

Shakespeare and the Colonial Encounter in India in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines intersections between Shakespeare and the British Empire in India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, using as case studies four interpretive situations: the transmission of Shakespeare books in India in the eighteenth century, the editing of the plays for use in colonial classrooms in the early nineteenth century, the emergence of Shakespeare as an academic subject in Britain with the introduction of English language and literature in the Indian Civil Service Examination in 1855, and uses of Shakespeare in family readings in middle-class Bengali homes in the late nineteenth century. Departing from the existing scholarship on Shakespeare in India that typically treats the subject as a single linear process, I approach the engagement of the colonizer and the colonized with Shakespeare in the context of empire, stressing the importance of the interactive dimensions of the colonial encounter, between the so-called periphery and the metropole and between the colonizer and the colonized. The dissertation locates Shakespeare in a view of empire that emphasizes cross-current circulation of knowledge, culture and commodities produced in the colonial encounter. It is interested in the ways in which knowledge of Shakespeare was produced, transmitted and received in the context of empire through material practices of reading, ownership and editing and institutional practices of curricula, examination and pedagogy. It follows the travels of Shakespeare books across India, traverses the professional realm of competitive examinations in Britain, the pedagogical realm of curriculum and textbook production in India, male public spaces of the colonial classroom and feminized, private domestic spaces within homes. With its sustained focus on the imperial constitution of Shakespeare as an icon of Britishness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the dissertation goes beyond a narrow Eurocentric frame of reference prevalent in Shakespeare scholarship. It explores the production of Shakespeare as a British exemplar created as a result of the colonial encounter. At the same time, it explores the intersections between Shakespeare and colonial modernity and nationhood. In doing this, it modifies a weighty post-colonial critical framework that views Shakespeare in India as a unilateral hegemonic imposition. Emphasizing a model of co-optation, collaboration and contest, my dissertation draws attention to the internal hierarchies of class, gender and status within the analytic categories of the colonizer and the colonized, ultimately illuminating the multiple axes of colonial knowledge production.

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I. Introduction

This dissertation examines intersections between Shakespeare and the British Empire in India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, using four distinct areas of inquiry: the transmission of Shakespeare books in India in the context of a fast evolving empire in the eighteenth century, the editing of Shakespeare's plays in India in the early nineteenth century, the introduction of Shakespeare as a subject of examination in the Indian Civil Service Examination in 1855 and appropriations of Shakespeare plays by Western educated Indian middle-class in the mid nineteenth century. By interrogating these microhistories within a larger narrative of Shakespeare's after-life in the context of empire, the dissertation examines the ways in which the plays and the playwright informed colonial knowledge production. The study is as much about Shakespeare's reception and transmission in the context of empire as about the production of meaning of 'Shakespeare' in the colonial encounter, aiming to highlight and understand the neglected interconnections between the imperial metropole and the Indian colony within the central discourse of knowledge production.

As such, the study seeks to accomplish two main objectives— 1) to contest the Anglo-phone frame of reference that dominates Shakespeare studies by arguing that empire presents a determining context to Shakespeare's emergence as a British cultural icon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and 2) to probe and extend the existing questions around the production of knowledge in the colonial/imperial encounter¹ in postcolonial studies. Taken together, the four

¹ It is generally agreed that the eighteenth century marked a transition from the 'first' British empire—an empire of commerce and of the seas—to a 'second' British empire—an empire of conquest. See Nechtman, Tillman. *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth Century Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010, p. 8. 'Empire' as an analytical category encompasses an intricate interweaving of politics, history, geography, ideology, race and culture. See Gould, Marty. *Nineteenth Century Theatre and the Imperial Encounter*. New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 4.

chapters of the dissertation offer contextualized analysis of archival and empirically based evidence, showing that Shakespeare had diverse uses and receptions in the imperial encounter. They address questions such as: How was Shakespeare embodied in the colonial/ imperial encounter? Through what agencies, institutions and practices was Shakespeare produced and re-produced in the colonial/imperial encounter? How did Shakespeare intersect British and Indian nationalism?

Shakespeare studies have recently engendered lively debates surrounding the historicity of the playwright's emergence as a major cultural icon in the post Restoration era in response to particular cultural and historical situations. In this respect, Michael Dobson's *The Making of the National Bard: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*, chronicling how the playwright, subordinate to Jonson and Fletcher in 1660, became a national icon of cultural and literary supremacy in 1769, has been seminal². Dobson posits reception as culturally determined construction, demonstrating that Shakespeare has been successively recreated from an "artless rustic" to "the transcendent personification of a national idea" by the end of the eighteenth century that could be mobilized against French classicism during Anglo-French wars in the eighteenth century³. Dobson's study belongs to a paradigmatic shift in critical inquiry that interrogates the notion of an essential Shakespeare as a historical and cultural construction, emphasizing that the playwright has been appropriated by various groups to serve different purposes⁴.

² Dobson, Michael. *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1992.

³ Dobson, *The Making*, p 13-4.

⁴ See also Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theater, Criticism: 1730-1830*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1989; Taylor, Gary. *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History, from the Restoration to the Present*. New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989 and De Grazia, Margreta, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus*. Oxford UP, 1991.

Dobson suggests that “Shakespeare has been as normatively constitutive of British national identity as the drinking of afternoon tea,”⁵ arguing that in the eighteenth century the playwright’s name became linked with Britain’s national identity, functioning since then as an icon by which an essential Britishness has been disseminated. Shakespeare’s reception, Dobson’s study reminds us, is enmeshed in the production of nation and that British national identity since the eighteenth century has relied on a consensual acceptance of Shakespeare as a guarantor of cultural and national value.

Although Dobson opens up the constitutive power of culturally produced paradigms of interpretation for critical analysis, his frame of reference is narrowly Eurocentric. Linda Colley has taken Dobson to task for historical inaccuracy, contesting his claim that Garrick’s 1769 Jubilee celebrations marked Shakespeare’s apotheosis as the British cultural icon⁶. Colley asserts that Shakespeare’s consolidation as a British as opposed to an English icon was delayed till as late as the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century⁷. She argues that in the eighteenth century, conflicting regional, religious and ethnic loyalties within a newly constituted political nation were obstacles to any wide-scale recognition of Shakespeare as a British as opposed to an English icon and that the popularity and advocacy of the playwright remained largely confined among private individuals. Developing in fits and starts, Shakespeare’s fortunes as an icon of cultural nationalism was anything but secure before the early twentieth century. It was in the

⁵ Dobson, Michael. *The Making of the National Poet* p. 7

⁶ Colley, Linda. “Shakespeare and the Limits of National Culture.” University of London. Royal Holloway. 3rd March, 1998. Hayes Robinson Lecture Series No. 2.

⁷ In the existing Shakespeare scholarship, there is considerable slippage between Shakespeare as a British as opposed to an English icon in the late eighteenth century. Jean Marsden, for instance, claims that “In eighteenth century England, Shakespeare’s works were the literary emblems of the British character, denoting liberty, courage and a specifically British genius” but goes on to say immediately afterwards that “Shakespeare’s status as the English national poet reiterated this national character.” Marsden, Jean. “Daddy’s Girls: Shakespearean Daughters and Eighteenth Century Ideology” *Shakespeare Survey* 51 Ed. Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998: 17-26, p. 17.

context of state sponsorship of Shakespeare, in particular, the development of a standardized vernacular curriculum in British schools in the late nineteenth century, the advancement of print technology which made the plays widely and cheaply available, the development of modern communication systems such as the radio, and last but not least, Britain's expansive empire that Shakespeare became, Colley asserts, a symbol of Britain's cultural excellence. More than the 1769 Jubilee celebrations in Stratford, the power of Shakespeare's national status, Colley asserts, was visible during the tercentenary anniversary of the playwright's birth celebrated across the empire.

Colley's argument regarding Shakespeare's belated emergence as the icon of British cultural excellence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is in accordance with her claim in *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* that in the eighteenth century Britain, far from an ideologically cohesive nation, was a fraught political landscape where consensus about the constitution of the British nation was internally contradictory⁸. National identity, Colley asserts, is a function of the production of cultural homogeneity in the face of difference. The emergence of Britain's empire in South Asia and Africa enhanced efforts to consolidate Britishness. Empire added a dimension of racial difference to the effort to forge peoples with conflicting loyalties into a single nation, defined in relation to colonized ethnic communities, new geographies, religions, culture and civilization. Possession of a vast and alien empire encouraged the British to overlook their internal divisions, cultural splits, gaps in experience and sympathy among different regions, social classes, religious groupings and between the sexes and see themselves as distinct, special and superior people. "They [Britons] could," Colley writes, "contrast their law, their standard of living, their treatment of women, their political stability and above all their

⁸ Colley, Linda. *Briton: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992

collective power against societies that they only imperfectly understood but usually perceived as far less developed. Whatever their own individual ethnic background, Britons could join together vis-à-vis the empire and act out the flattering parts of heroic conqueror, humane judge, and civilizing agent.”⁹ Britain’s empire, in Colley’s view, embodied an essential quality of difference against which Britishness could emerge.

Britain’s new geopolitical importance in the late eighteenth century, additionally, had the effect of absorbing internal communities within Britain that might otherwise have objected to the rise of a hegemonic British identity. Colley asserts that shared access to imperial booty and the psychic benefits of an empire provided a cause in common to disparate peoples within the British Isles. Those who were themselves subaltern at home— Irish Catholics and Scottish Highlanders— played an important role in the exploration, conquest and government of the British Empire, disproportionate to their number at home, participating in the *British* national project of imperial conquest. Building off of Colley’s argument, Alok Yadav has shown that Britain’s new geopolitical eminence on the global stage as an empire in the late eighteenth century was crucial for the exaltation of English language literature to a position of centrality in the European republic of letters¹⁰. This involved a process of critical negotiation that provincialized regional literary cultures within the British Isles at the same time it promoted English language literature to metropolitan status. Yadav’s argument raises questions about how this process of critical negotiation affected Shakespeare’s reputation in the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, Yadav dwells only cursorily on the issue.

⁹ Colley, Linda. “Britishness and Otherness: An Argument” *The Journal of British Studies* 31.4 (1992): 309-29, p. 324-25.

¹⁰ Yadav, Alok. *Before the Empire of English: Literature, Provinciality, and Nationalism in Eighteenth Century Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004

While Colley and Yadav both call attention to the importance of empire in the national apotheosis of Shakespeare, they stop short of asserting the constitutive role of the colony in Shakespeare's emergence as a British cultural icon. Yadav's focus is firmly on the imperial metropole in understanding the cultural negotiations that led to the emergence of English language literature to its present day global pre-eminence. In this dissertation, I extend Colley's argument by highlighting the contribution of the Indian colony in the many negotiations that led to the construction of Shakespeare as a symbol of British cultural nationalism. Shakespeare received government patronage in the Indian colony long before he did so in the metropolitan homeland where the traditional universities remained institutionally oblivious to his merits as the 'universal genius' till the latter decades of the nineteenth century¹¹. It was in India in the early nineteenth century that Shakespeare emerged for the first time as an academic subject at the highest level of distinction which influenced his incorporation as a subject of examination in the Indian Civil Service Examination for Britain's ruling elite in India in 1855 which in turn influenced the beginning of Shakespeare studies at Oxford and Cambridge in the late nineteenth century.

The dissertation attempts to bring the metropole and the colony in the same analytical framework, highlighting Ann Stoler and Fred Cooper's claim that the metropole and the colony were formed through their mutual encounters¹². Recent writings on colonialism stress the contingency of the metropolitan and colonial relations. There is a general consensus that social, material and intellectual lives in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were profoundly

¹¹ At Oxford, the Merton Professorship was established in 1884 and university examination in English was instituted in 1893. At Cambridge, English belonged to the Board of Medieval and Modern Languages, founded in 1878 until the English tripos was devised in 1921. See Taylor, Gary. *Reinventing Shakespeare*. New York: Weidenfield, 1989. p. 194

¹² Stoler, Ann and Cooper, Frederick. "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda" *Tensions of Empire* Ed Cooper and Stoler, Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2003. p. 4.

shaped by its colonial entanglements¹³. How do we understand Shakespeare's role in the mutually constitutive projects of empire and nation-building? In what ways did Shakespeare intersect the formation of Britain's national identity in the context of its colonial and imperial enterprise in India?

In Shakespeare scholarship, studies emphasizing mutual encounters located in the colonies and in the metropole are rare. While accounts of 'peripheral' appropriations of Shakespeare have emerged as one of the most exciting fields of inquiry within Shakespeare scholarship, the conceptual framework enabling these discussions privileges a linear developmental model in which Shakespeare is seen to emanate from the 'home country' to foreign soils where the playwright and his plays are appropriated in forms and modes of representation unmediated by Western canonical tenets. In this respect, Dennis Kennedy's collection *Foreign Shakespeare* has been seminal as the first to make world-wide appropriations of Shakespeare an important subject of academic inquiry, drawing attention to transformations of meanings of the 'original' plays from being recast in performative modes in Asia radically different from traditions of performances in the Anglophone world¹⁴. Since the publication of Kennedy's book, a number of scholarly publications have broadened the scope of Shakespeare studies from its normative Western focus—*Shakespeare and Cultural Tradition*, Russell Brown's *New Sites for Shakespeare: Theatre, the Audience and Asia* have been particularly influential¹⁵.

¹³ For interchanges between Britain's imperial and national histories in the eighteenth century see Nechtman, Tillman, *Nabobs*. Nechtman, following Kathleen Wilson's argument that the history of England is in America and in Asia and that the history of Asia and America is also the history of England, argues that the 'local' and the 'global' are fused together. Nechtman, "Introduction" p. 4-5.

¹⁴ Kennedy, Dennis. *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance*. Cambridge [England]; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge UP, 1993.

¹⁵ Kishi, Tetsuo, Pringle, Roger, and Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions: The Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress, Tokyo, 1991*. Newark, N.J: London: U of Delaware; Associated UP, 1994. Brown, John Russell. *New Sites for Shakespeare: Theatre, the Audience, and Asia*. London; New York: Routledge, 1999.

This scholarship draws attention to the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ in Shakespeare studies, seeking to disentangle these analytical categories. Its contribution has heightened our awareness of locality as an integral part of Shakespeare’s works and that considerations of locality are crucial for our understanding of Shakespeare’s global after-life. Sonia Massai’s edited volume *World-wide Shakespeares* argues that “the field of Shakespeare Studies has been radically transformed by the emergence of significant world-wide localities, within which Shakespeare is made to signify anew” and that the other side of the coin, ‘global,’ is as much the product of specific, historically and culturally determined localities¹⁶. This body of scholarship resists the hierarchical dichotomy that sees metropolitan, mainstream Shakespeare to be superior to peripheral and foreign readings—literary, performative and critical. It emphasizes that Shakespeare’s after-life is not secondary, questions whether there is any position that is not local, and enhances our understanding of the fact that considerations of Shakespearean localities, the localities of critics and the localities of where Shakespeare’s works are important if we are to grasp the global phenomenon of Shakespeare¹⁷.

The most recent addition to this line of inquiry, *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace* edited by Alexander Huang and Charles Ross departs slightly from the linear, developmental conceptual framework of transmission and reception by conceiving of global travels of Shakespeare as multi-directional traffic, noting the ways in which stage and textual appropriations of Shakespeare have made their way from Asia to the West¹⁸. Huang and Ross attempt to connect Asian and Anglo-European modes of representation, emphasizing intercultural

¹⁶ Massai, S. *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*. London; New York: Routledge, 2005. p. 8 and 9.

¹⁷ See Huang, Alexander CY. “Shakespearean Localities” *Shakespeare Studies* 35. Ed Susan Zimmerman and Garrett Sullivan. Madison: Farleigh Dickinson UP, 2007. p. 186-204

¹⁸ Huang, Alexander C. Y., and Ross, Charles Stanley. *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue UP, 2009. p. 1

appropriations. Unfortunately, the editors do not explore the potential of this perspective fully beyond noting the impact of Asian cultures on the Western cultural register as in cases of Kenneth Branagh's *As You Like It* (2006) set in Japan, the incorporation of eastern spirituality in Thich Nah Hahn scene in Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000) and appropriations of Asian audio-visual idioms on stage and screen in the West. My dissertation seeks to develop from a historical perspective the area which Huang and Ross leave unexamined. It carries out localized archive-based research that focuses on the production, transmission and reception of knowledge about Shakespeare on the grounds of empire involving agents of colonial rule, individuals and indigenous social groups, revising in the process the dominant assumption that Shakespeare, 'made' in the West, arrived in the peripheries in a fully developed form ready for dissemination and appropriation.

The existing scholarship on Shakespeare in India has done little to challenge the central assumption of a linear perspective. In this scholarship, the production of Shakespeare as a British national icon precedes the empire in a simple chronological fashion. It is a commonplace that Shakespeare arrived in India in the baggage of empire as a finished artifact to serve as an aid to Britain's civilizing mission and has remained since then to serve a myriad of purposes. The imbrication of Shakespeare in a program of imperial domination has been forcefully asserted by Gauri Viswanathan in *Masks of Conquest*¹⁹. Viswanathan's emphasis is tangentially on Shakespeare and more broadly on the institutionalization of English studies in India but it has introduced a weighty conceptual framework that perceives the institutionalization of English literature to be embedded in the impulse of the colonial rulers to dominate and control.

Viswanathan's thesis goes beyond suggesting a mere complicity between English literature and imperialism. It argues that English literature emerged as a discipline in India, long before it

¹⁹ Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.

did in the West, out of the political imperative of colonial management. Apprehensive that to support the teaching of Christianity would provoke religious hostility among Indians, the colonial state invested English literature with responsibilities such as the inculcation of morality and character among Indians, represented as morally and intellectually deficient, inaugurating English literature as an academic subject. Drawing upon Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, Viswanathan argues that by introducing English literature the colonial rulers attempted to secure the consent of the ruled through intellectual and moral manipulation rather than through military control. In the long run, the imperial mission of educating and civilizing colonial subjects in the literature and thought of Britain served to strengthen Western cultural hegemony over native Indian culture. Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which had claimed that negative stereotypes assigned to Oriental cultures were part and parcel of imperial domination, enabled Viswanathan to employ several analytical categories such as dominant cultural constructions, racial prejudices, ruler and the ruled in her analysis of the disciplining power of English literary study in colonial India²⁰.

Since the publication of *Masks of Conquest*, it is no longer possible to think uncritically of categories such as 'humanism,' 'morality,' and 'wisdom' of 'universally transcendental texts'—qualities traditionally associated with Shakespeare's works – without being aware of these as socio-political constructs shaped by colonial imperatives. One can no longer celebrate Shakespeare, as an Indian critic Mulyil did in 1964, for his purportedly emancipatory value without being aware that the internalization of the ideology of Western racial and cultural supremacy by the Indian intelligentsia made possible British domination in India and that the interactions

²⁰ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1st ed. New York: Pantheon, 1978

between Shakespeare and India are deeply implicated in the contradictions of colonialism and hierarchical power relations between the colonizer and the colonized²¹.

Shakespeare's function as an icon of colonial oppression has been documented by various scholars. In "Different Shakespeares: The Colonial and Postcolonial India" Jyotsna Singh extends Viswanathan's argument concerning the English curriculum as a discourse shaped by socio-political imperatives²². She challenges the notion of a universal Shakespeare loved by all Indians as a colonial legacy. Singh claims that while the plays written in a foreign language have little relevance to the lives of a majority of Indian students who are made to read them, they continue to thrive in the post-independence curriculum because they serve the dominant bourgeois class in wielding social and political control over other classes through its monopoly over the Indian language. The myth of Shakespeare as the universal bard, Singh explains, reveals and perpetuates complicity between the indigenous and imperial power structures.

In "Multiple Mediations of 'Shakespeare'" Nandi Bhatia extends Viswanathan's study by looking at the promotion of Shakespeare in the colonial educational system²³. She looks at the ways in which Shakespeare was taught in schools and colleges—the emphasis on rote learning, Bhatia claims, ensured the production of a class of persons who fitted Macaulay's infamous ideal of the colonial subject—"Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." Harish Trivedi's "Shakespeare in India: Colonial Contexts" finds Shakespeare's position a political site where divergent viewpoints clashed. Trivedi charts the changing attitudes

²¹ Mulyil, G. "Why Shakespeare for Us?" *Shakespeare Came to India*. Ed. Narasimha, CD. Bombay: Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1964, p. 5-11.

²² Singh, Jyotsna. "Different Shakespeare: The Bard in Colonial and Postcolonial India." *Theatre Journal*. (December 1989): 445-58.

²³ Bhatia, Nandi. "Multiple Mediations of Shakespeare" *Acts of Authority/Acts of Resistance*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2004. p. 51-75

of Indian scholars to Shakespeare in different historical moments²⁴. He writes, “in the changed political climate after World War I and the advent of Gandhian nationalism, Shakespeare began to be represented by some Indians as almost an agent of colonial subjugation whom it was their patriotic duty to disparage and debunk.”²⁵ Trivedi’s analysis includes translations, adaptations and appropriations of Shakespeare in colonial India in various languages. He assigns Shakespeare’s status, popularity and dissemination to non-literary factors. Like Jyotsna Singh, Trivedi is attentive to access to privilege via knowledge of Shakespeare in post-independence India. “About 40% of the population,” Trivedi writes, “knows Hindi and only 2% knows English, but it is this minority which is the privileged, prosperous decision-making new ruling caste of the country. In order to get into the elite Indian Administrative Service (the post-independence successor of the Indian Civil Service) the young aspirants are expected to show high competence of English, and many opt to be examined in the related discipline of English literature as well.”²⁶ Present day academic scholarship and criticism of Shakespeare in India, Trivedi says, emulates Western models to the detriment of finding a distinctly original orientation to the study of Shakespeare.

While Viswanathan’s focus is on how English was pressed into serve in creating colonized subjects, Jyotsna Singh, Harish Trivedi and Nandi Bhatia extend Viswanathan’s formulation of the role of English studies by examining the ways in which colonialist constructions of Shakespeare have been resisted, transformed and appropriated by Indians. This scholarship emphasizes that Indians were not passive recipients of Shakespeare. Homi Bhaba’s theories of mimicry and hybridity have proved to be particularly useful in probing Indian responses to Shakespeare. Ania Loomba and Rustom Bharucha have attempted to contextualize Shakespeare

²⁴ Trivedi, Harish. “Shakespeare in India.” *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995. p. 10-28

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 14.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 20.

in a discourse on hybridity, viewing appropriations of Shakespeare in India as expressions of intercultural dialogue with colonial authority²⁷

A recent revisionist approach to postcolonial studies has endeavored to distance accounts of Shakespeare in India from post-structuralist theoretical frameworks and discourse analysis which are criticized for being reductive²⁸. This new trend of criticism privileges textual analysis over discourse analysis and intellectual possession of Shakespeare by Indians, often outside colonial oppression, shifting the focus of attention from a narrative of victimization that bolsters Viswanathan's argument in *Masks of Conquest. India's Shakespeare*, edited by Poonam Trivedi and David Bartholomeusz, reflects this trend²⁹. It aims to break out of the dominant binary of imperial coercion and subversive resistance in postcolonial criticism of Shakespeare in India and demonstrates a willingness to reconstruct, unapologetically, Indian love for Shakespeare. Sisir Kumar Das' essay "Shakespeare in Indian languages," for instance, argues that Shakespeare answered to a need for intellectual stimulus. Das writes that the English-educated class in colonial India, critical of its own literary heritage, undertook translation of Shakespeare in native languages to revitalize traditional literature by bringing in a new set of canons and models. The translations, Das claims, were as much an attempt to bridge the increasing gap within the Indian literary community as to bring in social reform. "It would be extravagant to claim," Das argues, "that Shakespeare translations were undertaken with the prime motivation of social reform but there is hardly any doubt that the new social morality that emerged in the nineteenth century through

²⁷ Loomba, Ania. *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Bharucha, Rustom. *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking Through Theater in an Age of Globalization*. London: Wesleyan UP, 2002. For Shakespearean pedagogy in India, see Bose, Amalendu. "The Teaching of Shakespeare in India" *Indian Literature* 9.2 (1966): 77-84.

²⁸ Frost, Christina Mangela. "30 Rupees for Shakespeare: A Consideration of Imperial Theater in India" *Modern Drama* 35.1 (1992): 90-100.

²⁹ Trivedi, Poonam and Dennis Bartholomeusz, ed. *India's Shakespeare: Translation: Interpretation and Performance*. Newark: U of Delaware, 2005

various social and religious reforms, aiming at changes in the caste hierarchy and gender relations derived sustenance from Shakespeare.” The tenor of Das’ argument evokes Mulyil’s with the difference that Das shares none of Mulyil’s uncritical reverence for Shakespeare.³⁰

India’s Shakespeare shows an enthusiasm for material records, for data and facts as the basis for an inquiry into Shakespeare’s influences in the life and culture of Indians. It seeks to establish an empirical base for research. Trivedi criticizes lack of research into sources in much of postcolonial writing on Shakespeare in India. The valorization of a theoretical over the textual leads to, Trivedi asserts, “a cavalier attitude, where no need is felt to consult or track down original sources—translations, recordings or production files.”³¹ Trivedi’s critique of postcolonial writings on Shakespeare in India for its tendency to cast Indian appropriations of Shakespeare into reductive binaries highlights a turn away from speculative theory to evidence-based inquiry in recent critical practices.

The revisionist approach has tended to valorize a model of co-optation, collaboration and transaction without denying the exploitative nature of colonial rule. The critical tendency here has been to write more balanced accounts of the colonial encounter, attentive to Indians and their practices, methodologically distanced from post-structuralist theoretical borrowings which have been criticized for distorting the nature of the colonial encounter into a totalizing, monolithic narrative of oppression³². In a parallel development, new archive-based research on colonial knowledge production has tended to move away from the binary tendencies of earlier generation

³⁰In recent years, there has been much criticism of the binarism model propounded by Said’s *Orientalism*. Loomba for instance argues that the binary perspective masks the hybrid nature of the colonial encounter and the postcolonial condition. Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism-Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 1998. See also Kapadia, Paramita. “Jatra Shakespeare: Indigenous Indian Theater and the Postcolonial Stage” *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage* Ed. Craig Dionne and Paramita Kapadia. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008, p. 91-103

³¹ Trivedi, Poonam “Introduction.” *India’s Shakespeare* p. 23.

³² See Frost, Christina Mangela. “30 Rupees for Shakespeare”

of postcolonial scholars by privileging analytical frameworks that allow more historically accurate understanding of the entanglements of colonialism that brought indigenous and colonial groups and individuals to work together within asymmetrical and exploitative power relationships³³.

At the heart of this revisionist approach in postcolonial studies is an interactionist model of empire which is distinguished from the exclusive concern on the part of an earlier generation of scholars such as Viswanathan, Nicholas Dirks and Bernard Cohn to analyze how Britain came to dominate other cultures. To highlight the interactionist model of empire is to foreground how the British Empire brought people of different cultures and backgrounds into contact. In Priya Joshi's vivid image, the "image of British empire in India is of two sides [British and Indians] is facing each other with their arms outstretched, each side taking, snatching, pilfering and plundering what and when it could, but also giving, exchanging and unevenly borrowing, fitfully and sporadically from the other."³⁴In Joshi's formulation, the exchange between two unequal sides in the colonial encounter in India is marked by contest and collaboration rather than unilateral domination, passive acceptance or resistance.

There is yet another way of thinking about empire, one that this dissertation posits: as mobile and multi-directional where goods, people and knowledge flowed from, back and across the colony and the metropole. The circulation model of empire enables one to locate the construction of Shakespeare in the interactions between the Indian colony and the imperial metropole. John Plotz employs the flow model in *Portable Property* to show the movement of goods across the British Empire in the Victorian period³⁵. While the circulation model of empire

³³ See Sengupta, Indra and Ali, Daud. "Introduction." *Knowledge Production, Pedagogy and Institutions in Colonial India*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 1-16.

³⁴ Joshi, Priya. *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture and the English Novel in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. p. 7.

³⁵ Plotz, John. *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton, UP, 2008

may seem to obscure metropolitan exploitation of the colonies, Plotz shows that mechanisms of domination were inscribed in the movement of people and goods that empire entailed. Portable property comprising the imperial apparatus, Plotz argues, enabled colonizing agents to overcome the challenge of remaining English while living in the colonial periphery. Among Victorian things on the move that comprised the imperial apparatus, Plotz identifies Shakespeare books as one of the material objects most dear to Victorians. Along with other beloved objects, Shakespeare books manifested the fantasy of a cultural identity outside national boundaries in a tangible material object form, serving as reassuring embodiments of ‘dear old England’ for nostalgic expatriates during their colonial domicile, operating as material sites of the national identity of the colonizers. In Plotz’s formulations, Shakespeare goods served a type of portable property – commodities in the market paradoxically endowed with sentimental values, serving at once as sites of economic and sentimental value.

While Plotz’s argument creates the expectation of an account of material Shakespeare books traveling across the globe with their human owners, he swerves from a consideration of the object world to the novel, discussing the concept of portability and their representation in realist novels from 1830 to 1870³⁶. Ultimately *Portable Property* is an analysis of the concept of portability in mid Victorian novels, and reading it we learn little about Shakespeare books as material objects in the colonial world in the hand of real travelers and expatriates. This, I believe, is a missed opportunity which my dissertation hopes to fill. Situating Shakespeare in the material culture of empire, this dissertation addresses and examines four interpretive situations: the transmission of material books across the empire in the eighteenth century; the editing of Shakespeare’s play in India in the first college poetry textbook in 1840; Shakespeare’s

³⁶ See Pettitt, Clare. Rev. of *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move*, by John Plotz *Victorian Studies* 51.4. (Summer 2009): 766-8.

incorporation in the Indian Civil Service in the imperial metropole in 1855 and the transmission of Lamb's *Tales* in the colony in the late nineteenth century in the context of Hindu women's education. My focus here is on how Shakespeare traversed out of the metropole and across the Indian subcontinent as books, busts and other material forms, the ways in which Shakespeare was edited for the Indian classroom, and how Shakespeare traversed back to the metropole where it became bound up with the emerging institution of English studies and questions of Britishness.

At present there is no single study that looks in a sustained manner at any of the four areas I have chosen for my inquiry. Material transmission of Shakespeare in India has remained overlooked in the existing scholarship on Shakespeare in India primarily because of difficulty of access to documentary sources. Thanks to generous funding from the University of Washington Graduate School and an Andrew Mellon Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council in support of research travel to archives in Britain and India, I have recovered original sources that have not been examined before. I have used unusual documentary sources such as probate inventories, textbooks, government publications and memoirs in tracing a nuanced story of cultural interaction between India and Britain mediated by appropriations of Shakespeare. My inquiry has led to surprising conclusions such as the fluctuating fortunes of Shakespeare books in India in the eighteenth century, the playwright's importance as an integral part of the mentality of Britain's officials in India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the perception that Shakespeare was perceived to be incompatible with Britain's civilizing mission in the early nineteenth century because of his unconventional moral attitudes, that Shakespeare took upon the role of the ancient European classics in producing morally fortified imperialists in 1855 with the introduction of English language and literature as a subject of examination for Indian Civil Service candidates and that Western educated Indian husbands read Lamb's *Tales* aloud to their

wives and womenfolk to modernize them which ultimately worked to reinforce normative gender roles. Resisting a totalizing view of Shakespeare's reception in the colonial/imperial encounter, the dissertation challenges the concept of coherence of colonial knowledge systems.

What does this dissertation contribute to the subject? It draws together disparate fields of studies— Shakespeare, postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, bibliography, feminist and material studies— to examine Shakespeare's role and place in the colonial/ imperial encounter. My purpose here is to build on the existing scholarship, to situate Shakespeare within the material culture of the colonizers and the colonized, within histories of education in the imperial center and in the colony, in practices of domesticity and pedagogy in order to explore details of relationships that have been either overlooked or not examined in a sustained way. The dissertation adopts a range of methods from literary analysis, postcolonial theory, bibliography and material culture with the aim of producing historically grounded analysis of Shakespeare's imbrication in metropolitan and colonial cultures. It is offered as a contribution to our understanding of the politics of knowledge and modes of cultural transmission and reproduction as well as domination.

Methodologically, I employ in-depth empirical inquiry from the conviction that sober scrutiny of evidence is crucial for producing the kind of scholarly debate that will advance our knowledge of Shakespeare in the colonial encounter. This is not, however, to repudiate theory. In *Shakespeare after Theory*, David Kastan seeks to incorporate the value of theory into a historicism strengthened by having learned the lessons of theory.

The great age of theory is over . . . but not because theory has been discredited; on the contrary, it is precisely because its claims have proven so compelling and productive If theory has convincingly demonstrated that meaning is not immanent but rather situational, or, put differently, that both reading and writing are not unmediated activities

but take place only and always in context and action, the specific situations, contexts and actions—that is, the actual historical circumstances of literary production and reception—cannot be merely gestured at but must be recovered and analyzed³⁷.

Theory's lesson has precisely been that 'evidence,' 'archive,' 'facts,' 'material,' 'historical' are rhetorical constructs rather than verifiable truths. Homi Bhaba has argued that history is nothing more than a text, a grand narrative that operates according to the rules of rhetoric and logic as other genres of Western writing. As such its significance is limited to the part it plays in the discursive field that the postcolonial critic seeks to dismantle rather than the contribution it makes to our knowledge about the nature of colonialism³⁸. In her essay on the Rani of Sirmur, Gayatri Spivak has written about the archive as a concoction, pointing out the methodological problems of reading for female historical subject from reading colonial records³⁹. Restoring the subject status of Indian women silenced in official records is deeply problematic, Spivak shows, because official records construct a fiction about India and the subject people that suited the purpose of government. The colonial archive is thus a place to read strategies of representation—rhetoric rather than real referent. Written over by colonial governance, "(c)ought in the cracks between the production of archives and indigenous patriarchy, today distanced by the waves of 'hegemonic feminism,'" Spivak argues, there is no "real Rani" to be found in colonial records⁴⁰. Spivak's analysis highlights the gulf between the representation figure of official records and the historical referent.

³⁷ Kastan, David. *Shakespeare after Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1999. p. 31-32. See Knapp, James and Pence, Jeffrey. "Between Thing and Theory, or the Reflective Turn" *Poetics Today* 24.4 (2003): 641-71 for a useful discussion of the critical trend of privileging the historical record as a corrective to the excesses and perceived unproductive reflexivity of structuralist and post-structuralist theories on modes of interpretation.

³⁸See Kennedy, Dane. "Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory". *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24 (1996): 345-63, p. 350.

³⁹ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" *History and Theory* 24.3 (1985): 247-72.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 271

The dissertation attempts to forge a middle way between the two trends of theoretical abstraction and an overzealous empirical pursuit. Critiquing Spivak's conclusion, Asha Varadharajan has usefully pointed out that even if the Rani cannot be presented whole and complete, there is some evidence of self-will in the brief glimpses we get of her in imperial texts, suggesting that she was not completely written out of existence by official records so that the project of reclaiming her subjectivity is not entirely doomed⁴¹. In another exciting engagement with the colonial archive, historian Durba Ghosh reconstructs inter-racial marriage in early colonial India suppressed in colonial records from absences, lacunas and slips in archival records⁴². Ghosh's analysis turns the absence of archival records into a consideration of the implications of their absence, in the process illuminating an important aspect of colonial racial politics. Taking my cue from Varadharajan, Ghosh and Kastan, I turn to archival records as the basis for my inquiry while keeping in mind the limitations of its traditional status in positivist historiography as stand-in for the past.

Chapter 1 "The Shakespeare Book in Eighteenth Century India" queries the fluctuating fortune of Shakespeare in private and institutional libraries. Standing at the intersection of book history, postcolonial studies and Shakespeare studies, the chapter explores the material practices of reading and consumption on the ground of a fast evolving empire in the eighteenth century. Through detailed discussions of probate inventories, newspaper advertisements and private memoirs, the chapter locates Shakespeare in the material spaces and practices of the home, camp and the institutional library, connecting Britain's waxing confidence in its native cultural tradition with the increasing popularity of Shakespeare books in private collections among the

⁴¹ Varadharajan, Asha. *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said and Spivak*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995. p. 100-6.

⁴² Ghosh, Durba. *Sex and the Family in Colonial Empire: The Making of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.

expatriate community in India. The chapter shows the myriad purposes Shakespeare books and busts served in the colony in the eighteenth century: as an integral component of British imperialism, home décor, sites of sociability, mechanisms for coping with diasporic stress and nostalgia and, lastly, as vanity props. It challenges the existing scholarship on Shakespeare in India by focusing on anonymous agents of empire rather than the colonial state and by shifting attention from the heyday of imperial power in the late nineteenth century to a neglected, earlier phase of British presence in India.

Chapter 2 “Editing Shakespeare for the Indian Classroom” analyzes two early poetry textbooks, *English Poetical Reader* and *Selections of British Poets*, both commissioned by the colonial government, to understand Shakespeare’s place and role in the early colonial curriculum. It locates the production of knowledge of Shakespeare as the sign of imperial culture in the institutionalized practice of editing, pedagogy and curriculum. The chapter argues that in the early nineteenth century perceived obscenity stood as an obstacle to Shakespeare’s incorporation in Britain’s civilizing mission, built around the imperative to purify and uplift morally deficient Indians. In contrast to British reticence towards Shakespeare, the Indian elite took the initiative before the Macauleyan reforms of 1835 to educate their sons in Shakespeare in the way the classics trained English gentlemen in the imperial center. In the first instance of the colonial government’s shaky endorsement of Shakespeare in the poetry textbook, *Selections*, the editor, David Lester Richardson, sought to persuade colonial officials about the compatibility of Shakespeare with Britain’s civilizing mission as much as he sought to persuade Indian students to accept Shakespeare as the world’s greatest poet. The chapter argues that published in the colonial periphery, *Selections* is an early instance of Shakespeare’s emergence as a symbol of a composite British cultural nationalism.

Chapter 3 “The Indian Civil Service and the Introduction of Shakespeare as an Academic Subject in Britain” examines the role of Shakespeare in the newly introduced (1855) English literature in the Indian Civil Service Examination which served as a screening examination for Britain’s overseas bureaucrats, held in the imperial metropole. The chapter uses an archived guidebook to understand the kind of knowledge of Shakespeare suitable candidates were expected to demonstrate in the examination and its influence on the future of Shakespeare studies. The inclusion of Shakespeare in the examination harnessed the playwright officially in empire-building. The examination elevated Shakespeare to the status of an ancient classical author and paved the way to his inclusion in the curriculum at Oxbridge. The chapter highlights that the inquiry into Shakespeare’s after-life, transmission and reception is intimately linked to the production of knowledge about Shakespeare.

Chapter 4 “Reading Shakespeare in the Antahpur [Women’s Quarter] in Nineteenth Century Colonial Bengal” examines appropriations of plays like *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Othello* by Indian middle-class husbands in the late nineteenth century in teaching their wives and womenfolk in the home-school wifely duties and the virtue of docility and politeness. Departing from the critical tradition that looks at Shakespeare as a colonial imposition, the chapter shows the collusion and contestation of the Western educated Indian middle-class with the British in claiming and redefining a new kind of domestic partner within a recently introduced concept of companionate marriage. The chapter focuses on the role of Indians in the diffusion of Shakespeare in the colony and the ways in which Shakespeare was adapted to pre-existing intellectual traditions and domestic practices in India. It recovers traces of transmission of Lamb’s *Tales* in Bengal in the mid nineteenth century, the material practices of reading at home in mid nineteenth century and speculates that Hindu husbands may have been reading

aloud this version of Shakespeare to the women in their household. The chapter locates family readings of Shakespeare in an Indian modernity that was created in the colony as a result of the encounter between the Western concept of domesticity brought by colonialism and India's own patriarchal traditions.

The chapters taken together, then, contribute to our understanding of colonial knowledge production as fractured, dialogically produced, open-ended and embedded in material practices as opposed to the coherent and hegemonic instrument of rule that was advocated by an earlier generation of postcolonial scholars interested in discourse analysis⁴³. My findings suggest a weakening of the binary between the colonizer and the colonized that has formed an important analytical framework for the scholarship on Shakespeare in India. Neither the colonizer nor the colonized formed a monolithic whole but consisted of internal divisions that competed and contradicted each other. The chapter "The Shakespeare Book in Eighteenth Century India" considers that Shakespeare was not considered as highly suitable reading matter for rank-and-file soldiers drawn from the working classes in Britain and Ireland serving in the East India Company in the early nineteenth century whereas the elite members of the expatriate community owned and read Shakespeare. The chapter "The Indian Civil Service Examination and the introduction of Shakespeare as an Academic Subject" shows that from 1855 onwards colonial administrators seeking entry into the highest rungs of the British bureaucracy in India were expected to demonstrate their proficiency in Shakespeare. The binary between the colonizer and the colonized is further blurred in the chapter "Reading Shakespeare in Women's Quarter in Nineteenth Century Bengal" that demonstrates the hierarchical structures of power rooted in the

⁴³ Here I draw upon Sengupta and Ali's formulation of a revisionist interpretation of colonial knowledge production in postcolonial studies. See Sengupta, Indra and Ali, Daud. "Introduction." *Knowledge Production, Pedagogy and Institutions in Colonial India*.

practice of family readings of Shakespeare in colonial homes. The view that emerges is that colonial knowledge cannot be seen as a monolithic and homogenous entity.

I. The Shakespeare Book in India in the Eighteenth Century

1. Introduction

In Samuel Foote's three act play *The Nabob* (performed on the Haymarket Theater in 1772) we encounter the eponymous villain Sir Matthew Mite, an erstwhile East India Company merchant, newly returned from India with a trail of destruction extending from Bengal to Britain. Upon his return to the homeland, Mite uses his ill-begotten fortune made in India to buy into the privileges and properties of the traditional elites. Foote's satire embodies anxieties about Britain's overseas enterprise in India and the threats it posed to traditional social-economic distinctions at home⁴⁴. Hailing from a humble background with a threadbare education received at a local charity school, Mite is desirous to enter elite spheres and establish his reputation as a man of taste and culture, so he buys bogus Latin manuscripts which he cannot tell are fake. He also patronizes the Antiquarian Society that has recently acquired dubious Shakespeare relics among other objects related to British history to promote 'knowledge' of Britain's past. Foote is here satirizing the threat to national prestige that ensues when an unlettered parvenu like Mite assumes cultural, political and social leadership. In the play, the merchant Thomas Oldham, who has accumulated his wealth slowly in contrast to Mite's over-night affluence, effectively counters the latter's maneuvers, becoming a new model of leadership for Britain's colonial enterprise in India – one who would discharge the task of empire nobly, hospitably and honorably in contrast to Mite's devious and corrupt tactics. Solinger argues that in enacting the defeat of Mite by Thomas Oldham, Foote's play celebrates the emergence of the gentleman imperialist, authorizing the colonial project as a moral mission⁴⁵. Foote implies that a true appreciation of Shakespeare as

⁴⁴ Singh, Jyotsna. *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: Discoveries of India in the Language of Colonialism*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996. p. 61-4.

⁴⁵Solinger, Jason D. *Becoming the Gentleman: British Literature and the Invention of Modern Masculinity, 1660-1815*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. p. 120

opposed to a 'vulgar' fad of accumulating Shakespearean relics would be inscribed on the mental and moral compass of gentlemen imperialists performing the tasks of empire.

The Nabob was written at a time when public interest in Britain in the East India Company's operations in India were at a peak surrounding investigations into the legality of actions of Company officials which stained the reputation of Britain's overseas enterprise in India. Foote's play stands at the cusp of a momentous transformation of Britain's colonial presence in India, from mercantile adventurism to imperialism, that intricate interweaving of politics, history, geography, ideology, economics, race and culture that constituted Britain as the ruling power in India⁴⁶. In colonial discourse, the image of a new tide of morally upright colonial servants supplanting the earlier generation of fortune hunters enriching themselves at the cost of a responsible government would prove to be an important ideological strategy in the hands of apologists for empire in making claims for a reformed government that functioned as a trustee for the benefit of colonized subjects⁴⁷. Joseph Sramek has recently suggested that claims of moral rectitude, contradicting evidence, were essential to the colonial government in the early nineteenth century seeking legitimacy for its presence in India⁴⁸. Foote's insistence on a new kind of Shakespeare-educated colonial servant would prove to be prophetic. Available evidence suggests that from 1780s onwards Britain's agents of empire were indeed avidly reading Shakespeare during their colonial domicile. Matthew Adams's excellent inquiry into book ownership by the expatriate community in India from 1780 to 1850 mines probate inventories to reveal that Shakespeare books rank consistently high among titles owned by the British in India

⁴⁶ See Gould, Marty. *Nineteenth Century Theatre and the Imperial Encounter*. New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 4.

⁴⁷ See Macaulay, Thomas Babington. *Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review*. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843. p 192.

⁴⁸ Sramek, Joseph. *Gender, Morality, and Race in Company India, 1765-1858*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

across the decades⁴⁹. While bibles, dictionaries in European and Indian languages and grammars dominate private collections from 1780 to 1850, the list of frequently counted titles reveals that except on two occasions, in 1780-82 and 1824-26 when Alexander Pope and Walter Scott's works prevail, Shakespeare books rank higher than all imaginative works/authors counted in inventories from 1780 to 1850. Among literary authors, if Shakespeare had any consistent rival in popularity in private collections, it was Pope, coming second to Shakespeare's popularity⁵⁰.

Questions about the nature of the literary culture of British colonizers in India has been an issue of abiding interest to literary scholars and historians alike because of the light it sheds on colonial mentality⁵¹. Jyotsna Singh, for instance, has argued that the British showed a strong enthusiasm for Shakespeare, evidenced by the playwright's robust presence on the commercial stage in Calcutta in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century⁵². When Singh evokes the connection between the British in India and performances of Shakespeare in the colony, she is implicitly engaged in recovering Shakespeare's role in informing the imperialist mentality that enforced a vast empire in the Indian subcontinent. The attempt to link Shakespeare's contribution to the imperialist mind is hardly recent; early in the twentieth century, the editors of the *Cambridge History of the British Empire (1929)*, J. Holland Rose and F.R. Salter, note that Shakespeare's plays filled young British minds with wanderlust, laying the foundations of Britain's expansive empire in India⁵³. Written when it was written, the editors celebrate empire

⁴⁹ Adams, Matthew. "Furnishing the Colonial Mind: Book Ownership in British India, 1780-1850" Conference paper. <http://www.ehs.org.uk/events/academic-papers-2006.html>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid; Vasunia, Phiroze. *The Classics and Colonial India*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013; Hagerman, Christopher. *Britain's Imperial Muse: The Classics and Britain's Indian Empire, 1784-1914*. , 2013

⁵² Singh, Jyotsna. "Different Shakespeares: The Bard in Colonial/Postcolonial India." *Theatre Journal* 41.4 (1989): 445-58.

⁵³ J Holland Rose and Salter, F. R. "The Spirit of Adventure" *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*. Ed J Holland Rose and F.R. Salter. Vol 1. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1929, p. 23.

and Shakespeare's 'wholesome' contribution in facilitating it; *The Tempest* is quoted to substantiate Shakespeare's contribution to the concept of a benevolent colonial authority.

Matthew Adams' statistical analysis offers a firmer ground than records of performances of Shakespeare's plays – and, needless to say, the Cambridge editors' speculative analysis— from where one can begin to understand Shakespeare's entanglement in Britain's imperial project in India. In arguing the colonial agent's enthusiasm for Shakespeare, Singh does not take into consideration the peripatetic life of the British in India. Books traveled with the British as the latter travelled from one post to another across the Indian subcontinent whereas theatrical performances well into the nineteenth century were confined within the major colonial cities. Singh erroneously assumes that the plays performed on the colonial stage were the stable, fixed printed plays that we know as Shakespeare's. There is ample evidence suggesting the contrary: as on the London stage, in the colony too, plays were adapted to suit the tastes of the audience, making it problematic to claim that the Shakespeare the agents of empire experienced on the colonial stage is the same we know today as Shakespeare⁵⁴. The travel writer Emma Roberts (1794-1840) notes that the largest draw for *Macbeth* and *Othello* on the Calcutta stage in the early nineteenth century was Indian males which makes one question any overly generalized claim about the colonizer's enthusiasm for Shakespeare productions on the stage⁵⁵. Accounts of

⁵⁴ Consider the following advertisement in a local newspaper from 1784: "We hear the Tragedy of "Hamlet" will be performed in the course of the next week; but the managers have thought proper to omit the farce of the "Mock Doctor." (Thursday November 11, 1784) In *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes of the Years 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1788 Showing the Political and Social Condition of the English in India*. Ed. W.S. Seton-Karr. London: Longman, 1864, p. 30

⁵⁵ "Parties of Hindostanee gentlemen, beautifully clad in white muslin, and should the weather be cold, enveloped in Cashmeres, which would make the heart of a Parisian lady swell with envy, take their places in the boxes of the Chowringhee theatre, sitting in the first row, and as near the stage as possible. They prefer tragedy to comedy; and when the treasury is very low, and a full attendance of some consequence, the manager, consulting rather the interest of the house than the talents of the actors, announces the representation of *Macbeth* or *Othello*, which is sure to crowd the benches with Asiatic spectators." Roberts, Emma. *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan with Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society*. Volume 2. London: Allen and Co, 1837. p. 153.

book ownership and reading offer the most reliable source of documentary evidence for us to gauge the colonial agent's engagement with Shakespeare.

Surprisingly little is known about material transmission of Shakespeare in colonial India. In light of the transcontinental crossing of people and goods that empire entailed, it is expected that Shakespeare books would cross the seas and find their way into personal and institutional collections in colonial India. But what documentary sources are available that help us determine the precise nature of colonial society's material engagement with Shakespeare? Thanks to postcolonial criticism, we are all too well aware of the political nature of printed books in the colonial encounter. Introduced in India by Europeans, printed books were a potent symbol of Western rationality and modernity and implicated in imperial domination⁵⁶. In early nineteenth century Calcutta, the new administrative and commercial center of the emerging empire, it was common to hang in public buildings full-length portraits of high-ranking British personnels in official robes featured with books in hand, complete with a handful of awe-struck Indians in the margin gazing at the personnel in the center with expressions of admiration and reverence⁵⁷. This public art, enacting the drama of a responsible government with images of philosopher-kings at the helm of Indian affairs, bears testament to the centrality of printed books in the colonial discourse of 'superior' British culture saving 'backward' Indians from corruption and ignorance. Postcolonial criticism of Shakespeare has taught us much about political uses of

⁵⁶ See for instance Grant, Charles. "On the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, Particularly with Respect to Morals, and on the Means of Improving It." Mahmood, Syed. *A History of English Education in India : Its Rise, Development, Progress, Present Condition, and Prospects Being a Narrative of the Various Phases of Educational Policy and Measures Adopted under the British Rule from Its Beginning to the Present Period, 1781 to 1893, Comprising Extracts from Parliamentary Papers, Official Reports, Authoritative Despatches, Minutes and Writings of Statesmen, Resolutions of the Government*. Delhi, India: 1981, p. 12. Bhaba, Homi. "Signs Taken for Wonder: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817." *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985): 144-65

⁵⁷ "Sir John Anstruther, Bart" (Thursday June 26, 1806) In *Selections from Calcutta Gazette of the Years 1806 to 1815 Inclusive*. Vol 4. Ed. Hugh David Sanderman. Calcutta: Office of Superintendent Government Printing, 1868. p. 164.

Shakespeare by British administrators in India as an instrument of ideological domination that worked in tandem with the political and economic conquest of India. We do not, however, know, except in a few fragmentary ways, what those responsible for the imperial mission of educating and civilizing colonial subjects were actually reading. It is a commonplace of postcolonial criticism that more than any other author Shakespeare was made to carry the burden of Britain's civilizing mission, constituting a form of "epistemological violence," as Nicholas Dirks describes it, waged by the colonial state against colonized subjects that served to legitimize British rule⁵⁸. The emphasis on discourse analysis in postcolonial criticism has, however, tended to hollow out the materiality of printed books to the effect that we know little about the transmission of Shakespeare books in colonial India⁵⁹.

Recent revisionist approaches to postcolonial criticism have tended to distance the narrative of Shakespeare in India from discourse analysis. Without denying the exploitative nature of the colonial enterprise, the new trend of critical inquiry has tended to shift scholarly attention away from the oppressive institutional structure of the British Empire in India to an interactionist model of empire, understood in terms of a process that brought people of different cultures and backgrounds into contact. The revisionist approach emphasizes in particular the collaborative nature of colonial knowledge production instead of a unilateral imperial coercive imposition. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz's collected edition, *India's Shakespeare*, is at the forefront of this critical trend⁶⁰. It draws attention to the appropriation of Shakespeare by Indians, emphasizing a complicated 'love affair' with Shakespeare which Trivedi and

⁵⁸ Singh, Jyotsna. "Different Shakespeares"; Quoted in Cohn, Bernard. *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996. p. xii.

⁵⁹ See for instance Bhaba, Homi. "Signs Taken for Wonder: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817"

⁶⁰ Trivedi, Poonam, and Bartholomeusz, Dennis. *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, and Performance*. Newark: U of Delaware, 2005.

Bartholomeusz refuse to explain either in terms of colonial domination or as cultural and political acquiescence on the part of Indians. Privileging textual analysis over ideological criticism, the new trend of inquiry has emphasized the intellectual valuation of Shakespeare in India – the ways in which Indians have made Shakespeare their own—, adding immensely to the earlier critical emphasis on colonial political uses of Shakespeare in India. For all the great deal it has taught us about the uses of Shakespeare in colonial India, the available scholarship on Shakespeare in India however, makes us lose sight of the fact that the Shakespeare that circulated in India was also a *thing*.

