

## COLLEGE ENGLISH IN INDIA: THE FIRST TEXTBOOK

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*By Michael Hancher*

IN HER GROUNDBREAKING BOOK *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989), Guari Viswanathan established that “the discipline of English came into its own” not in England but in India, as an instrument of cultural colonization: “As early as the 1820s, when the classical curriculum reigned supreme in England despite the strenuous efforts of some concerned critics to loosen its hold, English as the study of culture and not simply the study of language had already found a secure place in the British Indian curriculum” (2, 3). Pausing to summarize the English literary curriculum fostered by “government schools in midcentury India,” she lists the following poetical works, gleaned from a report reprinted for the House of Lords in 1853: “Richardson’s *Poetical Selections* (Goldsmith, Gray, Addison, Pope, and Shakespeare), Otway’s *Venice Preserved*, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, Pope’s *Iliad by Homer*, [and] Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (the first four books)” (54).<sup>1</sup> Although Viswanathan does not identify Richardson or his *Poetical Selections*, she is right to head the list with that textbook, which is mentioned in many other government reports of the period, and which was instrumental in establishing a classroom canon of British poetry in India before any such curriculum had been determined in Great Britain.

Richardson was David Lester Richardson (1801–1865), who from 1836 was professor of English literature and principal at Hindu College in Calcutta, a day school which enrolled elite Hindu students ranging in age from five to twenty-two (“The Hindu College”; Sengupta 26). *Poetical Selections* was the short title that government reports generally gave to his textbook, *Selections from the British Poets from the Time of Chaucer to the Present Day, With Biographical and Critical Notices*. Aside from advertising British (rather than merely English) poets, the title emphasized two features that in combination made the work distinctive, in Richardson’s opinion. He organized the book chronologically, not thematically (as most other readers and class books did), so as to display the “progress” of British poetry across time. Furthermore, he presented that progress not across a shelf of volumes, as other editors had done before him, but “IN ONE VOLUME” (as the title page announces), making the book a convenient academic introduction to the history of British poetry: “The present work is the first attempt to comprise in one volume an uninterrupted series of specimens *from Chaucer to the latest living poets*” (5; Richardson’s emphasis). The boast was valid: nothing like Richardson’s textbook had been published in Great Britain, let alone in India – or the United States. Richardson in effect invented the genre that would later be redefined by the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* and its many competitors.

Richardson was himself a “living poet” – so much so, that he included selections from his own poetry in his book. And he was rather a British poet than an English one, although he had spent many years in London, and his mother may have been English. His father, Captain David Thomas Richardson, was a Scots officer in the Bengal establishment of the East India Company. Skilled in Arabic and Persian, and at least since 1797 a subscriber and occasional contributor to *Asiatick Researches*, the leading scholarly journal of Oriental studies published in Bengal, Captain Richardson left Calcutta for London early in 1799, pleading uncertain health and intending a three-year sojourn.<sup>2</sup> On August 15, 1800, according to a notice in the *Scots Magazine*, he married “Miss Violet Oliver, daughter of William Oliver of Dinlaybyre, Esq.” (“Lists. Marriages” 575). The following year, on February 15, 1801, his son David Lester Richardson was baptized at St. Marylebone, Middlesex. The mother is identified by the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (which does not mention the Oliver marriage) as “his wife, Sarah, *née* Lester.”<sup>3</sup> A London historian has traced the birth to January 22, 1801, in London, and stated that it was illegitimate.<sup>4</sup> Captain Richardson evidently returned to Bengal as he had planned, where he served as the first commandant of the Baraset Cadet College, outside Calcutta, until the outbreak of the second Mahratta war in 1803 (Hodson 130–32). On September 23, 1804, he was promoted from major to lieutenant-colonel, and the following year he was listed among those who served as occasional examiners in Oriental studies at the recently founded College of Fort William (*Asiatic Annual Register* 126; Buchanan 238). He is said to have translated Oriental poetry into felicitous English verse (Kaye 3).<sup>5</sup> From 1805 until 1807 he was military secretary to Sir George Hilario Barlow, acting governor-general of India (Hodson 131). After retiring on September 29, 1808 (Dodwell and Miles 218–19), he set sail for London on the *Lord Nelson*, together with his wife and three children (not including David Lester), but the ship encountered a November hurricane off Mauritius, and was never seen again.<sup>6</sup>

Although David Lester Richardson likely knew little of his father in the seven years that their lives overlapped, mostly on opposite sides of the globe, he would wind up reenacting many of his professional roles and behaviors. Both men were officers in the Bengal infantry; both were highly literate; both returned from Calcutta to London to repair their health; both were teachers, examiners, and principals of educational institutions in India; both even served briefly as personal aides to the governor-general of India. Both men also maintained disreputable domestic arrangements.<sup>7</sup> The son was a more prolific author than the father, and was active as an editor as well. But the most striking difference between them was the difference in their professional literacies. The father was an Orientalist of the old school, skilled in Persian (which had adapted Arabic script) and Sanskrit. The son, a professor of English, was a close ally of the so-called “Anglicists,” particularly Thomas Babington Macaulay and Lord William Bentinck, the governor-general, who sought to displace those classical languages from both the advanced curriculum and the administrative bureaucracy of British India, in favor of English. Richardson’s *Selections from the British Poets* was a significant part of that fateful project.

