

**The Discomforts of Empire: Emily Eden's Life in India, 1836-1842**

by

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## Abstract

This thesis discusses the physical and psychological discomforts of Emily Eden, an English aristocrat, during her life in India from 1836 to 1842. I argue that the comforts Eden identified during her early life in England defined how she interacted in India with her new surroundings, climate, and separation from family and friends. Eden believed that comfort was based in the pleasure and privileges of home as well as modes of life. When her comforts of home were compromised in India, the “hot land of strangers,” Eden clung to her identity as an aristocratic British woman. Physically, the Indian climate impacted Emily’s comforts and influenced her daily routine and activities like gardening, the experience of indoor and outdoor spaces, and interactions with the landscape and the picturesque scenery. The separation from family and friends, the apparent loss of her identity due to the lack of political influence, isolation from other Europeans, and her own perceived Indianization affected Emily psychologically.

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## List of Abbreviations

- EIC East India Company
- LFI* *Letters from India* eds. Emily Eden and Eleanor Eden. London: Bentley, 1872.
- MEL* *Miss Eden's Letters*, ed. Violet Dickinson. London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1919.
- UTC Emily Eden. *Up the Country: Letters Written to Her Sister from the Upper Provinces of India*. London: R. Bentley, 1866.

## Introduction

On March 24, 1836, Emily Eden, an unmarried aristocratic English woman, wrote a letter from the Government House in Barrackpore, India to her dear friend, Mrs. Theresa Lister, who was living in England. In the letter, Emily used a phrase that encapsulated how Eden interacted with and experienced India during her travels, from 1836 to 1842. Emily described how she had arrived in “a hot land of strangers.”<sup>1</sup> This phrase, “hot land of strangers” expressed how an elite British woman like Emily Eden could experience India during the early nineteenth century. As recorded in her letters, Emily experienced India primarily as a series of daily discomforts. To many Britons, India was seen as a place of death, a place of foreign unfamiliar populations, and, as the stereotyped “other,” a strange land.<sup>2</sup> For Eden, however, these ideas were subsumed within the broader concept of comfort.

The 1830s and 1840s were an unstable time for British imperial policy in India. Decades before the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and the establishment of the British government as total sovereign over it, India was still a battleground between East India Company (EIC) officials and Indian princes vying for territorial lands. It was also the time when E.M. Collingham argues the British official was undergoing a transformation from the eighteenth-century “nabob” into the late nineteenth-century “sahib.” In the early

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Barrackpore, March 24, 1836, *MEL*, 263-264.

<sup>2</sup> John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 190; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 43.

nineteenth-century, the image of the nabob was as a flamboyant, effeminate, and wealthy East India Company servant, usually of European descent. Open to the influences of Indian culture, social life, and traditions, nabobs often incorporated those aspects into their self-identity.<sup>3</sup> The nabob became acclimatized to South Asian mannerisms such as smoking the hookah, dressing in native clothes, and watching nautch dances. With the rise of evangelicalism and changes in the EIC and government power in India, however, the nabob was no longer viewed as an acceptable model for Anglo-Indian identity in the nineteenth century. Thus, the late nineteenth-century saw the development of the sahib, a sober, bureaucratic representative of the Crown.<sup>4</sup> The sahib was a “distancing mechanism to separate Briton from India, and the Anglo-Indian body increasingly came to serve as an active principle demarcating class as well as racial boundaries.”<sup>5</sup>

At this time, the majority of Britons in India were young men looking for the reward of status and riches through Company service. Few British women lived in India, except for the small community of officer’s wives and a few female servants. Emily Eden was thus unique in India; she was English, a woman, as well as unmarried, and aristocratic and did not match the standard demography of colonial personnel. Looking at her collections of letters offers a new perspective on British women travelers and how they could perceive their status in the subcontinent. The correspondence shows the

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<sup>3</sup> E.M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj c. 1800-1947*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

different world in which a member of the social elite, sister to the Governor-General, was accessible and moved in during her stay. Thus, exploring Emily Eden's experiences in India through her collections of letters demonstrates why India for her represented a "hot land of strangers" and further develops the discourse on early nineteenth-century British imperial history.

Emily Eden was born on March 3, 1797, at Old Palace Yard, Westminster, the tenth of the fourteen children of William Eden and Eleanor Elliot. Her father, William, and mother, Eleanor, came from politically active families. William Eden himself had a career as an ambassador in several countries and her mother's family history lay in colonial service. William became a close colleague of William Pitt the Younger during Lord Shelburne's ministry in 1783, as they agreed on most topics such as the economy and finance.<sup>6</sup> In May 1793, after retiring from diplomatic service, he accepted the British peerage of Baron Auckland of West Auckland.<sup>7</sup> His second son, George, became the second Lord Auckland upon his death in 1814. Eleanor's brother, Lord Minto, was also a former Governor-General of India.

The Eden siblings created further political connections through their appointments and achievements. George found a seat on Lord Grey's cabinet as president of the Board of Trade in 1830, as well as serving as First Lord of the Admiralty to Lord Melbourne

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<sup>6</sup> Lionel J. Trotter, *The Earl of Auckland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> "Eden, William, first Baron Auckland (1744–1814)," Stephen M. Lee in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2009, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8459> (accessed July 7, 2012).

four years later.<sup>8</sup> Even the Eden females brought political attention to the family as the objects of other men's affections. It was known that William's eldest daughter, who eventually married the Earl of Buckinghamshire, was "Pitt's first and only love."<sup>9</sup> According to rumors, Emily herself was one of the objects of Lord Melbourne's affections, although she did not reciprocate, writing, "I can derive but little vanity from Lord Melbourne's admiration. I stand very low in the list of his loves."<sup>10</sup> Emily was more than just an object of affection, however, throughout her life, Eden was her brother's political adviser, a lively participant in Whig political circles, and received solicitations for advice from Lord Melbourne and Lord Palmerston.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Emily was accustomed to being in a large network of family, friends, politicians, and near connections who participated in Whig politics, elite social circles, and colonial endeavors.<sup>12</sup>

Like politics, education was important to the Eden family. In the early 1800s, Eleanor hired tutors to educate Emily and her siblings. By age eleven she later claimed, she knew "the *Memoires de Retz*, Shakespeare, and a great part of the Bible, almost by heart."<sup>13</sup> As Emily was a young woman of means, she became very connected in the political and social circles of London. Lord Melbourne, for example, as observed above,

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<sup>8</sup> Trotter, *The Earl of Auckland*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, 30 Grosvenor Street, Thursday [January 1832], *MEL*, 216.

<sup>11</sup> Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 72.

<sup>12</sup> Janet Dunbar, *Golden Interlude: The Edens in India 1836-1842* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1955), ix.

<sup>13</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Hertingfordbury, Monday, September, 1826, *MEL*, 107.

was one of her closest and dearest friends. Indeed, rumors circulated that they were going to be engaged and married, but, after some confusion, her father called it off. After the death of her father and mother in the late 1810s, Emily and her younger sister, Fanny, moved to London and lived with their bachelor brother, George, Lord Auckland, in his Grosvenor Street house.

George and Emily had a close and affectionate sibling relationship that ultimately meant that Emily accompanied George to India when he was appointed Governor-General in 1835. King William IV even acknowledged the siblings' closeness, "His Majesty has long been aware of the sincere attachment which exists between Lord Auckland and his amiable Sisters, and of his anxiety for their Welfare and happiness, and he gives him credit for this exemplary feature of his character."<sup>14</sup>

As a well educated member of the social elite, Emily left behind an immense collection of primary source materials such as letters, drawings, lithographs, and two novels that were saved, edited, and published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first publication occurred shortly after her return from India in 1843. Emily had some of her sketches and watercolors created into lithographs for a compilation titled, *Portraits of the Princes and People of India*, which included images of young rajahs, attendants, and other miscellaneous people and events from India. Emily

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<sup>14</sup> King William IV to Miss Eden, Windsor Castle, September 26, 1835, *MEL*, 259.

also wrote two short novels that commented on the social behaviors of her time, *The Semi-Detached House* (1859) and *The Semi-Attached Couple* (1860).<sup>15</sup>

The richest material Eden left behind for historians, however, was her copious correspondence. In 1866, Emily published her first volume of letters, *Up the Country: Letters Written to her Sister from the Upper Provinces of India*. The volumes include letters from her travel excursion “up the country” from Calcutta to Simla. In a letter written to her nephew, William in 1866, Eden noted her own censorship in these volumes, “Many passages of this Diary, written solely for the amusement of my own family, have of course been omitted; but not a word has been added to descriptions which have little merit, but that they are true and that they were written on the spot.”<sup>16</sup>

According to her niece, Eleanor Eden, the popularity and success of *Up the Country* was so great that she urged Emily to publish more materials from her time in India.<sup>17</sup> In the late 1860s, Emily’s poor health undermined her ability to prepare the letters for publication. Therefore, Eleanor carried out the arrangement of letters with direction and support from her aunt. Eleanor wrote in the preface to *Letters from India*, “My Aunt frequently, however, expressed her desire that I should continue the work at

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Schlueter, and June Schlueter, *An Encyclopedia of British Women Writers* (New York: Garland, 1988), 216.

<sup>16</sup> Emily Eden to Lord William Godolphin Osbourne, Dedication, Eden Lodge, Kensington Gore, May, 1866, in *UTC*, v.

<sup>17</sup> Eleanor Eden, Bournemouth, November 1871, *LFI*, preface.

some future period.”<sup>18</sup> *Letters from India* appeared in 1872, three years after Emily’s death. A final volume of letters, which range in date from her early childhood to her travels in India, *Miss Eden’s Letters*, was published in 1919 by another relative, her great niece, Violet Mary Dickinson. According to Violet, *Miss Eden’s Letters* was published in response to the interest created by the *Life and Letters of the Fourth Earl of Clarendon* (1913), which had included some of Emily’s letters to Lord Clarendon, one of her closest friends.

These letters provide a wealth of information on Emily Eden’s life in England and India, giving details on how she understood and viewed her world. In previous scholarship, historians have used Eden’s writing as a source of small anecdotes for their historical arguments, simplified into one-liners in a larger text.<sup>19</sup> Eden has also been treated as a subject of biography, such as in Janet Dunbar’s work, *Golden Interlude: The Edens in India 1835 -1842* that “sets a detailed account of the Indian adventure against the background of the Eden family.”<sup>20</sup> This thesis does not simply detail the “Indian adventure” and family background but goes beyond the scope of biography to show how the concept of comfort impacted Emily Eden’s life, culture, and mannerisms.

Despite the editing by herself and her nieces, who removed whole letters and excised damaging remarks, Emily Eden’s writings still revealed a variety of continuous

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<sup>18</sup> Eleanor Eden, Bournemouth, November 1871, *LFI*, preface.

<sup>19</sup> For two examples, see: Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 307-308, 310-311; Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 357, 366.

<sup>20</sup> Dunbar, *Golden Interlude*, jacket.

themes. Her letters actively portrayed the importance of comfort in her daily life in both Britain and India. This demonstrates that comfort was an important concept in the life of an aristocratic English woman during the nineteenth century and that it played a central role in conditioning Eden's response to India and its people. Beyond the typical biography, this thesis is the first systematic study of Emily Eden and her entire published correspondence that analyzes the role of comfort in the life of a nineteenth-century aristocratic woman.

The word comfort derives from the medieval French word, *conforter* or *confort*, meaning physical and emotional support.<sup>21</sup> As John Crowley notes, before the middle of the eighteenth century, comfort usually had medicinal or nutritional connotations.<sup>22</sup> Developing slowly through the centuries, the term comfort developed new connotations of moral and emotional support.<sup>23</sup> Comfort was thus an established term in the medieval period; but it did not gain widespread usage until the eighteenth century. Around 1700, comfort acquired a new physical meaning that related to the relationship between the body, material culture, and the environment.<sup>24</sup> The increase in domestic material

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>22</sup> John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>23</sup> Crowley further explains, For centuries, "comfort" had primarily meant moral, emotional, spiritual, and political support in difficult circumstances. To be "comfortless" had meant being "without anything to allay misfortune," and "discomfort" involved feelings of "sorrow," "melancholy," and "gloom" rather than physical irritability. John E. Crowley, "The Sensibility of Comfort," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999), 751.

<sup>24</sup> Crowley, "The Sensibility of Comfort", 750-751.

possessions during the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century accelerated its use in the vernacular and refashioned the difference between luxury and necessity. Physical comfort “was a natural motive for new consumption patterns.” New furnishings, conveniences, and furniture meant to promote bodily comfort rapidly made their way into households.<sup>25</sup> Standards of living improved to the extent that previous luxury goods now came to be viewed as necessities.<sup>26</sup> The concept of comfort was also closely associated with the emerging notions of privacy and intimacy.<sup>27</sup> Although the culture of comfort developed during the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century realized its impact on society and lifestyles and can be seen in this microhistory of Emily Eden and her account of her time in India.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines comfort as “strengthening; encouragement, incitement; aid, succour, support, countenance,” but Emily Eden’s definition of comfort was far more complex.<sup>28</sup> In 1807, Robert Southey observed, of the English,

There are two words in their language on which these people pride themselves, and which they cannot be translated. *Home* is the one, by which an Englishman means his house...The other word is *comfort*; it means all the enjoyments and privileges of *home*; and here I must confess

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<sup>25</sup> Donna J. Bohanan, *Fashion Beyond Versailles: Consumption and Design in Seventeenth-Century France* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 74-75.

<sup>26</sup> Crowley, “The Sensibility of Comfort,” 752.

<sup>27</sup> Bohanan, *Fashion Beyond Versailles*, 75.

<sup>28</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “Comfort, n.” <http://www.oed.com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/view/Entry/36890?rskey=J9MMzX&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed April 12, 2012]

that these proud islanders have reason for their pride. In their social intercourse and their modes of life they have enjoyments which we never dream of.<sup>29</sup>

Like Southey, based on her discussion in letters, Eden agreed that comfort meant “all the enjoyments and privileges of home” as well as “their social intercourse and their modes of life.”<sup>30</sup> To Eden, her aristocratic understanding necessitated comfort in her life.

Without her physical and psychological comforts, Eden’s identity as an aristocratic British woman was compromised. She became “un-English” without the “enjoyments and privileges” of her home and the comfort they brought her.<sup>31</sup>

By looking at Emily Eden’s letters through the lens of comfort, this thesis asserts that several different scholarly arguments from imperial historiography are connected. For some historians, climate, by creating lethargy and stagnation, had a major impact on British rule in India due to its negative effects on Indian as well as European constitutions, which indicated inferiority in the eyes of Europeans.<sup>32</sup> As Mark Harrison argues, Europeans looked at the relation of their bodies with the Indian climate in different times of history depending on political circumstances.<sup>33</sup> Eden and her discussion of her discomforts in the climate of India addressed the early nineteenth century view of that time period and its political factors determined the importance of weather stricken

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<sup>29</sup> Quoted in John E. Crowley, “The Sensibility of Comfort,” 749.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 749.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 749.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India, 1600-1850* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13, 17.

<sup>33</sup> Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*, 20-21.

bodily relations. Attached to the climate is the understanding that the physical body “was central to the colonial experience” as the site of social structures and societal patterns.<sup>34</sup>

E.M. Collingham thus argues that the study of the British body in India can trace shifts in lifestyles such as the shift from the eighteenth-century nabob, who openly identified with Indian culture, to the sahib, bounded off from Indian influence by the change in private practices.<sup>35</sup> Emily demonstrated this shift in the definition of the British body and Britishness in India through her discussion of Anglo-Indian civilization and the discomfort she felt with the proximity of perceived “oriental despotism” to her English lifestyle.

