

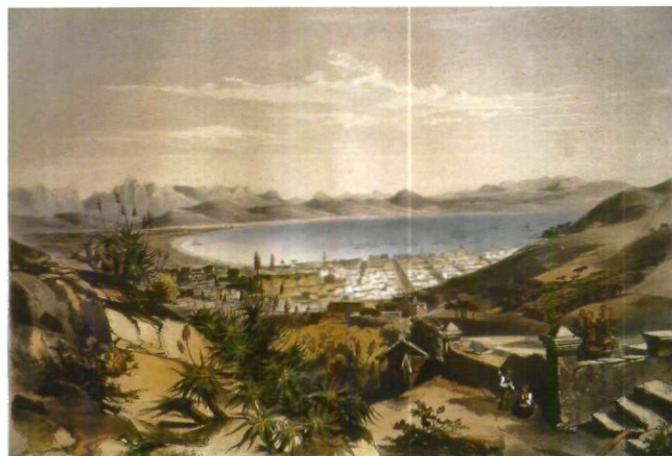
The picturesque and the homogenisation of Empire

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It is more than a century since JR Seeley remarked in *The Expansion of England* (1883) that the British Empire developed in 'a fit of absence of mind'.¹ The reasons for and motives underlying its expansion, whether political, diplomatic, economic, social, intellectual, or religious, are fairly well known, however much they continue to be debated.² In recent years scholars have also begun to explore the impact of the empire on the so-called metropolitan centre, especially politically,³ and have even questioned the very boundaries between metropole and periphery, particularly in the cultural realm.⁴ Yet serious and fundamental questions remain about the place of the empire in the British mind. How did Britons conceive of and represent their empire, especially during the 19th century, the period of its greatest expansion? How did they come to regard it as being more unified than it actually was at the administrative level?⁵ What, if anything, gave the empire coherence, especially in the half-century before the steamship and the electric telegraph? How did the individual regions of the empire – 'one continent, a hundred peninsulas, five hundred promontories, a thousand lakes, two thousand rivers, ten thousand islands'⁶ – become part of an imperial whole? What were the vectors of empire, and if, as many scholars have recently suggested, they should not be characterized in metropolitan-peripheral terms, then on what basis?

The Victorian imagination constructed the British Empire through a variety of cultural forms. The most famous of these were surely the maps of the world with the territories of the empire coloured pink, of which many versions were published beginning as early as Victoria's coronation in 1837 to promote imperial unity.⁷ In recent decades scholars have amply documented the role of literature – especially fiction, but also children's and travel literature and political speeches – in constructing an image of the people and regions of the empire as backward, uncivilized, irrational, feminine, exotic, decayed, impoverished, and irredeemably 'other'.⁸ But most of the literary analysis that has followed in the wake of Said's path-breaking *Orientalism* (1978) has focused on the Middle East and India, and to a lesser degree Africa and the Caribbean, neglecting, most glaringly, the white settler colonies, which were central components of the 19th-century British Empire. Photography, too, has received some attention, for constructing an empire built around racial hierarchies, big-game hunting, pristine mountain views, and efficient military campaigns, but photography admittedly drew on earlier pictorial traditions and imagery.⁹ Advertisements, especially those produced under the direction of the state-supported Empire Marketing Board, also played a role, largely by commodifying the empire, though not until the late 19th and early 20th centuries.¹⁰

Art too was critical in helping British men and women construct and visualize their empire.¹¹ This was especially true of the picturesque idiom, which had a powerful impact on almost all subsequent forms of imperial representation, including photography and advertising from the mid-19th century onwards. Most of the recent studies in this area have emphasized the 'ideological work' of paintings, through which 'the appropriation of land, resources, labour, and



1 *Tabiti Revisited* by William Hodges, c.1776. © National Maritime Museum, London. Ministry of Defence Art Collection

2 *Cape Town, from the Camp's Bay Road* by George French Angas, from *The Kaffirs Illustrated* (1849)

culture is transformed into something that is aesthetically pleasing and morally satisfying'.¹² Others have focused on the construction of the (noble) savage and the myth of empty lands.¹³ But one limitation that has affected almost all of these studies, especially those preoccupied with imperial lands (as opposed to the people of the empire), has been their focus on either a single artist or a single geographic area.¹⁴ Without a comparative lens, however, there can be no comprehensive analysis of British imperial art, and therefore no understanding of how that empire was constructed visually and pictorially.

The argument offered here is that the picturesque, the literary and visual aesthetic which developed during the second half of the 18th century, helped to unite and homogenize the many regions of the British empire. For the better part of a century beginning around 1775, British artists who travelled the empire frequently constructed and depicted what they saw through the lens of the picturesque, presenting regions as diverse as South Africa, India, Australia, and the Pacific Islands in remarkably similar ways. In the process they integrated the far-flung regions of the empire,

providing a measure of coherence and control that were clearly lacking on the ground at a time when it could take anywhere from three to six months to travel from London to Calcutta, a time lag which delayed the circulation of news and made virtually impossible the execution of government policy.¹⁵ Although there was, within the picturesque framework, some freedom to capture and convey local differences, everywhere it was deployed it served to conceal the hardships and beautify the frequently unpleasant surroundings that characterized life in the imperial zone, refracting local people and conditions through a single, formulaic lens.¹⁶

Moreover, in so far as the picturesque had initially been used to represent the English landscape, depicting imperial landscapes in these same terms meant that British artists travelling overseas ended up portraying so-called peripheral territories as similar to, rather than different from, so-called metropolitan territories. In short, the picturesque was about the creation of sameness rather than difference, though this is a point that requires some clarification as 'sameness' carries a number of different meanings. In the late 18th century, Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, two of the founding theoreticians of the picturesque, challenged the fashionable style of landscape gardening exemplified by the work of Capability Brown. They accused him of creating only 'eternal smoothness and sameness' in place of which they wanted to see 'roughness', meaning features such as moss-grown terraces and other intricate details to break up otherwise smooth vistas.¹⁷