After his father disappeared at sea Richardson came under the care of an uncle, J. D. Sherwood, a colonel in the Bengal Artillery, who eventually helped him secure a cadetship in Bengal, in 1819.<sup>8</sup> The orphan evidently received a substantial inheritance.<sup>9</sup> When he came to fill out his cadet application form, Richardson noted he had been educated by “Mr. Watts of Putney”; to the question “Of what nature has your education been?” he replied “Classical and Mathematical.”<sup>10</sup> Richardson’s teacher, William Mosley Watts, who had been educated



Figure 34. Portrait frontispiece to David Lester Richardson, *Sonnets and Other Poems, Partly Written in India* (London: Jones, 1827).

at Christ's Hospital, was the elder brother of the journalist and poet Alaric Alexander Watts. In an autobiographical note Alaric mentions William and his "academy . . . at Putney," but sheds no light on its curriculum.<sup>11</sup>

Soon after he arrived in Bengal, Richardson began publishing poetry in the *Calcutta Journal*. In 1821 he married Marian Scott, the daughter of a colonel in the Bengal Army (Sanial, "Captain" 71); the next year he was the author of a slight volume of *Miscellaneous Poems*. In 1824 he returned to London on medical leave, and was still there in 1825, when the firm of T. and G. Underwood published his *Sonnets and Other Poems*. This book was remarkable in two respects. It somehow prompted reviews in scores of newspapers and journals, which Richardson assiduously excerpted and advertised ("Just published"). It also was reprinted in 1827 as one of a series of handsomely printed miniature books of literary classics merchandised by the enterprising firm of Jones and Co. as a portable library, complete with a folding wooden case shaped like the facade of a Greek temple.<sup>12</sup> Richardson was the sole living poet granted admission to this portable canon, along with the likes of Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Pope, and Gray. For both vain distinctions, as well as for casting or indulging aspersions on *Blackwood's Magazine*, Richardson was ridiculed by John Wilson, the editor of *Blackwood's* (Wilson, "Sonnets" 356–57; Wilson, "Noctes" 695). An engraved portrait of the author as a young man faces the book's engraved title page (Figure 34).

In 1827 Richardson used his financial resources to advance his journalistic career by becoming the founder, proprietor, and co-editor (with the novelist James Augustus St. John) of the *London Weekly Review*, for which he secured articles and poems by such literary lights

as William Hazlitt, John Bowring, Thomas Roscoe, David Moir, and Thomas Pringle (Kaye 3; Wu 1: li). Having unwisely declined to sell a half-share in this venture to John Murray, he suffered financial reverses and lost control of the journal to Henry Colburn (Kaye 3–4). Pressed for money, Richardson returned (after some delays) to his assignment in India, where he quickly retired on a medical pension, and devoted himself to editing the *Calcutta Literary Gazette* (1830–35), the *Calcutta Magazine and Monthly Register* (1830–33), the *Calcutta Quarterly Magazine and Review* (1833), and the *Bengal Annual* (1830–36).<sup>13</sup> He dedicated the first volume of the *Annual* to Lady William Bentinck, wife of the governor-general, and on February 24, 1835, he was appointed an aide-de-camp to her husband (“Register” 237\*). Less than two weeks later, on March 7, Lord Bentinck issued a controversial resolution decreeing that certain funds should be diverted from the encouragement of Indian scholarship in Oriental languages (Arabic and Sanscrit) and devoted instead to the study of the English language and English literature (Zastoupil 194–96). That resolution, which had been drafted by Thomas Babington Macaulay, then the law member of the Supreme Council of India, put into practice many of the recommendations that Macaulay had advanced in an internal memorandum, or “minute,” on Indian education. (Macaulay’s minute, never published by him, has become his main claim to fame or infamy, guaranteeing him a toehold in the English literary canon: the merest trace, unauthorized if indeed characteristic, of his abundant and once enormously popular career as a Victorian author.<sup>14</sup>) For Macaulay in that minute, economic analysis argued against subsidizing the languages of the past and in favor of English, the language of modernity: “English is better worth knowing than Sanscrit or Arabic” (Zastoupil 171). More emphatically, “the literature now extant in that language, is of greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together” (166).<sup>15</sup> Bentinck’s resolution in favor of English was almost his last official act as governor-general of India; he left Calcutta for England on March 20, 1835, in declining health.

Richardson, no doubt aware that his appointment as Bentinck’s aide-de-camp would be of short duration, applied to Macaulay for help in securing appointment as principal of the Hindu College. John Tytler, the retiring principal, was a staunch Orientalist; he had recently protested against Anglicist initiatives in a long letter to Macaulay, which Macaulay had roundly repudiated (“I deny every one of your premises without exception”<sup>16</sup>). Macaulay might well look to replace Tytler at the Hindu College with someone more sympathetic to his cause. His reply to Richardson’s request was cautious: not the Committee of Public Instruction, over which Macaulay presided, but rather the managers of the college would make the appointment; “we have only a veto.” But he was encouraging nonetheless: “I feel that we have no chance of obtaining the services of any person whose services would be equally valuable with yours; and shall assuredly give you all the support in my power” (Macaulay, *Letters* 3: 126 [Feb. 7, 1835]). In the end Macaulay prevailed, and Richardson secured the appointment.<sup>17</sup> Figure 35, a lithograph by Colesworthey Grant, shows Richardson in a professional pose a few years after he secured the appointment.

In December 1836, when the Hindu College was inspected by the Committee on Public Instruction, Macaulay took it upon himself to examine the twenty-one students in the “first” (senior) class, which was taught by Richardson. Having set “a very simple passage from Swift, and . . . another, much more complicated and artificial, from Cowley’s dialogue on Oliver Cromwell,” as well as an obscure passage from Shakespeare’s *King John*, and “passages of considerable difficulty from Lord Bacon’s Essays,” he pronounced himself generally





Figure 35. “D. L. Richardson, Author of ‘Literary Leaves,’ ‘Ocean Sketches,’ &c.” Lithograph, 1839. Reproduced in Colesworthy Grant, *Lithographic Sketches of the Public Characters of Calcutta* (Calcutta: Thacker, n.d. [c. 1850]), np.

satisfied. “They all read with ease, and most of them with great intelligence,” and they were “well informed” about literature. Unfortunately, they were not so well schooled in British history. For example,

