Institution of Feelings: Theatricality, Moral Sentiments and Empire Building in Adam Smith

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The Theory of Moral Sentiments was first published in 1759. From then on, it was consistently revised, with its sixth edition coming out in 1790, a few weeks before Adam Smith's death. So different and opposed do *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations* appear at first glance that for some years scholars referred to the task of their reconciliation as the 'Adam Smith problem' (D. D. Raphael & A. L. Macfie 1982, p.20). The latter was published in 1776, two years after the former's fourth edition. For these scholars, the moral philosopher who made sympathy the basis of social behavior in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* did an about-turn from altruistic to egoistic theory in *The Wealth of Nations* owing to the influence of the French Physiocrat thinkers whom he met (D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie 1982, pp.21-2).

From the very first page of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in a section titled 'Of the Sense of Propriety' and subtitled 'Of Sympathy,' Smith seems determined to single out the social affections and compassionate instincts of universal mankind. 'How selfish soever man may be supposed,' the opening paragraph begins,

> there are evidently some principles in nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. (Smith 1982, p.9)

Even the 'greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society,' Smith argued, 'was not altogether without this pity or compassion (1982, p.9). The opening pages of *The Wealth of Nations*

presents another natural, universal, that is, interest in the welfare of humanity:

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest, we address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. (Smith 2000, p.16)

How shall we deal with these two *universal* but *seemingly different* economies of humanity, one based on sympathetic emotions, another on *economic* if not *materialistic* interest? I will try to address this question from a preliminary reading of his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* as an interpretation of the emergent forms of abstraction and exchangeability in the history of capitalism. My argument sees this Janus-faced Adam Smith in his moral philosophy and political economy as a figure strategically corresponding to a social transition from the local to the global in the formation of the British Empire.

Indeed, the eighteenth century, especially during its middle years, witnessed radical ruptures of constellations between sympathy, sentiment and society. On the one hand, we have David Hume saying:

> I am first affrighted and confounded with that forelorn solitude, in which I am plac'd in my philosophy, and fancy myself some strange uncouth monster, who not being able to mingle and unite in society, has been expell'd all human commerce, and left utterly abandon'd and disconsolate. (Hume 1978, p.264)

Besides the regular skepticism of Hume, here we see a philosopher phobic of a self consumed by contemplation and writing, who yearns for sense of politeness and normality in mingling with 'society' and 'human commerce.' The presumption goes that there already exists a prominent sense of the division between an atomistic self and a larger scale of the public, whether 'society' or 'exchange between men of

the products of nature or art' that 'human commerce' meant in the eighteenth century (*OED* Online, under *commerce*). On the other hand, feelings are not lodged within the private, inner lives of individual persons. As Adela Pinch writes in her critical investigation upon this period's epistemologies of emotions, from Hume to Austen

> [T]hey [emotions] rather circulate among persons as somewhat autonomous substances. They frequently seem as impersonal, and contagious, as viruses, visiting the breasts of men and women the way diseases visit the body. (Pinch 1996, p.1)

In other words, emotions, feelings, and sentiments have a rather exterior and more interchangeable existence in the eighteenth century, not yet to be internalized as inward psychological activities. As a matter of fact, Hume whose influence upon Smith's development of moral sympathy is observable (D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie 1982, p.17), declares that 'the passions are so contagious, that they pass with the greatest facility from one person to another, and produce correspondent movements in all human breasts' (1978, p.605). In another passage, he once again stresses the necessity for individuals to expose themselves for visits of feelings from without: 'Hatred, resentment, esteem, love, courage, mirth and melancholy; all these passions I feel more from communication than from my own natural temper and disposition' (1978, p.317). Individuals are not supposed to look and fathom from within to fashion a self-identity. Rather, one should, as becoming a necessity, embrace a disembedding mechanism which pries the production of feelings free from the hold of individual 'natural temper and disposition,' recombining them across inter-personal relations, if not across wide time-space distances.