Comfort offers an overarching structure through which to group these different arguments, especially when looking at the way in which Europeans, in particular the British, designated themselves as different than their other imperial counterparts. In his seminal work, *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said designated the Orient’s place in the European cultural experience.<sup>36</sup> He argued that the “Orient” was an image of the “Other” and it helped define itself as the contrasting idea to Europe.<sup>37</sup> Like Said, Mary Louise Pratt explores the interactions and distinctions between Europe and their conquered empires. Pratt discusses transculturation, meaning how subjugated groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant culture, as a phenomenon of the

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<sup>34</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 1-2.

contact zone, the space of colonial encounters.<sup>38</sup> Eden's interaction with Indian peoples in those contact zones demonstrated the ongoing Anglo-Indian relations defined by "coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."<sup>39</sup> As a British aristocrat living in India, the discomfort Eden felt at the interaction with South Asian cultures exemplifies Pratt's theory on contact zones.

Emily Eden's notion of comfort and its role in understanding her time in India are explored in three chapters. Chapter One, "Ploughing the Ocean": England, India, and the Voyage aboard the *Jupiter*, summarizes Eden's daily activities and the lifestyle that defined her comfort level while in England and examines the transitioning sea voyage on board the *Jupiter* in light of the expected discomforts of India.<sup>40</sup> Chapter Two, "To Rack and Ruin: India and the Physical Comforts and Discomforts of Daily Routine, Climate, and Housing," discusses the physical discomforts Eden experienced in India, particularly those caused by the climate.<sup>41</sup> Chapter Three, "To Dream of England: Separation, Identity Loss, and Isolation in the Subcontinent," addresses her psychological discomforts, such as separation from family and friends back in England.<sup>42</sup>

This thesis thus discusses the physical and psychological discomforts of Emily Eden during her stay in India from 1836 to 1842. It argues that the comforts Eden

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<sup>38</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>40</sup> From The Hon. Emily Eden To —., Calcutta, Friday, December 31, 1841, *LFI*, 276.

<sup>41</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Barrackpore, July 19, [1836], *LFI*, 186.

<sup>42</sup> From The Hon. Emily Eden To —., Calcutta, Friday, December 31, 1841, *LFI*, 275.

identified in England during her early life would define how she interacted in India with the new surroundings, climate, and distance. Eden treasured the comforts and enjoyments of social intercourse and her modes of life.<sup>43</sup> But, when her comforts were compromised during her stay in India, the “hot land of strangers,” Eden clung to her identity as an aristocratic British woman for stability.

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<sup>43</sup> Crowley, “The Sensibility of Comfort,” 749.

## Chapter 1

“Ploughing the Ocean”: England, India, and Voyage aboard the *Jupiter*

Emily Eden was thirty-nine years old when part of the Eden family, including George, Fanny, and their nephew, William Osbourne, boarded the *Jupiter* and began their journey to live in India for six years. She had never traveled, let alone lived, as far away from Britain as India in all of those thirty-nine years. Eden knew, however, that she needed to prepare, both physically and psychologically, for the discomforts of the sea journey as well as the cultural transitions that would occur in India. With Emily’s identity strongly grounded in her own Englishness and English notions of comfort, the voyage and inevitable arrival in India became difficult for her to accept. While on board the *Jupiter*, Eden wrote about her struggle with these changes in comfort,

That in the middle of February, when we ought to be shivering in a thick yellow fog, George and I should be established on a pile of cushions in the stern window of his cabin, he without his coat, waistcoat, and shoes, learning Hindoostanee by the sweat of his brow. I, with only one petticoat and a thin dressing-gown on, a large fan in one hand and a pen in the other.<sup>44</sup>

For Emily, the sea voyage and the expectations of life in India challenged all of her previous British habits, comforts, and routines. In a July 1835 letter to Lady Campbell, Eden wrote further about the loss of her English comforts while in India, “Besides, what is there to say, ‘God’s will be done.’ It all comes to that. I certainly look at the climate

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<sup>44</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, N. Lat. 17, Long. 21, February 18, 1836, *MEL*, 261.

with dread, and to the voyage with utter aversion. Then, we leave a very happy existence and then, worst of all, we leave my sisters and a great many friends.”<sup>45</sup> For Emily, the voyage ensured the loss of her physical English comforts and distanced her from her social and political lives. Socially, Emily relied on her family and friends for knowledge of “the latest books, the newest plays, the most up-to-date fashions and, above all, the current gossip.”<sup>46</sup> At the end of the estimated five-month sea journey, Eden’s lifestyle vanished and the discomforts of a new Indian life of heat, humidity, and isolation replaced it.

This chapter discusses the preparation of the Eden family for travel to India, as well as noting Emily’s preconceived notions of Anglo-Indian life. Life on board the *Jupiter* and the transition to the foreign climate and destinations gave Emily an indication of what her life in India would entail. Her discomforts with India and the British Empire first developed in Britain and on board the *Jupiter*. Understanding this development will help reinforce the arguments in the succeeding chapters on physical and psychological comforts and discomforts in Anglo-Indian society.

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<sup>45</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Admiralty, July 1835, *MEL*, 252.

<sup>46</sup> Julia Keay, *With Passport and Parasol* (London: BBC, 1989), 10.

## Preconceptions of India

In 1834 when Emily Eden's brother, George Eden, also known as Lord Auckland, told her that his work might be taking them to India, Emily thought it a dangerous assertion, and a potentially catastrophic event; nothing was further from her mind than the thought of foreign travel, especially to India.<sup>47</sup> Emily laughed that "Botany Bay would be a joke to it. There is a decent climate to begin with, and the fun of a little felony first."<sup>48</sup> In contrast, it would be a punishment to be forced to go to India. In reference to the five-month sea voyage, Emily complained she "would not do it for £1000 per day."<sup>49</sup> But shortly thereafter George was informed of the cancellation of the trip due to the collapse of the Whig government and the removal of Lord Melbourne as Prime Minister.<sup>50</sup> George's dreams of India were crushed and Emily was happy and relieved.

Emily's happiness and pleasure at the thought of not going to India was so extreme she had to hide her thankfulness from George, who was disappointed in the decision: "We have *esquivéd* India, a constant source of pleasure to me, though I keep it snug, as he is rather disappointed at having missed it, so I must not seem so thankful as I am."<sup>51</sup> Luckily for George, it would be Emily who was ultimately disappointed. By April

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<sup>47</sup> Keay, *With Passport and Parasol*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Ham Common, Monday evening, October 28, 1834, *MEL*, 245.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 245.

<sup>50</sup> Keay, *With Passport and Parasol*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Admiralty, Monday, November 23, 1834, *MEL*, 249.

1835, Lord Melbourne was once again Prime Minister, “and within two weeks of taking office he offered George a new post — as Governor-General of India.”<sup>52</sup> The choice to give George the post was to replace Lord Heytesbury, the candidate of the short-lived Tory administration. George’s income drastically increased from £2800 a year in office at the Board of Trade to £25,000 salary for the governorship. Although criticized in his role as First Lord of the Admiralty due to his unpopular manners and terrible public speaking skills, George Eden made an impeccable impression upon his arrival in Calcutta in 1836.<sup>53</sup> T. B. Macaulay acknowledged George’s personal improvements in awkwardness but noted he never did master his inability to speak in public.<sup>54</sup>

In July 1835, George Eden took the official title of Governor-General of India, an appointment that kept the Eden siblings in India for six years. Emily noted the unpleasant adjustment to her friend Lady Pamela Campbell in July 1835, writing that “George wrote to tell you of the awful change in our destination, and I have been so worried, and have had so much to do with seeing and hearing the representations of friends, and taking leave of many who are gone out of town and whom I shall never see again, that I could not write.”<sup>55</sup> What Emily, like George and Fanny, “found almost unbearable was the

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<sup>52</sup> Keay, *With Passport and Parasol*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> “Eden, George, earl of Auckland (1784–1849),” P. J. Marshall in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8451> (accessed July 6, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, (accessed July 6, 2012).

<sup>55</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Admiralty, July 1835, *MEL*, 252.

prospect of such a long separation from the friends, sisters and brothers to whom they were devotedly attached.”<sup>56</sup>

The Eden children — George, Emily, and Fanny — were from an aristocratic Whig family and they were accustomed to being a part of a large, supportive family of sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews, with whom they kept in touch by visits and regular correspondence.<sup>57</sup> The sisters, Emily and Fanny “were cultivated women who led a very full and happy existence, moving in the highest society, on terms of close friendship with the prominent Whig families, and taking pleasure in frequent visits to Bowood and Longleat, Chatsworth and Knowsley and many other great country-houses.”<sup>58</sup> George’s “appointment to India put an end to this pleasant, stimulating life.”<sup>59</sup> Not only did moving to India mean removing Emily from the comfort of home and her family, it entailed physical discomforts like “the five-months’ voyage under sail, [and] the extreme heat in which they would have to live for five or six years.”<sup>60</sup>

Even before the mention or prospect of George becoming Governor-General, Emily had developed many preconceived notions about India and what traveling there would entail. In her letters, Emily first mentioned her assumptions in 1820 to Miss Villiers, “Have you seen your Elliots? for I am anxious to know what India has done for them. It is a dangerous experiment, they get so stuffed with otto of roses, sandal-wood

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<sup>56</sup> Dunbar, *Golden Interlude*, ix.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, ix.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, ix.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, ix.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, ix.

and sentiment, they never come quite right.”<sup>61</sup> Based on this excerpt, Eden believed India negatively affected the Elliotts; that they never came “quite right,” meaning the Indian culture, which included otto of roses and sandal-wood, warped their English sensibilities.<sup>62</sup> Her inferences suggest her own sense of the inferiority and hazardous environment of Indian society, that it was “a dangerous experiment” to travel there.<sup>63</sup>

In the 1830s, when Emily found herself traveling there, she wrote a letter to Lady Campbell about her previous aversions to India and she optimistically admitted, “as other people have liked India and have come back to say so, perhaps we shall do the same.”<sup>64</sup> Lady Campbell wrote back suggesting her own notions of India, “How little did I imagine when I read of India, and looked on those hot, misty, gorgeous Indian views, that I should ever garner up part of my heart there.”<sup>65</sup> In contrast to Emily’s notions about the dangers of India, her friend thought India was hot, misty, and gorgeous.<sup>66</sup> Lord Melbourne also gave Emily an account of India with some advice as well, “Then God bless you- as to health, let us hope for the best. The climate of the East Indies very often re-establishes it.”<sup>67</sup>

Although her life in India was the first time Eden went beyond the British Isles, it was not her first time to experience the British Empire. In 1827, George suggested a

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<sup>61</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Grosvenor Street, Monday [1820], *MEL*, 62.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

<sup>64</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Admiralty, July 1835, *MEL*, 252.

<sup>65</sup> Lady Campbell to Miss Eden, Carton, September 1, 1835, *MEL*, 255.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 255.

<sup>67</sup> Lord Melbourne to Miss Eden, South Street, September 24, 1835, *MEL*, 258.

summer tour of Ireland to Emily and she hesitated on the expense and journey. She wrote about the travel notion,

He had invented such a good plan, that he and I should take Fanny to Knowsley, deposit her there, cross over to Ireland, make a little tour there, see Pamela, come back by Stackpole, see Elizabeth, and then go to Norman Court and the Grange for our shooting. It was a pretty idea of his, but then he is naturally a great dear. However this strikes me as rather an expensive journey, so I do not press it, and if he has thought better of it, I shall encourage his more economical thoughts. If not, I shall be very glad.<sup>68</sup>

With the expectation to see her dear friend, Lady Campbell, Eden agreed to travel to Ireland with George. She spent most of her six weeks' time in the houses and company of close family friends such as Lady Glengall and Lady Campbell. She also spent time on tour with George to places like Mount Shannon and Cahir where she drew many sketches.<sup>69</sup> At many instances, Emily enjoyed the Irish scenery and the visit, she wrote to a friend in England, "Altogether I liked Cahir. Killarney was one of the most satisfactory visits we paid; the lakes far surpassed even the extravagant expectation I had formed, and then the Kenmares are such charming people."<sup>70</sup>

While Emily's experience with Ireland during those six weeks was pleasant, her overall opinion of Ireland and the Irish was quite different. She commented on the Irish during their stay with Lady Glengall,

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<sup>68</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Bigods, Essex, Wednesday, July 1827, *MEL*, 137.

<sup>69</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Stackpole, Pembrokeshire, Saturday, November 3, 1827, *MEL*, 149.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

I never saw such a jaunting-car nation. The middle ranks seem to live in those vehicles, and the common people pass their days apparently sitting smoking at the doors of their cabins, the children with hardly as much cloathes on as a decent savage wears. Such groups we saw to-day! I feel much more in a foreign country than I should at Calais, and am only preserved from that illusion by the whistling of “Cherry-Ripe” which all the little naked Lazzaroni keep up.<sup>71</sup>

Much like the caricatures of the Irish as the not fully civilized simianized agitator from mid century Victorian England and Scotland, Emily illustrated her belief in the savageness of the lower class Irish in this passage.<sup>72</sup> Like her discomfort with the clothing choices of many South Asians, Eden believed the lower classes of Irishmen to be savages due to their lack of clothing and overall habits, “the children with hardly as much cloathes on as a decent savage.”<sup>73</sup> Emily stated in the years after her return from India that “I quite agree with Carlyle, who says: “If the Irish were not the most degraded savages on earth, they would blush to find themselves alive at all, instead of asking for means to remain so.”<sup>74</sup> Eden’s experience with the Irish in the British Isles prefigured her view of other imperial colonies and their inhabitants, whom Emily would also consider uncivilized. These notions of Ireland and her belief in the savageness of the Irish initiated Eden’s understanding of and aversions to British colonies, especially once she interacted with the people of India.

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<sup>71</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Dublin, Monday, September 17, 1827, *MEL*, 144.

<sup>72</sup> L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), xxxi.

<sup>73</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Dublin, Monday, September 17, 1827, *MEL*, 144.

<sup>74</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Theresa Lewis, Admiralty, Friday [April 1848], *MEL*, 375.

## Life in England

Despite her aversion to leaving England for foreign travel, it was Emily's love and dedication to her brother George that convinced her to accompany him to India. When living at the Admiralty house in London, Emily showed her devotion to George by minimizing her own health problems, writing that "one thing is quite certain, I could not have lived here without George, so I may be very thankful that my health has been so good this year that I have no difficulty on that account, as to going with him."<sup>75</sup> Their bond was even recognized by King William IV in a letter to Emily on the announcement of their journey, "His Majesty is not surprised that Miss Eden and her sister should have determined to accompany so affectionate a Brother even to so remote a destination, and He is sensible how much their Society must contribute to his comfort."<sup>76</sup>

From the time of their parents' deaths in the late 1810s, Emily and Fanny lived with George and he "depended on them to manage the domestic side of his life."<sup>77</sup> The sisters became companions to their brother; they created a home environment and tended to domestic duties in the household. But it was Emily who was closest to George and had maintained a devoted relationship with him since their childhood. From her brother's early political career to his successful promotion to "First Lord of the Admiralty," Emily

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<sup>75</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Admiralty, July 1835, *MEL*, 252.

<sup>76</sup> King William IV to Miss Eden, Windsor Castle, September 24, 1835, *MEL*, 259.

<sup>77</sup> Dunbar, *Golden Interlude*, x.

had acted as George's companion and hostess.<sup>78</sup> Again, King William IV acknowledged the siblings and their personal connections, "His Majesty has long been aware of the sincere attachment which exists between Lord Auckland and his amiable Sisters, and of his anxiety for their Welfare and happiness, and he gives him credit for this exemplary feature of his character."<sup>79</sup>

When George traveled around England for work or pleasure, Emily accompanied him on the journey, kept the house while he was away, or ventured to his side when he was distressed. In 1828, when George was Auditor of the Accounts for Greenwich Hospital, a man named Austin had "*defaulted* from Greenwich Hospital, after having cheated it a great amount" leaving George in a precarious state. Ultimately, George turned to his sister, Emily, for help in the situation, as she noted, "like a sensible man, he sent for me to keep up his spirits."<sup>80</sup> Then in 1831, when Emily was living in Greenwich Park, there was a commotion over Lord Russell's Reform Bill. Fearing for George's safety, Emily wrote, "London has been an ugly looking sight. We drove up to it most days to see George and to take him down to the House, because I like to see him safe thro' the crowd."<sup>81</sup> When George became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1834, Emily went with him to stay in London. She stated, "We went on Tuesday to see the Admiralty,

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<sup>78</sup> Keay, *With Passport and Parasol*, 9-10.