The fact is that Shakespeare in India is as material as political and intellectual, though one would not think so reading the available scholarship. My purpose in this chapter is to attend to the stuff of the matter, as it were. Aiming to recover the marks of materiality of uses of Shakespeare in India that have so far received a near total lack of scholarly attention, I revisit here the question posed by Jyotsna Singh – what was the nature of colonial society’s engagement with Shakespeare?⁶¹ However, I take the unexplored route of examining material traces of Shakespeare in colonial India. There is a need to recover the material ways through which Shakespeare was experienced in the colony, to rethink the grand symbol of British moral and cultural superiority through material uses, to connect the larger mechanisms of colonial knowledge production and consumption with the small-scale, everyday practices on the ground of the colony⁶². There is also a concomitant need to connect the narrative of uses of Shakespeare in India with that in the Anglophone world so that we can better understand the similarities and differences and the overall processes in which Shakespeare has been experienced across the

⁶¹ Singh, Jyotsna “Different Shakespeares” p. 446

⁶²See Jasanoff, Maya. “Collectors of Empire: Objects, Conquests and Imperial Self-Fashioning” *Past and Present* 184 (2004):109-35 for a similar argument regarding collection habits of colonial agents in India.

world as a whole within expanding global networks of mobility, diaspora, commerce and empire. Building upon the contribution of the available scholarship that has drawn our attention to the political and intellectual aspects of uses of Shakespeare books in India during British rule, I foreground here Shakespeare's status as an object rather than a text or discourse, supplementing the available knowledge of Shakespeare in India and rounding it out in important ways.

Here one may mention the recent book length study *Portable Property* by John Plotz that examines Victorian things on the move⁶³. Sitting squarely in recent critical attempts to think about empire in terms of a flow of people and commodities⁶⁴, in Plotz's analysis, mechanisms of domination are inscribed in the movement of people and goods that empire entailed. Departing from Viswanathan's influential study on the diffusion of English literature among Indians, Plotz demands a shift of attention to "English efforts to sequester the pleasures and powers of English literature and nationalize them, to make access to them as restricted as membership in Anglo-Indian clubs."⁶⁵ Portable property, Plotz argues, enabled the dispersed populace to overcome the challenge of remaining English while living overseas. Plotz's concern is to examine the value ascribed to material objects in the imperial apparatus. He identifies Shakespeare books as one of the things most dear to Victorians; among other beloved objects, Plotz argues, Shakespeare books manifested the fantasy of a cultural identity outside national boundaries in a tangible material object form, serving as reassuring embodiments of 'dear old England' for nostalgic expatriates during their colonial domicile. Shakespeare books are thus a type of portable property

⁶³ Plotz, John. *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton, UP, 2008

⁶⁴ See Freedgood, Elaine. *Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*. Chicago: U of Chicago, P, 2006; Breen, Timothy. "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776" *Journal of British Studies* 25.4 (1986): 467-99 for a similar understanding of empire.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 18; Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. Delh ; New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

which, Plotz explains, are commodities in the market paradoxically endowed with sentimental values, serving at once as sites of economic and sentimental value. In Plotz's critical estimation, portable properties bridge the gap between Marxian notion of the commodity and Marcel Mauss's notion of gift, functioning as reminders of Englishness to Victorians living in the colonial periphery.

Plotz's formulation of portable property derives from an admirably wide range of theoretical sources from anthropology to recent musings on thing-ness in literary studies, from Annette Weiner's theory of inalienable possession, to Appadurai's influential argument about the social lives of things, to Bill Brown's account of animate things⁶⁶. For all it says about the 'in-between-ness' of portable property operating at the same time as commodities and heirlooms, *Portable Property* says little about Shakespeare books as material objects in the colonial world. Plotz's argument creates the expectation of an account of material Shakespeare books traveling across the globe with their human owners. However, he swerves from a consideration of the object world to the novel, discussing the concept of portability and their representation in realist novels from 1830 to 1870⁶⁷. Ultimately *Portable Property* is an analysis of the concept of portability in mid Victorian novels, and reading it we learn little about Shakespeare books as material objects in the colonial world in the hand of real travelers and expatriates. This, I believe, is a missed opportunity that my chapter hopes to fill.

To some extent, the dearth of scholarly examination of material transmission of Shakespeare in India is explained by a severe scarcity of original documents. Facing a paucity of

⁶⁶ Weiner, Annette B. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-while-giving*. Berkeley: U of California, 1992; Appadurai, Arjun, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value" *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Ed. Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge UP, 1986. p. 3-63; Brown, Bill. "Thing Theory" *Critical Inquiry* 28.1 (2001).

⁶⁷ See Pettitt, Clare. Rev. of *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move*, by John Plotz *Victorian Studies* 51.4. (Summer 2009): 766-8

original sources, historians have fallen back on surviving probate inventories to reconstruct material life in colonial India. Extraordinarily high rates of death due to disease and war among the diasporic community in the Indian colony, fragmented from their families in the metropolitan homeland, resulted in the administrative convention of selling off the personal and household goods of the deceased at public auctions⁶⁸. The inventories of assets that were created on the occasion serve as one of the most illuminating sources of information available on material life in colonial India. Probate inventories serve as Matthew Adams' main original sources in his analysis of book ownership at the turn of the nineteenth century for the information they provide about the reading habits of the expatriate community at the turn of the nineteenth century. From the late eighteenth century with the transformation of the East India Company's political power in the Indian subcontinent, a greater number of British came to India, resulting in a relative abundance of a variety of sources such as diaries, letters, travel and fictional writings etc. For the early years of British presence in in India, probate inventories serve as one of the most important available documentary sources bearing evidence of colonial material culture.

In this chapter, I turn to the eighteenth century in examining material traces of Shakespeare in India. Adams's study, while extremely useful, does not establish what the British in India were reading before the 1780s. The traditional emphasis on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in narratives of the imperial encounter has resulted in the relegation of the eighteenth century to a shadowy, little known terrain. And yet the eighteenth century is a significant period of British colonial presence in India. During this century, the East India Company emerged from the status of interlopers among other interlopers—Dutch, French and Portuguese—to imperial rulers invested in territorial administration and collection of revenues.

⁶⁸ Finn, Margot, "Colonial Gifts: Family Politics and the Exchange of Goods in British India, C 1780-1820." *Modern Asian Studies* 40.1 (2006): 203-31.

The century also witnessed a major transition of English language and literature from a position of marginality and secondariness to metropolitan centrality in the European republic of letters, dominated hitherto by Latin and French language and literature⁶⁹.

Parallel to the dramatic transformation of British presence in India, the eighteenth century was transformative of Shakespeare's popularity and reputation in the metropole. In the 1730s, Shakespeare achieved an unprecedented prominence in the repertoire of London theatres, and his importance spilled out of the playhouse. A statue memorializing the 'bard' was installed in the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey in 1741, the plays were appropriated and rewritten by partisan groups during the fierce political conflicts of Queen Anne's reign (1702-14) and during Robert Walpole's premiership (c. 1722-42). In the latter decades of the eighteenth century, domestic factional politics gave way to a nationalist cult surrounding Shakespeare. In the process, the playwright's reputation evolved from the status of an archaic provincial poet to that of a literary demi-god, national saint and cultural icon⁷⁰. The event that gave particular publicity to Shakespeare in the eighteenth century was Garrick's Jubilee celebrations of 1769 which, according to Dobson, Bate and others, marked his apotheosis as the national poet. Additionally, it inaugurated an obsession with things and places associated with Shakespeare's life. By the end of the eighteenth century, Shakespeare was available in the market as a wide range of products and services—illustrated books, mementos, prints, busts—portable national culture that defined Englishness.

The glorification of Shakespeare as a distinctively English literary exemplar in the late eighteenth century took place within an imperial matrix extending beyond Anglo-French rivalry.

⁶⁹ Yadav, Alok. *Before the Empire of English: Literature, Provinciality, and Nationalism in Eighteenth-century Britain*.

⁷⁰ Dobson, Michael, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*.

Oxford: Clarendon, 1992. Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism, 1730—1830*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.

Linda Colley has argued that it was in the context of empire that Shakespeare first emerged as a *British* national icon, overcoming his association with a narrower English cultural and regional identity⁷¹. Just as Britain's enhanced geopolitical importance on the world stage in the late eighteenth century served as an impetus for a reassessment of Britain's literary achievement in the eyes of the British themselves, it also ensured a respectful audience from continental Europeans⁷². In 1841, Carlyle could confidently state that Shakespeare was "the chief of all poets hitherto, the greatest intellect in our recorded world"⁷³ without any trace of the embarrassment the plays evoked in English literate spheres in the early eighteenth century by their departure from neoclassical decorum and conventions of politeness⁷⁴. Shakespeare, according to Carlyle, was the ideological glue of empire holding together English men and women dispersed all over the globe by empire.

Already in the 1820s, decades before Carlyle's formulation, the British employees of the East India Company serving in India were exchanging copies of Shakespeare in gestures of mutual affective bonds that also reinforced shared cultural tradition in the context of diasporic dislocation⁷⁵. A Shakespeare book, eliciting memory and patriotic pride, was the exemplary gift that could be given to a nostalgic Englishman on exile, or so R.G. Hobbes notes in his *Reminiscences*, recalling the gift of a copy of Shakespeare he received while serving as a soldier in the East India Company in the early nineteenth century⁷⁶. Shakespeare's exaltation as the

⁷¹ Colley, Linda. "Shakespeare and the Limits of National Culture." University of London. Royal Holloway. 3rd March, 1998. Hayes Robinson Lecture Series No. 2.

<https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/history/documents/pdf/events/hrcolley.pdf>

⁷² As Colley notes, Goethe and Heine in Germany, Hugo and Berlioz in France gave Shakespeare a European-wide currency which also catered to British complacency.

⁷³ Carlyle, Thomas. "The Hero as Poet" *Thomas Carlyle on Shakespeare* Vol 1. London: De La More Press, 1904, p 9.

⁷⁴ Kramnick, Jonathan. "The Making of the English Canon." *PMLA* 112.5 (1997): 1087-1181.

⁷⁵ See Finn, Margot "Colonial Gifts" for exchange of books among elite officials of the East India Company in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. qazza

⁷⁶ Hobbes, R.G. *Reminiscences of Seventy Years' of Life, Travel and Adventure; Military and Civil; Scientific and Literary: Soldiering in India*. London: Elliot Stock, 1893. p. 184.

embodiment of Britishness, a place-holder for ‘home’ left behind, evoking nostalgic memories in expatriates threatened by loss of identity during their colonial domicile⁷⁷ is known to us as a commonly repeated anecdote. But what value was ascribed to Shakespeare in the eighteenth century when his status was yet to harden into a triumphant symbol of cultural nationalism and colonial superiority? Who owned and read Shakespeare in India in the eighteenth century and under what material circumstances? Investigating documentary evidence of Shakespeare book in colonial India presents a splendid opportunity to examine the playwright’s changing status in the cultural property portaged from Britain to the colonial periphery as the drama of Britain’s acquisition of imperial stature unfolded in the colonial frontier. The chapter reveals the changing meaning of ‘Shakespeare’ as the British in India came to locate their national and imperial identities around the material and intellectual possession of the playwright over the eighteenth century. I use probate inventories, rare surviving library catalogues, diaries and other kinds of original sources to recover not only what is lost but to understand the pre-history of Shakespeare’s emergence in India in the nineteenth century as an icon of British cultural superiority and sign of imperial rule.

Probate inventories as sources for documentary evidence are not without their share of problems and shortcomings. As Adams point out, only elite members of the expatriate community had sufficiently large assets to warrant public auctions. Probate inventories are thus necessarily records of the material lives of the wealthy and important members of the community. There is also a problem with how assets are recorded in inventories by compilers. In the eighteenth century, books were luxury items in the homeland and more so in the colony

⁷⁷ See Metcalf, Thomas. *Ideologies of the Raj*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 1994. p. 178 for perceived threats to British identity during colonial domicile.

because of their rarity and were likely to be listed in inventories⁷⁸. However, one runs into difficulties in tracking down a specific author such as Shakespeare as inventories created for auction sale were not likely to list individual titles unless collecting was considerable and items were costly and prestigious. In these situations, a general rubric or catch-all phrase such as “a small parcel of books” is more common. A single volume of a play by Shakespeare in unimpressive binding with a small economic value attached was not likely to be considered worthy of record. If Shakespeare’s name is at all recorded in inventories, it is frequently as ‘sets’ without further details about publication, editor, size, volume etc. Moreover, Shakespeare’s relative anonymity in the early eighteenth century would mean that compilers were unlikely to accord importance to books bearing his name. On the other hand, the increased popularity of Shakespeare in the late eighteenth century, following in particular Garrick’s much publicized Jubilee celebrations in 1769, is likely to have affected the listing of Shakespeare titles in inventories in the latter half of the century⁷⁹. Even if the archive is partial, incomplete and provisional, it does offer some precious scraps of information that allow us to present new evidence about the ownership of Shakespeare and circumstances in which they were read in early colonial India while examining the questions they raise. Supplementing probate inventories with other kinds of records such as rare library catalogues, lists of books bequeathed to churches or libraries help us arrive at an understanding of Shakespeare’s material transmission in colonial India and the values attached to them in the early colonial regime.

⁷⁸ Raven, James. “Debating Bibliomania and the Collection of Books in the Eighteenth Century.” *Library & Information History* 29.3 (2013): 196-209.

⁷⁹ Jennifer Mylander notes similar obstacles in using probate records to determine Shakespeare’s readership in colonial America. See Mylander, Jennifer, “Instruction and English Refinement in America: Shakespeare, Antitheatricality, and Early Modern Reading” *Shakespearean Educations*. Ed. Coppelia Kahn, Heather Nathans and Mimi Godfrey. Newark: U of Delaware P, p. 33-53.

2. Fort Saint George Library in Madras, 1729

The earliest record of a Shakespeare book in India that I have been able to locate is in the catalogue of the library of Fort Saint George in Madras, prepared in 1729⁸⁰. The East India Company had a long tradition of providing reading materials for its employees, the concern being the spiritual welfare of the residents within its fortified settlements, sending out large supplies of morally improving books⁸¹. These books were placed in the care of the resident chaplain who along with his religious duties monitored the behavior of the employees of the Company, moderated moral transgressions such as overspending, gambling and use of profane languages, and supervised the education of children in the settlements. In the absence of circulating libraries and book clubs in the early eighteenth century, the Company libraries, operating as lending libraries, would have been of great importance in supplying reading material to the residents of the settlements⁸².

Shakespeare books may have occurred in more East India Company libraries than we are aware of but at least in one instance, the library of Fort Saint George in Madras, the collection of books included for certainty a copy of Shakespeare's plays. The record of a Shakespeare book in this library's collection has survived because it was a costly collection and the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London insisted on the preparation of a detailed catalogue, which was furnished in 1729, to prevent loss of books through non-return, theft, damage and neglect⁸³. The concern of the Company Directors in London to preserve the library collection suggests the value of books in early colonial India—not only as conveyors of thought but also as precious

⁸⁰ India Office Records: Home Miscellaneous Series CCLX, 1-84.

⁸¹ Murphy, Sharon. "Imperial Reading? The East India Company's Lending Libraries for Soldiers, c 1819-1834." *Book History* 12 (2009): 74-99

⁸² Shaw, Graham. "The British Book in India." *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Vol. 5, 1695-1830*. Ed. Michael Suarez and Michael Turner. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009, p. 560-576.

⁸³ Love, H.D. *Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640-1800*. London: J. Murray, 1913, p. 150.

material objects⁸⁴. Shortly before the preparation of the catalogue, the value of the theological books in the library's collection, the collection's main strength, was estimated at £438 6s, a considerable sum for those days, which may have prompted the Directors to instigate the preparation of a catalogue⁸⁵. The scraps of information that have survived from various other settlement libraries suggest that the main concern of these libraries was to provide serious and solemn theological works⁸⁶, but the catalogue of the library of Fort Saint George shows that the collection was inclusive, accommodating light, past time reading, even though these were small in number⁸⁷. Shakespeare belonged to this latter category.

Fort Saint George was one of the most flourishing settlements of the British in India before Calcutta emerged as the new metropolis of the expanding empire in the late eighteenth century. Its prosperity is reflected in the library's collection—an impressive number of 1,235 titles which seems even more astonishing considering the uncertain and insecure future of the settlement amidst raids from rival powers. In the mid-eighteenth century, Fort Saint George was

⁸⁴ The Court of Directors ordered that “the said Books (such at least as are of value) be put up in close Presses to keep them from Dust and Vermine, and that none of them be lent or carried out of the library without the consent of both Ministers, if two shall be on the place; and the Books so carried out shall be entered in a Book kept for that purpose, inserting the day and year when, and the Person to whom it is lent on one side of the Folio, and on other the day and the Year when returned. And Wee order our Ministers to sort the said Books in proper Classes and to take a Catalogue of them to be kept in the Library of which they shall deliver a Copy to our President, and send a Copy home to us. And Wee desire our President to order two of our Servants, together with our Ministers, to examine the Books by the Catalogue once a Year....” Qtd in Love, *Vestiges*, p. 150.

⁸⁵ Love, *Vestiges*, p. 83.

⁸⁶ Kabir, Abulfazl, “English Libraries in Eighteenth Century Bengal” *The Journal of Library History* 14.4 (1979): 436-56.

⁸⁷ As Graham Shaw notes, most of the books were Christian works, mainly English sermons, but the collection also included classical authors, utilitarian works on accounting, surveying, medicine, elocution and other practical subjects. Shaw, Graham, “The British Book in India,” p. 563. Approximately half the total number of titles were in English, with Greek and Latin making up another one third, and the rest were titles in French, German, Dutch, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Tamil and Telegu. ‘Literature’ as a sharply defined category of writing possessing an aesthetic character and value did not take hold before the end of the eighteenth century. The category we call literature was considered frivolous and fictitious with little claim to truth before the eighteenth century. See Armitage, David. “Literature and Empire” *Oxford History of the British Empire*. Ed. Nicholas Canny and Roger Louis. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. p. 103

attacked by the French and its collection of books in the library was destroyed or scattered⁸⁸. Among the titles in the catalogue, we find “Shakespeare’s Plays” listed without any further detail of date of publication, editor, number of volumes or size of the book. The fact that volume information is not provided in the catalogue which is provided for other titles could simply be an oversight on the part of the compiler of the catalogue. In the case of a multi-volume set mistakenly recorded as a single volume, the title in question may have been a set of Nicholas Rowe’s recently edited six-octavo volume edition (1709/1714) or the sumptuous quarto-sized multi-volume set edited by Alexander Pope in 1725, both published by Jacob Tonson⁸⁹. It may also have been a single-volume edition that the entry suggests in which case it may have been a copy of one of the four Folios of the seventeenth century, or a collection of quartos bound in a single volume such as those published by Pavier in the early seventeenth century⁹⁰, or a single volume from a broken set of the recently published multi-volume edition of Shakespeare edited by Rowe or Alexander Pope. There is limited chance of the volume being one of the four seventeenth century Folios as there is no record of a Folio traveling to India⁹¹. We do not know anything about the trajectory of the Shakespeare book in the Fort Saint George collection outside the library.

No information is available that can help us determine whether the book was a deliberate acquisition in the sense that it was requested by the chaplain in charge of the library and supplied

⁸⁸ Penny, Frank, *The Church in Madras*. London: Smith, 1903, p. 147.

⁸⁹ Murphy, Andrew. “The Tonson Era 1: Rowe to Warburton” *Shakespeare in Print*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, p. 57-79.

⁹⁰ Andrew Murphy writes that Pavier, a member of the publishing trade closely associated with William Jaggard, printed and published quarto collections in 1619, after Shakespeare’s death in 1616 and before the publication of the first Folio in 1623, to fill a potential gap in the publishing market. In the early twentieth century, A.W. Pollard came across a quarto collection in the private holding of a German acquaintance. Similar quarto collections in two volumes have also been found at the Trinity College Library, Cambridge, and the University of Virginia is believed to have owned a single volume quarto collection. Murphy, Andrew “Early Collected Editions.” *Shakespeare in Print*. p. 36-42.

⁹¹ *Ibid*.

by the Company directors in London or whether it was bequeathed to the library by some individual. Donations from private individuals, both in the homeland and in the colony, and organizations such as the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge were common, and the Fort Saint George library holding, we know, was frequently augmented by them⁹². Considering the East India Company's squeamishness about the value of secular, light literature as suitable reading material for the employees well into the nineteenth century⁹³, it seems plausible that the Shakespeare book may have originated in a private collection in India before it was donated to the library which was then accommodated in the collection as a book valuable, if for nothing else, at least for its monetary worth. Nor can one rule out the possibility that the resident chaplain or the ministers responsible for maintaining the library attached some intellectual value to the Shakespeare book in addition to its fiscal value.

For the perspective it sheds on the Fort Saint George collection, it may be worth noting that the Yale library in the American colony compiled a catalogue of books in its holdings in 1743, listing a multi-text copy of Shakespeare as a 'valuable' book in its collection. At the same time the Yale library bestows legitimacy upon Shakespeare by including him in the collection, the catalogue places him at the very bottom of a list with the heading of "Plays and Books of Diversions."⁹⁴ The catalogue mentions that students were encouraged to intermix "other less Principal studies"— Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Cervantes and others – with the regular course of study. East India Company employees were not, needless to say, university students; in fact, an

⁹² Shaw, Graham. "The British Book in India" p. 564

⁹³ Murphy, Sharon. "Imperial Reading?"

⁹⁴ Murphy, "American Editions" *Shakespeare in Print*, p. 143; Willoughby, E. E. "The Reading of Shakespeare in Colonial America," *PBSA* 30.2 (1936):45-56.

inclination for intellectual matters was the least of their noted qualities⁹⁵. Nonetheless, the inclusion of Shakespeare may have satisfied the need for books of diversion complementing serious studies that the Company encouraged its employees to undertake in order to deter them from dissolute behavior⁹⁶.

More than merely listing books, the catalogue of 1729 also organizes books in hierarchical rankings. It divides books in ranked categories based on language; within each category books are subdivided into another hierarchy based on content: religious and secular. Within each group, titles are listed alphabetically. Highest in ranking are the library's small collection of Arabic works, followed by works in Greek and Latin, followed by English, French and Italian and lastly by works in vernacular Indian languages. The Shakespeare book is ranked low in the catalogue, under the ancient classics, indicating its relatively low status in relation to the ancient classics, serving as a reminder of the secondary status of vernacular works compared to the ancient classics in the metropolitan homeland. Prepared by the resident chaplain, the only Company employee with a mandatory university degree, the catalogue reflects a classical orientation and prevailing metropolitan attitudes in university-educated circles towards Shakespeare and English works as second-class to the classics⁹⁷.

In fact, the pre-eminence of the ancient classics in the catalogue is much less surprising than the priority given to English works over Italian, French and Dutch which were considered at the time closer to the classical model and hence superior to English⁹⁸. By placing English works

⁹⁵ The only required degree for service in the East India Company in the eighteenth century was a certificate in accountancy. The education of the Company employees was standardized in the early nineteenth century with the establishment of Haileybury in England. The curriculum at Haileybury emphasized a classical education.

⁹⁶ See Love, Harold. *Vestiges of Old Madras*, p. 249 regarding Company injunctions on the noted vice of gambling among residents, issued in 1728.

⁹⁷ Hunt, Arnold. "Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania." *Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland Vol 2: 1640-1850*. Ed. Giles Mandelbrote and K.A. Manley. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006: 438-58.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 439.

above other national vernacular literatures, the catalogue indicates the growing confidence of the British in their native cultural tradition. In the context of intense rivalry with the French and the Dutch for control over Indian trade in the early eighteenth century, such validation of British cultural tradition is also an assertion 'of English cultural nationalism on the global stage. Articulated in the context of commercial combativeness with European and Indian powers for the control of Indian trade, the assertion of supremacy of English language and culture over vernacular national languages veils an imperial ambition. Alok Yadav has argued that an international context of political competition was fundamental to the elevation of English language and literature to metropolitan standing in the eighteenth century⁹⁹. Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest* has emphasized that without claims of cultural superiority, Britain, lacking legitimacy, could not have achieved an imperial status in India¹⁰⁰. Early assertions of cultural preeminence such as one finds in the Fort Saint George catalogue indicate the kind of cultural capital the British would draw upon to claim its imperial stature in India in order to outgrow its image as a mere retail dealer in muslins and indigo at the turn of the nineteenth century.

For the moment, however, Britain's emerging national poet is relegated to a lower status than Virgil, Horace and other classical poets. The catalogue shows the self-perception of marginality of English language and culture and that the ancient classics defined official cultural and knowledge capital. Shakespeare is given a place in the official knowledge but fares low in the scale of importance in the hierarchy of cultural values dominated by the ancient classics. The East India Company's official recognition of Shakespeare as an English 'classic' equal in prestige and value to the ancient European classics was detained by over a hundred years. It was

⁹⁹ Yadav, Alok. *Before the Empire of English: Literature, Provinciality, and Nationalism in Eighteenth-century Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004

¹⁰⁰ Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.

in 1855 that Shakespeare, included in a newly forged subject called English Literature and History, was incorporated as a subject of examination for aspiring junior civil servants seeking administrative employment in India. The inclusion of Shakespeare and English literature in the Indian Civil Service Examination attests to triumphant British cultural nationalism in the mid nineteenth century, superseding the perceived status of marginality that is reflected in the catalogue of Fort Saint George.

Shakespeare's presence in the Fort Saint George collection stands in stark contrast to his absence in private collections in the early eighteenth century. This is not entirely surprising. There were serious impediments to acquiring books in India before the beginning of commercial book importation in the latter decades of the eighteenth century¹⁰¹. At this time, books travelled to India mostly with passengers as personal luggage. But, as Graham Shaw observes, supplies of books did percolate into India from the earliest history of British colonization, and once in India, they passed through various hands with a rapid velocity, circulating through auction sales and donations from the deceased and those departing for the homeland¹⁰². Shaw notes that it was possible for residents to augment their personal reading supplies by arranging to have books sent from the mainland with passengers or captains in arriving ships and by buying used books from auction sales¹⁰³. Books appear frequently among other assets in surviving probate inventories from the early eighteenth century.

In fact, contrary to what one might expect, it is evident that some British residents managed to assemble books that could rival collections in the homeland. Dawsonne Drake's inventory, for instance, included chest and trunks containing 1,600 volumes ranging from

¹⁰¹ Shaw, Graham "The British Book in India" p. 561.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 561-2

¹⁰³ Ibid

duodecimo to folio; the individual titles in that collection are not known¹⁰⁴. Prepared in 1729, the same year as the Fort Saint George catalogue, the inventory of the personal collection of Reverend Thomas Consett, a chaplain in Madras, included 568 volumes in Hebrew, Latin, Greek and English in addition to many more books and manuscripts in French, German, Dutch, Slovenian and Russian languages¹⁰⁵. Among Consett's English works were included Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Addison's *Travels*, *The Polite Gentleman*, *Ladies Tales* and *Parismus a Romance*. The library of Thomas Eyre, a Council member, shows a mix of theological and secular works-- Stillingfleet, Hoadley, Clarke, Drelincourt, *Grounds of Religion*, several volumes of sermons along with Bacon, Locke, the essays of Addison and Steele, a few unspecified romances and plays, Pope, Blackmore and Garth among others¹⁰⁶. William Belcher who died in 1757 at Fort Saint George, possessed 31 books, out of which 24, we learn, were music books, the rest included two volumes of the *Spectator*, Newton's *Opticks*, Horace's *Epistles*, Anson's *Voyage* among others¹⁰⁷.

The highest ranked officials were more likely to have large personal collections of books than junior officials because only the former were entitled to private residences while the junior employees led a collegiate existence, living, sleeping and eating together in cramped spaces¹⁰⁸. However, the custom of afternoon siesta enforced by the hot tropical climate of India, a general lack of various avenues for amusement, and time spent mostly within the confines of the settlement would have meant that in the early eighteenth century for any Company employee with an intellectual inclination, high ranking or not, books would be a means to while away time

¹⁰⁴ Dodwell, Henry. *The Nabobs of Madras*. London: Williams and Norgate Ltd, 1926. p. 191.

¹⁰⁵ India Office, Home Miscellaneous Records, 260. See also, Spear, Percival. *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India*. London: Oxford UP, 1963. p. 188.

¹⁰⁶ Dodwell, Henry. *The Nabobs of Madras*, p. 190.

¹⁰⁷ *Inventories*, 1, 2nd section, p. 26-7.

¹⁰⁸ Spear, Percival, *The Nabobs*, p. 11-12.

hanging heavy on the hand¹⁰⁹. This gets reflected in the frequent occurrence of books in probate inventories.

Considering the prevalence of books in surviving probate inventories, how do we account for the absence of Shakespeare books in the early years of the eighteenth century? Probate inventories begin to show a distinct rise in the frequency of listing of Shakespeare from the 1770s onward, a pattern that is also confirmed by Adams' statistical analysis of inventories beginning from 1780. While considering the absence of Shakespeare books it is important to bear in mind that in the homeland in the early eighteenth century, Shakespeare did not have a very wide currency and readership either. When, in 1709, Jacob Tonson, the Shakespeare publisher, substituted the folio format of Shakespeare's collected works for a multi-volume edition, he was able to present Shakespeare to a wider range of readers—well-to-do merchants and professionals beyond aristocrats and the lower gentry, the traditional cultural consumers,—at a relatively cheaper price than the Folios. However, exploiting their monopoly over Shakespeare's plays, Jacob Tonson and his heirs deliberately kept the price of Shakespeare books high, limiting the readership to only affluent readers. An anonymous commenter in *Mist's Journal* noted, for instance, how the edition prepared by Pope for the Tonsons in 1725, a particularly expensive installment of printed Shakespeare, catered to “Beau or Belle [who] may own a compleat Set of Shakespear, finely gilt, and letter'd at the Back, and which will look very pretty thro' a Glass Scrutore, for about Pounds seven Shillings Sterling” while “slovenly Scholars and poor Rogues, who buy Books only to read” rather than for their status value cannot afford an edition of the playwright¹¹⁰. Instead of publishing cheap reprints of the plays which would have made them more accessible, the Tonsons exploited their monopoly of copyright over

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 17; Dodwell, Henry. *The Nabobs of Madras*, p. 192.

¹¹⁰ Qtd in Murphy, Andrew, *Shakespeare in Print*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, p. 105

Shakespeare's plays by publishing in quick succession new editions by different editors with annotations growing in scale with every relaunch. In the 1730s the price of Shakespeare editions went down temporarily when the Tonsons published individual plays at a shilling¹¹¹. The price went down even further, to a penny, during the price war with Walker who had challenged the Tonson's shaky monopoly of copyright over Shakespeare's play. The price war ended with the Tonsons beating Walker out of the market and assuming their de facto control over Shakespeare's plays¹¹². Individual plays appear to be unavailable for purchase after the 1730s with the Tonsons reverting to multi-volume editions. It was not before Shakespeare entered the public domain in 1774 with the revocation of perpetual copyright that the plays were affordable for the average pocket.

To get an idea how expensive printed Shakespeare was in the early nineteenth century, we may note the prices at which they sold. The Tonsons' first installment of a multi-volume edition, the 1709 edition edited by Rowe, sold for the considerable sum of 30 shillings¹¹³. The 1714 re-publication of Rowe's edition in a one size smaller duodecimo format resulted in a reduction of price—it sold for 17 shillings; however, Jacob Tonson's next edition, in large quarto, edited by Pope in 1725, sold for 6 pound 6 shillings (126 shillings), and a very limited set of 750 copies were available. The high price of the multi-volume editions continued unbroken for most of the eighteenth century—Theobald (1733)'s edition at 42 shillings, Warburton's (1747) and Johnson's (1765) editions at 48 shillings, Capell's (1767) at 42 shillings, Steevens' (1773) at 60 shillings—till the revocation of perpetual copyright in 1774 which rendered

¹¹¹ St. Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, p. 154

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Murphy, Andrew. *Shakespeare in Print*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, p. 62.

Shakespeare out of copyright¹¹⁴. Once out of copyright, Shakespeare's plays were available for repackaging for all kinds of budgets including cheap reprint series.

The Cambridge University Press edition of Shakespeare of 1842, edited by Hanmer, published in disregard of the Tonsons' copyright, was the costliest of all multi-volume editions of Shakespeare in the early eighteenth century. Priced at 9 pounds and 9 shillings, it would cost the same as a modest palanquin, one of the most expensive items listed in probate inventories¹¹⁵. A luxury edition of Shakespeare would be a low spending priority for the British in India while a palanquin was necessary as a conveyance for traversing the terrains in the tropical heat and the rains of the monsoons. Only the wealthiest among the expatriates could afford a palanquin and an edition of Shakespeare, as we will see in the case of Clarembault.

The problem of affordability and difficulty of access to Shakespeare's books in the early eighteenth century was not unique to the British in India. Records of existence of printed Shakespeare in the American colonies are few in the early eighteenth century. It was with the first American printing of Shakespeare's plays in 1795, Kim Sturgess has argued, which reduced the cost of access to printed Shakespeare that Shakespeare readership grew in America¹¹⁶. In the early eighteenth century, only major collectors possessed Shakespeare in their private collections while the multi-volume editions were held in institutional libraries¹¹⁷. For instance, the Yale Library catalogue of "most Valuable books" published in 1743 which we referred to above included a nine-volume edition of Shakespeare, evidently one of the multi-sets emanating from the Tonson house. Earlier the Harvard University Library had acquired the 1709 Rowe edition

¹¹⁴ St. Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, p. 155

¹¹⁵ Jaffer, Amin. *Furniture from British India and Ceylon: A Catalogue of the Collections in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Peabody Essex Museum*. Salem, Mass. Peabody Essex Museum, 2001. p. 34.

¹¹⁶ Sturgess, Kim. *Shakespeare and the American Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, p. 64

¹¹⁷ Murphy, Andrew. *Shakespeare in Print*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, p. 143.

while the Hanmer edition was acquired for the Library Company of Philadelphia by Benjamin Franklin¹¹⁸.

Unlike the American colonies, India was not a settlement colony which would have implications for the consumption patterns of the expatriates. The short term residence of the British in India dictated that one's possessions were disposable and ephemeral, those that could be sold off in an auction without being missed¹¹⁹. Expensive books handed down through generations as treasures to be kept with care—the highlight of book collections in the metropole—had little value for a community always in the flux owing to death and departures to the homeland. Books, like other possessions, passed through various hands. Added to temporary residence were the perils to books in India's tropical climate. In the eighteenth century, books, made of rag paper derived from linen fibers, distinct from mechanically produced wood pulp used from the mid nineteenth century onwards, were a relatively durable and stable material form in the homeland; the tropical climate of India was, however, no respecter of this icon of Western civilization. If sea-water, rats and termites did not get to the books on shipboard on the long journey to India around the Cape of Good Hope and in warehouses during custom house clearance, they wreaked havoc on land. Damp, rust and mildew in the rainy season defaced and damaged leaves; tropical heat warped bindings. The worst offenders were, however, white ants or termites whose destructive power in devouring books and furniture have been recorded by the British in terms bordering on the fabulous¹²⁰.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Jones, Robin. "Souvenirs of People Who Have Come and Gone: Second-Hand Furnishings and Anglo-Indian Domestic Interior, 1840-1920" *Colonialism and Consumer Behavior*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. p. 111-35.

¹²⁰ See Parks, Fanny. *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*. Vol 1. London: Pelham Richardson, 1852. p. 312; Shaw, Graham. "The British Book in India" p. 562.

The cheap reprint series of Shakespeare's plays that flooded the market with the revocation of perpetual copyright in 1774 appear to have been more conducive for the material realities of India than the Tonson editions. We see a corresponding rise in records of Shakespeare books in private inventories from the 1770s. Bell's publication of the plays in six-penny weekly numbers in 1775 were cheap ephemera that could be toted, read, commented upon and worn out without fear of damage to the books. Equally significant were the innovative formats of the reprint series—for instance, Bell published the texts of Shakespeare's plays and other materials in parts which allowed the buyer to assemble an edition in any desired manner. The buyer could for instance have the plays and the commentaries collected in separate volumes, allowing for recreational readings of Shakespeare rather than study-oriented reading that the Tonson annotated editions encouraged¹²¹. Some reprint editions were specifically designed for traveling, such as Stockdale's one volume octavo Shakespeare. It had more than a thousand double-columned pages, designed for a wide range of clients that included the "middling and lower ranks of the inhabitants of the country" as well as the more wealthy clients who were already familiar with "all the expensive editions of our great dramatist" who might prefer a compact copy of Shakespeare's work for perusal on a journey or for use as a handy reference book¹²². The non-scholarly editions of Stockdale, Bell and others were perfectly suited for the kind of light reading William Princep, a merchant, engaged in with his co-passengers on their long ship-board trip to India in the early nineteenth century. In his memoir Princep recalls "Readings from Shakespeare were the delight of us all"¹²³; besides Shakespeare, discussions on diverse topics were held, including surgeries on sheep.

¹²¹ Murphy, Andrew. *Shakespeare in Print*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, p. 118

¹²² *Ibid*

¹²³ Qtd in Matthew Adams, "Furnishing the Colonial Mind"

While many explanations can be offered regarding the absence of Shakespeare books in the early eighteenth century, it is important to bear in mind that the low frequency in the record of Shakespeare books in private collections does not preclude the possibility of a greater presence of Shakespeare books in the Indian subcontinent than what available records suggest. Inventories reflect the cultural values of the times and the compilers who prepared them. As we mentioned earlier, it is possible that Shakespeare books were regarded as trivial by compilers and were not listed when Shakespeare's popularity was low in the homeland. The possibility of going unlisted is even higher for single copies or broken volumes. A single-text copy of a play by Shakespeare, such as those published by the Tonsons in the 1730s, costing a penny was not likely to be listed by compilers for the small monetary value attached to it even if it were present among one's possessions. Most records of Shakespeare books in the Indian subcontinent before the 1780s are 'sets'. The multi-volume editions were more likely to be recorded by compilers because of their monetary value than single-play texts. The compiler was likely to note the latter only if there were many of these making up a collection. For these reasons it is probable that single volumes or broken sets may have occurred more often in personal collections than what inventory records show but went unlisted individually, disappearing under collective headings and rubrics such as "a small parcel of books" in listings. On the other hand, with Shakespeare's waxing popularity and cultural valuation in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, copies, independent of the size or format of the book, were likely to be identified, resulting in their increased listing in probate inventories. Lastly, the presence of Shakespeare in the Fort Saint George library suggests that there may have been a readership for the plays that is not reflected in probate inventories.

3. Clarembault's Two Sets of Shakespeare, 1755

When Nicholas Clarembault(?-1755) died in India, his personal and household goods were sold off in a public auction as was the custom with expatriates who died in India far from their kith and kin in the homeland. The long inventory of possessions that was created on the occasion included two horses, three palanquins, an extensive livestock, several pieces of large furniture, tableware, foodstuff, chests of wine, beer and claret, many articles of clothing, hats and buttons, pictures, prints. His assets also included two sets of Shakespeare¹²⁴. These were a part of Clarembault's large collection of books that included seventy titles in English, forty in French, a book in Dutch and "eight odd Italian volumes." Little information is available on Clarembault's life and career—what brought him to India, his professional records or the circumstances of his death. The imperial record-keepers appear to have relegated his life to the dustbin of obscurity. In the absence of other records, the probate inventory is our only window into Clarembault's life in India.

The picture of material life conveyed by the list of goods and artefacts is clearly of a man of affluence who could afford comforts and luxuries not many of his contemporaries enjoyed or were permitted to enjoy during their colonial domicile. A recent sumptuary law had, for instance, restricted the ownership of palanquins, a status symbol in the colony, to only high-ranking employees of the East India Company¹²⁵. It is not unusual to find silverware, teapots or books in private collections of the British in India from the period — what is astonishing about Clarembault's inventory is the vast extent of these items. The number of books, which is

¹²⁴ Bengal Inventories, 1, 2nd Section, page 30-4

¹²⁵ In 1754, the Court of Directors ordered that junior employees of the East India Company "should lay aside the expense of either horse, chair or Palankeen during their Writership." The order apparently went unheeded for in March 1758 we find the Court again insisting that "no Writer whatsoever be allowed to keep either palankeen, horse or chaise during his Writership, on pain of being immediately dismissed from our service." Qtd. in Yule, Henry, and Arthur Coke Burnell, *The Anglo-Indian Dictionary*, 1886. p. 661.

considerably higher than the number of titles as many were multi-volume editions, attests to an impressive accumulation by metropolitan standards and even more so for someone located in India. The absence of local printing in eighteenth century India meant that all books were imports.

Clarembault's probate inventory not only provides a record of ownership of Shakespeare in a private collection it also presents glimpses of the circumstances in which he may have read Shakespeare which may have been true for others of his status. Clarembault died in November 1755, shortly before Robert Clive's victory over the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies at the battle of Plassey in 1757 which historians consider as the symbolic beginning of the British Empire in India. While the operations of the East India Company in the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century had been trade, after the victory at Plassey, it turned increasingly to military, administrative and diplomatic control; by 1818, the effective conquest of India was complete. Clarembault's probate inventory stands at the threshold of this momentous political transformation of British power in India. His list of assets is included in the Bengal inventory, suggesting that he died in or near Fort William in Calcutta. By the mid eighteenth century, the British, already a proto-imperial power, had emerged out of the safety and confinement of fortified enclaves to build residential dwellings in large numbers outside the walls of forts. It is not possible to say from his probate record whether Clarembault's residence was inside or outside the enclave of Fort William in Calcutta.¹²⁶ However, the room-by-room inventory of goods makes it evident that the house he lived in was a permanent building and a spacious elite house, not a bamboo or a thatched dwelling that were of temporary use. The inventory of goods bears evidence of substantial efforts at turning the domestic interior into an oasis of gentility in

¹²⁶ The fact that his probate records are included in Bengal Inventories suggest that he lived in or around Fort William in Calcutta, the administrative center of Bengal.

the ‘wilderness’ of the colony —substantial, because maintaining basic levels of comfort, even existence, were often challenging for the European community dislocated from accustomed contexts in the metropolitan homeland.

India’s extreme weather placed a tremendous strain on the longevity of both Europeans and their belongings portaged from the homeland. The saying was that the average lifespan of the European in India was two monsoons. Thomas Babington Macaulay writes home, “We are annually baked four months, boiled four more, and allowed the remaining four months to become cool if we can. Insects and undertakers are the only living creatures which seem to enjoy the climate.”¹²⁷ The intense heat of the tropical sun, violent rainstorms during the monsoon and the high humidity with a resulting perpetual damp and diseases meant that humans and their material possessions were locked in a race to speedy ends¹²⁸. The accoutrements of civility in the homeland — books, prints, paintings, clothes, furniture — broke down in India’s tropical climate; humans succumbed sooner than their belongings. “Here people die one day and are buried the next,” noted a resident. “Their furniture is sold on the third and they are forgotten on the fourth.”¹²⁹ In 1836, Macaulay writes about the deprivation of usual domestic comforts in the colony: “It [The climate] destroys all the works of man with scarcely one exception. Steel rusts; razors lose their edge; thread decays; clothes fall to pieces; books moulder away, and drop out of their bindings; plaster cracks; timber rots; matting is in shreds. The sun, the steam of this vast alluvial tract, and the infinite armies of white ants, make such havoc with buildings that a house requires a complete repair every three years.”¹³⁰ Humans resembled “yellow spectral figures” on

¹²⁷ Trevelyan, Otto. *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* Vol. 1. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1876. p. 373

¹²⁸ See Eaton, Natasha ““Excess in the City? The Consumption of Imported Prints in Colonial India, c 1780-1795” *Journal of Material Culture* 8.1 (2003): 45-74.

¹²⁹ Wilkinson, T. *Two Monsoons*. London: Duckworth, 1977. p. 13.

¹³⁰ Trevelyan, Otto. *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* Vol. 9. London; Longman, Green and Co., 1897. p. 450

their way to or risen from graves, deprived of vitality. For the fortune hunters of the eighteenth century, unencumbered by magnanimous visions of Britain's responsibility to deliver India from backwardness, a heavy price was to be paid for social mobility. A newly moneyed returnee from India, like Foote's Sir Matthew Mite, might jump ranks and find himself in a new social class, if only he was fortunate enough to not fall prey to premature death from disease or war while in India.

Consider then the items in Clarendon's possession before his death — books, prints, pictures, tableware, curtains, buttons, porcelain, china, time pieces, imported foodstuff, a staggering list of things running into tightly packed four pages. If nothing else, seventy five wine glasses indicate Clarendon's grand scale of living. Well-acquainted Victorian middle-class living spaces, replete with 'collectomania,' are familiar images of nineteenth century domestic interiors in the metropole; Clarendon's inventory shows that such material realities were reproduced in the colonial periphery, in the mid eighteenth century, against severe odds, impediment and hazards where freight, climatic conditions and the short term of residence of the expatriates would have made such reproduction extravagantly expensive. Clarendon's possessions are what Maxine Berg has called the new luxuries of the eighteenth century, humble products manufactured by the new industries of the eighteenth century, conveying fashion, civility, taste and convenience,¹³¹ except that in the colonial periphery these items, portaged from elsewhere, would be anything but humble.

Tea, coffee, equipment for drinking tea and coffee, silver items such as cups, spoons, ceramics, glassware, clocks, books, prints, cutlery, curtains that fill Clarendon's inventory list were new commodities in the mid eighteenth century in the metropole, owned by the traditional

¹³¹ Berg, Maxine. *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005

elites as well as by the emerging middle classes in urban areas and provinces in Britain, keen to cultivate social modes of self-representation mediated by the consumption of high-fashion goods¹³². Evidently Clarembault invested heavily in reproducing in the colony the normative consumption patterns of gentlemen, whether of blood or breeding, in the homeland. We find mentions of all visible markers of gentility in the probate inventory –a wide range of alcoholic beverages, live game, horses and carriages and an impressive collection of books. We do not know Clarembault’s social background in the homeland. His name is registered with an abbreviated Esq. (esquire) and among his goods is listed a coat of arms, but neither the title nor the heraldic sign necessarily denotes gentlemanly pedigree. Heraldic signs were available for purchase in the colonial market, as the coat of arms included in Clarembault’s own probate auction sale demonstrates. Clarembault may have originated from the landed class, typically a younger son of a noble family seeking to repair his fortunes in India, or he may have been from the middling ranks who, once in India, were able to reconstitute themselves as men of rank and social prestige thanks to the opportunities of social climbing the colony offered by privileging merit over birth. The fact that Clarembault would have a coat of arms among his possessions suggests that although pedigree had less social value in the colony than in the homeland, its appeal was perhaps not completely extinct.

In India, as in the homeland, books in the mid eighteenth century occupied a paradoxical position among luxury possessions, collapsing the boundary between necessities and luxuries. Books were at once fashionable material objects — rare, expensive objects, symbolic of elite power — and vehicles of instruction and improvement without luxury’s associations of

¹³² Ibid

frippery¹³³. From about the 1770s expatriates in India could draw their reading materials from a variety of sources through subscription, by joining circulating libraries, book clubs or reading rooms in the main metropolitan cities¹³⁴. Prior to the advent of these, the Company libraries with their mostly theological works were the only source of reading materials outside private collections. A private stock of books would have assumed great importance for those intellectually inclined wishing to be self-sufficient in reading matters or given to showing off¹³⁵.

Thomas Daniell's (1749-1840) second engraving in the series *Views of Calcutta* (1786-88) captures the paradoxical status of books in the colony: an Englishman is depicted on the streets of the commercial and fashionable center of Calcutta, Tank Square, reading a book while lounging in a palanquin in a relaxed, laid-back pose while he is carried aloft on the shoulders of Indian bearers, accompanied by a large retinue of servants and attendants.¹³⁶ The book in the man's hand has its visual corollary in a hat he is shown holding in the other hand; his body is shown decked in a long cut coat, breeches and what appears to be either a wig or powdered hair. The array of goods he is shown with—the palanquin, his fashionable hat, coat, breeches and the book—are emblematic markers of his social position and affluence and are pressed in the service of both representation and self-representation. The book reclaims the man from any negative suggestion of a frilly dandy or macaroni flaunting his charms and affluence on the streets of the new capital of British India. Carried along on the shoulders of Indian bearers in an energetic pace conveying purpose rather than indolent rambling, the man's gaze and attention are centered

¹³³ Raven, James. "Debating Bibliomania and the Collection of Books in the Eighteenth Century." *Library & Information History* 29.3 (2013): 196-209.

¹³⁴ Kabir, Abulfazl, "English Libraries in Eighteenth Century Bengal"

¹³⁵ Living beyond means and running into debt was a perennial problem for the East India Company employees in India. See footnote 87. Also Eaton, Natasha. "Excess in the City?"

¹³⁶ See De Almeida, Hermione, and Gilpin, George H. *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India*. Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005, p. 186.

studiously on the book he is reading rather than on the many inter-racial diversions on offer on the street. Ultimately, he cuts the figure of a colonial man of authority, ensconced in hierarchies of power.

Like Daniell's reader, Clarembault too evidently delighted in the adornment of the person with hats, clothing items, buttons and jewelry. His inventory attests to the fact that the home was an equally important site of conspicuous consumption and mannered display as the street. Exorbitant expenditure in domestic spaces was noted early in Company records — Directors concerned at reports of extravagant expenditures wrote from London, "We hear from several hands that many of the people.....are gotten into a more expensive way of living than formerly, and that our young covenant servants, though they have not the wherewithal to support it, will vie with those in better circumstances in the like unjustifiable pageantry of pallenkeens, horses and other disbursements; and even in private houses the profuseness vastly exceeds that of former times."¹³⁷

Like the three palanquins in his possession, Clarembault's collection of books proclaims his wealth. The room-by-room listing of goods in the inventory shows that the books were display items, kept in an almirah in one of the outer, public rooms in the house in which Clarembault likely worked, met with and entertained guests. A large collection of books freighted socio-cultural inferences. Besides the fact that books were extremely costly in the colony¹³⁸, they were high maintenance. We have already noted the highly perishable nature of eighteenth century books in India. The effect of tropical weather and the ravages of rats and

¹³⁷ Qtd in Dodwell, Henry. *The Nabobs of Madras*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1926. p.185.

¹³⁸ Joshi, Priya. In *Another Country Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002.p. 93.

termites meant that books had to be brushed and inspected frequently¹³⁹, on the outside and the inside, a job that was relegated to servants. To prevent damage, books were frequently kept locked in almirahs. Like bed posts which were dipped in little bowls of water to keep creepy crawlies away, almirah feet too may have been placed in water which would require regular replenishment.¹⁴⁰ Almirahs and book cases made of teak were better at withstanding the ravages of white ants but teak was extremely expensive¹⁴¹. When heavy rains during the monsoons penetrated the inside of houses drenching books, servants were engaged in airing and drying them painstakingly, taking each one down from the selves and holding it over pots with charcoal fire¹⁴².

If Clarendon's books were trophies declaring the affluence and tastes of the owner to visitors and guests, it does not preclude the possibility that they were genuine intersections between the material and intellectual worth of the books¹⁴³. The two sets of Shakespeare in fact suggest that the books were more than mere display items. Possessing an edition of Shakespeare would have allowed Clarendon to read an admired author while residing in the distant colony¹⁴⁴. The presence of two sets of Shakespeare books in the inventory, however, suggests

¹³⁹ A poem titled "Calcutta" in the *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India* refers to 'well-brushed books' which is annotated by the editor in these words: "The library, in India, has many subtle insinuating enemies, which penetrate into books and devour the leaves. The ravages are best prevented by brushing the volumes occasionally." *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, Vol. 25. Jan- June. London: Black, Kingsbury, Purbury and Allen, 1828. p. 304.

¹⁴⁰ *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India*, Volume 10. July-December. London: Black, Kingsbury, Purbury and Allen, 1820. p. 454.

¹⁴¹ Gilchrist, John Borthwick. *The General East India Guide and Vade Mecum*. London: Kingsbury, Purbury and Allen, 1825. p. 268.

¹⁴² Jones, Robin D. *Interiors of Empire: Objects, Space and Identity within the Indian Subcontinent, c. 1800-1947*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007. p. 59-60.

¹⁴³ See Raven, James. "Debating Bibliomania" for a discussion of similar intersections in the metropole.

¹⁴⁴ At Calcutta, theatrical performances were organized from 1775, and by the close of the century two theaters were fully operational. See Jaffer, Amin. *Furniture from British India and Ceylon*, p. 35. From 1775, those coming to Calcutta during the winter season could see *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *High Life below Stairs*, *the Critic* and *the High Life above Stairs*. Ghosh, Suresh. *The Social Condition of the British Community*, p. 135

that his interest in Shakespeare was more than casual. It indicates an attempt to stay abreast from the distant colony with recent developments in Shakespeare scholarship in the homeland, and indeed there was much going on in the emerging field of Shakespeare criticism that would pique someone interested in the textual authenticity of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare criticism was electrified in the early decades of the eighteenth century with debates between high-profile editors, Pope, Theobald and Warburton, of which the commercially astute Tonson firm reaped financial advantage by publishing new editions in quick succession, each promising to correct the errors of the earlier editor while presenting the most reliable version of the plays¹⁴⁵. India was eight months away from Britain; strained contact with the homeland before telegraphic communications may have made it seem far more distant. Clarembault's two sets of Shakespeare would help him stay connected with metropolitan trends, norms and values while in colonial domicile.

How Clarembault read Shakespeare, as dramatic works, poems or as fiction, one cannot tell. His collection covers all of these genres, and he may have read Shakespeare as one or all of these. Imaginative writings dominate the list of books—he owned eight volumes of Moliere, one volume of Racine, five volumes of Rabelais, six volumes of Dryden's plays besides Shakespeare, Voltaire's *Henriade*, La Mothe's *Illiade*, *Telemaque* (a prose epic in French), Gay, Pope and Thomson's works. Evidently, Clarembault's reading interests belong to the category we call literary, spanning across national borders, from contemporary times and of the recent past. Besides literary works, Clarembault owned histories, travels, a few dictionaries in European languages and a handful of philosophical and religious works, including a "large" bible, the only book in the inventory whose size is recorded. In contrast to the library at Fort Saint George in

¹⁴⁵ Bristol, Michael. *Big-time Shakespeare*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996. p. 62-3.

