texts, in particular, were among the sites in which the ambivalence of colonial sympathy mostly belied its structural function as a double-edged discourse caught between the imperial gaze and anti-conquest rhetoric (see Pratt 1992; Ghose 1998; Leask 2002; Comer 2005).

This article examines the travelogues of Eliza Fay, Maria Graham, and Fanny Parks, following the trajectory of a discourse *of*, as well as *on*, sympathy which the writers appear to employ in similar terms, as a *via media* between sentimental participation in and detached

[1] By 1830 India was almost entirely under British control. See Bayly 1989 and Metcalf 1995.

appreciation of Indian difference. Thanks to intellectually engaging and ethically nuanced approaches, whereby sexual, cultural, and racial binaries are interrogated and questioned, these narratives offer enlightening examples of a new sensibility in action in the community of Anglo-Indians undergoing the transition from colonising subjects to imperial agents (Bayly 1989; Metcalf 1995 and 2001). Despite the markedly nineteenth-century tone of their rhetoric, Fay's, Graham's, and Parks endorsement of colonial sympathy draws extensively on its most sophisticated and authoritative eighteenth-century British apologists, namely Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, and William Jones. Their composite outlook on the Indian question, which combines philosophical universalism and culture-specific sensibility with developmental historicism and utilitarian concerns, throws an interesting light on the complex, and as yet partly uncharted, cultural revolution that accompanied the rise of imperial liberalism in Britain (Mehta 1999; Pitt 2005).

In exploring the relevance of sympathetic imagination in Anglo-Indian travel writing, Paul Ricoeur's severe critique of sympathy can help us to illuminate the extent of the possible allegations associated with it (Ricouer 1954). Ricoeur attacks phenomenological approaches to the question of the other on the grounds of what he considers to be sympathy's two major inadequacies. Firstly, its being predicated on the primacy of identity, which prevents it from developing into a properly inter-subjective feeling unless it is redeemed and integrated by respect (which, in Kantian terms, concerns the individual's original limitations posed by the other's existence). Secondly, even when the emotional quality of sympathy is limited by respect, sympathetic feeling remains in the ambit of the private sphere and fails to attain the level of social and political struggle, and therefore the prerogative of proper ethical action. Subsequent, postcolonial-oriented debates on sympathy are, if anything, even less uncompromising. Combining an eighteenth-century moderate optimism regarding the viability of a "rooted cosmopolitanism" with a postcolonial mistrust of homogenising and universalising projects, Anthony Appiah identifies the core of modern imagined communities in synecdochical participation: "If there is something distinctive about the new, national stories, perhaps it is this: that they bind citizens not in a shared relation to gods, kings, and heroes, but as fellow participants, 'equivalent persons' in a common story. […]

Our modern solidarity derives from stories in which we participate through synecdoche" (Appiah 2005: 245). Although contemporary theorists[2] are far from underestimating its most recurrent risks, ranging from shallow humanitarianism to tactical cosmopolitanism and even to depoliticised spectatorship, they continue to ascribe a prominent role in the moral progress of large communities to sympathetic imagination:

> People can be very intelligent without having wide sympathies. It is neither irrational nor unintelligent to draw the limits on one's own community at a national, or racial, or gender border. But it is undesirable – morally undesirable. So it is best to think of moral progress as a matter of increasing sensitivity, increasing responsiveness to the needs of a larger and larger variety of people and things. (Rorty 1999: 81)

Departing from both Ricoeur's radical critique of sympathy and its more circumspect postcolonial revisions, this article questions colonial sympathy, as articulated in the travelogues of Fay, Graham, and Parks, on the grounds of its dubious and still debated ethical and global scope. Is colonial sympathy to be understood as emotional attunement between distant and differently situated people, entailing mere geographical broadening of the scope of sympathy? Is it a dislocation, mediated by narrativity, of affective participation in the life of cultural others from the space of the nation to the space of the empire – a dislocation deemed improbable by the very advocates of sympathetic relationship? Or, conversely, does colonial sympathy involve some change in the structure of sympathetic dynamics which, in amplifying its intrinsic shortcomings, undermines its transnational, planetary ecumenism?