The young lad Rajnarain Dutt, appeared to be well read in English Poetry, and answered questions about Shakespear [sic] and Pope better than any of the others, but seemed to have paid little attention to other subjects. Indeed I should be inclined to say that a disproportionate degree of attention has been bestowed on this branch of study by almost all the students. They all had by heart the names of all the dramatists of the time of Elizabeth and James the first, dramatists of whose works they in all probability will never see a copy; Marlow [sic], Ford, Massinger, Decker [sic], and so on. But few of them knew that James the second was deposed. I have no doubt that Captain Richardson, who seems most zealous and assiduous in the discharge of his duty, will direct their attention hereafter to the graver as well as to the lighter parts of English literature.<sup>18</sup>

Impressed by the importance of this point, Macaulay returned to it in a later paragraph: “I have duly communicated to Captain Richardson the above, and doubt not he will avail himself of the judicious suggestions which it contains.” At this time Macaulay was already beginning to imagine his own *History of England*, in which the deposition of James II would prove the pivotal moment.<sup>19</sup>

Shortly after he assumed his duties at Hindu College, Richardson asked the Committee on Public Instruction to provide a suitable class book, and he was instead encouraged to prepare one himself, with a guarantee from the committee to purchase a thousand copies for distribution to the government schools.<sup>20</sup> An additional thousand copies were subscribed for by the School-Book Society of Calcutta, which sold the book across India. The committee publicized and justified these arrangements in its annual report for 1835:

The first Lectureship which we shall always wish to see established, as the studies of the youths in our institutions become more advanced, is one on “English Composition and Literature.” The object of this is not merely to enable the young men in the senior classes to acquire a good style of English Composition, but also to give them a general acquaintance, before they leave college, with the extent and nature of the existing English Literature. We expect by these means to encrease their taste for reading, at the same time that we enable them to select proper subjects for study in after-life. In order to serve as a Class Book for these Lectures, we have induced the School Book Society, by offering to take half the impression, to undertake the publication of a Book of Selections from the English Poets, from Chaucer downwards, in the order of their dates, and we shall shortly commence the preparation of a corresponding volume in prose.<sup>21</sup>

Some printed resources were already being used in the classroom, though relatively meager ones. Around 1832 J. E. D. Bethune had supervised the preparation of several “Poetical Readers,” which were often reprinted by the Calcutta School Book Society (*Ninth Report* 7).<sup>22</sup> But now that English was the watchword, something more substantial was needed for collegiate literary instruction.

*Selections from the British Poets* appeared in 1840: a stout royal octavo volume, 1040 pages long, mostly printed in double columns. Figure 36 shows the title page. The main sequence provided extensive samples from the poets from Chaucer to Tennyson. These were introduced by Richardson’s biographical and critical commentaries, gathered near the front of the book. (Several direct references and occasional turns of phrase show that in preparing

**SELECTIONS**  
FROM THE  
**BRITISH POETS**

FROM THE TIME OF  
**CHAUCER TO THE PRESENT DAY**

WITH  
**BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICES**

BY  
**DAVID LESTER RICHARDSON**

PRINCIPAL OF THE HINDU COLLEGE.

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It appeareth that Poetry serveth and conferreth to magnanimity, morality and delectation.

*Lord Bacon.*

Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,  
Who gave us nobler hopes and nobler cares,  
The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs  
Of truth and pure delight in endless lays.

*Wordsworth.*

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PUBLISHED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

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IN ONE VOLUME.

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**CALCUTTA:**

PRINTED AT THE BAPTIST MISSION PRESS, CIRCULAR ROAD.

**MDCCCXL**

Figure 36. Title page, *Selections from the British Poets*, ed. David Lester Richardson (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1840). Courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Presented to  
 The Right Honble T B Macaulay  
 by the  
 General Committee of Public Instruction  
 Bengal  
 Calcutta }  
 1<sup>st</sup> March 1841 }

Figure 37. Inscription on fly leaf of T. B. Macaulay's copy of Richardson's *Selections*. Courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

these commentaries Richardson drew on Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* – probably as recycled in Alexander Chalmers's *Works of the English Poets* – and Thomas Campbell's introductions to his *Specimens of the British Poets*.) A series of appendices added a variety of other works.

Following Richardson's preface and commentaries the columns are numbered, not the pages. A long section, interpolated between columns 53 and 54, carries the text of several Shakespearian plays – evidently an afterthought. (The interpolated columns are numbered with superscripts; for example, 53<sup>24</sup>, 53<sup>209</sup>. Evidently this unusual system was a challenge for the typesetters: two columns are numbered 53, and number 56 is skipped.) The book was printed on paper imported from Europe and also on paper of lesser quality made in Serampore, outside of Calcutta; these different issues were sold for nine and seven rupees respectively (prices slightly reduced later) – that is, something more or less than fifteen shillings sterling. A few copies were bound as two volumes; most were bound as one. Two thousand copies were printed; half of these were paid for in 1841 by the Committee on Public Instruction; the other half were sold by the School-Book Society over the course of almost two decades (1840 until 1858) – sometimes more than fifty copies a year, sometimes fewer.<sup>23</sup> The book is scarce outside of India: there is a copy in the British Library, and another in the Houghton Library at Harvard. The latter is inscribed, "Presented to | The Right Honble T B Macaulay | by the | General Committee of Public Instruction | Bengal | Calcutta | 1st March 1841" (Figure 37). It is unclear how it found its way to Harvard.