Madras, the majority of his books constituted light, secular reading matter. Conspicuous by their absence are works in the ancient European classics, the benchmark of gentility in the homeland, except in English translation. This does not necessarily indicate a lack of classical education—Clarembault may have acquired the books he wanted to read. At any rate, his collection attests to reading as a pleasurable past time and, in contrast to Daniell's depiction of reading on the streets of Calcutta, a semi-private occupation.

Absent in Clarembault's collection are books in Oriental languages. Considering the insularity of the British in India in the pre-Plassey years, this is not surprising. Inventory records from the 1780s begin to show Shakespeare occurring along with Indian works—most commonly, Persian dictionaries as in the case of the inventory of Charles Hay who died in India in 1780¹⁴⁶. Hay's inventory, like many others' from the period, reflects a hybrid consumption practice marked by inter-cultural contacts—European shoes, phaetons, hunting saddles and cloaks occurring along with a large number of Indian goods such as hookah, muslins, spittoons etc¹⁴⁷. In contrast, Clarembault's inventory shows an absence of Indian goods. Clarembault reproduced in India the only model of gentility that he knew of, the European model; the two sets of Shakespeare books appear to be inscribed in that model of 'civilized' living, offering a sense of personal improvement and refinement as an antidote to geographic dislocation.

We do not know whether Clarembault brought his Shakespeare books with him from the homeland or purchased them in India. If he procured his books, or at least most of them, in India, the availability of supplies on the market would have placed a constraint on what he possessed. In considering a colonial book collection in the early eighteenth century, one needs to be attentive to the limitations on choices available to book collectors. The array of choices that

¹⁴⁶ Finn, Margot, "Colonial Gifts: Family Politics and the Exchange of Goods in British India, c. 1780-1820." p. 209

¹⁴⁷ Bengal Inventories, Inventory 10.

marked the eighteenth century market place in the metropole was absent for most of the eighteenth century in India¹⁴⁸. In the homeland, the exercise of choice in building collections contributed to the owner's sense of individuality and cultural competence. Collections were meant to represent the collector's unique personality, expressed through a meaningful accumulation that conveyed a harmonious effect¹⁴⁹. There were, however, many barriers to building a 'collection' in the metropolitan sense in the colony. Material historians have shown that in colonial homes furniture was incoherent and incongruous, necessitated by the fact that most items were bought second-hand at moving sales and probate auctions¹⁵⁰. In the latter decades of the eighteenth century with the advent of Europe shops, the availability of books in the colony may have been on the same level as any far-flung provincial town in Britain. Earlier in the century during Clarendon's time, the availability of books was much more limited.

Clarendon was not alone in his private possession of copies of Shakespeare in the colony. The account sale of John Mackintosh, from 14th December 1770, records Shakespeare's Works in nine volumes¹⁵¹. His inventory shows similar consumption habits as Clarendon's—a profusion of china tableware, silverware, curtains, looking glasses, clothing items, furniture, a backgammon table, pictures, buttons, watches along with a personal collection of books including, fifteen volumes of Smollett's History of England, Swift's Works in twenty-one volumes, four volumes of Don Quixote, Milton's Works in two volumes, *Memoirs of Pompadore*

¹⁴⁸ Breen, T. H. "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776." *Journal of British Studies* 25.4 (1986): 467-499.

¹⁴⁹ See Eaton, Natasha. "Between Mimesis and Alterity: Art, Gift, and Diplomacy in Colonial India, 1770-1800." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46.4 (2004): 816-44.

¹⁵⁰ Jones, Robin. "Souvenirs of People Who Have Come and Gone: Second-Hand Furnishings and Anglo-Indian Domestic Interior, 1840-1920"

¹⁵¹ Bengal Inventories at the Mayor's Court, Range 154, Vol 69, p. 139.

in two volumes, and the *History of Tom Jones*. Mackintosh's inventory confirms the impression that Shakespeare books in the colony were owned by affluent men and luxurious lifestyles.

The room-by-room listing of items in Clarendon's inventory gives us some insight into the domestic setting in which the Shakespeare books were likely read. We have already noted the mention in the inventory of an almirah with books in the "Halls and Outerrooms" of the house; these spaces are distinct from the bedroom and the five store-rooms which are individually identified in the inventory. Although the hall and the outer rooms are not individually distinguished by their functionality in the inventory, it is clear from the furniture contained in these rooms which included a large number of chairs, writing tables, sofas, and gaming furniture, that these were more public spaces for entertaining guests where Clarendon likely met with his guests and spent his leisure hours, a setting for the cultivation and display of refined manners. The listing of furniture shows that there was some writing activity too: a writing table and a glass lantern, presumably for reading and writing in the absence of natural light are mentioned. One of the best sources on architectural designs of colonial homes, Colesworthy Grant, visiting Calcutta in the mid nineteenth century, noted that the typical house plan of British homes in India consisted of a hall opening into four rooms which served as parlor, dining, drawing and sitting rooms¹⁵², and the same architectural design appear to underlie the description of the hall and the outer rooms in Clarendon's room-by-room listing of assets in the probate inventory.

By the mid eighteenth century, a separate domestic space distinguished as the library had emerged as one of the most important living and social spaces in elite homes in the metropolitan homeland¹⁵³. More than a repository of books, libraries with their collection of sculptures,

¹⁵² See Chattopadhyay, Swati, "'Goods, Chattels and Sundry Items: Constructing Nineteenth Century Anglo-Indian Domestic Life" *Journal of Material Culture* 7.3 (2002): 243-71.

¹⁵³ Wainwright, Clive. "The Library as a Living Room." *Property of a Gentleman*. Ed Robin Myers and Michael Harris. New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll P, 1991. 15-24.

artworks, curiosities and family collections allowed families and guests to assemble, serving as a drawing room, fulfilling multiple purposes of show, social use and study. In the Indian colony, however, the fact that European residences were modeled on the architectural plan of Indian houses made domestic settings distinct from metropolitan ideals. Europeans in India had to be flexible in their use of space adapting to the architectural setting of Indian homes¹⁵⁴. Many typical library furnishings in the homeland appear in Clarendon's inventory — tables, couches, a large number of arm chairs, writing desks, framed pictures, looking glasses, multiple almirahs, at least one of which served as a bookcase, a backgammon table, a glass lantern — but it is not clear if Clarendon had a designated library space in his residence where he used these furniture pieces and or whether he used a parlor or a sitting room for reading and writing¹⁵⁵. Even if there was no designated room functioning as a library, the idea of creating a library-like environment is clearly present. As with space, Europeans in India had to exercise flexibility in their use of furniture during their colonial domicile¹⁵⁶. Colesworthy Grant's architectural plan of the typical British house in India, clearly an elite house, mentions a writing room adjacent to the bedroom. The description suggests a much more limited use than a library, indicating more a room for writing correspondences than a space for social intercourse and displaying books. In fact, owing to its proximity and interconnectedness with the bedroom, the writing room is known to have doubled as a dressing room, for keeping slippers and dressing gowns¹⁵⁷. Available evidence

¹⁵⁴ Jaffer, Amin. "Furnishings and the Domestic Interior" *Furniture from British India and Ceylon*, p. 41-75.

¹⁵⁵ See Raven, James. "Debating Bibliomania" for typical library furnishings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain; see Jaffer, Amin, *India Furniture from British and Ceylon* p. 69-70 for furniture for books and writing in probate inventories from India from 1750-1810.

¹⁵⁶ Jones, Robin. "Souvenirs of People Who Have Come and Gone: Second-Hand Furnishings and Anglo-Indian Domestic Interior, 1840-1920"

¹⁵⁷ Chattopadhyay, Swati, ""Goods, Chattels and Sundry Items: Constructing Nineteenth Century Anglo-Indian Domestic Life" p. 249

suggests that reading and writing activities in elite colonial homes were conducted in sitting rooms, parlors or the main hall, and this may also have been the case for Clarendon.

References to libraries as distinct domestic spaces are more common from the late eighteenth century. The art collector and connoisseur Claude Martin, a Swiss-born French national who made India his home, built a capacious library in Lucknow that included a copy of Shakespeare's plays and a print from *Macbeth* among a collection of 4,000 books in English and French, Persian manuscripts and a gallery of 200 paintings¹⁵⁸. When his estate was inventoried upon his death in 1800, the library furnishings included extensive scientific equipment, a French puppet theater, a printing press, moulds for striking coins and medals, a billiard table, a magic lantern, a suit of armor, an assemblage of weapons, manuscripts, miniatures, prints, decorative objects, an extensive cabinet of natural specimens and myriad curios that set him at a par with collector-connoisseurs like Sloane in Britain¹⁵⁹. The homes of the highest ranked officials of the East India Company also had rooms set aside for collections of books and other decorative objects, as we learn from private letters and memoirs. In some cases prodigious effort and money were spent in building and fitting capacious libraries. The library in the residence of the British representative at the court of Hyderabad was, for instance, forty feet by forty, doubling as a family living room¹⁶⁰. When Henry Russell took up appointment as the Resident, he undertook extensive updates of the library, purchasing library furnishings and fittings from Calcutta and remitting £3,500 to a relative in the homeland who dispatched busts, glass and china to him on

¹⁵⁸ Llewellyn-Jones, Rosie. *A Very Ingenious Man, Claude Martin in Early Colonial India*. Delhi; New York: Oxford UP, 1992. p. 139; Hill, Samuel Charles. *The Life of Claude Martin, Major General in the Army of the Honorable East India Company*. Calcutta: Thacker and Spink, 1901. p. 114.

¹⁵⁹ Jasanoff, Maya. *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850*. New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 2005.

¹⁶⁰ "Life of the Right Hon. Sir James Mackintosh" *Carey's Library of Choice Literature*. 17 Oct. 1835: 54

ships¹⁶¹. For all the money spent in updating the library, Russell did not balk at buying used books from the preceding Resident Sydenham—necessitated, no doubt, by the scarcity of books in India—offering as much as a thousand pounds to buy his entire collection of books and prints.

4. Shakespeare Books in the Indian Colony from the 1780s

From the 1780s Shakespeare's popularity among British expatriates in India appears to have caught up with that in the metropole. The ubiquity is, I have suggested above, a reflection of the removal of access to Shakespeare's printed works and the strength of cultural nationalism that exalted Shakespeare as a literary exemplar in the closing decades of the eighteenth century. At the same time, it is also a function of a greater abundance and variety of documentary sources than in the earlier period. To some extent, the expatriate community in the latter decades of the eighteenth century was a more 'bookish' society than before. It included mature men from the learned professions such as judges and lawyers with appointments in the newly established Supreme Court of Bengal who came to India often accompanied by their wives¹⁶². As the attractiveness of services in India improved with the change in the East India Company's fortunes in the post-Plassey years, the elite administrative and military posts in the East India Company drew sons of well-off families with grammar and public school education¹⁶³. The new wave of gentlemen-administrators who came to India in the latter decades of the eighteenth century to serve in elite ranks were not only more likely to be knowledgeable about Shakespeare but also more likely to record their experiences while in India in diaries, journals and memoirs.

¹⁶¹ Sir Henry Russell to Lady Anne Russell, 11 February 1813, MS. Eng. lett. c. 153, fols 28-29.

¹⁶² Ghosh, Suresh, *The Social Condition of the British Community in Bengal, 1757-1800*. Leiden: E.J. Birell, 1970. p. 153.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 53; Hagerman notes that although the education of the civil servants was not formalized before the establishment of its training academy at Haileybury between 1805 and 1809, it would still have been common among Company servants from the upper echelons of society to come to India with a classical education. Hagerman, C. A. *Britain's Imperial Muse: The Classics, Imperialism, and the Indian Empire, 1784-1994*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 151.

Consequently, we have records of scholar-administrators like Mounstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859) reading Shakespeare while on the march, in camps and in the middle of violent warfare. Elphinstone read Shakespeare in his tent from a copy borrowed from a friend — one without critical notes, we learn, to facilitate reading without the interference of editorial views — a week after a hard-fought battle at Assaye fought on 23rd September 1803 in which the British overcame Maratha opposition, a victory that paved the way to British domination in western India¹⁶⁴. Elphinstone was an avid reader who travelled across the Indian subcontinent with two camel-loads of books packed in such a way that he could read any volume he wished¹⁶⁵. His journals and letters demonstrate the ways in which readings of Shakespeare sustained Britain's imperial venture in India at an individual level. His voracious readings of Shakespeare and musings on his relative merits in comparison to other playwrights during campaigns in the middle of violent warfare appear to have served the need for diversion while also acting as a mechanism for dealing with depression, cultural and environmental dislocation, anxiety, nostalgia and professional stress¹⁶⁶. If the classics contributed to the British imperial experience of empire by serving as a coping device for the stresses and anxieties of situations in India, Shakespeare, it appears, served similar purposes in Britain's imperial enterprise at the frontier¹⁶⁷.

Elphinstone's friend, Thomas Munro, who became governor of Madras, carried Shakespeare mentally and in a material form, as a book, during his campaigns across the Indian subcontinent. During one such campaign, he rode through a forest, describing his journey in the

¹⁶⁴ Colebrook, Sir T.E. *Life of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone* Vol 1. London: John Murray, 1884. p. 72.

¹⁶⁵ Cotton, J.S. *Mountstuart Elphinstone and the Making of Southwestern India*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1911. p. 15.

¹⁶⁶ See Colebrook, *Life of The Honourable Mounstuart Elphinstone*, Vol 1, p. 120, 148, 362.

¹⁶⁷ Hagerman, "Coping with Life in India" *Britain's Imperial Muse*, p. 150-68. The ancient European classics also appear to have served Elphinstone with inspiration and imperial visions. Hagerman notes that during an expedition in Kabul, Elphinstone and other British members gathered together to read Quintus Curtius' description of Alexander the Great's campaigns in the region. Daily classical reading was the norm for Elphinstone. Hagerman, p. 154-6.

following words: “My ride today was about twelve miles, not a single hut, and only one cultivated field in the distance. After the first four miles, I got rid of the hilly uneven country in which I had so long been; and the latter part of the journey was over a level country, still covered in wood, but the trees neither so tall nor growing so close together, as I had left behind. I have halted under a large banyan tree, in the middle of a circular open space about five or six hundred yards in diameter. One half of it is occupied by a natural tank covered with water lilies. The rest is a field which was cultivated last year. It was just in a forest such as this that the characters in “As You Like It” used to ramble.”¹⁶⁸ Munro’s recalling of Shakespeare in the unfamiliar terrains of India served to domesticate the foreignness of his surroundings. While in India, in 1787, he contributed to the growing Shakespeare scholarship in the homeland by translating and sending home his discovery of a source of the Shylock story in the *Merchant of Venice* in a Persian manuscript. Munro’s translation made its way to Edmond Malone and ultimately to the 1793 Variorum edition of Shakespeare¹⁶⁹. Munro’s biographer mentions that Shakespeare, Anson’s *Voyages*, Plutarch’s *Lives*, Spenser, Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, Hume’s *History and Life of Frederick the Great* were his favorite authors or books¹⁷⁰.

The careers of Elphinstone, Munro and other high-ranking officials, suffering personal deprivations in the colonial periphery, reading Shakespeare in remarkable situations, fulfill the terms in which Foote had imagined the ideal agent of empire in the play *The Nabob*—well-bred gentlemen-imperialists inspired by a public duty of service rather than personal aggrandizement.

¹⁶⁸ Gleig, George Robert. *The Life of Major General Sir Thomas Munro, Bart, and K.C.B. Late Governor of Madras*. Vol 1. London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830. p. 286.

¹⁶⁹ See *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare The Merchant of Venice* Vol VII Ed. Horace Howard Furness. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1888. p. 307. Gleig, George. *The Life of Major General Sir Thomas Munro*, p. 64.

¹⁷⁰ Bradshaw, John. *Rulers of India: Sir Thomas Munro and the British Settlement of the Madras Presidency*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1906. p. 12.

They also provided the stuff for narratives of romance, adventure and daring which were seen to underlie the foundation of Britain's 'moral' empire in India, removed from the ignoble feats of the earlier generation of illiterate bandit-kings. The ethos of honor underlying this narrative is, however, belied by reports of gossips, scandals and backbiting in elite circles of the Calcutta society that provided fodder for James Augustus Hickey's scandal-mongering weekly newspaper, *Hickey's Gazette*, the first of its kind in India. When the Governor General Warren Hastings threatened to confiscate Hickey's press, the latter responded with Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy, facetiously pondering on whether to continue printing his newspaper or not. Evident Hickey could depend upon his audience's knowledge of Shakespeare – at least popular speeches like Hamlet's soliloquy—for parodic effects¹. One finds many more similar parodies of speeches in Calcutta's earliest newspapers. More serious in intent were arguments with elaborate quotes from Shakespeare in local newspapers at the turn of the nineteenth century in support or refutation of William Jones' implicit comparison of the Sanskrit dramatist Kalidasa with Shakespeare when he referred to the Sanskrit poet as "our illustrious poet, India's Shakespeare."

For anyone in the colony interested in the 'authentic' texts of Shakespeare, printed plays would have triumphed over stage versions. Performances of Shakespeare plays on the stage appear to have little regard for textual authenticity. For instance, a review of a performance of *Henry IV*, part II in Calcutta in 1838 came down heavily on the show's lack of fidelity to the original¹⁷¹. The performance, we learn, was a pretext for elaborate spectacles which were very well received by the audience. "Do the people of Calcutta care a straw for the poetic merit of Shakespeare? To answer in the affirmative would be an insult to their boyish spirit," the reviewer noted caustically. Our reviewer for one knew his Shakespeare well. Fastidiously noting the

¹⁷¹ "Henry IV, part 2nd" *Calcutta Monthly Journal and General Register*. 1838. p. 184

slightest departures from the original text, the review shows a ‘readerly’ engagement with Shakespeare. The main spectacle the performance provided was a long triumphant march across the stage. The production’s attempt to militarize Shakespeare may have been prompted by a desire to render the play more relevant for the Indian context than in the original — British presence in India was militaristic in character. Judging from the hearty applause the performance received from the audience, it appears the changes made to Shakespeare’s play was well suited to the tastes of the audience, even if it dismayed our reviewer.

Lawrence Levine’s argument about a small elite reading Shakespeare in the American colony in the early nineteenth century in contrast to a socially inclusive audience at theatres for performances of the plays appears to be true for the Indian colony as well¹⁷². Matthew Adams’ findings about the reading habits of elite members of the British community stand in sharp contrast to what Sharon Murphy has uncovered from library catalogues and other sources about the reading patterns of British soldiers in India in the early nineteenth century¹⁷³. Murphy shows that rank-and-file soldiers in the East India Company’s military service, those who were directly involved in the maintenance of the empire by the sword, primarily read novels, fictions and travel writings. These genres are absent in probate records of men and women of property that Adams presents. Shakespeare’s name appears sporadically in Murphy’s results, a far cry from the predominance he enjoys in probate inventories of elite members of the expatriate community. Murphy usefully reminds us that books selected for use by soldiers more often reflect what was considered suitable reading matter by the higher officials than what the soldiers actually preferred or read. At any rate, the general neglect of Shakespeare among soldiers that Murphy’s

¹⁷²Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow/lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1988

¹⁷³ Murphy, Sharon. “Imperial Reading? The East India Company’s Lending Libraries for Soldiers, c 1819-1834.”

analysis reveals points to the perceived unsuitableness of Shakespeare for soldiers who were mostly drawn from the working classes of Britain and Ireland. Such reservations are an extension of the metropolitan perception in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century into the colony that considered Shakespeare unsuitable for readers with fragile intellectual and moral capacities owing to the playwright's unconventional moral attitudes and obscenities in the plays.

Adolescent boys, young women, children, the lower classes constituted categories of vulnerable readers, understood in contradistinction to mature men of the upper classes who were seen to possess the necessary intellectual competence to read and process objectionable matter. Matthew Adams and Sharon Murphy's findings taken together demonstrate the limitation of assuming a composite British enthusiasm for Shakespeare that pays inadequate attention to internal divisions among the colonizers based on class, gender, ethnic and regional affiliations.

In the latter decades of the eighteenth century, advertisements in local newspapers supplement probate inventories, memoirs and letters as sources of information about the colonial society's engagement with Shakespeare. We learn, for instance, about the arrival of a consignment of high-fashion consumer goods from the homeland in 1787 for sale in one of the recently opened European shops. The consignment included Johnson and Steevens' edition of Shakespeare along with Gibbon's *Roman Empire*, Newton's *Milton*, Johnson's *Lives*, Knox's *Elegant Extracts* and other titles in English, raisins and almonds, Sir Hans Sloane's milk chocolate and Angelo's raspberry jam "of remarkable fine flavour"¹⁷⁴. As in the metropole, Shakespeare was available in the colonial market as a wide range of products. An advertisement for sale in the *Calcutta Gazette* 1781 mentions the availability of white and black composition busts of "esteemed Poets and Authors"; it is safe to assume that it included Shakespeare's

¹⁷⁴ *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes of the Years 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1788 Showing the Political and Social Condition of the English in India*. Ed. W.S. Seton-Karr. London: Longman, 1864, p. 218

bust¹⁷⁵. The latter show up occasionally in probate inventories; Johanna Lee, who died in Bengal in 1805, for instance left behind a long list of personal and household items that included a black bust of Shakespeare and sixteen prints of Shakespeare in burnished gold frames¹⁷⁶.

Johanna Lee's Shakespeare prints may have been engravings published by Boydell from the ambitious Shakespeare Gallery, done after large oil paintings by leading artists exhibited in a permanent gallery in Pall Mall. The cost of these prints was quite astronomical in the homeland – the price of five guineas for four large and four small prints and for the large prints, each number of four prints cost three guineas¹⁷⁷. In the colonial market the price would be even higher, hiked up by freight, insurance and maintenance, and only the most affluent would have been able to afford these. Johanna Lee's inventory suggests an extravagant spending pattern — just the kind of luxury consumer Boydell had in mind when he turned to the Indian market to sell his product¹⁷⁸. For those stationed in India and unable to experience in person the Pall Mall exhibitions, the most talked about Shakespeare event at the turn of the nineteenth century, the prints would be the way to access the paintings. Additionally, as Natasha Eaton explains, framed prints, portable and disposable, had a great appeal as wall décor for the British as they struggled to overcome the foreignness of Indian dwellings.

It is impossible to say how many numbers or folio volumes of the *Shakespeare Gallery* sold in India. Boydell's project met with a failure in the colony as in the homeland as there were not enough buyers for the expensive engravings¹⁷⁹. We do know that a copy (Boydell's Shakespeare, 1790) was acquired for the royal library of Murshidabad though it is not clear when

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 61

¹⁷⁶ Finn, Margot, "Colonial Gifts: Family Politics and the Exchange of Goods in British India, C 1780-1820." p. 209.

¹⁷⁷ Young, Alan. *Hamlet and the Visual Arts, 1709-1900*. Newark, Del: U of Delaware P, 2002 p. 56.

¹⁷⁸ Eaton, Natasha. "Excess in the City?: The Consumption of Imported Prints in Colonial India, c 1780-1795" *Journal of Material Culture* 8.1 (2003): 45-74

¹⁷⁹ Ibid p. 68-9

it was acquired¹⁸⁰. Asaf-ud-daula, the Nawab of Oudh, who owned several thousand English prints glazed and framed, may also have purchased the *Shakespeare Gallery* from Boydell's nephew who was stationed in the colony to further his business. These would be some of the earliest engagements of Indians with Shakespeare. With the foundation of English medium colleges in the early decades of the nineteenth century, textual engagement with Shakespeare would dominate. Asaf-ud-daula's neighbor, art collector and connoisseur, Claude Martin, whom we mentioned above, the richest man in India upon his death in 1800, expressed his interest in the *Shakespeare Gallery* but ultimately bought Boydell's engraving of Milton¹⁸¹. He did, however, own a print of Shakespeare—Joshua Reynolds' *Shakespeare's Characters*—which he showed off to his guests. On one occasion, in 1788, Martin's guests, the Plowdens, were shown medals and new prints including a fine print of the Witches from *Shakespeare's Characters* by Joshua Reynolds. Mrs. Elizabeth Plowden was duly impressed, as much by the quality of the print as by its price which she noted in her diary to be three pounds in the homeland¹⁸².

By the late eighteenth century, engagement with Shakespeare had spread beyond the confines of the British community. Occasionally we find mention of Shakespeare books in the probate inventories of continental Europeans in India. This is not surprising considering that Shakespeare's literary prestige was debated in an international context at the turn of the nineteenth century. The emergence of Britain as an important polity in the Indian subcontinent in the latter decades of the eighteenth century sustained an elevated sense of Britain's cultural pre-eminence within the new imperial order. Probate inventories confirm this pattern. John Adam Cellarius, an employee of the Dutch East India Company who lived in the Dutch

¹⁸⁰ Majumdar, P. *The Musnud of Murshidabad, 1704-1904*. Murshidabad: Saroda Ray, 1904, p. 90.

¹⁸¹ *A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century India: The Letters of Claude Martin 1766-1800*. Ed Rosie Lewellyn-Jones. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003. p. 98.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p. 285

settlement of Kochi, owned a large collection of books that included *Hamlet* and a copy of *Romeo and Juliet* in Dutch¹⁸³. At the same time, the growing confidence of the British in their native cultural tradition is evident in the library built in the residence of the British representative at the court of Hyderabad. The renovated library included marble busts of the Ancients on one side and the Moderns on another, depicting Aristotle, Homer, Cicero, Shakespeare, Milton, Newton, Locke, Burke, Fox and Pitt¹⁸⁴. The busts represent a radically compressed colonial knowledge system underpinning the imperial order at the turn of the nineteenth century from the polyglot collection of the library at Fort Saint George in Madras in the early eighteenth century which, as we saw earlier, included Dutch, French and Italian works. Vasunia has shown that the British justified their presence in India by drawing continuities between Roman Empire and its own¹⁸⁵. In the Hyderabad residence of the British representative, French, Dutch and Italian stalwarts have been cleared off while British authors and statesmen have been elevated to a status at par with the ancient classics. With such an assumption of cultural importance, the history of the empire of English language and literature has begun, with Shakespeare as a believed-in idol of an emergent imperial order.

5. Conclusion

Past scholarship on Shakespeare in India has emphasized political and intellectual uses of Shakespeare in colonial India. In contrast, this chapter has foregrounded the materiality of Shakespeare in colonial India, arguing that its valuation as a good cannot be extricated from the

¹⁸³ Singh, Anjana. *Fort Kochin in Kerala, 1750-1830: The Social Condition of a Dutch Community in an Indian Milieu*. Leiden: Konincklijke Brill, 2010. p. 130.

¹⁸⁴ Henry Russell to Charles Russell, 26 September 1814, Bodleian, MS. Eng. let. c. 157, fols. 92 verso-93. See Finn, Margot, "Learning to Furnish: East India Company at Home, 1757-1857" <https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/ghcc/research/eicah/houses/swallowfieldpark/learningtofurnish/#n3>

¹⁸⁵ Vasunia, Phiroze. *The Classics and Colonial India*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013.

playwright's political and intellectual valuation. Alok Yadav has persuasively argued that in the eighteenth century nationalistic cultural negotiations prompted by Britain's enhanced geopolitical position led English-language writers to emerge from a self-conscious awareness of secondariness to the Italians, French and the Spanish to claim a status of metropolitan centrality in European republic of letters. Yadav's argument underscores the historicity of the emergence of English as the global language and literary culture that it is now. Corresponding with Britain's self-perception as an imperial power in the eighteenth century, Yadav argues, an imperial vision in English literary culture comes to be articulated in the eighteenth century. Yadav identifies the 1770s as the time when the British come to see themselves, and is sometimes seen by others, as the epitome of civility, and English language literary tradition is perceived to be superior to other European national language literatures. My inquiry in this chapter into material practices surrounding uses of Shakespeare on the grounds of early colonial India confirms Yadav's argument.

The chapter has traced the changing patterns in records of ownership and reading of Shakespeare in India in the eighteenth century. In the early eighteenth century, few employees of the East India Company possessed copies of Shakespeare. The East India Company library at Fort Saint George owned a copy but relegated it to a lower status than the ancient classics and above Italian, French, Dutch and Indian vernacular books. The hierarchy of values in the surviving catalogue for the Fort Saint George library indicates that while Shakespeare was included in the official knowledge system underpinning the East India Company's operations in India, it was the ancient classics that dominated the order of knowledge in the early nineteenth century. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the value assigned to Shakespeare was transformed. Occurring in a handful of probate records of affluent residents in the mid eighteenth

century, in the latter part of the eighteenth century Shakespeare books, busts, prints, become an integral aspect of the material life of elite British expatriates in India. The abundance of cheap reprints, mechanical prints and mass produced busts arriving in India in personal luggage and through commercial retailers were the precondition of the ubiquity of Shakespeare in India at the turn of the eighteenth century while nationalistic investment and Shakespeare's supremacy in the native literary tradition ensured the popularity of Shakespeare in various material forms among British expatriates in India. Probate records show that from the 1770s there is a dramatic increase in the occurrence of Shakespeare books and other material forms in the personal assets of deceased British expatriates in India. Shakespeare books, prints and sculptures sustained the maintenance of English/British identities in withstanding and explaining the experience of the Indian otherness¹⁸⁶.

While my findings confirm the much noted enthusiasm for Shakespeare among colonial agents, I have been careful here to avoid the assumption of an undifferentiated, composite colonizer class. Shakespeare, it appears, constituted a frame of reference for only the elite among the British in India. Whereas fictional writings and novels were thought more suitable for soldiers serving in the East India Company's military wing, elite residents read Shakespeare and decorated their living spaces with prints and busts to remain connected with metropolitan values and to overcome the stress of geographical dislocation. It is difficult to gauge how exactly, if at all, Shakespeare inspired imperial ambitions, but there is no doubt that from the 1770s Shakespeare became integral to the mental make-up of colonial agents who were at the vanguard of Britain's civilizing mission in India.

¹⁸⁶ See Eaton, Natasha "Excess in the City?"

In considering Shakespeare's role in informing the imperialist mentality, one needs to be careful of not exaggerating the playwright's contribution to British imperialism. Phiroze Vasunia and Christopher Hagerman have drawn critical attention to the importance of the classical tradition as sources for British conceptions of empire, in particular to the ways in which it informed the minds of the agents of empire stationed in the colonial frontier. As Vasunia shows, Thomas Babington Macaulay read European classical authors almost exclusively during his tenure in India. A reconstruction of his reading list over thirteen months shows that Macaulay read Aeschylus (twice), Sophocles (twice), Euripides, Pindar (twice), Callimachus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Quintus Calaber, Theocritus (twice), Herodotus, Thucydides, most of Xenophon and Plato, and Aristotle's *Politics*¹⁸⁷. Hagerman shows that Virgil, Horace, Aeschylus, Sophocles and other classical authors were the constant companion of Elphinstone, Munro, A.E. Lyall and other high-ranking British officials as they travelled across the Indian subcontinent.

The importance of the classics in the colonial mentality had much to do with the training imparted at the East India Company's preparatory academy at Haileybury, established between 1805 and 1809, to raise the educational standards of the Company's civil servants. The classics dominated the curriculum to the effect that for many Company officials they were formative for the mental furniture the elite officials carried to India. For many colonial officials, English language literary works remained secondary to the ancient classics. Both Vasunia and Hagerman argue that the classics "were not just part of a Victorian national culture in Britain but also of the colonial experience in places such as India."¹⁸⁸ The classical discourse evoked, excited, inspired and informed Britain's imperial project in India to the extent that the contribution of English

¹⁸⁷Hagerman, *Britain's Imperial Muse*, p. 152

¹⁸⁸Vasunia, "Greek, Latin, and the Indian Civil Service," *Cambridge Classical Journal* 51 (2005): 88-97, p 63; Hagerman, *Britain's Imperial Muse*, p. 156.

authors appear negligible. Enthusiasm for English literary works such that Indians evinced in the early nineteenth century could be a matter of ridicule and an occasion for cultural chauvinism for British officials. Thus we have Sir Alexander Grant writing from Bombay in 1862 to F. T. Palgrave, the editor of the English poetry anthology *Golden Treasury*, “I hope you won’t think this a degradation. English poetry is to this people what Homer is to us.”¹⁸⁹

Although Sir Alexander Grant speaks here for a collective ‘us,’ such perceptions and reading habits privileging the European classics over English authors appear to be true for some individuals rather than the general expatriate community. Probate inventories recording the assets of anonymous individuals living in the colony is a reliable barometer of the reading habits of the elite members of the community in India. They provide a window to what the anonymous agents of empire, rather than a few noted names, were reading while in India. Adams’ statistical analysis of probate inventories shows that dictionaries in ancient European classical languages were common titles across the decades from 1780 to 1850, indicating that many British were cultivating their interest in the classics during their colonial domicile. However, no classical European author enters the list of titles except Virgil, and his popularity shows to be much lower than that of Shakespeare.

The scattered evidence of material Shakespeare in private and institutional collections from the eighteenth century that I have brought together and analyzed here aims to generate a new understanding of the material uses of Shakespeare in India in the eighteenth century in the context of a fast evolving empire. Its importance lies in recovering Shakespeare’s evolving importance in the knowledge system underlying Britain’s assumption of imperial stature at the turn of the eighteenth century. The resulting transformation, I have shown, involved a shift from

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in Altick, Richard. “From Aldine to Everyman: Cheap Reprint Series of the English Classics, 1830-1906” *Studies in Bibliography* 11 (1958): 3-24, p 3-4.

an attitude of indifference and cultural secondariness towards Shakespeare to his cult-like status, becoming an integral component of British imperialism and spilling beyond the expatriate community.

II. Editing Shakespeare for the Indian Classroom

1. Introduction

This chapter tells a story about Shakespeare in early colonial education in India. Whole-play study of Shakespeare in the classroom emerged first in India in the early nineteenth century during British rule, a good half a century earlier than it did in Britain and America¹⁹⁰. It is now a critical commonplace that Shakespeare was the icon of Britain's civilizing mission in India. More than other authors, Shakespeare, Jyotsna Singh has suggested, served as the symbol of the colonizer's moral and cultural superiority over Indians, legitimizing British rule¹⁹¹. A mainstay of the English curriculum in Indian schools and colleges long before there was any such established discipline in the West, Shakespeare was integral to the politics of imperialism. Many accounts of Shakespeare in India endorse Gauri Viswanathan's claim in *Masks of Conquest* that the fortunes of English literary studies began in India as an instrument of cultural colonization¹⁹². In this view, the moral imperative of improving supposed Indian defects of character aligned with the British civilizing mission required that such defects be undone through exposure to the salutary effects of English authors. In this argument, the teaching of English literature, with Shakespeare as the centerpiece of the curriculum, enabled an outwardly benign form of cultural conquest that worked in tandem and furthered Britain's military conquest and economic exploitation of India.

Viswanathan, however, has little to say about the textbooks through which British literature and culture was produced and disseminated in India. This is a serious drawback

¹⁹⁰ See *Shakespearean Educations: Power, Citizenship and Performance*. Ed. Coppelia Kahn, Heather S. Nathans and Mimi Godfrey. Delaware: U of Delaware P, 2011 and Bottoms, Janet. "Doing Shakespeare': How Shakespeare Became a School Subject" *Shakespeare Survey* 66 Ed. Peter Holland. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, p. 96-109

¹⁹¹ Singh, Jyotsna. "Different Shakespeares: The Bard in Colonial/Postcolonial India." *Theatre Journal* 41.4 (1989): 445-58.

¹⁹² Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.

considering our increasing awareness of the textual embedded-ness of ideological formulations and the importance of the material culture of books for any cultural analysis of ‘literature.’

Michael Hancher has recently attempted to remedy the gap in Viswanathan’s analysis with his examination of the very first college-level poetry textbook for classroom use—*Selections of British Poetry from the Time of Chaucer to the Present Day* (1840) edited by David Lester Richardson (1801-1865)¹⁹³. As Hancher notes, presenting a chronologically arranged national corpus of poetry in a single volume for classroom use, Richardson’s anthology is the forerunner of our present day Norton and its competitors, the very first poetry anthology as we know that genre today.

The exigency of colonial education meant that an anthology such as *Selections* would be produced in India in the early nineteenth century rather than in Britain. Among the rave reviews the anthology garnered upon publication, one noted wryly “the curious circumstance” that “we owe the very best anthology of English poetry extant to the press of Calcutta,” drawing attention to the relative neglect of English poetry in the homeland at the time, especially in the traditional university curriculum which focused exclusively on the ancient classics¹⁹⁴. As far as I am able to tell, Richardson’s anthology is also the very first instance of Shakespeare’s inclusion in a government publication.

A useful study of the anthology’s history of publication and transmission, Hancher’s essay, however, does not say much about Richardson’s editorial approach in presenting Shakespeare to Indian students beyond that Richardson avoids sonnets with homoerotic sentiments. Hancher’s interests lie elsewhere – in recovering in rich detail Richardson’s

¹⁹³ Hancher, Michael. “College English in India: The First Textbook.” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 42.03 (2014): 553-72

¹⁹⁴ “Selections from the British Poets.” (Review). Reproduced in *Allen’s Indian Mail* (1845).

biography and the bibliographical history of the anthology's publication and use in the colonial curriculum. Although Hancher does not explicitly state it, his essay endorses Viswanathan's claim that English literary studies emerged in India as a solution to the administrative problem of quelling recalcitrant natives without having to resort to physical force. With an avowedly strict adherence to religious neutrality, English literature allowed the British to engage in a "disciplinary management" of Indian subjects under the guise of imparting a liberal, humanist education¹⁹⁵. Richardson's *Selections* is a tangible textual embodiment of that 'epistemological violence,' in Nicholas Dirks's term,¹⁹⁶ waged by the colonial state on Indian subjects.

Hancher's analysis is curiously unaffected by recent scholarly revisions of Viswanathan's argument in *Masks of Conquest*¹⁹⁷. While there is undeniable merit to much of Viswanathan's claim about the colonial government's investment in English literary studies for the purpose of ideological control of subject peoples, Viswanathan, nevertheless, has offered a linear, unilateral story about the emergence of English literary studies in India, relegating the activity of Indians in the colonial educational sphere to a separate textual realm¹⁹⁸. Paying attention to Indian engagement with Western education, as several scholars have recently done, has revealed that

¹⁹⁵ Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*. p. 20.

¹⁹⁶ Quoted in Cohn, Bernard. *Colonialism and Its Form of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996, p. xii

¹⁹⁷ For a critique of Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest*, see Frykenberg, Robert. Review. *American Historical Review* 97.1 (1992): 272-3. Frykenberg writes, "With astounding certainty, bereft of critical scrutiny, the author's eye seems closed to anything but a monolithic motivation (with an implied collective guilt). Viswanathan's position is that knowledge is power –without meaning apart from relations of power by which it is determined. Awkward facts and contexts are not allowed to stand in her way....The possibility that Viswanathan's own discourse may be a monocultural or Eurocentric imposition, precisely the same kind of 'Orientalism' against which Edward Said inveighed, seems to elude her." For a retort to Frykenberg in Viswanathan's defense, see Peers, Douglas M. "Is Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again? The Revival of Imperial History and the Oxford History of British Empire." *Journal of World History* 13.2 (2002):451. For revisions of Viswanathan's argument, see *India's Shakespeare*. Ed Poonam Trivedi and Bartholomeusz Diaz. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2005 and Joshi, Priya. *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002

¹⁹⁸ Viswanathan writes, "...it is entirely possible to study the ideology of British education quite independently of an account of how Indians actually received, reacted to, imbibed, manipulated, reinterpreted, or resisted the ideological content of British literary education..." *Masks of Conquest*, p. 11-12

colonial knowledge production was more of a collaborative act between the British and sections of the Indian population within asymmetrical power relations than a coercive, totalitarian imposition that Viswanathan proposes¹⁹⁹. The fixed boundary between the analytical categories, the ‘colonizer’ and the ‘colonized,’ that underlies Viswanathan’s account appears blurry when one considers that the Indian landed gentry had lobbied for English education long before Macaulay’s infamous *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) which became instrumental in the Anglicization of higher education in India and had actively resisted the colonial government’s attempts to allocate spending on vernacular education for the masses²⁰⁰. In the case of Richardson’s anthology, its plan was drawn up by the Committee of Public Instruction, responsible for administering the colonial government’s educational funds, which included among its members two Indian intellectuals, a point Hancher bypasses in his otherwise detailed account of the planning and execution of the anthology²⁰¹. The influence of Indians in the colonial government’s decision making may have been asymmetrical, but it cannot be ignored if one cares for a balanced and nuanced account of the beginnings of English literary studies in India.

About Shakespeare in the colonial curriculum, Viswanathan offers little beyond Reverend William Keane’s “attempt to persuade officials that ‘Shakespeare, though by no means a good standard, is full of religion; it is full of common sense principles which none but Christian men can recognize. Sound Protestant Bible principles, though not actually told in words, are

¹⁹⁹ Gupta, Abhijit. “The Calcutta School Book Society and the Production of Knowledge.” *English Studies in Africa* 57.1: 55-65.

²⁰⁰ Acharya, Poromesh. “Is Macaulay Still Our Guru?” *Economic and Political Weekly* 23.22 (1988): 1124-30.

²⁰¹ The committee consisted of 13 members headed by Macaulay. The last two names included in the list, suggesting a descending order of importance, are Radhakant Deb and Russomoy Dutt. Other notables in the list included Sir Edward Ryan, H. Shakespeare, C.H. Cameron etc. “Macaulay in Lower Bengal. II.” *Calcutta Review* (1906): 463.

there set out to advantage, and the opposite often condemned.”²⁰² Viswanathan takes Reverend Keane’s comment as indicative of the colonial government’s co-option of Shakespeare in order to spread morality and Christian values among Indians without direct proselytization.

Shakespeare, imbued with Christian sentiments without being overtly preachy, was perfectly suited for what the British wanted out of an English education, or so Viswanathan would have us believe. That Reverend Keane would feel compelled to persuade colonial officials about Shakespeare’s usefulness in the colonial curriculum indicates a reservation on the part of colonial officials about Shakespeare’s compatibility with the civilizing mission but Viswanathan is not attentive to that hint.

Glancing through various government records, one catches glimpses of an unmistakable reluctance, even opposition towards Shakespeare from many key players in the colonial educational sphere in its early years in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. For instance, the Orientalist scholar Horace Hayman Wilson notes in his evidence before the Select Committee in 1853 that missionaries protested against the government decision in 1844 to institute the Senior Scholarship examination which served as the gateway for posts in government service for Indian aspirants for the importance it allocated to Shakespeare. Wilson comments that the pupils of missionary institutions “were unfamiliar, for instance, with Shakespeare in particular—they had no chance of competing with the boys of the Hindu college who were tolerably well versed in dramatic literature.”²⁰³ Hayman mentions that the inclusion of Shakespeare in the Senior Scholarship examination disadvantaged students in the missionary institutions whose curriculum excluded Shakespeare and dramatic poetry in general. Nor were the missionaries alone in their opposition to Shakespeare. Reverend Keane’s observation

²⁰² Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, p. 80.

²⁰³ Great Britain. *Parliamentary Papers, 1852-53*. Evidence of Horace Hayman Wilson.

suggests that it extended to some colonial officials who were otherwise given to a secular education for Indian students. Viswanathan's account elides over the reluctance of missionaries and some colonial officials to include Shakespeare in the English curriculum.

If every Briton were equally convinced about Shakespeare's purported "sound Protestant Bible principles," then the missionary institutions would have been at the forefront of including the playwright in their English curriculum. At the General Assembly founded by Alexander Duff, Shakespeare was, however, avoided as a textbook for "obvious reasons," according to Lal Behari Dey, an alumnus of that institution²⁰⁴. In his memoir, Dey recounts the instance when he was found reading a Shakespeare play by another missionary, Reverend John Macdonald. The latter expressed his strong disapprobation by remarking that "he, when a young man, had a copy of Shakespeare in his library, and that instead of burning it very foolishly he exchanged it in the shops for another book—*foolishly* because another might have bought the book and injured his soul."²⁰⁵ Reverend Macdonald's hostility to Shakespeare undermines the oft-repeated truism of postcolonial criticism of Shakespeare in India that the agents of empire all felt robustly enthusiastic about Britain's national Bard²⁰⁶. Reverend Macdonald's comment illustrates what was perceived to be problematic about Shakespeare's compatibility with the civilizing mission: an inadequate moral ethos cancelling an enthusiastic endorsement by the agents of civilization.

Textbooks like Richardson's *Selections* tell a different story than what we have been made to believe about British enthusiasm for Shakespeare. It shows that the inclusion of Shakespeare in the colonial curriculum was neither natural nor inevitable. Shakespeare's values did not fit simply into the colonial imperative to project an image of moral purity and superiority

²⁰⁴ Dey, Lal Behari, *Recollections of Alexander Duff*. Edinburgh: T. Nelson and Sons, 1879, p. 133-4.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid* p. 195.

²⁰⁶ See for instance, Singh, Jyotsna. "Different Shakespeares: The Bard in Colonial/Postcolonial India." *Theatre Journal* 41.4 (1989): 445-58

over Indians. As for how important the image of moral superiority was for the British, we get an indication from Joseph Sramek's *Gender, Morality, and Race in Company India, 1765-1858*²⁰⁷. The fiction of moral superiority, contradicting all evidence to the contrary, Sramek explains, was crucial for the British in maintaining authority over Indians and in developing a rationale for why the British should rule India. By presenting themselves as moral and civilized figures, colonial officials sought to overcome the crisis of authority that mired the East India Company in the late eighteenth century ensuing from the debauched lifestyles and corruption of Company men which came to the forefront during the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings. Against charges of Burkean critics who called into question the morality of British rule in India, apologists of empire such as Thomas Babington Macaulay defended British rule on the ground that it was more moral and humane than Muslim or Hindu rule. The imperative of maintaining the image of British superior morality meant that the colonial state actively produced and reproduced social distinctions between Indians and the British based on virtue and morality. Sramek's argument dovetails well into Nicholas Dirks' account of how the East India Company government in the early nineteenth century sought to overcome its tarnished image by establishing a "moral mandate for a new kind of imperial project" emphasizing public responsibility and private virtue that would legitimize British rule as an instrument of "modernity and civilization."²⁰⁸

To my knowledge, Peter Stallybrass alone has been attentive to the perceived incompatibility of Shakespeare with the British civilizing mission²⁰⁹. In his analysis of the 'moral panic' that ensued Edmund Malone's inclusion of Shakespeare's sonnets in his 1790 edition,

²⁰⁷ Sramek, Joseph. *Gender, Morality, and Race in Company India, 1765-1858*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

²⁰⁸ Dirks, Nicholas B. *The Scandal of Empire India and the Creation of Imperial Britain*. Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Belknap, 2008 p. 315

²⁰⁹ Stallybrass, Peter. "Editing as Cultural Formation: The Sexing of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *Shakespeare's Poems*. Ed. Stephen Orgel and Sean Kellen. New York: Garland Pub, 1999. 133-47

Stallybrass notes the specter of sodomy and pederasty that hung over Shakespeare's newly constructed 'character.' To Malone's suggestion that the sonnets were the keys unlocking Shakespeare's psyche, the Shakespeare editor Steevens reacted by asserting that nothing short of the strongest act of parliament would force readers to their 'service.' As Stallybrass explains, implicit in Steevens' assertion is the anxiety that to read the sonnets is to be sodomized. Stallybrass shows that 'putting Shakespeare straight' was an ongoing process of critical negotiation occurring throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Bourgeois nationalism was, predictably, a pressure in claiming a decent and respectable Shakespeare, but so was, Stallybrass reminds us, Britain's civilizing mission in India. For all its attempt to erase the perceived taint of same-sex love and pederasty in the sonnets and Shakespeare's 'character,' the purification of immorality, Stallybrass shows, was never complete, persisting as an anxiety that the supreme literary ornament of the British race was a contaminated source subverting the colonial project that pivoted around the imperative to purify, cleanse and uplift.

The standard narrative of nineteenth century Bardolatry endowing Shakespeare with the moral authority of the Scriptures needs to be balanced with the more nuanced view that if Shakespeare was considered good for everyone in the metropolitan homeland it was so only under specific circumstances²¹⁰. During debates surrounding the passage of the 1857 Obscene Publications Act in Britain, Shakespeare's name came up amidst fears that Chief Justice Lord Campbell's definition of obscenity almost risked censorship of 'serious works of literature' like Shakespeare's²¹¹. The controversy draws attention to the thin line distinguishing the plays from

²¹⁰ See for instance DeCook, Travis, and Galey, Alan. *Shakespeare, the Bible, and the Form of the Book: Contested Scriptures*. New York: Routledge, 2012. Also, Laporte, Charles. "The Bard, the Bible and the Victorian Shakespeare Question" *ELH* 74.3 (2007): 609-28

²¹¹ Roberts, M.J. D. "Morals, Art, and the Law: The Passing of the Obscene Publications Act, 1857" *Victorian Studies* 28.4 (1988): 609-29. Lord Campbell defined obscenity as "intended to apply exclusively to works written for the single purpose of corrupting the morals of youth, and of nature calculated to shock the common feelings of

obscene matter. For a society preoccupied with sexual propriety, obscenity and immorality was a matter of concern for everyone but more so for some than others. As Kate Rumbold explains, Shakespeare could have a role in the education of youth in Britain only so far as virtuous fragments extracted from the plays were presented out of contexts in accordance with moral directives²¹². In fact, popular poetry anthologies such as Enfield's *Speaker* and Knox's *Elegant Extracts*, Rumbold argues, employing a selective filter of morality, were contributive of the myth of Shakespeare as a moral authority. Virtuous fragments were made to stand in a relationship of synecdoche to Shakespeare, the virtuous middle-class man, full of wise counsel, from whom the fragments were believed to emanate.

Like children and adolescent boys, women were considered particularly endangered by the immoral influences of Shakespeare's plays. Thus we have the Bowdlers, and many others after them, busy at work expunging expressions of obscenity—references to sex, prostitution, body parts, dissolute lifestyles, oaths and profanities—that might despoil the chastity of British middle-class women²¹³. Even expurgation of obscene expressions could not make plays like *Othello*, *Measure for Measure* and the two parts of *Henry IV* suitable for women and family reading as indecency seemed inextricable from the story line, so opined the Bowdlers. Nevertheless, they included these plays in their *Family Shakespeare* with the obligatory word of

decency in any well-regulated mind." Qtd in "Morals, Art and the Law" p. 613. The identification of intention and effect were pivotal in Lord Campbell's definition of obscenity. He appeared before the Lords with a copy of the Alexander Dumas' *Lady of the Camellias* which he claimed was a book of a "polluting character" and yet did not fall into the category of books deserving censorship. Shakespeare, Lord Campbell's critics pointed out, was a great artist but also source of incidental obscenity, but he could be excused for this because of the elevating sentiments he inculcated.

²¹² Rumbold, Kate. "Shakespeare Anthologized." *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts*. Ed. Mark Thornton Burnett, Adrian Streete and Ramona Wray. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011. 88-105.

²¹³ Originally published in 1807, *The Family Shakespeare* went through several editions in the nineteenth century. On Bowdler's excisions see Colin Franklin, *Shakespeare Domesticated: The Eighteenth Century Editions*. England: Scholar P, 1991, 141-43.

caution that they were more suitable for private reading in the cabinet rather than family reading in the parlor²¹⁴. In other words, these plays could be read only with guilty pleasure.

The Bowdlers' editing enterprise may appear to confirm the familiar narrative of the Victorian and pre-Victorian favorite past time of nosing out and repressing sexual indiscipline. Hunter, Saunders and Williamson, however, offer a more nuanced interpretation of the regulation of morality during the period²¹⁵. Drawing upon Foucault's analysis of the regulation of sexuality, Hunter, Saunders and Williamson argue that censorship of obscenity in the nineteenth century was distributive rather than repressive in that whether a work was to be deemed immoral or not depended not on some intrinsic characteristic of the work but with reference to who was accessing and reading it. Hunter, Saunders and Williamson describe this notion as variable obscenity. Emerging in the context of an unprecedented expansion of print technology, the regulation of obscenity coalesced around anxieties over assumptions of relative competencies of readers in utilizing printed texts. Some groups—women, young people, children, the working class, considered morally and intellectually fragile— had to be to be protected from immoral influences while mature men from privileged classes were exempt from such regulation as they were seen to possess the necessary competence to partake in print technology²¹⁶. The concept of variable obscenity may have found its legal expression in Lord Campbell and Lord Cockburn's definition of obscenity in the mid nineteenth century but it is

²¹⁴ See Skinner, David. *A Critical and Historical Analysis of Charles and Mary Lamb's and Thomas Bowdler's The Family Shakespeare*. Diss. U of Sheffield, 2012. p. 168.

²¹⁵ Saunders, David. "Victorian Obscenity Law: Negative Censorship or Positive Administration." *Writing and Censorship in Britain*. Ed. Paul Hyland and Neil Sammells. London: New York: Routledge, 1992: 154-70. Hunter, Ian, David Saunders, and Dugald Williamson, *On Pornography: Literature, Sexuality and Obscenity Law*. New York: St. Martin's P, 1993, p 10. Chief Justice Cockburn declared: "I think the test of obscenity is this, whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall."