Any provisional answer to this complex set of questions must first locate Fay's, Graham's, and Parks travel literature within the emergence of an imperial liberalism which, at the turn of the century, was moving away from the cross-cultural and egalitarian scope of late eighteenth-century colonial discourse, upholding a non-egalitarian and assimilative agenda that was supposed to justify violent territorial conquest, and the exercise of despotic rule in India. The roots of the nascent imperial ideology could be traced

[2] See, in particular, Igniatieff 1984, De Certeau 1986, Robbins and Pheng 1998, Rorty 1999, Forman-Barzilai 2010.

back to Smithian and Burkean notions of tolerance and respect, but its trajectory pointed away from such policies in favour of a staunchly progressive, taxonomic, and judgemental approach to Asiatic diversity. From William Jones's veneration for the Indian sublime to Robert Southey's disgust for Hinduism's "monstrous mythology", at once magnified and anathemised in *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), what changed was not so much the object of observation as the position of the observer and the quality of the outlook: respectful and eulogising in the case of the former, debasing and reifying in the latter. The reasons behind this change in perspective have been closely examined by cultural and economic historians, sociologists, and literary critics. More relevant here is an understanding of what happens to sympathetic imagination in the transition from Jonesonian Indophilia to Southeyan Indophobia. Does universalising, convivial sympathy transmute into callous hostility; or does sympathy – both in its positive and negative form – accommodate both agendas?

My contention is that in the travel writing of Fay, Graham, and Parks, sympathy appears to accommodate both agendas in the (Ricouerian) sense of providing a narrative mediation between an Enlightenment-inflected culture of sensibility, based on fellow-feeling, and a Romantic and post-Romantic sceptical, yet unbending, claim for intercultural ethics, based on affective mutuality and shared by all colonial actors. In the different solutions envisioned by the writers, colonial sympathy appears to fill the affective as well as the epistemic gap between the sentimental recognition of the Indian other and the ethical responsibility for this selfsame recognition. Sympathy's unceasing oscillation from universal moral sentiment to environment-responsive practice, moreover, justifies both its deep moral elusiveness and its epistemological instability.

2. What Englishmen feel for each other

Whether we understand it in Burke's sceptical version of delight "that hinders us from shunning scenes of misery" (Burke 1990: 43), or in the more compassionate formulation provided by Adam Smith[3], sympathy is a fellow-feeling naturally arising when people are

[3] "As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form

confronted with the spectacle of the pain of others. It is therefore, by necessity, grounded in some forms of connection – of space, time, kinship, common interests, common culture, religious feeling ("men, though naturally sympathetic, feel so little for another, with whom they have no particular connection", Smith 2009: 105). On the one hand, sympathy must assume proximity and connectivity as its own conditions of existence, while on the other it requires a certain degree of distance necessary to set in motion the analogical transference between the 'imagined' emotion of the self and the 'real' emotion of the other. Humans are predisposed to sympathise, that is to participate in the sufferings and in the emotional life of those who fall under the jurisdiction of their own senses. At the same time sympathy works through leaps of imagination which operate according to a differential logic. Hence the fundamental ambiguity inscribed in sympathetic imagination, perennially hovering between approximation and dislocation, between the regime of metonymy and the regime of metaphor.

Scottish Enlightenment philosophers and historians were highly sceptical about the possibility for sympathetic imagination to function in contexts of great distance and cultural difference – namely, beyond national borders. In spite of this scepticism, however, sympathy surfaces systematically in colonial discourse, featuring as one of its most recurrent rhetorical strategies. In the travel narratives of Fay, Graham, and Parks (as well as in contemporary Anglo-Indian literature), it proves to be a very adaptable paradigm, meeting a range of rhetorical, generic, and situational requirements. Sympathy works both as a sentimental ideology empowering the national subject at the expense of the colonial other, and as a deeply fractured, heretical, moral economy championing, if not equality of worth and rights, at least a more intense responsiveness to the needs of the different and heterogeneous Asiatic communities. In each narrative the discourse of sympathy inflects the negotiation of

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no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us out of our person, and it is by imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations" (Smith 2009: 13).

intracultural relationships, as well as the production and validation of cross-cultural knowledge.