The analysis that follows, however, uses sameness as an antonym not of roughness but of strangeness and difference, in order to take into account a certain tension between the picturesque and the exotic. The artist's purpose in travelling to India or the South Seas was often to report on their strangeness or difference, but as Giles Tillotson has put it in his book on William Hodges, 'the application of an English aesthetic to Indian scenes served rather to restrain than to reveal their exotic nature'.¹⁸ The images discussed here will also demonstrate that sameness can be used to describe the substantive and stylistic similarities between paintings and aquatints executed across the many regions of the British Empire. To be sure, difference (whether in the linguistic or the postcolonial sense) and sameness (meaning identification, mimicry, mimesis) are complementary opposites and cannot truly be divided.¹⁹ But the analysis that follows is an attempt to move the discussion of sameness and difference from its focus on language and people, which is now well-trodden terrain, to that of place.²⁰ This is especially important because the picturesque was not simply carried from England overseas, but rather developed as much overseas as in Britain, and therefore moved not unidirectionally from the imperial centre to the periphery, but frequently around the periphery. This in turn suggests the importance of envisioning the British Empire not so much as a 'spoked wheel' – imperial centre and periphery – but as a 'web' built around 'multiple centres' or 'bundles of relationships', not least of which were horizontal linkages between colonial sites, regions, experiences, and cultural products.²¹

The picturesque took as its starting point the idea that nature was imperfect and needed to be organized when it was painted. Artists, frequently using a Claude glass, a small convex mirror that brought every scene within the compass of a picture, employed a formulaic method of composition that was based upon certain rules of classical proportion, and which produced images with an identifiable picturesque structure, composition, and tint. The picturesque, which

William Hodges employed when he painted *Tabiti Revisited* (Pl 1) around 1776, divided the landscape into three distances: a darkened and detailed foreground, a strongly lit and deep-toned middle-ground, and a hazy background. Features such as trees and ruins were to be positioned so as to create a balanced composition that provided a sense of both harmony and variety, and to push the viewer's eye to the middle distance, as in a stage set. In a typical picturesque scene there would be a winding river; two *coulisses*, or side screens, which are the opposite banks of the river and which, in conjunction with some hills, mark the perspective; a front screen which points out the winding of the river; and a hazy, rugged, mountainous background. There was also an identifiable picturesque tint, the soft golden light of the Roman Campagna, which, as a number of scholars have suggested, artists transposed first onto the English landscape, and then carried to the furthest reaches of the British Empire.²²

But while scholars of the picturesque have generally focused on its English origins, in the writings of Knight and Price, it is important to note that many of its foremost practitioners drew their inspiration as much from the empire itself as from the English Lake District. Hodges, for example, was a student of Richard Wilson, the Welsh landscape painter who was strongly influenced by Claude and one of the founders of the English landscape school, but instead of completing his art education with a Grand Tour to Italy as his teacher had done, he instead became the draughtsman for Cook on his second voyage to the Pacific, and carried to India *tropical* ideas of light and vegetation, in addition to *English* ideas about picturesque composition.²³

This explains, in part at least, a number of the tensions in *Tabiti Revisited*.²⁴ The painting certainly illustrates the essential elements of the picturesque, but it also reveals Hodges' struggle to combine classical idealism, scientific accuracy, and Bougainvillian exoticism. He has replaced conventional classical motives – olive trees, cypresses, and Arcadian shepherdesses – with breadfruits, coconut palms, and Tahitian girls bathing near the water.²⁵ In the interest of empirical recording, he has painted the girls not as ideal beauties, but with characteristic tattoo markings.²⁶ And, the clouds around the mountaintops reflect not an idealized Italian countryside, but are the outcome of Hodges trying to render faithfully the atmosphere of the tropics. Hodges' openness to new environments and cultures, his (modest and occasional) questioning of the supremacy of classical prototypes, and his concern for scientific truth – itself of course a problematic and culture-bound notion – were always in conflict with the Claudian, picturesque principles demanded of the landscape artists of his day. But because he had in effect completed his artistic education in the South Seas, he had some freedom from contemporary academic practices, and was able to capture for the first time the brilliant light of the tropics. What this painting reveals – and it needs to be underscored here that this is obviously not a preliminary sketch, but a finished oil painting, and that Hodges was paid £350 per year by the admiralty to produce paintings of his journeys that would promote commerce and empire – is Hodges at once both capturing the light and feel of the South Pacific and introducing an element of exoticism, transforming Tahiti into a sensual and even sexual paradise, but at the same time subsuming that difference and exoticism beneath the familiar structure of the picturesque.

A remarkably similar picturesque frame can be seen in *Cape Town, from the Camp's Bay Road* (Pl 2), by George French Angas, an artist, geologist, and explorer who later became director of the Government Museum in Sydney, and



who published a book called *The Kaffirs Illustrated* in 1849 from which this plate is taken. As Angas himself wrote, 'Cape Town... is most picturesquely situated on the shores of Table Bay', and he claimed that nothing could exceed the beauty of the scene, with 'bold, abrupt, rugged mountains, the fertile plains and gardens, and the deep blue waters of the Bay'. This image illustrates the picturesque use of the foreground, with the steps and stone building and minuscule figure in the left-corner creating an impression of grandiosity; the slopes of the hills on either side that serve as framing devices and channel the viewer's eye towards the middle-ground, which is Cape Town; the rich blue colour of the water, contrasting with the greens and browns of the landscape; and, in the distance, the faded grey mountains and the pale blue sky. The scene is in perfect harmony, in terms of perspective, colour, and relationship between the human world and the natural world. Angas has also pointedly included, in the foreground, a number of kniphofia, more commonly known as red hot poker, perennials which have striking red flowers in the winter and are native to South Africa, although they have since become identified with English cottage gardens and have also been widely imported to Australia and New Zealand. They provide just a touch of local colour and flavour, but without ever threatening the formal requirements of the picturesque.