Macaulay himself had undertaken to prepare a companion volume, devoted to selections from British prose writers; but he had only sketched an outline before he left India for London in 1838. The job was then delegated to another member of the committee, Dr. John Grant of the Bengal Medical Service (Richardson, *Selections* 14–15), but it was never completed.<sup>24</sup>

In 1865, the last year of his life, Richardson wrote a series of articles, titled "Reminiscences of Lord Macaulay's Indian Career," for the *Court Circular*, a weekly journal



that he was then editing in London. These informative articles have not been noticed by Macaulay's biographers or editors. They are particularly revealing as regards the significant role that Macaulay played in helping to prepare the two textbooks. About the prose volume Richardson recalled, "I often urged him to go on with his share of the undertaking, and in a letter now before me he says: – 'I have done nothing or next to nothing with the "Prose Selections." But I suppose that I must do something for Trevelyan gives me no peace.'"<sup>25</sup> Charles Edward Trevelyan, Macaulay's brother-in-law, was Macaulay's chief Anglicist ally on the Committee of Public Instruction. In a later letter to Richardson, Macaulay makes it clear that the prose project was Trevelyan's idea: "I am too busy to think much about Trevelyan's plan for having a volume of prose extracts." Richardson generously concluded, "Who can doubt that if the 'Prose Selections' had been completed by the hand of Macaulay it would have been by far the noblest work of the kind ever yet produced."

As regards his own *Poetical Selections* Richardson shows that Macaulay was liberal with advice. After apologizing for his inability to work on the prose volume, Macaulay sharply distinguished the two projects: "But I can tell you, you are most certainly mistaken in thinking that the Elegant Extracts in verse are not to be had separately. I have, myself, bought them separately, and I believe that ten copies of the Verse are sold in England for one of the Prose." Here Macaulay probably refers to the popular companion volumes edited by Vicesimus Knox, *Elegant Extracts; or, Useful and Entertaining Pieces of Poetry*, and *Elegant Extracts; or, Useful and Entertaining Passages in Prose*, anthologies that had reached their eleventh edition in London in 1824.

In his preface to *Selections* Richardson complained that "Dr. Knox's well-known work, the '*Elegant Extracts*,' contains a vast quantity of verse, but it is chaotic and fragmental; and the worthy compiler was too much indulgent to bad writers" (5). Like most such books on the market, Knox's was broadly topical and thematic, a kind of pedagogic commonplace book. Richardson stakes out new ground for the one-volume genre by organizing his material chronologically, along the lines of Thomas Campbell's seven-volume collection, *Specimens of the British Poets* (1819), which he cites.<sup>26</sup> However, his claims for the merits of the chronological approach are broad and vague. "[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 history of its birth and progress" (6). "[T]he chronological arrangement of the memoirs and specimens will assist [the student] to give unity and completeness to the knowledge he may . . . acquire" by reading in the textbook beyond the limits of classroom assignments (19). Richardson hardly makes use of period concepts, which were mostly over the horizon. There was as yet no "Renaissance"; and no "Romanticism," either; although Richardson does mention (with some deprecation) "the Lake poets" and "the Lake school." The Restoration is mentioned only as a political event. The most that Richardson claims is that different periods have different fashions: so William Browne's eclogues are different from Pope's (xx); Rogers and Crabbe "are the links between what is now called the Lake School, and the poetry of the preceding period" (ci). Nothing more robust or Procrustean than that. And he offers no continuous narrative, rather taking up each author one after the other. For Richardson chronology is more a convenience than an informing context, a sequence rather than a shape.

After weighing the relative appeal of poetic and prose *Elegant Extracts*, Macaulay proposed that he and Richardson should meet at breakfast to discuss the project further; later he provided Richardson with various "notes" about it. For example: "I think [Abraham] Cowley's Ode to the Royal Society would be the best specimen of his lyric manner that

we could give. It is not one of the Pindariques, but it differs from them only in name. Of course, we have his ‘Chronicle.’ If not, it ought to be added.” Both of these poems were duly included (columns 354 and 349, respectively). The “Ode to the Royal Society,” a celebration of the rise of modern science, might be expected to appeal to the empirical Macaulay; indeed, he later published praise of its “lines weighty with thought and resplendent with wit” (Macaulay, *History* 1: 408). The fickle eroticism of Cowley’s “Chronicle” caters to a more surprising taste; but Macaulay shared that taste with Dr. Johnson, who had singled out the poem for its “gaiety of fancy . . . facility of expression . . . varied similitude, [and] succession of images” (Chalmers 7: 34). One of Macaulay’s first critical essays had paired Cowley with Milton (“Conversation”), and it is no surprise that he followed his light recommendation to Richardson concerning Cowley with an obdurate one concerning *Paradise Lost*: “I am quite for printing the first four books of Milton without omissions.” Which is indeed what Richardson did – thereby installing those books in the Indian curriculum.

Richardson, a prolific sonneteer, could not have taken much pleasure in Macaulay’s stringent advice about sonnets; he also redacts the text of Macaulay’s remarks at an interesting point:

I have none of ——’s Sonnets, and from what I know of his verses, I do not much regret the want of them. I am no great admirer of English Sonnets, though there are some very good ones. But our language is not sufficiently rich in rhymes to be subjected to rules so strict as those of the legitimate Sonnet. You see accordingly how few writers have observed those rules. I am exceedingly fond of many Italian and of some Spanish Sonnets. The Southern languages of Europe are so happily formed for the purpose of rhyming that a sonnet in those languages flows as smoothly, and has as little the air of effort, as Prior’s easiest octosyllabic couplets.

The textbook that Richardson and Macaulay eventually assembled was ambitious in its reach and depth. In the preface, despite his disdain for Knox’s slack standards, Richardson acknowledges that “intrinsic merit” was not the only criterion: historical representativeness was also relevant. (That is why he included Addison’s *Cato*: “an example of the Frenchified-English school of dramatic declamation” [5; see also 7].) Opening with the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, the book provided a taste of Gower before sampling Surrey, Wyatt, Sackville, Gascoigne, Harrington, and Sidney. Spenser is the first poet after Chaucer to be represented extensively: twenty-two columns of print excerpted from the first book of *The Fairie Queene*. Then Shakespeare, starting with sixteen of his sonnets, including “O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem” but omitting all others that invite a homoerotic interpretation. (In his essay on Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*, published five years earlier, Richards had constructed historical differences of expression to deflect such a “disagreeable” reading (Richardson, “On Shakespeare’s Sonnets” 369).