Eliza Fay's *Letters from India*, begun in 1779-80 but published only in 1816 to supply income for their destitute author, celebrate the aggregating and emancipatory virtues of Calcutta's cosmopolitan society at the time of her first unfortunate passages to India[4]. In this travelogue, sympathy operates as a survival strategy in an alien space, endangered by unrelenting military conflicts and shifting political allegiances. It hinges on national solidarity and seeks to cement reciprocal feelings among the expatriate British and European community. "Englishmen ought to feel for each other; we are not without our share of troubles *here*", writes Eliza, desperately trying to escape from captivity at the hands of Hyder Ali (Fay 1925: 143). The emotionally charged account of her bravely endured adventure in Calicut is peppered with a rich Orientalist repertoire of national clichés, including a "surprising indifference to life" – and therefore inability to sympathise – which features as the chief characteristic of Indian people.

Fay's preoccupation at the time of her first journey to India is social visibility and affiliation to the hegemonic group, for the sake of which the invocation of patriotic sympathy, and a show of hostile feelings towards the duplicitous Indians, serve the strictly personal agenda of admission into the tribe of prominent Anglo-Indians. Once admitted into the tribe, however, Fay is ready to combine intra-cultural sympathy with a benevolent gaze on the natives which, in accordance with an eighteenth-century relish for novelty and variety, provides the writer-in-embryo with an exciting spectacle of human diversity and numberless occasions for fun. Despite the recurring Orientalist topoi of her picture, Fay does not subscribe to an essentialist notion of cultures, nor does she prove incapable of exercising discriminating powers of observation. Nonetheless, her travelogue's almost exclusive concentration on solidarity among

[4] The Fays moved to India in search of an economic base for Eliza's lawyer husband, and saw India from an unprivileged class position. The publication of Eliza's letters in 1816 was supposed to pay their debts in Calcutta. When they arrived in Calicut in 1779 the Fays were imprisoned for fifteen weeks by Hayder Ali (Tipu Saib's father), who was trying to take control of Southern India and, having already clashed with the British in Madras, was preparing a second war.

fellow European emigrants inevitably shuts the Indians out of the colonial economy of feelings.

Unlike Fay, Maria Graham depicts the Bombay British community as an unpalatable mishmash of "under-bred", "over-dressed", "very ignorant and very grossière" ladies, and of civil servants "taken up with their own imaginative importance", attending "most dull and uncomfortable" costly parties, overcrowded with personal servants and sadly lacking authentic sociability (Graham 2000: 28-29). In the reactive and judgmental energy that typifies her style of description, Graham withdraws all sympathetic feelings when faced with the spectacle of colonial vainglory, openly accusing her compatriots of petty nationalism: "This mixture of nations ought, I think, to weaken national prejudice; but among the English at least, the effect seems diametrically opposite. Every Briton appears to pride himself on being a John Bull" (Graham 2000: 139).

Graham's irritation at the feelings of superiority exhibited by the British in the colonised territories signals uneasiness about colonial realities and belies a form of nostalgia for an eighteenth-century cosmopolitan ideal that in the years of her Indian residence was already on the wane[5]. Distant as they are, though, Fay's and Graham's narratives converge on one point. Whether articulated in terms of patriotic solidarity or antipatriotic critique, national feelings expunge the natives from the social contract which, according to the eighteenth-century moral universalism upheld by the critics of empire as well as the nineteenth-century biologically-inflected culturalism championed by its advocates, should bind all colonial agents into a sense of mutually acknowledged existence. By obfuscating the distance between the periphery and the metropolis, national feelings shore up the anti-creolisation policies which structurally undermine the possibility of colonial sympathy (see Marshall 1993; Leask 2002).