<sup>79</sup> King William IV to Miss Eden, Windsor Castle, September 24, 1835, *MEL*, 259.

<sup>80</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Eastcombe, August 31, 1828, *MEL*, 165.

<sup>81</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Greenwich Park, [October or November], 1831, *MEL*, 212.

and I believe we shall be moving into it the end of next week...but still I cannot fancy being much attached to any London house.”<sup>82</sup>

Emily’s daily routine in England included the activities of letter writing, visitations and social outings, sketching, reading, gardening, and shopping. Her daily activities were so extensive and time consuming that on one Friday afternoon Emily would “take leave to the Copleys, finish up the House Accounts, claim my allowance, pay my bills, lock up the tea and sugar, look over the House Linen, go to the Play” as well as “call on Lady Grantham.”<sup>83</sup> She led a life of routine, much like this Friday afternoon, based on ease and ritual comforts.

### **Preparation for the *Jupiter***

Physical preparation for the sea journey and stay in India included purchases like muslin and linen, but it also included the preparation of their cabins in their ship, the *Jupiter*. The Eden family found it necessary to conduct inspections of their living quarters, to ensure that the cabins provided the standard of comfort they were used to at home. On one of the final visits to the *Jupiter* before their voyage, Emily stated that they gave Captain Grey their “final directions about our cabins— a shelf here and a hook there, and more means of thorough ventilation, and better beds for the maids, and so on. It is all, I dare say, as

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<sup>82</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Grosvenor Street, 1834, *MEL*, 235-236.

<sup>83</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Bigods, Essex, Wednesday, July 1827, *MEL*, 136.

comfortable as a ship can be.”<sup>84</sup> Comfort was a high priority considering the distance and projected five-month duration of the journey aboard ship. Thus shopping for necessities and luxury goods, as well as critiquing the cabin conditions in order to have a comfortable trip, was necessary for the Eden family, and especially so for Emily.

Shopping for clothing and physical comforts were not the only preparations Emily made for the journey. For Emily, psychological arrangements also were made to maintain her established comfort level. One of these comforts involved the ability to physically see and talk with family and friends on a daily basis. To survive so far from England, Emily needed some sort of psychological reminder of her family and friends. Since she would be in India for six years, she saw these reminders as necessary for her psychological comfort, to ease her inability to see and interact with them.

Portraits and sketches thus became necessary objects for Emily’s comfort. She needed these objects around to create a sense of nostalgia for her home.<sup>85</sup> As Clare Pettitt acknowledges, “things” took on an extra burden of significance, and many women depended on the direct touch of a physical object to remind them of their home.<sup>86</sup> Emily arranged for sketches to be done of her friends and family to take with her to India. In a July 1835 letter to Lady Campbell, Emily wrote, “My present aim in writing is to ask

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<sup>84</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, October [?], 1835, *LFI*, 1-2.

<sup>85</sup> Susan M. Stabile, *Memory’s Daughters: The Material Culture of Remembrance in Eighteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>86</sup> Clare Pettitt, “Peggotty’s Work-Box: Victorian Souvenirs and Material Memory,” *RaVour*, Université de Montréal, 2009 <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/029896ar> (accessioned June 16, 2012)

whether there is not anybody in or near Dublin who can make a sketch of you, something in the Edridge or Slater line, not very extravagant in price, and if you do not mind, sitting for it for me.”<sup>87</sup> Lady Campbell responded, “I fear there is no good sketcher in Dublin, but there is a man who does paint something like a miniature, and does catch a likeness, and it shall be done for you next week, my darling.”<sup>88</sup>

In another letter to a friend, Emily explained how she displayed portraits while on board the *Jupiter*, “And so God bless you, my dearest friend, and tell the chicks that their picture hangs at the foot of my bed, and is a great comfort to me.”<sup>89</sup> Emily’s sister, Fanny, also participated in collecting portraits for the journey. In one letter to a friend, Fanny wrote, “I look at your unfortunate picture swinging opposite to me, and feel remorseful that I should have placed your innocent, dumb likeness in such a situation; and then, I don’t know where you, the real living woman, are. Nobody can have been anywhere as long as we have been on board this ship.”<sup>90</sup> Two days later, Emily wrote to a friend, expectantly, “I hope you have sat for your picture again, and I wish—would devote 7s. 6d. to me, and send me out his picture. I never did a wiser thing than carrying off those little sketches...George and I were looking at Mr.—’s picture last night with the

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<sup>87</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Admiralty, [August] 1835, *MEL*, 253-254.

<sup>88</sup> Lady Campbell to Miss Eden, Carton, September 1, 1835, *MEL*, 255.

<sup>89</sup> Eden to A Friend, Funchal, October 14, 1835, *LFI*, 13.

<sup>90</sup> From the Hon. F. H. Eden To A Friend, The ‘Jupiter’ at Sea, December 12, 1835, *LFI*, 43.

greatest satisfaction. He looks very sensible still, though he is at the Cape.”<sup>91</sup> For Emily, carrying portraits and little sketches of loved ones was an immense comfort; “I never did a wiser thing.”<sup>92</sup>

Each object became a souvenir for her family and friends, to keep the absent or distant person in Eden’s memory and physical presence.<sup>93</sup> Emily gathered and exchanged portraits, pieces of hair, and other material objects to substitute for distant family members and dear friends. As Susan Stabile argues, “Objects embody memories that might otherwise remain dormant or forgotten.”<sup>94</sup> Emily did not want to forget her memories or friendships during their stay in India. She wanted physical reminders to keep her memories close and intact.

Like the comforts of having a physical likeness and reminders of her friends, such as those of Lady Campbell or of her extended family, Emily exchanged other physical objects that would provide sensual remembrances of them, like clippings or pieces of hair. In October 1835, Emily wrote, “I enclose Fanny’s hair. George’s was cut this morning, but the result was only a little black dust; so I must cut off a bit close to his head when he is busy and not attending.”<sup>95</sup> In one of Emily’s last letters before sailing for India, she included the postscript, “This is George’s hair- all I could cut, at its greatest

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<sup>91</sup> From Hon. Emily Eden To A Friend, Cape of Good Hope, Monday, December 14, 1835, *LFI*, 53.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

<sup>93</sup> Stabile, *Memory’s Daughters*, 14-15.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

<sup>95</sup> Eden to A Friend, October 1835, *LFI*, 3.

length.”<sup>96</sup> One of Lady Campbell’s letters from Carton, similarly asked Emily to, “Send me a bit of your hair, my darling, and always bear me in your ‘heart of hearts, as I do thee, Horatio.’”<sup>97</sup>

Contemplating separation from family and friends made Emily worry about losing contact due to distance and uneven letter arrivals. After visiting the *Jupiter*, she reflected, “I sometimes sit in blank despair, and wonder —quite posed as to what I am to do without you all —not to be able to sit down and scratch off a line to you &c.; and then I feel as if I could cut somebody’s throat quite through- a sort of savage relief; in short, like ‘the Young Duke,’ ‘depend on it, I am on the point of doing something desperate.’”<sup>98</sup> Emily and her friends used material goods to keep friendships alive as well as to develop and foster intimacy before traveling the distance to India. Her friend, Mrs. Lister, sent Emily a bracelet, “but everyday my heart grows more sore, and I look at the great despondency to an utter separation from such kind friends as mine have proved themselves...and your bracelet will then be an actual comfort to me.”<sup>99</sup>

Portraits and bracelets were not the only material objects Emily and her friends used to demonstrate commitment. The sharing of books showed appreciation and support for the Eden’s journey to India. In a letter to Emily, Lord Melbourne noted that, “very few events could be more painful to me than your going...I send you a *Milton*, which I

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<sup>96</sup> Miss Eden to A Friend, October 3, 1835, 12 o’clock, [1835], *LFI*, 7.

<sup>97</sup> Lady Campbell to Miss Eden, Carton, September 1, 1835, *MEL*, 255.

<sup>98</sup> Eden To A Friend, October 1835, *LFI*, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Admiralty, September 1835, *MEL*, 257.

have had a long time, and often read in. I shall be most anxious to hear from you and promise to write.”<sup>100</sup> These initial exchanges of presents before the Edens’ journey to India illustrate the intense need and comfort of material goods in reminding Emily of her friendships and connections to England. According to Julia Keay, the real calamity of traveling to India for Emily “was the prospect of being separated from her friends and family.”<sup>101</sup> These presents became reminders of home as well as memorabilia of certain individuals or events. The goods would travel with her to India, and by carrying them with her, she was comforted by their representations of family and friends. The comforts of home were a necessity and thus Emily brought her friends with her to India.

### **Farewells from Portsmouth**

By September 30, 1835, after several days of official farewell visits and other preparations in London, the Eden family, including George, Emily, Fanny, and their sister Charlotte’s son, William Godolphin Osbourne, “traveled down to Portsmouth and put up in an inn, where they had to endure the usual drawback of inn beds- insects of no pleasing description.”<sup>102</sup> After some days of waiting for the wind to change, on October 3, Emily wrote, “The wind is fair, and we shall be off in an hour. It is a hurried job, and the sea looks more wicked and good-for-nothing than ever; but if we are really to go, I

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<sup>100</sup> Lord Melbourne to Miss Eden, South Street, September 24, 1835, *MEL*, 258.

<sup>101</sup> Keay, *With Passport and Parasol*, 10.

<sup>102</sup> Dunbar, *Golden Interlude*, 13.

suppose there is no use in putting it off...My health is very much improved.”<sup>103</sup> Emily was finally leaving England for the discomforts of India.

Comfort for Eden was not just about collecting material objects like portraits and clothes, but it was about her association with people as well. Included in the entourage was their private physician, Dr. Drummond, six personal servants, George’s valet, Mars, and another attendant, Giles, Emily’s maid, Wright, her *ayah*, Rosina, and a French negro cook, St. Cloup. The entourage also included several animals and pets. Her nephew, William Osbourne, brought six hunting greyhounds, and Emily transported her soon-to-be infamous King Charles spaniel, Chance, along for the six years in India.

From the moment Emily boarded the *Jupiter*, transitions occurred in which she realized that her life in India would not be the same as in England. From the time of George’s job announcement to the preparation for the journey, Emily started to realize that she would physically be at sea for five months and would arrive at an unfamiliar destination, not England, not home. She connected her expected physical discomforts from the Indian climate with the possible psychological discomforts of being away from home, family, and friends as well as from English culture, landscape, and society.

Although the transition from her English comforts to the discomfort of India was drastically apparent during the sea voyage, Eden had a friendly face to subdue her worries. Her dog, Chance, was a unique vehicle through which Eden could cling to her Englishness while still surrounded by the new climate, society, and routines of India. She

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<sup>103</sup> Miss Eden to A Friend, October 3, 1835, 12 o’clock, [1835], *LFI*, 6-7.

saw Chance as a true comfort and a companion; his presence brought about memories of home as well as lessened her anxiety due to separation from family and friends in England. By the turn of the nineteenth century, there developed “a warm attitude towards dogs” that “spread through all classes of society.”<sup>104</sup> Companionship was now their main function, as opposed to using dogs to perform essential economic functions. According to Katherine Rogers, dogs “were accepted as beloved members of the family” and an individual could “express deep affection for one’s dog.”<sup>105</sup> Emily wrote once after Chance’s death, “As for ever caring for a dog as I did for poor dear Chance, the thing is impossible. I do not believe there ever was so clever a dog, and very few equally clever men; and then, after eight years of such a rambling life, we have had so many recollections in common, and he was such a well-known character in India.”<sup>106</sup>

Although Chance helped Emily cope with the transition between England and India, Eden still agonized over the discomforts awaiting her upon their arrival in Calcutta. She wrote to her friend while off the coast of Africa,

I shall leave the rest of my paper for the chance of something to tell you which is not about the ‘Jupiter,’ and, besides, I always feel low the days we land.

It seems that we have gone so far, and been through so much, and only to come amongst strangers at last; and we cannot even hope to find a letter, or a word about anybody we care for, but are still to go farther and hear less. It is horrid, and makes me feel utterly desperate at times. It is

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<sup>104</sup> Katharine M. Rogers, *First Friend: A History of Dogs and Humans* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2005), 108.

<sup>105</sup> Rogers, *First Friend*, 108.

<sup>106</sup> Miss Eden to the Countess of Buckinghamshire, Calcutta, April 6, 1841, *MEL*, 337.

clearly not quite so good as being dead, as that is a separation without oblivion.<sup>107</sup>

As Emily stated in a later letter from India, her main concerns regarding her comforts away from England involved the separation from family and friends and the heat from the climate, reflecting the continued theme of displacement among strangers and the need for familial connection. Upset by the journey that only brought her “to come amongst strangers at last,” Eden loathed the lack of communication from England, which made her feel “utterly desperate at times.”<sup>108</sup>

Unfortunately for Emily, the *Jupiter* arrived in the rivers near Calcutta on her birthday, March 3, 1836. Officially arrived in India, Emily began her thirty-ninth year in the “hot land of strangers,” without the abundance of family and friends she would have had in England, and brought to a climate where mosquitoes often made a meal of her. Eden’s life on board the *Jupiter* helped her transition to the foreign climate and had given her an indication of the new discomforts that awaited her. The succeeding chapters further discuss the importance of physical and psychological comforts and discomforts during Emily’s time in India.

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<sup>107</sup> From Hon. Emily Eden To A Friend, Cape of Good Hope, Monday, December 14, 1835, *LFI*, 52-53.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

## Chapter 2

“To Rack and Ruin”: India and the Physical Comforts and Discomforts of Daily Routine,  
Climate, and Housing<sup>109</sup>

For Emily Eden, discomfort defined her experience in India for six long years. In India, Eden detected two major types of discomfort, “The real *calamity* of the life is the separation from home and friends. It feels like death...And the *annoyance* of the life is the climate. It is so very HOT, I do not know how to spell it large enough.”<sup>110</sup> Emily thus identified two types of discomfort: the psychological anguish of being far from family and friends and the physical nuisance of the Indian climate. This chapter examines the latter, the physical displeasure of the Indian climate and its impact on Eden’s activities and daily routine. It was so hot in India that Eden wrote once, “My drawings are all blistered, my books all mildewed, my gowns all spotted- in short, everything is going to rack and ruin.”<sup>111</sup> The Indian climate created intense discomforts for Eden, such as blistered drawings or spotted gowns, that often affected her physical body and the material objects that she used on a daily basis. Thus, this chapter explores how the Indian climate impacted Emily Eden’s physical comforts and its influence on her daily routine

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<sup>109</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Barrackpore, July 19, [1836], *LFI*, 186.

<sup>110</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Government House, Calcutta, August 16, 1836, *MEL*, 268.

<sup>111</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Barrackpore, July 19, [1836], *LFI*, 186.

and activities like gardening, the experience of indoor and outdoor spaces, and Eden's interaction with the landscape and the picturesque scenery.

In India, Eden's daily routines included many of the activities that had contributed to her sense of comfort back in England. She wrote letters, read books, sketched, as well as purchased and wore different clothing articles, especially shawls. Although Eden transferred these activities from England, the affects of India and its climate also produced new behaviors and actions to include in her daily routine. Due to the intense heat and high temperatures, Eden had to participate in airing, an activity that occurred around dusk or at night, the only time many British women were allowed to get fresh air and walk about without weakening their English constitutions in the Indian sun.

