

Abstract

This study explores how female authored travel texts and their reviews reveal the diversity of discourses in nineteenth-century Colonial India. By combining reception study and close analysis of two travel narratives, this dissertation aims to offer a new perspective on Victorian Colonial writing, by emphasising Anglophone women's experiences of Anglo-Indian life. Female travel narratives display a complex ambivalence in terms of constricting and situating the female narrative self within the nineteenth-century British discourses of femininity and colonialism. Travel writing therefore provides rich textual materials for exploring the socially, politically, and ideologically complex colonial context. Reading the reviews alongside the travel texts themselves, allows for a reconstruction of the discourses surrounding the Anglophone women travellers' daily interaction with Indian people, and thus further underlines the multiple perspectives on the British colonial project in general, and female colonial writing in particular. The female travel texts that form the basis for the following analysis are Emma Roberts' *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan with Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society* (1835) and Fanny Parks' *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque: During Four-and-Twenty Years in the East With Revelations of Life in the Zenana* (1850). Feminist and post-colonial literary theory forms the theoretical foundation for exploring how these two distinctly different travellers situates their narrative within the colonial space, where Homi Bhabha's dynamic description of the colonial meeting and his work on the third space and cultural hybridisation will be of particular importance. Based on a Marxist feminist perspective, combining reception studies with close-analysis of travel writing serve to uncover the patriarchal power-structures that women were working within and operating against in their contemporary reality, which in turn signals the possibilities and limitations of their writing.

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Introduction

Anglophone Women Writers in India

Travel writing, as a literary genre, is constituted by an extensive, multifaceted corpus of textual material, recording travels of various lengths from different historical eras, as well as from different geographical locations. According to Casey Blanton, these writings “render in words the strange, the exotic, the dangerous, and the inexplicable; they convey information about geography as well as human nature” (2). Thus, travel texts have a significant sociological importance, recording how people understand themselves and the world around them. Tim Youngs further emphasises the genre's relevance, arguing that

Travel writing [...] is the most socially important of all literary genres. It records our temporal and special progress. It throws light on how we define ourselves and on how we identify others. Its construction of our sense of ‘me’ and ‘you’, ‘us’ and ‘them’, operates on individual and national levels and in the realms of psychology, society and economics. (1)

In light of Youngs’ statement, one might argue that there is a certain self-reflective complexity to this particular genre, which makes it a potent source for finding interesting perspectives on life in the ideologically and politically complex space of nineteenth-century Colonial India.

From the 1820s and onwards, the Indian subcontinent was, even more than before, intertwined with Britain and became more clearly situated within the British national consciousness. This was due to various developments such as the “increased use of the overland route via Egypt and the introduction of steam ships”, the “revision of the East India Company’s Charter in 1833”, which allowed for independent immigration to India, “the Afghan War of 1839-42, and the annexation of the Punjab in 1849” (Raza 5). These developments received an increased focus in the British press, and they arguably contributed in bringing “Indian affairs to the forefront of public attention” (Raza 5). Before these technological advancements, India was recognised as more of a conglomeration of different states, but annexations, the overland route, and the building of the Indian railroad contributed to cement a more monolithic image of India in the British people’s imagination.

Moreover, as the century progressed, new technological innovations enabled greater geographic mobility, especially for women. Although both men and women have provided narrative contributions to the genre of travel writing, the general tendency is that the earliest

travel narratives were primarily dominated by men, documenting male travel and exploration. Despite there being some prominent examples of women travelling and recording their ventures in earlier centuries, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montague's *Letters* in the early 1700s, there was a proliferation of female contributions to the genre during the Victorian era (Raza 1). Emma Roberts and Fanny Parks are two of the women that came to India during this period of heightened female migration, and their travel books will be the focus of this study.

As more and more people travelled and settled in India, female travel writers found they could fill a popular demand for the provision of travel books and guiding narratives during this period of heightened Anglo-Indian involvement. One might argue that female authors in India had a special role to play when it came to providing information for a growing British reading public. Rosemary Raza claims that "they were the most reliable reporters of domestic life of Anglo-India, a subject of special interest to women in Britain who had friends or relatives in India, or the prospect of a residence there themselves" (6). This points to a noticeable feature of female travel books, namely how it records domestic and mundane details of every-day life. This focus on the mundane, gives female travel writing a special sociological importance, since it invites the reader into a textual space of contact, where recognisable domestic details are transported to and explored within the different and foreign space of Colonial India. The genre of travel writing is especially suitable for capturing these anecdotal and mundane details of everyday life, since its hybrid generic qualities allow for an eclectic mix of interesting observations, and varied textual descriptions. Carl Thompson shows how travel writing "is a very loose generic label, and has always embraced a bewildering diverse range of material" (11). Often borrowing elements from the memoir, from journalism, guidebooks, and from the novel in terms of its narrative structure, the genre allows for a dynamic and diverse recording of Indian life, both textual and visual through various sketches and diagrams (Youngs 1). In addition, women writers could also lift the veil and provide an inside look into the domestic departments of Indian women in the *Zenanas* and *Harems*, where no male travel writers were allowed to set foot. Being granted access into a world where men were effectively barred, female writers were given a unique role for providing information concerning previously uncharted spaces of India to the British reading public, and thus served an important contribution to British colonial endeavour.

Travel writers in general seem to have difficulty in striking a balance between investigating and being knowledgeable about local conditions, and at the same time being very aware of their status as an outsider. This is doubly important for British women writing about their travels in India because, as Indira Ghose argues, these literary voices represent a

complex ambivalence due to women being "colonised by gender, but colonisers by race" (5). This ambivalence relates to the fact that "women travelers had to negotiate the discursive boundaries of Victorian Britain's ideological sex-role socialization" (Anderson 14), which arguably affects their textual production. Trinh T. Minh-ha claims that it has become nearly impossible for a woman to

take up her pen without at the same time questioning her relation to the material that defines her and her creative work. As focal point of cultural consciousness and social change, writing weaves into language the complex relations of a subject caught between the problems of race and gender and the practice of literature as the very place where social alienation is thwarted differently according to each specific context. (qtd. Anderson 20)

This statement is applicable for female travel writers in the early nineteenth century, since they had to negotiate social conventions concerning what was regarded as suitable feminine enterprise, both in terms of their role as authors, travellers, women, and colonists.

This dissertation is interested in exploring how female authored travel texts and their reviews reveal the diversity of discourses on nineteenth-century British colonial involvement in India. Given the complexity women's travel texts display in terms of recording the construction of a female narrative self within contrasting discursive boundaries of femininity and colonialism, they provide rich textual examples of the heterogeneous experiences of Anglo-Indian life. Emma Roberts' *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan with Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society* (henceforth *Scenes and Characteristics*) (1835) and Fanny Parks' *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque During four-and-twenty years in the East with revelations of the Zenana* (henceforth *Wanderings*) (1850), represent distinctly different approaches to the ambivalent process of feminine self-construction. Reading the female-authored texts in relation to the reviews that surround them, further underlines the multiple perspectives on the British colonial project in general, and female colonial writing in particular. In some ways, reviews set themselves up as arbiters of taste and propriety, and thus gives an appearance of representing a sort of consensus on certain topics. In light of this, female travel texts and their reviews not only capture the diversity of nineteenth-century British Colonialism, it also draws attention to the potential possibilities and limits of female colonial writing.

In order to explore these issues, I will commence by discussing the theoretical foundations for this study. Feminist and post-colonial literary theory, as well as a Foucaultian

discourse analysis will be applied to the reading of these female travel texts. Afterwards, two separate chapters will be dedicated to Emma Roberts' *Scenes and Characteristics* and Fanny Parks' *Wanderings*, focusing on how the narratives position the female self within the discourses of nineteenth-century femininity and imperialism. In order to discuss the ambivalent process of feminine self-construction in the colonial setting, Homi Bhabha's work on cultural hybridity and the "third space" will provide an interesting comparative framework, capturing the complexity of the colonial meeting. For him, the third space is a space of interaction, where the coloniser and the colonised meet and mutually influence each other. The third space and Post-colonial literary theory are often applied to texts written by the formerly oppressed Other, dealing with the ramifications and heritage of imperialism. However, it is relevant to apply this sort of framework to describe Western perspectives on colonialism, especially female experiences, being, in many ways, the oppressed part of an even more basic binary between male "self" and female "Other".

Discourse Analysis and Reception

The overarching methodological foundation for approaching female travel texts and their reviews is through a discussion of discourses and constraints, which are understood in relation to Michel Foucault's work on discourse analysis. In "The order of Discourse" he maps the limitation of literary production. Sara Mills claims that, for Foucault, discourses "become not simply a grouping of written texts within a particular discursive formation, but at one and the same time, the site of struggles for meaning and also a means of constituting humans as individuals" (68). She goes on to argue that "discourses are not anonymous sets of writing which have little effect on people's lives, but they actively constitute us as subjects; individuals have some part to play in this process, both challenging and rewriting some of the positions within discourse" (68). In light of this, discourses are understood as a prevalent collective perception or social metanarrative on certain themes and topics, which invariably affect how individuals understand said topic. As mentioned, reviews seem to set themselves up as arbiters of literary taste and propriety, and could thus be seen as exemplifying certain nineteenth-century discourses. However, when approaching the notion of discourse, it is from a realisation that they are unstable, dynamic entities, ever-changing, and informed by a constantly evolving political, historical, and ideological landscape. Thus, when discussing "the discourses of colonialism" or "discourses of nineteenth-century femininity" there should be an emphasis on the dynamic and plural qualities of these categories, highlighting the impossibility of capturing a precise and stable understanding of what these categories truly

entail. Moreover, reading the reviews in relation to the individual female travel writers' text can provide the modern reader with examples of certain discourses at a certain point in history. Furthermore, situating female travel writing within its discursive boundaries will counter the somewhat reductive critical readings previously performed of female colonial writing, where the critical focus has been placed on discussing the texts' authenticity and truthfulness (see Mills 2-6). Mills' ground-breaking work in *Discourses of Difference* set out to change the parameter of how one approaches female travel texts, and this study aims to take her project one step further, by including a reading of reviews alongside the actual travel narratives themselves.

Using the reviews to recreate the constraints and discourses surrounding Anglophone women travel writers is highly relevant since Mills argues that

women's travel writing cannot be analysed as if the texts originated from one determining factor, such as the author, 'reality', imperialism or femininity, but rather the texts are produced in the interaction and clashing of a variety of constraining factors. Texts are heterogeneous made up of various elements in response to different constraints on the writing process. (69)

There are multiple discourses at work in female travel writing, but for comparative purposes this dissertation will focus on two categories, mainly discourses of colonialism and discourses of femininity. The reviews will provide valuable insight in terms of contextualising the power-structures Roberts' and Parks' texts were operating within and also reacting against. Examining how female travel texts were received and read by the contemporary British audience, thus gives us insight into the gendered, social, textual, and imperial context that surrounds these narratives and affected how they were viewed and hence produced. Monica Anderson argues that "Women's status in imperial society depended on them conforming to accepted standards of female behaviour. Women who transgressed into men's allotted sphere could be labelled both unfeminine and 'unnatural'" (20). The reviews surrounding Parks' and Roberts' books portray the complex layering of gazes involved in female travel texts, where the individual female travel writer's perspective on India interacts and reacts with the British audience's view of female travel and colonial writing. Without accounting for how society and critics viewed female writing within a colonial framework, one might not fully understand why and how these narratives positioned themselves within the contemporary discourse of colonial India, and hence the potential ambivalence displayed in these texts.

The reviews could also give some indication of potential instances of self-censoring, or, in the case of Fanny Parks, the lack thereof. The interaction between the Anglophone female writer and the Indian population is inevitably affected by what society considered acceptable female behaviour. The reviews accompanying these works thus reveal the implicit social power-structures and constraints in the intersection between the Victorian discourses on femininity and colonialism, since they record what happens when the unofficial, domestic third-space interaction between the British female self and colonial India, is transported to the more official sphere of literary publication.

Travel Writing and Feminist Literary Criticism

Considering that the main topic for the following analyses centres on a female authored corpus of material, there is an underlying, feminist literary perspective that serves as one of the main theoretical foundations for this study. Historically speaking, travel could be regarded as a new sort of freedom for the nineteenth-century woman, where new means of transportation could take her across the globe. At the same time, the colonial project enabled women to travel to distant places such as India relatively “risk-free”. Travel thus opens for a possibility for women to construct or fashion a new self, signalled, for example, through clothing, food, and the level of interaction between the Anglophone self and the native Other.