More than two decades later, at the time of Fanny Parks's wanderings "in search of the picturesque", the "shifting nature of Anglo-Indian society" – due to the systematic relocation of the

[5] Maria Graham arrived in Bombay in 1809 with her father, the Admiral George Dundas, and later married a naval officer, Thomas Graham, whom she followed in his military itineraries, while rarely mentioning his presence. During her three-year residence in India she travelled extensively and, apart from Madras, Calcutta, and Ceylon, also visited the Subcontinent's major archaeological sites (Elephanta, Salsette, and Karle).

administrative personnel that was supposed to prevent the formation of a creole population – made it impossible "to gain more than the passing information of the day, in places rendered memorable from circumstances of universal notoriety, but of which nobody can give the particulars" (Parks 1999: 409). In an 1844 extract from "The Asiatic Journal", incorporated in the narrative and titled "Sketches of a remarkable living character in India", Parks implicitly laments the damage of anti-creolisation policies whose chief effects had been to loosen the tie between people and places, and to hinder the development of localised collective memory. The narrative lingers on the story of Colonel Gardner, a model of "honorable" Indianisation is contrast with William Hastings's "geographical morality", that is, the allegedly corrupt adjustment of British administrative practice to the inferior ethical standards of the Indians, which had haunted Burke's parliamentary invectives some sixty years before. Gardner, having refused to fight the British army in the Mahratta war after he had enlisted in Holkar's service, and having married a "Moslem beauty", brilliantly maintained his loyalty to both his home and his adopted country, and is universally acknowledged as a living testimony to Anglo-Indian sympathies:

> In looking back upon past events, the Colonel occasionally expresses a regret that he should be induced to quit the King's service, in which, in all probability, he would have attained the highest rank; but, eminently qualified for the situation in which he has been placed, and more than reconciled to the destiny which binds him to a foreign soil, the station he occupies leaves him little to desire; and he has it in his power to be still farther useful to society by unlocking the stores of a mind fraught with information of the highest interest. (Parks 1999: I, 414)

Perhaps the most important lesson to be drawn from "four-and-twenty years in the East" is that compulsive national sympathy, enforced at the expense of more serious engagement with the imperial others, is an obsolete defensive strategy that depletes Anglo-Indian experience of cultural and moral significance, since it denies the colonised space the qualifications for functioning as a site of shared restorative memory[6].

[6] Like Maria Graham, Fanny Parks too belonged to a military family. Her father

Fay's, Graham's, and Parks's travelogues bear ample testimony to the fact that the viability of sympathy in the context of Anglo-Indian discourse stems from its inclusion of an evaluative component which prevents uncritical sentimentality in relation to the disadvantaged condition of the other. The evaluative component at work in sympathetic imagination introduces into the virtual identification with the suffering or the needy a discriminating and thus discriminatory note. As pointedly stated by Seigel (2005) with reference to Adam Smith, sympathetic emotion does not flow out of automatic analogical transference, but depends on a prior moral validation of the fellow-feeling provided by the well-known "impartial spectator" who, so to speak, presides over the propriety of the immaterial connection between peoples and places. This element of judgement operating in the dynamics of colonial sympathy accounts for the uninterrupted popularity of the paradigm throughout the decades in which British imagination turns India from symbolic into material capital, gradually discarding the trope of the *officina gentium* in favour of a heated gothic imaginary that pictures it as a threatening space of otherness to be ruled and domesticated. Thanks to its inherently evaluative (and prescriptive) element, sympathy could naturally serve, in turn, Edmund Burke's stern critique of empire at the time of Hasting's impeachment trial (1788-1795), Sir William Jones's pan-humanistic ideal of cultural translatability, underpinning the scholarly project of the Asiatic Society, the moralising agenda of the Evangelical missionaries, committed to christianising the Hindu, and, finally, the liberal and progressivist creed of utilitarian reformers (such as James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and Thomas Macauley), who equated cultural triumphalism with sympathetic condescension towards backward and infantile Indians.