Eden also learned how to use new technologies for comfort from the heat. Punkahs, an early type of fan worked by Indian servants, became a new method of cooling for Eden's daily routine in India; the fans were essential for her physical comfort. Although Eden did routinely participate in airing, she was blessed by her aristocratic status to have servants carry her from destination to destination, in palanquins and howdahs. Thus, Emily Eden adjusted her daily routine, expectations, and activities to fit India and its physical surroundings. This chapter demonstrates the way these adaptations contributed to Eden's sense of comfort and discomfort during her time in India through the lens of her daily routines, the climate, and the household and housing.

## Climate

As stated earlier, in a letter to her friend, Lady Campbell, Eden noted the two major annoyances of India, the separation from family and friends and the climate.<sup>112</sup> The Indian climate and its effect on her physical bodily discomforts was, oftentimes, the major topic of her letters to family and friends in England. In India, the climate was the source of her primary physical discomforts especially during her first years in the Subcontinent. The climate was indeed the real annoyance of her life in India, as Jagmohan Mahajan observes in his work on Eden.<sup>113</sup>

E.M. Collingham argues that, “The British experience of India was intensely physical.”<sup>114</sup> This was certainly true for Eden, where physical needs oftentimes interrupted any activity or interaction. The heat in India was so intense for Eden that she referred to the country as an “oven” on multiple occasions. In an early reflective moment, Eden noted, “I thought the physical discomforts of the ship very great, but then I did not know what this oven was.”<sup>115</sup> The aspects of the Indian climate that produced such a negative response included the high temperatures, raised humidity levels, dust storms, and, above all else, that the Indian climate was the opposite of an English climate.

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<sup>112</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Government House, Calcutta, August 16, 1836, *MEL*, 268.

<sup>113</sup> Jagmohan Mahajan, *The Grand Indian Tour: Travels and Sketches of Emily Eden* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors Ltd, 1996), 22.

<sup>114</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 1.

<sup>115</sup> From The Hon. Emily Eden To —, Thursday, April 7, [1836], *LFI*, 135.

The climate not only affected her physical comforts, but it affected her daily routine in India. Before Eden did anything, she anticipated how the climate would affect that action by checking the thermometer. In one instance, when a carriage turned over on the road, Eden wrote, “We were all assiduously fanning ourselves when the accident happened, but no fan would have helped us after that. Think of jumping out of a carriage in a hurry with the thermometer at 95.”<sup>116</sup> Eden also kept track of how the Indian climate affected her belongings with heat damage and insect manifestations. Many of her portraits, shawls, and other material objects were damaged due to the insects and the sun:

The degree of destructiveness of this climate it is impossible to calculate, but there is something ingenious in the manner in which the climate and the insects contrive to divide the work. One cracks the bindings of the books, the other eats up the inside; the damp turns the satin gown itself yellow, and the cockroaches eat up the net that trims it; the heat splits the ivory of a miniature, and the white maggots eat the paint; and so they go on helping each other and never missing anything.<sup>117</sup>

The climate also affected Eden’s daily participation in social activities like going to church, visiting with guests, as well as her own private routines such as sleeping and going outside for air. When Eden mentioned church sermons and church events, she always included a description of her physical discomforts involving the heat. The contents of one short letter on August 7, 1836, for example, stated, “Was so hot that nobody could go to morning church, and in the evening we went to the Fort Church, which was like a kettle of boiling water; but Mr.— simmered out an excellent sermon

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<sup>116</sup> Miss Eden to Mr. C. Greville, Barrackpore, April 17, 1837, *MEL*, 286.

<sup>117</sup> From The Hon. E. Eden To —, Government House, 1837, (Begun October 25, ended October 30), *LFI*, 101-102.

while we were stewing.”<sup>118</sup> Again, on Easter Sunday in 1837, Eden described the church as an oven due to the intense Indian heat, “there was no punkah there, and there are no glass windows to this church, so the hot air came pouring in as if we were in an oven, and I saw two or three people obliged to go away from the altar quite faint.”<sup>119</sup>

Sleeping in the Indian climate was also difficult for Eden. Most nights were accompanied by strong heat waves that barely cooled with the punkahs running. Many times, nights of poor sleep, illness, and other discomforts from the weather, made the Eden family travel to cooler climates for relief and a quick trip away from the “damp furnace” of Calcutta.<sup>120</sup> In one excursion to the Sandheads, Eden wrote about these travels,

being tired of bad nights and hot hands and living in my own room, I look to the real Indian cure of going down to the Sandheads, and though I am only thirty miles from Calcutta, yet I declare I think I feel better-‘a little puckish or so’ and not so hot. This sort of fever has been in every house in Calcutta and Barrackpore. They say it was nearly as bad last rainy season, only that we did not think about it, as it was our first year and we had our English healths. Poor innocents! but it is worse this year from the rain having failed. The air is so hot and steamy and the tanks do not fill, so that the atmosphere is muddy and bad, and altogether it has been much like an influenza in London, and whatever they do lose they never regain.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Emily Eden To A Friend, Sunday, August 7, [1836], *LFI*, 215.

<sup>119</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Barrackpore, Easter Sunday, 26, [1837], *LFI*, 339.

<sup>120</sup> From The Hon F.H. Eden To A Friend, Government House, October 17, 1837, *LFI*, 97.

<sup>121</sup> From The Hon. E. Eden To —, ‘Enterprise’ Steamer, Friday, August 6, 1837, *LFI*, 71-72.

India itself proved to be a torment to the British body; all the senses were assaulted by the heat, dust, and dirt.<sup>122</sup> In many cases, the torments of the body, physical discomforts, and agonies from disease brought the threat of death. Death was ever present in the minds of British colonists in India as well as their families back in Britain. By the 1830s, most Europeans “anticipated that the young man or woman who sailed for India would return, if at all, a shadow of their former self.”<sup>123</sup> Emily contemplated this threat before she arrived in India, indeed going so far as to predict her own death. In a July 1835 letter, she told her friend, Lady Campbell, “I have been so worried, and have had so much to do with seeing and hearing the representations of friends, and taking leave of many who are gone out of town and whom I shall never see again.”<sup>124</sup>

Even if a British colonist escaped death or serious illness, Collingham notes that all Europeans “were believed to undergo a subtle constitutional transformation” as a result of time overseas.<sup>125</sup> Nineteenth-century medical orthodoxy believed that “the heat of the Indian climate over-stimulated the organs of the body resulting in sluggishness and congestion.”<sup>126</sup> Europeans commonly assumed that the “lethargy” was the consequence of prolonged exposure to the climate.<sup>127</sup> Thus, many individuals worried that their delicate constitutions would resemble the climate in which they lived and they would

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<sup>122</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 1.

<sup>123</sup> Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*, 19.

<sup>124</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Admiralty, July 1835, *MEL*, 252.

<sup>125</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 2.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>127</sup> Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*, 13.

then undergo the transformation.<sup>128</sup> Eden, herself, claimed to observe this subtle constitutional transformation and sluggishness affecting her own body. She often referred to her yellowing appearance and inability to accomplish any activity due to the heat's effects. Eden stated, for example,

You have no idea what sallow figures we all are, and I mention it now because in another year I suppose the real Indian blindness will have come over me, and I shall believe we are all our natural colour...The new arrivals sometimes stagger us, but we simply say, "how coarse!" and wait with confidence for the effects that three weeks' baking will have, and a delicate tender yellow is the sure result.<sup>129</sup>

In a letter to her sister, the Countess of Buckinghamshire, Eden again referred to the yellowing of European skins, "We look like so many yellow demons, and my individual appearance is even more finished than the others, for Friday night happened to be particularly hot, and the bearers who were pulling my punkah fell asleep- the first time it has happened, I must say."<sup>130</sup> For Eden, the perceived constitutional transformation from the Indian climate was not subtle in any sense and had a major affect on her comfort level while living in India.

The discomfort of sluggishness induced by the Indian climate often revealed itself in Eden's letters when she discussed her daily activities. In many cases, the heat impaired her ability to draw, read, and write, her three most favorite activities. She commented on the life and activities of English women, "The life of ladies in India is a wearisome one

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>129</sup> Miss Eden to —, Government House, November 3, 1836, *MEL*, 275.

<sup>130</sup> Miss Eden To The Countess of Buckinghamshire, Government House, September 27, 1836, *LFI*, 237.

for them- so many hours in which the house must be shut up, nothing to do, and no strength to do it with.”<sup>131</sup> In a letter to Mrs. Lister, a family friend, Eden spoke of other heat-related maladies that affected her physical abilities, “Intellect and memory both are impaired, and imagination utterly baked hard, but I can answer questions when they are not very difficult, and if they are put to me slowly and distinctly.”<sup>132</sup>

Emily Eden was “utterly baked hard,” and turned “yellow” due to the relentless torture from the heat and climate in India; her garments were spotted, her household shut up, her books mildewed. As Collingham has argued, Eden’s experience of India was intensely physical and she loathed the discomforts caused by its climate. But she controlled the calamity of the climate by understanding her physical comforts and needs within the subcontinent. Emily Eden adjusted her daily routine, expectations, and comforts to fit India and its physical surroundings.

### **Daily Routine**

In India, as the Governor-General’s sister, Eden had a different daily routine than most British visitors and inhabitants in Calcutta. Her status and prestige as George’s sister made her “royalty” among the inhabitants of Calcutta and the East India Company officials passing through the city. But that also meant that Eden had to participate in

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<sup>131</sup> From Hon. Emily Eden To —, Barrackpore, Friday, March 18, [1836], *LFI*, 110.

<sup>132</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Government House, January 25, 1837, *MEL*, 280.

social events and government activities to please the Governor-General's constituency. On any given day, Emily began her morning with breakfast, followed by a visiting time for Calcutta residents, EIC officials, and other varied individuals. Many times, Emily claimed, she and her sister Fanny would spend three hours interacting with as many as one hundred people every morning.<sup>133</sup>

The afternoon activities varied by day, from staying in Government House for some quiet alone time, to visits to Mrs. Wilson's Orphan Asylum and royal estates like Runjeet Singh's palace, or to tending the garden. At night, the Eden family went out into Calcutta and attended balls, dinners, and the theatre. But Emily Eden also always created time in her routine for some of the daily comforts and leisure activities she had pursued in Great Britain. These activities reminded her of her Englishness and her domestic duties as a woman. They provided a means by which Eden conformed to the dominant idea of separate spheres, where the woman stays home tending to the household while the man works for the family outside the home.

In England, as previously observed, Eden had regularly made time for reading, writing, and drawing as well as a myriad of other activities like gardening, shopping, and other social pursuits. In India, however, these activities were dependent on the climate and her duties as EIC "royalty." Thus, Eden created time for her physical comforts within her routine on a daily basis to keep her sanity, maintain her sense of Englishness, and

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<sup>133</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Barrackpore, March 24, 1836, *MEL*, 265.

avoid any discomforts from the heat. For one day in 1836, Eden described all of these during her daily routine:

We had a great many visitors immediately after breakfast, both male and female. The aides-de-camp hand in the ladies and give them chairs, and if there are more in the room at once than we can conveniently attend to, they stay and talk to them; if not, they wait outside and hand the ladies out again. The visits are not long; but I hope they will not all compare notes as to what we have said. I know some of *my* topics served many times over. Visits are all over at 12:30 A.M. [P.M.], on account of the heat. We luncheon at 2 P.M. (the people will call it *tiffin*), and then all go off to our own rooms, take off our gowns, and set the punkahs going, take up a book, and I for one shall generally go to sleep, judging from the experience of the last three days. At 5:30 P.M. everybody goes out.<sup>134</sup>

Thus, the letters offer a detailed account of the days Eden spent in India, where she dealt with the Government House routine while simultaneously trying to find physical comfort in the Indian heat and act on her English urge to read. But one of the greatest sources of comfort wherever she was in India was writing letters. Eden wrote letters to family and friends in the morning, noon, and night, whether residing at Government House, or Barrackpore, or while traveling on her nephew's boat, the *Soonamookie*. Overall, Emily Eden's daily routines in India determined her level of discomfort from one day to the next, and understanding these routines can help define her threshold as it pertains to physical comfort.

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<sup>134</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Monday, March 7, [1836], *LFI*, 86.

## Gardens, Landscape, and the Picturesque

Physical comfort for Emily Eden went beyond the daily activities and routine of India. Comfort was not just found in physical objects like a pearl necklace or letter from one of her sisters, but in the physicality of the landscape and the visual arts. Emily Eden rejoiced in the interaction she had with the natural and created landscape (informed by the idea of the picturesque), and her ability to draw, sketch, or paint regularly. While in India, Eden found the landscape of Simla particularly mesmerizing, the Indian people picturesque, and their gardens comforting.

Gardens were another aspect of English culture that Eden continued to enjoy while living in India. In the nineteenth century, the garden “implied continuity with the past as well as membership within the exclusive club of Englishness, and it set in place value systems with significant ideological importance.”<sup>135</sup> Gardens also created a space where men and women could meet in “complimentary tranquility” and ignore gender roles and connotations by engaging in an earthly and physical activity.<sup>136</sup> Thus, Eden used gardens as a means by which to secure her Englishness while living in the subcontinent of India. At each of their houses, in Calcutta, Barrackpore, and Simla, George and Emily made sure they had a garden, visited several palaces, gardens, or

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<sup>135</sup> Anne Helmreich, *The English Garden and National Identity: The Competing Styles of Garden Design, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4.

<sup>136</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 374.

menageries around the country. At many rajahs' estates, like that of Ranjit Singh, Eden delighted in seeing the gardens, "In the afternoon we went to see the king's yacht, which he had decked out for us, and then his garden. Such a place! the only residence I have coveted in India."<sup>137</sup>

In England as well as India, tending the garden was a family process and George often helped. On several occasions in India Emily received plants from Dr. Wallich at the Botanical Garden. Then, George and Emily spent their evenings repotting or planting the new species just as they did at Greenwich in England. In Greenwich, where George worked as an auditor, they lived in "a very nice house in the park belonging to George's office, with a little greenhouse next to it."<sup>138</sup> Thus, during one summer in India, Eden notes the gardening connection between England and India and simultaneously shows her paradoxical attitude toward the South Asians,

Dr. Wallich, of the Botanical Garden (a great man in botanical history), has given me seven hundred plants, which would be exotics of great value if we were not acting in that capacity ourselves, and he is come here himself this afternoon to see that they are all put in the right places...George came out at six. It was great fun giving a poke at the bottom of a flower-pot and turning out a nice little plant- like Greenwich days, even though the poor little flower was received by twelve black gardeners very lightly dressed.<sup>139</sup>

For Eden, gardening was a remembrance of their life in England as well as a way in which to stay connected with George, to keep their sibling bond alive while in India. This

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<sup>137</sup> Cawnpore, Dec. 28, 1837, *UTC*, 62.

<sup>138</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Grosevnor Street, November 2, 1828, *MEL*, 168.

<sup>139</sup> Miss Eden To —., Barrackpore, Friday, June 17, [1837], *LFI*, 52.

excerpt also demonstrated how Emily felt about the South Asians and their dressing habits or as she called them, the “twelve black gardeners very lightly dressed.”<sup>140</sup> To the derision of the flowers, scantily dressed men received them, a tragedy in her eyes. In another letter, Eden commented that the gardens at Barrackpore reminded her of home, of England, “On Thursday afternoon we always come here, and a prodigious pleasure it is. It feels something like home.”<sup>141</sup> Gardens comforted her, fulfilling her desire to remain English in a country so far from home.

In the late eighteenth century, especially in England, gardens were also seen as an aspect of the picturesque, closely connected to the theory of painting.<sup>142</sup> As an artist, Eden often referred to the picturesque and its connection with the landscape, and found it reflected in every detail of her life and travels. Primarily used in the nineteenth century but developed in the eighteenth century, the theory of the picturesque between the classical and romantic phases of art.<sup>143</sup> Coined from the word *pittoresco*, meaning “after the manner of painters,” the picturesque developed as a means to perceive visual qualities in nature and the landscape that painters had previously isolated.<sup>144</sup> Christopher Hussey

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>141</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Barrackpore, March 24, 1836, *MEL*, 265-266.