To avoid overgeneralising a more complex social reality, it might be prudent to avoid mapping a clear gender-based division of Victorian society. Many have contrasted the labours of men and women by focusing on a clear-cut division between a female, private or domestic sphere, and a male, public sphere of influence and power. Considering this in relation to the discourse of femininity, one might claim that during the early-to-mid nineteenth-century, travel, exploration, and imperial enterprise mostly fell under the male sphere of influence. A predominant trope for the nineteenth-century woman is that of the “angel in the house”, which is arguably quite static and strongly associated with a sense of immobility. In light of this, discourses of nineteenth-century femininity could be said to put forward static female tropes, influenced by the growing Evangelical middle class’ valuation of female domestic virtue. However, the authors in this study reverses and complicates this feminine immobility, both in terms of undergoing extensive travel and exploration in India, but also in terms of actively partaking in the literary endeavour of portraying life in Anglo-Indian society—a socially and politically dynamic enterprise, formerly dominated by men.

Some feminist critical readings of travel writing tend to look for the distinctly feminine gaze (Ghose; Suleri). The aim of this dissertation is not to suggest that there is

something inherently *different* in female travel narratives, compared to male authored texts. However, one might argue that *the mode of interaction* with natives is somewhat different in male and female travel texts. Interacting with Indian people through any official, professional capacity was a prerogative mostly reserved for British men. Propriety and social convention impeded the majority of middle-class, Victorian women from taking employment outside the home. Furthermore, in the early-and-mid nineteenth century, women were effectively barred from academic and scientific societies such as the Royal Asiatic Society and the Royal Geographic Society. The first female member of the Royal Geographic Society was not elected until 1892 (Anderson 80). Keeping this in mind, one might argue that the mode of interaction between Anglophone women and Indian society were mostly based on a more unofficial and domestically situated interaction. This is mirrored in the extensive focus on exploring India from a domestic and every-day perspective, displayed by the female traveller, often focusing on aspects such as running Anglo-Indian households and depicting domestic living arrangements, especially in the Zenanas where Indian women resided, as well as art, culture, and clothing.

Although potentially transgressing Victorian female boundaries by extensive and unchaperoned travels, most female travel writers from this period show reluctance to associate themselves with any feminist project. However, as Mills argues, many twentieth-century feminist readings of travel writing tend to project contemporary opinions of female liberation onto the Victorian travellers, focusing on the radical woman who, through travel, broke free from the stifling patriarchy of contemporary English society (29). Although this is an interesting perspective that is applicable to many women, one ought to be careful of retaining such a focus, which might lead to a reductive and anachronistic reading of such texts. Moreover, it might also lead to a lack of critical focus directed at the more conservative and ordinary accounts of travellers, who did not undergo “radical” journeys to the absolute periphery of empire, but whom, I argue, still provide compelling and more overtly structured narrative perspectives on female travel and the role of females in the colonial context. “Ordinary women”, who try to operate within, rather than break with, the Victorian norms of propriety, provide valuable insight into the diverse and complex feminine reality in colonial India, though their depiction of every-day life.

Feminist literary theories represent multiple avenues of exploration and different modes of critically examining literature. A gynocritical feminist approach focuses on female authorship in general and how texts written by women were marginalised in their contemporary reality, due to the literary word being dominated by patriarchal structures

(Claudi 166). This area of focus is also shared by a Marxist feminist criticism, which also focuses on power-structures and oppression. Mills emphasises that female travel writers

constructed their text within a range of power nexuses: the power of patriarchy which acted upon them as middle-class women, through discourses of femininity: and the power of colonialism which acted upon them in relation to the people of the countries they describe in their books. It is the convergence and conflict of these two power systems which determines the style and content of women's travel writing. (18)

Considering these complex "power nexuses" of gender-related and racially-defined roles and structures that women had to work within, the importance of focusing not only on what the texts themselves reveal about female colonial agency, but also on the reception they received in the contemporary English press is further emphasised. No text is constructed in hermetic isolation, and contemporary ideas and notions concerning what constitutes suitable feminine pursuits will invariably put its mark on all female public production. Reception thus ties in with the larger discussion of the ambivalence displayed by female travel writers in consolidating their narrative within discourses and constraints in Victorian society, as for example the patriarchal structures that dominated certain genres of literary production in the early nineteenth century, as well as the masculine association connected to travel and exploration.

The reception these texts received might indicate what kind of material the female traveller chose to include, and, perhaps even more interesting, what they chose to exclude. Worly expands on this, claiming that there was a strong sense of tension regarding female travel and travel writing, since travel for women involved "leaving the postulated 'female' sphere [...] limited to the interior realm of and domestic life", resulting in many female travel writers potentially feeling a keen sense of "conflict between their need to fulfil cultural expectations, which viewed them as the weak, passive 'other', and their deliberate entrance, perhaps even escape into a world of danger and difficulty" (qtd. Mills 70). Thus combining a discursive analysis of female travel texts in relation to the social power-structures that surrounds them, might explain any instances of self-censoring found in these books.

Post-Colonial Readings of Female Travel Writing

The complex process of female narrative self-construction in nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian society needs to be considered not only in light of the discourses of femininity, but also the

discourses of colonialism and British imperial expansion. The nineteenth-century discourses of colonial India is, in the following, understood in relation to Edward Said's notion of "Orientalism", which refers to institutionalised or established assumptions and generalisations made by the West about Eastern culture and life (7). Orientalism thus refers to how the West depicted the Orient through romanticised descriptions and often patronising overtones. Ghose argues that "Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism [...] laid the foundation for the notion of the 'white man's burden' to bring enlightenment to the East" (21), and these political and ideological forces shaped the dominant nineteenth-century discourses concerning British presence in Colonial India. Being a British subject in this historical period of imperial expansion, male or female, invariably implied that one had to relate to the politics of colonialism, and for female travel writers, this meant reconciling partly conflicting roles relating to being a woman partaking in travelling, exploring and recording aspects of colonial life.

Furthermore, Ghose has argued that "Travel [...] serves as an ideal paradigm to study the intersection of different axes that construct identity: by locating Western women in other parts of the world, it points out the contradictory position of women as colonized by gender, but colonizers by race" (5). In light of this statement, female travellers represent a rather special, in-between position, both within and outside British colonial administration. Thus reading female travel texts and their reception in light of the prevailing nineteenth-century discourses of both femininity *and* colonialism is necessary, since gender is an integral part of the predominating ideologies of imperialism. This assumption is supported by Lata Mani, who claims that

as the nineteenth century progressed, at a symbolic level, the fate of women and the fate of the emerging nation become inextricably intertwined. Debates on women, whether in context of *sati*, widow remarriage, or *zenanas*, were not merely about women, but also instances in which the moral challenge of colonial rule was confronted and negotiated. In this process women came to represent 'tradition' for all participants: whether viewed as weak, deluded creatures who must be reformed through legislation and education, or the valiant keepers of tradition who must be protected from the first and be permitted only certain kinds of instruction. (152-153)

Mani's argument concerning how debates on native Indian woman became a symbol of the debates concerning the state of empire, is also applicable to the European female in Anglo-

India. The Western female is also laden with symbolic resonance of tradition in the colonial space, since Sara Goodyear Suleri claims that the English woman in India was “a symbolic representative of the joys of an English home; she was the embodiment of all that the Englishman must protect; most significantly, she was a safeguard against the dangers posed by the Eastern woman” (76). In light of this, both the European and the native feminine becomes a complex symbolic signifier of tradition and cultural values within the political space of colonial India, highlighting, again, that the discourses of femininity and colonialism are intertwined during this particular point in history.

Referring to the English woman as a “safeguard” against the Eastern woman, Suleri suggests that there is an inherent separating quality within the designated symbolic value of the Victorian British woman in India. It therefore becomes particularly intriguing to map how the female travel writers record the interaction between the self and the Other. Ghose claims that “The constitution of self [...] always hinges on the setting up of a ‘self-consolidating Other’, which in the case of women travellers was particularly represented by the ‘other’ woman” (8). As mentioned, female travel writers tend to devote large sections of their texts to depicting the native Indian female and their living situations in the Zenanas. Gayatri Spivak and her work in the groundbreaking essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, serves as a relevant theoretical insurgence for discussing this feminine focus of female travel writing. Her main interest lies in nuancing and complicating the notion of the Other, or the group often referred to as the “colonised” (Claudi 203). She is concerned with showing that this is not a homogenous entity, but that it rather consists of different marginalised groupings, situated on the fringes of colonial administration, resulting in a lack of power of self-definition. Colonised women serve as the most prominent example of the subaltern. Given female travel writers’ interest in depicting Oriental women, it is relevant to consider how writers, such as Parks, attempt to bring the subaltern to the foreground of the British public’s attention. Furthermore, the designation of “subaltern” can be expanded to include the Anglophone traveller, which provides an additional dimension to Emma Roberts’ discussion of unmarried European women in Anglo-Indian society. Although in no ways as marginalised and objectified as the nineteenth century Oriental female, Western women could also be said to fall somewhat outside the power-structures of colonial administration.

Another post-colonial theoretical insurgence that provides a relevant theoretical foundation for reading female travel texts is, as mentioned, Homi Bhabha and his work on cultural hybridity and the third space. As mentioned Bhabha provides a complex and dynamic perspective on colonial interaction, and his discussion of cultural hybridity goes beyond the

colonial binary between coloniser and colonised. Bhabha describes the process of cultural hybridity as a process that “gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (Rutherford “Interview with Homi Bhabha” 211). He goes on to claim that “the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather, hybridity [...] is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to merge” (Rutherford 211). Bhabha’s description of the colonial meeting is more dialogic and dynamic than that suggested by Said. In the third space—the meeting-point between the self and the Other—the clear separation between colonised and coloniser is destabilised, resulting in a form of cultural ambivalence on both sides. In this space of mutual influence, hybrid expressions of identity might emerge, which cannot easily be located on either side of a “colonial dichotomy” (Bhabha 25). For the purpose of clarification, when referring to the “Oriental Other”, I am aware of the dangers of imposing a supposedly unified voice, instead of capturing the reality, which is that there “can be no coherent, authentic other [...] only a plurality of voices” (Ghose 146). Although using terms such as “the self” and the “Other” for simplistic and comparative purposes, this dissertation recognises that “the other is as little a unified subject position as the self” (Ghose 146).

Women such as Emma Roberts and Fanny Parks represent a more unofficial mode of travel and exploration compared to Mary Carpenter, who had a more clearly defined purpose to her travels, being associated with the Evangelical missionary project. It is worth considering whether female travellers’ lack of “official status” gives them a more genuine opportunity for engaging in third-space interactions, especially in terms of being granted access to the *Zenana*—a world men could not enter due to their gender, and also to their more official status as colonial authorities. However, travel writing and recording the details of Indian everyday life, might be considered one of the most obvious arenas of female colonial agency (Leask 240-41), which complicates the potential “unofficial advantages” of the unprofessional female travel writer. Collecting, mapping and recording the specificity of other cultures might be considered central aspects of colonialism as a way of owning, understanding, and potentially dominating the Other, and might thus inherently complicate any dialogic cultural interaction. However, for comparative purposes, one can use the third space as a foundation for comparing how distinctly different female travel writers engage with India in different ways, and how the reviews surrounding their books show what happens when these individuals’ meetings with India are transported to the more public space of textual publication.

When discussing how female travel narratives tentatively engage with the third space, the aesthetics of the picturesque is worth some consideration. The picturesque is understood in terms of being an aesthetic mode of representation that relies on the visual or pictorial depictions of landscapes or scenes that holds elements of both the sublime and the beautiful. This is understood as an intermixture between romantic scenery and sudden intermissions of striking elements, such as temple ruins (Encyclopaedia Britannica). Although not being an exclusively feminine mode of description, the picturesque was still considered especially suitable for women (Leask 220). Moreover, it could be regarded as an oppositional aesthetic mode of representation to the third space, foregrounding distanced, static observation rather than dialogic and dynamic interaction. It is interesting to consider how Roberts and Parks position themselves between the somewhat contrasting roles of the picturesque observer, and the third-space interactor.