Adam Smith takes a similar stance. For him, the fellow-feeling of sympathy is a function that can be deployed as a 'contact zone'

(Pratt 1992, pp.6-7) for *psychological* communications, if we use a phrase from Mary Louis Pratt with a slightly different twist, for the expanding distances between individual minds moving along with this situation:

> As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. (Smith 1982, p.9)

Thus, sympathy acts as an imaginative act, as an agreement between sentiments, one possible way out of man's affective solipsism. At the same time, paradoxically, this is out of the realization of mutual inaccessibility between autonomous individual minds. It is almost impossible not to connect this with 'an increasing interconnection between the two "extremes" of extensionality and intentionality: globalizing influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other' that Anthony Giddens (1991, p.1) identifies as one of the distinctive features of modernity.

Indeed, one can take the popular trope of sympathy of the eighteenth century among writers in moral philosophy, aesthetics, medicine, and literature as what builds affective affinities between the circulating commercial markets, credit, public opinions acting at great distances. As Amit S. Rai (2002, p.17) points out, this preoccupation with sympathy took hold at a moment when Britain's imperial fortunes were on the rise. In the aftermath of the 1688 revolution, Britain, with the inauguration of its key economic institutions (for example, the stock exchange, the Bank of England), emerged in the eighteenth century as the world's leading commercial power. By the mid century, London had become the largest center of international trade, the premier port and warehouse of the world, and witnessed the forging of some spectacular fortunes. This was a century with increasing social mobility and the formation of the

British Empire. Along with this rise to global preeminence if not dominance yet, one also witness transformations in the conceptualization, scope, and practice of state power, the elaboration of complex institutions of civil society, and the emergence of a vibrant public sphere as Terry Eagleton investigates in his book on the ideology of aesthetics (1990, pp. 30-31).

In the first volume of his sentimental novel *Tristram Shandy*, published during 1759-67, the same period when Adam Smith wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and was speculating upon *The Wealth of Nations*, Laurence Sterne describes a village midwife, who, as

> she had all along trusted little to her own efforts, and a great deal to those of dame nature, —had acquired, in her way, no small degree of reputation in the world;—by which word world, need I in this place inform your worship, that I would be understood to mean no more of it, than a small circle described upon the circle of the great world, of four English miles diameter, or thereabouts, of which the cottage where the good old woman lived, is supposed to be the center. (Sterne 2004, p.7)

The additional proclamation of a provincial English parameter of four miles indicates a world beyond the local midwife's reputation, whose existence Sterne's readership was obliged to imagine and anticipate. The world was so obviously global for Sterne's readers that his message of irony of the provinciality of the midwife's reputation could be easily missed. This, indeed, was the world in which Adam Smith was writing. Sympathy offers us a window into the trans–subjective condition of affective 'mediality' at this period of proliferating mobility between the 'four *English* miles' and the '*world*' Sterne's readers must have taken for granted.

This increasing mobility is part of what Marshall McLuhan calls the 'new model[s] of perception' (1962, p.23) brought forth by crucial periods of adaptation during the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries when 'the initial shock gradually dissipates as the entire community absorbs the new habit of perception into all of its areas of work and association' (p.23). And this, for McLuhan, came '[w]ith the advent of the printed word' by which, 'the visual modalities of Western life increased beyond anything experienced in any previous society' (1962 p.23). The printed word, as a new technology, produces more information and can be disseminated over greater distances. Indeed, it is clear that the eighteenth century was what Susan Crawford aptly calls an 'information-conscious society' (cited in Ellison 2005, p.17) with its changes of reading habits, the construction of new systems and offices of information management. The words, images and representations of feelings that are carried is obviously instrumental to this process of popular consciousness adapting, to use Pocock's phrase, 'to a world of moving objects' (1985, p.221) and to an increasingly detached and mobile population.

With this in mind, I take sympathetic sentiment as Smith (1982) defines it as critical in an evolution of eighteenth-century management of information or 'information overload,' to use a phrase from Katherine Ellison's (2005) recent study on reading and information overload in early eighteenth-century literature. For Smith, sympathy is rather corporeal and physiological:

> Persons of delicate fibres and a weak constitution of body complain, that in looking on the sores and ulcers which are exposed by beggars in the streets, they are apt to feel an itching or uneasy sensation in the correspondent part of their own bodies. (Smith 1982, p.10)

Here the exterior appearance is easily–owing to a weaker constitution and *thereby* a strong sensibility–projected into the interior of another and thereby puts in danger the latter's physical health. The pleasures of seeing and feeling become, in effect, a

physiognomic metaphor for the mobile and polymorphous features of the society. 'Persons of delicate fibres and a weak constitution of body' (Smith 1982, p.10) have more chances of being exposed to specters of destitution and dearth, and being exposed to changes within from without, socially and economically.