Then, after excerpts from “The Passionate Pilgrim,” and another from “The Rape of Lucrece,” some major plays entire (*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *A Midsummer-night’s Dream*), plus a Falstaffian excerpt from *I Henry IV*. A few poems by the likes of Richard Barnfield, Drayton, and Donne (“Death, be not proud”) leaven other scripts for the stage: Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Jonson’s *Volpone*, and Massinger’s *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (mysteriously deprived of its title). A half dozen other lyric poets, including Herrick, and then a large portion of Milton, including not only the first four books of *Paradise Lost* (as Macaulay had stipulated) but also “L’Allegro,” “Il Penseroso,”

“Lycidas,” *Comus*, and several sonnets. Marvell (“Bermudas” and “The Garden”) leads to an anodyne taste of Rochester (“Love and Life”) and a large dose of Butler’s *Hudibras*. Then all of Otway’s *Venice Preserved*, and (after several other poets) much of Dryden, including *All for Love*. Excerpts from Sackville, Phillips, and Parnell lead on to yet another verse drama, Nicholas Rowe’s *The Fair Penitent*. Selections from Addison’s verse precede all of his *Cato*; other poets from early in the eighteenth century include Somerville, West, Savage, and generous portions of Pope (including all of the “Essay on Criticism” and “The Rape of the Lock”). Large extracts from Thomson’s *The Seasons* lead on through substantial samples of Phillips, Collins, Dyer, Shenstone, Churchill, Young, Akenside, and Chatterton, to Gray, including the “Elegy.” Then relatively brief portions of Collins, Goldsmith (including “The Deserted Village”), John Armstrong, Johnson (“London” and “The Vanity of Human Wishes”), Richard Glover, John Logan, William Julius Mickle, Thomas Warton, Thomas Blacklock, Sir William Jones (the Orientalist), Robert Burns, John Bampfylde, William Mason, Joseph Warton, William Cowper (large extracts from *The Task*), Erasmus Darwin, James Beattie, and Anna Seward – the first woman.

Byron claims ninety-five columns in this textbook – a good deal more space than Pope (sixty-one columns); but Keats is largely restricted to “The Eve of St. Agnes” (also a few sonnets, but no odes). Shelley, too, is sparsely represented, though “Ozymandias” is there; both poets are swamped by large selections from Scott. Crabbe leads to Coleridge (mostly “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”), followed by several poems by Mrs. Hemans, Samuel Rogers, William Lisle Bowles, and Joanna Baillie.

Wordsworth, who still had ten years left to live, was one of Richardson’s favorite poets – “the poet’s poet” (Richardson, *Literary Leaves* 2: 288) — and much of his characteristic work is here: “Hart-leap Well,” “Lines to the River Wye” (that is, “Tintern Abbey”), “Elegiac Stanzas,” “Lucy,” “Scorn not the Sonnet,” “The world is too much with us,” “Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1803,” and “Milton! Thou shouldst be living at this hour.” (Nothing from *The Prelude*, of course, which would not appear in print until a decade later.) James Montgomery, Robert Southey, Thomas Campbell, Thomas Moore, Leigh Hunt, Allan Cunningham, Caroline Bowles, Bernard Barton, John Wilson, Henry H. Milman, Thomas Hood, Bryan Waller Procter, George Croly, Mrs. Maclean (Letitia Elizabeth Landon), and Alfred Tennyson all bring the student closer to the present. “Date of birth uncertain,” Richardson remarked about Tennyson (column 1408). The test of time could not have aided Richardson’s shrewd choice of “Mariana,” which had been published only ten years before the *Selections* saw print. (That to reprint the moderns in this way was to violate copyright did not dawn upon Richardson until several years later, when plans for a London edition were scuttled because of copyright infringement.<sup>27</sup>) Generally Richardson’s taste for Romantic and post-Romantic poetry was in advance of Macaulay’s more conservative taste. “Pre-Romantic” is the assessment of William Thomas, the editor of Macaulay’s *Journals*, who notes that Macaulay “loved Cowper, Scott, and Crabbe, but thought Wordsworth maundering and egotistical” (1: xviii). Both tastes, fashionable and old-fashioned, were catered to in the *Selections*.

A section follows devoted to “Additional Miscellaneous Specimens of Our Early English Poets,” which looks like an afterthought repairing some oversights (for example, Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” matched by Raleigh’s “The Nymph’s Reply”). Another supplement gives “Old English Ballads,” starting with “Chevy Chace.” “Miscellaneous Scottish Songs, Ancient and Modern,” are followed by “Miscellaneous

Poems of the Nineteenth Century” – terrain already colonized in the main section. Here a place was found for “The Armada,” by T. B. Macaulay. A large section near the end provides “British-Indian Poetry (Specimens of British Poets Once or Still Resident in the East Indies)” – including nine columns by D. L. Richardson. William Cullen Bryant is the most conspicuous name among the “Specimens of American Poetry.” The penultimate section offers “Translations from the Greek, Latin, Italian, German and French, &c.,” and an appropriately brief section (two pages) offers a selection of “Epigrams.” A terse glossary of hard words follows – mostly words obsolete in form or meaning; then an index of “Subjects” (poem titles, actually); and, at the end, an index of authors.

