

# THE EAST INDIA COLLEGE DEBATE AND THE FASHIONING OF IMPERIAL OFFICIALS, 1806–1858\*

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**ABSTRACT.** *Throughout its relatively brief existence, the English East India Company's college in Hertfordshire was hotly debated in Company headquarters, parliament, and the press. These disputes are deeply revealing of contemporary attitudes to the inter-related issues of elite education, government, 'Britishness', and empire. Previously, historians interested in the relationship between education and empire have concentrated largely on British attempts to construct colonial subjects, but just as important and just as controversial to contemporaries was the concomitant endeavour to create colonial officials. On a practical level, disputes in educational theory made it difficult to decide on how to train recruits who would satisfy growing demands for transparency, accountability, and merit. Furthermore, on certain points contemporaries fundamentally disagreed about which qualities an imperial official should have. These disagreements reflected deeper uncertainties, particularly regarding the ideal relationship to be fostered between the Company, Britain, and India. In short, this debate highlights the tensions, anxieties, and ambiguities surrounding reform and imperial expansion in the early nineteenth century.*

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On the south-east boundary of the small English village of Hertford Heath looms Haileybury Imperial Service College. The grandeur of the place is a testament to its imperial past; the campus and buildings originally belonged to East India College (1806–58), a school devoted exclusively to the education of the English East India Company's civilian officials. The manicured grounds and magnificent neo-classical architecture evoke the college as it would have appeared to Company recruits 200 years ago. Admiring it now, it is difficult to imagine that the site was once described as 'a sink of immorality and vice, of disorder and irregularity'.<sup>1</sup> Yet East India College was frequently subject to

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<sup>1</sup> 'Debate at the East India House (EIH), Feb. 25 – Haileybury College', *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies*, 4 (July–Dec. 1817), pp. 157–77, at p. 164.

such denunciations during its lifetime. Company officials, shareholders, politicians, and journalists debated whether or not the college was producing graduates worthy of occupying positions of authority in India, and questioned whether the school ought to be significantly reformed or abolished altogether. Commentators avidly discussed the advisability of educating Company recruits at a separate institution, as well as debating the college's curriculum, its disciplinary regime, its nature as a public school, and the misbehaviour and purportedly poor academic performance of its students. The debate surrounding the college played out in parliament, in East India Company headquarters, and in the press, and was dispelled only by the school's closure in 1858.

The East India College debate, though deeply revealing of contemporary attitudes to the inter-related issues of elite education, government, 'Britishness', and empire, is nevertheless largely absent from the historiography of the British empire. Historians who have addressed contemporary opposition to the college have treated it reductively, attributing it to the directors' determination to preserve their patronage rights in the teeth of reformist opposition, or diagnosing it as a symptom of Anglicist and Orientalist divisions within the Company.<sup>2</sup> Framing the debate in this way, however, obscures the underlying concern which united commentators on all sides of the question, namely, anxieties about the character and ability of the Company's civilian officials. At the heart of the dispute was the problem of how to ensure the capability and good conduct of the men responsible for governing British territories abroad.

To understand why this problem proved so intractable, the debate must be situated within its wider historical context, rather than being approached solely in terms of the Company's institutional history. The Company was a British corporation, and in certain key respects its history overlaps with that of Britain more generally. By broadening the scope of analysis in this way, it becomes clear how contemporary disputes in educational theory made concerns about future officials especially difficult to address. Historians have suggested that public schools were attractive sites for political education which exerted a powerful influence on the Victorian and Edwardian ruling classes, reinforcing ideals of manliness and character; in the early nineteenth century, however, the Georgian elite were far less united in terms of the educational programme they desired for their future imperial governors.<sup>3</sup> Some

<sup>2</sup> Jacob Thiessen, 'Anglo-Indian vested interests and civil service education, 1800–1858: indications of an East India Company line', *Journal of World History*, 5 (1994), pp. 23–46, at p. 46; Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (New Delhi, 1959), p. 52; Michael Herbert Fisher, 'Persian professor in Britain: Mirza Muhammad Ibrahim at the East India Company's college, 1826–1844', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 21 (2001), pp. 24–32, at p. 25; Keith Tribe, 'Professors Malthus and Jones: political economy at the East India College, 1806–1858', *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 2 (1995), pp. 327–54, at p. 332.

<sup>3</sup> For public schools and the Victorian and Edwardian ruling elite, see P. J. Cain, 'Character and imperialism: the British financial administration of Egypt, 1878–1914', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34 (2006), pp. 177–200, at p. 179; Stefan Collini, 'The idea of

historians have sought to recover the Georgian public school from the conventional narrative of disorder and intellectual inadequacy, but the Haileybury debate exemplifies a few of the negative political implications that some contemporaries read into the public schools' alleged failings.<sup>4</sup>

Nor did the British state furnish the Company with an obvious model on which to base its educational enterprise. Although the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a series of 'practical improvements' designed to assuage contemporary fears of corruption, at the time of Haileybury's foundation the only prerequisite for appointments to public office in Britain (aside from a well-situated patron) was the ability to read, write, and do basic arithmetic.<sup>5</sup> The Company, then, had to determine for itself how best to train its officials, for instance, what value to place on habits and principles versus practical skills and attainments. The Haileybury debate can thus be seen as an example of the way in which British elites grappled with the question of how to ensure the quality and capability of men destined for public office. Indeed, the Haileybury debate presaged, and subsequently shaped, reform of the British civil service in the late nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The Company's dramatic territorial expansion and growing political prominence in the Indian subcontinent highlighted the need for a trained, virtuous body of civilian officials, a demand which called for a certain degree of experimentation and elicited an array of competing visions of what the education of a public official should look like.