Adam Smith's sympathetic figure (1982) is detached and casual, unbound by ritual, communal, or tribal loyalties. He is quite certain, in fact, that sympathy withers in primitive and 'barbarous' communities and thrives in 'civilized' society because it is only with man's release from the immediate exigencies of survival that he becomes free to extend and expect sympathy:

> Before we can feel much for others, we must in some measure be at ease ourselves. If our own misery pinches us very severely, we have no leisure to attend to that of our neighbour: and all savages are too much occupied with their own wants and necessities, to give much attention to those of another person. (Smith 1982, p.198)

The sentiment of sympathy becomes a factor of economy, which is interchangeable only in the moments of its *excess*. Furthermore, Smith writes in a more explicit tone: 'Our imagination which in pain and sorrow seems to be confined and cooped up within our own persons, in times of ease and prosperity expands itself to every thing around us' (Smith 1982, p.183). The terminology here resonates very well with that of a rising market economy and consumerism during the middle of the eighteenth century (Brewer 1990). By virtue of its opulence and its division of labor, a commodity economy would boost the supply of sympathy.

Indeed, for an eighteenth century reader, propriety and property were not easily distinguished. The long-standing association of honor and decorum with ancient and prescriptive rights in the land was being replaced by its much less aristocratic more bourgeoisie-like capitalistic counterpart. As historian Jean-Christophe

Agnew (1986, p.175) points out: 'In drama as in life, honor was increasingly understood to be a particularly stable and solid form of credit, whereas land was coming to be seen as an especially illiquid form of capital.' Sympathy, in some sense, joins in the first of this pair, as 'a particularly stable and solid form of credit' (Agnew 1986, p.175). Access to the agreement of sentiments was still hinging to *economic* matters, through physiological management as well as access to social capital such as honor or land.

If we turn to another passage from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*:

> … it is chiefly from [the] regard to the sentiments of mankind that we pursue riches and avoid poverty. For to what purpose is all the toil and bustle of this world? What is the end of avarice and ambition, of the pursuit of wealth, of power and preeminence? From whence…arises the emulation which runs through all the different ranks of men and what are the advantages which we propose by that great purpose of human life which we call better our condition? To be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency, and appreciation, are all the advantages which we can propose to derive from it. It is the vanity, not the ease or the pleasure, which interests us. But vanity is always founded upon the belief of our being the object of attention and approbation. (Smith 1982, p.50)

To be seen, to be sympathized with becomes a kind of competitive economy. Attention and sympathy are turned into 'a limited commodity for which isolated individuals competed' (Agnew 1986, p.181). Individuals are portrayed as driven by the fear of possible indifference and mortification. Attention and attentiveness become part of the visual economy of sympathy. 'Nothing is so mortifying as to be obliged to expose our distress to the view of the public, and to feel, that though our situation is open to the eyes of all mankind, no mortal conceives for us the half of what we suffer' as Smith (1982, p.60) writes a few pages later. Sympathy here joins honor, virtue,

and decorum to be part of a bottomless line of credit. It functions in an economy of scarcity rather than a natural distribution. Those blessed with 'ease and prosperity' (Smith 1982, p.183) are more sympathetically regarded by others. Their words, gestures, and actions are 'observed by all the world' (Smith 1982, p.51), in stark contrast to the poor, who come and go unnoticed. In the midst of a crowd, the pauper finds himself 'in the same obscurity as if shut up in his own hovel,' as Smith further suggests:

> The poor man … is ashamed of his poverty. He feels that it either places him out of the sight of mankind, or, that if they take notice of him, they have, however, scarce any fellow-feeling with the misery and distress which he suffers. He is mortified upon both accounts. (1982, p.51)

This shame economy of affective dearth (no attention, no fellow-feeling), this overriding compulsion to become or to remain 'the object of attention and approbation' (Smith 1982, p.50), serves as a goad to industry to that kind of 'human commerce' David Hume (1978, p.264) yearns for in order to be out of his solitude, which, for many others, means less philosophical contemplation than social obscurity or exile from an *honorable* class. It is exactly analogous to the 'propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another,' the abstract entity driving the competing individuals 'the butcher, the brewer, or the baker' (Smith 2000, p.14) in Smith's theory of an *economic* man and society in *The Wealth of Nations*. Both take as their goals to deal with the interconnections between 'globalizing influences on the one hand and personal [local] dispositions on the other' in the development of western modernity, to use Giddens (1991, p.1) again.