Furthermore, “Colonial Mimicry” is another notion put forth by Bhabha that will enrich the readings of how Roberts and Parks construct a narrative female self within the context of Anglo-India. Mimicry refers to a Western “desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is *almost the same, but not quite*” (Bhabha 86). However, there is a dislocation between desire and reality, which leads to a profound discomfort and anxiety as the self is mirrored back through the body of the Other (86). Mimicry often denotes how the marginalised Other appropriates the language of the coloniser, making something distinctly new in a process of taking back the power of definition and countering a one-way interaction. However, expanding the definition of mimicry, one sees how it could be applicable to describe the process of Anglophone female travellers’ self-construction as an authorial persona, coloniser, traveller and woman, appropriating male-dominated modes of expression through travel and exploration.

Chapter 1 Emma Roberts' *Scenes and Characteristics*: English Femininity in Anglo-India

Emma Roberts is a good example of the industrious female travel writer, who succeeded in making a name for herself in literary circles both at home and abroad. Born in England in 1793, Roberts travelled to India in 1827 to accompany her sister who was married to a Bengal Army officer (Leask 220). After Roberts' death, the *Gentleman's Magazine* celebrated her authorship, claiming that she was a "lady distinguished by her writings" (544). In addition to publishing two separate travel books recording her time in India, and a collection of poetry, she also moved to Calcutta after her sister's death to edit the *Oriental Observer* (Leask 220). Roberts' body of artistic work demonstrates how women travellers provided esteemed contributions to the discourse of empire.

In the introductory remarks of her three volume book *Scenes and Characteristics*, she justifies her publication by noting that "The popularity obtained, both in England and in India by a series of papers which appeared in the *Asiatic Journal*, has led to their republication in a separate form" (n.p.). Already in the introduction Roberts asserts herself as an authority on Indian affairs, noting her own popularity as an author of these Anglo-Indian sketches, which she hopes will "afford information upon the subject of Native and Anglo-Indian society" (n.p.). This is central to Roberts' construction of her authorial self. Considering that Roberts' book is produced for publication from the onset, she appears to be a stronger self-proclaimed author compared to Fanny Parks, who in her introduction gives a more humble justification for the personal style of her observations, claiming that her sketches were letters posted to her mother. *The Literary Gazette* emphasises Roberts' authorial experience, arguing that she has "unusual advantages", being "already accustomed to composition, she knew the value of lucid arrangement, and was able to express what she felt" (522). Furthermore, Roberts places herself alongside other published material on India, by including a paragraph from the *Calcutta Paper* in her introduction, which finds her depictions of India to be "Light, animated, and graphic, [her sketches] describe manners and people with spirit, and scenery with a tone of poetical feeling which alone can do justice to the magnificence of the Eastern World. We hope she will be induced to collect them in a volume, and a delightful one it will be" (n. p.). Roberts uses the critics' reactions as justification for her further writing, constructing herself to be a well-received authority on India.

In addition to illustrating Roberts' authorial self-construction, *Scenes and Characteristics* demonstrates the ambivalent process of a more general feminine self-

construction in the colonial context. This is best exemplified in her constant negotiation between compliance and rejection of what one might call rather conservative notions of nineteenth century, British femininity, highlighted through her discussion of marriage, clothing and female leisure activities. Also central to her narrative self-fashioning, is her consolidation of the somewhat conflicting positions between being a tentative engager with India and a distanced, picturesque observer. At times, Roberts seems to be located firmly within the sphere of the coloniser, providing distanced generalisations about the native community, while she at other times attempts to challenge classical Orientalist tropes to provide a more nuanced depiction of colonial life.

1.1 Marriage in India and the Anglo-Indian Spinster

Considering Roberts' narrative in terms of the nineteenth-century discourses of femininity, she does, at times, enforce a rather conservative view of the 'feminine proper', while attempting to paint a more nuanced picture of the Anglo-Indian woman, especially the unmarried sister. Despite female travel writing's tendency of foregrounding the Oriental feminine and her domestic living conditions in the Zenanas, Roberts is mainly focused on providing "Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society". Although "Anglo-India" consisted of people with Eurasian, Europeans and Indian heritage, Roberts mainly employs this designation to refer to the Western population. Her European or British focus is perhaps not surprising, considering that her implied audience mostly consists of English people, especially women, destined to travel or move to the colonies. *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* supports this assumption, claiming that the subject of marriage has been "placed at the beginning of her first volume, well knowing that it would prove by far the most interesting to the large majority of female readers" (294). Roberts' foregrounding of the Western female could therefore be read as a conscious and strategic choice by a skilled author, who knows which formal and structural elements will best ensure her commercial success.

Roberts' interest in the feminine is recognised by *The Quarterly Review*, noting that "The state of female society at Calcutta, and more especially [...] fair damsels who come under the designation of 'bridal candidates,' no doubt occupied the early attention of Miss Roberts, and one of her most amusing chapters is devoted to this subject" (178-179). Roberts seems to be using colonial India as the backdrop for exploring and probing the Western or British discourse of femininity. On the topic of marriage, she notes that

Many young women [...] may be considered almost homeless; their parents or friends have no means of providing for them except by matrimonial

establishment; they feel that they are burthens upon families who can ill afford to support them, and they do not consider themselves at liberty to refuse an offer, although the person proposing may not be particularly agreeable to them. (1: 25)

Roberts' observations here suggest that the harshness and lack of control for women in the "marital marketplace" is made more acute as it is transported to the foreign setting of colonial India. Being far from home, women seem to have even less opportunity to refuse an offer of marriage. Using terms such as "importation" of women, and describing young, newly arrived ladies as being "destined to be sacrificed to some old, dingy, rich, bilious nawaub" (1: 14), Roberts appears to be, implicitly, commenting on the limited space for female, colonial agency, highlighting how women's presence in colonial India is inextricably linked to the institution of marriage. This assumption is further supported by *Leigh Hunt's London Journal*, claiming that "there is little to deter a young lady from embarking on [Anglo-Indian life], provided only she can accomplish matrimony" (294). Thus, happiness and success for women in India only seem to be an option for those who have managed to secure a husband.

However, Roberts' focus on dispelling potential misconceptions of European marriages could be read as a warning against female travel motivated by consumerism. Priya Shah explains how luxury "commodities had long been associated with the East" (33), and highlights that "a good deal of the essays, travel narratives and domestic manuals published on the subject of India in the first half of the nineteenth century imagine their readership to be young men and women contemplating coming to India to make fortunes" (32). Roberts warns young men and women against travelling to India in the hopes of getting rich, claiming that "The golden age has passed away in India" (1: 15). Her specific focus on marriage indicates that she is especially eager to warn young women against travelling to accumulate wealth. This assumption is further supported by Shah, who claims that there is a "gendered logic" (33) to the Western desire for luxury items in the nineteenth century, where "British men come to India to accumulate wealth, British women come to India to marry men who have accumulated wealth" (33). Roberts' project of writing about marriage in India can therefore be regarded as an attempt of nuancing and disillusioning her audience's romanticised Orientalist image of colonial life. From a position of experience, she attempts to paint a more realistic depiction of the situation in India, especially for women, who often did not have direct access to capital to secure their return to England should their plans of matrimony surmount to nothing.

The danger of travelling to India to accumulate wealth through marriage is further emphasised in Roberts' description of the unmarried woman in Anglo-Indian society. The *Quarterly Review* notes that "Miss Roberts speaks with very peculiar sensitiveness of feeling" (180) when describing the forlorn state of the poor relative that accompanies a beloved sister to Eastern territories, only to find that she has no means of providing for her return to England. On the topic of unmarried Western women in India, Roberts tells us that

Soon after their arrival in India, the family, in all probability, have to travel to an up-country station,—and her the poor girl's trouble begins...she discovers that she is a source of continual expense; that an additional person in a family imposes the necessity of keeping several additional servants, and where there is not a close carriage she must remain a prisoner. She cannot walk beyond the garden or the verandah, and all the out-of-door recreations, in which she may have been accustomed to indulge in at home, are denied her. (1: 26)

Again, this suggests that being in India causes a heightened sense of acuteness of feminine distress, mostly felt by those not conforming to the norm of the "successful", married woman. Moreover, by emphasising the distress of the spinster, Roberts further underlines the potential danger of female travel for economic gain—alluding to the almost captive state of the women not managing to secure a wealthy husband.

Furthermore, by providing a sympathetic depiction of the sometimes overlooked unmarried woman, Roberts gives a rather nuanced depiction of female Anglo-Indian society, recognising that there are different classes of women, with different predicaments living within Colonial India. In addition, she classifies unmarried Western women into three categories, mainly the "daughters of civil and military servants", "sisters and near relatives of those who have married Indian officers", and "orphan daughters" (1: 31- 32). This again, highlights Roberts' project of providing a more nuanced image of Anglo-Indian femininity. Moreover, her discussion of the unmarried Western female can be read in relation to Spivak's work on the subaltern. By including this nuanced and realistic depiction of feminine life in Anglo-Indian society, Roberts is foregrounding certain, often dismissed, categories of women in the British public's imagination. It is plausible to view the spinster Anglo-Indian sister as a kind of subaltern, since Roberts shows how this group of women lives on the fringes of British colonial administration. For example, when describing why sisters are invited to travel with their married relatives to India, she notes that "The husband is usually desirous to lessen the regret of his wife at quitting her home, by persuading an affectionate relative to

accompany her, and does not calculate beforehand the expense and inconvenience which he has entailed upon himself by the additional burthen” (1: 26). The unmarried female is described as a burden, and as an object that is meant to “lessen the regret” of the wife that has to leave England. Therefore, when failing to acquire a husband, women seem to lose their subject position in Anglo-Indian society. Furthermore, it is worth noting how Roberts describes the spinster sister as a “prisoner”, showing how little room for individual agency these women were granted, due to lack of social standing and economic freedom.

1.2 The Impossibility of Performing English Femininity in Colonial India

Despite criticising the notion of marriage and the treatment of the unmarried British woman, Roberts aligns herself with a conservative view of femininity in her descriptions of what happens when British femininity as it is transported to the “Othered” space of Colonial India. One of the things she notices is that

The dresses of the ladies have very little pretensions to splendour compared to the displays of the toilette in the capital of Europe. Many during warm weather dispense with bonnets and wear their hair in the plainest manner: circumstances which, though rendered almost necessary by the climate, detract from the general effect. (1: 13)

This outward deterioration of propriety also links to a deterioration of manners, represented in the popular mode of repose amongst European gentlemen when riding in their carriages, of resting their feet on the door, which Roberts finds rather distasteful (1: 13). Her comments here suggest that the climate of India threatens the upholding of proper English codes of dress and manner, and is thus potentially a threatening space for conservative British values. These concerns are shared by other female travellers in India, such as Emily Eden, who, in one of her letters, comments that “their poor dear manners are utterly gone – jungled out of them” (qtd. Poon 458).

The deterioration of manners and morals was an important concern that occupied the British public’s discussion of nineteenth-century India. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* uses Roberts’s observations as a framework for warning their readers against the immorality of India, urging to “keep, if possible, the innocent and the young from a land where they may return with wealth in their coffers, but stripped of all those qualities which would enable them to use it with generosity and justice to their fellow creatures” (608). This extract draws attention to the concern with the morally corruptive nature of India, perhaps especially

connected to the aforementioned consumerism and the dangers of travelling for economic gain. This concern with moral degradation is especially linked to women, since they, according to Suleri, were symbolic custodians of tradition, and represent English traditional values that needed to be protected and preserved (76). Viewing the feminine as associated with tradition, can account for Roberts' description of the conservative nature of the Western feminine community in Calcutta. Roberts describes how rigid the social system of Calcutta had been in former days, and still were in her own time, noting the tendency of

every arrival being obliged to submit to the customs of the colony. The great influx of strangers at Calcutta has effected some change in the system; visitors are not now so much under the control of the leading people; they appear in whatever may be the fashion in England; and instead of, as heretofore, being obliged to rip off the silver trimmings from their dresses, or discard them altogether, to avoid the appellation of *nautch girls*, they are allowed to sparkle and glitter without provoking many invidious remarks. (3: 75-76)

This indicates that conservative discourses of British femininity are intensified when transported to the political space of Colonial India. The strict conservatism of Anglo-Indian female society could be read as a technique to pre-empt and counter the contemporary concern of moral degradation of the British in India. It is worth noting that most of Roberts' discussions concerning femininity and colonial interaction centre on observations on clothing, which is also the case in many of Fanny Parks' observations. This might be attributed to the fact that clothing is the most apparent outward signifier of social and cultural belonging.