The book is as daunting as any *Norton Anthology*, and yet it similarly provides the makings of a rewarding syllabus: even today an undergraduate could benefit from studying many of these poetical works. But it was over-engineered for its purpose, and not all of it proved useful in the classroom. The many comprehensive reports published by the Committee on Public Instruction show that Richardson’s book supported a much narrower curriculum than he offered. At one school or another the following might figure on the actual syllabus: the excerpts from Spenser; the selected plays by Shakespeare; one or more of the first four books provided from *Paradise Lost*, *Comus*, and several Miltonic sonnets (but no “L’Allegro” nor “Il Penseroso”); Dryden, Prior, Gay, Swift, Pope (especially “Essay on Criticism”), Addison’s *Cato*, Young, Thomson, Johnson, Gray, Akenside, Collins, Goldsmith, Cowper, Beattie, James Montgomery, Campbell, Wordsworth, and Byron (*Childe Harold*, book 3).<sup>28</sup> The names most often repeated were Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Gray, Cowper, and Wordsworth. The plays by Beaumont and Fletcher, Jonson, Massinger, Otway, and Rowe got little if any attention. No sign of Chaucer, Coleridge, Keats, Scott, nor Mrs. Hemans.

Some attention was paid in the classroom to the potted biographies and critical assessments with which Richardson introduced his selections. Several scholarship questions that were set at the Elphinstone Institution in Bombay in 1851 turned on Richardsonian dicta. “Mr. Richardson contrasts the styles of Campbell and Wordsworth; give the substance in language of your own” (*Report of the Board of Education* 126; see also 116, 123). Apparently less attention was paid to the general preface, which constructed an apology for poetry along lines that would have been familiar to both Sidney and Shelley.<sup>29</sup> Richardson’s application of such an apology to the education of Hindu students was somewhat less familiar. Identifying “a want of moral elevation” (his emphasis) as their chief weakness, Richardson prescribes poetry as a cure. “Let Milton and Shakespeare instruct the young natives of India how to appreciate the beauty which God has lavished upon his creation. He who is so taught has within his reach those sources of pure and serene delight that are wholly inexhaustible” (16).

Besides, they will learn English in the process. “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 and pure and noble thoughts, but to acquire a thorough knowledge of the language in which the poetry is embodied” (16). The challenge was considerable. “It is . . . advisable . . . to make the young student struggle as hard as he can to discover the purport of what he reads, and even to let a difficult sentence pass through a whole class, that every boy may have his chance of supplying an accurate explanation” (17). Richardson’s method – translation as close reading, and vice versa – chimes with the contemporary pedagogic vision of Dr. Thomas Arnold, master of Rugby (and Matthew

Arnold's father), which he expressed in a roughly contemporary letter, dated September 23, 1836:

[W]hat a treat it must be to teach Shakespeare to a good class of young Greeks in regenerate Athens; to dwell upon him line by line, and word by word, in the way that nothing but a translation lesson ever will enable one to do; and so to get all his pictures and thoughts leisurely into one's mind, till I verily think one would after a time almost give out light in the dark, after having been steeped as it were in such an atmosphere of brilliance. And how could this ever be done without having the process of construing, as the grosser medium through which alone all the beauty can be transmitted, because else we travel too fast, and more than half of it escapes us? (Stanley 2: 49)<sup>30</sup>

Easier said than done. R. T. Reid, who in 1850 was acting professor of history and general literature at Elphinstone College, was frank about the challenges that he and his students faced as they worked their way through the columns of Richardson's book (which provided little annotation):

[I]t may be well to draw attention here to the difficulties which foreigners, especially Asiatics, encounter in this study, such as the intimate connexion of the subject-matter with local customs, traditions, and superstitions – all requiring explanation from the tutor; and the frequent allusions to classical literature, opening up the entire subject of ancient history, geography, and mythology. Take for instance the following phrases and words which occur in one ode ["Ode to Fear"] of Collins, – "Ravens brood of Fate; Hybla's dews; the incestuous queen; the wretch of Thebes; haunted cell; hallowed eve; ghosts; goblins;" or . . . from [Gray's] *Elegy*, – "curfew; hamlet; blazing hearth; heraldry; aisle and fretted vault; anthem; village Hampden," &c. &c.<sup>31</sup>

Given such alien difficulties, it was not uncommon for the student to skip minute particulars and rehearse broad generalities. So, to an examination question that Reid posed, "Briefly characterize the genius and style of those English poets of whose works you have read portions during the term," a prize-winning student, Vshwanatii Narayan, responded in this vein: "The portions that I have read of Prior and Gay show an easy style, not far flying into the regions of fancy, and in some places not far above the dead level of mediocrity. The pieces are indeed pleasing and attractive; and though the subjects are common, yet in their treatment exhibit a knowledge of the human feelings" (208–09). And so on. Not that all replies were so vague; in 1848 a scholarship student at Hindu College explored alternative meanings of a phrase in *The Tempest* with an Empsonian ingenuity (*Scholarship Examinations of the Hindu* etc. [21]). Visiting a school at Ghazeeapore in 1844, Henry Carre Tucker reported that the students in the first class "understand most of the allusions in the first book of *Paradise Lost*"; but he also observed:

Little use is made of the Library, none of the boys being able to read with sufficient facility. Much money is wasted in large expensive class books, such as Richardson's *Poets*, *Hume*, *Russell* &c. &c. of which, whilst but an insignificant portion is read, the rest is thumbed and destroyed. For such mere beginners, the class books ought to be small, light volumes, or stitched parts of larger books, with which a whole class might be supplied at the cost of one of these huge volumes, which not one boy in a hundred gets half through.<sup>32</sup>



If Richardson's book was more a paperweight than a beacon, he gave his own students a quick route to the text, declaiming poetry for them in a way that held their attention, elucidated meaning, enhanced his popularity, and, it is said, commanded Macaulay's respect. Macaulay's often-quoted compliment to Richardson, even if apocryphal, captures the poetic enthusiasm that Richardson embodied and inspired in many: "If I were to forget everything of India, I could never forget your reading of Shakespeare" (Sanial, "Captain" 76) – a remark that incidentally expresses Macaulay's complete indifference to Indian culture.