Hodges and Angas in these two paintings used similar techniques to turn the distant and unfamiliar into the knowable and the familiar, to make what was a foreign and fundamentally 'different' landscape, with unusual flora and fauna, appear remarkably 'similar' to those landscapes with which they and their audiences would have been familiar. There are, however, important differences between these two paintings. Hodges has presented Tahitian society as pristine and untouched by Europeans; nowhere is there evidence of Cook's visit.²⁷ Angas has done the opposite: his painting maps the linear streets of Cape Town and the extent of European settlement. Angas' painting also lacks the elements of the sublime, which are present in Hodges' mountains. Yet both these images reflect certain imperial interests that were pervasive at the time they were produced. In the late 18th century the idea was to find previously undiscovered, Edenic lands that would stimulate interest in exploration and exploitation.²⁸ By the mid-19th century, as emigration and settlement became paramount, the idea,



3 *Hobart Town, taken from the Garden where I lived* by John Glover, 1832. Dixson Galleries, State Library of New South Wales

4 *View of Port Bowen, Queensland* by William Westall, 1811. © National Maritime Museum, London. Ministry of Defence Art Collection

underlying Angas' work, was to present regions of the empire as safe and familiar for potential European settlers.²⁹ In short, within the picturesque aesthetic the art of empire served important and changing strategic purposes.

An almost identical yet oddly mirrored version of Angas' painting is *Hobart Town, taken from the garden where I lived* (Pl 3), by John Glover, who arrived in Tasmania in 1831 and executed this work a year later. The painting was made in front of Glover's residence, Stanwell Hall, a two-story stone structure that had been built in 1828 in the Georgian style, featuring the plain and symmetrical facade found in many domestic dwellings in England at the time. The house and garden overlook the town, a thriving settlement of 10,000 that was the second largest in size in Australia, with the Derwent River, named after its Derbyshire counterpart, beyond, dotted with sailing vessels. Also visible is a white church, with Government House just to its left and the Barracks to its right, suggesting that beyond the boundaries of personal property implied by the painting's subtitle, the church, the executive, and the military remain the dominant features of the colonial scene. Despite the obvious

picturesque structure and elements, its needs to be acknowledged that the painting is something of an anomaly within Glover's Australian *oeuvre*, arguably being concerned more with informational topography than with picturesque view making.³⁰ As John McPhee has pointed out, behind the screen of the artist's house and garden, the picture marks the achievements and expansion of the colonial settlement 'with several view-points incorporated... so that the whole of the town may be shown, and the landscape rather flattened so that all streets and buildings could be included'.³¹

Hobart Town also illustrates what Alfred Crosby has termed 'ecological imperialism', the process by which European carried flora, fauna, and disease around the globe.³² Geraniums and roses, painted in meticulous detail and mentioned in Glover's inscription, dominate the foreground. Geraniums were especially popular in the new colony because they could thrive on very little water. Several varieties are indigenous to Australia, but others arrived on board one of the first ships from England in 1788, and additional varieties, native to southern Africa, were unwittingly carried into Australia in seed form on the coats of animals taken on board ships that called at Cape Town.³³ By the time Glover arrived in what was then called Van Dieman's Land, settlers had already attempted to cultivate virtually all European vegetables, and the Glovers in fact brought with them a range of northern hemispheric seedlings, although not all survived the journey. Glover's son recorded that their tangerine saplings died *en route*, but enough of the plants survived that the Land Board, in endorsing Glover's application for a land grant, recorded approvingly that 'he has imported English song birds and shrubs'.³⁴ In this painting, therefore, the flowers create an impression of homeliness, familiarity, and connectedness between the regions of the British Empire. Not only did immigrants import English vegetation in order to acclimatize their environment; they refashioned that environment – both physically and representationally – in order to resemble the typically picturesque English landscape.³⁵

Elsewhere in this painting, however, Glover has made concessions to a vastly different environment. He has toned down the rich greens of the English countryside, and has shown the trees as distinct entities, befitting the somewhat sparse Australian forests, rather than as part of the dense foliage that characterized European forests. And, the large areas of greenery present in Hobart Town constitute a marked departure from the closely packed villages and towns of rural England.³⁶ Ultimately this painting is similar to Angas' *Cape Town* in terms of the overall picturesque structure of the work; the ways in which it reproduces familiar English elements, such as the Georgian Stanwell Hall, the roses and geraniums, and the river Derwent; and, simultaneously, its incorporation of indigenous Australian characteristics, but subsumed within the picturesque.

At least in the early years of the 19th century, however, translating the Australian landscape into the picturesque proved quite challenging, as it occasionally did for Glover.³⁷ William Westall, who accompanied the mapmaker Matthew Flinders on his circumnavigation of the continent of Australia from 1801-3, was disappointed by his search for scenery from which to make oil paintings to be displayed in London after the fashion of his colleague William Daniell, who had successfully shown his views of India at the Royal Academy. For Westall the coastline did not yield the exotic subject matter he had hoped to find, and he considered Australia to be pictorially unpromising. Shortly after leaving Australian shores, he summed up his years on the Flinders voyage as a barren experience, and he was pessimistic about the drawings he had made, about which he wrote: 'When executed [they] can neither afford pleasure from exhibiting the face of a

beautiful country nor curiosity from their singularity'. Westall's paintings are especially important because they are so clearly at odds with his written descriptions of the landscape. In his 1811 *View of Port Bowen, Queensland* (Pl 4), he depicts the triumvirate of Australian novelty – flora, fauna, and Aboriginal people – but the jungle setting conflicts with his description of the coast as 'barren', and it is also not in keeping with his description of the general appearance of Australia as 'differing little from the northern parts of England'.³⁸ And so here is an artist who initially was unable to find the picturesque in Australia, yet ended up depicting Australia as a land very different from his native England, but doing so through familiar picturesque devices. Regardless, when he accepted a commission in 1809 for a series of oil paintings of Australian landscape views and exhibited them in London, there was considerable interest in his depictions of places that had never before been seen by Europeans.³⁹