Not only is the Indian climate hindering the upholding of proper dress and moral codes, Roberts also describes the impossibility of upholding and performing typical British female leisure activities in India:

Tending flowers, that truly feminine employment is an utter impossibility; the garden may be full of plants [...] in all the abundance and beauty of native luxuriance, but except before the sun has risen, or after it has set, they are not to be approached; and even then, the flame is too completely enervated by the climate to admit of those little pleasing labours. She might be condemned to a long melancholy sojourn at some out-station, offering little society, and none to her taste. If she should be musical, so much the worse; the hot winds have split her piano and her guitar, or the former is in a wretched condition, and there is nobody to tune it; the white ants have demolished her music books, and new

ones are not to be had. Drawing offers a better resource, but it is too often suspended from want of materials; and needle-work is not suited to the climate. Her brother and sister are domestic, and do not sympathize in her ennui; they either see little company, or invite guests merely with a view to be quit of an incumbrance. (1: 26-27)

This passage is particularly interesting since it gives the reader a notion of what was considered suitable female employments according to the nineteenth-century Western discourses of femininity. Sewing, gardening, playing music and drawing are considered female virtues, and are thus vital acts of performing female Englishness. In this excerpt, Roberts suggests that India, mostly due to its climate, makes it impossible to be *feminine*, and to perform this sort of English femininity that she wishes to be associated with. Thus, Roberts seems to align herself with a rather conservative Western display on femininity, not wanting to appropriate part of native clothing to accommodate the stifling climate, for example. On the contrary, Roberts rather celebrates how Anglo-Indian ladies, “much to their credit be it spoken, in the wildest jungles [...] endeavour to make an appearance suitable to their rank and circumstances” (1: 19) although owning that “this is [...] a matter of great difficulty”, mostly because “Articles of British manufacture are exceedingly expensive [...] the climate [...] is exceedingly injurious to wearing apparel, and much waste and destruction is effected by the want of care of native dealers, who do not understand the method of preserving European manufactures from dust and decay” (1: 19-20). As mentioned, travel represents an opportunity to construct and fashion a new self. Roberts’ narrative shows that she is more interested in upholding a conservative, Western self in India, rather than using interactions with India and its people as a basis for creating a hybrid new self-expression.

However, her feminine self-construction is ambivalent, since she salutes highly conservative displays of feminine clothing, while at the same time criticises the dreariness of Western female costumes displayed at balls and dinners, a situation she believes

will prevail, so long as the female residents of India prefers the faded manufactures of Europe to the gorgeous fabrics of oriental looms. At fancy-balls, where the products of the country are rendered available, the difference of the effect is astonishing; instead of being confined within the narrow limits prescribed by the last bulletins from London and Paris, fancy and talent have free scope; and in no assemblage of the kind could more magnificent groups be

found than those which have made their appearance at Government-house. (3: 80)

In light of this, Roberts' narrative construction of the self seems to be torn between being a representative of the strict conservative British feminine, while also criticising and opposing the absurdity of this conservative obsession with appropriating all aspects British, even when there is opportunity for improvement. In this excerpt, the European dress is associated with a sort of narrow outdatedness, which refuses to adapt to a changing environment—perhaps an implicit, but potent image of the British in India overall. The Oriental in this passage is presented as a vibrant and creative contrast that could improve the outdated European apparel. There is thus a sense that although Roberts will identify herself in accordance with the classic feminine tropes of Western femininity, dressing according to her rank, sewing and partaking in all aspects considered proper for the British female, her travels to India and her interactions with Anglo-Indian society opens for a certain reconsideration of the discourses of femininity, both in terms of clothing, but also in terms of the strict social control and desubjectification of the spinster.

1.3 Emma Roberts: Third-space Interactor or Picturesque Observer?

One might argue that a prerequisite for all observations and discussions Roberts enters into, is her experiences in the Othered space of colonial India, and her interactions with the native population. However, Roberts' feminine self-construction seems to hinge on avoiding the more dialogic and cultural hybrid meetings with India, which complicates reading her work in relation to Bhabha's notion of the third space. Angela Poon discusses, in an analysis of Emily Eden's *Letters*, how Eden, through various rhetorical techniques, textually performs Englishness. Poon argues that "In colonial discourse [...] performance of national identity is linked inextricably to being a discerning spectator", who "confidently sees (through and knows the Indian Other)" (454-55). She goes on to claim that "Eden's construction of an English subjectivity [is] locatable in the interstices between different degrees of witnessing colonial rule in action, knowing imperial duty and ironic self-monitoring" (456). This interplay between distant observation and partaking in everyday life in Indian society is also applicable to Roberts' *Scenes and Characteristics*. Her reliance on the aesthetic of the picturesque enforce a distance between the observer and India (Leask 225), complicating further any interaction with the native community. Roberts employs the voyeuristic gaze, to create a sort of stabile, fixed, view of India and its inhabitants, and to create narrative

boundaries between herself and the native Other. For example, she provides an almost panoramic description of the social scene of a ball-room. Resting her gaze on an assembly of native ladies, she recognises that “the effect of a well-filled ball-room is much heightened when the company is not exclusively composed of Europeans. The dress of the Armenian ladies is picturesque and striking” (3: 80). These rather generalised observations bears similarity to the typical picturesque landscape depiction, where the native attire here provides a desired edge to the scene, representing the noticeable feature amidst the European displays of beauty. Thus, Roberts as the picturesque observer records both the social and geographical landscape of colonial India, but from a somewhat distanced position.

Roberts has a tendency of interspersing her narrative with generalised comments concerning both Indian women and men. At times, Roberts tentatively engages with the third space, but these interactions seem to unsettle her. In her lengthy conversations about marriage in India, it is predominantly the Western social codes concerning matrimony she is commenting on. However, she does make a few general remarks about native matrimony as well, noting “That native women do not consider their seclusion from the world as any hardship is plainly evinced by the mode of life which they voluntarily adopt on becoming wives of Englishmen” (2: 57). This exemplifies of the sort of sweeping assumptions made by Roberts on the basis of distant social observation, indicating, perhaps, that she had little intimate interaction with native women, apart from servants. Although it being a seemingly general remark, one can read Roberts’s description of the self-inflicted seclusion of Zenana-women, as an expression of Indian female agency. Many Victorian female travellers deemed the seclusion of Indian women as immoral and inhumane, painting a rather dismal picture of their existence (Ghose 61). Roberts does not seem to subscribe to this mode of sentimentalising the suffering of Indian women, underlining that this is ultimately their own choice. However, *The Quarterly Review* sees this as Roberts showing a lack of nuance, and even accuses her of being rather hypocritical in her depiction of native women. It states that

We cannot concur in Miss Roberts’s opinion, that Asiatic women consider it no hardship to be shut up as they are [...]. That the females who reside with Europeans voluntarily continue to seclude themselves [...] merely shows that they submit to the rules of propriety, which regulate the only society with which they are acquainted. (194)

The review goes on to link Indian women’s submission to social etiquette to that of unmarried Western women, claiming that “Miss Emma Roberts may think it hard that she cannot go to a

ball or a play without putting herself under charge of some married ladies of her acquaintance—but she submits to the conventional rules in these cases” despite feeling “the hardship of being subjected to the restraint” (194). This comment challenges Roberts’ perception of English femininity as something separate from the Oriental Other, pointing to the similarities between the two representations of femininity, in terms of both being bound by the same social restrictions. It is curious that Roberts do not herself recognise these similarities between the Eastern and Western subaltern, since she shows noteworthy critical nuance when pointing to the restriction placed upon the unmarried Western women residing in India.

Another instance where Roberts establishes distance between herself and India is in her description of the Eurasian community. She seems quite sceptical towards the Eurasian female, commenting that

The prejudice against ‘dark beauties’ (the phrase usually employed to designate those who are inheritors of the native complexion) are daily gaining ground, and in the present state of female intellectuality, their uncultivated minds form a decided objection. The English language has degenerated in the possession of the ‘country-born;’ their pronunciation is short and disagreeable, and they usually place the accent on the wrong syllable. (1: 33)

The criticism directed at the Eurasian woman here, can be read as a typical trope of colonial racism, something Lionel Caplan argues is a characteristic trait of nineteenth-century discourses of Colonial India (866). Roberts seems to be aligning herself with the general concern issued by missionaries, such as Mary Carpenter, who believed that the lack of female education was one of the main aspects holding India back compared to Europe, justifying her own and others’ project of educating native women. This again shows how issues relating to the feminine become the symbolic ground for debates on larger concerns relating to the justification of empire (Mani 152-153; Suleri 76).

Roberts’ scepticism towards the degeneration of the English language expressed in the excerpt above can be read as an expression of her scepticism to cultural hybridity, and her uneasiness when faced with colonial mimicry (Bhabha 86). As mentioned, Bhabha identifies the discomfort and potential anxiety felt by the coloniser as the self is mirrored back through the Other, in an expression that is “*almost the same but not quite*” (89). If read as such, Roberts’ scepticism towards the Eurasian female, in addition to her lack of interaction with native women in general, could be seen as an expression of her colonial anxiety. However,

Roberts' self-identification as a Western intellectual female is dependent on the Eurasian woman being the "self-consolidating other" she can compare herself with (Ghose 8). Thus Roberts' performance of Englishness is, in part, dependent on a certain interaction with the native Other, although she seems to regulate this interaction by setting up self-constructed space between herself and the native community.

In her numerous descriptions of Indian cemeteries, Roberts seems to express both a concrete and symbolic fear of cultural interaction and hybridity. These sections represent a peculiar addition to her travel narrative. She writes that "Strangers, visiting our Eastern territories, cannot fail to be impressed with painful feelings, as they survey the gloomy spectacles appropriated to those Christians who are destined to breathe their last in exile" (2: 34). She goes on to show that the cemeteries are

over-crowded, and many exhibit the most frightful features of a charnel-house, dilapidated tombs, rank vegetation, and unburied bones withering in the wind. The trees are infested with vultures and other hideous carrion-birds; huge vampire-bats [...] wolves and jackals [...] tearing up the bodies interred without the expensive precautions necessary to secure them from such frightful desecration. (2: 34-35)

Descriptions of these dreary cemeteries might be regarded as an example of the picturesque, where the serene beauty of the Indian scenery is suddenly disrupted by the striking features of dilapidated tombs. However, these sudden, dismal descriptions of burial places stands in sharp contrast to the light descriptions that predominate the larger part of the book, and could thus be read as an expression of a genuine ambivalence towards cultural immersion. This anxiety is further underlined by her inclusion of rather lengthy melancholic stories about English people dying in India, and how little help the natives provide in their last hour of need. One of these stories describe a British wife having to watch over "the fast decaying remains" of her husband lying dead on the side of the road, since the poor woman found it "impossible to induce [her Indian servants] to touch the body" (2: 46). These episodes might be read as a cautionary warning, meant to disillusion the men or women contemplating moving to India based on the romantic preconception of it being a place where fast and easy accumulation of wealth is the norm. However, these rather morbid sections can be read as an expression of Roberts' own profound personal fear of a symbolic cultural hybridisation. Roberts seems genuinely unsettled by the prospect of engaging in the final, symbolic third-space interaction, where the English body is mixed with the Indian soil.