In 1848 Richardson collected many of his essays and some of his poems in a book called *Literary Chit-Chat*, published in Calcutta by P. S. D'Rozario and Co., and in London by J. Madden, a firm that specialized in Oriental titles. It opened with a series of literary dialogues in a style that looked back to Dryden and forward to Oscar Wilde, the first of which was devoted to a discussion of "Macaulay and the Poets." Speaker "H." in this dialogue celebrated Macaulay's critical powers, finding his magazine reviews to be "generally original papers of great power," which rank "amongst the very finest compositions of that kind in our language." Speaker "A.," however, shared the views of a friend who found him to be "a shallow fellow," and he ventured his own hostile opinion:

To me he appears flippant, dogmatical, laboured – though he is not without a showy cleverness. His style is never easy and natural. He has not the art to hide his art. It is not so difficult to construct the short, snappish, independent French sentences of which he is so fond, and which are agreeable enough to vulgar readers, because they move lightly, and are unencumbered with a weight of thought. To use an illustration of Coleridge's, they have only the same connexion with each other that marbles have in a bag. (2)

This passage was brisk enough to be quoted in a review essay about Richardson that was published in the *Calcutta Review* (John Grant 92). Someone must have seen it there and mentioned it to Macaulay; nine years later he tried to track it down, going to the library of the British Museum specifically for the purpose – as his journal reports:

Saturday – October 10 [1857]

Forced to go to the Museum – looked for D. L. Richardson's attack on me, but could not find it. Must consult the *Calcutta Review* which unfortunately is not in the Museum. Sitting of two hours or so. (Macaulay, *Journals* 5: 86)

Ten days later he was still in search of the damaging item, this time using the library of the Athenaeum Club:

Athenaeum – *Calcutta Review*. Could not find such evidence of Richardson's unhandsome conduct to me as would justify me in cutting him. I therefore answered his letter civilly. I ought now to be courteous. Haughtiness would now be imputed to a feeling of which I have not the smallest portion. People would think that I was giving myself airs because I had been a Lord. (5: 89)<sup>33</sup>

Macaulay's polite response to Richardson has not survived. However, in a footnote to his "Reminiscences," Richardson draws attention to another letter, friendly and nostalgic, that Macaulay sent him the following year:

I cannot resist the temptation of stating that, more than twenty years after my appointment as Principal of the Hindoo College, Macaulay, then in London, had not forgotten the circumstances of my official connection with him in India; and in a letter dated Holly Lodge, Kensington, Oct. 7, 1858, he writes: – "I well remember that I and my colleagues of the Board of Education thought ourselves fortunate in being able to secure your services in the capacity of Principal of the Hindoo College, and of Editor of a Volume of Extracts from the English Poets. I well remember, also, that, a short time before my departure from India, I examined a class which had been under your care, and that I was much gratified by the proficiency which your pupils had made in European knowledge."

Macaulay left India for England on January 21, 1838 (*Letters* 3: 243n1). Maybe, as this letter suggests, he had examined Richardson's pupils for a second time shortly before his departure, and had found them to be better informed than the ones he had examined two years earlier. Or maybe he forgot just when he had made his only visit. Evidently he did forget that Richardson edited *British Poets*, not "English Poets." In any case Richardson was pleased to record, not long before his own death, that Lord Macaulay had advanced his pedagogic career and had guided his preparation of the first college textbook of British poetry.

*University of Minnesota*

## NOTES

1. Viswanathan cites "Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, 1852–53*, Appendix N, 32:491–572" – that is, *Sessional Papers* 29. Appendix N reprinted *General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1843–44*.
2. Stewart 1: 26. Abu Taleb remarks that Richardson "perfectly understands both the Persian and the Hindoostani languages" (I: 23). Richardson's essay in anthropology, "An Account of the Bazeegurs, A Sect Commonly Denominated Nuts," which proposed linguistic connections between an Indian tribe and European gypsies, appeared in *Asiatick Researches* 7, Calcutta (1801): 457–85, and London (1803): 451–79 (Richardson, "An Account").
3. Boulger. Other recent considerations of Richardson are provided by Ghosh and by Gibson. Ní Fhlathúin included several of his poems in *The Poetry of British India, 1780–1905*.
4. Smith; see also Everts 145–46. Thanks are due to Jill Cramphorn, Hon Secretary, The Clapham Society, London, for information about Smith's research.
5. This unsigned article is attributed to Kaye by Laurie (635).
6. "Lieutenant-Colonel T. D. [sic] Richardson, his wife and three children" were among those lost in the presumed foundering of the *Lord Nelson* at sea (Taylor 77, citing passenger information published in the *Madras Courier* Oct. 19, 1808).
7. "[T]here is a lady in the case, and delicacy commands silence. Captain Richardson has a wife and family resident in England; he has, or lately had, a young widow living in his house with him, whose appearance in his society at the college occasioned such scandal, that, at the suggestion of friends, he was removed from one department to another." *Bombay Times*, quoted in "Captain Richardson" 286.
8. Das Gupta 756. Sherwood was acting commandant of the Bengal Artillery at the time (Stubbs 239).