Nor was Westall the only early artist who shared the view that the Australian landscape lacked beauty.⁴⁰ Thomas Watling, a young painter from Dumfries who was transported to Australia for forging Bank of Scotland guinea notes, famously decried his inability to find or mould the picturesque from the landscape of the penal colony. Watling had been trained in the picturesque mode of landscape painting, and it was the absence of typically picturesque features – old and gnarled trees, winding mountain paths, peasant cottages, and jagged and rocky cliffs – that depressed him. 'The landscape painter', he wrote to his aunt, 'may in vain seek here that kind of beauty which arises from happy-opposed off-scapes. Bold rising hills, or azure distances would be a kind of phenomena. The principal traits of the country are extensive woods, spread over a little varied plain'.⁴¹ But Watling knew well enough that picturesque paintings were not simply transcripts of nature but arrangements of it, incorporating motifs culled from a number of sketches. As he put it, 'I confess that were I to select and combine, I might avoid that sameness, and find engaging employment,' which is exactly what he did with works such as *A direct North general view of Sydney Cove*, which Bernard Smith has discussed in terms of its application of Gilpin's theories about and drawings of the Lake District, but which also bears a striking resemblance to Wilson's *Rome from the Villa Madama* (1753).⁴² Wilson's painting, executed for the Earl of Dartmouth, portrays one of the most famous prospects of Rome, the point from which pilgrims had traditionally caught their first sight of the city, and thus was an appropriate model for Watling, who had to do little more than substitute some newly-built cottages for the famous loggia of the Villa Madama, designed by Raphael for Pope Clement VII, that appears in the lower-right corner of Wilson's work.⁴³

Perhaps no artist painted Australia to look more like England than Conrad Martens, who arrived in New South Wales in 1835 after having sailed on the *Beagle* with Charles Darwin. His *View from Rose Bank* (Pl 5), painted for the commodities merchant Robert Campbell, shows a garden piazza looking over the newly established villas surrounding Woolloomooloo Bay. Martens has skilfully rendered the houses of the wealthy colonists as though they were Italian villas (which is how they were often described in contemporary literature), but he gives no hint that these houses lacked antiquity; in fact, none of the houses that could be seen from the terrace at Rose Bank in 1840 when Martens produced this work was more than a decade old. This painting illustrates the process not so much of creating 'New Worlds from Old', as an exhibition of 19th-century Australian and American landscape paintings put it, but rather of creating old worlds from new.⁴⁴

5 *View from Rose Bank* by Conrad Martens, 1840. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

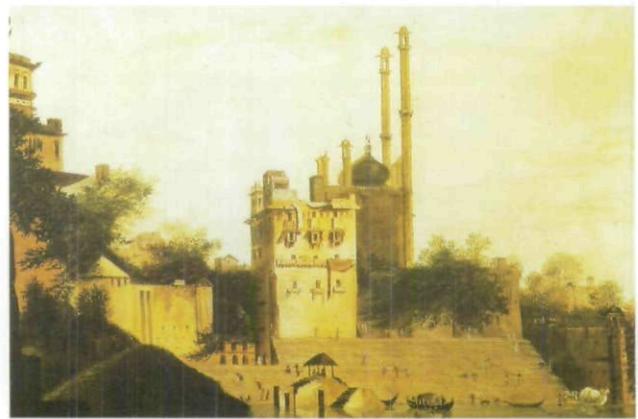
6 *A view of Benaras* by William Hodges, 1811. By Permission of The British Library, P94

7 *View in Gaur* by Thomas Daniell, c1791. Private Collection. Courtesy of Charles Greig, Esq

Artists carried many of these same picturesque principles with them to India, where, as elsewhere, they represented the landscape as harmonious, with great emphasis placed on intricately detailed foregrounds, irregular hills and buildings, and some reference to man's presence in the landscape, along with a ruin that was picturesquely irregular as well as a reminder of man's transience. Artists who made picturesque paintings of India also removed, or at least softened, what many Europeans would have regarded as its exotic features. Indian architecture, for instance, was either shown in conventionally picturesque ruins, or had its (to European eyes) startling lack of symmetry reduced to symmetrical forms. The first professional British landscape painter to visit India was William Hodges, in 1780, and his *View of part of the city of Benaras (sic)* (Pl 6) dated the following year shows a number of these elements, notably in the varied and irregular outline formed by the buildings, further enlivened by tufted trees; in the sense of movement, created by small, scattered details such as the figures and boats; and in the broken dabs of colour.⁴⁵ But as with his Tahiti painting, this one is also rife with contradictions. In his *Select Views in India* (London, 1775-8), Hodges wrote that the artist's responsibility was to eschew 'fanciful representation' and keep the imagination 'under the strict guidance of cool judgment', yet his own Indian paintings contradict this very aim, composed as they are according to European notions of the picturesque that emphasized the loftiness of monuments though the use of foreshortened perspective and exaggerated proportions. Despite his time in the South Pacific, Hodges' finished oils are firmly within the picturesque tradition, and remain true to the Claudian principles of his teacher Richard Wilson, whose work he so often imitated.⁴⁶

Although Hodges was the first, the most famous British landscape painters to visit India were Thomas Daniell and his nephew William, who, after seven years of travels, brought back with them to England some 1,400 drawings, which they used to produce six sumptuous volumes of aquatints. Although the Daniells repeatedly disparaged their predecessor's work for containing all sorts of inaccuracies, their goal of fidelity was continually undermined by the constraints of the picturesque aesthetic. Searching always for the Sublime and the Beautiful, the Daniells generally portrayed grandiose views carefully framed with palm and banyan trees, and, on at least one occasion, enhanced the beauty of a scene with the addition of a temple.⁴⁷ Part of the lure of India was its strangeness, and in fact a fascination with the exotic was a part of the picturesque repertoire, and yet the treatment of Indian subjects in a picturesque manner tempered, rather than exaggerated, their exoticism, by making them conform to a set of supposedly universally applicable values derived from European art.