²¹⁶ Heath, Deana. *Purifying Empire: Obscenity and the Politics of Moral Regulation in Britain, India and Australia*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2010. p. 52.

already in operation much earlier in the century when editors attempted to protect middle-class women and children from the unexpurgated “manly” book of Shakespeare, the restricted domain of men²¹⁷. Excerpted anthologies for boys, moralistic re-told tales for children, especially female children, expurgated plays for women and family reading in bourgeois parlors, heavily annotated, uncut scholarly editions for the father’s library – in the metropolitan homeland, nineteenth century Shakespeare editions catered to a readership minutely differentiated along lines of assumed competencies.

The colonial subject, like women, children, the youth and the working class in the metropolitan homeland, belonged to the category of vulnerable readers. In benign views, he was child-like; less benevolently, he was a moral pervert—either way, he was little deserving of civil liberty, predicated on self-regulation. As Sramek explains, the concept of Indians as moral children requiring British tutelage was crucial to the British seeking authority over Indians and legitimacy for imperial rule. It provided, in particular, a way out of the ethical dilemma of British imperial rule in India²¹⁸. This is also confirmed by Uday Singh Mehta who shows that the premise of Indians as child-like requiring benevolent British tutelage justified autocratic intervention in their lives by a ‘liberal empire’ ostensibly committed to the autonomy, equality and freedom of all individuals²¹⁹.

²¹⁷ Mary Lamb, “For Young ladies too it has been my intention chiefly to write, because boys are generally permitted the use of their father’s libraries at a much earlier age than girls are, they frequently having scenes of Shakespeare by heart, before their sisters are permitted into this manly book.” “Preface.” *Tales from Shakespeare* qtd in Marsden, Jean. “Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and Tales from Shakespeare.” *Children’s Literature* 17 (1989): 47-63. As Jean Marsden notes, “The library doors were unlocked but the books themselves were out of reach.”

²¹⁸ Sramek, Joseph. *Gender, Morality, and Race in Company India, 1765-1858*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

²¹⁹ Mehta, Uday Singh. *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-century British Liberal Thought*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1999.

Purging immorality from Indian culture, traditions and practices was one of the main drives of the British civilizing mission²²⁰. Missionaries, colonial administrators and educationists portrayed Indian culture and traditions as obscene; Indian poetry, in particular, was singled out for its moral licentiousness²²¹. ‘Hindu literature’ was “immoral and sensuous,” unsuitable especially for women; by contrast, English literature, it was claimed, was “purer, cleaner”²²². In 1849, John Drinkwater Bethune, chairman of the Education Council, advised the young aspiring poet Madhusudan Dutta: “By all that I can learn of your vernacular literature, its best specimens are defiled by grossness and indecency. An ambitious young poet could not desire a finer field for exertion than taking the lead by giving his countrymen in their own language a taste for something higher and better.”²²³ Interactions with English poetry were expected to produce an elevation of tastes, sensibilities and morality. Here it needs to be pointed out that the purging of immorality from Indian culture was hardly coercive. The emerging middle class of India — beneficiaries of colonial rule and having a substantial ideological investment in the notion of ‘respectability’ — adopted British notion of obscenity and set about to reform Indian cultural practices, showing a greater zeal than even the British in castigating immorality from indigenous traditions and practices²²⁴.

This chapter examines Shakespeare’s contested position in the early colonial curriculum. Contrary to a confident, self-congratulatory attitude towards the national Bard that one may expect from the British, the chapter uncovers an ill-at-ease about Shakespeare’s compatibility with the civilizing mission. The inclusion of Shakespeare in a government textbook not only

²²⁰ Banerjee, Sumanta. “Bogey of the Bawdy: Changing Concept of Obscenity in 19th Century Bengali Culture.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 22.29 (1987): 1197-1206.

²²¹ Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, p. 82-3.

²²² *Ibid*, p. 87.

²²³ Qtd in Sumanta Banerjee’s “Bogey of the Bawdy.” p. 1202.

²²⁴ Heath, Deana. *Purifying Empire*, p. 197

rendered the British vulnerable to charges of purveying immorality and obscenity, it threatened the project of moral and intellectual improvement of subject peoples on which the ethical justification of empire was based. The assertion of an unambiguous moral code in a canon of literature was crucial for the British as it was touted as a mark of national virtue²²⁵. The chapter queries resistance to Shakespeare from none other than a section of the British actively involved in the project of castigating, in Macaulay's words, "impious and cruel superstitions" on the bank of the Ganges. In contrast to the reticence of colonial officials and missionaries towards Shakespeare, the Hindu intelligentsia of Calcutta, we will see, made the first initiative in claiming Shakespeare as an object of academic study in a program of English-style liberal education for their sons, paving the way for his inclusion in the government curriculum and textbook publications.

It is now widely acknowledged that editors and editions have had a transformative impact on what and how we mean by 'Shakespeare.' Strategies used by editors and publishers—editorial approaches, textual and critical apparatuses, the layout of the text, the size and format of the

²²⁵ Consider Macaulay's toast delivered in Edinburgh in 1844: "To the literature of Britain, to that literature, the brightest, the purest, the most durable of all the glories of our country, to that literature, so rich in precious truth and precious fiction, to that literature which boasts of the prince of all poets and of the prince of all philosophers, to that literature which has exercised an influence wider than that of our commerce and mightier than that of our arms, to that literature which has taught France the principles of liberty and has furnished Germany with models of art; to that literature which forms a closer tie than the ties of consanguinity between us and the commonwealths of the valley of the Mississippi; to that literature before the light of which impious and cruel superstitions are fast taking flight on the banks of the Ganges; to that literature which will in future ages, instruct and delight the unborn millions who will have turned the Australasian and Catfrarian deserts into cities and gardens. To the literature of Britain, then! And wherever the literature of Britain spreads may it be attended by British virtue and British freedom! Qtd. in Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, "Introduction" *Women Writing in India 600 B.C. to the Present, Vol. I: 600 B.C. to the Early Twentieth Century Delhi* Ed. Susie Tharu and Lalita. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1993. p. 1. The speech evokes British literature as a nation-defining achievement whose influence was as expansive as Britain's physical empire founded on military conquest, migration and settlement. Purity and piety, Macaulay claims, are the defining characteristics of British national literature. It is inevitable that Macaulay should choose these qualities rather than some other because it is national literature which is made to shoulder the burden of imperial expansion as a moral enterprise, sublimating the brutalities of imperial conquest and subordination into a hallowed civilizing mission. Purported literary purity lends an aura of virtue to the nation, bolstering Britain's right to govern large portions of the globe. Macaulay's prince of all poets and philosophers is certainly a reference to Shakespeare.

volume—have more than presented Shakespeare to readers—they have contributed to the myth about Shakespeare’s greatness²²⁶. The chapter addresses the editorial negotiations that sought to make Shakespeare compatible with the British civilizing mission. In so doing, it reveals the oppositions to Shakespeare on account of perceived immorality that had to be overcome before he could be incorporated into a government commissioned textbook. This is not simply a story of making Shakespeare safe for the Indian classroom by editing away objectionable matter. On the pages of Richardson’s *Selections*, we encounter Shakespeare suspended between the conflicting and contradictory claims of a libertarian ethic of colonial education and empire and the claims of an ethic of control. *Selections* demonstrate a symptom of the ideological crisis of liberal imperialism premised on the lofty notions of progress and improvement of subject peoples and the craving from perpetual domination.

The chapter serves as a counterpoint to Viswanathan’s rather flattened argument about the origins of English literary studies as a neat solution to the colonial government’s administrative expediency of wanting to avoid direct biblical teaching while wishing to inculcate morals among subject peoples. In place of a coherent and uniform view of colonial discourse, the present chapter highlights the fractures in colonial discourse on Shakespeare. Shakespeare emerges as a site of contest caught in an unresolved tension between conflicting claims about the goals of education for Indians. Torn between the opposite pulls of moral libertarianism and moral regulation, the editing of Shakespeare for Indian college students is a story of paradox and contradiction rather than neat schemas such that Gauri Viswanathan narrates in *Masks of Conquest*. The chapter ultimately highlights the incompatibility of a liberal education for subject peoples governed by foreign autocracy.

²²⁶ See Massai, Sonia. “Textual Shakespeare.” *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts*. Ed Mark Thornton Burnett, Adriane Streete and Ramona Wray. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011. p. 11-36.

In Shakespeare scholarship, Dobson's influential study *The Making of the National Poet* has argued that the dramatist's emergence as a national icon occurred belatedly, more than a century after the playwright's death in 1616. Dobson employs England's internal factional politics and Anglo-French rivalry as his frames of reference in explaining Shakespeare's apotheosis in the eighteenth century²²⁷. Linda Colley has challenged Dobson's account of the national apotheosis in the eighteenth century²²⁸. Contrary to Dobson's assertion that in the 1760s "his [Shakespeare's] fame is so synonymous with the highest claims of contemporary nationalism that simply to be British is to inherit him, without needing to read or see his actual plays at all,"²²⁹ Colley says that public estimation of Shakespeare as 'British,' as opposed to an 'English' cultural icon was delayed till as late as the early twentieth century, occurring more in fits and starts than in a steady progressive development that Dobson, Jonathan Bate and others have charted. In the eighteenth century, conflicting regional, religious and ethnic loyalties within a newly constituted political nation, Colley argues, were obstacles to any wide-scale recognition of Shakespeare as a British cultural icon and that the popularity and advocacy of the playwright remained largely confined among private individuals. Religious and ethnic differences and conflicting loyalties in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were obstacles to any stable recognition of Shakespeare as a British icon. It was in the context of state sponsorship of Shakespeare, in particular, the development of a standardized vernacular curriculum in British schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the advancement of print technology which made the plays widely and cheaply available, the development of modern communication

²²⁷ Dobson, Michael. *The Making of the National Poet Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1992. p. 214. Also Singh, Jyotsna, "Different Shakespeares" p. 447

²²⁸ Colley, Linda. "Shakespeare and the Limits of National Culture." University of London. Royal Holloway. 3rd March, 1998. Hayes Robinson Lecture Series No. 2. Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet*

²²⁹ Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet*, p. 214.

systems such as the radio, and last but not least, Britain's expansive empire that Shakespeare became, Colley argues, a symbol of Britain's cultural excellence. More than the 1769 Jubilee celebrations in Stratford, the power of Shakespeare's national status, Colley argues, was visible during the tercentenary anniversary of Shakespeare's birth celebrated across the empire.

Colley's criticism of Dobson rightly emphasizes the importance of the British Empire in the national apotheosis of Shakespeare but it stops short of asserting the constitutive role of the colony in elevating the playwright and poet to the pinnacle of national glory and cultural achievement. In this chapter, I take farther Colley's argument by highlighting the contribution of the Indian colony in the construction of Shakespeare as a national symbol. Shakespeare received government patronage in the Indian colony long before he did so in the homeland with the publication of Richardson's *Selections of British poetry from Chaucer to Present Poets* in 1840. The chapter aims to revise the persisting notion that Shakespeare, manufactured in Britain, was exported to India as a finished artifact and then disseminated in a ready-made form as an aid to the civilizing mission.

While the contribution of the anthology as a genre in the constitution of national identity has been noted²³⁰, missing in these discussions is the role of anthologies such as Richardson's in the construction of a national literary corpus produced on the margins of empire as an instrument of mediation between colonized subjects and a metropolitan national literary culture. The present chapter brings together the disparate scholarship on Shakespeare, anthology, and the construction of the national canon together by examining how Richardson constructs Shakespeare as a national symbol over the pages of the anthology. Englishness, and by extension Britishness, was

²³⁰ Benedict, Barbara M. *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1996. Benedict argues that the anthology's "format prompts the formation of a canon" and that historically arranged gatherings present the "history of English literature as a patriotic and moral commodity" so that readers of national anthologies "become part of the culture they absorb" p. 4, 166 and 173.

fashioned, as Benedict Anderson has argued, through distance—through travel, colonization and exile—generating the “nationalizing moment” necessary for the articulation of national identities²³¹. The colony not only secured Britishness but served as a stage on which the national character and its representative symbol could be constructed, defined and contested. And the Indian colony was particularly suited for the articulation and forging of a national identity as it was more British than English with subaltern groups within the British Isles, the Scots and the Irish, playing a crucial role in its conquest, exploration and government, disproportionate to their total numbers in the homeland²³².

In what follows, I use documentary sources I found during my research at the British Library to reconstruct Shakespeare’s absence and presence in the curriculum before English education became the fixed policy of the colonial government with the Macaulayan reforms of 1835. The examination will involve a scrutiny of an anthology commissioned by the colonial government titled *English Poetical Reader*. Unlike Richardson’s anthology, *English Poetical Reader* was meant for use at the school level in government schools. By examining this anthology, we gain material which allows us to examine attitudes towards Shakespeare in the early colonial curriculum. I will also look at the emergence of Shakespeare as an academic subject at the Hindu College, established in Calcutta in 1817, on indigenous initiative and wealth. The credit of innovation of Shakespeare as a college level academic subject goes to the Indian intelligentsia that established the Hindu College to impart a liberal education, English style, to the sons of upper-caste Hindus. From here, I will go on to examine Richardson’s

²³¹ Anderson, Benedict. ‘Long-Distance Nationalism.’ *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* Benedict Anderson. Ed. Benedict Anderson. London: Verso, 1988, p.58-74. Heath, Deana. “Obscenity, Empire and Global Networks” *Commodities of Empire* Working Paper 7 (2008): 1-17, p 1.

²³² Colley, Linda. “Britishness and Otherness: An Argument” *The Journal of British Studies* 31.4 (1992): 309-29, p. 324.

editorial approaches in presenting Shakespeare to Indian students in *Selections of British Poets* in the context of Lord William Bentinck's *Resolution* of 1835 which codified Macaulay's views in "Minute on Indian Education" by reversing the colonial policy of supporting traditional subjects taught in Sanskrit and Arabic established in the 1780s in favor of an English education for government supported institutions of higher education in India. Bentinck's *Resolution*, which became the foundation of English Education Act, signaled the political ascendancy of the chief principles of liberal imperialism which posited that civilization meant the progress towards universal truths of ethics, philosophy and morality, truths understood far better by the British so that it was the moral responsibility of the colonial government to recast backward and superstitious Indian culture and institutions in the British model²³³.

2. Shakespeare in the Early Colonial Curriculum

Before Richardson's anthology, the colonial government had undertaken the publication of a series of graded poetry anthology, entitled *English Poetical Reader* in the early 1830s in four volumes for use at the school level. Like Richardson's anthology, this too was published by the Calcutta School Book Society on behalf of the government. The Calcutta School Book Society had been formed in 1817 with a joint management of British and Indian intellectuals to provide cheap but morally uplifting textbooks in English and vernacular Indian languages without religious interference which would "enlarge the understanding and improve character" of students in schools in and around the vicinity of Calcutta, and it received government aid to that end²³⁴. The ninth report of the Calcutta School Book Society mentions that the General Committee of Public Instruction proposed to prepare and print a series of books in the English

²³³ See Deane, Bradley. "In Statu Pupillari: Schoolboys, Savages and Colonial Authority" *Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Literature, 1870-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014, p. 116.

²³⁴ Gupta, Abhijit. "The Calcutta School Book Society and the Production of Knowledge." *English Studies in Africa* 57.1 (2014): 55-65.

language on the subjects of reading, spelling, grammar, poetry, elocution, history, mathematics, geography, metaphysics and physical science—modern subjects distinguished from the traditional curriculum of reading, writing and arithmetic in indigenous schools. A total of 38,000 volumes was proposed to be printed and the Committee of Public Instruction united with the Calcutta School Book Society in accomplishing this project²³⁵. The *English Poetical Reader* appears to be a fruit of this joint venture.

Unknown in traditional schools and indigenous educational institutions in India, textbooks were an introduction by the British. Embodying ‘new learning’ in their very material form, textbooks sought to displace the predominance of teachers, who were often seen to be adverse to modern education, in the traditional curriculum²³⁶. Judging from the several editions and revisions that *English Poetical Reader* went through, it was evidently popular with Indian school students and also possibly teachers. With large sale numbers, *English Poetical Reader* was likely to be the most important set of poetry textbook introducing Indian school students to British poetry in the early years of colonial education.

According to a report of the Calcutta School Book, *English Poetical Reader* was compiled by the evangelical educationist, J. D. Bethune whom we mentioned above. The anthology embodies “a taste for something better and higher”²³⁷ that Indian students were exhorted to cultivate if they were to be weaned away from the immoral influences of native literature. Available in four volumes, graded on increasing difficulty, the anthology does not carry the name of the editor(s), nor does it have any preface, footnote or explanatory apparatus

²³⁵ *The Calcutta Christian Observer* 1 (1832): 144.

²³⁶ Laird, M.A. “The Contribution of the Serampore Missionaries to Education in Bengal.” *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies* 31.1 (1968): 92-112. Kumar, Kishen. “Origins of India’s ‘Textbook Culture.’” *Comparative Education Review* 32.4 (1988): 452-64.

²³⁷ See above Bethune’s advice to Dutt.

and many of the poems included are without authorial subscription. The general plan of the *English Poetical Reader* series follows that of two popular poetry textbooks in the homeland: William Enfield's *Speaker* and Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts*. Selections are grouped under genre headings such as descriptive poetry, narrative poetry, lyric poetry and miscellaneous poetry and are further divided into 'Lessons.' There is no underlying narrative here of a national corpus—selections are held together by a directive to edify rather than to tell a story of the nation's purported literary wealth as we will see in the case of Richardson's anthology. While both Enfield and Knox had included virtuous fragments from Shakespeare's plays, *Poetical English Reader*, however, steers clear of any. It shows little interest in canonicity—many of the selections in the four volume are from poets the present-day reader would not readily recognize. The fourth and last selection in the series, meant for the most advanced school level, included pieces such as Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Gray's *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, Dr. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, Thomson's *Address of Indolence*, Cowper's *On Friendship*, Langhorne's *Hymn to Humanity* along with lesser known selections, all with lofty moral tags.

How do we explain Shakespeare's exclusion from the *Poetical Reader*? By most accounts of uses of Shakespeare in the curriculum in the metropolitan homeland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, fragments from the plays found a place in the formal and informal-out-of-classroom curriculum of middle class schoolboys as a practice in oratory and rhetoric with an obligatory dose of morality. In Enfield's *Speaker*, for instance, fragments of Shakespeare are provided to practice good articulation, pronunciation, elegance, accent, emphasis, pauses and gestures in speech. In Knox's *Elegant Extracts: Or Useful and Entertaining Pieces of Poetry, Selected for the Improvement of Youth in Speaking, Reading,*

Thinking, Composing; and in the Conduct of Life, poetic excerpts from Shakespeare are provided for “recitation, transcription, the exercise of memory, or in imitation.” A Shakespearean education entailed a modern and useful education for boys destined for practical pursuits, offering upward mobility to good public speakers, in contradistinction to the non-practical classical curriculum in public schools and universities²³⁸.

The *English Poetical Reader*, in contrast to the anthologies in the homeland, conceives of English poetry primarily as an interpretive, moralistic study of poems. Public speaking, associated with citizenry, is submerged by an imperative to inculcate moral lessons. At the basic level, it offers second-language learners an acquaintance with the English language, idioms and diction although there is no accompanying explanatory apparatus.²³⁹ Beyond that, selections are culled with the singular goal to provide elevating thoughts and tastes and serve as a guide to virtuous conduct of life. In its pages, Indian students would encounter morally uplifting views that would enhance the impression of the superiority of British culture. Shakespeare’s plays, even if cut and rearranged, did not fit a strict adherence to moral purity. An excerpt of Cassio’s lamentation over a night of drunken carousing from *Othello* could be instructive of the consequences of insobriety for schoolboys in the homeland, but for a textbook prepared for Indian students it risked admitting to moral failures that the colonial government wished to avoid. Drinking, after all, was one of the main problems plaguing the image of British moral superiority in early nineteenth century India²⁴⁰.

²³⁸ Gustafson, Sandra. “Eloquent Shakespeare” and Renker, Elizabeth. “Shakespeare in the College Curriculum, 1870-1920” *Shakespearean Educations: Power, Citizenship and Performance*. Ed Coppelia Kahn, Heather Nathans and Mimi Godfrey. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2011. p. 71-91 and 131-56.

²³⁹ Consider Richardson’s comment in the ‘Preface’ to *Selections* (1840), p. 16: “The Indian students read our English poets, as English collegians read the poets of Greece and Rome, not only to familiarize their minds with beautiful images but to acquire a thorough knowledge of the language in which the poetry is embodied.” and pure and noble thoughts, but to acquire a thorough knowledge of the language in which the poetry is embodied.”

²⁴⁰ Sramek, Joseph. *Gender, Morality and Race in Company India, 1765-1858*. p. 91.

Like the colonial government, the Calcutta School Book Society too, it appears, was unwilling to associate itself with Shakespeare. Among the large number of textbooks it put in circulation from the time of its inception to 1850, there was no Shakespeare publication in any form, whether as an excerpted anthology, translation, re-told tales or the publication of a whole play. Not that the Society was averse to making changes to original works to fit its guiding principle of providing morally improving textbooks. We learn, for instance, from the *Thirteenth Report* that the Society undertook to publish *Hitopodesh* or *Salutary Instruction* by the Indian author Vishnu Sharma. The work was seen to embrace interesting topics on ethics such as friendship, discord, war and peace. But it was also deemed to carry some stories not suitable to youth, so it was decided to omit these and retain all other parts which had the “tendency to enlighten the mind and improve conduct.” In the case of Shakespeare, no such editing enterprise was undertaken. To some extent this had to do with the fact that the Society privileged the publication of utilitarian works over imaginative literature. Besides the *English Poetical Reader* and its supplementary anthology of prose, also commissioned by the colonial government, the English publications of the Society in the pre-1835 years are practical textbooks such as spelling books, grammar books, dictionaries and such. For a Society dedicated to the moral and intellectual improvement of Indians through wholesome and healthy textbook publication, Shakespeare did not fit in the program of a strict adherence to ethics, morality and usefulness.

At a time when in Britain Shakespeare was studied, if at all, exclusively at the school level as elocutionary texts under the subject of rhetoric²⁴¹, at the Hindu College in Calcutta²⁴² he

²⁴¹ Bottoms, Janet. “‘Doing Shakespeare’: How Shakespeare Became a School Subject” *Shakespeare Survey* 66 Ed. Peter Holland. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, p. 96-109

²⁴² At the time of its inception in 1817, the Hindu College was divided into two sections—junior or school and senior or college sections. The former gave instruction in English, Bengali, grammar and arithmetic while the senior section taught languages, history, geography, astronomy, chemistry, mathematics and the sciences. The syllabus in

acquired for the first time a new disciplinary identity as ‘literature.’ The curriculum at the College placed whole-play texts of Shakespeare at the highest level of study for the senior classes, attended by young men whose age ranged from fifteen to twenty-five. In contrast to the relatively amorphous readership of *English Poetical Readers*, the students at the Hindu College comprised a more well-defined readership. The College’s students came from the landed gentry and the affluent Hindu middle-class of Bengali society—sons of elite families from Calcutta and its vicinities. For them Shakespeare was deemed a suitable subject within the parameters of a ‘liberal’ education. While it is likely that Shakespeare was included in the curriculum from the very inception of the Hindu College in 1817, the earliest record is from 1828 when the reading list for the senior classes shows to have included one of Shakespeare’s tragedies besides Gay’s *Fables*, Pope’s translation of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Dryden’s translation of Virgil’s *Aenid*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Goldsmith’s *History of Greece, Rome and England*, Russel’s *Modern Europe* and Robertson’s *Charles the Fifth*²⁴³. The syllabus for this year was drawn up by the College’s managing committee which comprised of three Hindus, the Scottish educationist David Hare who had been involved in the founding and operation of the College from its inception, and the Sanskrit scholar Horace H. Wilson, representing the colonial government²⁴⁴. Shakespeare’s position in the curriculum was stable—the reading list for 1832 mentions him again²⁴⁵.

the senior or college section was particularly biased towards literary studies. See Dasgupta, Subrata. “Enfant Terrible.” *Awakening: The Story of Bengal Renaissance*. Noida: Random House India, 2010.

²⁴³ “Henry Louis Vivian Derozio.” *Calcutta Review*. Calcutta, 1881, p 41. Also, Dalmia, Manju. “DeRozeo, English Teacher.” *The Lie of the Land: English Literary Studies in India*. Ed Rajeswari Sundari Rajan. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1992. p 53

²⁴⁴ Majumdar, Bhagaban Prasad. “Curriculum in Relation to Life.” *First Fruits of English Education, 1817-57*. Calcutta: Bookland Private Limited, 1973. p. 114.

²⁴⁵ By 1824, the Hindu College was in financial trouble and appealed to the newly formed Committee of Public Instruction for aid. In lieu of financial assistance, the government appointed to the College’s managing committee a ‘visitor’. Horace Wilson was appointed to this post which he maintained till his retirement to Britain in 1832. Although the Hindu College came under the supervision of the government from 1824 onwards, it remained out of

At the junior level of the Hindu College, Shakespeare may have been studied only in excerpts and as declamation pieces. Considering the popularity of recitations of passages and dramatic performances of scenes from Shakespeare during prize distribution ceremonies at the Hindu College²⁴⁶, it appears that the teaching of Shakespeare did retain some emphasis on elocution. At the same time the College was charting new terrains by offering interpretive study of specialized individual authors and whole texts, according Shakespeare a special distinction by allocating him for senior class study. The move towards whole-play interpretive study of plays is emblemized by the founders' desire to make available for the "sons of respectable Hindoos" a "liberal education, in the English manner"²⁴⁷ such that English gentlemen received in the homeland. Desirous "to be informed of everything the English gentlemen learnt,"²⁴⁸ the Hindu students would engage with 'modern' subjects and authors—English language and literature, geography, history, chemistry, physics, eschewing both Oriental learning that government colleges offered as well as religious instructions offered in missionary and indigenous educational institutions. The curriculum at the Hindu College was particularly biased towards English language and literature, offering "something more of a classical knowledge of the English language and literature"²⁴⁹ than the acquisition of a superficial smattering of English, knowledge of which equated with employability under the changed social circumstances of British rule.

the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy that wracked the Committee of Public Instruction in the early 1830s, becoming the only government college offering an English education before the Macauleyan reforms of 1835.

²⁴⁶ In 1829, for instance, according to a contemporary newspaper, students, possibly from the junior section, participated in recitation of Shakespeare during prize-giving ceremonies. Gibson, Mary Ellis. *Indian Angles: English Verse in Colonial India from Jones to Tagore*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 2011. p. 140.

²⁴⁷ Great Britain. *Parliamentary Papers, 1852-53*. Evidence of Wilberforce Bird.

²⁴⁸ Ibid

²⁴⁹ Ibid

Phiroze Vasunia has drawn attention to the anomaly in Macaulay's proposition in the "Minute" that it was English that was to indoctrinate Indians into British morality and habits of thinking when in the homeland English morality and habits were derived from an intellectual training in Greek and Latin. "If Macaulay really had been interested in the creation of a 'class of persons Indian in blood and color but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect,'" Vasunia writes, "he would have insisted this class of persons be educated as thoroughly in Greek and Latin as an educated Englishman was."²⁵⁰ The early history of the Hindu College shows that the anomaly Vasunia points out predates Macaulay's proposal. If the Hindu College founders wanted to learn everything the English gentlemen learnt they should have embraced Greek and Latin. Instead of the ancient European classical authors, they chose for their sons a liberal education involving a radically new subject comprising Shakespeare, Milton, Pope and others. The education this liberal education was seen to impart was more than a practical knowledge of the English language. It was to enlarge the minds of pupils and form their character. The English language and literature as it emerged as a curriculum at the Hindu College dissolved the distinctions between practical and liberal education, modern and classical education which polarized English from the ancient classics in the West in the early nineteenth century²⁵¹. It carved out for the first time a rigorous academic identity for Shakespeare, equal in status to the ancient European classical authors. The English model of liberal education also explains why Shakespeare could find a place in the Hindu College curriculum. The classical curriculum in Britain allowed matter that was deemed immoral. An exposure to Juvenal, Aeschylus and Ovid in the classical curriculum was considered essential for the formation of character of men from

²⁵⁰ Vasunia, Phiroze. "Barbarism and Civilization: Political Writing, History and Empire". *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature Vol 4: 1790-1880*. Ed. N. Vance and J. Wallace Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012: 131-58, p. 149.

²⁵¹ See Renker, Elizabeth, "Shakespeare in the College Curriculum, 1870-1920"

privileged social ranks, destined for public services.²⁵² What Aeschylus, Juvenal and Ovid did for the English, Shakespeare was to do for the native gentleman reared in the Hindu College.

What were students at the Hindu College exhorted to learn in the classroom from their Shakespeare? In 1828 when a Shakespeare tragedy was being studied, the master of English and history at the Hindu College was Henry Derozio (1809-1831), a flamboyant and unconventional teacher of mixed race Portuguese descent who had been appointed at the College shortly before, in 1826, at the young age of eighteen. A student of Drummond's private Dhurrmtolla Academy which imparted a secular education to affluent Europeans and Indian students, Derozio is known to have taken part in performance of Shakespeare at Drummond's Academy.²⁵³ As a teacher at the Hindu College, he may have encouraged the same. But more than performance, rhetoric or declamation, critical, interpretive study was clearly his main pedagogical focus. Derozio is famous for the emphasis he placed on the cultivation of critical thinking and inquiry²⁵⁴. His teachings radicalized a group of students known as 'Derozians' who began an onslaught on Hindu orthodoxies such as caste system, child marriage, plight of Hindu widows on the tenets of progressive western thoughts. The Young Bengal Movement, as it came to be called, drew a backlash from Calcutta society, and under pressure from alarmed parents and guardians of the College, Derozio was forced to resign in 1831. He died on the same year from cholera²⁵⁵.

²⁵² See Macaulay, T.B. "Comic Dramatists of the Restoration." *Selections from Macaulay's Essays and Speeches* Vol.II. London: Longmans, 1856, p. 3-64.

²⁵³ Majumdar, Sarottama. "That Sublime "Old Gentleman": Shakespeare's Plays in Calcutta, 1775-1930." *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*. Ed. Poonam Trivedi and David Bartholomesz. Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2005. p. 235. Majumdar writes that in 1829 when Derozio was a teacher at the Hindu College, students performed scenes from various plays—*Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Cymbeline* and *Henry IV*. On other occasions, whole plays such as *Julius Caesar* were enacted. It may be that enacting was more of a junior section activity than the college section. In 1834, Madhusudan Dutt took part in a performance of *Henry VI* when he was a boy of ten.

²⁵⁴ See Edwards, Thomas. "Henry Derozio, the Eurasian, Poet, Teacher and Journalist: With Appendices" Calcutta: W. Newman Co. 1884

²⁵⁵ Chaudhuri, Rosinka. "Young India: A Bengal Eclogue" *Interventions* 2.3 (2000):424-41.

English literature, it appears, had a deep influence on the minds of the youthful group brought up for the first time on organized public instruction in English. K.M Banerji, a student at Hindu College, declared in 1830 that Pope and Dryden were to be held in higher esteem than the Hindu Shastras²⁵⁶. The young men, in a typical gesture of adolescent excess that characterized their group, ridiculed Hindu religion by repeating lines from the *Iliad* (presumably in Pope's translation) when they were expected to utter mantras²⁵⁷. According to the literary historian Dinesh Chandra Sen, "They [Young Bengal] exulted in Shakespeare's drama and Milton's poetry; they read Schiller's *Robbers* and Goethe's *Faust*; they could name all the English dramatists of the Elizabethan age—Marlowe, Philip, Massinger, Ford, John Webster, Ben Jonson and Shirley and reproduce from memory lines from still earlier dramatist and from Holinshed's *Chronicles* which Shakespeare had improved on, in many a noble line. They grew mad after Shelley's *Epipsychidion*[sic] and Keat's [sic] *Hyperion* and even after Chatterton's *Death of Charles Bodwin*."²⁵⁸ If indeed Sen is right then the reading list of Young Bengal went much beyond the prescribed texts at the Hindu College. Sen, however, appears to be more interested in creating an effect—to show the Young Bengal's alienation from native literature—than to be historically accurate. By most accounts, Enlightenment philosophy and Romantic poetry inspired Derozio's teachings and his disciples' radical politics more than Shakespeare. Shelley and Byron were Derozio's heroes rather than Shakespeare²⁵⁹. Besides the Romantic poets, Derozio raised his students on Hume, Locke, Rousseau and, in particular, the abolitionist, anti-monarchical Tom Paine²⁶⁰. Records of near hysteria among Derozio's students to buy overpriced cheap copies of

²⁵⁶ Chaudhuri, "Young India." p. 426

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 427

²⁵⁸ Quoted in Chaudhuri, "Young India" p. 433.

²⁵⁹ Gibson, Mary Ellis, "Indian Angles" p. 75.

²⁶⁰ Leask, Nigel. "'Revolution of Empire' or Empire as Revolution?" *British Romantic Writers and the Anxiety of the East*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992. p. 119.

Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* shipped to Calcutta from America are illustrative of the radicalism of the group influenced by Derozio's teachings²⁶¹.

While Derozio established the tradition of an enthusiastic study of English literature at the Hindu College, it was, however, with the appointment of David Lester Richardson, an invalided lieutenant in the Indian army, as professor of English in 1835 that Shakespeare studies received momentum. Politically conservative and loyal to the government, English poetry was Richardson's avocation, and teaching Shakespeare was his forte²⁶². According to Shivnath Shastri, "(H)e took his pupils through the works of Shakespeare in a way to enrapture them. They admired the Captain and the race to which he belonged, and tried to imitate him."²⁶³ That emulation included copying Richardson's fondness for the bottle and everything British. More sympathetic to Richardson regarding his influence than Shastri, Sanial depicts the English professor as a positive role model for his students, "(H)e was never so enthusiastic in his vocation as when introducing his boys to an intimate acquaintance with the great poets of his nation, and enriching their minds with the most precious treasures of British thought."²⁶⁴

Cutting a rather different figure than the radical Derozio, Richardson had strong backing from the Bengali gentry and intelligentsia of Calcutta. However, like Derozio, Richardson too was a maverick, though of a different sort, and had to resign from the Hindu College in 1848 from his second term as professor and principal when his 'mode of life' and irregularities of attendance became matters of official inquiry. In particular, he fell afoul of John Drinkwater

²⁶¹ Edwards, Thomas. "Henry Derozio, the Eurasian, Poet, Teacher and Journalist: With Appendices" Calcutta: W. Newman Co. 1884, p 34.

²⁶² See Hancher, "College English in India" for a detailed account of Richardson's biography and his terms as professor of English at the Hindu College and other government and private institutions in and around Calcutta.

²⁶³ Shastri, Shivnath. *Ramtanu Lahiri: Brahman and Reformer: A History of the Renaissance in Bengal*. Calcutta: S.K Lahiri & Co., 1907. p. 109. Shastri claims that Richardson had the 'vice' of drinking and that his students copied him in that respect.

²⁶⁴ Sanial, S. C. "Captain David Lester Richardson." *Calcutta Review* 122. (1906): 70-89.

Bethune, president of the Council of Education²⁶⁵. Richardson, it appears, was averse to teaching moral philosophy²⁶⁶ which, added to allegations of a dissolute lifestyle, may have aroused the antagonism of powerful members of the educational hierarchy such as Bethune who were committed to a purist curriculum and stainless image for the British in India.

According to Sanial, at the Hindu College Richardson taught *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and two parts of *Henry IV* along with Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, *Rape of the Lock*, *Essay on Man* and *Prologue to the Satires*²⁶⁷. "He taught them year after year with a repetition that at last took away our relish of them, when we supplicated him to take up other plays and poems," Sanial writes. "Only the choice of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Timon of Athens* and Young's *Night Thoughts* without either *The [sic] Paradise Lost* or *Childe Harold* was all the change we had."²⁶⁸ Richardson's approach to Shakespeare was exegetical, applying the same kind of critical attention to the plays that was accorded to the ancient classics in the university curriculum in Britain. Sanial writes,

Each of us had to read out a little passage and explain its meaning. This practice was followed 'to make the young student struggle as hard to discover the purport of what he reads and inure him to a mental exercise which he does not undergo if help promptly comes to his aid. When a boy failed to give the right meaning, he used to let the whole passage pass through the whole class that every boy might have a chance of supplying an accurate explanation. On finishing a play or poem,

²⁶⁵ Although the reason for the dispute between the two is not known beyond rumors of drinking, absenteeism and the possibility that Richardson may have been living with an Indian mistress have been suggested. See Ghosh, Priyali *David Lester Richardson (1801-1865): A Romantic Anglo-Indian*. Diss, Kent University, 2009. p. 222. See Sanial, "Captain" for the Bethune-Richardson controversy and the rallying of the Indian gentry behind Richardson in that controversy. Also Gibson, Mary Ellis. *Indian Angles. English Verse in Colonial India from Jones to Tagore*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 2011. p. 290.

²⁶⁶ Sanial, "Captain," p. 75.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 74.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 74.

it was his rule to call upon every one of us for an opinion, a process by which he meant to develop our thinking and critical powers. Last of all he delivered his own judgment, in the course of which he travelled over a large field that formed the most interesting part of his tuition.²⁶⁹

As for which edition of Shakespeare students at the Hindu College used in the classroom in the early years, it is not clear. According to Horace H. Wilson, students were in the habit of copying out entire plays of Shakespeare read out by class monitors²⁷⁰, a practice that may have been necessitated by the high price and general rarity of printed books in the Indian colony in the early nineteenth century²⁷¹. It is clear that there was a great demand for cheap and accessible copies of Shakespeare and other poets that were read in the classroom at the Hindu College and other similar modern educational institutions that had come up in the wake of its success.

Richardson mentions in the preface to his anthology the haste in which he had to prepare the textbook to meet the anticipation of its publication. The problem of scarcity of suitable textbooks for classroom use was solved, or at least expected to resolve, with the publication of Richardson's anthology in 1840. By then, the number of students studying English literature at the college level had exploded with the government's adoption of Anglicist policies in 1835 for all government colleges in India. In the following section, I turn to a consideration of Richardson's editorial approaches in presenting Shakespeare to Indian students.

²⁶⁹ Sanial, "Captain" p. 75

²⁷⁰ Great Britain. *Parliamentary Papers 1852-53*. Evidence Given by Horace Hayman Wilson. Derozio's students were willing to pay an inflated price of eight rupees, a large sum in those days, to buy cheap editions of Paine's *Age of Reason*. Edward, Thomas. *Henry Derozio: Eurasian, Poet, Teacher and Journalist: With Appendices*. Calcutta: W. Newman, 1884. p. 34.

²⁷¹ Freight and insurance hiked up the price of books in Calcutta in the early nineteenth century to a hundred percent over the price at which they were available in Britain, making books a luxury commodity in early colonial India. Travel writer Emma Roberts notes in 1835 that "Next to jeweller's shops, the most magnificent establishment in the city [Calcutta] is that of the principal bookseller, Thacker & Co." Quoted in Priya Joshi. As Joshi explains, English books were literally prized "next to the jewelers." Joshi, Priya. "Readers Write Back." *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture and the English Novel in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. p. 93.

3. 'Shakespeare Whose Heart Was Pure'

Selections of British Poets from the Time of Chaucer to Present Poets—a weighty royal octavo running into over a thousand pages with double columns—declares a British rather than an English focus in its very title. The conception of the anthology is different from the earlier *English Poetical Reader* the colonial government had published. Offering an “uninterrupted series of specimens *from Chaucer to the latest living poets*,”²⁷² it displays the progress of British poetry across time while demonstrating the wealth of British poetic creations. The anthology aims at comprehensiveness, including selections from English, Scottish and Irish poets²⁷³. As an appendix to the main national corpus in the anthology, Richardson included a section of American and Anglo-Indian poetry in English, one of which is written by an Indian poet Kashiprasad Ghose. Echoing Macaulay’s vision of an expansive empire of British literature over which the sun never set²⁷⁴, the anthology reifies Britishness as a moral and aesthetic code exceeding a fixed geographical region in a globalized world of imperial expansion and migration. The moral code it extolled, we will see, is more ambiguous than the code of moral purity that *English Poetical Reader* projected.

At the time of the publication of Richardson’s anthology in 1840, the idea of organizing poetry around chronology was relatively new. Richardson sees the chronological arrangement as a way to overcome confusions arising from the more common arrangement of selections according to subjects which Knox, Enfield and Bethune had used in their anthologies²⁷⁵.

²⁷² *Selections*, p. 5. Italics included.

²⁷³ *Selections* is arranged in ten sections: a Preface, a Biographical and Critical Notices section, followed by poets and dramatists from Chaucer to the early nineteenth century (the largest section in the anthology), a section on poetry from the Middle English period, excerpts from the works of Ossian, a section titled ‘Miscellaneous Poems of the Nineteenth-Century’ followed by another titled ‘British-Indian Poetry.’ The final sections include one with extracts from American poetry, and another with translations in English from classical Latin and Greek poetry, from Portuguese, Spanish, French and German poetry.

²⁷⁴ See Macaulay’s toast to British literature in footnote 31.

²⁷⁵ Richardson describes Knox’s plan of arrangement fragmentary and chaotic and makes no mention of *English Poetical Reader*, clearly to avoid causing umbrage to Bethune.

Richardson writes, “(T)he chronological order gives us at once a clear and general view of the various wealth of our literature, and enables us to trace the birth of its history and progress.”²⁷⁶

The chronological development of poetry is implicitly a narrative about the history of the nation.

Hancher provides an informative account of Macaulay’s influence and involvement in the planning and execution of the anthology²⁷⁷. We may recapitulate here only the most relevant details and fill the gaps in Hancher’s inquiry. The immediate context of the publication of the anthology was the adoption of an Anglicist curriculum in colonial higher education which sought to displace the study of Sanskrit and Arabic texts in government funded higher education.

Macaulay’s “Minute,” notorious for its cultural chauvinism, was instrumental, as noted above, in the government’s decision. Macaulay’s main point was that available Government funds for education ought to be employed in teaching what was best worth knowing and that English was more worth knowing than Sanskrit or Arabic and therefore deserving of government encouragement. The new policy came into effect with the passage of the *Resolution* of March 7th 1835 passed by Governor-general Lord William Bentinck. Among Macaulay’s proposals upheld by Bentinck, the *Resolution* espoused in particular the view that it was wasteful to spend limited government funds in publishing Oriental works for which there was no demand among Indians and that the publication of Oriental works should immediately stop. The *Resolution* adopted by Lord Bentinck stated that some of the funds released by the reforms would be channeled in producing and publishing a college level English poetry textbook that would serve as an

²⁷⁶ *Selections*, p 6.

²⁷⁷ Hancher, “College English.” In the “Preface” Richardson mentions available poetry anthologies: Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets* (1787-1788), Robert Southey’s *Select Works of the British Poets* (1831), John Aikin’s *Select Works of the British Poets* (1820), Thomas Campbell’s *Specimens of the British Poets* (1819). Vicesimus Knox’s *Elegant Extracts* (1784)⁴⁸ and William Hazlitt’s *Collection of Specimens from Chaucer to Burns* (1827). *Selections*, as Richardson justly claimed, is “the first attempt to comprise in one volume an uninterrupted series of specimens from Chaucer to the latest living poets” (p.5). He identified “the young Hindus, for whom this series of specimens has been chiefly prepared” as his audience.

introduction to English literature for students enrolled in government colleges in India. It is clear that the chronological plan for the anthology was drawn up by the Committee of Public Instruction headed by Macaulay that included two Indians among its members, and the task of preparing the textbook was given to Richardson who had already established a reputation for himself in Britain and in India with his literary pursuits and editorial activities and who had been recently appointed as professor of English at the Hindu College.

That the very first textbook of the colonial government's reformed educational policies in 1835 would be a British poetry textbook speaks of Macaulay's vision of modernizing India by displacing and obliterating native literary and cultural traditions. In Orientalist estimation, poetry was considered the apex of Indian cultural achievement; in 1772, the Orientalist scholar William Jones had called for greater attention to be given to the poetry of the East than of ancient Greece and Rome in his "Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations."²⁷⁸ Since the beginning of government patronage of learning in India in the 1780s, the cultivation of Sanskrit and Arabic poetry was the mainstay of the Oriental curriculum in government supported educational institutions²⁷⁹. Even James Mill, who was otherwise opposed to the Orientalist position on Indian education, had grudgingly conceded the merits of classical Indian poetry, although he belittled poetry in general as the expression of semi-barbarous people²⁸⁰. In his utilitarian view, useful learning emphasized rational thinking and practical, modern subjects rather than the cultivation of poetry which he believed distorted empirical understanding.

Macaulay's views on modernizing colonial education were influenced by Mill's utilitarian philosophy in its insistence on avoiding the wastefulness of Oriental scholarship. At

²⁷⁸ Vasunia, Phiroze. *The Classics and Colonial India*, p. 242

²⁷⁹ Cutts, Elmer H. "The Background of Macaulay's Minute" *The American Historical Review* 58.4 (1953):824-53; Vasunia, Phiroze. *The Classics and Colonial India*, p. 244.

²⁸⁰ "On Mr. Mill's History of British India" *Asiatic Journal for November, 1829*. Vol-28-29. p. 513-25.

the same time they departed from a strict adherence to utilitarian principles. First, Macaulay espoused English as the medium of instruction in government institutions of learning as opposed to vernacular Indian languages which Mill advocated. Second, Macaulay gave much importance to English poetry, overriding utilitarian opposition to poetry as a useful object of study. Colonial subjects, Macaulay proposed in his “Minute,” should study Hume and Milton if they were to be incorporated into Western rationality, morality and habits of thinking. These were subjects that students at the Hindu College were already studying in the classroom with great avidity. The popularity of the Hindu College among Indians bolstered Macaulay’s claim that Indians themselves cared more for Western than Oriental learning. In fact, Macaulay proposes that the curriculum at the Hindu College should serve as the model for other colleges funded by the government. Interestingly, in the “Minute”, Macaulay avoids any reference to Shakespeare—the reason for this is not hard to gauge. To have brought up Shakespeare would have been contentious and likely to raise the antagonism of colonial officials unsure about Shakespeare’s compatibility with the civilizing project and evangelical missionaries who were united with the Anglicists in the common cause of a Western education for Indians but were willing to grant poetry a limited role in the curriculum only so far as it prepared the minds of recalcitrant Indians in receiving the message of God. Milton was far safer than Shakespeare in bridging differences, and Macaulay mentions him twice in his “Minute” as the representative English poet who along with Hume and English thinkers would bring about the Indian student’s intellectual improvement and moral upgrade.

The poetry textbook that came into being—our anthology in question— did devote a large share to Milton²⁸¹ but it is Shakespeare, occupying 306 pages, who dominates the selection of poets. The anthology is infused with Macaulay’s vision of indoctrinating Indian students into British codes of thinking²⁸². Towering above all poets and providing the yardstick for the evaluation of all is Shakespeare whom Richardson describes in the critical and biographical notice as “the greatest poet the world has yet seen.”²⁸³ Richardson overrides William Jones’ influential critical estimation of the ancient Sanskrit poet Kalidasa whom he had described in the preface of his influential translation of the poet’s work *Sakuntala* as “our illustrious poet, the Shakespeare of India,”²⁸⁴ evoking an implicit comparison between the two. In a stroke, Richardson obliterates traces of contest, consigning Indian literary tradition to the outsides while establishing British poetic tradition, with Shakespeare as the apex, as the model of poetry writing, themes and values²⁸⁵. Richardson’s editorial treatment of Shakespeare marks a

²⁸¹Richardson included Books I to IV of *Paradise Lost*, "The Power of Beauty" extracted from Book II of *Paradise Regained*, "Description of Greece" extracted from Book IV of *Paradise Regained* and also "L'allegro" "Il Penseroso" "Lycidas" "Comus" and twelve additional sonnets.

²⁸² Richardson echoes Macaulay’s Anglicist sentiments in the essay “English Language for India” (published in *Literary Recreations* (1852): “Is it right then to neglect this opportunity to make English the leading language? The natives generally know enough of their own language for all the necessary purposes of daily life: -- why then discourage them from the acquisition of our own? Where there is a will, there is generally a way; and if the Government of India were determined to accomplish so grand and glorious an object--- if they would devote to it but half as much money or zeal as they devote to the acquisition of an [sic] useless addition to their territories--- they could. in half a century, make half the native population of India familiar with the English language, and thus open to this comparatively benighted country all the intellectual treasures--- all the philosophy and knowledge, and morality and religion of European lands.” Quoted in Ghosh, Priyali. *David Lester Richardson (1801-1865): A Romantic Anglo-Indian*. p. 240

²⁸³ *Selections*, p. xii

²⁸⁴ Malagi, R.A. “Towards a Terrestrial Divine Comedy” *India’s Shakespeare*. Ed Poonam Trivedi and Bartholomeusz.Diaz. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2005. 110-26, p. 111

²⁸⁵ Richardson included Jones’ poetry in the *Selections*. In the biographical notice for Jones he writes, “In three or four years after his arrival in India he (Jones) acquired a knowledge of the Sanscrit. His acquisitions as a linguist were now truly wonderful. He had studied with assiduity and success Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Sanscrit, Arabic, Persian, French, German, and Portuguese. In 1785 a periodical was started in Calcutta entitled the Asiatic Miscellany to which he contributed a variety of poems, chiefly translations from the Persian. In the following year he made a voyage to Chatigon, and during his leisure hours read twice through the poem of Ferdausi, consisting of sixty thousand couplets. He considered it to be an Epic poem as majestic and entire as the *Iliad*. In 1789 he

significant moment in the process of provincialization of Indian literature and culture that consigned the latter, in Dipesh Chakraborty's telling image, to the imaginary waiting-room of history²⁸⁶.

Richardson's inclusion of Shakespeare in a poetry anthology was not entirely novel. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century after all had invented a poetic Shakespeare superseding his dramatic qualities²⁸⁷, and a few other poetry anthologies in the homeland such as Thomas Campbell's *Specimens of British Poets* (1819) had already included Shakespeare. What was indeed novel about Richardson's approach is that he would include whole plays of Shakespeare. Whereas Richardson's predecessors had selected passages and scenes, he includes whole plays—*Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer*. The impetus for this came from the already established convention of whole play study in senior classes at the Hindu College. In addition, Richardson's Romantic penchant for organic structure influenced his decision to include entire plays rather than snippets such as Knox and Enfield had done in their school editions. In the preface to the anthology, Richardson professes his disdain for extracting 'beauties'—to do so, Richardson says, is to violate the artistic integrity of works. In addition to the whole plays, he included two scenes from *Henry IV* part 1, sixteen sonnets and selections from *The Rape of Lucrece*. Richardson also provides biographical and critical notices for 108 poets included in the anthology, beginning with Chaucer and ending with Ebenezer Eliot. The

translated the ancient Hindu Drama of Sacontala or the Fatal Ring, by Callidas, the Indian Shakespeare. 19 "Sir William Jones" *Selections* p. lxxvii (1840).

²⁸⁶ Chakraborty uses the image to describe historicist ways of thinking claiming that non-western peoples were not sufficiently civilized for self-rule to rationalize colonization as a civilizing project. Chakraborty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000. p. 8.

²⁸⁷ Hollingsworth, Mark. *Shakespeare Criticism. Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. Gail Marshall. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 2012: 39- 59. p. 44.

critical biographies of poets he published in *Selections* proved successful enough to warrant their publication in a stand-alone edition in Calcutta in 1848.

The 'Preface' to *Selections* makes it amply clear why Shakespeare had been left out from government publications and those by the Calcutta School Book Society: an uneasiness with the morality of the plays and the playwright. If Shakespeare was to be included, he had to be pruned of obscene words and expressions, or so suggested Reverend Pearce, Secretary of the School Book Society which undertook the publication of the anthology on behalf of the government. Reverend Pearce, we learn, was "extremely anxious that I should scrupulously omit every line or word in the Selections that might seem in the least degree to militate against the interests of morality and religion."²⁸⁸ Richardson describes it as a praiseworthy suggestion and writes about his equal anxiety to act up to the spirit of the suggestion. "I have often taken the liberty to suppress objectionable passages (indicating the blank with stars)" he continues, "but I could not be so ridiculously presumptuous as to supply their place with words or sentiments of my own."

Under pressures of informal censorship, Richardson is forced to cut parts of Shakespeare's text but he flags the omitted parts with asterisks instead of expurgating objectionable passages discreetly, revealing his reluctance to tamper with Shakespeare²⁸⁹. His refusal to bind up and suture the cuts in the plays, as, for instance, the Bowdlers had done, turns out to be a persuasive plea arguing Shakespeare's greatness, expressed as a refusal to tamper with the perceived sanctity of the texts. Richardson says that there were occasions when he found it impossible to cut the text because "it has sometimes happened that particular passages of which I could not wholly approve were so interwoven with the general texture of the poem that it

²⁸⁸ Richardson, *Selections*, p. 17

²⁸⁹ See Yeats, George. "Shakespeare's Victorian Legacy: Texts as Monuments and Emendation as Desecration" *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40.2 (2012): 469-86 for a discussion of the consolidation of the sense of the sanctity of the 'revealed text' of Shakespeare's plays in the nineteenth century.

was impossible to separate them without injury and confusion.”²⁹⁰ Playing upon the etymological root of anthology as a garden, Richardson writes, “in the fields of literature a weed is sometimes so closely connected with the flower that one is not to be extracted without the other. I hope, however, that the purest-minded reader may go through this large volume with very little offense from particular passages or expression, because the general tendency of the poetry is decidedly in favor of virtue and religion. In the words of Bacon, it “serveth and confereth to magnanimity, morality and delectation.””²⁹¹ As much as Richardson’s aim is to persuade the Indian student to accept Shakespeare as the world’s greatest poet, it is also an attempt to persuade some members of the British community that dramatic poetry, and in particular, Shakespeare was the greatest ally of Britain’s civilizing mission in India.