9. At one point Sherwood is said to have advised Richardson against a return visit to England from India: "You are the richest Ensign in India; if you go home, you will return a beggar" (Kaye 3). Kaye remarks that "his patrimony . . . was far from being inconsiderable."
10. Ghosh 15n5, citing Entry Papers in the Asian and African Studies Archives, British Library, L/MIL9/135 431–34.
11. Entry for Alaric Alexander Watts in *Men of the Time* – which Alaric himself tacitly edited (770). For William Watts's dates see Whellan 165.
12. Spielmann 84–86, 92. Two copies of the set and case are in the British Library. The Richardson volume was a late supplement to the series.
13. For accounts of the first three see Chanda 96–99, 124–25, 159.
14. Greenblatt 6: 1582–87. The other surviving Macaulay item in the *Norton Anthology* is his review of Southey's *Colloquies* (6: 1640–42).
15. Macaulay's notorious "Minute on Indian Education" hinges on a doubtful matter of statutory construction, which I discuss in "Reading and Writing the Law."
16. Macaulay, *Letters* 3: 122 (Jan. 28, 1835). For Tytler's letter and also Macaulay's see Sirkin 421–27.
17. The date or dates of Richardson's appointment or appointments are unclear. Annotating Macaulay's letter, Pinney states that Richardson "was appointed Professor of English Literature at the Hindu College in Calcutta, July 1835, and Principal of the College, 1839" (3: 126n2). Sanial reported that Richardson was appointed "Principal-Professor" as of January 1836, "in the place of Dr. Tytler, resigned" (Sanial, "Captain" 73). In a later article Sanial restated the matter and also stated Macaulay's motive: "In 1835 the principalship of the College fell vacant by the resignation of Dr. Tytler, and Mr. Macaulay took in Captain D. L. Richardson to give his subject of advocacy [i.e., English education] a fair trial" (Sanial, "Macaulay" 123: 479). In first printing Macaulay's letter to him, Richardson himself recalled that it was the "Principalship" that "was then open to competition" ("Reminiscences" 32).
18. *Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal, for the Year 1836* 68–69; quoted by Sanial, "Macaulay" 480. This section of the *Report* is specifically attributed to "Your President" – that is, Macaulay, the president of the committee.
19. The fate of James II had engaged Macaulay's attention in India as he prepared his review of James Mackintosh's *History of the Revolution in England in 1688*, for the *Edinburgh Review*. By the end of 1835 Macaulay was projecting "some great historical work" of his own – which would cover much the same ground (*Letters* 3: 158 [Dec. 30, 1835]); and by Nov. 5, 1841, he had begun work on his *History of England* (4: 15).
20. Writing as the book was in production, Kaye pronounced it "the most complete work of the kind that has ever emanated from the press" (5).
21. *Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal, for the Year 1835* 4–5. The May 1837 issue of the *Metropolitan Magazine* (London) reported that "Mr. David Lester Richardson, who has lately been appointed Professor of English Literature in the Hindu College of Calcutta, is busily engaged in preparing for the press, a volume of Selections, to consist of one thousand octavo pages, from pure English poetry, beginning with Chaucer, and coming down to the present time" ("Literary News" 19).
22. The first volume included "miscellaneous pieces"; the second, John Gay's *Fables*. Twelve thousand copies (counting all four numbers) had been printed by 1839 (*Twelfth Report* 37), but none are held by Western libraries. Years later John Murdoch criticized the weaknesses of the series in his *Report* (12–14). For the early history of the Calcutta School-Book Society see Basak.
23. In 1841 the General Committee of Public Instruction paid the society 3,354 rupees, 11 annas, to cover the cost of its half of the print run (*Thirteenth Report* 9). The two versions of the book are distinguished on p. 32. Subsequent reports give the annual sales through 1858.
24. The project was still being mooted as late as 1852, with reference to "the plan laid down by Mr. Macaulay's minute on the subject" (*General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency, From 1st Oct. 1851 to 30th Sept. 1852* xiv).

25. All quotations from Richardson and Macaulay in this regard are from Richardson's "Reminiscences" 32.
26. Richardson mentions two other large collections, which had also been arranged chronologically: Robert Anderson, *The Works of the British Poets* (1795); and Alexander Chalmers, *The Works of the English Poets from Chaucer to Cowper* (1810). In his commentary on Thomas Warton, Richardson commended the "judicious plan of a chronological arrangement" which Warton had followed in preparing his *History of English Poetry* (1774–81); it was better than dividing "our poets into schools" (lxxiv).
27. The London edition was never published, but it garnered a positive notice nonetheless from the *Metropolitan Magazine*: "We shall be greatly surprised if Mr. Richardson's 'Selections from the British Poets' do not, ere long, become a standard work" ("*Selections*" 539). The book had been advertised as "now preparing" (Advertisement). Richardson gives a brief account of the debacle in "Reminiscences," noting the intervention of John Murray (32).
28. *General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency* (for 1847–48, 1849–50, 1850–51, 1851–52, 1852–55, 1856–57, 1857–58). *General Report on Public Instruction in the North Western Provinces of the Bengal Presidency* (for 1843–44, 1845–46, 1851–52). *Scholarship Examinations* (of 1846–47, of 1850–51). *Report of the Board of Education* (for 1850–51). Various pages.
29. Shelley's "Defense of Poetry," though written in 1821, was published in 1840, the same year as Richardson's *Selections*; both mount a robust defense against Utilitarian criticisms of the inutility of poetry. The positive review of the *Selections* in the *Friend of India*, an influential missionary newspaper published outside Calcutta, did close by quoting the first four pages of Richardson's preface ("*Selections*").
30. I contextualize this passage and its reception in "Re: Search and Close Reading." Krishna Kumar might have had Reid's comments in mind, and he certainly had Richardson's *Poetical Selections* in mind, when he scored the "alien symbolism" found in "the textbook used for the teaching of English," symbolism which "made the texts unintelligible" and fostered memorization as kind of coping mechanism (Kumar 459–60).
31. *Report of the Board of Education* 149. Krishna Kumar might have had Reid's comments in mind, and he certainly had Richardson's *Poetical Selections* in mind, when he scored the "alien symbolism" found in "the textbook used for the teaching of English," symbolism which "made the texts unintelligible" and fostered memorization as kind of coping mechanism (Kumar 459–60).
32. *General Report on Public Instruction in the North Western Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1843–44* appendix K, xxxv.
33. Macaulay had been offered a peerage on Aug. 28, 1857, which he immediately accepted (*Journals* 5: 69). News of his elevation appeared in the press on Sept. 1 and 2 (5: 71).

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