At the hands of Thomas Daniell, for example, the Muslim tomb at Gaur was transformed into a Gothic folly in an Arcadian park. *View in Gaur* (Pl 7) is in fact a strikingly Claudian work, similar to several of the 17th-century master's paintings including *Pastoral caprice with the Arch of Constantine* (1651) and *Landscape with the father of Psyche sacrificing at the Temple of Apollo* (1662).⁴⁸ All of these make use of architectural *capricci* – actual buildings put together



by an artist in an imaginary arrangement – and share the same basic structure and features: ruins on the left, trees on the right, a river winding through the centre towards a distant mountain that is rounded rather than steep and craggy, and several figures in the foreground, though there is a greater sense of stasis in Daniell's painting, whereas in Claude's the figures are turning and gesturing, giving those works a greater sense of movement. A much more immediate link, however, as in the case with Hodges, was Richard Wilson, as Daniell's painting both recalls and develops from such Wilson imitations of Claude as *Kew Gardens, the Ruined Arch* (1762), a picture which for a long time was thought to show an actual Roman ruin somewhere in Italy.⁴⁹

The picturesque not only tended to homogenize the regions of the British Empire; it also blurred all sorts of boundaries between Britain and its empire, between home and abroad, metropole and periphery, even self and other.⁵⁰ There are, for example, some important similarities between Thomas Daniell's watercolour of *The Falls of Poppanassum* (1804) and the Scottish landscape painter Jacob More's *The*

Falls of Clyde (Cora Linn) (1771), both in their formal elements – the lushness of vegetation, the direction in which the water is flowing, and the angle of the trees hanging over the river – and in their approach to composition (Pls 8, 9). Both paintings emphasize the grandeur of the scenes by placing several small figures in the foreground, tourists who are in each case dwarfed by the thundering falls above them. But one has to look very closely at Daniell's painting to locate two slender palm trees, the only indication that these falls are not located in Europe, and even the two figures are of indeterminate origin, and thus if they are Indian, they have been stripped of their 'otherness'.

The paintings by Daniell and More also share certain fundamental similarities with Wilson's *Lydford Waterfall, Tavistock* (c1771-2), and all three probably drew on the writings of Alexander Cozens, who made extensive observations of nature in order to clarify the link between landscape phenomena and aesthetic feeling, and to identify what it was about natural events that stimulated specific emotional responses in the viewer.⁵¹ In *The Various Species of Landscape Composition* (1759), Cozens identified sixteen 'compositions' or basic landscape themes, the eighth of which was 'a waterfall'. Daniells and More, like Wilson before them and the American Thomas Cole after them, took wild, seemingly inhospitable scenes and made them less frightening, rendering the natural and the sublime moving rather than terrifying, with escape always assured.⁵² While perhaps owing more to the romantic than the picturesque tradition (though the relationship between the two is too complicated to discuss here), the paintings by Daniell and More illustrate yet again the extent to which late-18th-century aesthetics homogenized the empire and de-emphasized its difference from the British and the familiar.

Given their similarities in terms of elements and approach to composition (if not in actual composition), these two images raise the important question of how colonial sites can be differentiated from the non-colonial. This point takes on additional urgency because the picturesque form represented a wide range of tourist sites both inside and outside of Britain and its empire, including Spain, Italy, and the German Rhine. It hardly needs to be pointed out, however, the above waterfall example notwithstanding, that there were substantial differences between so-called picturesque views of tourist sites in Britain and on the European continent on the one hand, and those of the British Empire on the other.⁵³ Whereas in late-18th-century Britain the picturesque implied the avoidance of anything precise or tame, instead emphasizing, variety, novelty, ruggedness, and wild, unkempt beauty – Gilpin specified that 'ideas of neat and smooth... strip the objec... of picturesque beauty'⁵⁴ – imperial art, especially in India, consistently softened, regularized, and beautified the natural landscape.⁵⁵ Consequently, a potentially dangerous curiosity about colonial people and places, one that might involve violence, conflict, and oppression, has been diverted into the quest for aesthetic novelty. It is important to recognize, therefore, the particularity of the picturesque in the colonial environment and the pleasures it offered, even while noting the general similarities between the domestic and the imperial picturesque.

What then does it mean when colonial sites are subjected to a form of visual representation so closely associated with tourism? Given the primary function of the picturesque in the establishment of both domestic and foreign tourism, it would seem that the colonial and the touristic gaze have collapsed into each other, normalizing the imperial experience. If the so-called first British empire was a commercial and trading empire, the second British empire, beginning with the near-

simultaneous addition of the Indian subcontinent and loss of the thirteen American colonies, became increasingly a tourist's empire, not just symbolized but made possible by the concomitant development of the picturesque. Although some scholars have argued that the English picturesque was mainly a late-18th century aesthetic which supposedly fell out of fashion during the first half of the 19th century, it should be mentioned that, contrary to such conclusions, the aesthetic framework continued to prevail so that the picturesque mode is easily recognizable in late-19th- and even 20th-century photography and advertisements.⁵⁶

There are, of course, numerous other aspects of the picturesque in the colonial context that need to be explored, including its relationship to labour, an issue that was often discussed in picturesque texts even as it was frequently disavowed in picturesque images.⁵⁷ There are also some limitations to the analysis and approach offered here, which has subsumed beneath the broader picturesque rubric the subtle differences between the topographical, the beautiful, and the natural, or what Ann Bermingham has called landscapes of sense, sensibility, and sensation.⁵⁸ Although there are topographical elements in the work of Angas and Glover, and although the Daniells were highly accomplished topographical artists, landscape engravings such as theirs were not intended to function simply as a topographical record. As noted earlier, the use of formal structure, figures, and atmospheric effects transformed a real and visitable site into a picturesque representation, elevating it to the status of a visual souvenir. And, there was a naturalistic element in British and continental picturesque views that is, for the most part, not characteristic of imperial art.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Bermingham's rationale for adopting these new terms, however, to 'shift the focus from style to the moral, political, and social values each type of landscape was intended to awaken', as well as to provide a framework that could accommodate works that traditionally do not fit into the traditional categories, including amateur production, is exactly the argument being made here.