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had fought honourably in the Napoleonic Wars and her husband, after a short residence in Calcutta, was given an appointment at Allahabad, where the childless couple lived from 1826 to 1839. The long Indian residence gave her the opportunity of repeated visits to a number of places (renowned or not), and that enabled her to supplement a first-impression narrative style with a less impressionistic account of the Indian Subcontinent. Leask reads Parks's picturesque aesthetics in terms of an anti-utilitarian and defensive ideology of imperial solidarity that "commodifies British India for a metropolitan public, but without partaking in the 'guilty' private interests of the nabobs of Hastings's generation" (Leask 2002: 170).

In the multiple and at times erratic affiliations of their travel narratives, Fay, Graham, and Parks illustrate how the code of sympathy can open up unsuspected epistemological contact-zones, whereby an apparently uncontested endorsement of empire, due to the position of the authorial subject within the imperial system, is modulated by an ethically-inflected and situated critique of its ideological travesties. Such a heterodox outlook surfaces predominantly in Maria Graham:

> Now really it has often mortified me to think I was living under the same government and protected by the same laws with my fellow-subjects in India, and that I knew as little about them as about the inhabitants of Mercury, who are so enveloped in sunbeams as to be dark with excess of light. […] I am not sure that I was not once liable to the reproach of European prejudice so far as to despise immeasurably the Hindu meekness, and half polish; and perhaps I should be ashamed to own that I had so far strayed from good-nature and good-sense, as to forget, that whatever reproaches may be deserved by some of the Hindus for their moral practices, the fundamental principles of morality itself are so firmly implanted in the soul of man that no vicious practice and no mistaken code can change their nature, and that we should look on the historian who should tell us of laws which enacted theft and murder, or punished honesty and benevolence, with as little credit, as on him who should talk of "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders". (Graham 1814: 85-86)

3. "The climate is worse than the jaws of the crocodile"

A common feature of these travelogues is a pervasive discourse concerning the violence of the Indian climate. This discourse is articulated along two distinct and at once complementary rhetorical lines, both of which are sympathy-inflected: the endangering of the Europeans' health and the environmental anthropology applied to native character and customs. Eliza Fay dwells extensively on the measure of resilience demanded by the hostile natural environment, and employs her physical and psychological endurance as a textual strategy of self-empowerment. Fanny Parks seems to take the Indian weather in a more philosophical mood, making the best of each season – a sofa and a novel in the unbearable heat, and invigorating rides and picturesque roamings in the cold months. Still, at no time does the quasi-Richardsonian writing-to-the-moment technique of

her travelogue allow readers to forget that the picturesque sketches whereby they are able to comfortably bridge the gap between the domestic and the exotic space of the Subcontinent stem from the colonisers' ceaseless struggle against the adversity of the climate and from their time-honoured sacrificial lifestyle. No wonder that in such an emotionally-charged codification of colonial sensibility the sati becomes a free-floating signifier by which the stigmatised Hindu custom of widow-burning ends up dovetailing with the English exercise of self-immolation, indifferently practised by women and men in the colonial space[7].

Interlaced as it is with the gendered account of the European subject's endurance in this torrid zone, climatology becomes the vehicle for an assessment of Indian manners and customs that mediates between environmental determinism *à la* Montesquieu, inspiring much eighteenth-century Western discourse on the East, and an opposing historicist approach to national character vigorously upheld by Hume[8]:

> I am unwilling to think the natives of any country naturally inferior to those of another, and I therefore endeavour to account to myself for the great moral disparity between Europeans and Asiatics, by supposing that the severities of the northern climate, and the difficulty of raising food, give a spur to industry and invention, to surmount the disadvantage of nature, and to procure property and comforts, which are valued in proportion to the difficulty with which they are attained. But no such incitements to exertion exist in this climate, and the mind sinks in proportion to the inactivity of the body. (Graham 2000: 92-93)