For Smith, sympathetic sentiment's correlation with an attentional and visual economy is set to exclude some individuals from the 'moralizing gaze of others' (Poovey 1995, p.33), those 'sunk

in obscurity and darkness,' as Smith (1982, p.51) says. 'His conduct is observed and attended to by nobody, and he is therefore very likely to neglect it himself, and to abandon himself to every sort of low prodigality and vice' (Smith 1982, p.134). Such 'low prodigality and vice' are definitely not among either aristocratic or bourgeois-like virtues or morality, as David Hume–one of Smith's mentors on sympathy–is so 'affrighted and confounded' (Hume 1978, p.264). The *natural* impulse to keep oneself from moral and visual oblivion, and mankind's 'dull insensibility to the afflictions of others' (Smith 1982, p.22) compels the sufferer to take the part of his spectators toward himself, since it was only by such measures that the sufferer could discover at what level he needs to cast the expression of his own feelings to win their sympathy. A mechanism of an internalized gaze is developed for the sake of an outward representation of self. Sympathy thereby obtained offers him 'his sole consolation,' and the sufferer could 'only hope to obtain [sympathy] by lowering his passion to that pitch' (Smith 1982, p.22) which his spectators find tolerable. Strategies of representing oneself should be tailored for those representations to be emotionally communicable and affectively decent. He has to 'flatten,' in Smith's words, 'the sharpness of its natural tone, in order to reduce it to harmony and concord with the emotions of those who are about him' (Smith 1982, p.22). Only certain kinds/degrees of emotions can be counted as evidence, as testimony, and the person in question is to be addressed with these enunciative/expressive/signifying rules in mind while representing an affective or emotional self. In order to reach that momentary imaginary inter-changeable transaction of situations, upon which sympathy is founded, the sufferer turns instead to a more deeply theatrical and collusive set of relations with his audience:

> As they [the audience / spectators] are continually placing themselves in his situation, thence conceiving

emotions similar to what he feels; so he is as constantly placing himself in theirs, and thence conceiving some degree of that coolness about his own fortune, with which he is sensible that they will view it. (Smith 1982, p.19)

In this mechanism of interchangeability and communication, what needs be reducible so as to be observable and thereby sympathized is that kind of 'strange fits of passion' to draw half a line from William Wordsworth's 'Lucy Pomes' for our purpose (Wordsworth 2008, p. 476), contagious and virus-like in the eighteenth century (as we mentioned above). Emotions should be tailored so as to enter an equilibrium, so as to be exchangeable, or to put it explicitly, to be marketable. In this realm of emotional production and communication, what is first at stake is not what is *in the true* or *in the private* (what the person in question really *feels.*), but what is *in the evidentiary* or what could be made *in the circulatory* for the sake of those spectators, from whose courtesy one obtains the benefit of a moral existence.

Writing on structural transformation of the public sphere as a category of bourgeois society, Jürgen Habermas (1989, p.30) explains rather cryptically that '[i]ncluded in the private realm was the authentic "public sphere," for it was a public sphere constituted by private people.' This dialectical dynamics between the public and the private is further elucidated by Clifford Siskin in his analysis of the social role of writing regarding the division between the public and the private. Siskin quotes Anne Dutton's defense of 'PRINTING any Thing written by a Woman' in 1743, more than a decade before the first publication of Smith's *Moral Sentiments*:

> […] communicating one's Mind in *Print*, is as *private*, with respect to particular *Persons*, as if one did it particularly unto every one by *himself* in ones *own House*. There is only this *Difference*: The one is communicating ones Mind by *Speech*, in ones *own* private House: The other is doing

> it by *Writing*, in the private house of *another* Person. Both
> are still *private*. (quoted in Siskin 1998, p.164)