It is hoped, however, that the examples offered above – and the Egyptian work of David Roberts would fit as well – are representative enough to suggest that the picturesque was a dynamic force in the creation of the British Empire. One of the implications of Edward Said's work is that Orientalism – 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'⁶⁰ – made colonialism possible. But one of the limitations of the Orientalist approach is that it focuses largely, though no longer exclusively, on the Middle East. Scholars have applied Said's thesis to India, but have not applied its tenets to South Africa and Australia, and would have difficulty in doing so. The picturesque, on the other hand, was a much more comprehensive trope than Orientalism, and unified the empire by refracting local differences through a single lens. And it is revealing, in this context, that the picturesque became popular at the very moment when the British empire was undergoing its most massive expansion, and that the picturesque lost its vogue – and value – as the empire became more physically integrated during the second half of the 19th century, when the electric telegraph and the steamship allowed for greater levels of communication and control.⁶¹

The paintings discussed here also make the point that imperial representations were not exclusively concerned with the creation of 'otherness', on the presumption that the imperial periphery was different from the imperial metropolis.⁶² Rather, artists were also engaged in what cultural anthropologist James Boon has called 'the



8 *The Falls of Poppanassum* by Thomas Daniell, 1804. The British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings

9 *The Falls of Clyde (Cora Linn)* by Jacob More, 1771. The National Gallery of Scotland

construction of affinities',⁶³ Indeed, picturesque representations were in large part about what David Cannadine has identified as 'the domestication of the exotic': regarding and reordering the foreign to look very much like England itself.⁶⁴ And this point needs to be underscored: the exotic is still very much present in the picturesque, but largely stripped of its difficult otherness, allowing the viewer to remain in his or her visual comfort zone, secure in the knowledge that the Ganges looked basically like the Wye. Not only were British artists in India, South Africa, and Australia never very influenced by indigenous artistic traditions; their style was only minimally affected by the landscape itself, in contrast to that of European artists working in the so-called Oriental world.⁶⁵ In fact, there is considerable evidence to suggest that painters sought out landscapes that looked – or could be made to look – like England itself.

Finally, it should be clear that the vectors of imperialism did not work solely (or perhaps even largely) in a binary, metropole-periphery, home-abroad, fashion. As noted earlier,

Hodges travelled through the South Pacific before he ever went to India, and numerous scholars have noted that influence; the Daniells were in South Africa before their journey to India; and Angas moved several times between England, South Africa, and Australia. In short, the picturesque was not simply an aesthetic that was carried from the English Lake District to Table Bay and the Ganges River, but developed throughout the British Empire without, at times, England even as a reference point. And in this way it did its part to integrate the British empire, by blurring boundaries, tempering the exotic, providing a measure of familiarity for would-be travellers, and most of all, homogenizing differences.

1 JR Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, London, 1883, p8.
 2 The literature on this point is voluminous. The most comprehensive summation may be found in William Roger Louis, ed, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 vols, Oxford, 1998-9. For a brief survey outlining the various methodological approaches is Andrew Porter, *European Imperialism, 1860-1914*, London, 1994. On pre-modern conceptions of the British Empire, see David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, Cambridge, 2000.
 3 Andrew S Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics c. 1880-1932*, Edinburgh, 2000; Antoinette Burton, ed, *Politics and Empire in Victorian Britain*, New York, 2001; Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis*, New Haven, 1999.
 4 Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain*, Berkeley, 1998; Michael Fisher, *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*, Berkeley, 1997; Edward W Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, 1993; Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, Berkeley, 1997, pp1-56; Julie F Codell and Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Orientalism Transposed: The impact of the colonies on British culture*, Aldershot, 1998.
 5 It is telling that the empire figures almost nowhere in Walter E

Houghton's *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, New Haven, 1957, except briefly in chapters on 'anti-intellectualism', 'the worship of force', and 'patriotism'. John M MacKenzie, ed, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, Manchester, 1986, focuses on the age of high imperialism, after 1880, as does James Morris, *Pax Britannica: The Climax of Empire*, New York, 1968, who writes of the Diamond Jubilee having 'crystallized the new conception of Empire', p37.
 6 GP Gooch, *Under Six Reigns*, London, 1958, p123.
 7 John M MacKenzie, 'Empire and the Global Gaze', in *The Victorian Vision: Inventing New Britain*, London, 2001, pp 241-2.
 8 Here too the literature borders on the unmanageable, but in the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, New York, 1978, a selection of recent works would have to include Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India*, Chicago, 1992; Deirdre David, *Rule Britannia: Women, Empire, and Victorian Travel Writing*, Ithaca, 1995; Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel*, Durham, NC, 1996; Nancy L Paxton, *Writing under the Raj*, New Brunswick, NJ, 1999. More generally, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London, 1992.
 9 James R Ryan, *Picturing the Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, Chicago, 1997.
 10 Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, Stanford, 1990, pp119-67; Stephen

Constantine, 'Bringing the Empire Alive': The Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Propaganda, 1916-23', in MacKenzie, op cit, pp192-231, and idem, *Buy & Build: The Advertising Posters of the Empire Marketing Board*, London, 1986; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, New York, 1995, pp207-31.
 11 The most comprehensive overview of the field of imperial art is Jeffrey Auerbach, 'Art and Empire', *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol V, ed Robin W Winks, Oxford, 1999, pp571-83.
 12 See especially Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth Century British Painting*, Durham, NC, 1999, p2; Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dehijia, *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757-1930*, Ithaca, 1986, 16. The most influential work taking this approach, though not focused on the British Empire, is Linda Nochlin, 'The Imaginary Orient', *Art in America*, 71 (1983), pp118-31ff.
 13 Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 2nd edn, New Haven, 1985.
 14 For example, Jane Carruthers and Marion Arnold, *The Life and Work of Thomas Baines*, Vlacberg, 1995; Giles Tillotson, *The Artificial Empire: The Indian Landscapes of William Hodges*, Richmond, 2000. Once exception, though it makes no attempt to articulate a unified imperial vision, is Michael Jacobs, *The Painted Voyage: Art Travel and Exploration 1564-1875*, London,