<sup>142</sup> Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1967), 136.

<sup>143</sup> Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 2-4.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 17.

defined the picturesque as “the characteristics of ...roughness and sudden variation joined to irregularity,” of “form, colour, lighting, and even sound.”<sup>145</sup>

While in India, Emily saw a distinction in the definition of picturesque; Indian picturesque scenery was not the same as English picturesque scenery. Although Eden did find “visual qualities in nature” in the landscape of India, she also found exceptions to the rule in forms of material culture.<sup>146</sup> This was especially the case at Simla, a British hill station in the northwest region of the Himalayas, where the Eden family went to escape the heat in Calcutta. Most hill stations like Simla “sought to isolate their seasonal residents from India’s harsher features, to offer them a comforting haven for rest and recreation.”<sup>147</sup> The Governor-General’s party, including Emily, spent April to October in 1838 and 1839 in Simla.

Emily expanded the definition of the picturesque beyond the landscape to include the South Asian’s decorative clothing while in India. She specifically thought of garments such as sashes with metallic thread woven into them and bejeweled turbans as picturesque. She wrote,

It is more like a constant theatrical representation going on; everything is so picturesque and so utterly un-English. Wherever there is any state at all it is on the grandest scale. Every servant at Government House is a picture by himself, in his loose muslin robes, with scarlet and gold ropes round his waist, and his scarlet and gold turban over masses of black hair; and on the

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>147</sup> Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*, 2.

esplanade I hardly ever pass a native that I do not long to stop and sketch-  
some in satin and gold.<sup>148</sup>

Due to the overwhelming pictorial appearance of some native Indians, in her eyes, Emily often asked to sketch or draw anyone she felt complemented her picturesque ideas. In August 1836, when the Eden's were living in Calcutta, Emily noted that, "These people are all dressed in white muslin, with red and gold turbans and sashes, and are so picturesque that when I can find no other employment for them I make them sit for their pictures."<sup>149</sup> Although Eden found "these people" picturesque, she also considered them to be her own to command, telling them to find employment by sitting for their pictures.<sup>150</sup> She understood both her and their place in the hierarchy of British India and used her status as an aristocrat to channel her voice of command toward the South Asians and explore her artist impulses simultaneously. Eden saw her native servants as picturesque, "I looked up in the night, there she was wrapped up in a heap of Indian shawls, flat on the ground, with her black arms (covered with bracelets) crossed over her head- very picturesque, but rather shocking"<sup>151</sup>

While traveling up the country, Eden saw different cities, palaces, and forts that also had, in her opinion, the picturesque quality. During one day of exploring, Eden noted how Indian architecture was picturesque, "In the afternoon we went to see the opium

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<sup>148</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Barrackpore, March 24, 1836, *MEL*, 264.

<sup>149</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Government House, Calcutta, August 16, 1836, *MEL*, 269.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, 269.

<sup>151</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Funchal, Wednesday, October 14, 1835, *LFI*, 10.

godown, and then F.,B., and I went in the band boat along the shore to sketch some of the old buildings, which are very picturesque here.”<sup>152</sup> Like many Europeans who viewed cemeteries and monuments as picturesque back in England, Eden also admired the English graveyards in India for their picturesque qualities, “We drove to the Military Burial Ground, where there are some very pretty picturesque monuments I wanted to sketch. It was a melancholy sight.”<sup>153</sup> A city, Gwalior, was picturesque because it was a fort on a rock away from the plains of Calcutta.<sup>154</sup> Palaces of various Indian princes also piqued Eden’s eye toward the picturesque. She routinely wrote of their splendor. “We were all peering out of the window to see the vakeel’s procession, which was very picturesque and theatrical...and on this sublime occasion he did spread at least four yards of Venetian carpeting.”<sup>155</sup>

In Simla, mountains surrounded the hill station where Eden lived, another key element in her definition of picturesque. As stated before, however, she changed her definitions for each geographical location she experienced. Emily often compared places and degrees of picturesque in a location. On April 28, 1838, Emily wrote to Mrs. Lister about her disappointment in the Simla mountains, “These mountains are very beautiful, but not so picturesque, I think, as the Pyrenees- in fact they are too gigantic to be

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<sup>152</sup> Monday, Nov.13, [1837], *UTC*, 20.

<sup>153</sup> Saturday, March 26, [1836], *LFI*, 119.

<sup>154</sup> Gwalior, Saturday, Jan. 10, [1840], *UTC*, 372.

<sup>155</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Government House, May 22, 1836, *LFI*, 163-164.

sketchable, and there are no waterfalls, no bridges, no old corners, that make the Pyrenees so picturesque, independent of their ragged shapes.”<sup>156</sup>

The picturesque, gardens, and art each impacted Eden’s physical comforts. By her experiences in gardens and with the picturesque, she was able to relate her surroundings to her previous life in England. Gardens and gardening represented activities Eden encountered in England at her family’s country homes as well as at their house in Simla, the Indian hill station known as “the resort of the rich, the idle, and the invalid.”<sup>157</sup> As an artist, Emily Eden needed the comfort of art and its physical presence in her environment. Thus, seeing India through the lens of the picturesque made perfect sense to Eden.

### **Housing, Gender, and Airing**

Housing and the architecture of a household in India differed greatly from England. As in England, the architecture of a house reflected one’s rank in society, but differences among the castes created sharp distinctions in their dwellings. Due to the higher temperatures, humidity, and general change in climate, Emily’s daily activities also changed depending on the household environment. During certain times of the day, the servants closed up Government House and the house in Barrackpore, the windows covered to keep the heat and sun from getting into the house. Due to these enclosures, the

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<sup>156</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Simla, April 28, 1838, *MEL*, 297.

<sup>157</sup> Quoted in Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 22.

placement of punkahs in the house was necessary to increase circulation of air. As previously observed, since the house was primarily the woman's domain during the daytime when the men were at work, the Indian climate forced English woman to be shut inside her own homes.

Bothered by these changes in her household activities, Eden commented on the effect of darkness while being shut in. The darkness and heat from being shut into the house made daily activities harder to accomplish. She argued that women lost their strength and resolve to perform menial tasks. Emily often stopped drawing due to the closed off atmosphere in which she was living. She stated, "The rooms are so dark I cannot draw, and besides it is impossible to sit up *on end* long together, and then there are a thousand interruptions. We are always dressing, too, and though we thought we brought out so many gowns, I have not half enough."<sup>158</sup> Even when temperatures dropped slightly and the weather became cooler, the houses stayed closed up:

With all the fine cold weather they talk of, I have not been able yet to live five minutes, night or day, without the punkah, and we keep our blinds all closed as long as there is a ray of sun. I do not mean to deny that the weather is not improved, but when the chilly creatures who have passed forty years here say triumphantly, 'This must remind you of an English November,' they really do great injustice to my powers of recollection.<sup>159</sup>

Eden believed the Indian climate literally transformed her body, such as the yellowing of skin, and changed her ability to perform daily activities. It also altered her relationship with indoor and outdoor spaces. Eden adapted her life to the activity and

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<sup>158</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Monday, March 28, [1836], *LFI*, 121.

<sup>159</sup> Miss Eden to —, Government House, November 3, 1836, *MEL*, 275.

practice of “airing” outside while she also stayed shut inside, literally, her households. Her personal habits, including the purchasing and wearing of clothing, adjusted to suit her physical discomforts. The climate even affected her environmental location since Eden and her other family members would escape to Barrackpore or travel up the country to Simla for the comfortable resemblance of English weather. As Catherine Hall writes that the hill stations were “havens of safety for the British...the standards of home could be maintained in what was experienced as a physically and morally corrupting land.”<sup>160</sup>

Eden found a solution to the heat, darkness, and physical discomforts through an outdoor activity: airing. Airing was an activity Eden and her family often participated in to find comfort in the Indian heat. Instead of staying locked up inside the house, Eden and usually her sister Fanny would go for an “airing”, in other words, the act of walking outside when the temperatures were cooler to regain energy. In one letter, Emily said, “Fanny and I took an airing quite late. It shows how this climate subdues one to all its ridiculous habits, for I should have been ashamed to be carried upstairs in England, and never hesitated about it here.”<sup>161</sup> Eden’s daily routine was positioned around the time of these airings and she frequently had to wait for George or Fanny to come back to Government House or their house in Barrackpore before she could get a change of air. It was a social activity where one enjoyed the company of another European. Eden wrote,

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<sup>160</sup> Catherine Hall, “Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century,” in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Phillipa Levine, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 74.

<sup>161</sup> From Hon Emily Eden To —, Thursday, March 17, [1836], *LFI*, 108.

“George came back on Thursday, time enough for me to take my first airing with him.”<sup>162</sup>

In the first month of their life in India, Emily wrote a revealing letter to her friend, Mrs. Lister, telling of the events and discomforts of her first three weeks there. Eden ended the letter by describing one of her main physical discomforts in India. She wrote, to give her love to Mrs. Lister’s brother, “I often long for a laugh and talk with him, but it would be too pleasant for the climate.”<sup>163</sup> Even her sister Fanny acknowledged how the Indian climate ruined common pleasantries like talking and moving. Fanny wrote, “We have arrived upon the hot season, and at this hours, with the windows and blinds closed, and the punkahs going, the slightest exertion, even of moving across the room, is a real fatigue.”<sup>164</sup>

Although the Eden family gradually adjusted to the Indian climate by accommodating the Indian landscape to their own ideas and maintaining the English habit of gardening, it was still the major physical discomfort for Emily during their residence. The heat blistered her drawings, spotted her gowns, and caused her daily routine and travel plans to shift in order to accommodate the weather. During certain times of day, Emily was shut in her household as a deterrent to keep the heat out. Overall, the Indian climate impacted every facet of Eden’s life, her physical body, daily routines, interactions with indoor and outdoor spaces, as well as her contact with the landscape and notions of the picturesque.

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<sup>162</sup> The Hon. E. Eden To A Friend, Saturday, May 6, [1837], *LFI*, 8.

<sup>163</sup> Emily Eden to Mrs. Lister, Barrackpore, March 24, 1836, *MEL*, 267.

<sup>164</sup> From The Hon. F.H. Eden., Calcutta, March 9, 1836, *LFI*, 92.

### Chapter 3

“To Dream of England”: Separation, Identity Loss, and Isolation in the Subcontinent<sup>165</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, the climate of India created most of Emily Eden’s physical discomforts during her time in the subcontinent. To transition from what she saw as the bracing frost of Britain to the Indian “oven” physically impacted her body, daily routines, and other activities.<sup>166</sup> But physical discomfort was not the only development that changed in Eden’s lifestyle while she was in India. As Eden herself claimed, “the real calamity of the life is the separation from home and friends.”<sup>167</sup> Emily struggled with many psychological discomforts in addition to the separation and distance from her family and friends. Separation from Britain, from home, and from the familiar was the main psychological anxieties Eden managed during her residence in India.

The lack of English society and politics, as well as the tensions created by a perceived loss of European identity caused severe distress for Emily. The dearth of other Europeans, the ubiquity of Indian servants in her daily life, and the lack of what she perceived as civilized society caused Eden to question her European identity and contributed to her own sense of Indianization. These were not the only reasons that caused Emily to question her identity as a European but the lack of instant

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<sup>165</sup> From The Hon. Emily Eden To —., Calcutta, Friday, December 31, 1841, *LFI*, 275.

<sup>166</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Barrackpore, March 24, 1836, *MEL*, 263.

<sup>167</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Government House, Calcutta, August 16, 1836, *MEL*, 268.

communication with family and friends in England further produced many psychological discomforts in India. Thus, letters became an important device which Eden used to resist her own perceived identity loss and distance from Britain. Any written news, whether a short note from her sister or a trashy novel from an English friend, became a cherished piece of material that connected her to her English identity and soothed the psychological anxieties of being away from family and friends.

The disconnection from Britain in distance and time often made Emily explore the diminishing qualities of her own identity in India, as a European, as a woman, and as an aristocrat. The dearth of Europeans altered societal fashions, and uneven British political dominance in India caused Eden to view her life there in self-deprecating ways. This chapter will examine Emily Eden's psychological discomforts in India caused by separation from family and friends, class hierarchy, social distinction, gender roles, and isolation from other Europeans as well as explore her ambivalence about both the apparent loss of an English identity and her lack of political influence.

### Letters, Print Culture, and Material Goods

Catherine Hall argues that, nineteenth-century Britons believed that “every family should be an empire of love, with the father as monarch, and the woman as queen.”<sup>168</sup> Although Emily and George were brother and sister, the Eden family also emulated this idea and was indeed one of the many empires of love that created networks of support, communication, and affection across the British Isles.<sup>169</sup> Due to their physical separation from each other, the family sought to maintain these effective networks through space and time by sending letters through the postal system.<sup>170</sup> The Eden family was able to communicate easily through letters due to the rise of the Royal Mail and the construction of turnpikes, road improvements, and carrier services that had developed during the eighteenth century.<sup>171</sup>

The growth of empire beyond the British Isles “made letter-writing a necessity, not just a pleasure.”<sup>172</sup> Thus, when some of the family members traveled to India, the Eden family needed to create a new network of communication that extended beyond the British Isles. This network needed to extend the “empire of love” to the far reaches of

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<sup>168</sup> Catherine Hall, “The Sweet Delights of Home” in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 50.

<sup>169</sup> Hall, “The Sweet Delights of Home,” 50.

<sup>170</sup> Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660-1800*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 13.

<sup>171</sup> Whyman, *The Pen and the People*, 13.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

India to maintain familial ties between siblings and friends.<sup>173</sup> It became a necessity to write to each other about their mundane activities in order to keep the family together.

From the moment Emily arrived in the subcontinent, receiving a letter from the British Isles became an important event worth waiting for all day. Due to the geographical distance from her home, letters took on a special significance for Eden and her family in India. They were the only means of communication between family and friends and became sorts of written relics, sacred texts. For Emily, letters and the words contained within them were much more valuable than any other objects she had in India. Letters connected her with her much beloved family, gave her comfort in times of stress and fatigue, and momentarily brought her consciousness out of the “dreaded India.” Emily emphasized the immense value of letters to her friend Lady Campbell: “I cannot sufficiently explain the value of a letter here; rupees in any number could not express the sum which a letter is worth, and I do not know how to make you understand it. But, you see, the scene in India is so well got up to show off a letter.”<sup>174</sup> To Emily, letters were more valuable than money and were a way to “show off” her British connections in Anglo-Indian society.<sup>175</sup> Letters thus held social value that outweighed simple monetary value.

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<sup>173</sup> Hall, “The Sweet Delights of Home,” 50.

<sup>174</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Government House, Calcutta, August 16, 1836, *MEL*, 267.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 267.

Letters were more valuable than money to Europeans in the hinterlands of the British Empire. Like all letters, their value came from their contents, and, for Emily, any piece of information about her family or friends was sacred. When reading a letter about the family of Lady Campbell, Emily wrote back to her, “You cannot imagine how I enjoyed your history of your children, those are the letters to send to India. Other people or papers tell public news. What a pleasure it is to have a letter!”<sup>176</sup> Indeed, the value of letters was so extreme, that it impacted Eden’s view of India and Indians as an entirety: “I can only calculate how strong my aversion must be to ‘the land we live in.’ I suppose it is partly not feeling well, and partly the fidget for letters: but nobody can be happy in such a climate.”<sup>177</sup>

Emily was not the only British woman to treasure letters, other women of nineteenth century families felt similarly. In a post-script by Clarissa Trant to her brother, Thomas, posted in Bengal, Trant insisted that her brother write continuously to her, she said, “P.S. Write by every possible opportunity.”<sup>178</sup> In another letter, she wrote about her cheer at her father’s receipt of numerous letters from Thomas, “I ran after him into his room where I had the happiness of seeing not only one but five letters make their appearance—in all fifty-four pages in my beloved Brother’s handwriting!—Aix no longer seemed a strange desolate place—it was like Home in comparison of those spots where I

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<sup>176</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Government House, Calcutta, August 16, 1836, *MEL*, 270-271.