Despite there being examples of Roberts establishing boundaries between herself and the native community, she does, at times, suggest a more inclusive, third-space interaction. As mentioned, the whole prerequisite for her observations and her writing is based on *some* form of engagement between herself and India. In the sections describing how colonial administration facilitates intercultural exchange between Europeans and Indians, Roberts notes that “some of the barriers which have divided persons of different persuasions and different complexions from each other, have been broken down, and are disappearing” (3: 81). Here it seems as though Roberts is welcoming a new space for intercultural interaction. However, her understanding of what constitutes an inclusive space is not as dialogic and open as first assumed, but rather narrow in terms of gender and class:

A few native gentlemen, which have either adopted English customs, or are so well acquainted with them as not to be guilty of any misapprehension or mistake, have for many years mingled freely in the fashionable circles of Calcutta, making their appearance at private parties, and joining in the subscriptions for public amusements; they were distinguished in large assemblies for the elegance of their costume, and the splendour of their diamonds. (3: 82)

This latter excerpt shows Roberts being clearly situated within the sphere of the coloniser, remarking that it is only the native *gentlemen* who have “adopted English customs” that might be advantageous to interact with. She goes on to argue that

Asiatics offend [in social settings], and constant intercourse can alone render them acquainted with the terms upon which gentlemen mix in respectable female society. It is certainly not very agreeable to be obliged to give the lesson; but the consequences are too important to be neglected. (3: 83-84)

Moving from a position of welcoming increased intercultural engagement, this latter excerpt reinstates clear distance between Roberts and the Other. The interaction here is constructed in a hierarchal, didactic relationship where Roberts envisions herself as the “colonial teacher” and the Asiatic Other as her “teachable object”. This selective and hierarchal mode of cultural interaction contrasts the dialogic nature of the third space. For Bhabha, the colonial meeting consists of some level of mutual cultural interaction and mutual influence, but in Roberts’ description there seems to be no recognition of the potential advantages of a dialogic exchange of experiences or meaning with Indian people. Although tentatively engaging in a few potential third-space interactions, as for example her discussions of marriage, clothing

and social gatherings, these meetings unsettle her, and she ultimately retreats into the distant role of picturesque observer. Nigel Leask argues that “The rise of the ‘purely picturesque’ literary and touristic travelogue [...] empowered women writers unwilling to ‘ask men’s questions’” (220). This might explain why Roberts aligns herself with a more conservative, “safe” mode of female colonial writing, where the distanced observations of the picturesque provide a particularly suitable alternative for women who did not want to engage in more culturally transgressive interactions.

1.4 Contemporary readings of Emma Roberts’ *Scenes and Characteristics*

The numerous reviews concerning Roberts’s *Scenes and Characteristics*, might be considered as a finding in itself, emphasising her contemporary relevance and popularity. Most of the reviews praise Roberts’s narrative for being a clever and instructive piece of writing that serves a clearly didactic purpose, as well as provides its readers with amusing details. *The Athenæum* notes that

This is the work of a lively and clever lady; shrewd in all social and domestic matters, with an eye for the picturesque, and a taste for whatever is striking and peculiar. [...] Our authoress handles no such momentous subjects as change of empire and perplexity of monarchs; yet she meddles with matters quite as delicate and perilous. She has made it her business to lift the veil from domestic life in the East. (614-15)

Roberts is, in the abovementioned excerpt, deemed as somewhat of a female expert on Indian affairs. Her focus is that of unveiling Eastern living, and she is celebrated for her domestic and feminine area of interest. This exemplifies how mundane details of Indian daily life were recognised as authentic and important contributions to the literature of empire. Furthermore, this highlights the distinctly feminine features of colonial literature, which was not expected to deal with grave topics and scientific discourse, but to focus on moral, domestic and social affairs. This focus on mundane details is considered a strength of female travel writing, suggesting that women were expected to write within certain topics and frameworks.

The Eclectic Review goes on to argue that “the Author’s observations and recollections, are of a light and desultory nature, such as we might expect to find in the familiar correspondence of a clever and accomplished woman who united feminine tact and minuteness of observation with the masculine tone acquired by travel” (415). This indicates that the reviewer is operating with a clear preconception of what is considered suitable and

expected elements of female travel writing. Female-authored travel accounts are empowered by their light and desultory nature, which *The Monthly Review* emphasises, claiming that “Our lady travellers have so much observation, and are so faithful and vivid in their descriptions, that we much prefer their accounts to those of our male acquaintances” (669). There is power and relevance, as well as authenticity in the descriptions of daily life, which has sociological importance, since it provided the average British reader with information about India, without overwhelming them with complex scientific information. However, expecting female authored texts to be light and amusing, also binds authors to certain standards and expectations. *The Eclectic Review* explicitly states that travel is associated with masculinity, and that Roberts’ minuteness of observation and feminine tact manages to ‘save her’ narrative by restoring it to the realm of femininity. As mentioned, Roberts is a rather self-aware author, and it is not unconceivable that her formal choices and foregrounding of certain topics have been carefully selected to comply with discursive constraints of female colonial writing.

Furthermore, *The Eclectic Review*’s comment that her book is “light”, as of “familiar correspondence” (415), is comparable to Roberts’ own introduction, which clearly states that her intentions for publishing this book is to share her knowledge on Indian affairs with the British public. The critic’s description of the book as light and almost informal could therefore be seen as undermining Roberts’ authorial self-fashioning. In light of this, one might argue that the reviews signal a dislocation between how the individual female views her project, and how the critics perceive her, both in terms of being a female author, but also as a woman partaking in the discourse of colonialism. This dislocation of perspectives on the female traveller’s project is further exemplified by *The Quarterly Review*, as it claims that Roberts had “peculiar advantages” being “unencumbered by domestic duties” (176). Interestingly, the critic sees Roberts not being married or having children as an advantageous lack of domestic commitment, which allows her greater freedom to travel and explore. However, Roberts’ own description of the state of the unmarried female in Anglo-Indian society, comparing them to prisoners, shows that she regards being unmarried as a disadvantage that complicates the female existence. Again, this implies that the critic’s perspective on the female traveller’s project contrasts how the author views this herself.

Another interesting observation on the reviews is that they value the importance of Roberts’ book in terms of its moral manifest. *The Eclectic Review*, for example, argues that *Scenes and Characteristics* gives “a correct and vivid idea of those scenes which [...] compose so large and essential a part of the moral picture, but which are overlooked, or passed over as too minute and trivial by politicians, statistics, and scientific travellers” (414-

15). It is worth considering that the reviews are representatives of their own particular ideological and political discourses. According to the *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism* (henceforth DNCJ), *The Eclectic Review* was a periodical known for its religious sentiment, being “founded by a group of evangelical leaders, both clergy and laity, as a non-profit journal with revenues allotted to various missionary societies” (188). This could shed some additional light on why the review particularly praises Roberts’ moral commentaries.

However, other reviews also understand female travel writing’s importance in terms of the moral commentary it provides on Indian life. *The Literary Gazette*, for example, argues that “The moral and social position of this vast and important empire has been completely neglected” (522). The DNCJ argues that the *Gazette*’s “reviews could make or break a novel’s fortune” (366), which exemplifies how forces beyond the author influences and affect literary production. The review suggest that travel writers in nineteenth-century India, and perhaps especially female travel writers, were expected to take a firm moral stance towards certain aspects of society. Poon further supports this assumption, arguing that

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, including, as Sara Mills has noted, ‘moral knowledge’. It follows that any claim to viable knowledge was also productively assessed in connection with another powerful gesture of self-authorisation for women writers – the (successful) performing of Englishness. (454)

The critics’ expectation of female travel texts to provide moral commentary, might be linked to the previous discussion of Roberts and the third space. It is worth considering whether it was actually possible for the ambitious female travel writer to partake in any genuine interaction between the self and the Other, without sacrificing her own commercial success. Writing something that directly contrasts the British public’s conception of colonialism, would be highly difficult, especially for women, being already on the fringes of official colonial administration.

In light of this, one might argue that the reviews highlight the potential limitations of female colonial writing. *The Eclectic Review* concludes their reading of Roberts’ book, noting that “From graver topics she has abstained; and we do not feel disposed to blame her for her reserve, but cordially recommend her volumes” (431). What constitutes “graver topics” is not clear, but one might speculate that it involves critical questioning of colonial administration

and controversial topics such as native religion and superstition. It is also worth noting that while accepting and even perhaps celebrating Roberts' silence on certain graver topics, *The Quarterly Review*, as discussed previously, briefly criticises Roberts for not giving a more detailed and morally nuanced picture of Indian women living in Zenanas. Roberts only comments on this briefly, claiming that Indian women choose to seclude themselves, not making any moral judgement on the subject beyond that, thus failing to provide the same degree of moral commentary in her description of native females as she does with British women in Anglo-Indian society. *The Eclectic Review*'s praise of Roberts abstaining from the graver topics, alludes to an implicit limit of female travel writing, which expects female authors to go into detail on certain "feminine topics", such as the moral state of the Oriental female Other, whilst pass over other, more "difficult" topics, as colonial administration and Indian religion. This signals one of the main differences between Emma Roberts and Fanny Parks, where Roberts seems to be celebrated for managing to retain a conservative distance towards the native community and the "graver topics". Parks' narrative however, seems to actively engage in third-space interactions between the self and the native other, thus leading to a more critical probing of both the Western notion of femininity and the colonial administration. This will become even clearer when looking at how the critics read Parks' *Wanderings*.

Chapter 2 Fanny Parks—the “Wandering Pilgrim” Challenging the Parameters of Colonial Femininity

Compared to Emma Roberts, Fanny Parks represents a different type of writer with a rather different narrative approach to India. If Roberts’ *Scenes and Characteristics* mainly explores the European community in India, then Fanny Parks’ *Wanderings* focuses more on exploring and interacting with native society. Frances Susanna Archer, the daughter of Captain William Archer and his wife Ann, was born in the North of Wales in 1794. In March 1822, at the age of 28, she married Charles Crawford Parks, who was employed as a civil servant working for the East India Company. She accompanied her husband to India the same year as their marriage started, and did not return to England until August 1845 (Raza 270). Thus, Parks’ time in India overlaps with Roberts, and their travels and depictions of Anglo-Indian life takes place during approximately the same timeframe. Parks’ extensive two-volume work consists of various recordings of her 23 year long stay in India, and the travels that she underwent there, both alone and in the company of others. It also deals, in great detail, with native religious customs and most aspects concerning life in India. *The English Review* celebrates Parks’ book, claiming that it is “not acquainted with any work which conveys so much minute information in matter of the every-day life of India, both amongst the native and the European population” (442). This includes information ranging from the price of apartments, shopping at Indian markets, and native festivals, to the best recipes for hair colour (1: 320). Moreover, being the wife of a British civil servant, Parks also gives her readers a glimpse into the constantly changing, politically affected nature of British colonial enterprise, recording, for example, the constant relocation of British army-families. Parks thus provides descriptions and observations of one who has lived much of her adult life in India, as well as providing an inside perspective on the British colonial administration.

Fanny Parks’ *Wanderings* highlights the tone of ambivalence often found in female travel writing. Her ambivalence becomes most apparent in the sections where she probes and questions the parameters of Victorian discourses of colonialism and femininity. This is especially the case in her revelations from Colonel Gardiner’s Zenana. In this feminine space, Parks is given the opportunity to interact with the female, Oriental Other. The title of her book already gives the reader some indication as to her “open” approach to India: *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*. Parks envisions herself as a “wandering pilgrim”, who immerses herself in an unknown culture. One might argue that there is an “openness” to the figure of the wandering pilgrim, which one might contrast to the image of the colonial

missionary, who clearly had a set goal or agenda for travelling to the colonies. Whereas Roberts makes use of the picturesque to create structuralising distance between herself and India, the wandering pilgrim is more of a third-space interactor, providing transgressive breakdowns of the boundaries between the Western self and the Eastern Other. This seems like somewhat of a paradox considering that Fanny Parks' title suggests that she is the traveller *in search of the picturesque*. Emma Roberts and Fanny Parks employ the picturesque in different ways. For Roberts, it is a mode of observation, structuralising people and space from a distance, without having to engage in any transgressive interaction. However, Parks seems to be using it to denote how the "wandering pilgrim" sets out to record her travels to the secluded, and perhaps even romantic, locations of India. Although providing many picturesque descriptions of landscape and also of native clothing, this aesthetic mode of description becomes a secondary "steppingstone" for her more transgressive and engaging project of recording interactions with Indian people. Furthermore, Parks' wandering pilgrim serves to highlight the personal nature of the unprofessional female traveller, who is motivated to learn about foreign cultures from her own, private sense of curiosity, unhindered by any seal of officialness.