As stated in Maria Graham's universalising and unequivocal appraisal of cultural difference, if the inferiority of the Indian is undeniable, the recourse to the environmental explanation, as well as to stadial theories of uneven development, can soften the crudity of geo-cultural taxonomies by championing a reunification of all colonial agents into one homogenous destiny of physical and mental lethargy. Still, this partially exculpating gesture performed in favour of the

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[7] The sati question is a common theme tackled by Fay, Graham, and Parks from the contradictory perspective of the abnormality of the practice, and of its universality in terms of the abuse of women at work, even in advanced societies.

[8] See Hume's essay "On National Characters" (1777).

Indians' economic and moral inadequacy reads rather ambiguously, in that it advances the two antithetical postures of resignation and intervention. In spite of considerable dissimilarity in tone and style, such a dilemma lies at the core of both Graham's and Parks ethnographic descriptions. The two writers' gendered and not fully consensual position with respect to empire leads them to espouse a nuanced reformist attitude in which the overt critique of the East India Company (and of Governmental policies) does not undermine the imperialist foundations of their protocols of observation and interaction. Graham's unsentimental narrative, privileging referential report over abstract reflection, gradually shapes a narratorial voice that takes on the guise of the moralist as it gradually begins to sound simultaneously self-effacing and judgmental. She sympathises with the degraded state of the Pariahs, but she cannot refrain from picturing them according to the rhetoric of abjection ("they are filthy in all their habits, and do not scruple to use as food any dead animal they find; it is even said that, in some places, they do not reject human bodies", Graham 2000: 15). She is distressed at the sight of a peasant mother selling one of her children to procure food for the others, but criticises the Indians' passive compliance with the colonials' unequal distribution of resources ("Such was the patience of the Hindoos that they saw the wagons of rice sent by the English at Bombay to the relief of Poonah, pass through their villages without an attempt to stop them", Graham 2000: 70). In the alleged neutrality of her representation, colonial sympathy reveals a complex structure of feelings operating according to a dialectics of participation and alienation, and traversed by an unresolved tension between performative and spectatorial language. A structure of feelings in which, to go back to Smith, the interventionist approach of the "*exploratrice sociale*" (Pratt 1992: 155-64) is countered by an inert humanitarian gaze on cultural difference which equals "action that requires no self-denial" (Smith 2009: 222), and therefore action achieving neither reciprocity nor pragmatic goals.

Unlike Graham's analytical rigour, Fanny Parks's discursive wanderings – only equal in abundance and variety to her incessant peregrinations up and down the Indian Subcontinent – invite the reader to share a mode of selective sympathy that rejects a holistic, essentialising approach to Asiatic difference, and draws sharp lines between eligible and non-eligible objects. With respect to religion,

for example, Parks provides colorful narrations of the devotional practices, as well as erudite accounts of the Hindu Pantheon, in which both the ritual and the theological dimension of Hinduism are observed with a curious and respectful eye. Nonetheless, such an authentic cultural interest in the Hindu creed does not exempt the author from aligning with mainstream Christian missionary indictment of the Brahaminical caste, charged with the historical responsibility of oppressing the lower orders by encouraging idolatry for the sake of preserving social and economic privilege. Fay, Graham, and Parks portray castal society as a system of organised 'unsympathy', which validates injustice and encourages anti-social behaviour, based as it is on deep-seated mechanisms of internal othering. Accordingly, in line with a humanitarian paternalism advocated by a number of Anglo-Indian writers, they assign colonial rule the task of re-educating Indian sensibility in the direction of increased human solidarity in more equalitarian and anti-tribal terms. Their reformist attitude does not, however, automatically translate into a call for a liberal re-programming of India's economic, social, legislative, and moral contours. The anecdotic, nuanced, and gendered tone of their travel writing keeps them at a safe distance both from the integralism of the Clapham Sect (the Evangelical group led by William Wilberforce which lobbied Parliament for the imposition of Christianity throughout British India) and from the hyperactivism of utilitarian social engineers.