This is particularly evident in the preface to the anthology. Here Richardson offers a passionate plea for poetry against utilitarian and evangelical charges of uselessness and falsity but it is obvious that what is at stake is a defense of Shakespeare from charges of immorality, obscenity and incompatibility with the civilizing mission. The high pitch Richardson adopts in his plea registers the strong opposition the anthology saw itself encountering. The terms in which Richardson frames his argument about the merits of poetry are drawn from Sidney’s passionate plea for poetry in his *Defense of Poesy* against Puritanical objections to poetry. More recently than Sidney, Vicesimus Knox had made a plea about the usefulness of poetry in the education of the middle-class. Knox had argued that poetry in small measure was good for the middle-classes because of its humanizing influences and its tendency to soften mercantile preoccupations. Richardson transplants Knox’s argument about the usefulness of poetry to the colonial

²⁹⁰ Richardson, *Selections*, p. 18

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

situation—no subject was better suited than British poetry in weaning Indians from their inordinate attachment to lucre²⁹².

Yet where Knox recommends a cautious dose of poetry to combat the mechanical influences of an increasingly industrialized age, Richardson advocates poetry, albeit British poetry, as the panacea for the Indian's moral backwardness. Since the generally accepted fact about the character of the people of India, Richardson writes, is a want of moral elevation, poetry more than any other subject can produce the desired change in their character. "Poetry cannot cure the grief of a bodily wound," Richardson writes, "but it can administer to a mind diseased, and it can heighten our truest pleasures" so when utilitarians influenced by Jeremy Bentham denounce poetry, they make a mistake about its very essence²⁹³. Nor is poetry opposed to virtue and truth. "Poetry improves us by a direct appeal to the finest sensibilities of our nature," and no subject is better suited than poetry in improving the minds of Indians by weaning them from their attachment to earthly delights than poetry. Transmuting everything into gold, poetry rises above pettiness and the mundane world and it goes into the heart of universal questions which are of interest to the mankind. While moral science is dry, poetry penetrates the heart. "No lecture on guilty ambition leaves so vivid and permanent an impression on the mind as the agony of Macbeth," Richardson writes²⁹⁴. At another time, he says that the study of the Scriptures and Shakespeare are essentially harmonious. Poetry could hardly be criticized for pandering

²⁹² On Indians as a 'conceptual category' constituted by colonial discourse, see Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, p. 11. In the Preface, p. 16, Richardson writes, "Let us teach the people of Bengal, who are now too apt to think that the loss of riches is the loss of everything, that even in penury and solitude a mind of true refinement can echo the noble sentiment of Thomson.

I care not Fortune what you me deny,
You cannot bar me of free Nature's grace,
You cannot shut the windows of the sky
Through which Aurora shows her brightening face."

²⁹³ Richardson, *Selections*, p. 12

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 14.

falsities—“It signifies little whether Othello or Iago ever lived or died; it is enough to know that the passions represented under those names still burn and breathe in the human heart.”²⁹⁵ Milton and Shakespeare are called upon “to instruct the young natives of India to appreciate the beauty which God has lavished upon the creation. He who is so taught has within his reach those sources of pure delight that are wholly inexhaustible.”²⁹⁶ Superficially a defense of poetry, the preface leaves little doubt in the reader’s mind that Richardson is in effect defending the inclusion of Shakespeare in the selection.

On the surface expressing his anxiety to remove indecency and obscenity from Shakespeare’s plays, Richardson undertakes an explanation of why allegations of immorality and obscenity against Shakespeare are misguided. The defense of Shakespeare turns overt when Richardson, drawing upon Samuel Johnson, writes, “The writer who professes to hold the mirror up to nature and give the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure’ cannot consistently confine himself to pictures of purity and refinement.....it is of course the height of absurdity and injustice to confound the painter himself with the character he pourtrays.”²⁹⁷ To claim that dramatic poetry encouraged impurity of thought and action, Richardson argues, would be as wrong-headed as to claim that Aesop’s Fables encouraged unethical actions. An appreciation of the dramatic genre, Richardson reminds his reader, called for an appreciation of the distinction between the representation of characters and manners from the personal sentiments of the poet, and so long as the teacher was making clear the distinction little harm could ensue from reading the immoral in dramatic poetry. The immorality Shakespeare shows is part of the ‘good’ literature is supposed to do. If those antagonistic to Shakespeare for alleged

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 11

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 16

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 18

immorality would pause to consider the peculiar nature of the dramatic genre, then there could be no opposition to Shakespeare, Richardson suggests.

To what extent did Richardson actually carry out Rev. Pearse's instruction of omitting "words and lines violating the interests of morality and religion"? Expletives bearing reference to Christianity or God, devil, damnation or hell remain intact in his edition contrary to what one would expect from Richardson's assertion in the preface to have followed conscientiously Pearse's suggestion to remove words and lines violating religion. Thus, Hamlet is allowed to say, 'O God I could be bounded in a nutshell' (2.2.256-8) and he can also lament 'O God, God! / How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable/Seem to me all the uses of this world' (1.2. 132-4)²⁹⁸ Similarly Malcolm's speech "Nay, had I power I should/ Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell" (4. 3. 97-8) is retained in *Macbeth*. The Bowdlers had removed all these expressions as unsuitable for women and family reading. In fact, it appears Richardson had little interest in cutting out blasphemies; this is particularly seen in the instance where he keeps Iago's "Zounds, sir, you're robbed" but takes out the sexually explicit lines that immediately follows: "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram/ Is tuppung your white ewe. Arise! Arise! /Awake the snorting citizens with the bell, /Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you." (1. 1. 87-93).

Overall, the boundary of acceptability Richardson draws for Indian college students is much more flexible than what the Bowdlers had drawn for women and children in the homeland. References to drinking, swearing and whoring in the plays expunged by the Bowdlers are retained in Richardson's anthology. Thus, Polonius' speech in *Hamlet* (2.1.25-27) is thus retained. References to prostitutes and bastards are also retained, as in *Hamlet* where Laertes says 'that drop of blood that's calm, proclaims me bastard; /Cries cuckold, to my father" (4.5.

²⁹⁸ All references to Shakespeare's text are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Ed. David Bevington. New York: Pears Longman, 2009.

121-2) and when the Fool says “This is a brave night to cool a courtesan” (3.2.79) or when Edgar says “Keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from lenders’ books” (3. 4. 94-6). In Richardson’s anthology, Hamlet says, “Must, like a whore, unpack my heart” (2. 2. 586) but Gloucester’s speech in *King Lear* “Though this knave came something saucily to the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair, there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged.” (1.1. 21-24) is removed. References to the word ‘incest’ in *Hamlet* are not cut as they are in *Family Shakespeare* nor are references to sexual intercourse between Claudius and Getrude. The Ghost calls Claudius “that incestuous, that adulterate beast” (1.5.43) and asks Hamlet not to let “the royal bed of Denmark be/A couch for luxury and damn’d incest” (1.5.84). “Nay, but to live/In the rank sweat of an enseam’d bed’ (3.4. 93-4) is also retained. In Richardson’s anthology Iago still believes that “twixt my sheets/ He’s [Othello] done my office” (2.1. 389-90) which the Bowdlers had removed. References to venereal diseases are also kept as when the Fool says “No hereticks burned but wenches suitors” (3.2. 84). Lear’s exclamation “Thou art a boil,/A plague-sore, or emboss’d carbuncle/ In my corrupted blood” (2.4. 224-6) is retained in Richardson’s anthology. Excretory allusions such as in *King Lear* where the Duke of Kent says “daub the wall of a jakes with him” (2.2.67) which are expunged by the Bowdlers are retained by Richardson. Depictions of graphic violence such as the gouging out of Gloucester’s eyes in *King Lear* or the murder of children in *Macbeth* go uncensored. References to body parts with sexual overtones too are retained by Richardson as when the Fool in *King Lear* says “The codpiece that will house/Before the head has any, /The head and he shall

louse/ So beggars marry many,” (3.2.27—30), lines chiding Lear for acting without common-sense²⁹⁹.

What Richardson does take out are explicit references to sex and sexual body parts as in the porter speech in *Macbeth* with its account of drunken revelry consisting of about 36 lines is excised almost in its entirety. The speech brings together references to hell, blasphemy, intoxication and sexuality with the porter’s proclamation that drink is the provoker of nose painting, sleep, and urine, as well as an influence over lechery, encouraging desire but inhibiting one’s performance. Richardson also removes Hamlet’s exchange with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about Fortune’s private parts (2.2 232-5). Hamlet’s entire exchange with Ophelia concerning ‘country matters’ in Act 3.2. 110-6 of which Theobald writes, “If ever the Poet deserved Whipping for low and indecent Ribaldry; it was for this passage,”³⁰⁰ is taken out in its entirety as are sexually vivid passages in *King Lear*. However, innuendos and expressions with sexual suggestiveness are retained as in Othello’s speech expressing his bewilderment and rage, “Lie with her! Lie on her ! We say “lie on her” when they belie her. Lie with her? Zounds, that’s fulsome. ... – O devil!” (4.1.35-43). Similarly, the conversation between Iago and Roderigo in 3.1 which begins with several sexualized comparisons between the body and a garden is retained.

More radical than Richardson’s reticence about expunging ‘objectionable’ matter from his anthology is his inclusion of Act 1 Scene 2 and Act 2 Scene 2 of *Henry IV* part 1, a play that had been considered problematic for its ambiguous morality at least from the Restoration onwards. The controversy regarding *Henry IV* part 1 centered on the character of Falstaff who

²⁹⁹ For a detailed discussion of excisions of Shakespeare’s obscenity by the Bowdlers see Burden, Emily. *Pre-Victorian Prudery, The Family Shakespeare and the Birth of Bowdlerism*. MPhil Thesis. University of Birmingham, 2007.

³⁰⁰ Lesser, Zachary. “Contrary Matters.” *Hamlet after Q1: An Uncanny History of the Shakespearean Text*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania, 2015, p. 96.

was seen to embody the attractiveness of moral corruption. Samuel Johnson, for instance, considered *Henry IV* part 1 as exemplary of Shakespeare's tendency to sacrifice virtue to convenience and he accused the dramatist for neglecting opportunities for promoting piety and decency. Nevertheless, Johnson was able to salvage Shakespeare from condemnation by offering a novel analysis of the play that insisted that the character of Falstaff needed to be seen in relation to the character of Prince Hal and in relation to play rather than by himself as his predecessors had done. Johnson insisted that Shakespeare was not interested in the characters but in the context of the friendship between Falstaff and Hal³⁰¹. Johnson's interpretation of the play enabled a moral to be drawn: that "no man is more dangerous than he that with a will to corrupt, hath the power to please; and that neither wit nor honesty ought to think themselves safe with such a companion when they see Henry seduced by Falstaff."³⁰²

Richardson's divergence from an overtly ethical interpretation of the play is most evident in the two scenes he selects for the anthology from *Henry IV* part 1. These are focused on the revelry, pranks and mischief of Prince Hal, Falstaff and their associates at the tavern and Gadshill. He titles his selection as "Sir John Falstaff," suggesting the centrality of Falstaff rather than Prince Hal. By having cut the rest of the play, Johnson's suggestion that Falstaff is tied to the personal growth of Prince Hal in his ascent from the English tavern to the throne as the ideal king is removed. Students learn that Falstaff is the jesting master of ceremonies at the tavern but nothing about his fate as Prince Hal eventually casts him off. It emphasizes Hal's deviance rather than his maturation from a rogue to a responsible heir to the throne.

³⁰¹ See Tomarken, Edward. *Morality in Henry IV. Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare: The Discipline of Criticism*. Athens: U of Georgia, 2009.

³⁰² Quoted in Tomarken, Edward. *Samuel Johnson*, p 15.

Richardson's non-didactic position in relation to the plays is in sharp contrast to the care he takes to construct Shakespeare as a respectable middle-class author in biography and critical notice where he functions as a model of a self-made man 'who has risen.' It is in the biographical notice more than anywhere else that Richardson attempts to achieve a conformity between the playwright and the register of Britain's civilizing mission. Here Richardson suppresses all indications of wayward tendencies in Shakespeare's presumed character. In his achieved greatness, Shakespeare embodied an edifying example of respectable, upward mobility, prefiguring the heroic entrepreneurship of middle-class colonial agents. It is mentioned that at the age of 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, but the reader is not told that Anne was already pregnant. If Shakespeare had any intimacy with men, it was a bond of homo-social friendship. His only act of indiscretion was that, young and gay, he joined some dissipated men from the park of Sir Thomas Lucy in stealing deer as mere frolic. Readers learn that Shakespeare's personal characteristic was civility which he showed as a horse guarder and which he put to use to great personal advantage. Upon arriving in London to seek his fortune, Shakespeare rose slowly by dint of hard work and civility, accumulating wealth and ultimately retiring to purchase a house in Stratford. His intention of retiring was "to devote the remainder of his existence to social and domestic happiness."³⁰³

Elsewhere, in the essay "Shakespeare's Sonnets" he contends with the angular edges of Shakespeare's presumed 'character,' resisting a neat incorporation into the middle-class mold he casts the dramatist in in the *Selections*. Published for the first time in 1836 in the literary journal *Literary Leaves* which Richardson edited, revised again in 1840, the same year as the publication of the anthology, he admits to indications of 'irregularities' in Shakespeare's character such as

³⁰³ Richardson, *Selections*, p. xi.

infidelity, domestic discord etc. as reconstructed from the sonnets and other documentary evidence³⁰⁴. Here Richardson ponders the possibility that Shakespeare's morality may have been questionable having written sonnets expressing extravagant love for a low and licentious woman (the dark mistress) and others with homo-erotic sentiments. Could Shakespeare have an early an innate propensity to sin?—Richardson asks. He concedes momentarily that obscenities and indecencies in some of the sonnets cast disgrace to the name of Shakespeare but retracts immediately from a full admission by posing the question: how can we know that the sonnets are really his? Reflecting on the murky publication history of the sonnets, Richardson suggests that it is impossible to tell if more than one hand was involved in the composition of the sonnets. Stallybrass sees Richardson's musings on Shakespeare's morality on the margins of empire as part of a larger contemporary discourse trying to put Shakespeare straight under the twin pressures of bourgeois nationalism and British civilizing mission³⁰⁵. Richardson did include in the anthology sixteen sonnets in spite of the problem they were seen to pose to claims of Shakespeare's respectability. However, Richardson suppresses questions of who the sonnets are addressed to by a rearrangement of the order of the sonnets.

Imputations of immorality, elaborate explanations absolving Shakespeare from wayward tendencies interspersed with momentary concessions that the dramatist's personal life may have been tarnished are not allowed to creep into the ideal character Richardson bestows upon 'the world's greatest poet' that he purveys to Indian students. In his critical estimation of Shakespeare in the notice, Richardson's tone is laudatory and eulogistic. Shakespeare is no God, the reader is told. He is the sun, and just as the sun has spots so had he. Unlike Samuel Jonson who categorized Shakespeare's flaws in his 'Preface', Richardson is reluctant to count Shakespeare's

³⁰⁴ The essay was reprinted in another collection titled *Literary Recreations* (1852)

³⁰⁵ Stallybrass, Peter. "Editing as Cultural Formation: The Sexing of Shakespeare's Sonnets."

flaws. Instead, he lavishes unsparing praise. “There is something almost super-human in the precision with which he reads the innermost secrets of our nature,” he writes. “He lays bare the heart. He is the poet of the world. His true and inimitable delineations of humanity are not confined to particular times and countries.” Shakespeare’s penetrating sagacity rather than lived experience explains his insight into virtue and vice. Understanding and representing human nature, the reader is told, entails a depiction of virtue and vice which are closely related. Though Shakespeare knew well to portray the darkest passions, his own heart, Richardson asserts, was one of the purest and gentlest that ever lived³⁰⁶.

4. Conclusion

Departing from the standard narrative of Shakespeare in colonial India, this chapter has argued that the dramatist’s inclusion in the colonial curriculum was not smooth owing to concerns regarding the moral dimensions of his plays, sonnets and the new emphasis on his character. Contrary to Dobson’s claim that by the 1760s Shakespeare’s reputation as an uplifting moral master was already established, I have argued here that in the colonial context where the central assumption was that education should serve ethical purposes, alleged immorality and obscenity in Shakespeare’s presumed character and works posed obstacles to his inclusion in the colonial curriculum. The absence of Shakespeare in colonial publications in the early nineteenth century highlights the qualms of the colonial government regarding Shakespeare’s compatibility with an ethical program of education that it wished to instill. Richardson’s anthology reveals the editorial negotiations involved in conforming Shakespeare to Britain’s lofty civilizing mission in India.

³⁰⁶ In the Preface, p. 7, Richardson provides the following disclaimer for his overly laudatory tone in the critical evaluations. “I ought, perhaps, to apologize [sic] for the somewhat peremptory tone of the critical remarks in the prefatory Notices; but it is very difficult for anyone, however unpretending, to seat himself in the critic's chair without assuming for the time a manner somewhat foreign to his nature. Doubt and indecision seem inconsistent with the dignity of his office, and in compliance with the almost universal custom he speaks as one possessed of supreme authority on all questions of taste.”

His editorial practice involved a textual re-visioning of Shakespeare through selection, omission, rearrangement and emphasis that sought to make the dramatist fit an ideal that would consolidate Britain's cultural and imperial self-esteem.

An analysis of Shakespeare's first inclusion in a government sponsored anthology, however, reveals the cracks and fissures in the project. Richardson's inclusion of Shakespeare in a government publication drew its sustenance from a liberal ethic, espoused by Macaulay and others, that saw the British ruling India as trustees until Indians were capable of self-rule³⁰⁷. A liberal education for subject peoples was the hand-maiden of a liberal vision of empire. The editing of Shakespeare for Indian students, however, highlights the paradox of liberal empire by revealing the incompatibility of extending a liberal education to a country governed by autocracy. The text of Shakespeare in Richardson's anthology embodies the contradictions in the colonial state's commitment to liberal principles. Guided by a libertarian ethic and bolstered by a sense of the sanctity of Shakespeare's texts, Richardson seeks to keep as much of Shakespeare as possible but under pressures of informal censorship, he is compelled to cut 'indecent' parts of the plays. The text of Shakespeare that his edition offers is a visually ruptured one with open cuts, as it were. Richardson advances the image of a respectable Shakespeare by suppressing objectionable matter and glosses Shakespeare's unconventional moral attitudes with assertions of the dramatist's penetrating sagacity into human virtues and vices. Torn between the opposite pulls of moral libertarianism and moral regulation, the editing of Shakespeare for Indian college students is a story of unresolved paradoxes and contradictions.

In spite of the great interest Richardson's anthology aroused while under preparation for publication and the rave reviews that it received upon publication, its slow release from the

³⁰⁷ Vasunia, Phiroze. *The Classics and Colonial India*. p. 308.

Calcutta School Book Society's depositories suggest that it failed to appeal to students and teachers as much as it was expected. Hancher explains the reasons the anthology fell into disfavor—it was too cumbersome and it supported a much wider range of texts than what the colonial curriculum supported³⁰⁸. One may add that selling at 7 rupees, it was not a particularly cheap book. If in 1835s, Shakespeare texts were unaffordable for many Indian students, the situation was soon to change. The penny Shakespeare of the 1840s, made available by technological advancement in printing in the 1830s, found their way to the colony³⁰⁹. Cheap editions of Shakespeare were available to Indian students in the mid nineteenth century as they were not in earlier decades.

A textbook list for Calcutta University shows that Richardson's anthology was being used for poetry selections but not for Shakespeare play³¹⁰. The fact that the university did not assign a particular edition suggests the wide availability of Shakespeare texts by the time the syllabus was created. A note by a teacher Taraknath Sanyal (headmaster, Cantonment High School, Nowgong) confirms the circulation of wide range of Shakespeare editions in the Indian market in the 1870s-80s—editions imported from America, Britain as well as Germany³¹¹. The availability of cheap, single copy editions of the plays prepared for school students in the West would have rendered Richardson's anthology redundant for Indian students. A major drawback of Richardson's anthology was its sparse explanatory framework. Richardson's conviction about the universality of Shakespeare underscores his assumption that second-language readers of Shakespeare would intuitively understand the dramatist without a substantial explanatory

³⁰⁸ Hancher, Michael. "College Text in India"

³⁰⁹ Altick, Richard D. "From Aldine to Everyman: Cheap Reprint Series of the English Classics 1830-1906." *Studies in Bibliography* 11 (1958): 3-24.

³¹⁰ "Minutes of the Syndicate, 1874" Vol 17. p. 96.

³¹¹ Sanyal, Taraknath. "Shakespeare Study in India." 1887.

apparatus³¹². Thus his anthology offers scant explanations of unfamiliar words, idioms, references and cultural practices. Sanyal voices the need for a different kind of edition catered specifically for Indian students: heavily annotated texts that would explain the dramatist's foreignness to Indian students.

From the latter decades of the nineteenth century one finds a profusion of such editions prepared by university professors in India who were familiar with the challenges of Indian students grappling with Shakespeare. Even if these later editions succeeded in eclipsing the relevance of Richardson's anthology, the latter was nonetheless decisive in consolidating Shakespeare in the Indian curriculum.

³¹² In the 'Preface' to *Selections* Richardson writes, "The teacher must be content to let the student arrive as nearly as possible to the general meaning. We cannot force a sense of intellectual beauty in the mind of a child. It will come in due time if his nature be favourable and his teacher skillful."(17)

III. The Indian Civil Service Examination and the Introduction of Shakespeare as an Academic Subject in Britain

1. Introduction

Examination questions inviting students of literature to comment on aspects of Shakespeare plays seem so natural today in English literary studies that one tends to forget their historical novelty. Such questions are, however, a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging first in India in the early nineteenth century and later in Britain in the mid nineteenth century³¹³. The emergence of examination questions on Shakespeare is ensconced in the emergence of English literature as an academic subject in the nineteenth century. Well into the nineteenth century, students in the traditional universities in England would not have encountered questions requiring a demonstration of knowledge of Shakespeare as part of fulfilment of degrees. For one thing, the concept of examination as a way of determining one's competence in a subject was a new academic phenomenon in Britain in the nineteenth century³¹⁴. Second, academic literary study meant exclusively the study of the ancient Greek and Roman classics, the staple of a liberal education since the fifteenth century revival of humanist learning³¹⁵. Classical authors alone were considered worthy of serious academic attention by virtue of their literary styles, the moral lessons they offered and, not least, because of the difficulty of Greek and Latin languages. English authors, including Shakespeare, were deemed all too easy in comparison, something an intelligent and educated gentleman was expected to have picked up from private reading rather than through sustained studies in the classroom³¹⁶.

³¹³ Majumdar, Bhagaban Prasad. *First Fruits of English Education, 1817-57*. Calcutta: Bookland Private Limited, 1973

³¹⁴ Joseph Roach, "Middle-Class Education and the Examinations: Some Early Victorian Problems," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 10.2 (1962): 176.

³¹⁵ Clarke, M.L. *Classical Education in Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1959.

³¹⁶ McMurty, Joe. *English Language: The Creation of an Academic Discipline*. Hamden: Archon, 1985. p. 8.

In the early nineteenth century, if Shakespeare was included at all, albeit informally, in the classical curriculum it was probably as a handy resource for passages for translation from English into Greek and Latin. The situation may have been different at the newly established University College of London³¹⁷, the provincial colleges and dissenting academies in England and at the Scottish universities. Offering useful, practical education to the upwardly mobile middle class in contrast to the gentlemanly pursuit of liberal studies in the classical universities, these institutions offered English language and literature among other ‘modern’ subjects. To what extent, Shakespeare was part of this alternative curriculum, it is, however, not clear. Thomas Miller’s research reveals that geared mainly towards teaching students business writing skills, oratory and English grammar and composition, Milton, Pope, Thomson, Young, Akenside and Daniel Defoe were regularly offered in the curriculum at these institutions³¹⁸. At the school level, formal and informal study of Shakespeare emphasized oratory and rhetoric over questions of literary value³¹⁹.

The unmistakable impression of academic secondariness that one gathers in surveying available curricular evidence from colleges and universities in Britain before the mid nineteenth

³¹⁷ University College London founded in 1828 had a chair in English literature and history in 1828; University College and King’s College (1834) were founded in reaction against the Anglican exclusiveness and classical traditionalism of Oxbridge. Its roots were in Puritan tradition and in the Dissenting Academies which the 1662 Act of Uniformity had made necessary and the 1689 Act of Toleration had made possible. English was studied as a training in ministry with emphasis on rhetoric but also as a requirement ‘for the business of manhood.’ At UC the practical value of the language was emphasized while at King’s the stress was on the moral, humane influence of literature. See Harrison, J.B. “English as a University Subject in India and England: Calcutta, Allahabad, Benaras, London, Cambridge and Oxford” *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia* Ed Nigel Crook Delhi: Oxford U P, 155-89, p. 155-6. At Cambridge, English belonged to the Board of Medieval and Modern Languages, founded in 1878 until the English tripos was devised in 1921. At Oxford, the Merton Professorship was established in 1884 and university examination in English was instituted in 1893. See Taylor, Gary. *Reinventing Shakespeare*. New York: Weidenfield, 1989. p. 194. University College London had a chair in English literature and history by 1828; Trinity College, Dublin, from 1867.

³¹⁸ Miller, Thomas P. “Where Did College English Come From?” *Rhetoric Review* 9.1 (1990): 50-69; Miller, Thomas P. *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: U of Pittsburgh, 1997

³¹⁹ Bottoms, Janet. “‘Doing Shakespeare’: How Shakespeare Became a School Subject” *Shakespeare Survey* 66 Ed. Peter Holland. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, p. 96-109

century is at odds with what we have been told about contemporary enthusiasm for Britain's national Bard in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In Michael Dobson's influential analysis of Shakespeare's shifting reputation in the eighteenth century, by the 1740s factional politics in England had already promoted Shakespeare to the status of the great 'National Poet and the Universal Genius,' a status that was further consolidated during the Anglo-French rivalry in the late eighteenth century³²⁰. Dobson's argument, emphasizing the historicity of Shakespeare's canonization, belongs to a spate of recent scholarship that has examined the historical and cultural forces that have made Shakespeare the 'Bard'. In similar veins as Dobson, Gary Taylor has argued that if the Puritan revolution of the 1640s had sustained itself or if France had won the Napoleonic wars, Shakespeare would not have achieved or retained the dominance he now enjoys³²¹. Dobson, however, inadequately addresses the fact that the construction of the meaning of 'Shakespeare' before the latter half of the nineteenth century took place in contexts other than the academic.

Criticizing Dobson's narrative of Shakespeare's glorification as a British icon in the eighteenth century, historian Linda Colley has argued that the dramatist's emergence as a British as opposed to an English icon was delayed till as late as the early twentieth century³²². Taking Dobson to task for historical sloppiness, Colley asserts that in the eighteenth century conflicting regional, religious and ethnic loyalties within a newly constituted political nation were obstacles to any wide-scale recognition of Shakespeare as a British icon with the result that the popularity and advocacy of the dramatist remained largely confined among private individuals and

³²⁰ Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

³²¹ Taylor, Gary. *Reinventing Shakespeare*.

³²² Colley, Linda. "Shakespeare and the Limits of National Culture." University of London. Royal Holloway. 3rd March, 1998. Hayes Robinson Lecture Series No. 2.

Shakespeare enthusiasts. Religious and ethnic differences and conflicting loyalties in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were obstacles to any stable recognition of Shakespeare as a British icon. It was in the context of state sponsorship of Shakespeare, in particular, the development of a standardized vernacular curriculum in British schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century³²³, the advancement of print technology which made the plays widely and cheaply available, the development of modern communication systems such as the radio, and last but not least, Britain's expansive empire that Shakespeare overcame his association with a narrow Englishness, ultimately assuming the status of a British icon.

Colley's argument identifies the educational apparatus in Britain as an important factor in Shakespeare's consolidation as a national icon but does not adequately look at how or when the academy claimed the dramatist as its own. While a standardized school curriculum may have ensured Shakespeare's popularity and wide acceptance, it is doubtful whether the playwright would have acquired the cultural prestige he is associated with without the approval of the highest institutions of learning. If today, Shakespeare's primary association is with the academy, when and under what conditions was that connection forged? What new significance accrued to the meaning of Shakespeare with his transformation as an academic subject at the highest level?³²⁴

In this chapter, I examine the importance allocated to Shakespeare in the English literature and language component in the Indian Civil Service (hereafter ICS) Examination in transforming the dramatist into a venerable academic subject, one that embodies, even justifies the very concept

³²³ At the school level, Shakespeare was installed in the syllabus as a set text from the 1880s. See Taylor, Gary. *Reinventing Shakespeare*. New York: Weidenfield, 1989. p. 184

³²⁴ Elizabeth Renker addresses similar questions with respect to the beginning of Shakespeare studies in America. See Renker, Elizabeth. "Shakespeare in the College Curriculum, 1870-1920" *Shakespearean Educations: Power, Citizenship and Performance*. Ed Coppelia Kahn, Heather Nathans and Mimi Godfrey. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2011. p. 131-56.

of a literary education. The ICS Examination, established by Act of Parliament in Britain in 1855, was a competitive screening examination through which the influential body of administrative officials that ruled the Indian subcontinent were selected for appointment. In 1855, the competitive examination was introduced to substitute the existing method of recruitment through patronage by the East India Company board of directors. Throughout the nineteenth century, the ICS consisted largely of men who were born and recruited in Britain. Although nominally Indians were free to compete for the positions, they were effectively kept out of the service by a low age requirement for recruits and by holding the examination only in Britain, both disadvantageous to Indian candidates³²⁵.

By making knowledge of Shakespeare a prerequisite for the acquisition of positions in the higher ranks of imperial administration, the ICS Examination, I show, was instrumental in reinventing Shakespeare as an academic subject suitable for the education of the British ruling class at a time when there was no formal study of the dramatist in the traditional universities. I show here the mediation of a political and commercial institution, the East India Company, in selecting and interpreting Shakespeare as necessary indoctrination for imperial civil servants. A subject to be close-read, memorized, cited and theorized by imperial job-seekers and later by students across schools and colleges, Shakespeare was guaranteed survival in an incarnation hitherto unknown. The ICS was Britain's first civil service³²⁶. As the gateway to a prestigious and lucrative profession for British gentlemen³²⁷, the ICS examination paved the way for

³²⁵ The total number of Indians who succeeded in the open competition from 1855 to 1913 was eighty-four, less than 4% of the total number of successful candidates. See Vasunia, Phiroze. "Greek, Latin, and the Indian Civil Service" in *British Classics Outside England*. Waco, Texas: Baylor UP, 2009, 61-93.

³²⁶ The emphasis on English in the ICS carried over into other examination schemes as the Home departments moved to competitive selection. By 1870 all had done so except the Foreign Office. Harrison, J. B. "English as a University Subject" p. 157.

³²⁷ Spangenberg, Bradford. "The Problem of Recruitment for the Indian Civil Service during the Nineteenth Century" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30.2 (1971): 341-60.

Shakespeare's incorporation at Oxbridge. Not least, in so doing, the ICS Examination consolidated Shakespeare in the project of empire-building. Surely the ICS Examination was not the only factor in effecting Shakespeare's transformation into a curriculum; it, nevertheless, was a significant force in enshrining the playwright in the curriculum at the highest academic level.

Thanks to Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest*, the story of British Empire's investment in English literary studies is a familiar one³²⁸. We know that the fortunes of English literature as a curriculum began in India as a mechanism of ideological control of recalcitrant subject peoples. Outwardly benign and humanistic in orientation, English studies aimed at disciplinary management of Indians to render them docile and submissive to British domination. As such, it served as an instrument of cultural conquest that worked in tandem with British military conquest and economic exploitation of India. Viswanathan shows that the English literary curriculum in India enabled "the humanistic ideals of enlightenment to coexist with and even support education for social and political control."³²⁹ Her study, however, focuses exclusively on colonial discourse to the neglect of the colonizer's engagement with English literary studies beyond exploiting its usefulness as an ideological weapon in the colonial encounter. A crucial issue unaddressed by Viswanathan and later critics inspired by her analytical framework is the kind of literary education the colonial agents responsible for maintaining Britain's imperial presence brought with them to India. Viswanathan contends that for Indians, English literary texts served as a "surrogate English in his highest and most perfect state, [becoming] a mask for

³²⁸ Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, p.3

economic exploitation.”³³⁰ What happened when those responsible for overseeing Britain’s imperial and civilizing mission were reading the same texts?³³¹

The importance of the ICS Examination in the formation and consolidation of English literature as a disciplinary study has escaped sustained critical consideration. Viswanathan glances at it only briefly as does Chris Baldick in his account of the beginnings of English as an academic subject³³². Bill Ashcroft et al acknowledges that “the study of English and the growth of Empire proceeded from a single ideological climate and that the development of one is intrinsically bound up with the development of the other, both at the level of simple utilityand at the unconscious level”³³³ but there is no specific attention given to the ICS Examination as a significant locus where imperialism intersected with English as an academic discipline.

In Shakespeare studies, Thomas Dabbs in “Shakespeare and the Department” has argued that the single most important event in the long history of Shakespeare’s reception is his transformation into an academic subject in the mid to late nineteenth century, but he makes no mention of the ICS examination³³⁴. Gary Taylor, in “Victorian Values,” comments briefly on the role of ICS in formally legitimizing English literature as a subject of instruction at universities, with Shakespeare as the dominant component of the subject; however, this observation is made in passing within a broader preoccupation with Victorian reinventions of Shakespeare³³⁵. Stanley Wells, in his account of the history of Shakespeare reception from the seventeenth century to

³³⁰ Ibid, p. 20.

³³¹ See Murphy, Sharon. “Imperial Reading? The East India Company’s Lending Libraries for Soldiers, c 1819-1834.” *Book History* 12 (2009): 74-99 for a similar critique of Viswanathan. Murphy recovers titles of books that British soldiers serving in the East India Company were exhorted to read.

³³² Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest*, p. 2; Baldick, Chris. *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1983. p. 70.

³³³ Ashcroft, Bill. Griffith, Gareth and Tiffin, Helen. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, p 3.

³³⁴ Dabbs, Thomas. “Shakespeare and the Department” In *English as a Discipline, or Is There a Plot in this Play?* Ed. James Raymond. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama, 1996. p. 82-98.

³³⁵ *Reinventing Shakespeare*, p. 184.

present times, makes no reference to the ICS³³⁶ nor do any of the two volumes of *Victorian Shakespeare*, the second of which specifically covers a range of nineteenth century Shakespeare appropriations outside the theatre³³⁷.

In ICS histories, Javed Majeed, Phiroze Vasunia, Victoria Larson, Christopher Hagerman, C. J. Dewey, Bernard Cohn and, earlier, O'Malley have discussed the content of the ICS Examination and the educational qualifications of civil servants and aspiring candidates³³⁸. The emphasis of these scholars has been primarily on the influence of a classical education on the mind set of Britain's colonial agents. Vasunia, for example, argues, that in the nineteenth century the dominant view of the imperialist was that of a British gentleman knowledgeable in the ancient European classics, a view reinforced by the importance given to the classics in the ICS Examination. Larson argues that the predominance of the classics in the ICS Examination sought to reinforce aristocratic influences by limiting access of socially under-privileged men to the spoils of empire. These arguments, while illuminating the importance of the classics in the education of colonial agents, turn oblivious to the simultaneous importance given to English language and literature in the ICS Examination. My purpose here is to build on this existing scholarship, to situate the ICS Examination within the histories of education for Britain's ruling elite in India with its traditional emphasis on the ancient European classics, of Shakespeare reception, of the disciplinary origin of English studies, and, last but not least, of empire, and to explore details of

³³⁶ Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare for All Time*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.

³³⁷ Marshall, Gail. Ed. *Victorian Shakespeare*. New York: Palgrave, 2003

³³⁸ Majeed, Javed. "Comparativism and References to Rome in British Imperial Attitudes to India" in *Roman Presences* Ed. Catharine Edwards. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999; Phiroze Vasunia, "Greek, Latin, and the Indian Civil Service" in *British Classics Outside England* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2009), 61-93; Larson, Victoria. "Classics and the Acquisition and Validation of Power in Britain's Imperial Century" 6.2 (1999): 185-225; Hagerman, Christopher. *Britain's Imperial Muse: The Classics and Britain's Indian Empire, 1784-1914*, 2013; Dewey, C. J. "The Education of a Ruling Caste: The Indian Civil Service in the Era of Competitive Examination" *The English Historical Review* 88.347 (1973): 262-85; Cohn, Bernard, "The Recruitment and Training of British Civil Servants in India, 1600-1860," in *An Anthropologist among the Historian and Other Essays* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), 500-53; Malley, L. O. *The Indian Civil Service, 1601-1930*. London: Frank Cass, 1965.

the relationship that have been overlooked. To this end, I use a previously unexamined archival source—a how-to guidebook for aspiring candidates offering help in the English literature and language section of the ICS examination –in critically developing this earlier material.

In what follows, I tease out the complex nexus between English literature and national language and unity in Britain in the mid nineteenth century while examining the mechanism of the ICS Examination through which Shakespeare made his first notable appearance in Britain as an academic subject at an advanced level. In particular, I focus on the imaginative and ideological life of an organically unified nation-state as it was negotiated and reproduced under the sign of English language and literature in the ICS examination and, more specifically, under Shakespeare whose plays, apprehended as literary objects rather than as play scripts, were interpreted to be implicated in the narrative of British nationhood³³⁹. In this regard, I draw attention to the contribution of the ICS towards the construction of an English literary canon, with Shakespeare as a towering author. In *Masks of Conquest*, Viswanathan, following Eric Stokes in his classic argument in *English Utilitarians and India*, has argued that India served as a laboratory in which to test out new philosophical, political and pedagogic ideas³⁴⁰. The incorporation of English literature in the ICS Examination shows how English literary studies, first introduced and tested in India, made its way back to Britain as an educational qualification for aspiring colonial administrators and later for the general populace, confirming the view of empire as a system that entailed the flow of knowledge and culture produced in the colonial encounter to flow across the empire back to the metropolitan imperial center.

³³⁹ Denise Albanese makes a similar argument with regard to the influence of college entrance requirements on the making of a national educational Shakespeare in America. See Albanese, Denise. "Canons before Canons: College Entrance Requirements and the Making of a National-Educational Shakespeare. *Shakespearean Educations*. Ed Coppelia Kahn, Heather Nathans and Mimi Godfrey. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2011. p. 157-74.

³⁴⁰ Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, p 65.

2. Before Open Examination: The Training of Indian Civil Servants at Haileybury

The simultaneous introduction of English language and literature and open examination in 1855 as the method of recruitment for civil servants in India belongs to a series of reforms attempting to standardize the educational qualifications of Britain's imperial administrators that date back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Scholars have located Edmund Burke's highly publicized critique of corruption of Company men during the impeachment trial of Governor-general Warren Hastings in the 1780s as the beginning of the notion of qualified professional servicemen overseeing Britain's territorial acquisitions in India³⁴¹. As Eddy Kent explains, Burke's vision of a virtuous British empire existing for the mutual benefits of Indians and the British nation rested on the notion of imperial agents as honorable professionals replacing the rapacious tyrants who had secured the East India Company its territorial acquisitions in the late eighteenth century³⁴². If the East India Company's mercantile project in India was to transform into a legitimate imperial mission, professions of morality, public responsibility and private virtue of imperial agents were to be crucial in transforming the tarnished image of Britain's overseas enterprise in India. From Burke onwards, a new type of functionary—the imperial agent as a bureaucrat replacing the profligate eighteenth century nabob enriching himself at the cost of good government—was envisioned at the heart of Britain's newly envisaged mission in India as trustees of colonized subjects, enforcing law, good government, civilization and progress.

The first steps towards the establishment of a standardized education that would produce the ideal representative of empire was taken by Richard Wellesley, Governor-General of India from 1798-1805. Without consent from the board of directors in London, Wellesley unilaterally founded the Fort William College in Calcutta in 1800 as a preparatory college for civil servants

³⁴¹ Kent, Eddy. "How the Civil Service Got Its Name: India as a Noble Profession" *Corporate Character: Representing Imperial Power in British India, 1786-1901*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, p. 59-89.

³⁴² *Ibid*, p. 61.

out of his conviction that the current cohort of recruits were “unequal to their prescribed duties” and consequently the “principles of public integrity are endangered, and the successful administration of the whole Government exposed to hazard.”³⁴³ The college, it was hoped, would instill professional ethics and qualifications commensurate with the changed responsibilities of Company servants who were no longer commercial agents and were now recast in the roles of administrators, revenue collectors and district judges. For civil servants stationed in India, the best professional asset was character. Wellesley writes,

Their [the civil servants’] education should be founded in a general knowledge of those branches of literature and science, which form the basis of the education of persons destined to similar occupations in Europe;their early habits should be so formed, as to establish in their minds such solid foundations of industry, prudence, integrity and religion, as should effectually guard them against those temptations, with which the nature of this climate, and peculiar depravity of the people of India, will surround and assail them in every station, especially upon their first arrival in India³⁴⁴.

As Eddy Kent explains, Wellesley’s plan of education for civil servants, involving a superstructure whose foundation was to be laid in Britain and completed in India through an acquaintance with the history, languages, customs and manners of India and inculcation of moral values, was completely novel for its time in its insistence on a preparatory training in statesmanship rather than private citizenship that the traditional universities in Britain instilled³⁴⁵. The civil employees of the

³⁴³ Ibid, p. 68

³⁴⁴ Quoted in Cohn, Bernard, “Recruitment and Training of British Civil Servants in India, 1600-1860” *Asiatic Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition*. Ed Ralph Braibanti. Durham: Duke UP, 1966. p. 112.

³⁴⁵ Kent, Eddy. *Corporate Character*, p 66.

East India Company would learn to conduct the affairs of government like statesmen and ministers of a powerful sovereign.

Rejecting Wellesley's plan of a preparatory college in Calcutta, the court of directors in London moved it to Haileybury in Hertfordshire where it could exert greater influence. In 1806 the East India College, commonly called Haileybury, admitted its first cohort. Recruits nominated by the court of directors of the East India Company would spend two years here before taking up appointments in India. Till the abolition of the college in 1853 with the implementation of open examination, Haileybury served as the training academy for the Company's civil servants, the first of its kind in Britain. It may be worthwhile here to consider for a moment the education of the ICS recruits before the introduction of English language and literature as it allows us to map the intellectual space that English, and more specifically Shakespeare, would come to occupy from 1855 onwards. Haileybury was primarily intended to instill moral values among future administrators. It had two departments, the European classics and Oriental languages³⁴⁶. Novel at the time, the curriculum also included modern subjects such as natural philosophy, law, history and political economy.

Training in the classics was perceived to be crucial at Haileybury, from its admission practices to the curriculum it offered. The Committee of Correspondence, which had been set up in 1804 to draw up the plan for a new college for the East India Company, emphasized the importance of the classics in the education of the civil servants. Its report said, "Without some foundation of this kind of [classical] Learning, which is intermixed with every other cultivated among us, it will be difficult to raise any great superstructure of that liberal knowledge which is

³⁴⁶ Powell, Avril "Preparation for Empire: Haileybury College" *Scottish Orientalists and India*. Rochester, NY: Boydell p. 51-74.

required in men invested with Public Trust.”³⁴⁷ The future civil servants of the Company would pass an important and formative period of their life undergoing such an education: “(i)t is the only period their destination will allow for the acquisition of European Literature and Science, and in a word, on the use which is made of it, in a very material degree, their future Character and Services.”³⁴⁸ Such an education would fortify the civil servants against “erroneous and dangerous opinions,”³⁴⁹ producing “good subjects and enlightened Patriots and imbued with reverence and love for the religion, the Constitution and laws of their own Country.”³⁵⁰ The European classics would provide a foundational, primarily moral, education in this regard. Regardless of the Committee’s insistence on producing “enlightened Patriots,” the report made no provision for the study of English literary authors, including Shakespeare, by the recruits—the only English subject that they were expected to train in was English composition. This anomaly points to the uncertainty of the Committee about the value of English subjects in the education of Britain’s administrators in India at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Haileybury’s emphasis on the classics attests to the dominance of aristocratic values in the education of the ICS recruits. As Victoria Larson points out, the emphasis on the classics at every stage in the training at Haileybury served as a screening device in making the coveted administrative jobs in the East India Company the exclusive preserve of the socially privileged in Britain³⁵¹. The classics were the dominant subject in the education of the upper and the upper middle class, serving as a benchmark of one’s gentlemanly status. The latter’s education in the classics began at an early age in public schools and continued through to the university level. While

³⁴⁷ Vasunia, Phiroze. “Greek, Latin and the Indian Civil Service” *The Classics and Colonial India*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013, p. 199.

³⁴⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁹ Ibid

³⁵⁰ Ibid

³⁵¹ Larson, Victoria “Classics and the Acquisition and Validation of Power in Britain’s Imperial Century” p. 190.

the working class received no classical training, the middle class had some access to it in the local grammar schools, but this was of a poor quality. However, the upper middle class, which aspired to gentlemanly status and could afford expensive public schools that heavily emphasized on a classical curriculum, did receive classical training. As Bernard Cohn has pointed out, it was primarily this class constituting banking families and professionals from which the majority of the Indian civil servants were recruited in the days of patronage.

The appropriation of Shakespeare by the ICS Exam in 1855, like the introduction of open examination with which it coincides, marks a significant moment in the displacement of the ancient regime of the aristocracy of birth by meritocracy in the government of the Indian colony. It is well known that from the late eighteenth century onwards, middle-class values came to dominate colonial ideology³⁵². The history of the ICS in the first fifty years or so of the nineteenth century reflects the transition from traditional aristocratic ideas of service, based on birth and patronage, to the middle-class concept of career open to merit³⁵³. The introduction of open competitive examination as the recruitment method for Indian civil servants has long been considered as the highlight of the triumph of middle-class values in the government of the Indian colony. The existing scholarship has, however, neglected to consider the role of the introduction of English language and literature with Shakespeare as a major author in the consolidation of middle class values in colonial administration.

Gerald Newman has shown that middle-class values also undergirded the surge of English nationalism in the eighteenth century leading to a growing pride in English culture and heritage that displaced, at least partially, the supremacy of the ancient classics in literate circles³⁵⁴. Many

³⁵² See Kent, Eddy. "How the Civil Service Got Its Name: India as a Noble Profession" *Corporate Character: Representing Imperial Power in British India, 1786-1901*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, p. 59-89.

³⁵³ Dewey, C.J. "The Education of a Ruling Caste: The Indian Civil Service in the Era of Competitive Examination".

³⁵⁴ Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism, A Cultural History 1740-1830*. New York: St. Martin's, 1987.

contributory factors are believed to be at work behind the rise and growth of English nationalism in the eighteenth century—the expansion of the reading public, new forms of mass communication, an intensified sense of togetherness and a sense of cultural alienation. Newman argues that an especially significant impetus came from the rising political activity of the middle-class who waged a class struggle against the aristocratic elite under the guise of a foreign cultural invasion and a concomitant cultural and moral betrayal³⁵⁵. The source of the aristocrat's authority, protecting his property and privilege, stemmed from his participation in a cosmopolitan, international culture which transcended the nation-state and which was inaccessible to the middle-class. The latter defined itself by moral opposition to aristocratic influence and cast itself as the defender of native culture, perceived to be slighted by foreign cultural invasion and the aristocrat's participation in it. The program of national renewal, spearheaded by the upwardly mobile middle-class, Newman asserts, took an anti-aristocratic stance by correlating privilege of birth and connection with incompetence, moral corruption and un-English taste. Merit was seen as antithetically opposed to privilege, believed to be overridden by inherited status, power, aesthetic failure and an international taste.

Kathryn Prince, following Newman, has argued that in the late eighteenth century Shakespeare served as the icon of middle-class English nationalism that questioned and set itself against the dominance of aristocratic cosmopolitanism³⁵⁶. “Nationalism,” Prince writes, “in which Shakespeare-worship played an increasing myth-making role, served an equalizing function essentially bourgeois in character.”³⁵⁷ The very characteristics of Shakespeare's plays that had posed an embarrassment to English critics early in the eighteenth century—their departure from

³⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 93.

³⁵⁶ Prince, Kathryn. “Shakespeare and English Nationalism” *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* Ed. Peter Sabor and Fiona Ritchie. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012, p. 277-94.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 284.

neoclassical decorum and standard norms of politeness—turned out to be their distinctive virtue and a barometer of Englishness. If Shakespeare had been earlier in the eighteenth century an icon of Whig oppositional values within factional politics in England, Anglo-French rivalry in the latter decades of the century cemented his status as the icon of English poetics, artistic freedom and cultural excellence. The idea of an original genius exempted Shakespeare from neoclassical requirements while the playwright became the means of building national character perceived to be eroded by foreign, especially French influences.

While Prince's insights are helpful in understanding the transformation of Shakespeare's reputation in England in the eighteenth century, her argument, like Dobson's *The Making of the National Poet*, remains constrained within a continental frame of reference. Prince's argument does not explain how Shakespeare became a British as opposed to an English icon. Alok Yadav has usefully shown that it was Britain's newly enhanced geopolitical eminence as an imperial power in the late eighteenth century that led to a reassessment of its cultural heritage, paving the way for the emergence of English language as the dominant language at the expense of downgraded provincial languages in the British Isles³⁵⁸. Yadav argues that "the elevation of English above the other British regional vernaculars gave it a much more secure footing on which to claim the status of a language of culture than did English's standing vis-à-vis the recognized European languages of culture.... this 'national' elevation of English was one of the most palpable and far-reaching domestic consequences of empire."³⁵⁹ Yadav makes the important observation that English language and literature assumed the status of a language of culture by provincializing other vernacular languages and cultural spheres within Britain.

³⁵⁸ Yadav, Alok. *Before the Empire of English: Literature, Provinciality, and Nationalism in Eighteenth-century Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 45.

Linda Colley shares Yadav's emphasis on the imperial context shaping British nationalism. Contesting Dobson's insular perspective, Colley argues that Britain's expansive empire in South Asia was a significant factor for Shakespeare's emergence as a British as opposed to an English icon. Taking my cue from Colley's argument, I show here the constitutive role of British Empire in the first articulation of Shakespeare in Britain as an academic subject at an advanced level. With the introduction of English language and literature in the ICS Examination, this newly forged subject would topple the exclusive pre-eminence of the ancient European classics as the moral training ground of Britain's ruling elite. From 1855 onwards, English language and literature –with Shakespeare as a major author-- came to share equally with the European classics the responsibility of producing morally-fortified imperial administrators while assuming some of classics' other associations of upper-class, gentlemanly civility. The contribution of the ICS Examination to Shakespeare studies lies precisely in the fact that it made possible to think of Shakespeare as a subject suitable for Britain's ruling elite. At the same time, the questions set in the English literature section of the ICS Examination attest to Yadav's argument regarding the process of provincialization by which English language and literature assumed cultural centrality within Britain.

It is particularly interesting that Thomas Babington Macaulay, the British statesman who had been instrumental in consolidating Shakespeare, and more broadly English literature, in the Indian classroom through his recommendation in the "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) that the colonial government in India should patronize English in place of Oriental learning in government-aided schools and colleges, would be the person in vanguard in introducing English literature and language as a subject of training for imperial administrators. Macaulay had made the recommendation for English as the language of official support in India on the ground that Oriental

learning was negligible in comparison to European achievement and that the aim of the British government in India was to produce “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect”³⁶⁰ – a civilizing drive that staked the colonial enterprise on the creation of a morally elevated class of Indians indoctrinated into metropolitan habits of thinking.

Belatedly in 1855, the British administrators of India were brought under the same intellectual regimen that their colonized subjects had been under for over three decades, fulfilling Macaulay’s confidence in English language and literature which he thought to be “now more valuable than that of classical antiquity.”³⁶¹ The introduction of English language and literature as a subject for examination for Indian civil servants in Britain is a prime example of the intertwined histories of the metropole and the colony bearing testament to the ways in which both were formed through mutual encounters. Macaulay’s efforts to bring colonial administrators under a similar intellectual training as that for colonized subjects is a confirmation of the Eurocentric cultural chauvinism that underlies his “Minute on Indian Education.”

3. The Introduction of English Language and Literature as a Subject of Examination in the ICS Examination

In 1833, Macaulay said to the House of Commons:

Consider too, Sir, how rapidly the public mind of India is advancing, how much attention is already paid by the higher classes of the natives to those intellectual pursuits on the cultivation of which the superiority of the European race principally depends. Surely, in such circumstances, from motives of selfish policy, if from no higher motive, we ought to

³⁶⁰Macaulay, T. “Minute on Indian Education” in *Parliamentary Papers* 21 (1835), p. 228.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

fill the magistracies of our Eastern Empire with men who may do honour to our country, with men who may represent the best of the English nation.³⁶²

The passage offers a glimpse into the nature of the pressure from the colony that provided the impetus for making an overhaul in the selection process and the curriculum of the Indian civil servant. As Sramek points out, in the early nineteenth century the Indian empire was believed to be one of opinion, built upon the racial and cultural superiority of the British over their Indian subjects³⁶³. The importance of the Indian civil servant for the stability of the empire was undisputed—it was readily acknowledged that the quality of the civil service would determine the future of the British Empire in India³⁶⁴. Much of the imperial administrator’s sway over the native, as Macaulay implies in the passage above, rested on his command of awe and respect; the empire would prematurely come to an end if the native, indoctrinated into Western culture, saw himself superior to his ruler in intelligence, cultivation and sophistication. Macaulay was one of many in the 1830s who favored major reforms in the ICS in the belief that the system of patronage and the alleged vocational training that Haileybury offered failed to produce the “best of the English nation.”