For Siskin, it is print in Dutton's writing that 'overwrites the category of public-as-state, by instituting, within the private realm of society, a new kind of publicness–one that is accessed and thus produced in private terms.' (1998, p.164) In other words, print, as a technology and an art of transmission, enhances a world of moving objects, images and other means of representations, if we adapt Pocock's phrase (as quoted above). It would be technologically determinist to claim print as the incubator of social mobility. What is interesting, however, is the social increase of this 'new kind of publicness' that 'is accessed and thus produced in private terms' around the middle of the eighteenth century. Anne Dutton's functionalist acknowledgement of the difference between the oral (*speech*) and the tactile (*writing*), without substantiating the consequences brought by this difference, suggests her ignorance of the modality of impersonality, transparency, and mediated exchangeability created by the *social* and *public* properties of writing. Spontaneous communal speech and its audile mechanism begin to co-exist with an emergent mode of print communication and its visual mechanism. In Dutton's writing, one can even detect a syndrome of the technological transition from orality to literacy, to use a simplified model of the communication theory by Walter J. Ong (1982). The sense of immediacy ('as if one did it particularly unto every one by *himself* in ones *own House*') from which Anne Dutton tries to salvage a sense of security ('in ones *own* House,' thereby safe.) turns out to be exactly what writers must find ways to achieve as a memorable quality of writing owing to words' separation from their 'living present' (Ong 1982, p.81).

The world is becoming larger than that of the village midwife of Laurence Sterne. Habermas, in his influential study on this point,

describes the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century of commerce of communication and the way in which the press was a major factor in the emergence of the public sphere:

> The great trade cities became at the same time centers for the traffic in news; the organization of this traffic on a *continuous* basis became imperative to the degree to which the exchange of commodities and of securities became continuous. (Habermas 1989, p.16)

This sense of imperative traffic and commerce displays itself not only materially in the forms of actual commodities, flows of capital or securities, but also *immaterially*, the way the neutralizing strategy of *excessive* emotions works, for instance. This throws a significant historical light upon the theatrical and collusive set of relations between the sufferer and his spectators in Adam Smith's moral philosophy. The way Adam Smith, as a would-be political economist, designates emotions to be regulated, disciplined and transferred as evidences and testimonies for communicative sympathy correlates with these crucial periods of adaptation to an increasing commerce and mobility. This is also why David Hume, the skeptical philosopher of human understanding and nature, fixes on conversation as an antipode to 'that forelorn solitude' as mentioned above. For Hume, as Graham Burchell points out, conversation, a crucial term in the eighteenth century for illustrating 'the flow *across* those newly reconstituted fields' of the private individual exchanges and the public ones generated out of their multiplicity, is 'to describe the form ideally taken by the "commerce" of [the political culture] of opinion, the appropriate cultural form of exchanges between individuals of the "middling rank" immersed in "common life"' (Burchell 1991, p.129). This necessity of interchangeability (a necessity portrayed as a bourgeois-like virtue) between things, perceptions, feelings, spaces and words requires all parts involved to develop neutralized and well-

disciplined platforms for one another, whether in the forms of commodities, the visually demanding literacy (ability to read and write), or sympathy (ability to represent an emotional self to one's spectators).

Of course, labor is involved in translating different positionalities and making them *in the evidentiary* to the collective editorial 'we' that Adam Smith uses throughout his moral philosophy. More labor for some, less for others. This ability to liquidate suffering and pain to make emotions *transparent* and *translatable* enough to be exchangeable, analogous to the making of money as embodiment of exchange values of different commodities from different worlds, is rather theatrical and self-reflexive in the theatre of Smith's sympathy. Furthermore, it seems unevenly distributed and much less accessible, in Smith's system, to the poor in the midst of the crowd, the street beggar with sores and ulcers, and the 'fair sex':

> The reserve which the laws of society impose upon the fair sex, with regard to this weakness [i.e., passionate love], renders it more particularly distressful in them, and, upon that very account, more deeply interesting. We are charmed with the love of Phaedra, as it is expressed in the French tragedy of that name, notwithstanding all the extravagance and guilt which attend it. That very extravagance and guilt may be said, in some measure, to recommend it to us. Her fear, her shame, her remorse, her horror, her despair, become thereby more natural and interesting. (Smith 1982, p.33)

'Natural and interesting' here applies not to a set of proper emotions already tailored to circumstances, but to extravagant emotions such as Phaedra's fear, shame, remorse, horror, and despair 'rendered (and thereby appropriated) by the art of the dramatist', as Daniel M. Gross (2006, p.174) observes. Each person wanting to be materially rich or visibly individual has to work to become. a dramatist.