1995. Both Elizabeth Johns *et al.*, *New Worlds from Old: 19th Century Australian & American Landscapes*, Canberra, 1998, and Tim Barringer, 'Imperial Visions: Responses to India and Africa in Victorian Art and Design', in MacKenzie, ed, *The Victorian Vision*, pp315-33, focus on two regions.
 15 On the difficulties of administering the empire from London, see DM Young, *The Colonial Office in the Early Nineteenth Century*, London, 1961; John W Cell, *British Colonial Administration in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, New Haven, 1970. On the challenges of running the empire from the periphery, see William Denison, *Varieties of Vice-Regal Life*, 2 vols, London, 1870; James Pope-Hennessy, *Verandah: Some Episodes in the Crown Colonies: 1867-1889*, New York, 1964.
 16 On the sanitizing effects of the picturesque in British India and elsewhere, see Suleri and Nochlin.
 17 Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, London, 1794, pp9, 20; Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem in Three Books*, London, 1794, pp23, 31.
 18 Tillotson, p55.
 19 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore, 1998.
 20 On issues of identity and alterity, see Martin Daunt and Rick Halpern, ed, *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850*, Philadelphia, 1999.
 21 The idea of the empire as a web comes from Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism and*

- the British Empire, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2002, pp1-17. The phrase 'bundles of relationships' is from Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, Berkeley, 1982, p5. Recent work suggesting the limits of the 'spoked wheel' model includes Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*, Cambridge, 1995, and SB Cook, *Imperial Affinities: Nineteenth Century Analogies and Exchanges between India and Ireland*, Newbury, CA, 1993. On the problematic concept of 'metropole', see Stoler and Cooper; Thomas Metcalf, 'Empire Recentered: India in the Indian Ocean Arena', in Gregory Blue, Martin Bunton, and Ralph Croizier, ed, *Colonialism and the Modern World*, White Plains, NY, 2002, pp25-39; Douglas M Haynes, *Imperial Medicine: Patrick Manson and the Conquest of Tropical Disease*, Philadelphia, 2002; Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating identities in nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain*, London, 2001; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, Chicago, 2002.
- 22 Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, Stanford, 1989, pp29-30, 89; Pheroza Godrej and Pauline Rohatgi, *Scenic Splendours: India through the Painted Image*, London, 1989, pp19-20; Mildred Archer, *British Drawings in the India Office Library*, vol I, London, 1969, p19; John M MacKenzie, 'Art and the Empire', *Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*, ed PJ Marshall, Cambridge, 1996. In the interest of not being overdeterministic, it should be emphasized that the picturesque was hardly a stable or unitary aesthetic. Although Christopher Hussey in *The Picturesque; Studies in a Point of View*, London, 1927, established the picturesque as an 'interregnum between classic and romantic art, necessary in order to enable the imagination to form the habit of feeling through the eye' (p4), there were debates about what it was at the time, as there have been ever since. See Andrews, p239; Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, ed, *The Politics of the Picturesque*, Cambridge, 1994, esp pp1-2, 178; Kim Jan Michasiw, 'Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque', *Representations*, 38 (1992) pp76-100.
- 23 Tillotson, esp pp43-53.
- 24 It should be pointed out that Hodges' *Tabiti Revisited* does not fall exclusively or perfectly within the picturesque tradition. Especially in the context of the other paintings he executed for the Admiralty after his return from the South Seas, there is a historicising quality to his work that narrated the voyage, contributed to the debate over human origins and civilization, and, in the absence of any heroic figures, elevated the landscape to prominent status.
- 25 Smith, pp62-4.
- 26 Harriet Guest, 'Curiously Marked: Tattooing, Masculinity, and Nationality in Eighteenth-Century British Perceptions of the South Pacific', *Painting and the Politics of Culture: Nine Essays on British Art, 1700-1850*, ed John Barrell, Oxford, 1992, pp101-34.
- 27 In fact, Europeans are absent from the vast majority of Hodges' paintings of the South Pacific, notable exceptions being *A view of Matawai Bay in the Island of Otahete*, 1776, *View in Pickersgill Harbour*, *Dusky Bay, New Zealand* (c1773), and *The landing at Erramanga* (1776), all at the National Maritime Museum, London.
- 28 Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature, and the Illustrated Travel Account, 1760-1840*, Cambridge, MA, 1984.
- 29 Ged Martin and Benjamin E Kline, 'British Emigration and New Identities', *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*, pp254-79; Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, New York, 1997, 307-11; CA Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830*, London, 1989, pp157-8; Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 2nd edn, London, 1984, pp7-8.
- 30 David Hansen, *John Glover (1767-1849) and the Colonial Picturesque*, Hobart, 2003.
- 31 John McPhee, *The Art of John Glover*, Melbourne, 1980, p27.
- 32 Alfred W Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Cambridge, 1986.
- 33 Arthur Bowes Smyth, the surgeon aboard the *Lady Penryhn*, one of the ships of the First Fleet that sailed to Australia in 1788, wrote in his journal: '5th January 1788. A very fine breeze. This night was so very hot that I was obliged to throw off the bedclothes. There are now in the cabin geraniums in full blossom and some grapevines which flourish very much, there are also myrtles, bananas and other sort of plant brought from Rio de Janeiro.' See Paul G Fiddon and RJ Ryan, ed, *The Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth: Surgeon, Lady Penryhn, 1787-1789*, Sydney, 1979.
- 34 Sharon Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania*, Cambridge, 1992, p99. Foreign plants were brought to Van Dieman's Land at such a rate that by the time Revd W. Spicer took his weed census in 1878 more than one hundred exotic species had become naturalized. See WW Spicer, 'Alien Plants', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, Hobart, 1878, p64. John Richardson Glover to Mary Bowles, 8 September 1833, Mitchell Library, Sydney; Land Board Report 753, 11 May 1831, Archives Office of Tasmania; Hansen.