Selection through patronage was seen as too random for such an important office as the civil service. A new type of civil servant was conjured—one selected for merit and competence, not connection, and promoted for ability, not seniority³⁶⁵. Reform-minded liberals argued that there was no other way of discovering merit as through open competitive examinations.³⁶⁶ As much as a

³⁶² *Parliamentary Papers* 55 (1854), 38.

³⁶³ Sramek, Joseph. *Gender, Morality and Race in Company India, 1765-1858*. p. 3.

³⁶⁴ Spangenberg, Bradford. “The Problem of Recruitment for the Indian Civil Service during the Nineteenth Century”

³⁶⁵ Dewey, C. J. “The Education of a Ruling Caste: The Indian Civil Service in the Era of Competitive Examination”

³⁶⁶ Macaulay’s Committee stated “it is not among young men superior to their fellows in science and literature that scandalous immorality is generally found to prevail....Indeed early superiority in science and literature generally indicates the existence of some qualities which are securities against vice –industry, self-denial, a taste for pleasures not sensual, a laudable desire of honourable distinction, a still more laudable desire to obtain the

liberal education conferred moral qualities, examination proved those qualities; it proved, for instance, steadiness of character and strength of personality—highly valued qualities in a civil servant—because only a man possessed of these qualities, it was argued, would have the stamina to undergo successfully the long and vigorous training necessary to pass tests. The idea of an open competition found a responsive ear with the Whig party in office in the House of Commons, and a committee was appointed in 1854 to inquire into the examinations of the ICS candidates. This committee, chaired by Macaulay, made recommendations that defined the policy- guidelines for the examination, training, and selection of later generations of ICS candidates.

Macaulay's Committee, as it came to be known, defined its priority as the recruitment for the East India Company's service young Englishmen who would have "received the best, the most liberal, the most finished education that [their] native country affords."³⁶⁷ The goal was to align the ICS with the ideals of the scholar-administrator, a goal Haileybury was seen to have failed in producing. In accordance with this aim, the syllabus of the examinations was to be "confined to those branches of knowledge to which it is desirable that English gentlemen who mean to remain at home should pay some attention." The Committee favored a 'liberal' education marked by breadth and inutility, as opposed to the vocational training offered by Haileybury. The content of the examination was to be primarily literary with approximately 70% of total marks devoted to literary subjects-- ancient, modern and Oriental--reflecting the Committee's assumption that literature provided the best intellectual training for administrative jobs. Among all subjects, English literature, history and composition received the maximum value in terms of marks ascribed--a total of 1,500-- followed by Mathematics with a 1,000 marks and Greek and Latin with

approbation of friends and relations. We therefore believe that the intellectual test which is about to be established will be found in practice to be the best moral test which can be devised." *The Indian Civil Service, Report to the Right Hon. Sir Charles Wood by T.B. Macaulay and others*. London: Thacker and Co, 1855

³⁶⁷ *Parliamentary Papers* 40 (1854-55) p. 8

750 each. The following table shows the distribution of marks in the examination of candidates for the ICS in 1855³⁶⁸.

Subject	Marks
English, literature, history and composition	1,500
Greek language, literature and history	750
Latin language, literature and history	750
French language, literature, and history	375
German language, literature and history	375
Italian language, literature and history	375
Mathematics, pure and mixed	1,000
Natural science	500
Moral science (logic and moral philosophy)	500
Sanskrit language and literature	375
Arabic language and literature	375

The importance of English language, literature and history in the ICS Examination is clearly evident from the fact that most marks were allocated to it, superseding by far the importance of Greek and Latin. While the European classics were far from completely abandoned—indeed, Greek and Latin, combined, claimed the same marks as English language, literature and history in the open examination—the relatively low weight given in the syllabus to Greek and Latin individually is somewhat contradictory of the Committee’s stress on the value of classical learning. Skill in Greek and Latin versification, the Committee argued, must have a considerable share in

³⁶⁸ “Civil Service Commission: Appendix to Report” *Parliamentary Papers*, House of Commons, Vol 22. London: George Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1876. p. 497

determining the issue of the competition. The fact that great figures such as Fox, Canning, Wellesley and others excelled in this accomplishment, indicated how “powers of mind....properly trained and directed, may do great service to the State.”³⁶⁹ Despite these and other high praises for classical learning in the report, in practice the syllabus showed an uncertainty about the value of Greek and Latin in the education of the Indian civil servant by giving them the third place in the scale of marks. It has been remarked that the reform of recruitment methods for the ICS was at least partially motivated by the desire to annex Oxford and Cambridge to the ICS by roping in honors graduates from these universities for administrative service in India, thereby improving career opportunities for England’s academically brightest in a tight job market while enhancing the quality of civil service in India³⁷⁰. If open examination was devised to favor Oxbridge honors graduates, the importance given to English language and literature in the ICS Examination may seem surprising considering that the subject was as yet non-existent at Oxbridge where the official curriculum was dominated by the ancient classics (Oxford) and Mathematics (Cambridge).

The introduction of English literature in the open examination, however, appears less surprising if we consider it as a nod to the alternative curriculum at the Scottish and the new ‘red-brick’ universities in England which included English language and literature as a subject of instruction in their curriculum. “A young man,” the Committee argued, “who has scarcely any knowledge of mathematics, little Latin, and no Greek may pass such an examination in English, French, Italian, German, Geology and Chemistry, that he may stand at the head of the list.”³⁷¹ The list of subjects was selected and marks were assigned for each with an egalitarian insistence on opening a fair field to all educational institutions in Britain so that the best scholars from each

³⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 12

³⁷⁰ Dewey, C.J. “The Education of a Ruling Caste: The Indian Civil Service in the Era of Competitive Examination”

³⁷¹ *The Report of the Macaulay Commission on the Indian Civil Service*. Reprinted in *Colonial Administration in the Far East* Vol 2 Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co, 1907. p. 395.

should have equal chances of success and share in the spoils of empire. “The marks,” the Committee argued, “ought, we conceive, to be distributed in such a manner that no part of the kingdom and no class of schools shall exclusively furnish servants to the East India Company.”³⁷² Proficiency in the subjects taught at Oxford and Cambridge—classics and mathematics— was to be rewarded; but the alternative curriculum of newer institutions of learning was also to be valued.

By allocating only 20% of the total marks to the classics and 19% to mathematics, the Committee claimed that in the reformed system no candidate could hope to pass the examination by virtue of his excellence at classics or mathematics alone, thereby undermining any undue advantage that candidates with a degree from Oxford or Cambridge might have. In reality, however, the inclusion of English language and literature worked especially in the advantage of candidates with a degree from Oxford or Cambridge who were otherwise disadvantaged in the examination by their lack of competence in subjects like moral science, natural science or the Oriental languages which were not taught in the traditional curriculum. These candidates, in practice, would still have a fair chance of success in the ICS by mastering English language and literature, and it confirmed the hope that Oxbridge honors graduates, with their excellent academic credentials, would constitute the greatest number of civil servants sent out to India.

If English language and literature was enlisted in the service of unifying the diverse curricula of the country – traditional and new, mainstream and alternative— in an attempt to give all educational institutions in Britain a fair share in the prize of the ICS appointments, its content, as proposed by the Committee, likewise emphasized a unifying purpose: the study of literary authors from England, Scotland and Ireland connected through a common, national language: English. Foremost among all literatures, the Committee claimed, is the English literature. At the

³⁷² Ibid, p. 394

root of Macaulay Committee's delineation of English language and literature as a field of study is the conception of a national culture seen in terms of an organically whole national way of life, united through the English language. The subject of English language and literature was devised to entail the study of a unique narrative of the national past and present that overcame regional loyalties by asserting a national unity through a common language. English literature, interpreted as the embodiment of the national character, "attended by British virtue and British freedom,"³⁷³ as it was claimed, was seen to convey the distinctive moral virtues of the British.

The Committee identified a body of knowledge that students would be expected to write about : as a field of study, English language and literature was deemed to include not just the works of "poets, wits and philosophers" but also knowledge of English history and constitution, and to study it was to imbibe a sense of national and cultural identity. In laying down the outline of the subject, the Committee delineated three areas of study: 1) grammar and history of the English Language, from Anglo-Saxon through Middle English to modern English; 2) the history of English literature and criticism from Anglo-Saxon to the modern authors, and 3) English composition. The application of a historical method in the study of English language and literature as proposed by the Committee emphasized the close association of English literature with a narrative of the national past.

The Committee's glorification of national literature, accomplished at the discredit of vernacular languages within the British Isles and foreign literatures, is given the most concrete form in the hierarchy of values established in the scale of marks. Indian vernacular languages and literatures are conspicuously absent from the list of subjects included in the examination. Sanskrit and Arabic—two classical Oriental languages—are admitted in the list but allotted the lowest rung

³⁷³ Macaulay, Thomas. *Miscellaneous Writings* Vol 3. London: Longman, Green and Co., 1880, p. 399

with modern European languages and literature, French, German and Italian. The list of subjects and the marks allotted to each embody the Committee's concept of an exemplary education for Britain's guardians of the empire. The hierarchical list of subjects, consecrating the pre-eminence of English language and literature, asserts Britain's cultural supremacy over India and Europe just as it legitimizes the cultural and social leadership of the middle-class by transposing the aristocratic cult of glory into the social order of success in examinations, in particular scholastic triumph and demonstrable prowess in national literature.

Macaulay Committee's report embodies a wider cultural outpouring of nationalist sentiment in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, manifested in the literature, arts, music, antiquarian studies, education and various other fields. The Shakespeare revival that began in the eighteenth century, emblemized by the 1769 Jubilee celebrations centering on the 'national genius,' is an expression of the same defense of native cultural heritage as does the Macaulay Committee's report of 1854. The ICS Examination gave a concrete form to the nationalist program by subsuming it within the educational sphere. Its significance lies in no small measure on the fact that whereas earlier Shakespeare had been directed towards colonized subjects outside the center of political power, the Examination instead introduced the playwright at the elite level by making it a subject of study for the elite overseas administrative officials of Britain³⁷⁴.

A particularly noteworthy feat accomplished by the ICS was its redefinition of English as a 'liberal' and 'non-utilitarian' subject. Whereas the alternative curriculum in Scottish and dissenting universities in England offering English emphasized the teaching of correct and practical usage of the English language, the ICS dissociated English language and literature from

³⁷⁴ Chris Baldick notes that Mathew "Arnold's conceptions of the humanizing and socially healing power of literary culture had in fact quickly taken root where Homer was unavailable: among women, artisans, Indians and their respective teachers." *The Social Mission*, p. 72.

such utilitarian associations, endowing it instead with a disinterested literariness – moral and aesthetic qualities such as ‘profundity,’ ‘beauty,’ ‘art,’ etc., qualities erstwhile associated with the ancient classics. Such a reinvention was crucial if English was to take the place of the ancient classics in the training of the administrative officials while accommodating the nationalist aspirations of the middle-class. The nature of the mid nineteenth century reforms of the ICS, in particular the delineation of English language and literature as a subject of study for British bureaucrats, I have been arguing here, is a realization of the nationalist ideology of the middle-class, reproduced through the educational apparatus of the examination system. By requiring an advanced knowledge of literary English to qualify for overseas administrative jobs, the ICS Examination implicitly enforced a common unified national language for the British internally divided by conflicting loyalties, ideologies and local, regional cultures.

While open competitive examinations with English as a subject of examination satisfied middle-class insistence on an egalitarian equality and nationalist pride, in fact they served in large the interests of a limited section of the society. Pierre Bourdieu and Passeron have argued that while the system of examination guarantees formal equality for all, in fact it legitimizes the reproduction of social hierarchies³⁷⁵. They write, “...the apparently purely academic cult of hierarchy always contributes to the defense and legitimation of social hierarchies, because academic hierarchies, whether of degrees and diplomas or establishments and disciplines, always owe something to the social hierarchies which they tend to re-produce.”³⁷⁶ Emerging at a time of increased demand for hierarchized posts from bureaucratic organizations, the principle of social selection, Bourdieu and Passeron claim, renders hidden services to certain classes under the guise of technical selection. With the introduction of open examination in the ICS, the greatest

³⁷⁵ Bourdieu, P and Passeron, Jean Claude. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. 1990.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 152.

proportion of candidates continued to be culled from the middle classes—the sons of professional men (67%), of businessmen (21%), and farmers or lesser gentry (12 to 13%). Of the 1600-odd recruits selected between 1858 and 1897, only one was the son of a manual worker.³⁷⁷

Macaulay's maneuvers in India and Britain successfully transformed English from a skill in letters to an instrument of ideology, described by Terry Eagleton as:

A vital instrument for the insertion of individuals into the perceptual and symbolic forms of the dominant ideological formation...What is finally at stake is not literary texts but Literature—the ideological significance of the process whereby certain historical texts are severed from their social formations, defined as “literature,” and bound and ranked together to constitute a series of “literary traditions” and reintegrated to field set of ideological presupposed responses³⁷⁸.

If in the seventeenth century, literature meant all written works, this was clearly changed by the mid nineteenth century, coming to denote an academic subject intertwined with the demonstration of professional expertise. The uncertainty regarding the substance of English literature at educational institutions prior to 1855 can be judged from the fact that professors in English were simultaneously professors in history, logic, rhetoric or other subjects. It was as though English, inadequate by itself, needed the support from another discipline in order to survive in academic contexts. By connecting the national literature of the country to the education of the ruling class, Macaulay's Committee gave material anchoring points to the reproduction and consumption of English literature within the mainstream educational apparatus. At a time when there was no organized teaching of the subject, its recommendations were instrumental in consolidating its proposed method of organizing the discipline of English as the standard for later generations. With

³⁷⁷ Dewey, p. 283.

³⁷⁸ Quoted in Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, p 4.

the inclusion of English in the ICS, the ground was prepared for its legitimization in the traditional curriculum at Oxford and Cambridge and its acceptance in mainstream educational practices as a respectable discipline, central to a liberal curriculum.

4. English Literature for Dummies: A Study Guide for Aspiring Candidates

In the previous sections we have seen that the introduction of English language and literature in the ICS Examination in the mid nineteenth century coincided with a resurrection of vernacular literature in Britain, interpreted as a means of defining national identity. The introduction of open competition in the ICS Examination with English language and literature as a major subject was a statement of faith in the autonomously directed self-made man. It envisaged the imperial administrator in a radically new way: as a scholar-gentleman grounded in his native cultural heritage as much as, if not more, in the traditional classical curriculum, one who achieved status through application and unaided efforts.

If the reformed system rendered the aid of family connections useless, it, however, proved congenial for the development of a different kind of aid: an elaborate examination paraphernalia in the form of study guides, textbooks, cramming institutions, all offering the ICS candidate practical help in his efforts to land a plum job in the imperial bureaucracy. In the post-reformation period, cramming became so extensive that it was considered inseparable from the examination system. Its widespread practice raised serious doubts about the quality of the candidates who were sent to India, derisively called competition-wallahs³⁷⁹, whose route to India through cramming belied the hope of the Macaulay Committee that the reformed ICS would attract the best educated and most qualified men that Britain had to offer. In fact, cramming undermined the very idea of a liberal education that the Committee had espoused and upheld in its report. In 1874, the result of

³⁷⁹ Compton, J.M. "Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service, 1854-1876" *The English Historical Review* 83.327 (1968):265-284

an inquiry initiated to look into the pervasive practice of cramming for the ICS examination revealed that with no better alternative to open examination to sort out merit, cramming had to be accepted as a necessary evil accompanying the examination system³⁸⁰.

English language and literature was particularly suited to cramming for two primary reasons: first, as yet unincorporated in the traditional curriculum in most schools and colleges in Britain, such educational appliances as textbooks and tutorials, which were abundant in subjects like the classics and mathematics, were unavailable for English so that there was no systematic plan of approaching the subject. Nor were professors or tutors available in most colleges to advise candidates on how to read English language and literature. Crammers, equipping ICS candidates for the examination, proliferated in the 1860s, capitalizing on the market demand for practical instruction on how to prepare for the examination. Secondly, the broad scope of the subject, from Anglo-Saxon to the contemporary, all squeezed into one paper, called for a general knowledge of the subject, making it particularly suitable for cramming. Macaulay's Committee had sought general intelligence rather than particular intelligence in the belief that administrative problems were best handled by such intelligence. The scope of the English paper as well as the long list of subjects included in the examination was a reflection of this belief. While the intention of the Committee had been that the candidates would demonstrate their familiarity with English literary works in their whole, unabridged form, study guides in English offered a way around it, making it possible for candidates to demonstrate a 'mastery' of the subject by reading only instructional guide books.

It is this educational culture with its ideals and their inversions which produced the study guide under consideration. Written by Robert Demaus and published by Longman in London in

³⁸⁰ Dewey, C. J. "The Education of a Ruling Caste: The Indian Civil Service in the Era of Competitive Examination"

1866, the study guide noisily denounces its status as a how-to book for dummies, protesting that its purpose, far from making the study of English easy, is to develop the candidate's aesthetic sense which the classical curriculum with its drilling of grammar had left uncultivated³⁸¹. Its role, Demaus contends, is to direct the candidate to an appreciation of the beauty and grandeur of English language and literature which can be experienced only through a first-hand reading of literature. Demaus elevates its status from a mere guidebook by claiming to make a contribution to the serious study of English literature neglected by the classical curriculum. While the study guide provides a unique insight into the controversies surrounding the status of English as an academic subject in the 1860s and the ICS's intervention in it, its other importance lies—and this is more central to our purpose here—in containing all the questions set in the ICS exam from 1858 to 1866 with sample answers. The questions allow us to gauge the specific contours of English language and literature as it was conceived by the ICS examination; the specimen answers, on the other hand, illuminate the particular skills and knowledge that candidates were expected to demonstrate in order to qualify for administrative jobs in India.

A quick glance at the examination questions reveals the centrality of Shakespeare in the ICS examination. While other authors are inconsistently present on the list of questions asked, Shakespeare is permanent every year. Out of an average of thirty essay questions set in the Literature section of the question paper, from which candidates were expected to select only six, at least three were on Shakespeare every year. Thus, some knowledge of the playwright would have seen a candidate through fifty percent of the content of the examination. No other author enjoyed the same pre-eminence as Shakespeare: Chaucer, Spenser and Milton come closest to him with frequently two but no more than two questions set on each. Other authors like Samuel

³⁸¹ Demaus, Robert. *English Literature and Composition: A Guide to Candidates in those Departments in the Indian Civil Service with Examination Papers and Specimens of Answers*. London: Longmans Green, 1866.

Johnson, Francis Bacon, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth and Coleridge receive only one question every year.

Moreover, unlike other authors, Shakespeare's presence spreads beyond the literature section into the grammar and composition sections of the examination. Whereas in the literature section candidates were asked to comment on literary aspects of the plays, in the language section long passages were quoted from the plays, inviting candidates to comment on the idiom and grammatical constructions of the English language. Here the importance given to Shakespeare over other authors asserts his status as the maker of the national tongue and the poet in ultimate command of the English language. In the composition section, where students had to compose three essays out of six assigned topics, one was frequently on Shakespeare. An essay prompt in the examination for 1858, for instance, says: "Write a short but careful exposition of what appears to you to be the true conception of any one of the characters from Shakespeare's drama: Hamlet, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Lear or Falstaff." Such essay prompts were frequently paired with current issues in the empire, for instance, "Write a narrative of the Indian mutiny, not dwelling on details, but sketching rapidly the course of events, and so presenting a clear summary of what has happened down to the capture of Lucknow, with as little expression of opinion as possible." Clearly, the future administrative official of the empire was expected to demonstrate with equal ease his mastery of Shakespeare and the political affairs in the empire, with the tacit assumption that knowledge of both was crucial for the successful discharge of imperial duties.

At the heart of the list of thirty questions posed in the literature section in the ICS examination every year is the conception of a single line of English literary history, stretching from Chaucer to Tennyson. The line is harmonious rather than contentious, national rather than provincial, local or regional. A favorite question of the examiners, repeated with thinly veiled

alterations every two year or so, is to ask the student to comment on the origin of English literary history: “What do you consider to be the true epoch of the commencement of English literature?” The anchoring points in the unbroken continuum of English literary history are the parade of ‘major’ authors—Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Francis Bacon, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Tennyson, those who are expected to be read in full text forms as opposed to the ‘minor’ authors, to be read in excerpts and who are always lumped together in a single question rather than treated individually as the major authors are or subsumed within broad questions on literary periods. In this respect, the ICS exam’s role in English literary canon-formation cannot be overemphasized: the system of examination gave a concrete, material form to the concept of a literary tradition through the allotment of a scale of marks and by requiring candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of and proficiency in some authors over others. At the same time, it imposed restrictions on who are allowed in the literary tradition: women authors and the genre of novels are, for instance, conspicuously absent from the list of questions set from 1858 to 1866, supposedly for their ‘low’ intellectual value.

The ICS’s delineation of a national corpus of literature for systematic study by aspiring candidates had its direct precedent in *Selections of British Poetry from the Time of Chaucer to the Present Day* (1840), the very first college-level poetry anthology as we know that genre today, commissioned by the colonial government for use in the classroom by students in India³⁸². Edited by David Lester Richardson, the anthology offered “an uninterrupted series of specimens from Chaucer to the latest living poets,”³⁸³ displaying in a chronological spread the progress and wealth of British poetry across time. The textbook was a material embodiment of Macaulay’s vision of

³⁸² Hancher, Michael. “College English in India: The First Textbook.” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 42.03 (2014): 553-72

³⁸³ Richardson, David Lester. *Selections of British Poets from the Time of Chaucer to the Present Day*. Calcutta: Baptist Mission P, 1840. p. 5.

assimilating Indians into ‘superior’ British morality and aesthetics which he articulated in the “Minute on Indian Education” and which became the basis of the colonial government’s adoption of Anglicization of higher education in India in 1835. Richardson made Shakespeare the pinnacle of British cultural excellence, describing him as “the greatest poet the world has yet seen.”³⁸⁴ Departing from the tradition of including snippets or beauties from the plays, Richardson included whole plays of Shakespeare—*Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer* — and two scenes from *Henry IV*, part 1. In the biographical notice, Richardson extolled Shakespeare as a model of a self-made man who rose by dint of hard work and personal characteristics such as civility, prefiguring the heroic entrepreneurship of the British middle-class administrators at the helm of affairs in the Indian government.

By allotting most questions, and therefore most marks, to Shakespeare, the ICS Examination deploys the playwright as the touchstone of British literary tradition. Such a deployment attests to the significant difference in which his plays were received in Britain before their introduction in the examination system. Before the mid nineteenth century, Shakespeare was primarily accessed and experienced through the lens of leisure and recreation, with the playhouse as the primary locus of that encounter³⁸⁵. What drew playgoers to the theatre was not so much the name of Shakespeare or the prospect of literary edification as entertainment. In fact, as Richard Hume has shown, in Shakespeare’s own lifetime as well as late in the mid eighteenth century, the plays were frequently printed and advertised in playbills without authorial ascription³⁸⁶. Even with the boom in interest in the playwright’s biography and the question of authorship in the eighteenth century, the plays continued to be primarily a source of entertainment at the theatre, frequently

³⁸⁴ Ibid, p. xii

³⁸⁵ Dabbs, Thomas. “Shakespeare and the Department” p. 84.

³⁸⁶ Hume, Richard. “Before the Bard: ‘Shakespeare’ in Early Eighteenth Century London,” *ELH* 64.1 (1997): 41-75

employing lavish spectacles during staging, with no overwhelming concern for authenticity. The emphasis on spectacle provided a feast for the eyes. For instance, in the 1840s and 1850s, stage props for *The Midsummer* included a complete forest, dells and waterfalls; *The Merchant of Venice* was set in an elaborate Venetian canalscape with arches and moving gondolas; the set for *Antony and Cleopatra* recreated Rome and Egypt with massive pillars, beviest of dancing girls and soldiers³⁸⁷. These elaborate sets took precedence over the action of the plays; changing sets often paralyzed the action, and Shakespeare's text were cut to make time for scenery-shifting. The audience and the producers of the plays cared less for faithful reproductions of the plays on the stage as for entertainment and it was common to alter Shakespeare's texts to suit current tastes or commercial needs. Nahum Tate's 1681 adaptations of *King Lear*, with its severe cuts and additions, dominated the London stage well into the mid nineteenth century while *Romeo and Juliet*, like *King Lear*, ended happily in the 1850s.

The contribution of the ICS examination in the history of Shakespeare reception lies in that it wrested Shakespeare away from the axis of the recreational to that of the pedagogical. By routinely requiring candidates to demonstrate their 'reading' of Shakespeare, the ICS emphasized the plays as stable, literary objects as opposed to play scripts from performance. Such a treatment of the plays was not entirely without precedent. As we have seen, in India students in government colleges were already reading whole plays and demonstrating their proficiency in them as gateways to low rung jobs in the colonial bureaucracy. In Britain, the eighteenth century had witnessed an ascendancy in Shakespeare on the page among the affluent middle-class, newcomers to the literate culture traditionally dominated by aristocrats and the lower gentry³⁸⁸. Thanks to the

³⁸⁷ Dabbs, Thomas, "Shakespeare and the Department"

³⁸⁸ Dobson, Michael. "Shakespeare on the Page and the Stage" *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta De Grazia and Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge, UP, 2001. p. 235-49.

successive editions of the plays published by the Tonsons, beginning with Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition which sought to restore Shakespeare's plays to their pristine 'original' form from the 'corruptions' of the contemporary stage, the plays were much more affordable in their multi-volume format than seventeenth century folios though still out of reach of the average pocket³⁸⁹. These editions treated the plays as literary classics and Shakespeare as a poet, bestowing upon the plays the principles of editing that had hitherto been applied to the ancient classical poets³⁹⁰. The editions reproduced the plays with elaborate footnotes and prefaces on Shakespeare's biography, inviting a study-oriented approach to them.

For the ICS's appropriation of Shakespeare as a major author, perhaps the most influential of all eighteenth century editions of the plays was the bibliographical and critical groundwork laid by Edmond Malone's editions of 1790 and 1821. As Margreta de Grazia explains in *Shakespeare Verbatim*, the significance of Malone's edition in the history of editing the plays was that it constructed for the first time the Shakespeare we know of today, author and guarantor of meaning of a canon of works which were to be understood through his biography, his times, background, stage and critical history³⁹¹. Malone's editions, De Grazia argues, inaugurated a rupture from seventeenth and eighteenth century editorial practice of selecting a text closest to the editor rather than closest to the author, originating the concept of authenticity in Shakespeare scholarship and reading practices that were essential to the study of Shakespeare as the ICS Examination envisaged it³⁹². Malone's ordering of diverse and discrete texts while filling the gaps in between them, enabling an 'authentic' Shakespeare to emerge, was crucial if the ICS Examination were to require

³⁸⁹ St. Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, p. 150-5

³⁹⁰ Walsh, Marcus. "Editing and Publishing Shakespeare" *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* Ed. Peter Sabor and Fiona Ritchie. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. p. 21-40

³⁹¹ De Grazia, Margreta. *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus*. Oxford [England] : New York: Clarendon ; Oxford UP, 1991

³⁹² *Ibid*, p 52.

candidates to demonstrate a unified knowledge of an autonomous dramatist. Equally crucial for the ICS's appropriation of Shakespeare was Malone's construction of Shakespeare as a respectable bourgeois, departing from earlier biographical accounts of the dramatist's wayward, if not outright criminal, tendencies.

Here we may also add that if the Shakespeare revival of the eighteenth century paved the way for the play's inclusion in the ICS Examination in the mid nineteenth century, it is doubtful whether they could be included in the examination without a wide availability of the texts in the market in the mid nineteenth century. It has been frequently remarked that Garrick's Jubilee celebrations of 1769 were more of a celebration of Shakespeare's life than his works. In Dobson's words, in the 1760s "his [Shakespeare's] fame is so synonymous with the highest claims of contemporary nationalism that simply to be British is to inherit him, without needing to read or see his actual plays at all."³⁹³ With regard to reading Shakespeare in most of the eighteenth century, a practical impediment, as Linda Colley explains, was the general unaffordability and inaccessibility of the play-texts in modernized and edited forms³⁹⁴. The revocation of perpetual copyright in 1774 which rendered Shakespeare's plays out of copyright and available for cheap reprint as English 'classics' may have been a milestone in the a wider availability of the plays for the public³⁹⁵ but it was only in the mid nineteenth century with technological advancement in printing that 'complete' Shakespeare was available for a shilling³⁹⁶. Easily available and

³⁹³ Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet*, p. 214

³⁹⁴ Colley, Linda. "Shakespeare and the Limits of National Culture."

³⁹⁵ St. Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, p. 155

³⁹⁶ Altick, Richard. "From Aldine to Everyman: Cheap Reprint Series of the English Classics 1830-1906" *Studies in Bibliography* 11 (1958):3-24, p. 9. In the 1860s, steam presses and machine made paper made mass production of anthologies, selections and cheap editions available in tremendous numbers and at modest prices. See Harrison, J. B. "English as a University Subject" p. 159.

affordable, modernized texts of Shakespeare provided the common reference point for Shakespeare to emerge as an object of study in the ICS Examination.

While the concept of Shakespeare as a literary author was thus already available before it was appropriated by the ICS Examination, what is unique about the latter's treatment of Shakespeare is its dissociation of the playwright from the sphere of leisure. Eighteenth century editions, produced by amateur scholars and Shakespeare enthusiasts, were targeted towards gentlemen readers — by blood and by breeding— who would read them in their study in a leisurely pursuit of self-improvement³⁹⁷. The editions had little concern in the plays as a means of demonstration of one's professional qualifications which was a contribution of the ICS Examination.

Two kinds of questions are set on Shakespeare in the ICS examination: factual and interpretive. The first type tested candidates' knowledge of facts of Shakespeare's plays, for instance, identifying plays from names of characters, enumerating the plot line and the main characters in plays, description of action in plays, identifying the chronological order of the plays, identifying plays from quoted lines, knowledge about sources etc. The interpretive questions called for appreciation of character, language and Shakespeare's dramatic art. The role of candidates was to interpret the plays as texts, and the skills candidates were expected to demonstrate was knowledge of the whole text, close reference and the use of brief quotations in support of arguments. In approaching the interpretive questions, candidates were expected to give evidence of a thoughtful, informed response to the questions set. Questions frequently elicited laudatory responses, for instance "Compare Shakespeare's poetical genius with that of Milton." Even then, unbounded enthusiasm for the 'Bard' was to be avoided through an appropriate demonstration of

³⁹⁷ Walsh, Marcus "Editing and Publishing Shakespeare"

‘critical thinking’ and informed reasoning. What was emphasized was the value of subjective response drawn from close reading of the texts and their contexts, allied to the ‘critical powers,’ demonstrated in clear and organized essays and written in legible handwriting. At the same time the ICS Examination distanced Shakespeare’s plays from performance, it turned the material and social conditions of Shakespeare’s theatre into an object of study. Candidates were frequently asked to comment on the theatre’s influence on Shakespeare’s plays where the focus was on the historical and scholarly rather than the contemporary and experiential.

The ICS examination emphasizes that understanding Shakespeare is a task. By requiring candidates to read Shakespeare closely and in terms of sources, influences, contexts and identification of speeches and characters, it encourages a methodical approach to the plays. In so doing, it implicitly insists that Shakespeare is difficult and inaccessible to a casual approach. Such an insistence was necessary if Shakespeare was to take the place of the ancient classics, which required prodigious efforts to master, in the education of the imperial bureaucrats. Easy, moreover, had negative associations with femininity; masculine academic study required a strict and rigorous method of study, concentrated on specific objects or texts³⁹⁸. The Shakespeare that emerges from the ICS examination is suitably difficult, demanding serious application and effort from candidates. This elevates the playwright to the status of the ancient classics, a status further reinforced by questions inviting candidates to compare the playwright with classical authors. Consider, for instance, the question: “Compare any tragedy of Shakespeare with one by Sophocles or Euripides in reference to the rules of art which govern the construction of the plot in each, and the effect which each is calculated to produce upon the audience”. The specimen answer included in the guidebook points to the model response candidates were expected to give: Shakespeare

³⁹⁸ See Kramnick, Jonathan. “The Making of the English Canon.” *PMLA* 112.5 (1997): 1087-1181

overcame the limitations of the ancient playwrights through superior art. Not only did Shakespeare measure up to the classical authors, he surpassed them in form and content.

To insist on Shakespeare's difficulty, as the ICS examination, did was to remove the plays average playgoers and readers who now had access to the printed plays thanks to cheap reprints. In the early nineteenth century, people with average incomes had the opportunity to experience Shakespeare on the stage and through cheap editions. In these encounters Shakespeare could be accessed without any training in literary studies. If the mid nineteenth century saw a decline in the popular appeal of Shakespeare, as Dabbs has claimed, the role of the ICS examination in this regard needs to be understood. Shakespeare's association with high-brow culture was forged, at least in part, by the ICS examination's insistence on the playwright as an icon of prestige, intelligence and privilege. To demonstrate one's knowledge of Shakespeare successfully was to belong to the select, elite group of Britain's overseas administrative bureaucrats, the empire-keepers. At the same time, it relegated an intuitive understanding of the playwright to the laity.

Not all plays of Shakespeare enjoyed equal status in the ICS examination. Interestingly enough, while the ICS emphasized Shakespeare's poetic value, it gave no importance to his poetic works—from 1855 to 1866, there is not a single instance of a question set on Shakespeare's sonnets or other poems. At least in the case of the sonnets, the exclusion must have had to do with their scandalous homoerotic content. As Peter Stallybrass explains, Malone's contention in the 1790 edition that the sonnets were revealing of Shakespeare's psychology set in a moral panic surrounding the perceived taint of sodomy and pederasty in Shakespeare's newly constructed 'character' leading to the apprehension that the supreme literary ornament of the British race was a contaminated source subverting the colonial project³⁹⁹. The exclusion of the sonnets in the ICS

³⁹⁹ Stallybrass, Peter. "Editing as Cultural Formation: The Sexing of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *Shakespeare's Poems*. Ed. Stephen Orgel and Sean Kellen. New York: Garland Pub, 1999. p. 133-47

Examination is consistent with the latter's tendency to distance Shakespeare from ambiguities or complexities that might interfere with an understanding of the playwright as the upholder of respectable British national identity. We find for instance that the problem plays are avoided in the examination as are the socially difficult plays such as *Othello* or *The Merchant of Venice*.

Among the plays, those concerned with history received the greatest prominence. Whereas candidates might be asked to identify characters from *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night* or *Measure for Measure*, the interpretive questions are always from plays dealing with history, whether the history plays or the tragedies. The comedies and the problem plays are generally neglected in the examination. Typical questions asked were: "How far is Shakespeare's account of Prince Arthur's death historical?" "Are any of the dramatis personae of 'Cymbeline' historical?" "What did Shakespeare derive from the chronicles?" "Who was the English king when Macbeth was on the throne?" The exclusions and silences in the examination questions are just as telling as are the acts of inclusion: they allow us to understand why the ICS Examination would give some plays of Shakespeare more prominence than others⁴⁰⁰. The emphasis given on the plays on history also allows us to understand why Shakespeare was selected in the first place as the yardstick of English literary tradition in the ICS literature exam. Dobson has argued that in the eighteenth Shakespeare was selected as the national icon over other playwrights because of his history plays even if his unconventional moral attitudes stood as an obstacle to bourgeois respectability⁴⁰¹. Dobson's observation helps explain why Shakespeare's history plays would receive more importance than any other play in the examination. No author served better the ICS's interest in

⁴⁰⁰ Denise Albanese notes similar strategies of exclusions and emphasis in college entrance examinations. See Albanese, Denise, "Canons before Canons"

⁴⁰¹ Dobson, Michael. "Bowdler and Britannia: Shakespeare and the National Libido" *Shakespeare Survey* 46: 137-44

British nationhood as did Shakespeare with his chronicles of the English, and occasionally British, past.

Even then it is important to recall Linda Colley's observation that the history plays inadequately fulfilled the role Shakespeare was made to play in the eighteenth century as the icon of British nationalism⁴⁰². Colley argues that the history plays centering more often than not on English rather than British history, did not help the cause of British nationalism. Discounting recent critical tendency to discern a nascent British nationalism in Shakespeare's plays, Colley argues that Shakespeare's allegiance was to the Protestant kingdom of England, demonstrating a "sturdy and watchful" Englishness, rarely alluding to Britain. She further argues that in the eighteenth century Shakespeare's association remained with Englishness—in 1757, for instance, Shakespeare signified a narrow English conceit, not a cause for a collective British triumph. Colley uses this to discount Dobson's claim that already in the eighteenth century Shakespeare's status as a British icon was firmly in place.

Colley's argument serves as a useful check on any exaggerated claim regarding the extent to which Shakespeare's status as a British symbol had solidified in the eighteenth century. However, as way of critique of Colley's argument, it is useful to remember that in the 1760s *Cymbeline*, with its story of native Britons squaring off against ancient Romans, had become what Prince calls "the jewel in the Shakespeare crown."⁴⁰³ More than the English history plays, *Cymbeline* served the cause of British nationalism which explains its popularity in the eighteenth century. Prince also confirms that the play's resonance with nationalistic interests explains its popularity in the eighteenth century. A romance written late in Shakespeare's professional career, the play dramatizes the conflict that arises between Britain and Rome when the former withholds

⁴⁰² Colley, Linda "Shakespeare and the Limits of National Culture."

⁴⁰³ Prince, Kathryn. "Shakespeare and English Nationalism" p. 287

the tribute pledged to Julius Caesar upon his conquest of the isle. While the conflict is amicably resolved at the end of the play, it gives the occasion to present a narrative about the national past and a culminating vision of Britain as a renewed, regenerated nation that proclaims the integrity of its own laws, customs and traditions, emblemized by Imogen's sense of Britain as "In a great pool a Swan's nest" (3.2.139). An adaptation of the play by William Hawkins titled *Cymbeline: A Tragedy Altered from Shakespeare* (1859) emphasized its relevance for British nationalism. The prologue, addressing the audience as Britons, explains that

.....the poet bids you see
From an old tale, what Britons ought to be;
And in these restless days of wars alarm
Not melts the soul to love, but fires the blood to arms.
Your great forefathers scorn'd the foreign chain,
Rome might invade, and Caesars rage in vain
These glorious patters with bold hearts pursue
To king, to country, and to honour true!⁴⁰⁴

In the ICS Examination, one finds that *Cymbeline* was at the heart of the English literature paper. Its importance stemmed doubtless for its narrative on the British nation as the inheritor of the imperial legacy from ancient Rome. For the British viewing themselves as successors to the Romans in the imperial legacy, the play's message about a respect for national tradition and Britain as the heir of Roman greatness would have an indoctrinating effect. Featuring regularly in the ICS examination, the play enjoyed a pre-eminence that few other plays in Shakespeare's oeuvre did. For an imperial elite en route to India, *Cymbeline* would serve as a means of connecting Roman

⁴⁰⁴ Quoted in Prince, Kathryn. "Shakespeare and English Nationalism" p. 288.

imperial legacy with British colonial ambitions while imbibing a sense of national cultural greatness. Surprisingly, *The Tempest*, which has been in recent years at the center of discussions of Britain's colonial adventures and expansionist ambitions, is markedly absent from the ICS Examination from 1858 to 1866.

To examine Shakespeare's role in the ICS Examination is to mark the emergence of a Shakespearean college-level canon. While some of the ICS Examination's favorite plays have now fallen into relative disfavor, others continue to enjoy pre-eminence today even though Shakespeare has outgrown his use as a test of one's aptitude for imperial jobs. More importantly, the analytical frameworks the ICS used in testing candidates' knowledge of Shakespeare continue to shape academic approaches to Shakespeare. *King Lear*, which enjoys popularity in the college curriculum, received considerable attention in the ICS examination, possibly because of its ties to British history. *Romeo and Juliet*, or for that matter any of the plays with a dominant love interest, is noticeably absent possibly owing to its lack of any discernible interest in British nationhood. Moreover, the story of reckless teen love would have little value in the intellectual training of the masculine and muscular administrators the ICS hoped to send to India⁴⁰⁵.

The nature of the questions asked on Shakespeare in the examination was geared towards testing not only the candidate's knowledge of the subject but also his ability to remember facts, digest information, his good sense, taste and judgment, qualities of character considered essential for administrative jobs. We have already noted the emphasis on fact-based and interpretive questions on Shakespeare in the examination. Consider, for example, a question asked in 1859: "Over what period of English history do Shakespeare's historical plays extend? Name these plays in the chronological order of their subjects, and indicate the time and the nature of the action of

⁴⁰⁵ Sramek, Joseph. "Joseph. *Gender, Morality, and Race in Company India, 1765-1858*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

each, mentioning one or two of the principle persons included in the action, and conveying your impression of their characters as drawn by Shakespeare.” The challenge for the candidate was to demonstrate his ability to grasp a large subject, to focus on what was of prime importance, and to arrange his argument forcibly, all within the limited time allowed in the examination. He, moreover, had to write a sensible, comprehensive response without being vague and general on one hand, or confused with excessive detail on the other, displaying impressive reading and powers of thought and arrangement. And all this was to be expressed in good idiomatic English and legible handwriting. With imperial jobs to fill, the ICS Examination interprets ‘character’ not only in terms of moral qualities but also as an aptitude for administration embodied in virtues of good judgment, sense and taste, and not least, legible handwriting, and knowledge of Shakespeare, tested through the examination system, was seen to contribute to the kind of strong and reliable men that made imperial administrators⁴⁰⁶.

Needless to say, crammers like the one under consideration, subverted the ICS Examination’s ability to test the imperial administrator’s ‘character’ by providing ready-made answers which could be memorized and then reproduced verbatim during examination. Robert Demaus’ guidebook with its pat answers to expected questions subverts the idealized image of the Indian civil servant as the ‘steel frame’ on which the structure of the British government and administration of India was thought to rest. From the perspective of Shakespeare reception, it is worthwhile to keep in mind that the imperative of testing aptitude for jobs determined the nature of questions that were asked in the ICS examination. It helps us understand why a factual and interpretive approach towards Shakespeare and other authors were taken in the examination and why, for instance, candidates were not required to write from memory lines from Shakespeare’s

⁴⁰⁶ See Albanese, Denise “Canon before Canons” for her argument about the way a Shakespearean education has been conceived in college entrance requirements in America.

plays. The contribution of the ICS examination to the academic study of Shakespeare in the English department lies in that it has helped enshrine a particular approach to Shakespeare—factual and interpretive—when other alternate approaches were possible. Even while Shakespeare has outgrown the need to cull the best prepared candidates for imperial administrative jobs, students of English literature continue to be tested of their knowledge of the playwright with questions similar to those set in the ICS examination.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that empire presents a determining context to the emergence of Shakespeare as a field of academic study in Britain. The pressure to increase the morality and efficiency of imperial administration necessitated the introduction of merit-based open examination with English language and literature as a major subject of examination. This subject was expected to play a vital role in inculcating national pride and solidarity, and within it, Shakespeare was given primacy as the embodiment of the British cultural tradition. In order to be recruited for the ICS, candidates were required to demonstrate their knowledge of Shakespeare, and to be able to do so successfully was taken as an indication of their strong character and reliability for imperial service. Both the content and the format of the examination were based on the assumption that to undergo a demanding test was incompatible with a dissolute character.

The guidebook for examination I have analyzed here, however, indicates the contradictions of the ICS examination system. While the civil servants were conceptualized as men in whom education had instilled qualities of a scholar-gentleman, the guidebook undermines such a conception and raises questions about the colonial administrator's intellectual training, revealing how easy it was to trick the examination system and demonstrate one's suitability for administrative jobs through cramming. Claims of British moral and intellectual superiority over Indians, emblemized by the upright, intelligent and hardworking civil servant, were crucial in

the maintenance of Empire. Our crammer shows the cracks and crevices in the ICS Examination as the guarantor of the civil servant's moral and intellectual training.

The imbrication of Shakespeare in the ICS Examination is significant because it shows that the playwright was part of the imperial experience in the metropolis as well as in the colonies. In colonial India, Shakespeare was a part of the curriculum in colleges and universities before English education was made compulsory by the British in government-aided institutions of learning in 1835. Studied enthusiastically by well-off Indians, prompted as much by intellectual curiosity about the colonizer's culture as by hopes of procuring high-paying jobs in the colonial bureaucracy by cashing in on their knowledge of English language and culture, Shakespeare was to them, as to the aspiring ICS candidates in Britain, a means of getting ahead in life. The open examination of the ICS brought the ruler and the ruled under similar intellectual training, although this should not make us lose sight of the crucial difference between the two-- the colonized remained, to quote Homi Bhabha, “*a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*”⁴⁰⁷ The imbrication of Shakespeare in the colonial and metropolitan imperial cultures allows us to see that the playwright served as a means of upward social mobility and as a category for the management of notions of British cultural superiority in both contexts. Shakespeare participated in the imperial culture, and intersected, in metropolitan and colonial contexts, with issues of class and social mobility and with notions of British national and cultural greatness⁴⁰⁸.

My aim here has been examining the role of empire in sustaining Shakespeare as an academic subject. I have also been interested in understanding the contribution of the ICS to Shakespeare reception—primarily its role in transforming the playwright into an object of serious

⁴⁰⁷ Bhaba, Homi “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse” *October 28* (1984), p 126; his italics.

⁴⁰⁸ See Vasunia, Phiroze “Greek, Latin, and the Indian Civil Service’ for the ways in which the ancient European classics intersected social mobility and imperial domination in the metropole and in the colony.

academic study at the university level by emphasizing critical appreciation as opposed to leisurely pleasure. The ICS Examination was instrumental in the institutionalization of English literature with Shakespeare as a major author in mainstream universities in Britain. Oxford began to feel the pressure of the examination, and some tutors complained that students were being distracted from ‘proper studies’ by these exams while others began to coach aspiring candidates.⁴⁰⁹ Shortly after, at Oxford the Merton Professorship of English Language and Literature was established in 1884 and at Cambridge, English formed a sub-department, founded in 1878. University examinations on the subject were instituted in 1893⁴¹⁰. The first volume of Cambridge or Globe Shakespeare appeared in 1863, edited by three Cambridge dons, prepared with student needs in mind. According to Taylor, the Cambridge Shakespeare represented “the first intrusion of academics into the history of Shakespeare’s reputation”⁴¹¹. The Oxford University Press followed with the Oxford Shakespeare in 1868. Whereas in the eighteenth century Shakespeare’s plays had been edited by amateur scholars and playwrights, from the late nineteenth century the task was mainly undertaken by academic scholars associated with educational institutions. While Shakespeare no longer serves his use as a qualification for imperial administrative jobs, the plays continue to thrive at all academic levels, the legacy of the Indian Civil Service Examination system we have examined here.

⁴⁰⁹ Baldick, *The Social Mission*, p. 70-75.

⁴¹⁰ At Oxford, the syllabus and examination scheme for a degree in Final Honors in English included a paper Shakespeare (six plays) among other papers (ten in total): Old English Texts, Middle English Texts, Chaucer (selections), Piers Plowman (selections), History of the English Language; History of English Literature to 1800; Gothic, Unseens from Old and Middle English, Literary Criticism and Special Subjects. See Harrison, J. B. “English as a University Subject” p. 161.

⁴¹¹ Taylor, Gary. *Reinventing Shakespeare*, p. 186.

IV. Reading Shakespeare in the Antahpur [Women's Quarter]⁴¹² in Nineteenth Century Colonial India

1. Introduction

Like everybody else, Indians too often have a story to tell about their first exposure to Shakespeare⁴¹³. In his autobiography detailing his childhood experiences in colonial Bengal, the Bengali-English writer Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897- 1999) remarks that his earliest notion of Shakespeare was something every grown-up was expected to discuss and recite⁴¹⁴. That he would acquire this notion growing up in a remote deltaic town of East Bengal (now Bangladesh) called Kishorganj attests to the deep penetration of Shakespeare in colonial India. From Chaudhuri's account it is evident that Shakespeare was prevalent in his small provincial hometown. In the village school, upper-form boys performed scenes from *Julius Caesar* which would have connected them with contemporary school boys in Britain and America⁴¹⁵. Chaudhuri's immediate social environment was permeated by Western literature; his father, a lawyer belonging to the new Western-educated professional class, read Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and Jane Austen novels at home⁴¹⁶. In the living and sitting room of the home, two volumes of Shakespeare—*Julius Caesar* and *Othello*, the latter in an American edition—graced a glass-fronted cupboard that held a small collection of books, curios, knick-knacks and clothes, offering

⁴¹² Antahpur, also called andarmahal refers to the secluded quarters in upper and middle-class Bengali homes where women lived and domestic affairs were conducted. Men outside the immediate family were not allowed here. By contrast, bahirmahal were outer rooms where business was conducted by men and male visitors were received. See Chattopadhyay, Swati. *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* New York: Routledge, p 154 for an architectural plan of a wealthy residence in mid nineteenth century Calcutta and p. 205 for more modest middle-class residences.

⁴¹³ See Burton, Jonathan. "Lay on, McGuffey: Excerpting Shakespeare in Nineteenth Century Schoolbooks" *Shakespearean Educations: Power, Citizenship, and Performance* Ed. Coppelia Kahn, Heather S. Nathans, and Mimi Godfrey Newark: U of Delaware P, 2011, p. 95-111.

⁴¹⁴ Chaudhuri, Nirad, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. New York: Macmillan, 1951. p. 107

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, p. 107; Bottoms, Janet. "'Doing Shakespeare': How Shakespeare Became a School Subject" *Shakespeare Survey* 66 Ed. Peter Holland. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, p. 96-109

⁴¹⁶ Chaudhuri, *Autobiography*, p. 164

an intimate glimpse of colonial middle-class culture⁴¹⁷. It was fairly common for English educated Bengali middle-class families like Chaudhuri's to possess Shakespeare at home; in 1874, we find the novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, comparing Shakespeare's *Tempest* with the Sanskrit poet, Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, write, "We wanted to reproduce the first love talk between Ferdinand and Miranda in its entirety but it is not necessary. Everyone has Shakespeare at home; everyone may open the original text and read it."⁴¹⁸

For all his ubiquity in the Bengali household in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Shakespeare belonged to the colonial public space of educational institutions, theatres, lecture-halls and associations from which women were generally excluded, except for a negligible few among the most elite families. The culture of Shakespeare in colonial India was the culture of the *bhadralok* (literally a gentleman), a product of colonial modernity, in particular Western education⁴¹⁹. Intellectual and material possession of Shakespeare was a significant indicator of cultural accomplishment, and the *bhadralok* took part in the public sphere by virtue of his ability to 'discuss and recite' Shakespeare. Chaudhuri's mother was not unlettered but she could not have taken part in such discussions and recitations because she knew no English. The collection of books kept locked behind the glass-fronted cupboard in Chaudhuri's home was a

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, p. 30. From Chaudhuri's description of his residence in Kishorganj, it appears the architectural plan was different from that of urban dwellings in Calcutta in that it housed a number of buildings clustered together to make a dwelling. For an architectural plan of provincial residences like Chaudhuri's, see Sengupta, Tania. "Living in the Periphery: Provinciality and Domestic Space in Colonial Bengal" *The Journal of Architecture* 18.6: 905-943.

⁴¹⁸ Chatterjee, Bankim. "Shakuntala, Miranda O Desdemona" in the Baishakhi edition of Bengali literary magazine *Bangadarshan*, Kolkata: 1873. Reprinted in Jogeshchandra Bagal ed. *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol II. Kolkata: Sahitya Sansad, 1954/reprinted 1998. p. 179-184.

⁴¹⁹ "The first four decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of a newly rising English-educated middle-class, who called themselves *bhadralok*, literally meaning 'respectable men' or 'gentlemen,' and claimed to represent 'the native public opinion.' The members of this class, comprising a heterogeneous, upwardly mobile, cultural community of professionals, bureaucrats and servicemen, were vital for the maintenance of the British rule." Banerjee, Swapna. "Subverting the Moral Universe: 'Narratives of Transgression' in the Construction of Middle-Class Identity in Colonial Bengal" *Beyond Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of Colonial Identity*. New Delhi: Oxford UP: 77-99. p. 79.

‘father’s library,’ symbolic of intellectual and professional pursuits in the public sphere. Chaudhuri’s mother’s attachment, by contrast, was to two leather-bound books of secular and religious songs which she kept close at hand on her bedside table like a breviary, we are told, endowing them with a sacrosanct aura, suggestive of an intimate psychic relationship⁴²⁰. That Chaudhuri’s mother would exert an open, independent ownership of books is indicative of the progressive ethos of the Chaudhuri home—for, the conservative view that for a woman handling a book was to call upon the destitution of widowhood was unlikely to have disappeared completely at the turn of the twentieth century when Chaudhuri was a little boy.

Within affluent middle-class homes, literary discussions took place in the baithak-khana or the drawing room, a semi-public space intervening between the outside and inner, domestic space, the realm of women. The material practices of the middle-class drawing room in late nineteenth century Bengal were saturated with bourgeois respectability⁴²¹. It was here that men with privileged access to education and public spaces read newspaper, conducted their business, met with their friends and discussed their intellectual endeavors—all in phallic solitude, as Dipesh Chakrabarty writes in his study of the social practice of *adda* (literally a leisurely conversation) in colonial and post-independence Calcutta that flourished, among other sites, in the baithak-khana⁴²². *Adda* on wide-ranging topics connected men to one another and to global

⁴²⁰ Chaudhuri, *Autobiography*, p. 30. M

⁴²¹ Rosinka Chaudhury traces an evolution in the material practices of the baithak-khana brought about by colonial contact. Over the course of the 19th century, Chaudhuri argues, baithak-khana was transformed from its Persianized conception as a reception-cum-entertainment space in wealthy homes into the bourgeois drawing room combining elements of the study and the living room. From its earlier manifestation as a mirror-image of Western drawing room imitating English aristocratic taste, complete with wall-clocks, oil paintings, sofas, cushioned chairs, carpets and lamps, baithak-khana emerged as a bourgeois space registering a process of democratization and eventually, during Swadeshi, as a hybrid space synthesizing Western and Indian uses and décor. Chaudhuri, Rosinka. “Modernity at Home: The Nationalization of the Indian Drawing Room, 1830-1930” *Interpreting Home in South Asian Literature* Ed Malashri Lal and Sukrita Paul Kumar. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2007, p. 221-38. See also Chattopadhyay, Swati *Representing Calcutta*, p. 208.