Considering Parks' narrative in terms of the nineteenth-century discourses on femininity, one might argue that she, at times, challenges gendered expectations and conventions. She seems to be quite a liberal, if not radical figure compared to Emma Roberts, having no objection to smoking or eating opium, travelling without her husband, as well as killing and collecting snakes and other exotic animals for her "cabinet of curiosities". In the early sections of the book, Parks professes her curious nature, which effectively sets her aside compared to the Victorian conception of the average European Lady. When travelling past the little island of Carnicobar, the European voyagers' first impression is that of "men [dressed] like Adam when he tasted the forbidden fruit" (1: 14). The other British ladies on the ship, being thoroughly shocked by public displays of nakedness, decide to stay on deck as the boat anchors at the island, while the men set out to explore. Parks, however, "could not resist a run on a savage island, and longed to see the women, and know how they were treated" (1: 15), and thus joins the men on their little expedition. This episode portrays her urge for exploration and a curiosity for the exotic, which were qualities most often associated with masculinity in this period (Leask 220). It is worth noting here that her curiosity is directed at the feminine, wanting to see the *women* of this island. Moreover, since she is explicitly commenting on the other European ladies retreating to their cabins in fear of their feminine virtue being

threatened, Parks appears rather self-aware and seems to be consciously probing the parameters of female social behaviour.

Parks' "self-aware" confrontation of acceptable feminine enterprise is also present later in the narrative, as she sets out on a voyage up the river without her husband to accompany her:

The other day I was on deck, in a green velvet travelling cap, with an Indian shawl, put on after the fashion of the men, amusing myself with firing with a pellet bow at some cotton boats [...] Some natives came on board to make salām, and looked much surprised at seeing a ghulel (a pellet-bow) in feminine hands. (1: 326)

This excerpt highlights several aspects concerning the incompatibility of the roles of imperial explorer and woman. The fact that some natives, presumably men, came on board to "make salām" to her, indicates Parks' natural, "powerful" position as a coloniser by race. She is a British citizen, and is thus treated with cordiality befitting her racial and social standing. However, the fact that the natives are much surprised to see a "ghulel [...] in feminine hands" (1: 326) suggests that despite her apparent racial superiority, her gender automatically creates some limitations in terms of expected behaviour, both from a native Indian, and British perspective. Again one might claim that the narrator seems quite aware of how her own presentation as a British Victorian woman, dressed in native, male clothing, shooting a pellet-bow from her boat to amuse herself while leading her servants on a sea-voyage up river to inspect the Taj, might seem rather unconventional. *The Calcutta Review* picks up on this, noting that the author seems to be "a very clever, and a very eccentric (and we have no doubt a very pretty) lady" (475). Mills argues that eccentricity rarely served as a compliment for women in the nineteenth century, and the comment by the *Calcutta Review* insinuates that Parks is stepping outside the contemporary discourses of femininity. The review goes on to compare Parks' eccentricity to that of Lady Montague and her writings concerning the Turkish Harems, claiming that

The journal of Mrs. Parks has many points of resemblance with the famous letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague; and we cannot help fancying that our 'fair lady' was not altogether unaware of the fact; and has ingrafted upon her own, not a few of the more objectionable eccentricities of her witty, but not over-strait-laced, predecessor. (475)

Montague also displayed rather liberal views and challenged the parameters of what could be deemed as socially acceptable behaviour for women of her time. The critic emphasises that

Parks is consciously invoking descriptions and actions considered to be “objectionable eccentricities” for a woman, actively and purposely linking her narrative project to that of Montague. It is interesting to consider whether Parks indeed is an eccentric person, or if her eccentricity is projected onto her by the critics’ reading of her work. Compared to the more conservative performance of Englishness found in Roberts’ *Scenes and Characteristics*, Parks seems to deliberately set herself aside from the classic English feminine tropes. This reflects back to the notion of travel representing an opportunity for fashioning a new self, through liberation from social control, perhaps especially for women. Compared to Roberts, Parks ventures more outside the larger city-centres, where the European community resided, which might allow her more uncensored space for exploring her own eccentricity and fashioning a new feminine self, away from Western social conventions. However, one might also read Park’s alleged eccentricity as an example of the multiplicity of gazes involved in female travel writing. Parks never explicitly describes herself as an eccentric lady, this is a designation added by the reviews commenting on her work. Thus, it could signal a dislocation or discrepancy between how the critics view Parks’ project and how she describes this herself.

2.1 Parks and the Feminine Third space: Curiosity, Idolatry and the Zenana

Fanny Parks’ ambivalence towards her own femininity and her role as a coloniser is particularly apparent in her revelations from the Zenanas, where she is allowed to interact freely with native Indian women. Having lived almost four years in India, Parks laments that she has not yet been able to interact with any native women, except “servants in European families, the low caste wives of petty shopkeepers, and *näch* women” (1: 59). It is worth noting her selective curiosity towards Eastern women, which only includes the ladies of rank, perhaps due to the mysticism of their seclusion from public view. Parks’ fascination with Eastern women further highlights how her project contrasts that of Roberts, who is mainly concerned with depicting European women in India.

Parks’ wish to meet native ladies is realised as she befriends Colonel Gardiner and is granted access to his son’s Zenana, where she lived for a time (1: 386). In Gardiner’s Zenana she meets Mulka Begam, and is immediately struck by her beauty: “How beautiful she looked! how very beautiful! [...] her dark eyes struck fire when a joyous thought crossed her mind...I felt no surprise when I remembered the wondrous tales told by the men of the beauty of Eastern women” (1: 383). Male orientalism and romanticised tales of exotic and beautiful Eastern women are incorporated in Parks’ own account. Critics such as Ghose has linked the eroticism in Montague’s descriptions of women in the Turkish harems, more specifically her

depiction of Fatima, with Parks' description of Mulka Begam, highlighting the desirous, almost homoerotic undertones (Ghose 58-59). The feminine interaction between Parks and Mulka might, again, be read in relation to the complexity of gazes involved in female travel writing. The Victorian British woman was both "observer and observed" (Ghose 60), and often found herself the object of the male gaze. However, in Parks' meeting with Mulka, the gaze is reversed, and Parks takes subject position, as the subaltern Mulka is "reduced" to the object of her observation. This can be tied back to Spivak and her work on the subaltern. As mentioned, she uses this term to denote marginal groupings that fall outside colonial authority, and thus have little or no power of self-expression or self-definition, but are perpetually fixed as an object for the Orientalists' gaze. However, since British women also found themselves the object of the dominant male gaze, the category of the subaltern could be expanded to include the Western women in Anglo-India. Although not as marginalised as the native Indian females, British women were also complexly situated on the fringes of colonial administration. The fact that many female travel writers show an interest in depicting Indian women, could be read as a reciprocal inspection or dialogue between different forms of subalterns. Parks' reversal of the gaze in meeting Mulka, can also be read in relation to Bhabha's work on mimicry, where the otherwise "dominated" British female invokes the dominant mode of observation—the "male gaze" (Ghose, 60), to reverse their position in an implicit social hierarchy of power. In light of this, the cultural engagement that goes on between Eastern and Western women in the Zenanas, represent a complex mode of interaction, which might account for why many travel writers are so interested in depicting these exclusively female meetings.

However, Parks' meeting with Mulka is not simply a one-way communication, and her time in Gardiner's Zenana leads her to compare the Western discourses of femininity with that of the East, complicating the narrator's self-construction within an absolute Western subject position:

Mulka walks very gracefully, and is as straight as an arrow. 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. (1: 383)

In this comparison, the European seems to be associated with restraint, here explicitly linked to their stifling clothing, whilst Eastern women are depicted as much freer and more gracious, due to their lack of corsets and other restraining and stifling garments. Parks displays a

different approach to clothing and femininity than Roberts, who celebrates the more conservative displays of British femininity, despite it being highly unpractical in the Indian climate (Roberts 1: 19). When meeting Mulka, Parks starts out from the subject position of “the coloniser”, fixing and observing the subaltern woman as an object under her gaze, but her observations develop into a more dialogic interaction, which leads to a self-reflective scrutiny of her own understanding of femininity. In the meeting between Parks and Mulka, there seems to be a mutual influence and interaction, resulting in a cultural expression that cannot be clearly situated in a dichotomist separation between coloniser and colonised, thus exemplifying the sort of cultural hybridity and third-space interaction suggested by Bhabha.

The moment of interaction portrayed by Parks also opens for a re-evaluation of one’s own role and place within the discourses of femininity and colonialism. This is exemplified when the two women discuss and compare English and Oriental femininity. Parks notes that “Mulka made enquiries concerning the education of young ladies in England; and on hearing how many hours were devoted to the piano, singing, and dancing, she expressed her surprise, considering such *näch*-like accomplishments degrading” (1: 385). This excerpt is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it exemplifies how the third space meeting with the Oriental female Other reverses the classical signifiers of British femininity. The pursuits associated with feminine virtues, when seen through the eyes of the Oriental female, become associated with “*näch* women” and morally frivolous and vulgar behaviour. Thus, the meeting with Mulka gives Parks a different perspective on the female self, opening for an informed probing of her own position within the discourses of Western femininity. This contrasts Roberts’ rather distanced and sometimes unsettling interactions with Indian people. Although Roberts sometimes tentatively engages with what might be regarded as a potential third-space interaction, the main difference between her and Parks is that Parks more explicitly employs such spaces of interaction for constructing a new female self in the meeting-point between East and West, while Roberts wants to uphold a certain distance between herself and the Indian population.

Secondly, Mulka’s questioning of British feminine tropes, shows how Parks gives Mulka direct presence in her text. The wandering pilgrim not only records her own observations from the Zenana, she also records how the Oriental Other, here represented by Mulka and the slave women, returns the gaze, and is equally curious about Western displays of femininity. Parks notes that “To the slave girls I was myself an object of curiosity...I could never dress myself but half a dozen were slyly peeping in from every corner of the *pardas* (screens), and their astonishment at the number and shape of the garments worn by a

European was unbounded” (1: 387). She recognises the Indian woman’s perspective, and the coloniser becomes the object of scrutiny, fixed under the subaltern’s gaze. It is worth noting here that as with Roberts, observations on clothing leads to a larger discussion of women’s place in the colonial context. Moreover, clothing is an important signal in the process of constructing a new identity through travel. Parks notes that “English dresses are very unbecoming, both to European and Asiatics [...] an Englishwoman is greatly improved by wearing a native one, the attire itself is so elegant, so feminine, so graceful” (1: 386). For her, the Oriental represents a more graceful and beautiful mode of femininity compared to the European, and Parks often records how she adopts native clothing.

Another interesting example of how Parks engages in a dialogic cultural comparison is found in the section describing her visit to the Mahratta camp and Zenana. Visiting the Bāiza Bāi, Parks records that “Her Highness said she should like to see an English lady on horseback; she could not comprehend how they could sit all crooked, all on one side, in the side-saddle” (2: 4). Parks returns later on to show off her mode of riding in a side-saddle, to the native ladies’ amusement. Afterwards, the native women show off their style of riding. When finished with their little display Parks notes how

On dismounting, the young Gaja Raja threw her horse's bridle over my arm, and said, laughingly, ‘Are you afraid? or will you try my horse?’ Who could resist such a challenge? ‘I shall be delighted,’ was my reply. ‘You cannot ride like a Mahratta in that dress,’ said the Princess ; ‘put on proper attire.’ I retired to obey her commands, returning in Mahratta costume, mounted her horse, put my feet into the great iron stirrups, and started away for a gallop round the enclosure. I thought of Queen Elizabeth, and her stupidity in changing the style of riding for women. (2: 6)

This excerpt shows how Parks’ narrative includes seemingly direct dialogue between herself and native ladies, which stands in contrast to the more distanced observations of Emma Roberts, who uses a “third-person, descriptive style” (Leask 221), not signalling any form of dialogue or direct communication between herself and native Other. Furthermore, the excerpt above also demonstrates how Parks, through the use of clothing and leisure activities, occasionally slips into an Oriental mode of femininity. The women’s cultural interaction, observing and comparing the mode of riding, can be regarded as a feminine third-space engagement, which allows Parks to experience a different mode of femininity and thus to reconsider and re-evaluate herself through the Other.