<sup>177</sup> To The Same, Barrackpore, Thursday, April 28, [1836], *LFI*, 148.

<sup>178</sup> Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>., in *The Journal of Clarissa Trant, 1800-1832*, eds. Clarissa Sandford Trant Bramston and Clara Georgina Luard (London: J. Lan, Bodley Head, 1925), 109.

had not heard from him.”<sup>179</sup> Just like Emily Eden, Clarissa Trant experienced the lack of familial connection with her brother away in India and found immense pleasure in the arrival of letters.

Enjoyment and pleasure came to Emily from the details of family relations, its history, and details about mundane life activities. She acknowledged that although one letter barely held the contents of a whole conversation, those words were more valuable because of the distance and time between the arrival of each letter as well as the psychological comfort that it brought her to know only a small speck of information about them. She wrote in a journal entry on Saturday, May 6, 1837 to a friend,

It is very odd what extraordinary interest those few scratches of black liquid on a white pulp can give, because the same number of words said in conversation would go a very little way; and yet one folds up a letter with an air of pompous satisfaction, and says, ‘Ah! it is very comfortable to know all they have been about’ - a deception, only I do not mean to see through it.<sup>180</sup>

Thus, cheated by distance from home and by the absence of long conversations, Emily recognized that any small amount of “black liquid on a white pulp” gave her the comfort to know her family and friends are in good health and that she knew “all they have been about.”<sup>181</sup>

The imperial postal system suffered from mistakes, unreliable transportation, and slow routes at the time of the Edens’ stay in India. Routes across land and by sea varied

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<sup>179</sup> May 13., *The Journal of Clarissa Trant*, 204.

<sup>180</sup> The Hon. E. Eden To A Friend, Saturday, May 6, 1837, *LFI*, 9.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

in their arrival times from the British Isles. During the first year of their stay in Calcutta and Barrackpore, the post took two to three months to arrive from England and many letters actually arrived in the correct chronological order. Emily once wrote about the speed and accuracy of securing her posts,

I received your overland letter of April 2 on June 12, which makes us positive neighbours again—a mere trifle of time—and as there is an overland dispatch going home on Monday, which will have the honour of conveying this, our communication will be unpleasantly quick. The pen with which, like Niobe,<sup>182</sup> all ink, you last wrote will hardly be dry before you have to begin again. The only fault of these over-land letters is that, by going about in that harum-scarum way, they rather spoil- not much but just a *leetle*- the merit of those plodding navigation epistles, which come in, in their proper course, and find themselves forestalled in most of their news.<sup>183</sup>

She also wrote about her anticipation of receiving the post, not just some package from Government House but specifically from England. Emily wrote to her brother, Robert,

The dawk, as the ignorant *creturs* call the post, comes in about half-past one at Barrackpore; so about that time I established myself and book in his Excellency's room while he was writing, and kept an eye on the door; and when the nazir, George's head servant and a thorough picture of 'a gentle Hindu,' came in with a placid smile on his good-looking countenance, I guessed he had something better to give than a common official box. Then

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<sup>182</sup> Niobe is a figure from Greek mythology known for being the symbol of eternal mourning. After bragging about her seven sons and seven daughters at a ceremony, Apollo and Artemis killed them and Niobe fled to Mt. Siplyon where she turned to stone that formed a stream from her ceaseless tears. I believe Emily Eden referenced Niobe because she wanted her friend's letters to be unceasing with continual flow of ink. "The pen with which...all ink, you last wrote will hardly be dry before you have to begin again." *Encyclopedia Mythica*, s.v."Niobe." <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/n/niobe.html> [accessed June 2, 2012], *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Niobe." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/niobe> [accessed June 2, 2012]

<sup>183</sup> Miss Eden to —, Barrackpore, Friday, June 17, 1837, *LFI*, 50. Italics in original.

there was the fun of breaking open Grindlay's large packages, and sorting the contents, and distributing them about the house; and, as luncheon was announced, I would not open any of my letters but kept them till I could return to my own room and enjoy them at my leisure.<sup>184</sup>

This excerpt from a letter to her brother Robert reveals much about Eden's relationship with the post, the native Indians, and the physical comfort provided by letters. The language of the first half of the opening sentence shows Eden's disdain for the accents of the native Indians. Written against them, "The dawk, as the ignorant *creturs* call the post," testified to her treatment of and expectations for the level of education from her Indian servants.<sup>185</sup> In that excerpt, Eden demonstrated her understanding of hierarchy among the Europeans and other peoples in India through a perceived lack of understanding about the nature of the postal system. Yet, Eden took the time to learn George's head servant's mannerisms well enough to tell he had "something better to give than a common official box."<sup>186</sup> Her attention to detail was caused by the excitement of an arrival of letters. She counted on the post to come daily and needed the comfort of those private letters when she could return to her own room and enjoy them at her leisure.<sup>187</sup>

As their stay in India progressed, the overland letter packages to England became slower, making Emily frustrated and uncomfortable at the possible delays or letters lost

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<sup>184</sup> Miss Eden To The Hon. And Rev. Robert Eden, Barrackpore, July 17, 1837, *LFI*, 66-67. Italics in original.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, 66. Italics in original.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, 66-67.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, 67.

along the way. Her sister, Fanny, also commented on the lack of coordination among the post in India and its failure in sending their letters home in a consistent manner, “As usual, dearest, your No. Eleven followed No. Ten, just as it ought, three weeks after. I wish you would send your Board of Admiralty to instruct our Board of Admiralty, who send their ships without regard to the date of our letters.”<sup>188</sup>

In the absence of letters arriving on a consistent schedule in India, Eden often turned to the collection and circulation of print materials such as books, novels, and any other European or American printed literature. Whether purchased in the streets of Calcutta, ordered from bookstores in England, or borrowed from friends in India and Britain, Eden used print material as a way to remain continually updated on the fashions of England. Prized and treasured by Emily, whichever printed source brought any piece of knowledge was better than none from her beloved country. Thus, Eden found printed volumes to be a secondary mode of comfort for filling the time until the mail arrived.

The purchasing and exchange of books was another medium through which Emily stayed in contact with England and its culture. The Eden family often had boxes of books shipped from England, and they purchased cheaper editions in India from places like the United States of America. Reading was an activity that kept Emily mentally agile and helped pass the time. She read everything and anything she could get her hands on. American editions were the cheapest and easiest to come by. She noted,

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<sup>188</sup> From the Hon. F.H. Eden To A Friend, Government House, July 18, 1837, *LFI*, 68.

There are such a good set of American editions of English books advertised to-day, that I sent off forthwith and bought Mrs. Butler's Journal and Theresa Lister's novel, 'Anne Grey,' and one of Lady Morgan's novels and another book, all for ten rupees...I tried at an English shop for some books, and they asked 2l. for Poole's 'Scenes and Recollections,' and 3l. for the commonest novels in three vols...I wish, if Mr. Rice has an odd copy of the 'Marquis de Pontanges,' and any other recommendable French books, you would buy them and send them out to me.<sup>189</sup>

Books were also a means of exchange between Europeans in India, specifically in Calcutta society. In one instance, Emily gave one of her sketches as payment to borrow several books from a Mr. Trower,

You will have heard from us about our books long before this...and our appetite for *trash* becomes daily more diseased and insatiable; so you are hereby constituted our book-agent, and you can settle with Rodwell the set he is to send...We have read 'Rienzi' and 'Gilbert Gurney,' - thanks to Mr. Trower, who belongs to a book-club, and has sacrificed his week's share of these books to me, because I did a sketch for him.<sup>190</sup>

Emily asked several of her friends and family to ship books down to India so that she had the most up-to-date European publications. Staying busy with those publications distracted her from other discomforts India created (such as the heat), and Emily similarly craved amusements like books to ward off boredom and the discomfort of her physical surroundings. Emily once wrote about her circumstances and the misery caused by a lack of books to a friend: "It is of vital importance that we should feed our poor yellow Indian minds with constant amusement, so I wish, dear, you would take upon yourself to send off a box of the newest publications once in two months, and do not let people scratch

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<sup>189</sup> Miss Eden To The Same, Wednesday, May 11, [1836], *LFI*, 160.

<sup>190</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Government House, July 23, [1836], *LFI*, 195-196.

anything out of your list. The more trash the better.”<sup>191</sup> For Eden even the “trashiest” English novels offered a potential corrective to the “yellowing” of the English mind caused by the Indian milieu.

Letters and books were not the only material goods exchanged between Emily and her family and friends in the British Isles. They also exchanged decorative accessories and articles of clothing, sending both Indian goods to Britain and British goods to India. Mrs. Lister sent Emily a bracelet and her sister Fanny a brooch while they were living in Barrackpore. Fanny shipped feathers and other accessories back to several friends in England.<sup>192</sup> Friends in India like Mrs. C. Elliott gave Eden and her brother George gifts on a regular basis, such as a pair of beautiful bracelets.<sup>193</sup> Eden would often give back to her friends; in one instance, she bought a silver-embroidered dress for the Duchess of Sutherland.<sup>194</sup>

Gift exchange was common among her family and friends, but it was also common in India where it became a ritual among officials in the East India Company, Europeans travelers, and those involved in business interactions with Indian rajahs. When George Eden held durbars, every official exchanged gifts such as pearls, necklaces, diamonds, and other precious materials. Not only did family and friends in both England

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<sup>191</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Thursday, August 11, [1836], *LFI*, 220.

<sup>192</sup> From The Hon. F.H. Eden To A Friend, Government House, August 18, 1837, *LFI*, 81.

<sup>193</sup> From The Hon. Emily Eden To —., Calcutta, Monday, November 14, [1836], *LFI*, 256-257.

<sup>194</sup> Miss Eden To A Friend, Thursday, 9, [1837], *LFI*, 325.

and India receive gifts of beautifully decorated materials, but Eden's dog Chance was showered with luxurious goods and accessories: "there is a native who sells us Chinese silks, and I suppose has made a good thing of us, for he made up as a surprise to me a coat for Chance, of a broché gold-coloured satin bound with silver, with a sort of breast-plate of mock stones set in gold."<sup>195</sup>

Letters, print culture, and material objects comforted Emily and blunted the insecurities caused by her separation from England and all that separation implied. Letters became a unique and standard form of communication. Any sort of print material was a requirement for adequate social inclusion, and material objects also connected Eden to England through memory and exchange. These physical forms of remembrance soothed Eden's anxieties and comforted her psyche by their presence in India. But Emily also worried about other discomforts that could weaken her identity as an aristocratic Englishwoman, such as her own Indianization, interactions with natives, and the loss of political influence in India.

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<sup>195</sup> Miss Eden To The Countess of Buckinghamshire, Government House, January 27, 1837, *LFI*, 300.

### Class, Race, and Civilization

When thinking of India, most eighteenth-century Britons had agreed that, “it conjured up images of grand Islamic despots ruling tyrannically over timid pagans, florid and fanciful literature bred under a searing sun, and men corrupted by heat and the harem into terminal effeminates.”<sup>196</sup> India and their ‘grand Islamic despots’ were thought of in direct opposition to the British government and how Europeans defined themselves as rulers.<sup>197</sup> The English perceived South Asians and Africans as always inferior to European governments due to their “despotic” law systems, the climate, and their ignorance of Christian virtues.<sup>198</sup> Although Europeans acknowledged the use of “law” in India, that “law” was believed to delay justice and thus was checked and regulated by British rule in India.<sup>199</sup>

During the eighteenth century, the EIC and men like Warren Hastings influenced by the Indian culture and thought to be transformed from mercantile British subjects into “nabobs,” an image most Britons perceived as open and subject to the effects of “despotism.” With the strengthening of British colonial power in its expanding empire

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<sup>196</sup> Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>197</sup> Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7.

<sup>198</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989), 7.

<sup>199</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Form of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 62-65.

and public and parliamentary critique of EIC moral issues, Britons saw the push to enhance consciousness of the new imperial identity, separated from the influence of so-called Oriental despotism.<sup>200</sup> The nabob was created as a fictional character based on the reality of most European men's Anglo-Indian lifestyles. The lifestyle provided a number of Company servants with the monetary means to return from India with large fortunes and social aspirations.<sup>201</sup> The established rule of the nabobs, who were considered to be influenced by "native corruption," and the dramatic territorial conquests in the 1760s, prompted "a serious rethinking of the very nature of empire" by the end of the century.<sup>202</sup>

To redefine the nature of empire meant that the British also needed to understand their own identity detached from the Oriental despots of India. As Thomas Metcalf writes, "As the British defined their own identity as a nation in opposition to the world outside, so too, more generally, did they as Europeans, under the influence of the ideals of the Enlightenment, announce their own pre-eminence as a 'modern' and 'civilized' people."<sup>203</sup> As the civilized people, it was the duty of Europeans to conquer and advance the Indians, a people they believed were inclined to corruption, extortion, and mendacity.<sup>204</sup> Thus, the methods of previous EIC rulers, whom it was feared had established a "tyranny that exists to the disgrace of this nation," in the eighteenth century

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<sup>200</sup> Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 346; Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993), 119.

<sup>201</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 14.

<sup>202</sup> Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, 5.

<sup>203</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 4.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

were eradicated and the British justified their new rule by the ideas of the Enlightenment and its theory of stages of civilization.<sup>205</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, the EIC and British rulers sought to rid India of the pervasive “Oriental despotism” of which they had been accustomed by imposing European bureaucratic order. As Robert Travers argued, “Instead, the British embraced what they hoped would be a new kind of colonial despotism, a despotism of law underpinned by racial segregation and the rule of force, that would increasingly be justified by Europe’s supposed higher rank on the ladder of civilization.”<sup>206</sup>

Emily Eden lived in India during the mid-nineteenth century, and she often claimed to see and experience the lingering effects of “Oriental despotism” and observed the lack of one established civilization in India. As the sister of the Governor-General, Eden also saw the transition of the new British colonial bureaucracy, which was based on racial segregation and class rank “on the ladder of civilization.”<sup>207</sup> As the old system of government, which involved several components of despotism, was fading away in the nineteenth century, this new bureaucracy established itself as the new colonial order. The new colonial order intervened “in matters that were seen as particularly undermining to British notions of civilization.”<sup>208</sup> Thus, this section examines the interactions Eden had with class, race, and civilization in India defined by her own Englishness, involvement in

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<sup>205</sup> Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, 6.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, 29-30.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*, 29-30.

<sup>208</sup> Hall, “Of Gender and Empire,” 53.

British imperial society, and her notions of both “despotic rule” and British superiority.

The period from 1800 to 1857 saw a gradual consolidation of British power and growing community in India.<sup>209</sup> During the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, the demography of the EIC was labeled as European but diverse in origins including Americans, Caribbean blacks, Germans, Swiss, and Portuguese as well as sepoys or Indian soldiers.<sup>210</sup> Most of these Europeans came to India as enlisted soldiers, as teenagers, with limited chances of returning home, most likely to die there.<sup>211</sup> India also had a large population of non-commissioned Europeans working in the Company presidencies and larger cities.<sup>212</sup>

Due to George’s position as Governor-General and the duties that came to her as an EIC representative (such as official public appearances), Emily encountered a variety of people, European and Indian. Most days, Eden only saw the higher classes of society such as the European elites of Calcutta or Indian rajahs and their families. Surrounded by Indian servants, she also regularly communicated with them, such as her *ayah*, Rosina. On her trips to Calcutta, visits to Indian ruins or royal palaces, or along the road during their caravan up the country, however, Eden also came across the poor lower caste people of India. The juxtaposition of Indian rajahs and poor natives confused Emily as to the level of civilized society in India.

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<sup>209</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 63.

<sup>210</sup> Colley, *Captives*, 260.

<sup>211</sup> Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, 83-83.

<sup>212</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 63.