⁴²² Chakrabarty, Dipesh. “Adda: A History of Sociality” in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000. p. 180-213.

cultures; as Chakrabarty argues, it was a practice of modernity in the context of the transnational dynamics of urbanization. In its exclusion of women, the baithak-khana was an extension of masculine homo-social culture of public spaces into the domestic sphere, serving as a threshold between the outside and the inside. In its furnishings as in its uses, the baithak-khana was a site of colonial modernity, connecting the local with the global. It was often the only apartment of the house with Western furniture—tables, chairs, prints and pictures— while domestic practices in the inner quarters usually took place at the ground level⁴²³. It was here that the accoutrements of gentility, books and bookcases, were usually kept and displayed, carrying freighted socio-economic references to the owner's tastes, education and claims to respectability, even though the hot and humid climate of India were not particularly hospitable to these highly perishable items⁴²⁴.

In the baithak-khana of affluent Bengalis of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was not uncommon to find expensive coffee-table editions of Shakespeare ordered from England⁴²⁵, occurring at the same moment when advances in printing and book trade were making editions of Shakespeare cheap, disposable and easily accessible in the colonial book market— for as low as four annas, if new, and two annas, if used, by Kipling's Baboo Hurree Chunder's account in *Kim*⁴²⁶. Deriding the intellectual pretensions of the colonial Bengali

⁴²³ Chaudhuri, Supriya "Phantasmagorias of the Interior: Furniture, Modernity and Early Bengali Fiction" in *Journal of Victorian Culture* 15.2 (2010): 173-93, p. 179.

⁴²⁴ See Chaudhuri, Rosinka "Modernity at Home: The Nationalization of the Indian Drawing Room, 1830-1930" p. 229 for a contemporary description of Vidyasagar's drawing room.

⁴²⁵ Chaudhuri, Nirad. "Shakespeare for the Babu's Dowry" *The Times of India* Feb 8, 1981

⁴²⁶ "(A) man might go far, as he himself had done, by strict attention to plays called *Lear* and *Julius Caesar*; the book cost four annas but could be bought second-hand in Bowbazar for two." Kipling, *Kim*. London: Doubleday Page and Co, 1914. p. 258. For the importance of books as an accoutrement in colonial middle-class drawing rooms, see Rosinka Chaudhuri, p. 228-30. Chaudhuri writes, "The advent of the drawing room had many similarities with the coming of the printed room; both these processes, linked to an English education in infinitesimal ways, changed the cultural contours of Bengali lives forever." Printed books were constitutive of bhadralok identity. See Bhattacharya, Tithi. "A World of Learning: The Material Culture of Education and Class in

middle-class, Nirad Chaudhuri remarks that expensive editions of Shakespeare were strategic display items to raise the value of sons in the marriage market⁴²⁷. In the novel *Rajani* (1877), Bankim Chandra, however, presents a different use of such an edition. He depicts a meandering conversation between two male characters centered on *The Shakespeare Gallery* set in the drawing room of the narrator of the novel⁴²⁸. Amarnath, a visitor, picks up the book from a table, launching into an erudite discourse about the artistic merits of *The Shakespeare Gallery*, Shakespeare's delineation of women characters, Hindu literary and mythological heroines, European classics and modern European philosophies; the conversation is framed by discussions of social reforms and politics. Discerning, up-to-date, grounded in native literary traditions while knowledgeable about Shakespeare and Western literature and philosophies, drawing upon a global stock of literature and philosophies, Amarnath is the antithesis of the Shakespeare-misquoting, odious Baboo Hurree Chunder in *Kim*, Kipling's embodiment of a failed civilizing mission⁴²⁹. Amarnath is Chatterjee's formulation of what it meant to be a truly 'sophisticated person' which many, including Nirad Chaudhuri, took to be prescriptive⁴³⁰.

Nineteenth Century Bengal" in *Beyond Representation: Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of Indian Identity* Ed. Crispin Bates. Oxford: Oxford UP, p. 177-209.

⁴²⁷ Chaudhuri, Nirad. "Shakespeare for the Babu's Dowry" *The Times of India* Feb 8, 1981

⁴²⁸ *The Bankimchandra Omnibus* Vol I. Trns. Radha Chakrabarty. New Delhi: Penguin, 2005. p. 496

⁴²⁹ Baboo Hurree Chunder represents a caricature of Macaulay's model of an acculturated intermediary class — English in tastes and morals, Indian in blood—that English education was expected to produce. A monstrous hybrid of East and West, Hurree Chunder has embraced English literature without any substantial engagement with the 'progressive' ideals of English education from a need for social and professional advancement and approval from the colonial master.

⁴³⁰ Chaudhuri, Nirad *Autobiography*, p. 196. The superficially Anglicized 'babu,' a term for middle-class, educated Bengali elite, was as much as an object of British ridicule as Bengali derision. Bankim Chatterjee satirizes the intellectual pretensions and obsequiousness of the babu: "So you might call me erudite—I study! So, oh Englishman! Smile upon me! I lie at your feet in obeisance." Quoted in Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2008. p. 104. As Sartori explains, Chatterjee's denunciation of superficial appropriation of Western civilization is also a denunciation of Western civilization, understood to be constituted in its essence by the values of a commercial society. Chatterjee spared Shakespeare for his purported other-wordliness which he identified as the Hindu way of life.

If women found a place in the baithak-khana, as Amarnath's discourse testifies, it was only as a subject of discourse rather than as active participants in practices that privileged men and boys with exclusive access to the public world of literature, philosophy and politics⁴³¹. And yet Nirad Chaudhuri's first introduction to Shakespeare was through the story of King Lear told to him by his mother—she not only told him the story but also informed him about the author, suggesting a modern engagement with a literary work, perceived as the creation of an identified author⁴³². However, her engagement with Shakespeare pertained to the story of the play in contrast to the men's 'more advanced' intellectual preoccupations encapsulated in 'discussing and reciting' Shakespeare in polite society. In fact, Chaudhuri credits his first encounter with Shakespeare not to the story told by his mother but to recitations of lines from *Julius Caesar* which he did as a boy of ten upon his father's bidding⁴³³. For Chaudhuri, the 'real' Shakespeare was contained in the lines of the play rather than in the stories. The privileging of Shakespearean form over storylines which underpins Chaudhuri's attitudes was fostered by systematic study of Shakespeare plays in schools and colleges in colonial India which emphasized an evolutionary model of advancement for Indians students, reflected in the material design of college editions of Shakespeare for Indian students. Beginning with a basic comprehension of the story line gleaned from Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, included in the introductory apparatus of the plays, students were exhorted to move to more complex engagements, with the plays themselves.

⁴³¹ Women were first allowed to appear in the baithak-khana in the early 20th century. Rosinka Chaudhuri, "Modernity at Home" p. 230.

⁴³² Chaudhuri, *Autobiography*, p. 107. Before print took off in the early nineteenth century in India, the notion of individual authors, while not non-existent, was not a strong priority in the oral culture in which compositions transmitted through the interlocution of generations of bards, readers and listeners. "The permanence of the printed page," Tithi Battacharya explains, "oriented writing as the only visible referent to knowledge and the inedible printer's ink fixed the content of the written word in such a way that the author was fixed to each word of his writing forever." Battacharya, Tithi "Forms of Print" *The Sentinels of Culture*, p. 125.

⁴³³ Chaudhuri, Nirad, *Autobiography* p. 202.

Nirad Chaudhuri's story points to the intersections of women with Shakespeare in colonial India occurring on the margins of a predominantly male preoccupation with the playwright. Colonial male preoccupation with Shakespeare assumed the form of no less than a cult in nineteenth century Bengal; in Chaudhuri's own words, no "other country in the world ever made one author the epitome, test, and symbol of literary culture as we Bengalis did with Shakespeare in the nineteenth century."⁴³⁴ Even when the upsurge of nationalist feelings at the turn of the twentieth century led to a rejection of Western models and codes of behavior, Shakespeare's preeminence on Bengali minds and material practices appear to have remained unshaken⁴³⁵. Bankim Chatterjee's *Amarnath* is an early attempt at self-definition stepping beyond the identity of mimic men blindly aping British culture. Chatterjee critiqued Western civilization for its adherence to commercial values but spared Shakespeare for his purported otherworldliness which he identified as the Hindu way of life⁴³⁶. He resorted to Shakespeare's sonnet 146 –"Poor soul the center of my sinful earth,"-- in explaining to his countrymen an ascetic disregard of materiality, suggesting a perceived commensurability between Shakespeare's vision and Hindu spirituality⁴³⁷. The same congruence between Shakespeare and the Hindu way of life is seen in Sister Nivedita's account of Calcutta in the early years of the twentieth century during the nationalist movement when men in loin-clothes, symbolic of the ritually pure Hindu, seated on door-sills in dusty lanes of Calcutta, reportedly talked about Shakespeare and Shelley

⁴³⁴ Ibid, p. 203.

⁴³⁵ Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz note a "marked decline in the translation and performances of Shakespeare" in the 1920s "during the intensification of the nationalist movement". "Introduction" p. 16. This comes, somewhat contradictorily, after the assertion that "in the major [Indian] languages the bulk of the [Shakespeare] translations were done during the first thirty years of the twentieth century." Trivedi and Bartholomeusz note that "As there is no consolidated bibliography in the Shakespeare translations in all the major eighteen Indian languages as yet, figures cited will necessarily be rough estimates." Unfortunately Trivedi and Bartholomeusz do not cite any figure, even approximate ones, or evidence in support of their assertion.

⁴³⁶ See footnote 424.

⁴³⁷ Chaudhuri, Supriya, "Phantasmagorias" p. 183.

which she along with others went far to hear⁴³⁸. As a foreigner, social worker and missionary, Sister Nivedita had mobility and access to public spaces that few ‘respectable’ Hindu women in Calcutta had. What interests me here is not the presence of Shakespeare in the public space of streets, door-sills, street-facing drawing rooms, bazars, educational institutions and the like where the playwright officially reigned but the inner, domestic space outside the parameters of public space.

How Chaudhuri’s mother acquired her knowledge of the story of King Lear and Shakespeare is a matter of speculation but one that I wish to hazard here, teasing taciturn evidence from the colonial archive. I examine here Shakespeare’s move from the public space to the domestic space of women in middle-class families. Using the memoir of Girish Chunder Ghose written by Manmathanath Ghosh, published in 1911, as my primary example, I show here that inner domestic quarters of Bengali middle-class homes could act as a secondary site for reading and interpreting Shakespeare in colonial Bengal⁴³⁹. Second, although women’s engagement was indirect, mediated through translations, adaptations and excisions, and controlled by husbands, fathers and elder male family members, in middle-class families women may have gained familiarity with Shakespeare, a fact that has not so far been recognized in much discussed recent accounts of Indian love for Shakespeare which are in effect accounts of Indian Western-educated middle-class males’ love for Shakespeare⁴⁴⁰. The familiarity of women, confined within the inner quarters, with Shakespeare was informal in contrast to the formal

⁴³⁸ Sister Nivedita. *The Web of Indian Life* in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol II, Calcutta: Ramkrishna Sarada Mission Girls School, 1967, p 2.

⁴³⁹ *The Life of Girish Chunder Ghose: The Founder and First Editor of ‘The Hindoo Patriot’ and ‘The Bengalee’ by One Who Knew Him*. Ed. Manmathanath Ghosh. Calcutta: R. Cambay, 1911.

⁴⁴⁰ Das, Sisir Kumar. “Shakespeare in Indian Languages” in *India’s Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*. Ed Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Barthomeusz. Newark: U of Delaware P, p. 42-63. Acknowledgement of Indian ‘love’ for Shakespeare without the implication of cultural crawling is a recent critical trend, see Trivedi and Barthomeusz’ “Introduction”

instructions men received in educational institutions and mostly unrecorded, nonetheless significant in assessing Shakespeare's place in colonial Indian life.

Expanding the notion of education beyond the classroom, this chapter brings to the forefront how colonial middle-class men adopted Shakespeare not only to educate themselves but also to educate their wives. The memoir illustrates the domestic practices that enabled Shakespeare to cross over from the outside to the inside; it also shows that the purposes Shakespeare served, or may have been seen to serve, in the lives of women—in teaching them wifely duties and obligations that were redefined according to new models drawn from Shakespeare. At the same time, the new models were a modification of patriarchal norms of traditional Hindu society. The reading of Shakespeare in the antahpur can be connected with a particular moment in colonial history when the education of women emerged as a major site of contestation between the English educated colonial gentleman and the British, leading to the emergence of the social figure of the *bhadramahila* (literally a respectable woman, lady), the educated, female counterpart of *bhadralok*. The essay highlights Shakespeare's entanglement in the articulation of the figure of the *bhadramahila*.

In recent years, the weighty critical framework introduced by Gauri Viswanathan in her influential analysis of English literature as a coercive imperial imposition has been complicated by the recognition that Indians themselves had been instrumental in introducing English literature as a subject of study and influencing colonial policy long before Macaulay's "Minute on English Education" (1835), notorious for its cultural chauvinism, helped pass Lord William Bentinck's *Resolution* of 1835 which channeled government funds towards promoting English education in India⁴⁴¹. Moving away from Viswanathan's unilateral framework, revisionist post-

⁴⁴¹ Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989. For critiques of Viswanathan see Roy, Modhumita "The Englishing of India: Class Formation and Social Privilege"

colonial criticism has tended to valorize a model of co-optation, collaboration and transaction without denying the exploitative nature of colonial rule⁴⁴². The critical tendency here has been to write more balanced accounts of the colonial encounter than Viswanathan would allow, attentive to Indians and their practices, methodologically distanced from post-structuralist theoretical borrowings which have been criticized for distorting the nature of the colonial encounter into a totalizing, monolithic narrative of oppression⁴⁴³. In Priya Joshi's vivid image, the "image of British empire in India is of two sides [British and Indians] facing each other with their arms outstretched, each side taking, snatching, pilfering and plundering what and when it could, but also giving, exchanging and unevenly borrowing, fitfully and sporadically from the other."⁴⁴⁴ In Joshi's formulation, the exchange between two unequal sides in the colonial encounter in India is marked by contest and collaboration rather than unilateral domination, passive acceptance or resistance.

In recent years, the role of the bhadralok and his contribution to the purported Bengal Renaissance in the nineteenth century has come under close scrutiny, especially in his relationship with women whom he made the locus of his affirmative, reform-oriented actions⁴⁴⁵. It is no longer possible to celebrate in simplistic terms his modernizing initiatives under the aegis of colonial rule without recognizing his class position (middle-class), caste affiliations (upper-caste Hindu), constricting ideologies and his peculiar predicament within the matrix of colonial

Social Scientist 21.5/6 (1993): 36-62 and Mukherjee, Alok. *This Gift of English: English Education and the Formation of Alternate Hegemonies in India* Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2009. Also Chaudhuri, Rosinka. "Young Bengal: A Bengal Eclogue': Or Meat-eating, Race and Reform in a Colonial Poem" *Interventions* 2.3 (2000): 424-41.

⁴⁴² Joshi, Priya. *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture and the English Novel in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002.

⁴⁴³ Gupta, Abhijit. "The Calcutta School Book Society and the Production of Knowledge." *English Studies in Africa* 57.1 (2014): 55-65. Also *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*. Ed Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2006.

⁴⁴⁴ Joshi, Priya. *In Another Country*, p 7.

⁴⁴⁵ Sangari, Kumkum, and Vaid, Sudesh. *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990.

rule. Schooled in colonial education system, the gentlemen-elite as a class asserted its superiority over traditional elites through its invocation of the Enlightenment project of rationality and progress while defining itself in contrast to native manual labors. Sangari and Vaid have argued that the concern with women's social status was superficial; what was at stake when the bourgeoisie undertook reforms of the status of women was its own self-definition⁴⁴⁶. In a parallel argument, Tanika Sarkar has suggested that politically disenfranchised by colonial rule, the bhadralok was re-enfranchised in the domestic sphere which served as an autonomous site with himself as an actor of reforms⁴⁴⁷. The account of Girish Ghosh's attempt to educate his wife in Shakespeare's plays needs to be read in light of this revisionist scholarship challenging a triumphalist view of the bourgeoisie's modernizing initiatives.

The idea of Shakespeare as an educational tool for women was prevalent in Britain in the nineteenth century. In her monograph, *Shakespeare and Victorian Women*, Gail Marshall notes that in the nineteenth century Shakespeare's plays were used to inculcate Victorian girls and women into an established nineteenth-century framework of gender ideology⁴⁴⁸. Marshall observes that "[d]uring the years 1850-1900, when the debates over women's education were most vociferous . . . educationalists strive both to articulate appropriate motives for improving the education of women of all classes and to design appropriate models and curricula whereby those ends might be attained"⁴⁴⁹. According to Marshall, this motive inspired "an effort throughout the century to embed Shakespeare within the rhetoric and canon of girls' reading," which is concurrent with the "increasingly central cultural position of Shakespeare in the

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, "An Introduction" p. 9.

⁴⁴⁷ Sarkar, Tanika, "The Hindu Wife and the Hindu Nation: Domesticity and Nationalism in Nineteenth Century Bengal" *Studies in History* 8 (1992): 213-35.

⁴⁴⁸ Marshall, Gail. *Shakespeare and Victorian Women*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 22-23.

Victorian period” and the “pervasive sense that Shakespeare could educate for female citizenship in the nineteenth century.”⁴⁵⁰ Marshall’s analysis turns from here to a consideration of the varied results the effort produced—women soon found that they could also use Shakespeare’s plays as a means of expressing their own views about gender. They often did so, as girls, by entering essay contests or completing written assignments about Shakespeare, by performing the plays in private as well as in public venues, and, as adults, by expressing their views about womanhood through memoirs or fictionalized literature about Shakespeare’s drama. One such early reader of Shakespeare, Anna Jameson, asserted in *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical and Historical* (1832) that the playwright was a champion of women and that he had lifted women out of vassalage, degradation and sensual tyranny, asserting their prerogative as intellectual beings which not only combatted the nineteenth century normative description of women as the ‘angel of the hearth’ it also brought in new perspectives in critical parameters for understanding Shakespeare’s depiction of women⁴⁵¹.

In reconstructing women’s engagement with Shakespeare in colonial India, the literary historian has to contend with a severe absence of original sources that can illuminate how Indian women read Shakespeare. A numerically small number of middle and upper-class women attained literacy in the nineteenth century, overwhelmingly in the vernacular language; only a handful of them have written about their experiences in autobiographies, and an even smaller number of these saw the light of the day through publication or survived in the colonial archive⁴⁵². Among those available, I have not come across a single instance of a woman reading

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 22.

⁴⁵¹ Hankey, Julie. “Victorian Portias: Shakespeare’s Borderline Heroines” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45.4 (Winter 1994): 426-48, p. 426-7.

⁴⁵² Sumanta Banerjee estimates that 190 odd women authors from 1856 to 1910 produced about 400 works, including poems, novels, plays, essays and autobiographies. The majority of these women came from well-to-do bhadralok families. Banerjee, Sumanta. “Marginalization of Women’s Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century

Shakespeare in the original or in translation by herself. The inevitable fallback in this situation is on the writings of men with the result that the experience of women come to us in mediated forms, as represented by men. In her essay on the Rani of Sirmur, Gayatri Spivak has written about the methodological problems of reading for female historical subject from reading colonial records⁴⁵³. Restoring the subject status of Indian women silenced in official records is deeply problematic because official records construct a fiction about India and the subject people that suited the purpose of government. The colonial archive is thus a place to read strategies of representation— rhetoric rather than real referent. Written over by colonial governance, “(c)ought in the cracks between the production of archives and indigenous patriarchy, today distanced by the waves of ‘hegemonic feminism,’” Spivak argues, there is no “real Rani” to be found in colonial records⁴⁵⁴. Spivak’s analysis draws attention to the gulf between the representation figure of official records and the historical referent which is of relevance to us in our attempt to recover colonial women’s engagement with Shakespeare as represented by Indian males.

The attempt to restore the silent subject of the colonial archive as a historical subject may not, however, be as doomed as Spivak suggests. Critiquing Spivak’s conclusion, Asha Varadharajan argues that even if the Rani cannot be presented whole and complete, there is some evidence of self-will in the brief glimpses we get of her in imperial texts, suggesting that she was not completely written out of existence by official records⁴⁵⁵. In another exciting engagement

Bengal” *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*. Ed Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990: 127-177. p. 161.

⁴⁵³ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives” *History and Theory* 24.3 (1985): 247-72.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 271.

⁴⁵⁵ Varadharajan, Asha. *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said and Spivak*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995. p. 100-6.

with the colonial archive questioning its traditional status as a stand-in for the past, historian Durba Ghosh reconstructs inter-racial marriage in early colonial India suppressed in colonial records from absences, lacunas and slips in archival records. Ghosh's analysis turns the absence of archival records into a consideration of the implications of their absence, in the process illuminating an important aspect of colonial racial politics⁴⁵⁶.

Girish Ghose's wife remains nameless in Ghose's biography; we know that Girish was fifteen when he was married to his wife—her own age at the time is not given—that she died at the age of sixty, heartbroken over the death of several children. Besides these meager facts, we are told in the biography that she learned to read vernacular magazines like *Masik Patrika* and *Bamabodhini Patrika* which were dedicated to educating women and which Ghose subscribed to for his wife⁴⁵⁷. We never see the wife as a whole individual; instead we encounter the details of her life in the context of the life and achievement of her husband whose fame rested primarily as a pioneer of the newly instituted press which assumed a hugely influential role in nineteenth century Bengal in the matter of social reform. In the biography, Ghose's attempt to educate his wife in Shakespeare belongs to a larger commemorative discourse on Ghosh as a 'public' man whose life was dedicated to the worthy cause of social reforms and alleviation of inequity, both in the world at large and in the antahpur, which aims to show a seamless congruence between his public appearance as an enlightened social reformer and his private self as a progressive husband and head of family. Ghose's wife's engagement with Shakespeare shines only in the reflected

⁴⁵⁶ Ghosh, Durba. *Sex and the Family in Colonial Empire: The Making of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.

⁴⁵⁷ See Sen, Krishna. "Lessons in Self-Fashioning: 'Bamabodhini Patrika' and the Education of Women in Colonial Bengal" *Victorian Periodicals Review* 37.2 (Summer 2004): 176-91 for the importance of vernacular magazines like *Bamabodhini Patrika* in the education of women in nineteenth century colonial Bengal.

glory of her husband as an enlightened and progressive stalwart of his time, zealous in his attempt to modernize and educate his wife in Western education⁴⁵⁸.

In contrast to the wife, we have a much fuller picture of Ghose, from the biography and his own writings, whose pursuits were in many ways the textbook example of *bhadralok* concerns. Born in an upper-caste, middle-class Hindu family whose forefathers had made considerable wealth from business with the British but had subsequently fallen into harder times, Ghose's introduction to English literature was early when he enrolled at the Oriental Seminary, a leading educational institution in Calcutta, the center of Britain's empire in the East, offering western education to Hindu students which had been founded in 1829 on exclusive Indian initiative in the wake of the success and popularity of the Hindu College, established in 1817. The Oriental Seminary, like its prestigious counterpart, offered a lot more than an acquaintance in the English language which was much in demand under the changed political and social situations of the early nineteenth century, offering the opportunity for upward social mobility to the emergent middle class through lucrative employment in the British administrative bureaucracy and other professions opened up by Britain's colonial presence in India⁴⁵⁹. The Oriental Seminary offered a secular and liberal Western education outside the purview of Christian missionaries, aiming at intellectual and moral improvement of students and offering the opportunity for socialization along the model of the English gentleman. The curriculum it

⁴⁵⁸ Disjunctures between an outwardly enlightened public appearance and an 'un-regenerated' private self was often a source of complaint and derision against the colonial Bengali middle class' pretensions to civilization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Depictions of such discrepancies often took spatial terms, as in Rabindranath Tagore's ironic contrast of the outer and inner apartments in the novel *Jogajog* (1929). In Tagore's depiction, the outer room is thoroughly Anglicized with marble floors and carpets imported from England, oil paintings and engravings representing European landscapes and themes, chinaware, brassware, sofas and chairs covered in silk, and glass-fronted shelves holding richly bound English books, untouched by anybody except the servant with his dust cloth. The inner domestic quarters by contrast are dark, damp, sooty and filthy. See Chatterjee, Chandrani *Translation Reconsidered: Culture, Genre and the "Colonial Encounter"*. New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010. p 129.

⁴⁵⁹ Roy, Modhumita, "The Englishing of India"

imparted, like that at the Hindu College, served the imperative “to be informed of everything that the English gentleman learnt, and they [Indian students] would take that which they found good and liked best.”⁴⁶⁰

The anomaly of the curriculum in the Hindu College and the Oriental Seminary was that it did not include the ancient European classics, the benchmark of gentility in the metropolitan homeland. The need of the hour in the colony was for ‘useful knowledge.’ The curriculum in private institutions like the Oriental Seminary turned to English literary works, investing on them the kind of systematic attention and academic labor that went into the study of the ancient classics in traditional educational institutions in Britain. The curriculum in the Oriental Seminary heavily emphasized analytical, interpretive readings of Shakespeare. Recitations and performances were also common, and the headmaster of the school, Herman Geoffrey, taught elocution to students using Shakespeare’s texts. Ghose’s passion for journalism and his participation in public debates, pursuits dear to the *bhadralok*, are an embodiment of the ‘public man,’ at home in the modern public sphere opened up by British colonialism. At school, he excelled in elocution and oratory, earning the title of Demosthenes from his teacher; his recitations of Shakespeare impressed everyone⁴⁶¹. According to his biographer, “Girish Chunder always used to ascribe his success as an orator to his early training in the art of elocution, and his mastery over the English language to his early study of the Modern British Drama.”⁴⁶² As a

⁴⁶⁰ Great Britain Parliamentary Papers, 1852-53. Evidence of William Wilberforce Bird, 32:237. Quoted in Chaudhuri, Rosinka “‘Young Bengal: A Bengal Eclogue’: Or Meat-eating, Race and Reform in a Colonial Poem”, p. 425.

⁴⁶¹ *Life of Grish Chunder Ghose*, p. 29

⁴⁶² *Ibid*, p. 32

journalist, Ghosh used his oratorical skills in pressing for social reforms through the English newspapers he founded and edited, *The Hindoo Patriot* and *The Bengalee* ⁴⁶³.

Ghose's journalistic writings frequently reflect the peculiar predicament of Western educated bhadralok like himself, caught in a conundrum caused by what was perceived to be the conflicting dictates of a purportedly rationalist secular Western education and the faith-based native religious traditions and social obligations. From the perspective of evangelical missionaries, a perspective that may have been shared by many colonial officials outwardly committed to the East India Company's official policy of maintaining religious neutrality to avoid provoking hostilities, the encounter of Indian students with English education, even if it did not involve direct biblical instruction, was expected to result in a protracted mental struggle leading to the overthrow of Hinduism⁴⁶⁴. Thus the Serampore missionary John Marshman told a parliamentary committee in 1853 that "the study of English literature, and European science which is obtained by the Natives, although unaccompanied with religious instruction, produces the great effect of shaking the fabric of Hindooism to its very foundation."⁴⁶⁵ The optimism of this colonial narrative about the assimilation effects of English education on Indian minds drew sustenance from reports of iconoclastic activities of students of the Hindu College called the Young Bengal after Mazzini's Young Italy who began an onslaught on traditional Hindu mores

⁴⁶³ For the inception of Indian-edited English periodicals in the nineteenth century and the contribution of the *Hindoo Patriot* to anti-colonial resistance, see Paul, Debapriya "'Hindoo Patriot' and Hurish Chunder Mookerjee: A Study in Colonial Resistance" *Victorian Periodicals Review* 37.2 (Summer 2004): 161-75.

⁴⁶⁴ In 1836, Macaulay wrote, "No Hindoo, who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his own religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy, but many profess themselves pure Deists, and some embrace Christianity. It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence." Quoted in Sanjay Seth, "Secular Enlightenment and Christian Conversion: Missionaries and Education in Colonial India" *Education and Social Change in South Asia*. Ed. Joachim Oesterheld, Krishna Kumar, Sonia Amin, and Zentrum Moderner. Orient. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007: 27-43. p. 34.

⁴⁶⁵ Quoted in Mahmood, *A History of English Education in India* (1981) quoted in Seth, Sanjay "Secular Enlightenment and Christian Conversion", p. 36.

and orthodoxies on the tenets of Western ideals in the late 1820s and the early 1830s. Rumor said that the young radicals of the Hindu College recited the *Iliad* instead of their mantras, and one student gained notoriety by greeting an image of the goddess Kali with “Good morning, Madam” instead of the customary bow⁴⁶⁶. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century in a conservative backlash to the Young Bengal’s radical politics and adolescent excesses, the hyper-westernization and alienation of its members from indigenous cultural practices gave way to attempts at reconciliation between Western ideals and traditional Hindu practices. As Sumanta Banerjee writes, the tendency was to accept “reform at a gradual pace and in modified forms as part of the general bhadrakok inclination towards social stability based on a set of values born of a compromise between the old and the new.”⁴⁶⁷

Girish Ghose’s attempt to educate the womenfolk at home is an expression of the conundrum of trying to reconcile Western ideas of civilization with Hindu traditions in the domestic sphere. Ghose’s choice of Shakespeare in educating his wife and other women in the household was hardly arbitrary. To understand the uses of Shakespeare in the colony within the context of the social, cultural and economic interactions brought about by colonialism, we need to, as Cooper and Stoler have argued, bring the metropole and the colony into one analytic field⁴⁶⁸. Colonial appropriation of Shakespeare was created and sustained through a dialogue and dialectic of metropole and colony and within each other⁴⁶⁹. In the following pages, I map this interaction while locating within it Ghose’s use of Shakespeare.

⁴⁶⁶ Bose, Rajnarain. *Atmcharit* (Calcutta, 1909). Quoted in Seal, Anil. *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Late Nineteenth Century*. London: Cambridge UP, 1968. p. 196.

⁴⁶⁷ Banerjee, Sumanta “Marginalization” p. 148.

⁴⁶⁸ Cooper, Frederick and Ann Laura Stoler. Eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997, p3.

⁴⁶⁹ Traditionally, imperial historians privileging an empirical approach to the study of empire have tended to view empire as a space for the movement of material things, especially capital and goods. The designation and geographical distinctions of ‘core’ and ‘peripheries’ in this spatial imagining have served to explain and locate the motivation and cause of British imperial expansion. The imperial core has been variously identified as Britain or as

2. Shakespeare and Family Reading

Girish Ghose's appropriation of Shakespeare for the education of the women in his household needs to be located within the emergence of the phenomenon of 'family Shakespeare' in the nineteenth century in its metropolitan and colonial enunciations. Kathryn Sutherland writes that in Britain in the years 1774 to 1830, "literature became increasingly subject to modes of marketing and consumption that helped consolidate its function, whether for entertainment or for instruction, within a domestic space."⁴⁷⁰ Small format edition of Shakespeare—duodecimos and octavos and, less frequently, quartos in contrast to the oversize folios of the seventeenth century emanating from the house of Tonson in quick succession from the early eighteenth century onwards had reconfigured the portability and affordability of Shakespeare⁴⁷¹. In the aftermath of the revocation of perpetual copyrights in the Donaldson vs Beckett case of 1774, reprints of complete works of Shakespeare, now rendered out of copyright, made them even more accessible and affordable to the growing reading public. Popular editions of Shakespeare, competitively priced, fed the market for domestic consumption that turned family reading into a hallowed domestic practice, enmeshed in the pattern of everyday life—courtship, sociality, child-rearing—and looked upon Shakespeare as a guide for morality and human conduct. An image of

London, and peripheries have been mapped in relation to this core. The relationship between the core and the periphery has been understood in terms of causality, linkages and interactions. For instance, a great point of debate in traditional imperial historiography has been whether the causes of Britain's imperial expansion were located in the core or in the periphery. Postcolonial theoretical approaches to imperial history has proposed a networked conception of interconnectedness of empire that retains the spatial imagining of metropole and periphery in traditional imperial historiography but highlights non-deterministic, non-causal relationship across space between the metropole and the peripheries and between peripheries without privileging either. See Lambert, David and Lester, Alan. *Colonial Lives across British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006, p. 5-13.

⁴⁷⁰ Sutherland, Kathryn. "British Literature, 1774-1830" *The Cambridge History of the Book* Vol V. Ed. Michael Suarez and Michael Turner. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009: 667-83, p. 667.

⁴⁷¹ Murphy, Andrew. *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, p. 57-89.

bourgeois domestic felicity undergirds the sales pitch of Cassell's *Illustrated Shakespeare* (1864) in trying to convince the reader why no home could claim to be cultured without its edition of Shakespeare:

No household that aims at home culture can now be without a copy of Shakespeare; no domestic circle, that justly looks upon social reading aloud as a means of true happiness and improvement, can think of itself duly provided without this among its books, however few the number may be to which due economy limits its cherished store. The mother, who wishes that her boys should have interesting yet vigorous matter of perusal ever at hand; the father who desires to see his girls acquire a love of the beautiful, and cultivate the polish and grace which the study of poetical themes and ennobling subjects inevitably produces; the parents, eager to introduce their children to higher thoughts and aspirations amid the needful duties and pursuits of everyday life, will certainly make a point of having this noblest of poetic books as their homestead friend and favorite⁴⁷².

Cassell's *Illustrated Shakespeare*, described by Richard Altick as 'probably the most sumptuous edition of Shakespeare ever prepared for the popular market,' was according to one of its editors, Charles Cowden Clarke, a "a positive wonder of cheapness."⁴⁷³

It is a commonplace to say that the home was central to the articulation of bourgeois respectable identity in Britain in the nineteenth century. A gendered discourse on domesticity positioned educated, virtuous, active women at the center of the home, sharply divided from the market-place and male work in the public sphere. Shakespeare was imbricated in the attempt to

⁴⁷² Quoted in Young, Alan. *Hamlet and the Visual Arts, 1709-1900*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2002, p. 99.

⁴⁷³ Ibid

instill proper gender roles for women. John Ruskin's lecture, "Of Queens' Gardens" asserts, for instance, the home was a peaceful sanctifying place that kept the changes of the world outside the door. For Ruskin the home was "the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury but from all terror, doubt and division."⁴⁷⁴ The ideal home was the refuge from moral temptation, the incubator of morality for children, defense against the degradations of the market-place, and a corrective for a society in flux. The kind of female companion, Man needed in "his rough work in this open world" was a woman who would constitute the home "as the temple of the Hearth." Whereas Man was "the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender," women's function was "sweet ordering, arrangement and decision.....Her great function is Praise." Shakespeare's heroines conformed neatly to this scheme "as infallibly faithful and wise counsellors, -- incorruptably just and pure examples—strong always to sanctify, even when they cannot save."⁴⁷⁵

For Shakespeare to emerge as an instructive mentor of morality suitable for family reading, the plays had to be carefully edited and expunged of objectionable matter. The Cassell edition, for instance, excluded "phrases not thought objectionable at the time when Shakespeare wrote, but coarse and unfit for modern utterance."⁴⁷⁶ The editors explained, "So unwilling were we that any marring should occur in the pleasure of an assembled home met together to enjoy the Dramatist's pages, that we made the omission of expressions that might have checked the reader aloud."⁴⁷⁷ Cassell's *Illustrated Shakespeare* was a relatively late comer to an established tradition of expurgated editions that pruned out "all that can raise a blush on the cheek of modesty," as Henrietta Bowdler writes in her four volume edition of *Family Shakespeare*

⁴⁷⁴ Hanckey, Julie, "Victorian Portias" p. 427-8.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid

⁴⁷⁶ Quoted in Young, Alan. *Hamlet and the Visual Arts, 1709-1900*, p. 99.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid

(1807)⁴⁷⁸. The Preface explains that, “while few authors are so instructive as Shakespeare, ... his Plays contain much that is vulgar and much that is indelicate.”⁴⁷⁹ The Bowdler edition offered a family-friendly edition that omitted “many speeches in which Shakespeare has been tempted to purchase laughter at the price of decency” that was “intended to be read in private societies, and to be placed in the hand of young persons of both sexes.”⁴⁸⁰ In the same year Henrietta Bowdler published her edition, Mary and Charles Lamb published *Lamb’s Tales from Shakespeare*, prose versions of twenty of Shakespeare’s plays. The popularity of the Lambs’ *Tales* inspired many imitations. For instance, Caroline Maxwell’s *The Juvenile Edition of Shakespeare Adapted to the Capacities of the Youth* (1928) offering prose versions of eleven of Shakespeare’s plays claimed to have maintained throughout the strictest censorship: “any incident, passage or even word which might be thought exceptionable by the strictest delicacy, is entirely omitted, and on no occasion has the fair purity of the youthful mind been for one moment forgot.”⁴⁸¹ The purpose of the enterprise was to provide “much useful instruction, under the most pleasing garb, and shewing in the strongest light, the superiority of virtue, of honesty, discretion and goodness of heart, over the reverse of those amiable and honorable moral duties.”⁴⁸²

With family readings serving as an important educational tool for female members who were denied the same education as males, unmediated access to printed Shakespeare for young women was a source of anxiety⁴⁸³. As Jean Marsden writes, unadulterated Shakespeare was seen

⁴⁷⁸ Quoted in Young, Alan. *Hamlet and the Visual Arts*, p. 79. See also Dobson, Michael. “Bowdler and Britannia: Shakespeare and the National Libido” *Shakespeare Survey* 46: 137-44.

⁴⁷⁹ “Henrietta Bowdler, 1754-1830” *Women Reading Shakespeare, 1660-1990: An Anthology of Criticism* Ed Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts, Manchester: U of Manchester P, 1997. p 46.

⁴⁸⁰ Young, Alan. *Hamlet and the Visual Arts*, p. 79.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, p 78-9.

⁴⁸² Ibid

⁴⁸³ James, Felicity, “‘Wild Tales’ Quoted in Young, Alan. *Hamlet and the Visual Arts*, p 78-9. from Shakespeare: Readings of Charles and Mary Lamb” *Shakespeare* 2.2 (2006): 152-67. James talks about the importance of family readings as an educational tool, and Shakespeare’s role in it, in dissenting families in Britain in the early nineteenth century, p. 159-64.

as improper for a delicate female mind⁴⁸⁴. Unmediated Shakespeare was considered primarily a male domain, and female entry into that domain had to be controlled and directed by male members. Expurgated and retold tale editions were specifically designed with females, often adolescent females, in mind. The Bowdlers thus offered a Shakespeare “a father could read aloud to his children, a brother to his sister, or a gentleman to a lady.”⁴⁸⁵ Mary Lamb writes anonymously in her preface to the first edition of *Tales from Shakespeare* that boys being permitted the use of the father’s library at a much earlier age than girls, it was a brother’s duty to lend “kind assistance in explain to their sisters such parts as are hardest for them to understand Shakespeare’s difficulty” and to read aloud to them from the original plays, “carefully selecting what is proper for a young sister’s ear.”⁴⁸⁶ As Felicity James explains, “Women’s appropriation of Shakespeare is thus bounded; on the one hand they are allowed a possibly subversive glimpse of the paternal literary inheritance, yet on the other, it is made clear that this insight into what she [Mary Lamb] terms the ‘manly book’ of Shakespeare should be determined and ordained by the male reader.”⁴⁸⁷ Fathers were interchangeable with brothers in offering guidance and control to females in their entry into the “manly book” of Shakespeare. Rejoicing Thomas Bowdler’s endeavor in offering a Shakespeare that could be read aloud in decent company, the only criticism the *Edinburgh Review* had of the edition was that the type was too small: “For we

⁴⁸⁴ Marsden, Jean. “Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and ‘Tales from Shakespeare” *Children’s Literature* 17 (1989):47-63, p. 47.

⁴⁸⁵ Quoted in Rosenberg, Marvin. “Reputation Oft Lost, Without Deserving...” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 9.4 (1958): 499-506, p. 499. In *A Letter to the Editor of the British Critic* (1823), Thomas Bowdler writes, “I assert, that although the writings of Shakespeare possess greater merit than those of any other dramatist, they are, nevertheless, stained with words and expressions of so indecent a nature, that no parent would chuse to submit them, in an uncorrected form, to the eye of ear of a daughter.” Quoted in Rosenberg, Marvin. p. 499

⁴⁸⁶ Marsden, Jean. “Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and ‘Tales from Shakespeare”, p 48.

⁴⁸⁷ James, Felicity. “‘Wild Tales’ from Shakespeare”, p. 159.

rather suspect, from some casual experiments of our own, that few *papas* will be able to read this, in a winter evening to their children, without the undramatic aid of spectacles.”⁴⁸⁸

The figure of the respectable head of the pater-family reading expurgated Shakespeare to his wife and children on wintry evenings exemplifies the professional family-oriented man, presiding over the feminized space of the home with his function as the moral educator of his wife and children. John Tosh has argued that the family-oriented man was the ideal model of masculinity that emerged in the nineteenth century in response to a variety of other masculine models that did not support the domestic ideology—the aristocratic libertine, the romantic, the dandy, and some aspects of the polite gentleman inhabiting salons and coffeehouses, models which were discarded in favor of the family-oriented man who spent his leisure time at home⁴⁸⁹. Tosh’s argument, while illuminating, is constrained by an insular metropolitan perspective. Mrinalini Sinha has argued that to understand the constitution of ideal masculinity requires extending the frame of reference from the metropole to the colony. Sinha analyzes how the stereotypes of ‘English manly man’ and ‘effeminate Bengali babu,’ produced by the colonial encounter, were constitutive of British masculinity which emerged as an imperial social formation⁴⁹⁰. In the following section, I turn to the colonial periphery to understand the constitutive impact of the colonial encounter in the context of Ghose’s memoir.

⁴⁸⁸ Quoted in Murphy, Andrew. “Nineteenth Century Popular Editions” *Shakespeare in Print*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003 p. 171. Italics included.

⁴⁸⁹ Tosh, John, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire. Women and Men in History*. Harlow, UK Pearson, 2005, p 88-89.

⁴⁹⁰ Sinha, Mrinalini. *Colonial Masculinity: The 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Manchester; New York: Manchester UP, 1995.

3. Family Readings of Shakespeare in the Colonial Home

In distant Calcutta, when Girish Chunder Ghose recounts his experience of reading aloud Shakespeare to the womenfolk in his household, he is evoking an image of respectable bourgeois domesticity at once familiar and dear to the colonizer. The occasion was a public debate in March 1868 in which Ghosh combatted the allegations of Justice Phear, a judge of Calcutta High Court, who claimed that “Hindu women did not have a scintilla of knowledge and culture.”⁴⁹¹ In his rebuttal, Ghosh argued that Hindu women were indeed cultured and educated, except that it was through a different means of education than European schools. Their schooling took place at home in the zenana or the antahpur where passages of the Indian epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, were read out by a knowledgeable person. Not only were Indian women cultured, they had similar intellectual abilities as British women, and this Ghosh sought to establish by showing from his personal experiences the response of women in his home to the master-text of empire: Shakespeare. The women, Ghose averred, were moved to tears on hearing about Desdemona’s fate in *Othello* and one woman wanted a translation of Katharina’s speech in *The Taming of the Shrew* “in which she [Katharina] sets forth the duties of a wife to the husband.” Asserting that the custom of separate quarters for women, imposed by Muslim rule, was not peculiar to Hindu social life, Ghose went on to construct a history of Vedic idyll of educated Hindu women thrown into disarray by Muslim onslaught which was to be followed by redemptive British liberalism, in which Western educated Hindu husbands, fathers, and brothers like himself were to be the saviors and actors of Hindu women’s redemption.

Ghose’s rebuttal, we are told in the biography based on a report in the newspaper he founded and edited, the *Hindoo Patriot*, was very well received. After the speech, one Sir Richard Temple, convinced by Ghosh’s argument, observed that “he believed that all gentlemen

⁴⁹¹ *Life of Grish Chunder Ghose*, p. 127

would admit that native ladies were not so destitute of education as was commonly supposed, and it was quite true, as mentioned by Baboo Grish Chunder Ghose, that native ladies had as much capacities for learning and understanding and for appreciating everything that there is great and noble as the ladies of any other country.”⁴⁹² *The Hindoo Patriot*, condemning the offensive tone of Mr. Phear’s lecture, reported Ghose’s speech in the following words: “In the name of the nation we offer our gratitude to Baboo Grish Chunder Ghose for vindicating the character of our countrymen and countrywomen before the abject natives and the merry Europeans who delighted to libel them.”⁴⁹³ Here we see an early phase of nationalist rhetoric, which made women central to the narrative of resurgent India, trying to withstand colonial interpellation.

Justice Phear’s allegation about the Hindu women’s absolute lack of knowledge and culture was the common stock of British onslaught on Hindu culture in the nineteenth century which turned the ‘deplorable’ condition of Hindu women into one of the main planks of its civilizing drive⁴⁹⁴. The latter rendered an aura of responsibility and benevolence to a recently emerged imperial power that sought justification and legitimacy for its presence in India by positing itself as a ‘liberal empire’ that existed for the benefit of the subject people and for promoting their positive welfare, a position classically enunciated by Edmund Burke in 1783⁴⁹⁵. Nicholas Dirks has persuasively argued that the British sought legitimacy for rule in India by erasing and displacing the memory of its own scandals that mired the early years of military conquest of India onto Indian scandals of sati, child-marriage, the plight of widows and other Indian social practices. Political ethics, public responsibility and private virtue were the mantra of the reconstituted – at least rhetorically so – regime that saw itself as an instrument of

⁴⁹² Ibid, 128.

⁴⁹³ Ibid

⁴⁹⁴ See Banerjee, Sumanta. “Marginalization of Women’s Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal” p. 127-8.

⁴⁹⁵ Vasunia, Phiroze. *The Classics and Colonial India*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013, p. 276.

modernity and civilization to Indian backwardness⁴⁹⁶. The memory of Fishing Fleet referring to British female adventuresses arriving in India like commodity items in search of prospective husbands, ridiculed in Gillray's graphic satire *A Sale of English Beauties in the East Indies* (1786) which showed a newly arrived 'cargo' of women put up for 'sale' on a Calcutta dock before a throng of customers,⁴⁹⁷ was conveniently erased and forgotten in 1817 when James Mill asserted that women's position was an indicator of society's advancement. The 'degraded' condition of women in India, according to Mill, was an indicator of India's low status in the hierarchies of civilization⁴⁹⁸.

The trajectory of the eighteenth century betel-chewing British adventuress morphing into the nineteenth and twentieth century memsahib (married, respectable middle-class female partners of the British in India), remains to be told in specific details but it will likely belong to the same narrative of making empire respectable which underlies the transformation of the male agent of empire from the flamboyant, effeminate East India Company fortune-hunter-nabob of the eighteenth century cohabiting with Indian women into the nineteenth century sahib, a sober, bureaucratic representative of the crown that Elizabeth Collingham has analyzed in *Imperial Bodies*⁴⁹⁹. The ethos of empire, practicing social and racial distance between the ruler and the ruled, increasingly frowned upon inter-racial sexual relations between the British officer class and Indians in the early nineteenth century, replacing miscegenation and inter-racial domestic set-up, prevalent in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with domestic arrangements

⁴⁹⁶ Dirks, Nicholas B. *The Scandal of Empire India and the Creation of Imperial Britain*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap, 2008.

⁴⁹⁷ Leffel, John. "Where Woman, Lovely Woman, For wealth and Grandeur Comes From Far': Representations of the Colonial Marriage Market in Gillray, Topham, Starke, and Austen." *Transnational England: Home and Abroad, 1780-1860* Ed Terry Robinson and Monica Class. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars P, 2009, p. 190-213

⁴⁹⁸ See Borthwick, Meredith. *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989. p. 27.

⁴⁹⁹ Collingham, E. M. *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, C. 1800-1947*. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell, 2001.

constituted by resident white women brought to India as wives or married on site⁵⁰⁰. Various scholars have argued that the presence of British wives and mothers providing a spectacle of ‘public domesticity’ was crucial for bolstering the image of the colonizers as legitimate rulers⁵⁰¹. As Alison Blunt argues, colonial domination depended not only on discourses on masculinity but also on feminized discourses of domesticity⁵⁰². The lives and activities of memsahibs were a demonstration of the superiority of the colonizing culture. The domestic space of the colonizer’s home was at the heart of the imperial project while the memsahib’s private work of domestication paralleled and reinforced the male, public work of domestication of empire⁵⁰³.

That Girish Ghose would feel compelled to prove to the colonist that Hindu women were as culturally sophisticated as English ladies bears testament to the power of the image of the memsahib/English lady. Construction of masculine and feminine typologies were central to the nineteenth century political cultures of India as in Britain. In colonial imaginings, the memsahib was what the Hindu woman was not. While the memsahib was organized, capable, intelligent domestic managers engendering virtue and future imperialists, whose housekeeping activities overlapped with and enforced imperial rule, Hindu women, by contrast, were a perversion of that model of femininity – gossipy, licentious, indolent, given to petty bickering, without the slightest

⁵⁰⁰ Ghosh, Durba, *Sex and the Family in Colonial Empire*; Sen, Indrani “Devoted Wife/ Sensuous Bibi: Colonial Constructions of the Indian woman, 1860-1900” *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 8.1 (2001): 1-22

⁵⁰¹ George, Rosemary Marangoly. “Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home” *Cultural Critique* 26 (Winter 1993-94): 95-127.

⁵⁰² Blunt, Alison. “Imperial Geographies of Home: British Domesticity in India, 1886-1925.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24.4 (December 1999): 421-40.

⁵⁰³ Blunt, “Imperial Geographies”; Chattopadhyay, Swati “‘Goods, Chattels and Sundry Items’: Constructing Nineteenth Century Anglo-Indian Domestic Life” *Journal of Material Culture* 7 (November 2002): 243-71.

modicum of culture⁵⁰⁴. If they read anything at all, it was licentious erotic tales in vernacular⁵⁰⁵. The native domestic situation was the antitype, rather than an alternative, of Victorian bourgeois domestic life, a repulsive deformity of ‘civilized,’ humane cultural norms.

Narratives of scandalous images of women’s condition in India fed into the machinery of respectability that powered the domestic discourse in the colony and in the metropole⁵⁰⁶. In a parallel argument to Sinha’s in *Colonial Masculinities*, scholars have suggested that the metropolitan bourgeois domestic discourse emerged as the standard of family life and civility not only within a national frame but within the context of interactions and exchanges of colonial and imperial relationships. Cooper and Stoler ask us to see the bourgeois discourse of domesticity not just as the impact of the West on the colony but as the ways in which the colony and the metropole mutually influenced each other—“Europe was made by its imperial projects, as much as colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe itself.”⁵⁰⁷ It is possible to hear echoes of the ritual of sati—according to the missionary Reverend James Hough “none excited a more painful sensation in the Christian world than the practice of the burning of the Hindoo

⁵⁰⁴ Sen, Indrani “Devoted Wife/ Sensuous Bibi: Colonial Constructions of the Indian Woman, 1860-1900” *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 8.1 (2001): 1-22. Sen points out that much of the ‘knowledge’ about women in the antahpur were produced by British women, especially missionaries who had access to the inner quarters sometimes as ‘zenana teachers.’ She shows that paradoxically alongside the stereotype of Indian women in the antahpur as sexed bodies there existed another stereotype: the ideal, pious sacrificing Indian wife. Sen suggests that at times the perceived qualities of Indian women in seclusion were made to overlap with the qualities of British women, notably, in the predisposition of both to hysteria.

⁵⁰⁵ Women readers were alleged to have a particular penchant for the erotic tale of *Vidyasundar* by Bharatchandra Roy (1712-?). J Wenger described it as a book “the study of which must destroy all purity of mind; and yet it cannot be doubted, that if any book is read by, and to, respectable Bengali females, this is it.” Wenger, J, “Popular Literature of Bengal” *The Calcutta Review* 13.26, 1850, p 261; quoted in Bhattacharya, Tithi “Forms of Print” *The Sentinels of Culture*, p. 116.

⁵⁰⁶ Ellis, Sarah Stickney “The Ardent Woman and the Abject Wife” *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family* Ed. Karen Chase and Michael Levenson. Princeton: U of Princeton P, 2009. p. 70.

⁵⁰⁷ Stoler, Anne Laura and Cooper, Fred, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda” *Tensions of Europe: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* Ed. Fred Cooper and Anne Stoler Berkeley: U of California P, 1997. p 1.

widow on her husband's funeral pyre"⁵⁰⁸—in Anna Jameson's exposition of Shakespeare's heroines in *Characteristics of Women, Moral and Political* where she writes, such a heroine

constituted like Portia, and placed in this age, and in the actual state of society, would find society arm'd against her; and instead of being like Portia, a gracious, happy, beloved, and loving creature, would be a victim, immolated in fire to that multitudinous Moloch termed Opinion. With her the world without would be at war with the world within; in the perpetual strife, either her nature would 'be subdued to the element it worked in', and bending it to a necessity it could neither escape nor approve, lose at last something of its original brightness; or otherwise – a perpetual spirit of resistance, cherished as a safeguard, might perhaps in the end destroy the equipoise; firmness would become pride and self-assurance, and the soft sweet, feminine texture of the mind settle into rigidity. Is there then no sanctuary for such a mind? – Where shall it find a refuge from the world? – Where seek for strength against itself? Where, but in Heaven?⁵⁰⁹

Jameson located Heaven, not the metropolitan homeland, as the site where Shakespeare's Portia could flourish. If Portia were living in early nineteenth century Britain, her fate would be immolation in fire, metaphorically speaking, a victim to normative gender expectations.