Moreover, this comparison of leisure activities not only allows Parks to experience another mode of femininity, it also allows the Indian subaltern to experience British displays of feminine culture. When Parks has finished her ride, she proposes that the native ladies should try her British side-saddle:

My habit was put on one of them; how ugly she looked! [...] she hung on one side, and could not manage it at all [...] the lady dismounted, and vowed she would never again attempt to sit on such a vile crooked thing as a side-saddle. (2:6)

As the Indian woman puts on the habit of the English, she is perceived by Parks as ugly and unnatural. This indicates that the third-space interaction in the *Mahratta Zenana*, allows Parks to see certain signifiers of Western femininity, mirrored back through the Indian Other. As the Western leisure activities and clothing is reflected back to her they appear rather absurd and unnatural. This could be read a different experience of mimicry than that described by Roberts. When faced with colonial mimicry, Roberts feels unsettled and thus distances herself from the Indian Other. In comparison, Parks also experiences a sense of discomfort, but this discomfort is directed at the British self. As she sees herself mirrored in the Indian women, she feels dislocated from the British displays of femininity. Parks' active engagement in this open dialogical interaction, sets her narrative aside from that of a clear colonialist, and gives an impression of her as genuinely interested in native women.

The English Review celebrates Parks' sympathy with native people, noting that the 'Pilgrim' appears to possess such thorough sympathy with, and knowledge of, the people described, as almost to be identified with them; and to enter so completely as the author has done into the character of a people so difficult, and in most cases so impossible to appreciate and understand, evinces no ordinary power of observation, memory, and combination. (441-2)

Apart from recognising Parks' genuine sympathy and curiosity towards the native community, this excerpt also reveals a lot in terms of the Victorian discourse of colonial India. The native population are understood to be "so difficult, and in most cases so impossible to appreciate and understand" (441-2). This suggests that the review is operating from a dichotomist distance between the understandable Western culture, which functions as the norm, and Indian culture as the different Other. Furthermore, since Parks identifies with Indian people and engages with Indian culture, William Dalrymple argues that this complicates positioning her within an Orientalist framework and situating her within the sphere of the coloniser (1). Her openness towards Indian culture is exemplified by her interest

in learning Hindustani in order to facilitate communication between herself and the people of India, especially her servants (1: 11). Learning the language indicates Parks' dialogic intention towards India. Furthermore, her incorporation of glosses and oriental proverbs, as well as signing her own name in Arabic lettering, might be seen as an expression of a sort of textual and, in extension, cultural hybridisation, possibly representative of the female travellers' construction of a new, culturally hybrid self through travel.

Moreover, since she knows some of the native language she can communicate with the women of the Zenana, and when she is not able to do so, she has a female interpreter with her. One might contrast this relative direct mode of dialogue between the British and Indian woman, by comparing it to Mary Carpenter, who mostly converses to and about native women through their husbands, men who spoke on their behalf. Additionally, this more direct mode of interaction serves as a contrast to the distanced and rather generalised comments and observations provided by Emma Roberts.

2.2 Probing the Foundations of British Colonial Administration

Although most apparent in her revelations from life in the Zenana, Parks adapts this genuinely curious, third-space mode of interaction to include most aspects of life in India. *The English Review* comments on her mode of interacting with native society, claiming that "The tone of bold and careless frankness in which this interesting and instructive work is written, is singularly attractive" (441). This relates to Parks' ambivalence towards the discourse of colonial India in general and particularly in connection to native religion. One might argue that at this point in history, the discourse of imperialism valued British Evangelic morality above Indian religion and idolatry. Being able to provide bold, frank, and emotionally detached observations of Indian religion, might have been considered a rather singular feature of Parks' narrative style, by her contemporary reader, since Indian idolatry represented an important basis for justifying Britain's missionary endeavour and colonial presence in India. From this, one might further surmise that Parks' narrative somewhat stands out in terms of Victorian discourse of femininity, since it aligns itself with this more masculine tone of "bold and careless frankness" when describing Indian culture. This further supports the previous discussion of the reviews surrounding Roberts' *Scenes and Characteristics*, which suggests that there is an implicit expectation to the Victorian female travel writer in terms of providing sentimental, moral commentary.

The tone of open and "bold frankness" that *The English Review* picks up on, is symptomatic of Parks' more general mode of narration, not just when dealing with the

feminine third space of the Zenana, but also when talking about more politically pungent topics, such as colonial administration, religion and cultural practises. Throughout her book, there are short and often rather critical comments concerning colonial administration. Many such comments relates to the stringent wages paid to Government officials, and the lack of funding given to British survival in the Indian climate, such as the Government cutting their funding for small-pox vaccination of British children (1: 144). In relation to native religious practises Parks states that

The Government interferes with native superstition where rupees are in question—witness the tax they levy on pilgrims at the junction of the Ganges and Jumna. Every man, even the veriest beggar, is obliged to give one rupee for liberty to bathe at the holy spot; and if you consider that one rupee is sufficient to keep that man in comfort for one month, the tax is severe. (1: 162)

This conveys that Parks is aware of the encroachments made by the colonial administration on native Indian life, and also of the inhumane universalism of imperial policy. Emma Roberts also comments on this tax imposed by Government on pilgrims, but she takes a different perspective on this than Parks, claiming that

A tax has been levied by the Government upon pilgrims resorting to Allahabad; this impost has had the effect of lessening the number of bathers, [...] a method of opposing the hideous superstitions of Hindooism, in strict accordance with the mild policy pursued by a government, which would inevitably occasion the overthrow of its own authority by a more direct and coercive mode of rooting out idolatry from the land. (Roberts 2: 8)

In comparing these two perspectives on the taxation of native pilgrimage, Roberts sympathises with the Government, underlining their difficult position of attempting to, without causing too much native opposition, perform what they consider important moral work of “opposing the hideous superstition of Hindooism” (2:8). Parks, on the other hand, places her sympathy with the native population, criticising the Government for forcing Indians to pay whole months’ wages in order to perform their religious worship.

Parks’ criticism of British colonialism is further emphasised by her travel to the Taj, where she witnesses how European tourists are treating this monument of ancient Indian culture as their “playground”. In indignation, Parks exclaims: “Can you imagine any thing so detestable? European ladies and gentlemen have the band to play on the marble terrace, and dance quadrilles in front of the tomb!” (1:355). She views this frivolous display of British leisurely activities as deeply misplaced and insulting, since she herself “cannot enter the Tāj

without feelings of deep devotion” (1: 356). These descriptions demonstrate how Parks wants to associate herself with a more sensitive and culturally aware British presence in India.

However, it is interesting to consider whether the wandering pilgrim really examines her own participation in the colonial endeavour. She does not seem to critically question her own, or her husband’s position in colonial India, and she is, generally, comfortable in her role as a memsahib—a woman of power and importance. On the other hand, she seems to be aware of the rough violations of Indian culture, brought about by British colonial interference, and does not seem to identify herself with the “average” European traveller. Based on mundane observations of daily interaction with her female servants, Parks describes how British colonialism affects the people of India, noticing that

Musulmāne women never wear a petticoat when amongst themselves; it is the badge of servitude, and put on to please European ladies; the moment an aya gets into her own house, she takes off her full petticoat and the large white mantle (chadār) that covers her head and the upper parts of her body, and walks about in the curiously shaped trousers. (1: 140-41)

Here, Parks reveals that she is very much aware of the signifiers or symbols of colonial oppression, through her attempt of making the reader aware of what it means for a “Muslim” woman to be dressed in petticoats. This incorporation of small observations of everyday life in India, could arguably be seen as providing a more nuanced description of the Indian subaltern. By showing the mundane consequences of colonial imposition and control for these women, Parks manages to highlight a side of Anglo-Indian life, which most English women with no experience of India would know little about. She therefore seems to put herself in a category separate from most British travellers, since she, as the wandering pilgrim, has immersed herself in the cultural, religious and symbolic history of India. This is further exemplified by her active interaction with native religious texts, where she includes sections from the Coran, not as a means of critically examining it from a power-position of the coloniser, but rather as a way of incorporating the voice of Indian culture in her book.

Another interesting section where Parks shows her ambivalence within the discourse of female colonial agency, is in her discussion of governmental prohibitions on the act of *Sati*, a native tradition where widows were to burn on their husband’s funeral pyre. With a tone of “bold and careless frankness” (*The English Review* 441), Parks remarks that “Women in all countries are considered such dust in the balance, when their interests are pitted against those of the men, that I rejoice no more widows are to be grilled, to ensure the whole of the property passing to the sons of the deceased” (1: 162). Parks’ objection to the act of *Sati* stems from

what one might call a highly particularised feminist perspective, rather than the more universal humanist complaint of the inhumanity of such an act. Parks is glad to see the end of Sati mainly because it would put an end to male relatives using tradition and religious practices to get rid of widows that would otherwise inherit their late husbands' means. Her focus on the financial implications of this practice could be read in relation to the contemporary Victorian debates concerning women's legal rights. Goldie Morgentaler argues that "The laws of coverture erased married women's identity by making all their property the possession of their husbands, a situation that prevailed for most of the nineteenth century until the first Married Women's Property Act of 1870" (298). Parks is rather explicitly comparing the legal status for Indian women to that of the British female. Although not being forced to burn on their husband's funeral pyre, British women did not, at this point in history, like their "India sisters", have any legal security or rights concerning finances and property. Parks' economic and feminist criticism of Sati contrasts that of other travel writers, such as Mary Carpenter, who criticise the practice from an Evangelical moral standpoint, considering it an example of the dangers of Indian superstition, and as an expression of the blatant disregard for female life.

2.3 Contemporary readings of Fanny Parks' *Wanderings*

Despite Raza's claim that Parks was "one of the most celebrated and popular writers on India" (2), there seem to be few reviews concerning both the author in general and her travel book in particular¹. This might be considered a finding in itself, indicating that Parks' quite radical piece of travel writing, compared to the material provided by Emma Roberts, might have received little public attention in the contemporary press. As mentioned, Parks seems to challenge the discourses of Victorian femininity, both in terms of her sense of curiosity and the cultural and religious relativism she displays. *The English Review* praises Parks' book, recording that "the amount of anecdote, and gossip, and detail, extending to the most minute points, and especially such points as ladies are peculiarly interested in, is such as quite to take this work out of the ordinary class of books of travels" (442). They go on to write that the book "contains as much amusing and light reading as if it were split into half a hundred pretty little manuals, better adapted to the hands of young ladies" (442). Minute, every-day information, gossip and anecdotes seem to be elements that critics define as key features of female travel texts. Furthermore, this excerpt reveals that the intended readers of Parks' book

¹ In the digitalised periodical database provided by NTNU there are only two available reviews concerning Parks' *Wanderings*.

are women, and that women particularly prefer to read gossip and minute information. The critics' focus on the aesthetic quality and the light format of female authored narratives might again explain why most women chose to structure their texts in such anecdotal formats. Parks' text emphasises the hybrid nature of the genre of travel writing, as suggested by Thompson (11). She structures her narrative through multiple anecdotes, varying in length and scope, and includes sketches, sheet-music and diagrams to illustrate her description of Anglo-Indian life.

The *Calcutta Review* also praises Parks' narrative, claiming that "it is a very pretty book; and where is the critic, who has not an amiable weakness for a luxurious type, a broad margin, sketches faithful to nature, or rich with gorgeous coloring" (475). The aesthetic value of Parks' book does not go amiss amongst the critics, and font, colours and the outward appearance of *Wanderings* are the source of most of its praise. However, the *Calcutta Review* finds value in her work beyond just its aesthetic appeal, claiming that

it is not merely a pretty book to grace the drawing-room or the boudoir, and to have its pages turned over by idle gentlemen or ladies, when they are at a loss for any thing better to do. Mrs. Parks is a very clever, and a very eccentric (and we have no doubt a very pretty) lady. (475)

For the modern reader, it is curious that the prettiness of the author should have something to do with the critical reading of her work, and it is perhaps worth contemplating whether a male-authored travel narrative would invoke speculations concerning the author's looks.

Despite Parks' cleverness and her aesthetically pleasing work, both *The English Review* and *The Calcutta Review* cannot help but find grave faults in her book. Ironically, Parks' dialogic, feminine third-space interaction with Indian females of the Zenanas seems to be welcomed by the critics, and her sympathy with the natives is considered a virtue by *The English Review*.