When Emily Eden arrived in India she expected change, particularly a hot climate and an immediate death. Although the latter never occurred and she felt the former expectation was justified, India and its people presented Eden with a wider range of changes than she had imagined, specifically in terms of society, civilization, and class interactions. Coming from a higher class than most Britons who visited or lived in India in the early nineteenth century, Eden demonstrated, through the contents of her letters, the differences in Indian class-consciousness and civilization of the rajahs, women, and natives. Eden expressed this in her description of the Indian population and her reported personal contacts with them. At many times, she wrote about the contrasting manners between British society and that of India, but at certain points Emily also noticed the similarities or amalgamations of Indian and British cultures.

She wrote about the distinctions between the civilizations in Britain and India. Eden noted the “uncivilized” nature of Indians and their enduring customs, that no matter the education given to them by the British, infectious Oriental despotism rooted deep into their culture and customs:

Then as to the Hindu College. The boys are educated, as you say, by the Government, at least under its active patronage, and they are “British subjects,” inasmuch as Britain has taken India, and in many respects they may be called well-educated young men; but still I cannot tell you what the wide difference is between a European and a Native. An elephant and Chance, St. Paul’s and a Baby-Home, the Jerseys and Pembrokes, a diamond and a bad flint, Queen Adelaide and O’Connell, London and Calcutta, are not further apart, and more antipathetic than those two classes. I do not see that any degree of education, or any length of time, could bring natives to the pitch of allowing any liberty to their wives...They live in mud huts, something like the Irish cabins, and in half

of that hut these women pass their lives.<sup>213</sup>

Even with the guidance of the highly civilized Europeans, Eden asserted the unflinching contrast of the uncivilized nature of Indians with the British. As John Stuart Mill said in response to the vigorous despotism the British perceived in India, “it was incumbent on a “more civilized people” to advance the condition of ‘a barbarous or semi-barbarous one.’”<sup>214</sup> Eden’s quotation likewise showed what she saw as the “more civilized people,” the British and their government, advancing the condition of the Indian boys at the Hindu College.<sup>215</sup> But even as the native boys became well-educated young men like Europeans, in Eden’s example, there was no level of education or civilizing that could bring the Indians to be respectable like agents of European civilization. She condemned their treatment of women and wives as well as their housing: “They live in mud huts, something like the Irish cabins.”<sup>216</sup> To Emily, the treatment of women proved the “sense of Asiatic barbarism and venality” in the nature of Indian peoples, and she felt the “need to expunge the most repugnant elements of Indian custom” like many other Europeans during the time.<sup>217</sup>

In another example, Emily further perpetrated the contemporary British claim that elements of Indian custom were uncivilized and barbaric.<sup>218</sup> On one of the caravan

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<sup>213</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Government House, January 25, 1837, *MEL*, 281-282.

<sup>214</sup> Quoted in Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, 6.

<sup>215</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Government House, January 25, 1837, *MEL*, 281-282.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, 281-282.

<sup>217</sup> Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, 107.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, 107.

marches up the country, she detailed the European and “civilized” customs to which most Indians were ignorant,

I always wonder how ignorant of the ways of the world the inhabitants of these solitary valleys can be, and how such ignorance feels. No ‘crafty boys,’ no fashions, no politics, and, I suppose, a primitive religion that satisfies them...I imagine half these people must be a sort of vulgar Adams and Eves-not so refined, but nearly as innocent.<sup>219</sup>

To Emily, a developed civilization required knowledge of fashions, politics, and a modern religion.<sup>220</sup> As stated by C.A. Bayly, in the eyes of nineteenth-century Europeans “cultures attained ‘civilisation’ by stages of moral awakening and material endeavour.”<sup>221</sup> The “primitive religion” of the Indian population and their ignorance of material fashions proved to Eden that they were at the lower stages of civilization, “a sort of vulgar Adams and Eves.”<sup>222</sup>

To Eden, the natives lacked civilization and therefore were inferior to Europeans in their culture and other societal acts. Emily defined civilization much like the *OED*, “the state or condition of being civilized; human cultural, social, and intellectual development when considered to be advanced and progressive in nature.”<sup>223</sup> European society was advanced and progressive with its education, gentility and etiquette, fashion, and general social progression. When she looked at the Indian natives, she saw no

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<sup>219</sup> Thursday, Sept. 13, [1838], *UTC*, 162.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, 162.

<sup>221</sup> Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 7.

<sup>222</sup> Thursday, Sept. 13, [1838], *UTC*, 162.

<sup>223</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “Civilization, n.”

<http://www.oed.com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/33584> [accessed May 15, 2012]

generalized civilization that included at all levels of society any education or social progress. With the requirement of “fashions,” Emily herself defined civilization, for example, as the requirement to wear clothing and cover the body, which many Indians did not. She often commented on their lack of cloaks as a sign of uncivilized peoples needing to be saved by the superior European classes. While still on the *Jupiter* waiting to arrive in the Hooghly River, Eden wrote, “We are surrounded by boats manned by black people, who, by some strange inadvertence, have utterly forgotten to put on any cloaks whatever.”<sup>224</sup> To her English sensibilities, it was strange to be without clothing, as the English were known for their layers of clothing, pelisses, muslin dresses, petticoats, and proper wear for different occasions.<sup>225</sup>

Clothing was not the only category in which the Indians did not successfully fit into Eden’s definition of civilization. The housing and shelter of many common Indians differed from the grandiose structures of European design. Eden looked at these modest structures as uncivilized compared to the English and Indian rajah’s palaces,

Then, after passing a house that is much more like a palace than anything we see in England we come to a row of mud-thatched huts in wild, black-looking savages squatting in front of them, little black native children running up and down the cocoa-trees above the huts, and no one appearance of civilization that would lead one to guess any European had ever set foot on the land before.<sup>226</sup>

The unequal distinction between the royal palaces and mud-thatched huts proved to Eden

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<sup>224</sup> Thursday., In the Hooghly, [1836], *MEL*, 263.

<sup>225</sup> Jane Ashelford, *The Art of Dress: Clothes and Society 1500-1914* (London: National Trust, 1996), 179.

<sup>226</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Barrackpore, March 24, 1836, *MEL*, 264.

that most natives were uncivilized and in need of European guidance. The English saw the Mughal court and government as a type of absolutism, a form of despotic sovereignty that was occasionally barbaric in nature.<sup>227</sup> This form of barbaric despotism caused a displacement in wealth; it was a concept implying “that no will, and hence no law, existed apart from that of the despot himself.”<sup>228</sup> Thus, for Eden, the uncivilized households of royal palaces and mud-thatched huts proved to be an outcome of Indian laws and customs, of “oriental despotism.”

Also commenting on the lack of European presence in the subcontinent, Eden saw the lack of civilization, the mud-thatched huts and “wild black-looking savages,” as a duty for the Europeans to undertake. Europeans needed to come to India to bring civilization, proper housing, hygiene, and clothing to these wild natives. Again, Eden found the image of India, its lack of civilization, and climate repugnant,

I take all the naked black creatures squatting at the doors of their huts in such aversion...what with the climate and the strange trees and shrubs, I feel all Robinson Crusoe-ish...I can only calculate how strong my aversion must be to ‘the land we live in.’<sup>229</sup>

Eden’s sister, Fanny, also commented on the aversion to India and its inhabitants and said, “It sometimes strikes me we really are in what is called a barbarous country.”<sup>230</sup> The aversion Eden felt was to the nude bodies, strange land, and the feeling of psychological

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<sup>227</sup> Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, 106.

<sup>228</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 9.

<sup>229</sup> To The Same, Barrackpore, Thursday, April 28, [1836], *LFI*, 148.

<sup>230</sup> From The Hon. F. H. Eden To A Friend, Government House, August 18, [1837], *LFI*, 82.

discomfort at the contrasting cultural mannerisms. Eden, as an educated aristocratic woman, did not understand how people could live in the environment of “strange trees and shrubs” while “squatting at the doors of their huts.”<sup>231</sup> To Emily, people should be living in houses with more than dirt for floors. Like Eden, most Britons saw colonies like India as “enervated, hierarchical, corporatist, back-ward- and thus inferior.”<sup>232</sup> Collectively inferior, the natives were seen by the EIC and the British as the equivalent of the “undeserving poor” in Britain.<sup>233</sup> Much like Emily’s views of the Irish, who she viewed as the most degraded savages on earth, she equally saw the native Indians as uncivilized and inferior due to their sparse clothing and nakedness.<sup>234</sup>

Thus, the poor living conditions for the majority of Indians made Eden think of her own life in the subcontinent. With the impact of the climate, lack of British society, and overall new surroundings, Eden worried about her own acclimatization to Indian culture and their uneven civilized demeanors. The repugnance Eden expressed for India, Indians, and their living environment made her own sense of physical and psychological alterations distressing. Emily thus sought to counterbalance the destruction to her own identity by reviling the nature of Indian habits when commenting on their cultural practices.

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<sup>231</sup> To The Same, Barrackpore, Thursday, April 28, [1836], *LFI*, 148.

<sup>232</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>233</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 6.

<sup>234</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Theresa Lewis, Admiralty, Friday [April 1848], *MEL*, 375. Emily quotes Thomas Carlyle.

## Indianization

Acclimatizing to Indian habits and in physical appearance was a major concern for Eden while living in India. One of the “Indian” habits she noted in her letters was the luxury of having everything imaginable to compensate for the climate; “Then, as a set-off to discomforts peculiar to the climate, we have every luxury that the wit of man can devise, and are gradually acquiring the Indian habit of denying ourselves nothing, which will be awkward.”<sup>235</sup> Luxury was one of the main pursuits of the Anglo-Indian lifestyle of the nabob, who consumed lavish food and drink as well as participated in leisure activities like hookah smoking and attending nautch dances.<sup>236</sup> Although past British officials took to the culture and habits of the Indian lifestyle, the early nineteenth century brought with it a new tone in imperial rule, in which Europeans began to alienate their bodies from those habits, instead trying to maintain a separate identity and rule through differentiation rather than accommodation. To Emily, the transformation and alteration to the Indian climate and their habits was appalling. Yet, she confessed, “but the real truth is, I suppose, that we are becoming *acclimated* more or less- rather less than more, but still we are becoming blind to our wretched position.”<sup>237</sup>

As time progressed and years passed in India, Emily began to believe that her

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<sup>235</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Government House, Calcutta, August 16, 1836, *MEL*, 268.

<sup>236</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 200.

<sup>237</sup> From The Hon E. Eden To The Countess of Buckinghamshire, Government House, May 24, 1837, *LFI*, 26.

distance and from British society adapted her to the surroundings, becoming much like the native Indian “savages.” The loss of fashionable society and a clear connection to Britain concerned Eden, and thus the loss of her basic British identity created intense psychological discomfort. She wrote, “I am almost certain we are very nearly savages- not the least ferocious, not cannibals, not even mischievous- but simply good-natured, unsophisticated savages, fond of finery, precious stones and tobacco, quite uninformed, very indolent, and rather stupid.”<sup>238</sup> To Emily, uninformed, sluggish, and stupid were the qualities of the uneducated and uncivilized. Those characteristics were not those of an Englishwoman.

As Emily Eden never wanted to travel to India in the first place, her negative feelings grew once she arrived in India and the scarcity of other European presence influenced the psychological discomfort from being away from her British culture. During the 1830s and 1840s, British India was still very much a country based on residency towns and impermanent European settlements. Indeed, Calcutta was the most transitory of all towns in India; it was the destination for those leaving India or those going up the country for hill stations or their residency cities. The nature of this society caused Eden great psychological discomfort,

I never could take to the Calcutta society, even if there were any, but there is not. Almost everybody who was here when we landed five months ago are gone either home or up the country. They come to Calcutta because they are on their way out to make their fortunes, or on their way home because they have made them, or because their healths require change of

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<sup>238</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Calcutta, December 29, 1836, *MEL*, 276.

station, and they come here to ask for it.<sup>239</sup>

Up until the announcement of George's appointment as Governor-General in 1835, Emily Eden had led a stable English life, surrounded by her family and friends, established in her domestic role in the household, and had maintained the code of behavior understood in the idea of "separate spheres" and English identity. Psychologically, Eden's place in English society developed out of a permanent class hierarchy, from birth. Being dropped into the contrasting classes of Anglo-Indian society made Eden psychologically uncomfortable. Emily wrote about the way in which the Indian life caused makeshift and temporary housing, "I hate that part of an Indian life. People are always changing their stations, and at every change they sell off everything, because there are no stages, wagons, or canals by which even a chair can be transported from one place to another, and it is not everybody who can afford a man's head on which to carry it."<sup>240</sup> As Deborah Cohen argues, "For the British...the house could never be merely a machine for living in; homes were repositories of feeling and personality."<sup>241</sup> The transitory nature of houses and households in British India thus thoroughly shocked Eden's domestic sensibilities.<sup>242</sup>

The immediate presence of Indian servants in Indian houses and the households of Calcutta and Barrackpore made Eden's tensions with her own Indianization more uncomfortable. As the nabob became a powerful patriarch in Anglo-Indian households,

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<sup>239</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Government House, August 24, 1836, *MEL*, 273.

<sup>240</sup> To The Hon. and Rev. R. Eden, Barrackpore, August 18, 1837, *LFI*, 80.

<sup>241</sup> Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 185.

<sup>242</sup> Cohen, *Household Gods*, 185.

the British also “played a part in encouraging and perpetuating the complex of differentiation of domestic servants.”<sup>243</sup> The EIC officials continued to use the caste system among its servants and arranged the British as the highest class in India, ruling its lands and controllable rajahs. As Eden mentioned regularly, she and her family had numerous servants in both the households of Calcutta and Barrackpore and these servants followed her everywhere she went. The constant assistance from servants often annoyed Emily, who claimed she wished to be alone and independent. She wrote that she had “established myself in the garden, and told all the servants to go and sit down at a little distance, that I might fancy myself ‘alone in the country’ and ‘sitting out reading,’ as if it were the Temple Walk at Eden Farm, or the lawn at Bower Hall, and altogether it *was* rather a pleasant hour.”<sup>244</sup>

Wherever Eden was, there were her servants, maids, and bearers. Surrounded by Indian servants on a daily basis, Eden never found a moment to be alone. This inability to be alone was a different kind of discomfort, one that emphasized the lack of European society but also made her personality change to suit the smothering nature of EIC rule and the methods of the British Empire. On one stormy night, Eden’s servants demonstrated this strict suffocating relationship between master and servant. After a sleepless night, Eden just wanted to sleep in peace with no interruptions, but her servants interrupted her slumber and time alone,

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<sup>243</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 18.

<sup>244</sup> To A Friend, Barrackpore, Thursday, June 22, 1837, *LFI*, 55-56.

so of course some of the bearers, who sleep in the verandah below, began to cough out of compliment to the storm...I slept for one hour. And now you know what an Indian bad night is. The result was that after luncheon I thought I would go to sleep, and took off my frill and my sash and let *all the hooks and eyes* loose, and told the servants to keep the passage quiet and not to come in with any notes; and just as I had sunk into a peaceable slumber several of them rushed in, announcing the Lord Sahib himself and the Lord Padre.<sup>245</sup>

Due to the lack of personal time and constant involvement of her servants in Emily's daily life, she grasped onto those few moments of time when she was alone and could do anything she wanted to do. She wrote, "That is a great comfort to me here, the number of hours I can pass alone without any fear of being called down."<sup>246</sup> The inability to be alone was another type of discomfort, one that contrasted with her desire for English society.

While Eden struggled with the involvement of native servants in her own life, she also viewed them in different capacities in and outside of Government House. On one of her early days in India, Eden first noticed the lingering characteristics of eighteenth-century Anglo-Indian life, the intermingling of British civilization with Indian culture. She wrote, "the next thing you meet is a nice English Britschka with good horses driven by a turbaned coachman, and a tribe of running footmen by its side, and in it is one of the native Princes, dressed just as he was when he first came into the world, sitting cross-legged on the front seat very composedly smoking his hookah."<sup>247</sup> The "turbaned coach

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<sup>245</sup> March 15, 1837, *LFI*, 329. Italics in original.