Jameson's remark draws attention to the reverse side of the bourgeois façade of domestic felicity revolving around its female linchpins: happy, self-effacing, well-adjusted mothers, daughters and sisters. Stoler has argued in *Race and the Education of Desire* that the "'civilizing mission' of the nineteenth century was a bourgeois impulse directed not only at the colonized, as is often

⁵⁰⁸ Quoted in Ellis, Sarah Stickney, "The Ardent and the Abject Wife" p 70.

⁵⁰⁹ Quoted in Hanckey, Julie, "Victorian Portias" p. 430.

assumed, but at recalcitrant and ambiguous participants in imperial culture at home and abroad.”⁵¹⁰ Jameson’s remarks illuminates the cost of Britain’s ‘civilizing mission’ at home.

4. The Bengali Gentleman’s Collaboration with and Contestation of the British

The public debate between Ghosh and Justice Phear brings to the forefront colonial representations, and its contestations, of Hindu women; inadvertently, it illuminates the ways in which the identity and character of men were involved and at stake in debates surrounding women’s question. Phear had not only maligned Indian women’s lack of culture, he implicitly charged Indian men for the deplorable condition of women, in particular for withholding education. In the mid nineteenth century, sequestration of Hindu women was attributed to the tyranny and selfish folly of Hindu male who rationalized the practice of sequestration by invoking the uncontrollable sexuality of women. The discourse presented Hindu males as weak and effeminate while it cast the colonizers as chivalric rescuers of Hindu women from the tyranny of Indian men who had sequestered them⁵¹¹.

If “(e)nergy, assertiveness, independence, directness, simplicity were the core attributes of the doctrine of manliness that emerged in the mid nineteenth century” as Tosh argues in the metropolitan context⁵¹², in the colonial encounter the same attributes undergirded narratives of imperial adventure that laid the foundation of empire in the Indian subcontinent. By contrast, Hindu men, sometimes more specifically Bengali men, were marked by physical and moral

⁵¹⁰ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham: Duke UP., p 109.

⁵¹¹ Indrani Sen writes that from the 1860s, the British located sequestration of women to ‘native’ distrust of women’s sexuality and located the custom of seclusion as an attempt to control it. Sen quotes *The Calcutta Review* noting in 1861 that “seclusion had existed for centuries even before the rise of Moslemism.” The evil of sequestration was attributed to the “tyranny and selfish folly” of the native male who rationalized it by invoking the uncontrollable sexuality of women. Sen, Indrani “Devoted Wife/Sensuous Bibi” p. 9.

⁵¹² Tosh, John, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 88.

‘softness’ which justified their subjugation under foreign rule. Mrinalini Sinha has argued that in the post- Mutiny years following a changing political relationship of the British with Bengal’s educated middle-class, charges of effeminacy came to be attributed specifically to Western educated Bengali babu in contrast to an earlier wider attribution of effeminacy to all male inhabitants of Bengal⁵¹³. Sequestration of women in the antahpur was a reflection of the babu’s effeminacy—his fear of women’s uncontrollable sexuality—as well as a cause of it. Among the various reasons held responsible for the Bengali babu’s feebleness—for instance, ‘the relaxing climate,’ the ‘enfeebling diet,’—the premature maternity of women was held responsible for the birth of a weak and stunted race in Bengal.

In his rebuttal, Ghosh vindicates Hindu women as intellectual beings which undercuts their stereotypical representation as sexed bodies in the women’s quarter. At the same time, he vindicates Hindu men—the onus of women’s backwardness is made to rest on regressive Muslim influences— by presenting himself in the role of the educator of women in Western literature in his family. The search here is for self-respect, to demonstrate to the colonizer that the latter and the bhadralok were in progressive reforms. In the process, he reclaims the image of the Bengali intellectual elite from imputed allegations of effeminacy, an energetic actor of women’s emancipation rather than the passive bookish invertebrate the British claimed he was⁵¹⁴. At the same time, Ghose ascertains the prerogative of the Hindu patriarchal father as the head of his family, involved in the latter’s education and moral development, rather than the British who must stay out of its precincts.

⁵¹³ Sinha, Mrinalini. “Introduction” *Colonial Masculinities: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995. p 16.

⁵¹⁴ Sinha, Mrinalini “Colonial Masculinities” p. vii.

The zenana or home-school education that Ghose refers to in his argument had assumed a central place in contemporary debates about female education among the bhadralok in the 1860s as he contended with negative images of himself and Hindu women in textbooks, lectures, newspaper articles and sermons. The question of zenana education was taken up particularly by *Bamabodhini Patrika* that Ghose subscribed to for his wife⁵¹⁵. While radical reformers argued that women should have the same kind of education as men and in similar situations, moderates placed emphasis on home-schooling. The latter ensured, it was argued, that female education was a success and that girls were not taken out of school early on account of marriage which would compromise their ability to complete a formal school education. The argument conveniently bypassed the issue of women's access to and movement in public spaces which institutional schooling entailed. At the same time, it rendered the content of women's education firmly in control of the male heads of the family.

For all the wide range of debates on women's education in nineteenth century Bengal, the central assumption that a woman's goal in life was to marry, produce children and be a homemaker was not dislodged. Nor did Western education challenge this basic tenet. From 1838, an annual essay competition was held on the necessity of female education. The description of the topic – “On the importance of educating Hindu Females, with reference to the improvement which it may be expected to produce on the education of children, in their early years, and the happiness it would generally confer on domestic life”⁵¹⁶—set the parameters of the necessity of female education as a service to domestic happiness. In 1842, Madhusudan Dutta, then a young man of eighteen who went on to become the first modern Bengali epic poet, wrote an essay that

⁵¹⁵ See Sen, Krishna. “Lessons in Self-Fashioning”

⁵¹⁶ Majumdar, Bhagaban. *First Fruits of English Education, 1817-57*. Calcutta: Bookland Private Limited, 1973, p. 221

has survived because it was appended to the annual report to the government in the homeland as proof of the progress of Britain's benevolent work in India⁵¹⁷. In his essay, Dutta discusses the pernicious effects of a superstitious and ignorant mother on her child's education and how an educated wife contributes to the happiness of the husband and domestic bliss—the terms of the discussion are those set in the topic. The essay asserts the importance of reform only so far as it makes women enlightened partners in conjugal domesticity. It ends with the assertion, “The people of this country do not know the pleasure of domestic life, and indeed they cannot know, until civilization shows them the way to it,” giving the British much to feel good about its role in India, although Dutta leaves the reference to ‘civilization’ ambiguous and unspecific. The only instance where Dutta appears to go beyond the set parameter is when he imagines a consensual sexual relationship that female education would result in as distinct from the current situation where women were no more than “speaking brutes created merely to contribute to the gratification of the animal appetites of men, a view prevalent in Oriental countries.”⁵¹⁸ The British authorities approved of Dutta's views, awarding him a gold prize.

Girish Ghosh's interest in *the Taming of the Shrew* and *Othello* is embedded in the emergence of domesticity as a new cultural ideal for the colonial middle-class. The new cultural ideal projected the family as a site of reform. As various scholars have argued and as I have shown here, the articulation of Bengali bhadralok identity was based on the definition of its women. In reaction to British criticism of the degraded condition of women in the Hindu family, the Bengali gentleman envisioned a ‘new woman’ in the role of a companionate housewife and an ideal mother who combined in her the virtues of the self-sacrificing Hindu wife and mother

⁵¹⁷ Ibid

⁵¹⁸ Ibid, p 222.

and the Victorian image of the ‘perfect lady.’ As Swapna Banerjee explains, ‘the new woman’ was placed at the center of a moral universe articulated around the home and the family⁵¹⁹.

This moral universe was created by controlling the infiltration of immoral printed texts into women’s quarters and the pernicious effects of low-class domestic help and service providers, bearers of an uninhibited, colloquial popular culture operating outside the framework of colonial education into the sequestered women’s quarter⁵²⁰. In contrast to the sheltered lives of upper and middle-class women in the antahpur, poor working women enjoyed comparative independence and freedom of movement in public spaces. Anindita Ghosh writes that in the 1860s and the 1870s antahpur education had produced a body of women with some reading skills. The native presses of Battala⁵²¹ targeted these women as one the main consumers of the ephemeral literature they published in colloquial Bengali—sensational novels, sensual romances, thrillers and bawdy skits— which reached the private quarters of the bhadralok through hawkers and servants⁵²². The attempt of the colonial elite to emancipate their wives, daughters and sisters and align them with the new cultural norm of respectability involved weaning them away from ‘immoral’ popular literature and the coarse vocabulary of the street⁵²³.

Sumanta Banerjee has described the colonial elite’s moral crusade against popular cultural forms and literature, in particular women’s songs and folk culture, which were deemed

⁵¹⁹ “Subverting the Moral Universe: ‘Narratives of Transgression’ in the Construction of Middle-Class Identity in Colonial Bengal” *Beyond Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of Colonial Identity*. New Delhi: Oxford UP: 77-99. P. 78.

⁵²⁰ Banerjee, Sumanta “Marginalization” p. 127-177

⁵²¹ Battala, a location in north Calcutta, became a metonym for the cheap literature produced in that area. Gupta, Abhijit. “Household Words: An Account of the ‘Bengali Family Library’” *The Culture of the Publisher’s Series Vol 2* Ed John Spiers New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 152-6

⁵²² Banerjee, Anindita. “Cheap Books, ‘Bad’ Books: Contesting Print Culture in Colonial Bengal” *South Asia Research* 18 (September 1998): 173-94

⁵²³ Sumanta Banerjee has argued that if ‘emancipation’ meant greater participation for respectable middle-class women in the new social milieu and cultural affairs of educated society, it resulted in the suppression of popular culture, literature and practices.

licentious, impolite and subversive of the new ideal of domesticity⁵²⁴. Narratives of tyrannical husbands and the plight of women in a patriarchal society were the stock of folk songs and sayings in which women across class divides traditionally took part. Making mockery of patriarchal values, women's folk culture, Banerjee argues, offered a dissenting space and temporary liberation from the rigid strictures of a patriarchal society. "For the Bengali male elite," Banerjee writes, "which was making strenuous efforts to create new patterns of deference and patronage, such songs and expressions were perceived as products of lower class beliefs and behavior which were doubly annoying and embarrassing because they were shared by their own women in the andarmahal."⁵²⁵ Banerjee quotes a bhadralok who prescribes that "women stay home and [be] provided with opportunities to listen to good instructions, discussions on good books" instead of attending traditional communal readings of mythological stories which failed the bhadralok's filter of morality⁵²⁶. This, the gentleman suggested, would train the women in artistic occupations while "their religious sense will improve and their souls will become pure and they will be suitable for domestic work..." In a provocative twist on the narrative of the benign and liberating effort of the colonial elite to improve the condition of its women, in Banerjee's interpretation women's emancipation turns out to be a more rigid and oppressive articulation of domestic virtues and the 'proper' relationship of women to male heads of the family, marked by complete deference. Derision of patriarchal values in aggressive, forthright and ribald tone in women's popular, oral cultural forms were replaced by stories of saintly, virtuous and dutiful women imparted through textbooks that middle-class women now studied. Penetrating as Banerjee's analysis is, it suggests a triumph of rigid patriarchal values, with

⁵²⁴ Banerjee, Sumanta "Marginalization" p. 127-177

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 131.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 152

dissent bidding a retreat from the precinct of the middle-class home. My analysis below suggests that dissent may not have been as completely smothered as Banerjee would like us to believe.

5. Editions of Shakespeare

As various scholars have remarked, reformers of women's condition in the nineteenth century experienced a scarcity of 'suitable' textbooks for women. Missionaries, colonial educationists and administrators, and the Indian intelligentsia were energetically involved in the production of morally improving books that would effectively counter the pernicious influence of colloquial, popular literature published by the Battala presses. Girish Ghosh's interest in Shakespeare appears to stem from a recognition of the usefulness of plays like *Othello* and *the Taming of the Shrew* as textbooks instilling appropriate genteel norms and models of behavior in his household. Which edition of Shakespeare did Ghosh use at home? Our only, rather bare, clue is contained in the line that women were moved to tears on hearing about Desdemona's fate in *Othello* and that one woman wanted a translation of Katharina's speech in *The Taming of the Shrew* "in which she [Katharina] sets forth the duties of a wife to the husband." Evidently, the women's engagement with Shakespeare was at the level of the story although we see a progress towards Shakespeare's poetry in one woman's demand for a translation of Katharina's speech in the *Taming of the Shrew*.

The arrival of print in Bengal did not, as Anindita Ghosh has argued, automatically and immediately displace pre-print oral practices⁵²⁷. Traditionally, manuscript books were of secondary importance in communal readings where the teacher's dramatic vocalization of text

⁵²⁷ Ghosh, Anindita, "Cheap Books, 'Bad' Books: Contesting Print Cultures in Colonial Bengal" *South Asia Research* 18.2 (1998): 173-94

with gestures and intonations dominated, making ‘reading’ an oral experience⁵²⁸. The strong tradition of orality continued its sway well into the nineteenth century, although the emergence of the new practice of silent, private reading structured around the printed text reconfigured its audience along specific communities lacking reading skills such as women⁵²⁹. Orality with an emphasis on memorization was also an important aspect of formal classroom pedagogy.

Considering all these, we need to be open to the possibility that Ghosh may not have used any printed text at all, recalling from memory the stories of *Othello* and *The Taming of the Shrew* which he would have encountered as a class text at the Oriental Seminary.

It may also have been that Ghosh read aloud from a recently published *Lamb’s Tales from Shakespeare* in a Bengali translation. A notice in the local newspaper, the *Calcutta Review*, in 1853, lists *Lamb’s Tales from Shakespeare* among the Vernacular Literature Society’s recent publications in Bengali that also includes *Robinson Crusoe*, *Life of Lord Clive*, *The Vividarthra Sangraha* or *Penny Magazine*, *Spirit of the Native Press* and the *Life of Pratapaditya*⁵³⁰. *Lamb’s Tales from Shakespeare* is described in the notice as “a translation of a popular work, and contains a variety of information.”⁵³¹ This was translated into Bengali by Dr. Edward Roer—a duodecimo that sold for 6 anna (3s 6d?), one of the 50 new books the newly established Vernacular Society had published in 1852-1853⁵³². This was not the first translation of Lamb’s

⁵²⁸ Bhattaacharya, Tithi. “The Forms and Uses of Print” *The Sentinels of Culture: Class Education, and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005: 108-52, p. 117

⁵²⁹ Ibid, p. 119

⁵³⁰ “Miscellaneous Notices.” *The Calcutta Review* 20, 1853: xiv

⁵³¹ Ibid. Publication and sales records of the Vernacular Literature Society from June 1, 1857 to May 31, 1858 show that 1,500 number of copies of Lamb’s *Tales* had been printed out of which 542 copies were sold, a higher sales number than *Robinson Crusoe* (485 copies). The most successful sales figures went to *Story of Mother* (1,047 copies) followed by *Tinder Box* by Hans Anderson, translated by Madu Soodun Mookerjya (1,031 copies). Considering that 9,305 copies were sold in total by the Vernacular Literature Society in the one year, it is evident that Lamb’s *Tales* were one of its more popular publications. See “Appendix” *Selections of the Records of the Government of Bengal*, 28-32, p. 81-2.

⁵³² Appendix” *Selections of the Records of the Government of Bengal*, 28-32, p. 81-2.

Tales into Bengali—only a year earlier in 1852 Mukhtaram Vidyabagish and others had translated Lamb’s *Tales* into a hefty 500 page book in Bengali in what appears to be a collaborative translation project, published in Calcutta by a native press, Sambad Purnachandradaya Yantralaya⁵³³. Earlier still, in 1848 Gurudas Hajra had translated *Romeo and Juliet* from Lamb’s *Tale*, 88 pages, published in Calcutta. These publications, targeting the Indian audience, are distinct from the earliest translation of Shakespeare in India undertaken as a collegiate exercise by an East India Company writer (junior civil servant) and student at the Fort William College, Monckton, in the early nineteenth century. His translation of *The Tempest* into Bengali may have been published by the Serampore Mission Press to supply the need for study material in Bengali for the students of the Fort William College⁵³⁴.

Vernacular Literature Society had been formed in collaboration of members of the Bengali intelligentsia and British men in non-official capacities in 1851 to publish wholesome literature that would counter the ‘pernicious effects’ of Bengali books of the market, the newly emerged native presses in and around Battala⁵³⁵ that specialized in erotica, almanacs, scandals, songs and doggerels⁵³⁶. The operation of the Vernacular Literature Society testifies to the joint endeavor of the Indian intelligentsia, European missionaries and British government officials in purging obscenities and impurities from indigenous cultural practices⁵³⁷. It took “for its field the provision of a healthy domestic literature, at once attractive in its character, and moral and

⁵³³ “Miscellaneous Notices” *The Calcutta Review* 19, 1853, p. xx

⁵³⁴ Mitra, S.M. “The Partition of Bengal and the Bengali Language” *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record* 21, Calcutta, 1906. p. 271

⁵³⁵See Gupta, Abhijit. “Household Words: An Account of the ‘Bengali Family Library’”

⁵³⁶*Allen’s Indian Mail, and Register of Intelligence for British and Foreign India, China and Parts of the East*. September, 1856. p. 510; Gupta, Abhijit. “Household Words: An Account of the ‘Bengali Family Library’” *The Culture of the Publisher’s Series Vol 2* Ed John Spiers

⁵³⁷ Gupta, Abhijit “The Calcutta School Book Society and the Production of Knowledge” *English Studies in Africa* 57.1 (2014): 55-65

civilizing in its effect,” the report in Allen’s Mail noted⁵³⁸. In its emphasis on supplying ‘improving and useful’ vernacular domestic literature, the Society’s area of specialization was distinct from that of other book societies in operation in India at the time—the Tract Society, for instance, supplied books on religion and the School Book Society supplied textbooks for schools. By supplying sound and useful domestic literature, the Vernacular Literature Society identified the household as the main site of consumption of its publications.

The Vernacular Society’s publication of *Lamb’s Tales* belonged to the first-ever publisher series in the Bengali language: the Bengal Family Library. As Abhijit Gupta explains, the title itself reinforces the series’ association with the domestic sphere⁵³⁹. In 1856, 317 copies of the Vernacular Society’s edition of *Lamb’s Tales* had been distributed which is given as a proof of a rapid sale in a newspaper report in Allen’s Mail. The same report claims that the subject of this and the other publications by the Vernacular Society “must be highly interesting to the young men and women of this country, and well calculated to supersede the pernicious Bengali books of the market.”⁵⁴⁰ Women were an important target audience and consumer of the publications of vernacular presses, both Battala and the Vernacular Literature Society⁵⁴¹. The latter saw itself filling the gap in the availability of suitable books for female readers. In the wake of the Mutiny of 1857, when the question of the judiciousness of allowing native presses to operate, at least without censorship, became a matter of concern, the need for vernacular literature was justified on the ground, among others, that the success of female education

⁵³⁸ *Allen’s Indian Mail, and Register of Intelligence for British and Foreign India, China and Parts of the East*. September, 1856. p. 510

⁵³⁹ Gupta, Abhijit. “Household Words: An Account of the Bengali Family Library” p. 112-3

⁵⁴⁰ *Allen’s Indian Mail, and Register of Intelligence for British and Foreign India, China and Parts of the East*. September, 1856. p. 510

⁵⁴¹ Gupta, Abhijit. “Household Words: An Account of the Bengali Family Library”; Ghosh, Anindita, “Cheap Books, ‘Bad’ Books: Contesting Print Cultures in Colonial Bengal” *South Asia Research* 18.2 (1998): 173-94, p. 190-1.

depended on the availability of sound vernacular books to supply the newly opened schools for girls and to furnish family libraries. Asserting that “native Females are now learning to read from their husbands and brothers,” the Report on the Native Press in Bengal recommended that, “If Females are not supplied with good books, they will be sure to read bad ones, we know of a case where a female of the higher class wished a European lady, her teacher, to procure for her a licentious tale *Videa Sundar*, the latter refused and gave her *Sushila* one of the Vernacular Literature Society’s publications—the result was that half a dozen copies of the last work were sold to the friends of the family”.⁵⁴²

In its issue of 8 March 1860, the newspaper *Friend of India* noted that “The bulk of the purchasers [of Vernacular Literature Society], it is believed, are women, to whom their husbands read the tales, a most satisfactory fact, if it were only established on a little clearer evidence.” The “Report on the Native Press in Bengal” reiterates a female readership: that many females were learning to read from their husbands and brothers.⁵⁴³ Abhijit Gupta quotes that ‘several books have been sold, through the agency of female hawkers, in the Zenanas of the wealthy native gentlemen, and she had disposed in this way many copies of *Sushila*, *Paul and Virginia* and the *Exiles of Siberia*. In truth, the committee feel much encouraged by the fact that a large portion of the books which we sell are bought by native gentlemen to be read by the female members of the family.’⁵⁴⁴

Charles and Mary Lamb’s ‘feminization’ of Shakespeare in the *Tales* had made the plays suitable reading material for women in colonial middle-class homes. Jean Marsden has noted the

⁵⁴² “Report on the Native Presses in Bengal.” *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*. Calcutta: John Gray, Calcutta Gazette Office, 1858, p. ix. Also quoted in Gupta, Abijit. “Household Words” p. 163

⁵⁴³ “Report on the Native Presses in Bengal.” *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*. Calcutta: John Gray, Calcutta Gazette Office, 1858, p. ix

⁵⁴⁴ Gupta, Abhijit, “Household Words” p. 158

various ways in which the Lambs infused elements of gender in their prose retellings to the effect that girls were presented with a version of the plays that encouraged the development of ‘feminine’ virtues such as modesty, gentleness and patience⁵⁴⁵. As Marsden points out, female readers exposed to the tales were to garner moral lessons, not poetry, which espoused contemporary views of the purpose of female education; in Hannah More’s words, “She is to read the best books, not so much to enable her to talk of them, as to bring the improvement which they furnish, to the rectification of her principles and the formation of her habits.”⁵⁴⁶ Among various cuts and omissions, the Lambs removed all obscene expressions, suggestions of sexuality and harshness that might destroy the ideal of femininity, emphasizing disembodied love, appropriate feminine conduct and wifely duties, reinforced by a gentle moralistic tone of third person narrative. The overall effect is that Mary Lamb, directing the project of adaptation, gave girls an access to Shakespeare they might not otherwise have had although “the ‘Shakespeare’ they were to read,” Marsden shows, “was not the literature their brothers knew.”⁵⁴⁷

The Taming of the Shrew and *Othello* in Lamb’s *Tales* both emphasize the virtue of wifely obedience and appropriate feminine conduct. Without being explicitly a cautionary tale about the disasters that ensue from feminine indiscipline, Lambs’ Katharine of *The Taming of the Shrew* shows how a “lady of ungovernable spirit and fiery temper” risks prospects of domestic happiness because of her bad attitude. As Marsden explains, the fundamental assumption is that proper feminine behavior involves submission to masculine authority. *The Taming of the Shrew* becomes in Lambs’ hands the story of Katharina becoming “a meek and manageable wife”

⁵⁴⁵ “Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and ‘Tales from Shakespeare” *Children’s Literature* 17 (1989):47-63.

⁵⁴⁶ Quoted in Marsden, p. 55

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 60

thanks to gentleman Petruchio's good judgment, wits, high spirits and disciplinary actions.

Petruchio's pecuniary motives in seeking a wife which would complicate his gentlemanly status are downplayed in Lambs' version, and any murmuring of domestic abuse that may arise in the mind of the reader from Petruchio's harsh treatment of Katharine in denying her food and rest is quelled with the reminder that he exerts benevolent authority: "(h)e not meaning she should be quite starved, had brought her a small portion of meat." Petruchio's violent method of containing Katherine's haughtiness and rebellion, deservedly so, is amusing rather than alarming. It effects a complete subjugation of her "proud spirit to such perfect subjection, that she dared not remember that there was such a word as contradiction."

Marsden rightly infers that the Lambs' *The Taming of the Shrew* goes further than its Shakespearean original in emphasizing wifely obedience, for its sense of closure depends upon stating what Shakespeare leaves implicit—Katherine's future status as the good wife. The tale ends: "Katherine once more became famous in Padua, not as heretofore, as Katherine the Shrew, but as Katherine the most obedient and duteous wife in Padua."⁵⁴⁸ While I agree with the tenor of Marsden's conclusion, it seems to me that she does not adequately pick up on the subtle ambivalences and tensions in how the Lambs' convey the battle of the sexes. Marsden claims that "only when the two women [Katharine of *The Taming of the Shrew* and Adriana of *The Comedy of Errors*] repent of such [aggressive] unfeminine conduct are they awarded a happy ending."⁵⁴⁹ In Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, the repentance is expressed in Katharine's final speech in which she advocates the wife's complete subjection to the will and authority of the husband.

⁵⁴⁸ Marsden, "Shakespeare for Girls" p. 56.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid

Contrary to Marsden's claim, the Lambs do not present Katharine's repentance as such. Thwarting the expectation of the usual copious details with which the Lambs render significant moments in Shakespeare's plays, all that the reader is provided, in a sweeping brush stroke, is an assertion of obedience without any suggestion of repentance: "And to the wonder of all present, the reformed shrewish lady spoke as eloquently in praise of the wifelike duty of obedience, as she had practiced it implicitly in a ready submission to Petruchio's will."⁵⁵⁰ We see here that the Lambs are careful to close off the suggestion that Katharina's speech may have been a mere show of obedience by emphasizing that she practiced what she preached. Katharina's speech in the Shakespearean original has been interpreted by modern scholars like Karen Newman as ambiguous, ironic and tongue-in-cheek, an exercise in performative freedom in the face of patriarchy, contradicting her overt claim of complete subjection to masculine authority⁵⁵¹. I would argue that, alert to the ambiguity of the speech and its potential to puncture a sense of closure, the Lambs suppresses it from their version, leaving readers assured of an uncomplicated happy ending. Susan Wolfson, departing from Marsden pessimistic reading of Mary Lamb's adherence to moral expectations, has argued that the tales seem to question and simultaneously collude with conventional gender expectations within and around Shakespeare⁵⁵². The absence of any mention of Katharine's repentance, I contend, is an illuminating example of that tension Wolfson identifies in the tales.

⁵⁵⁰ Lamb, Charles. *Tales from Shakespeare: Designed for the Use of Young People*. London: George Routledge and Sons, p. 250.

⁵⁵¹ Newman, Karen "Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*" *English Literary Renaissance* 16.1 (1986): 86-100

⁵⁵² Wolfson, Susan "Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tale from Shakespear*" *Women's Re-visions of Shakespeare: On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich. H.D., George Eliot and Others*. Ed Marianne Novy. Urbana: U of Urbana Champaigne, p. 16.

When Ghosh enlightened the women of his household with the story of Katharina, we are told that a woman wanted a translation of Katharina's speech "in which she [Katharina] sets forth the duties of a wife to the husband." The speech is clearly Katharine's 'repentance' speech in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Why did the woman want a translation of Katharina's speech? Could she have picked up on the tension in the patriarchal home's incomplete containment of feminine rebellion that the Lambs hint at through their omission of a detailed representation of Katharine's speech? Did she want to interpret for herself Katharine's final speech about wifely duties? Needless to say, we cannot make a conclusive assertion because we have no supporting evidence. We do not know for certain that the text, if at all, Ghosh read aloud to the women was indeed *Tales from Shakespeare* translated in Bengali. Even if it was, one needs to be open to the possibility that the tale may have changed further from the Lambs' version in the hands of the translator⁵⁵³. The fact that the woman asks for the speech left out by the Lambs lends some support to the possibility that the text used was indeed Lambs' *Tales* but then the woman, we are told, asks for *Katharina's* speech whereas the Lambs record her name as *Katharine*. Mediated by adapters, translators, biographers and not least by Ghosh's own interpretive strictures, the Shakespeare that the women in Ghosh's family read is lost to us in impenetrable shadows.

Whatever the woman's intention may have been in asking for the speech in translation—whether because she wanted to use it as a lesson in wifely duty or whether she wanted to apply her interpretive autonomy, implicitly questioning the normative gender role that Ghosh's teaching was supposed to instill—we encounter here a momentary glimpse of self-will that is

⁵⁵³ Abhijit Gupta writes that the Vernacular Literature Society's objective in translating English works into Bengali was to provide adaptations palatable to Indian tastes. Thus *Robinson Crusoe* in the Bengali version received an Indian name, locale etc. while remaining true, in Gupta's critical estimation, to the spirit of the original. Adaptation was abandoned in favor of translation after the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*. Lamb's *Tales* may or may not have been adaptations of the Lambs' version.

otherwise drowned in the double imperative of colonialism and native patriarchal structures. Marsden writes pessimistically that for girls, “the library door was unlocked but the books themselves were still out of reach.”⁵⁵⁴ The anonymous woman in Ghosh’s family, however, lays claim to the Shakespearean original in the library by asking for a translation of Katharina’s speech. We are not told whether Ghosh complied with a translation—that resounding silence itself is indicative of a crack in the edifice of feminine compliancy that Ghosh’s narrative upholds.

6. Shakespeare the Upholder of Dharma

As for that edifice of feminine submission to patriarchal authority, Ghose’s middle-class bhadralok sensibility would have responded favorably to Petruchio’s ‘gentlemanly’ methods in bringing about a transformation in Katherina’s assertive attitude not through physical beatings—characteristic of the ungentle husband—but through ‘clever’ strategies. Like Petruchio, Ghosh instills proper values among his women without recourse to violent means, through education. Sumanta Banerjee writes about derisions against wife-beating husbands in women’s popular cultural sayings: “bhaat debar naam nei, kit marar Gonsbai” (He can’t provide me with rice, and yet is quite a mighty one in beating me with his fists)⁵⁵⁵. Instead of the assertive tone mocking patriarchal authority that such popular sayings encouraged, *The Taming of the Shrew* would inculcate pliancy and docility among the women in Ghose’s household by offering a different model of behavior in the character of reformed Katherina.

That Girish Ghose would include Shakespeare in his home school suggests an unusual curriculum—the general view was that arithmetic, history, hygiene, needlework and the basics of

⁵⁵⁴ Marsden, “Shakespeare for Girls” p 60.

⁵⁵⁵ Banerjee, Sumanta. “Marginalization” p. 144.

the vernacular language and English were adequate for women⁵⁵⁶. However, the little that we know about the transmission and circulation of Lamb's *Tales* in colonial India in the middle of the nineteenth century suggests that reading practices in the antahpur may have been more diverse than the syllabus we know of more commonly such as the one formulated for women during the period by the *Bamabodhini Patrika* which outlined a five year old syllabus of home study, covering a variety of subjects but excluding Shakespeare: reading and writing in Bengali in the first year; Bengali grammar, geography and arithmetic in the second year; advanced Bengali grammar and literature, geography, history and algebra in the third year; the same subjects and hygiene in the fourth year; the same subjects and botany and biology in the fifth year⁵⁵⁷.

Yet Ghose's readings of Shakespeare are in parallel with the basic principle of female education formulated by the *Bamobodhii Patrika* and others—the enforcement of dharma (literally the right thing to do). The ten cardinal points of the Hindu woman's dharma were piety, charity, taking care of family members, truthfulness, benevolence, self-sacrifice, absolute fidelity to the husband in body and mind, an abstemious life, faith in God, and belief in the preparation for after-life⁵⁵⁸. There was much apprehension, even among those who were well-disposed to female education, regarding the effect of education on women's mind—that mental liberation gained from education would result in license and defiance of patriarchal authority, embodied in the image of a dolled-up wife reading novels in the baithak-khana while smoking hookah to the utter neglect of all domestic chores and family responsibilities⁵⁵⁹. Education, it was feared,

⁵⁵⁶ Sen, Krishna. "Lessons in Self-Fashioning: 'Bamabodhini Patrika' and the Education of Women in Colonial Bengal" *Victorian Periodicals Review* 37.2 (Summer 2004): 176-91, p. 179

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 182

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid*

would result in a ‘memsahib’ – here we see how easily the image of the Victorian lady could slide from a model worthy of imitation to scorn, depending on convenience – to who knew neither to cook nor to scour dishes, who was useless for household chores and taking care of the family.

Ghose’s selective use of Shakespeare--*The Taming of the Shrew* and *Othello*--show that by reinterpreting Shakespeare within the matrix of traditional Hindu dharma of women, a Shakespearean education for women in colonial India could actually work to reinforce the traditional Hindu stereotype of a home-oriented devoted wife. Indeed, Shakespeare seems to have offered the possibility of reconciling Western culture with traditional Eastern philosophies and practices by erasing the conflicts and the contradictions that were seen to exist between the ‘superior’ culture of the colonizer and ‘backward’ native traditions. At the same time, the implicit claim that Shakespeare was an upholder of Hindu dharma eradicated the stigma of Westernization and capitulation to an alien ethos that educating women entailed. The Hindu wife, reconstituted through her engagement of Shakespeare, would perform all that was expected of a traditional Hindu wife with the added advantage of having knowledge of Western literature and culture, modeled on the prototype of a cultured English lady. Here we see the implicit goal of educating women in Shakespeare: to produce well informed housewives, not independent women, instilling in them the qualities of purity and dutifulness, the traditional dharma of the Indian wife, thus co-opting Shakespeare in the service of patriarchal values, in teaching women subjection to men.

Foreclosing the interpreting ambiguity of Shakespeare’s play, Ghose introduces *The Taming of the Shrew* to the women in his family as a play enacting the defeat of an assertive woman to a compliant member of patriarchy. It becomes enmeshed within the interpretive matrix

of traditional Hindu values, in the process it removes Shakespeare's foreignness from traditional Hindu practices and customs. Katherine's sentiments are those that even a conservative Hindu would approve:

Fie, fie! unknit that threatening unkind brow,
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor:
It blots thy beauty as frosts do bite the meads,
Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair buds,
And in no sense is meet or amiable.
A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it. (5.2. 140-49)⁵⁶⁰

While the play is seen to be perfectly aligned with traditional Hindu beliefs, it is likely to have been seen to be suited to the changing conditions of the time, brought about by the British presence in India. If Ghose's interest in the play came from its concern in delineating the proper relationship of the wife within the household, it is likely that the play had an added significance for its exploration of marriage as the foundation of an orderly life, a concern that gained some prominence among western educated Indians who worked in the British bureaucracy or in other

⁵⁶⁰ *The Taming of the Shrew* in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* Ed. David Bevington. New York: Pearson Longman, 2009. P. 147.

professions⁵⁶¹. Just as Katherine is about to assume her new role as the manager of her household she defines order at home through economic and political terms, of obligations of indebtedness.

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
And for thy maintenance commits his body
To painful labour both by sea and land,
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;
And craves no other tribute at thy hands
But love, fair looks and true obedience;
Too little payment for so great a debt.
Such duty as the subject owes the prince
Even such a woman oweth to her husband;
And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,
And not obedient to his honest will,
What is she but a foul contending rebel
And graceless traitor to her loving lord? (5.2. 150-64)

Deploying the language of economic debt and indebtedness, Katherine presents the image of the household as a microcosm of the state and the husband as the prince. What secures the order of the household is the wife's acknowledgement of her indebtedness to the husband. Perpetually

⁵⁶¹ Walsh, Judith. "A Well-Ordered Home." *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, 113-40

obligated to him for the things he provides for her, she is subordinate like a subject to the king. At the heart of this speech, Katharina marks a gendered division of labor, a separation of masculine and feminine spheres of work, according to which husbands labor by land and sea while women luxuriate at home, a division of labor that devalues the wife's role in the household economy, rendering housework as invisible and erasing the status of housework as work, which also secures the role of the husband as her provider⁵⁶².

We find many echoes of Katharina's sentiments expressed in the way Ghose's wife carries out her everyday tasks, as documented by the memoir. The wife's economic obligation to her husband is explicitly stated when the biographer notes,

if Girish Chandra did all he could to enrich and improve the mind of his wife, she amply *repaid* him for his trouble by ardently sympathizing with the noble mission in life, which she also furthered in no small measure by relieving her husband of the management of all domestic concerns, by nourishing him in his hours of ease and by nursing him in his hours of illness. One of Darwin's son has told us lately, in an excellent biography of his father, how that illustrious naturalist was enabled to achieve his great scientific work, in spite of his delicate health, mainly by the incessant care bestowed upon him by his devoted wife. But how little does the world know of the way in which the secluded and self-denying Hindu wife helps her husband fulfill his life's mission [emphasis added]⁵⁶³

⁵⁶²Korda, Natasha. "Household Kates: Domesticating Commodities in 'The Taming of the Shrew.'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47.2 (1996): 109-31.

⁵⁶³ *Life of Grish Chunder Ghose*, p 152.

We also notice the same rigid compartmentalization of public sphere and domestic work as we see in Katherina's speech in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Judith Walsh has noted how the structures of employment in British India reshaped the lives of the Western educated and the effect it had on the reorganization of domestic life. Although Ghosh's reputation rested on his journalistic work, this was his pursuit in the spare-time; his livelihood was from serving as an employee in the British bureaucracy. We learn from Ghosh's biographer that he was extremely efficient in his work, rising up rapidly to higher rungs of the bureaucracy, though still subordinate to the British. The Western educated who worked for the British or in professions like journalism, law and education, Judith Walsh argues, had to negotiate work environments which demanded that they were hardworking, punctual, well-organized, efficient and clean. These demands and concerns of efficiency in the male public sphere crossed over to the domestic, in the process reorganizing traditional familial dynamics, and this is seen in advice literature for women of the time which focused on efficient household management, hygiene, along with proper moral conduct for wives. In Ghosh's biography we see Shakespeare allied to the new values of efficiency and a well-ordered domestic life, illustrating the way Shakespeare spoke to the Bengali elite about the changing conditions of colonial modernity. The success of the education imparted by Ghosh to his wife is seen in that she managed entirely all household duties, as we anticipate Shakespeare's Katharine to do at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*, leaving Ghosh the opportunity to fulfill his life's goal as a public man.

Shakespeare is thus seen to be an effective lesson in the value of order, organization, efficiency, economy and beauty. When Ghosh's wife recreates a well-ordered home, in tune with the changing conditions of the time, the impulse, it is suggested, came from the lessons imparted to her by her husband. The colonial middle-class home had to function as a money-saving

economy where the housewife was responsible for the health, wealth and happiness of the family. Ghose writes in an essay, apparently recalling the dedication of his wife: “On the sick-bed her attendance is priceless, she seems to be formed by nature for the office of a nurse...Indeed, the devotion and strength of character manifested on such occasions by the affectionate creature prove more efficient means of recovery than the prescriptions of the doctor. The rich who are thrown upon the attention of their servants during severe illness seldom survive, the poor whose wives are their sole attendants on the sick bed generally escape death.”⁵⁶⁴ The wife’s dedicated service saves money as well as lives. The social upward mobility of the middle-class is made possible by the thrift and service of the wife who acknowledges her indebtedness to the husband.

From Ghosh’s account and the biography, we also learn that Desdemona’s fate drew tears in the women’s eyes, an appropriate feminine reaction to Shakespeare’s story-line and characterization, rather than, say, an appreciation of Shakespeare’s poetry which would be the purview of men. The association of Desdemona with complete wifely subjection to the husband was strong in the minds of many Indians. For instance, in a published essay “Othello through Indian Eyes,” Krishan Kumar, in 1936, writes his ‘true’ opinion regarding his interpretation of *Othello* which he says he could not express at the time of his university examination as he was obligated to provide the ‘correct’ opinion approved by the authorities. He went on to publish his personal views of *Othello*, unfettered by considerations of approval from authorities, seeking to redress his tutor’s misinterpretation of the play:

Desdemona, dear tutor, was like our satees of old who burnt themselves alive when their husbands were dead. The Heaven was there where their husbands would be.And

⁵⁶⁴ *Life of Grish Chunder Ghose*, p. 153

when DWESH DAMNA died—let me give her my Hindu name—when Dwesh-damna died—the destroyer of jealousy—she died a nobler death, saints would have envied it⁵⁶⁵.

Judging from the teary reactions of the women in Ghose's home school to the fate of Desdemona, it is quite likely that the latter was interpreted through a similar lens of abject submission.

If Shakespeare was used in the antahpur to instill the value of efficiency, household order and subjection, he was also conducive in redefining the husband and wife relationship in terms of a companionate marriage. Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued that the Western model of modernity had to constantly negotiate with traditional Indian customs and practices in colonial India. The nuclear family model of the West providing a stage for the unfolding of Western subjectivity was at odds with the joint family structure of Hindu families in the nineteenth century⁵⁶⁶. The memoir narrates how Ghosh's attempt to educate his wife in their joint family proved abortive because of several obstacles, including the opposition of some women in the family, a momentary concession to the limits of Ghosh's project of assimilating the women in his family to Western learning. However, while away from the joint family, in their garden house in Bellare, unrestrained by the trammels of the joint family system, Ghosh, we are told, enjoyed ample opportunities for imparting Western education to his wife. He spent an hour or two after supper every day in reading and translating to his wife masterpieces of English literature, including

⁵⁶⁵ Kumar, Krishan. *Othello through Indian Eyes: Being a New Interpretation of Shakespeare's 'Othello, the Moor of Venice.'* Calcutta: Sarabjit Singh, 1936

⁵⁶⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Domestic Cruelty and the Birth of the Subject" *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2000, p 117-48

Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth and *The Taming of the Shrew*. These family readings, we are told by the biographer, were his only recreation⁵⁶⁷.

We know from available descriptions of husbands reading to their wives, that reading times were charged with romantic intimacy⁵⁶⁸. For husbands and wives locked in arranged marriages early in life, reading times were moments of great intimacy and bonding in an exclusive romantic relationship outside the power and control of family members. A husband and a wife in an 'Advice for Women' text from the late nineteenth century, for instance, meet late at night; the husband instructs the wife on proper conduct, social conduct and the need for literacy. 'Now go to sleep,' says the husband at the end of one chapter of *Griha Lakshmi*, "it's gotten very late." And the wife replies, "I don't know why, I don't get sleepy when I'm with you. I only want to hear you talk⁵⁶⁹. We catch similar depictions of conjugal bliss in Ghosh's biography: sometimes he would spread a mat on the terrace of his garden house or in a cozy corner of a flower-bed when he would keep his wife entertained. Lest one thinks this entailed excessive romantic indulgences, the reader is reminded that Ghosh's intention was to enrich the mind of his wife.

That *Romeo and Juliet* would be included in the list of Ghosh's reading suggests an attraction to Western style of romantic love. We do not know how Ghosh interpreted this play for his wife, but it is worthwhile to remember that the traditional dharma of the wife downplayed the role of romantic love within marriage. Neither the husband nor the wife, it was believed, may live for their own love or happiness; the emphasis was on the husband and wife working together to accomplish the social and familial obligations of their marriage. An advice text thus writes,

⁵⁶⁷ *Life of Grish Chunder Ghose*, p 151

⁵⁶⁸ Walsh, Judith. "Rewriting Patriarchy: The Companionate Marriage" *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, p. 51-61.

⁵⁶⁹ Quoted in Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India* p. 337

Thinking constantly only about ‘Love,’ in the end some go mad like a character in a novel. They can’t think of anything else. The love of a husband seems to become the only goal of their lives.Family dharma gets burnt to ashes. Only two people, sitting face to face, night and day, pass their lives⁵⁷⁰.

Romantic, exclusive love is here condemned as trivial and selfish. The family household and duty should take precedence over personal happiness. The life of Ghose’s wife, as we learn from the memoir, seems to have been a constant attempt to reconcile the claims of modernity with the desires of extended family. Thus we learn that while food for the extended family was cooked in the main kitchen, she would prepare delicacies for her own children and husband in the private kitchen adjoining her quarters. We do not know what lesson Ghose’s wife derived from *Romeo and Juliet*, but the memoir does assert that she was a “pattern wife,” “a pattern mother” and “a pattern daughter,” dedicated to the sansar dharma: cooking, rearing children, nursing the sick. Shaped by Western values, her life, as it comes across from the memoir, seems to have been an attempt at adapting new cultural values to a traditional order against all kinds of odds.

Keshab Sen, a contemporary of Ghose, argued in a public lecture titled “Proposal for Improvement of the Women” that educated women made better wives in the new liberal ideology of companionate marriage rather than the traditional hierarchical dynamics, the rationale of that education rested in that it produced, among other happy outcomes, better mothers⁵⁷¹. This is the view of a wife who is able to fulfill all the duties of the traditional Hindu

⁵⁷⁰ Quoted in Walsh, Judith “What’s Love Got to Do with It.” *Domesticity in Colonial India* p. 87

⁵⁷¹ Sen, Krishna. “Lessons in Self-Fashioning: ‘Bamabodhini Patrika’ and the Education of Women in Colonial Bengal” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 37.2 (Summer 2004): 176-91, p. 184

wife with the extra qualification of education. As Amritalal Basu said of the bhadramahila in 1903, the newly reconstituted wife is not a housemaid of the husband; endowed with all the good qualities a Western educated husband expects of his wife, she combines in her the Hindu wife's devotion to her husband, and at the same time, like the English wife, she is his comrade of the mind and partners at work⁵⁷². Ghose's biography shows the roles being shaped for the Bengali woman by her Western educated husband: as an intellectual companion and at the same time as subordinate to the husband who establishes a firm authority over her by choosing the texts to be read and by translating and interpreting them for her. The husband lectures while the wife listens and carries out her lessons through her everyday tasks. Far from the haughty, precocious disorderly wife that many feared female education, especially Western education, would produce, Ghosh's wife was the "stately flower of female fortitude and perfect wifedom."⁵⁷³ In this mission, Shakespeare was not antagonistic to the virtues of a traditional Hindu housewife, rather his plays were received as suitably aligned in the service of the patriarchal structures of traditional Hindu society.

The image of domestic bliss centered on readings of Shakespeare in Ghose's biography receives an ironic contrast in the autobiography of the leading stage actress of the time, *Amar Jiban (My Life)* by Nati Binodini (1863-1941). Commercial theater was at the heart of the Bengali intelligentsia's reformist and modernizing projects, and Bengali versions of Shakespeare was a staple on the Calcutta stage. While men played women's role in the early theatrical productions including Shakespeare's plays, in 1873 women performers were inducted for the

⁵⁷² Ibid

⁵⁷³ *Life of Grish Chunder Ghose* p. 153

first time for lead roles⁵⁷⁴. As no respectable woman would be seen on the public stage, actresses were drawn from impoverished backgrounds in the red-light districts of Calcutta. Binodini was the most renowned and gifted of the early actresses, joining commercial theater when she was nine years old and retiring after 14 years at the zenith of her career, wishing to escape the compulsion of prostitution that the life of an actress entailed. Although Binodini was without any formal education, she wrote her autobiography in the refined, chaste language of the colonial genteel. Here she writes about her experience of being tutored by the doyen of the nineteenth century Bengali theater, Girish Ghosh:

Girish babu would instruct me with great care in my roles. His was a wonderful teaching method; first he would explain the bhava (the essence) of the role in question, then he asked me to memorize the lines. After this was done he would, at his convenience, he would come to our home with Amrita Mitra, Amrita babu, and several others, talk to us about numerous English actresses and the works of famous English poets such as Shakespeare, Byron, Milton and Pope. He discussed their works in the form of stories and sometimes he read out sections from the text to explain them the better. He taught us a range of behavior, discussing every aspect of separately⁵⁷⁵.

Unlike Ghosh's wife, Binodini's entry into Shakespeare was through the back door of respectability: to train as a professional artist for the entertainment and enlightenment of theater-going bhadralok who looked down upon actresses as 'public women.' For all the gulf separating

⁵⁷⁴ Sengupta, Debjani. "Playing the Canon: Shakespeare and the Bengali Actress in Nineteenth Century Calcutta" *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, and Performance* Ed Poonam Trivedi and Denis Bartholomeusz Newark: U of Delaware P, 2006, p. 216-31.

⁵⁷⁵ Quoted in Sengupta, Debjani "Playing the Canon" p. 222.

Binodini from Ghose's "pattern wife" in terms of class and respectability, the excerpt above shows the stark similarity of their situations: being introduced into Shakespeare by a male teacher-figure so that they could perform their respective roles, be that of a professional actress on the stage or the dutiful wife in the antahpur. Here too Shakespeare's stories take precedence over his poetic merits, opening up "a range of behavior" which Binodini was expected to assume on the professional stage. Binodini considered role-playing as an integral part of her life: "Acting was the chief treasure, the mainstay of my life. It had become as if an inextricable part of my nature...."⁵⁷⁶ Role-playing subverts the notion of an essential subjectivity instilled by education. In spite of the similarities of the Shakespearean education Binodini and Ghose's wife received from their male mentors, Binodini was excluded from a membership in the sorority of genteel ladies because she lacked the prime pre-condition for that membership: a home-bound existence in the antahpur performing the responsibilities of the traditional home in total dependence of the male head of the family⁵⁷⁷.

7. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion situates the reception and transmission of Shakespeare in late nineteenth century Bengal within the construction of middle-class elite culture that formulated the bhadralok/bhadramahila (gentleman/gentlewoman) identity. Scholars like Tanika Sarkar have argued that the domestic space symbolized by women became the solace for middle-class Bengali men, influenced by Victorian bourgeois morality, from the tyrannies of the outside world. Forced to accept changes in the public sphere brought about by British colonial rule, middle-class Bengali men were keen to prevent those changes from seeping into their homes. As

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 222

⁵⁷⁷ Banerjee, Sumanta "Marginalization" p. 165. Banerjee discusses how the writings of prostitutes, 'transgressing' into the chaste, refined language of the bhadralok, reinforce the ethos of domestic virtue.

a result middle-class men considered the domestic space to be an autonomous and inviolable domain. Increasingly as the nationalist movement took its shape, the domestic space emerged as a 'Hindu way of life.'⁵⁷⁸

In a parallel argument, Partha Chatterjee has argued that the home was central to the nationalist anti-colonial discourse confronting colonialist critique of Indian traditions⁵⁷⁹. Demarcating a political position opposed to colonial rule, Indian nationalists constructed the domains of the 'material' and the 'spiritual' as a way to mark themselves out from the colonizers. This allowed Indian nationalists to limit the extent of Western influences while defining an essential core of the cultural tradition of the nation. The 'material' was defined as the locus of science, technology, and statecraft of the West which the colonized people had to emulate and incorporate into their own culture in order to adapt to a modern, material world and to overthrow colonial rule. The spiritual domain, on the other hand, was where the self-identity of the national culture, threatened by colonial dominance, was to be preserved. In the nationalist discourse, Chatterjee argues, the spiritual domain was considered to be the source of superiority of the East. "What was necessary," Chatterjee explains, "was to cultivate the material techniques of modern Western civilization while retaining and strengthening the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture." This material/spiritual dichotomy coalesced into a related dichotomy of the 'outer' and the 'inner.' The world or the material domain, where the colonized was humiliated and subjugated, reflected only the outer self of the colonized, so the nationalists argued. What was more important than this outer self was the inner, spiritual self which was to

⁵⁷⁸ Sarkar, Tanika, "The Hindu Wife and the Hindu Nation"

⁵⁷⁹ Chatterjee, Partha. "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women: The Contest in India." *American Ethnologist* 16.4 (1989): 622-33.

be kept free of the intrusion of the West⁵⁸⁰. The home, shielded from the outer, material world, was the locus of spirituality from which the West was to be kept out of for its polluting influence, and women were the embodiment of this inner domain of the spiritual untrammelled by the West. In the domain of the home, the 'nation' was autonomous, free of Western intervention and influences, and un-subjugated in its distinctive and superior spiritual culture.

Chatterjee's argument illuminates the process that eclipsed the Shakespeare educated Hindu wife from consideration because she is anterior to the evolving anticolonial nationalist project which made women the custodian of Eastern spirituality conceived in contradistinction to Western and westernized women of wealthy parvenu families as well as to coarse, vulgar lower class women of the indigenous society. In this chapter, I have attempted to recover the Shakespeare-educated bhadramahila as a site where male dominance and autonomy was articulated. Girish Ghose's selective appropriation of Shakespeare shows how the latter was used to fortify that domination. During the nationalist movement, the figure of the bhadramahila was recoded along the lines of a disavowal of Western influences. Using Ghosh's biography, I have shown that in an earlier phase of colonial encounter the contradictory pulls of Western education and Hindu way of life were reconciled by strategic uses of Shakespeare. Records of women's engagement with Shakespeare in colonial India are the hidden histories of India's encounter with the playwright. My attempt here has been to recover what is lost and to draw attention to the inscription of dissent inscribed in colonial patriarchal narratives of family reading of

⁵⁸⁰ Consider Gandhi's speech delivered in Poona in 1918, printed in the March 1918 issue of *Stree Darpan (A Mirror for Women)*: In order to rectify social inequalitieswe shall have to reimburse women with the purity, firmness, resolve and the spirit of self-sacrifice of Sita, Damyanti and Draupadi.....[T]hen today's women, pure as satis, would begin to command the same respect in Hindu society as was enjoyed by their ancient prototypes." [Quoted in Talwar quoted in Krishna Sen, "Lessons in Self-Fashioning" p. 181. In Gandhi's speech sati refers to its etymological sense of faithful wife, not self-immolating wife. In Hindu mythology, Sita, Damyanti and Draupadi were the bywords of wifely duties and self-sacrifice.

Shakespeare celebrating pliant women in the service of domesticity. How Nirad Chaudhuri's mother came to know Shakespeare stories or what exactly what lessons, if any, she derived from these stories we may not know for sure, but my exploration here has laid bare the cultural process by which many colonial women partook in the master text of empire.

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