However, a problem arises when Parks transports this open, third-space exploration of Indian culture from feminine and domestic themes over to more political and controversial topics, such as religion. As mentioned, the Victorian discourses on colonial India seem to build upon a universal assumption that favours British Evangelical practices and morality over the practises of idolatry and superstition. *The Calcutta Review* notes that

when [Parks] steps out of her own natural and better self for the poor affection of displaying her familiarity with the proverbs and superstitions of the natives [...] repeating stories that other women would shrink from, her levity becomes profane, and her Amazonian tone coarse and indelicate. (475-476)

This excerpt is highly interesting since it outlines some clear parameters or limitations of *female* colonial agency. When Parks constructs herself as the wandering pilgrim, immersing

herself in the language and religion of India, she effectively “steps out of her own natural and better self” and thus becomes “coarse and indelicate” (475-476). *The English Review* makes a similar comment:

We cannot say that we like everything in the volume. In fact, the description of a state of society, in which the gross and voluptuous systems of Hindoo and Mahomedan superstition are so universally prevalent, and in which Christianity is so often disgraced by the conduct of its nominal professors, must, if faithfully described, present features revolting to every right-minded person. It is a difficult and painful subject for a female writer; and our authoress accordingly passes over much that she must have witnessed, and touches but briefly on the darker parts of the picture. (443)

It is a striking assumption that Parks’ femininity makes this a particularly difficult subject to comment on, and the female author seems to be better off not mentioning such controversial topics at all. Again, one might read the reviews in relation to the ideological and political discourses they represent. *The English Review* emerged as a succession of the *Quarterly Theological Review and Ecclesiastical Record* (DNCJ 78). The name implies that it was operating from a clearly religious framework, which might account for the rather harsh description of religious practices that differs from Christianity in the above excerpt.

The Calcutta Review does not seem to feel that the wandering pilgrim briefly passes over “darker parts of the picture” (*English Review*, 443), arguing that “Idol-worship is a foul and hateful thing, and the curse and bane of this country; and no Christian—and a lady least of all—has any more right to amuse himself or herself with playing at idolatry, than with playing at theft, or drunkenness or murder, or any other deadly sin” (476). This comment on idolatry being “the bane of the country” might be linked back to the one-rupee tax on bathing that Parks records the Government enforcing. The Evangelical influence on Victorian colonial discourse is very apparent in this section. Furthermore, Parks’ attempts at identifying with Indian religion and culture is highly criticised by the review, arguing that “a lady least of all [...] has any more right to amuse [...] herself with playing at idolatry, than with playing at [...] any other deadly sin” (476). Clearly, as a British woman, Parks is a coloniser by race, but her gender prohibits her from interacting freely with all aspects of Indian culture. This links to a dislocation of expectations towards the female authored travel narrative. Parks’ project of an open exploration of Indian culture contrasts with the expectations of Victorian femininity that excluded women from partaking in scientific and academic discourse.

In order to mend her indiscretion *the Calcutta Review* demands revision of her text in order for them to recommend *Wanderings* to their audience: “The flippancy and levity, also, with which she refers to her own faith, savour more of the cock-pit than the boudoir, and will we trust, be all expunged from a second edition” (476). Keeping this in mind, the reviews portray the relatively small window of opportunity for female colonial contribution. In many ways they seem to give “mock-power” to female travel writers, in terms of accepting and congratulating one mode of narrative on India, mainly the short, funny sections that provide rather superficial information to the average British reader. However, one might argue that the fragmented anecdotes provided by Parks, serves as her richest sections in terms of giving the reader insight into Anglo-Indian life, and might thus convey more cultural understanding and information about India than *The Calcutta Review* recognises in their commentary.

Neither *The Calcutta Review* nor *The English Review* seem to support and encourage a free, dialogic interaction with native society, if this mode of interaction is transported to topics that lie outside the sphere of the domestic or feminine. This is particularly exemplified in the severe criticism directed at Parks’ “playing at idolatry” (*The Calcutta Review* 476). As mentioned earlier, Parks seems, at times, to be adopting a critical, masculine mode of interrogation of colonial administration, which could be read as her performing an act of mimicry—using and mirroring the language of the dominator in a process of asserting her own power of observation. Bhabha identifies how “Mimicry is, [...] the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (86). The reviews’ criticism of Parks could be read as a reaction to her performing mimicry, when she, as the colonised Other to the Western male norm, engages with the male mode of critical, dialogical observation on topics that fall outside the designated female sphere. As Bhabha argues, “The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing.” (86), which could explain how her narrative seems to create an uneasiness for the critics, since her performance of mimicry in many ways destabilises the patriarchal foundation that empowers them, causing ambiguity and anxiety. Read as such, one might argue that the review highlights certain normative and contrasting impulses and discourses that women such as Parks had to negotiate and operate within, which served to complicate her experience of colonial India. Reading the reviews of her book, in relation to the literary text itself thus provides the reader with a “meta-perspective” on the female traveller’s ambivalent process of narrative self-construction, and reveals the limitations of female colonial involvement.

Conclusion: Female Travel Writing and Their Reviews— Nuancing the Discourses of Anglo-India

This study set out to explore the diversity of discourses in nineteenth-century Colonial India, by analysing Emma Roberts' and Fanny Parks' travel narratives and their reception. The reading of these two female authored travel books expands the discourse of female colonial endeavour. Both women represent different approaches to the construction of the self within the political and ideological space of Anglo-Indian society. Emma Roberts' performance of English femininity in colonial India, hinges on establishing certain structuralising boundaries between the self and the Other. In comparison, Fanny Parks represents a more destabilising force, whose construction of female identity is dependent on breaking down the same walls and barriers that Roberts set up. Whereas Emma Roberts seems to situate herself within the sphere of the coloniser, Parks displays a more hybrid cultural identity, re-evaluating her own Western notions of femininity in her meetings with native women in the Zenanas. Emma Roberts and Fanny Parks thus show the diversity of Western experiences in India, and also highlight the dual nature of the travel writer as both free and constrained—there is a lot of both literally and metaphorically uncharted territory in the colonies, but what kind of experiences and perspectives the traveller provides of India is dependent on the access she has to the Othered spaces. Thus, Roberts' lack of interaction with native women of the Zenanas, might be read either as a conscious expression of her self-construction, or it might be attributed to lack of opportunity. Being an unmarried woman, she might not have had the chance to make social alliances with native women of rank.

The two travellers' different styles and approaches to this feminine construction of the self not only underlines the diversity of nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian discourses, but also paints a more diverse image of the post-colonial critical framework that one often uses to approach these types of text, especially in terms of Bhabha's notion of the third space. In general terms, the process of female self-construction in the context of colonial India will be dependent on some interaction and comparison between the European self and the Oriental Other. However, having looked at both Emma Roberts and Fanny Parks in light of Bhabha's work on cultural hybridity, they show how very differently cultural interaction and the third space can be approached. Rather than entering into an open dialogue between the self and the native Indian Other, Roberts focuses on discussing the European female in Anglo-Indian society, depicting the unmarried British woman as a sort of subaltern. Furthermore, her aesthetical use of the feminine picturesque establishes distance between the "Western

Observer”, and the “Eastern Observed”. Instead of engaging in a mutual dialogic meeting, Roberts’ performance of Englishness seems to hinge on avoiding a third-space breakdown of the distance between European self and Indian Other. At times, there seems to be a tentative engagement with the third space, where she wants to give a more nuanced depiction of the people of India. But these instances slip away into moralising and generalising commentaries, made from a distance, where the observer is clearly situated within the sphere of the coloniser. Intercultural engagement and mutual influence is implicitly present in her observations of Indian life, and is a prerequisite for her writing. However, the fact that she does not engage actively with the potential third-space interaction or recognise any mutual influence in this colonial meeting, complicates reading her interaction with India in relation to Bhabha. Thus her narrative allows us to question whether it is possible to talk about cultural hybridity and third-space interactions, if the narrator does not recognise that such spaces exist and actively participates in engaging with it. In comparison, Fanny Parks actively searches to establish an open dialogue with the native community of India, partaking in native religious worship and living within Gardiner’s Zenana for a while. Parks’ interaction with women in the Zenana, seems to create a “new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (Bhabha 211), and thus fits more comfortably with Bhabha’s dynamic understanding of the colonial meeting.

Furthermore, including the reviews of Roberts’ and Parks’ books allows for a richer and more diverse reading of the discourses of femininity in Anglo-Indian society. As mentioned in the introduction, reviews tend to set themselves up as arbiters of taste and propriety, and could thus seem to present a sort of general consensus about certain topics, for example the role of women in the nineteenth-century colonial context. The reviews seem to provide a certain unified conception of the strengths and weaknesses of female travel writing. The majority, if not all, of the reviews relating to Roberts’ *Scenes and Characteristics* and Parks’ *Wanderings*, seem to applaud the formal elements making the books light and amusing through their focus on domestic details, presented in a humorous anecdotal format. They also celebrate sympathetic descriptions and moral commentary, suggesting that this is an important element in female travel writing. Moreover, the reviews implicitly express certain limitations of female colonial agency. As discussed in the chapter dealing with Parks, the reviews seem to provide an illusory sense of power to the female travel writer, by designating areas of authority for women, mainly relating aspects dealing with moral, domestic and feminine issues, while criticising her if she transports her curious and detailed descriptions to other themes that fall outside the boundaries of the “feminine”. This is particularly prominent in

relation to Parks' *Wanderings*, where the narrator's hybrid cultural identification and third-space interaction with Indian culture extends to other areas outside the feminine world of the Zenanas, including her active participation in native religious worship. This is severely criticised by both the *The Calcutta Review* and *The English Review*. In comparison, Roberts manages to uphold a tone of moral distance when dealing with different aspects of native life, situating herself more explicitly in the sphere of the Western, picturesque observer. Considering that the reviews surrounding Roberts' narrative is much more positive than those surrounding Parks, this might indicate an implicit preconception concerning what women in Colonial India were expected to write about and not. Given the complex symbolic resonance of femininity in the colonial context, where Western and native women were symbolically intertwined with the discourses of empire, being viewed as custodians of tradition in many ways (Mani; Suleri), the reviews facilitate a richer reading of these texts, since they contribute to show the multiplicity of gazes and perspectives on female writing, illustrating how the contemporary reader responds to the female travel writer's colonial project. Therefore, incorporating the reviews into our reading of Parks' and Roberts' books helps us to counter a monolithic perspective of British colonialism, emphasising the diversity of voices that coexist within the discourses of nineteenth-century Anglo-India. The reviews praise and criticise different aspects of Roberts' and Parks' narratives, showing how they themselves are representatives of various ideological and political forces shaping the discourses of colonialism. The reviews exist alongside the travel books themselves, adding more voices to the discussion of nineteenth-century British colonial enterprise, and women's particular role in the Western imperial project.

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Appendix

The Study's Relevance to the Teaching Profession

The process of writing this paper has benefited my academic development in several ways. Firstly, working with a longer writing project has been beneficial from a more general meta-perspective, since it has allowed me to work with time distribution, as well as independent research and source criticism, which are important skills I will recommend my students to work actively with. Furthermore, working with extensive textual production has also allowed me to work with textual coherence, grammar and syntax, which are aspects that will allow me to better help my students become independent academic writers.

Moreover, the scope of this study has also allowed me to gain greater insight into the not so well known genre of travel writing. I believe that it will be advantageous to introduce students to other narrative forms beyond the more typical novel and short-stories, and travel writing is a hybrid genre that is both entertaining to read in terms of literary quality, and challenging to analyse due to its hybrid mixing of different narrative forms. Furthermore, since I have researched, in depth, the ideological and political foundations of British colonialism, as well as women's role in this context, this project has afforded me not only increased insight into an important historical era of English history, but has also contributed to enrich my understanding of literary theoretical frameworks that one can apply to the reading of complex and multifaceted literary texts. While working with this area of focus I have gained increased knowledge about post-colonial literary theories, feminist literary theory, as well as more general ways of approaching texts and ideologies through Foucault and discourse analysis. These are theoretical foundations I can invite my future students to engage with in their writing and reading.

Furthermore, working on this paper has empowered me as an English teacher, by giving me experience with using and navigating digital databases that holds many interesting authentic historical sources. I believe that working with this type of text is something that will be advantageous to include in my own teaching. This is because it might potentially create more authentic textual encounters for students. Furthermore, it might also expand the corpus of literary material employed in the classroom, adding greater generic diversity to our teaching. Furthermore, working with the genre of travel writing, as well as authentic digitalised historical sources, can potentially expand prevailing notions of what is and might be considered as literature.