<sup>246</sup> To A Friend, Government House, July 23, [1836], *LFI*, 197.

<sup>247</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Barrackpore, March 24, 1836, *MEL*, 264.

man” and the “tribe of running footmen” juxtaposed with the nude native prince smoking his hookah furthered showed Emily the drastic effects of “Asian despotism” and the distance it created in the hierarchy of Indian civilization. Events like this, for Eden, justified the reasons for British rule in India, the perception that Indians were negatively affected by the climate and made into despots.

In another letter, Eden mentioned her own servants and their lack of civilized activities and developed cultural habits. On one afternoon, the servants brought Eden clay figures that she found detestable but she kept the figures for their own appeasement, “the servants all bought horrid clay, misshapen, gaudy-looking figures; and I am sorry to say all mine thought it necessary to present me with some, because they thought I liked modeling, and my room is full of the most frightful-looking toys, which I dare not destroy, as they think them beautiful.”<sup>248</sup> Although she saw the figures as an uncivilized attempt at modeling, in her role as sister to the Governor-General, Emily was required, even to her servants, to accept the presents in a sincere manner. As a colonizer, Eden was viewed by the public and affected by their discernment. Never alone, the servants knew everything about her, which made destruction of the figures unmanageable. Although much of the experience of rulers in colonial India involved their isolation from the ruled, Indian servants often modified this integral experience of empire by their interaction with

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<sup>248</sup> From The Hon. Emily Eden To —., Thursday, November 10., [1836], *LFI*, 254-255.

both.<sup>249</sup> Eden could not reject the clay figures because her servants were actively entangled in her private life.

### Isolation

Emily and her brother George arrived in India in the wake of the late eighteenth century critique of the EIC and its changes in governance in the early nineteenth century. The trial of Warren Hastings and the attacks by Edmund Burke on the extortion, acts of bribery, and arbitrary power of the EIC and their nabob rulers in India, led to a drastic change in British colonial government standards and procedures.<sup>250</sup> According to Nicholas B. Dirks, what occurred in India in the late eighteenth century was an “internal revolution” rather than a “foreign conquest” which needed to escape the EIC’s tarnished image of nabobs.<sup>251</sup> The nabob was a fictional character based on the reality of most European men’s Anglo-Indian lifestyles. The life provided a number of Company servants to return from India with large fortunes and social aspirations.<sup>252</sup>

As the need for rulers instead of merchants became prevalent and long-term residence became essential for British survival in India, Britons confronted one of the

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<sup>249</sup> Ranajit Guha, “Not at Home in Empire,” *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 484-485.

<sup>250</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 289.

<sup>251</sup> Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 316.

<sup>252</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 14.

most important questions facing imperial administrators: how to rule India. Was India to remain an “anomalous empire” without parallel in British history or go the way of North America and become a permanent European settlement?<sup>253</sup> Britain turned away from the recognized caricature of the accommodating and influential nabob in the late eighteenth century to the perceived image of the British sahib, who condemned Indian acclimatization and conformed to racial distinctions.<sup>254</sup> The nabob showed how India was different from and inferior to Britain with their predisposition to eastern luxury that moved hand-in-hand with “Asiatic despotism.”<sup>255</sup> These perils of despotism proved to British imperial leaders that change and boundaries were necessary in empire building.

The rampant fortuneering of the Clive era became less common in the EIC toward the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>256</sup> With the administration of Lord Cornwallis in the 1780s, EIC servants were no longer allowed to accept gifts or engage in private trade as before.<sup>257</sup> Instead the EIC and the British used a magnificent ceremonial ruling style to influence the regional native rulers.<sup>258</sup> After Lord Wellesley’s arrival in the 1790s, the Governor-General position “acquired semi-royal status, surrounded by the trappings of silver-stick bearers, club bearers, fan bearers and sentries in the new setting of

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<sup>253</sup> Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*, 111.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*, 111-112.

<sup>255</sup> Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92.

<sup>256</sup> Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, 82.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid*, 82.

<sup>258</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 15.

Government House.”<sup>259</sup> Emily confirmed this status when she spoke about her brother, “We all met in my sitting-room and as soon as Sir Charles was in sight, stalked solemnly off in a grand procession of aides-de-camp, silver-sticks, peacocks’ feathers, &c., with Captains Grey and Chads tacked on. George took his place on a sort of a throne.”<sup>260</sup> Display like that of silver-sticks and peacocks’ feathers became a requirement for most EIC employees. Often times, display overlapped in its functional duty with comfort. George’s “throne” was, in essence, a chair for him to sit upon during the ball that evening. The functional duty of the chair was to provide comfort to George but also overlapped in its role as an object of display and power, making the Governor-General a ceremonial ruler.

While in India, Eden responded to the psychological discomforts of the difference of gender roles and treatment of native women by writing about her experiences. Emily interacted with both European and native Indian women on a daily basis, whether during Government House visits, travels to royal palaces, or in their journey up the country to Simla. Eden thought that India was no place for any European woman, especially for the young, or recently married, to live for an extended amount of time. In one letter, Eden commented on the lives of two young brides,

There was a pretty Mrs. — dining here yesterday, quite a child in look, who married just before the ‘Repulse’ sailed, and landed here about ten days ago. She goes on next week to Meemuch, a place at the farthest extremity of India, where there is not another European woman...There is

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>260</sup> Monday, March 14, [1836], *LFI*, 103.

another, Mrs. —, only *fifteen*, who married when we were at the Cape, and came from there at the same time we did, and went straight on to her husband's station, where for five months she had never seen an European...It is an abominable place. I do not mean so much for us, who come for a short time and can have a fleet, or an army to take us anywhere for change of air if we have pains in our sides, but for people who earn their bread in India, and must starve if they give it up.<sup>261</sup>

For Eden, class and longevity of stay were crucial aspects of how Europeans could survive and live in India without “civilized society.” Unfortunately for those two women, whose social ranks were much lower than Eden, their stay in India would be abominable due to the longevity of their stay, their station's location “at the farthest extremity of India” and the lack of other Europeans' presence.<sup>262</sup>

Not only the dearth of Europeans bothered Emily, but also the lack of European women in particular created psychological discomfort for her. Emily believed that she and other European women in the British Empire needed to socialize with other European women while abroad. During one of the river expeditions to recover her health in the cooler climates south of Calcutta, Eden wrote of another experience where one married woman rarely saw another European woman, “Mrs. Rousseau, the postmistress, sent me a basket of fruit and vegetables. I wish she would come herself, as she must want to see another European woman.”<sup>263</sup> Eden even told her family and friends never to let their daughters come to India. She wrote, “It is a melancholy country for wives at the best, and

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<sup>261</sup> From The Hon. E. Eden To —, Government House, 1837 (Begun October 25, ended October 30.), *LFI*, 103. Italics in original.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

<sup>263</sup> Saturday, 7, [1837], *LFI*, 73.

I strongly advise you never to let your girls marry an East Indian.”<sup>264</sup> Eden believed the isolation among most European women in the “melancholy country” of India caused major psychological discomforts due to the separation from other European women and culture. But Emily was not alone in her feelings. Other British women reacted similarly to life in India. In another compilation of letters, Clarissa Trant acknowledged the cultural shortcomings of India after speaking with a friend and receiving letters from her brother, Thomas Abercrombie Trant, stationed in Bengal. She wrote, “It gave me an insight into the Indian world- which I cannot help thinking a very peculiar one...so much cultivation of mind amongst the men—so little amongst the women.”<sup>265</sup>

The changes in perception that occurred with the transition in the Anglo-Indian lifestyle from nabob to sahib created tensions in the formation of a British identity separated from Indian customs. Identities overlapped with young Indian boys educated by the government and formed into respectable British men. During the early nineteenth century, the EIC and the British government eradicated the perceived influence of Oriental despotism from its subjects by creating “an official class separated from the lures of commerce or entanglement with ‘native’ life.”<sup>266</sup> Emily saw this confusion on a daily basis, in Government House and when visiting medical colleges and other cities. During one visit to the Hindu College in Calcutta, Eden noted this confusion in identities

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<sup>264</sup> From The Hon. E. Eden To —., Government House, 1837 (Begun October 25, ended October 30.), *LFI*, 103.

<sup>265</sup> 1822. June to December., *The Journal of Clarissa Trant*, 99.

<sup>266</sup> Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 195.

but made the Indians' inferiority to the British race blatantly clear; "but still I cannot tell you what the wide difference is between a European and a Native... London and Calcutta, are not further apart, and more antipathetic than those two classes."<sup>267</sup> Emily Eden struggled with the perceptions of her own Britishness and how the isolation from other Europeans in India may have contributed to her descent towards Indianization. With the threat of Indianization and the dearth of Europeans, Eden experienced the transitioning moment in British imperial rule, where the EIC and British government were trying to escape the perceived image of officers as nabobs and despotic rulers by creating the representation of a closed, stable colonial bureaucrat. She saw the effects of both Oriental despotism and its perceived lack of civilization on the natives, rajahs, and the EIC, as well as its effects on the mission of the British government to ward off those corruptive tendencies. Overall, Eden's psychological discomforts from isolation in India were heightened by the separation from her family and friends and the absence of Europeans, which created further cultural tensions of identity loss.

### **Britishness and Politics**

Although the continual letters from family and friends kept Emily involved in some of the happenings in England while she was away in India, Eden still missed the society and the influence of her own opinion in the political circles of London. The dearth of

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<sup>267</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Government House, January 25, 1837, *MEL*, 281-282.

Europeans in India also meant the absence of colonial commitment to, and clear participation in, home politics. Thus, Emily missed the psychological comfort of her power and authority among British politicians in London. While in England, Eden actively influenced many politicians in Whig politics and the social circles of London. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, the “older modes of political expression and engagement” shaped the political culture of Britain that challenged the involvement of women and their political subjectivities in the political process.<sup>268</sup>

Kathryn Gleadle called these women “borderline citizens,” their status as political actors was often fragile and contingent upon these earlier modes.<sup>269</sup> With the rise of evangelicalism, the changes in citizen’s roles, and the new landscape of opportunity, many women participated in public engagements and politics on a day-to-day basis.<sup>270</sup>

Emily was one of these women who had political interests and it was one of her main passions in life. It was an activity she could participate in with her brother George and a way to stay relevant in the changing social circles of London. In 1826, she wrote to her friend, “You ask if I care about the present state of politics? Why, dear child, I never cared for anything half so much in my life,-almost to the pass of being sorry I am out of town this week.”<sup>271</sup> While in India, her passion for English politics continued to be a major focus for Eden. She satiated herself with every morsel of political gossip and

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<sup>268</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2009), 2.

<sup>269</sup> Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, 2.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>271</sup> Miss Eden to Miss Villiers, Hertingfordbury, Monday, September 1826, *MEL*, 107.

information. Imbedded in her identity as an English aristocratic woman, Emily made politics into one of her psychological comforts. In order to maintain her sense of Britishness while living in the “dreaded India,” she had to stay informed about the political parties, the new monarch, and any other scandalous political event that happened during those six years away from the Metropole.

The lack of political interest among the European society of Calcutta appalled Eden. On answering her friend’s questions about her new Indian experiences, Emily replied about this outrage, “They read no new books, they take not the lightest interest in home politics, and everything is melted down into being purely local.”<sup>272</sup> Eden was not suited for local politics because she disliked Calcutta society and its estrangement from anything English and the loss of British identity among the people. What Emily discovered was that politics only became popular when there was a transitioning moment or great disrepute. In one instance, Emily noted the revived appeal of English politics to Anglo-Indian society,

You cannot imagine the interest English politics have again become now we have the debates to read. I am so proud of our ministers. At this distance one sees the thing in an historical point of view, and I cannot help thinking they are a wonderful set of men to have brought the country back to that pitch of prosperity in which it is, and by such hard labour too.<sup>273</sup>

Although the discussion of politics may have gone in and out of fashion in Calcutta and other European communities in India, Emily could always rely on George to

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<sup>272</sup> Miss Eden to Mrs. Lister, Government House, January 25, 1837, *MEL*, 280.

<sup>273</sup> To —., Barrackpore, Friday, June 17., [1837], *LFI*, 53. Unknown political debate.

chat about English politics with her. Whenever alone with George, Eden took the opportunity to broach the subject of recent events in English politics, or at least the most recent reports within the letters from family and friends in England. Emily wrote once about these talks, “It is odd that whenever George and I are alone we invariably find ourselves talking hard English politics-admiration of the prosperity of the country-of his Majesty’s ministers, &c. Indian politics are clearly not half so amusing.”<sup>274</sup> As in England, Emily encouraged and helped George in his political positions in London. Keeping this personal interaction with George while living in India balanced some of Emily’s psychological comforts away from Britain. Eden’s English identity developed around politics and without the topic, Eden’s psychological discomforts would have elevated from its loss.

### **Conclusions**

As John Crowley writes, comfort was something to be learned and expressed, not only through the physical aspects of material culture and leisure items, but also through emotional responses.<sup>275</sup> For Emily, psychological discomforts produced an emotional reaction triggered by the many effects of living in India. The distance from family and friends, isolation from social trends, and cultural aspects of British life severely

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<sup>274</sup> Wednesday, July 25, [1836], *LFI*, 201.

<sup>275</sup> Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort*, 149.

discomforted her psyche. The lack of English society as well as the apparent acclimatization to Indian culture caused Eden to believe in the loss of her English identity. Afraid of the Indianization of her body and mind, Emily found meaning in the receipt of letters from Britain. Letters thus became objects of sentimental value for her to cherish just like the discussion of politics with her brother George and other British aristocrats. Crowley also argued that comfort was viewed as a sign of social progress.<sup>276</sup> In the six years Eden lived in India, she claimed to experience, first hand, the lack of a developed “civilization” among the natives. Social progress was needed in India, Britons believed, and Emily’s accounts reflected the European belief in thwarting “oriental despotism” by the subjugation of the Indian people and government, and the justifications it provided for imperial expansion.

The European perceptions of the Indian environment changed in the early nineteenth century from optimism about acclimatization before 1800 to the rejection of it and the emergence of ideas of race and the consolidation of colonial rule.<sup>277</sup> The Indian climate and environment impacted every aspect of British imperial development due to its contrast with European weather. Eden found India’s heat and high temperatures as a profound discomfort to her own English sensibilities. As Crowley notes, “Historical changes in the technology of elementary comforts depended on the existence of a fashion-conscious public that was made aware of the *dis*-comfort of what had previously

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 292.

<sup>277</sup> Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*, 2-3.

been considered functionally adequate.”<sup>278</sup> Emily was one of the fashion-conscious public that viewed her life through comfort and discomfort, very much aware of her own distinctions between the physical and psychological divisions. Physically, India weakened her English constitution and created new modes of transportation and routines to subdue the heat. Punkahs became a new part of Eden’s routine that were essential for her physical comforts. Due to her status as the Governor-General’s sister and an aristocrat, her servants also carried her from destination to destination, in palanquins and howdahs. Although Eden was shut in to her household during the hot days, she did participate in airing, a walking activity for women that occurred around dusk or at night to relieve their discomforts from the climate.

To review, as Emily once said of India and her life there, “The real *calamity* of the life is the separation from home and friends. It feels like death...And the *annoyance* of the life is the climate. It is so very HOT, I do not know how to spell it large enough.”<sup>279</sup> In her letters, Eden never knew how to spell her discomforts large enough. A continual theme, Emily demonstrated the impact of physical and psychological comfort on the nineteenth-century imperial woman. Indeed, for Emily Eden, comfort engendered discomfort and it continually influenced her life in the “hot land of strangers.”

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<sup>278</sup> Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort*, 291.

<sup>279</sup> Miss Eden to Lady Campbell, Government House, Calcutta, August 16, 1836, *MEL*, 268. Italics and emphasis in original.

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