- 35 Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, Melbourne, 2000, pp69, 90-9.
- 36 Johns, p122.
- 37 The most 'unpicturesque' of Glover's paintings is *Cawood from the Ouse River* (1838), which is almost anti-Claudean in its structure, featuring a convex rather than concave foreground, an absence of *coulisses*, and almost barren hills in the distance. In most other instances, however, Glover's work is comfortably picturesque. *The River Derwent and Hobart Town* (c1831), for example, provides a view, appropriately enough, of Salvador Rosa's Glen, and is loosely based on Poussain's *Abraham and Isaac* (1655-60). It is also worth noting that Glover's son, John Richardson Glover, characterized the coast near Launceston where they settled as 'much of the Ulswater [sic] character' and described the masses of hills as 'strong and striking, and very like the management of Gaspard Poussin's landscapes, ie good school for the chiaro-scuro light and shadowing'. See John Richardson Glover to Mary Bowles, 20 February 1831, Mitchell Library, Sydney, and Hansen.
- 38 Westall to Banks, 13 January 1804, quoted in Smith, *Australian Painting*, p13.
- 39 Andrew Sayers, 'The Shaping of Australian Landscape Painting', *New Worlds from Old*, p55.
- 40 See also Baron Field, *Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales* (1825), in Bernard Smith, ed, *Documents in Art and Taste in Australia 1770-1941*, Melbourne, 1975, 36.
- 41 Thomas Watling, *Letters from an Exile at Botany Bay, to his Aunt in Dumfries*, Penrith [1794]8-9.
- 42 Watling, 9; Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting 1788-1960*, Melbourne, 1962, 11-15, and *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 182-5.
- 43 David H Solkin, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, London, 1982, pp184-5.
- 44 Sayers, p59.
- 45 Tillotson, pp1-4, provides an excellent formal analysis of this painting.
- 46 Jacobs, pp 60-2; WG Constable, *Richard Wilson*, Cambridge, MA, p139. According to EK Waterhouse, Hodges was 'probably the most accomplished painter of fake Wilsons'. See his *Painting in Britain 1530-1790*, London: Penguin, 1953, p178.
- 47 Jacobs, pp67-8. See also Mildred Archer, *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786-1794*, New York, 1980; Jagmohan Mahajan, *Picturesque India: Sketches and travels of Thomas and William Daniell*, New Delhi, 1983.
- 48 H Diane Russell, *Claude Lorrain 1600-1682*, Washington, DC, 1982, and Humphrey Wine, *Claude: The Poetic Landscape*, London, 1994. More generally, see Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England*, New York, 1925.
- 49 Michael Rosenthal, *British Landscape Painting*, Oxford, 1982, p64; Constable, p179.
- 50 See Tobin, esp pp81-138; Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*, New York, 1999; Daunt and Helpert.
- 51 Constable (p184; pl 52b) identified *Lydford Waterfall*, *Tavistock* as 'A Welsh Waterfall (Pistyll Cain, Merionethshire)'. See Solkin, pp135-6.
- 52 Rosenthal, pp56-64; Thomas Cole, 'Essay on American Scenery', *The American Magazine* 1 (1836), pp1-12; Andrew Wilton and Tim Barringer, *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States, 1820-1880*, Princeton, 2002.
- 53 See Brian Dolan, *Exploring European Frontiers: British Travellers in the Age of Enlightenment*, London, 2000; Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century*, New Haven, 1997; Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in the Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa*, 6 vols, London, 1810-23.
- 54 Quoted in CP Barbier, *William Gilpin. His Drawings, Teaching and Theory of the Picturesque*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, p100. On the Indian picturesque, see Pal and Dehejia, pp97-129.
- 55 On the 'truth' claims that can be associated with the topographical panorama, see Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago, 1983.
- 56 Jeffrey Auerbach, 'Art, Advertising, and Legacy of Empire', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 35 (2002), pp1-23.
- 57 On labour and the picturesque in the domestic as opposed to imperial context, see John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840*, Cambridge, 1980; Christiana Payne, *Toil and Plenty: Images of the Agricultural Landscape in England 1780-1890*, New Haven, 1993; Nancy Armstrong, 'The Picturesque Effect: Landscape and Labour in Victorian Photography', exh, Yale British Art Center, 1992. On labour and empire more generally, see Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor in the British Caribbean*, Philadelphia, 1998.
- 58 Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art*, New Haven, 2000, p78.
- 59 On the relationship between the topographical and the picturesque, see Andrew Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Cambridge, 1992, pp163-8.
- 60 Said, *Orientalism*, p3.
- 61 This argument is complementary to, rather than incompatible with, that put forward by Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860*, Berkeley, 1986, esp pp73-83, in which she argues that the picturesque was an 'ideological response' to the changing relationship between landlords and peasants and the attendant segregation of social classes during the agricultural revolution, and that its 'anti-industrialism' was in response to the early years of the industrial revolution. It is also not incompatible with Sara Suleri's argument in *The Rhetoric of English India*, Chicago, 1992, that women deployed the picturesque in order to minimize the threats posed by life in the imperial subcontinent (pp75-6).
- 62 David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*, London, 2001, p xix.
- 63 James A Boon, *Affinities and Extremes: Crisscrossing the Bittersweet Ethnology of East Indies History, Hindu-Balinese Culture, and Indo-European Aulture*, Chicago, 1990. For a discussion of this point concerning people, rather than the landscape, and in the Romantic period, see Harry Liebersohn, 'Discovering Indigenous Nobility: Tocqueville, Chamisso, and Romantic Travel Writing', *American Historical Review* 99:3 (1994), pp746-66.
- 64 Cannadine, p xix; on the complex intersections of the domestic and the exotic, see Guest.
- 65 MaryAnne Stevens, ed, *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse*, New York, 1984, 15; John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500-1920*, Cambridge, 1988, p135.

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