In keeping with the shifting and unsteady quality of the travellers' gaze, this mode of selective sympathy conflates chronologically distant narratives like Fay's, Graham's, and Parks into one insightful and moderate discourse on India's puzzling, yet deeply engaging, strangeness. The travellers' rhetoric feeds on a micro-politics that is made up of individualised acts of inspection and evaluation conducted on a number of objects (human and not) which may elicit different degrees of emotional attunement, but which invariably require committed local intervention: from orphan children to be adopted or brought to proper asylums, to infant brides and bridegrooms to be "liberated" from family captivity; from stranded lepers to be hospitalised, to religious outcasts to be re-humanised through work; from famished rural populations to be rescued from starvation, to epidemic-stricken urban masses to be supplied with medical treatment, and even to Hindu women to

be saved not so much from fire as from the "sati mentality". If the "distant anthropology" advocated by Robert Southey and James Mill entitles the imperial observer to supersede class, gender, and religious specificity, and to unify differently situated people into one culturally monolithic otherness, the close and freer perspective of the female traveller demands a mode of selective sympathy that, eschewing the antithetical postures of uncritical empathy and judgmental disavowal, incites the colonial/imperial agent to engage with cultural difference with greater circumspection and discernment. Accordingly, if it is a common Anglo-Indian habit to consider all Indian servants as *in pectore* thieves, both Fay and Parks remind readers that such generalisations are not only unfair to the natives' morality but also profoundly self-defeating because they block the natives' inclination to self-reform and perpetuate illicit practice. Similarly, Parks's repeated reports of the imprisonment and condemnation of thuggee bands, supplemented by well-documented descriptions of their protocols of assault and murder, project the complex phenomenon of thuggism onto the backdrop of a sensationalist gothic sensibility (originally ignited by Evangelical zeal), and simultaneously highlight a masculine trait of the Hindu character that counters established clichés about the femininity of Indian culture (see Smith 2003). Be it voiced through the language of sensibility, of moral sentiments, or of intellectual detachment, these travelogues' common plea is for sympathetic involvement with the colonial subjects, conceived as pragmatic intervention rather than a sentimental ideology of social inaction – orphan schools, fund-raising, child adoption, female solidarity, etc. This is an ethical and ideological interventionism that may have moments of relapse, but never recedes in the face of failure[9].

[9] Parks provides an ironic account of one of her failed charity experiments. During the Bundel-Khand famine in 1838, she and other Allahabad ladies 'purchased' ten famished girls, and "placed them in a comfortable house, with a school-mistress to instruct them; every care was taken of them, and the ladies of the station attended the school, and superintended their morals. It certainly flourished to a very great degree; they studied the commandment 'increase and multiply and replenish the earth', with so much assiduity, that in a short time all the little girls were in a fair way to becoming mammas […]. It was an annoying failure that experimental school of ours" (Parks 1999, 2: 294-95).

That Anglo-Indian travel writing qualifies for Ricouer's profoundly relational and historicised version of "sympathy and respect" is highly improbable. What appears more plausible is that colonial sympathy operating in a number of literary texts in the Romantic and early-Victorian era was able to preserve its own rhetorical viability because it proved capable of divesting itself of its ecumenical presumptions, and of upholding a more situational stance. Such a shift may have brought sympathy a few steps closer to fulfilling its original commitment: to transcend mere sentimental attunement with the other's feelings through amplification of one's own, and to achieve the standing of a shared ethical praxis through sustained rehearsing of inter-subjective possibilities offered by the complex quality of Anglo-Indian experience. Whether the metamorphosis of sensibility into moral sentiment and hermeneutic practice involves a renovation of the cultural paradigm of sympathy along a trajectory of dismissal of its fundamental ethnocentrism – and exoticism – is a different and still debatable question.

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