Here we can even detect a touch of what Michel de Certeau (1992, p.78) calls 'the ethnographic operation,' that epistemological-technical process through which the emotions of 'primitive' others become visually archivable, are brought into representations and translations, and are transcribed by social researchers or political economist of emotions. It is a hermeneutics of the emotionally other inscribed by and through certain forms of intelligibility, visuality and civility. What we have in Adam Smith's moral philosophy is not ethnographic writing *per se* as in the original de Certeau scheme. Nevertheless, the strategy remains the same. The editorial 'we' that Smith uses throughout *Moral Sentiments* is to 'invoke the presumptive authority of common experience, thereby denying or, again, dissembling the emotional isolation that lay at the heart of his system' (Agnew 1986, pp.185-86). The common experience offers as the site of exchange, nodal point of transference and translation. The imperative to become the common for the sake of visibility and interchangeability in a rising western modernity predicts what a Frankfurt school critic Herbert Marcuse captures aptly as 'one dimensional man' in his 1964 book as a critique of high capitalism. It remains categorically analogous to some other peculiar forms of modern abstractions variously designated as the *commodity*, *reification*, and the *fetish*. The increasing problems of the production and administration of this sort of abstract space, as I try to argue throughout, closely dovetail with the rise and dissemination of western modernity in the eighteenth century. In this light, one can see an Adam Smith trying to weave all social relations into versions of measurable exchange, and individuals as instantiations of the same abstract entity, either sympathy, the moralizing impartial spectator or the 'propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another' (Smith 2000, p.16). This Smith designates as a system corresponding

to 'to a world of moving objects,' to use Pocock's (1985, p.21) phrase again, as a strategy to deal with the informational mobility in an increasingly globalized world.

Information, in the centuries following the Middle Ages, largely between the 17th and 18th centuries, became an entity to be regarded objectively as 'something to be stored and processed' as Rafael Capurro (cited. in Ellison 2005, p.8), suggests in an etymological study. Katherine Ellison contextualizes Capurro's definition of information as 'a kind of abstract stuff present in the world, disconnected from the situations that it is *about*,' as 'physically and spatially associated with surface, depth, and meaninglessness' (Ellison 2005, p.9). In Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, the impartiality of the sympathetic spectator and how individuals are coordinated to opt for the moralizing gaze of virtue in a transitional period between agricultural and commercial remains historically coincident with and logically analogous to the overloading information age of the 18th century. The establishment of public post offices, the publication of books (the word 'publish' appears in Samuel Johnson's famous dictionary of 1755: 'To put forth a book into the world'–suggestive of the expansive nature of book publishing, which is at once an act of production and dissemination), the 'moving objects' (Pocock 1985, p.21), and the moving people, all allude to this overloading. It even 'began to flow out along the arteries of European commerce in search of its victims' as Peter Hulme (1992, p.229) writes. Antonio Damasio, a neuroscientist of emotion, muses that the history of civilization is, to some extent, 'the history of a persuasive effort to extend the best of "moral sentiments" to wider and wider circles of humanity' (cited in Gross 1992, p.170). It is no surprise that Adam Smith could be cited as an intellectual antecedent. For Smith, the man of middling rank can afford to cultivate those bourgeois

sensibilities–compassion first among them–that constitutes a civilized nation. Living in such a flux of mobility, one has to 'flatten' (to use Smith's word as quoted above), one has to manage to remain connected, to be wired into medial possibilities. Otherwise, one would be 'sunk in obscurity and darkness,' as Smith highlights (1982, p.51). Through this *flattening* or *abstracting* theatrically alternating embodiment and disembodiment, Smith's sympathetic subject creates an example of what Robert Mitchell and Phillip Thurtle examine as a creative process of information upon a theatrical body (Ellison 2005, p.7-9). And such a story of information flow concerning emotions is class and gender based, as I have demonstrated above above.

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