These domestic disputes regarding the education of the Company's recruits are especially noteworthy because they coincide with a period of Britain's history which has heretofore been characterized as one of imperial confidence. According to historiographical convention, in the first half of the nineteenth century the Company's rule in India was justified, at least by certain prominent liberal thinkers, on the grounds that it would introduce law, order, civility, and technological progress into previously violent, backwards places. The ability of the Company to do so was predicated on the moral and intellectual qualities of its agents, and their essential difference from the Indians they were meant

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"character" in Victorian political thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 35 (1985), pp. 29–50, at p. 47; Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English character* (London, 1990), pp. 216–20.

<sup>4</sup> M. V. Wallbank, 'Eighteenth-century public schools and the education of the governing elite', *History of Education*, 8 (1979), pp. 1–19; Kevin Waite, 'Beating Napoleon at Eton: violence, sport and manliness in England's public schools, 1783–1815', *Cultural and Social History*, 11 (2014), pp. 407–24. For a typical account of the decline of the public schools, see Vivian Ogilvie, *The English public school* (London, 1957), pp. 114–29.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Harling, 'Parliament, the state, and "old corruption": conceptualizing reform, c. 1790–1832', in Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain, 1780–1850* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 98–113; Emmeline W. Cohen, *The growth of the British civil service, 1780–1939* (London, 1965), p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Cohen, *The growth of the British civil service*, p. 78.

to regulate and improve through example.<sup>7</sup> More practically, the Company needed accomplished and qualified young men if its extensive Indian administration was to be maintained. The Haileybury debate, however, suggests that many British contemporaries did not take their young men's proficiency or exemplary qualities for granted. Heretofore, historians exploring the relationship between colonialism and education in India have concentrated on British attempts to construct colonial subjects, but just as important and just as controversial to contemporaries was the concomitant endeavour to create colonial officials.<sup>8</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron famously argued in *Reproduction in education, society and culture* that education reproduces power relations by perpetuating particular ideas, values, practices, and conventions which serve the objective interests of dominant groups. Prominent figures within the Company, however, appeared uncertain about what curriculum and mode of instruction would best serve their interests, and about which ideas, values, and practices they should inculcate in their young recruits. This uncertainty, in turn, led them to doubt whether the education provided at Haileybury would in fact secure the Company's future in India.<sup>9</sup> The Haileybury debate therefore exposes an undercurrent of anxiety coursing through a period previously associated with British assumptions of civilizational and racial superiority, and suggests the different strategies by which contemporaries proposed to manage the fraught relationship between imperial rulers and imperial subjects.

A debate which was once interpreted simply as a Company dispute thus provides a window onto a set of important problems facing the Company and the British state more broadly at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Through an examination of debates within the East India Company, parliament, and the press, this article brings to light these underlying points of discord. I will preface my analysis of the dispute by outlining the history of the college and the debate it inspired. I will then address successively the two core issues animating the discussion. First, contemporaries could not agree on how to put their ideals into practice given the diverse and highly controverted state of educational theory at the time. Second, on some points commentators fundamentally differed in terms of the kind of civil servant they thought Haileybury ought to produce. This second point revolves in part around uncertainties concerning the relative value to be accorded to practical learning over

<sup>7</sup> Carey A. Watt, 'The relevance and complexity of civilizing missions, c. 1800–2010', in Carey A. Watt and Michael Mann, eds., *Civilizing missions in colonial and postcolonial South Asia: from improvement to development* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 1; Jennifer Pitts, *A turn to empire: the rise of imperial liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Examples include Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of conquest: literary study and British rule in India* (Delhi, 1998); Sanjay Seth, *Subject lessons: the Western education of colonial India* (Durham, NC, 2007); Catherine Hall, 'Making colonial subjects: education in the age of empire', *History of Education*, 37 (2008), pp. 773–87.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, trans. Richard Nice (London, 1990), p. 10.

character-building (overlapping with the debate playing out between proponents of practical and classical education). Perhaps more importantly, it also relates to the problem of the kind of identity formation to be encouraged at Haileybury. In particular, contemporaries debated how exactly the Company's recruits should be taught to feel about Britain, India, and the Company itself. All told, these manifold aspects of the debate speak to the disquiet attending administrative reform and imperial expansion in the nineteenth century.

## I

The catalyst for Haileybury's foundation apparently came in the form of a letter from the Company outpost in Canton dated 29 January 1804. Noting the negative effects of the climate on teenage boys, the writer suggested detaining appointees in Britain a few years longer before dispatching them to Asia, and proposed educating them in the interval.<sup>10</sup> Although the Company had established Fort William College in Calcutta shortly before in 1800, the court of directors agreed that the moral and physical well-being of their recruits would be better served by postponing their departure from Britain. The directors accordingly charged a committee with the task of inquiring into what kind of education was required, and whether or not such an education was already available at existing British institutions.<sup>11</sup> The ensuing report (rumoured to have been written primarily by Charles Grant, a Company director and intimate member of William Wilberforce's evangelical circle) determined that nowhere in Britain was there an institution that would provide students with the specific knowledge and skills requisite for a post in the Indian civil service.<sup>12</sup> The report suggested founding a college to furnish students with the rudiments of Persian and Hindustani, as well as instructing them in Indian history and culture; mathematics and natural philosophy; classical and general literature; and law, history, and political economy.<sup>13</sup> Having acquired this general knowledge, recruits would then be trained in relevant local languages with the aid of presidency colleges in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. The court of directors accepted this proposal and chose Hertford Castle as the site of their school in England. The committee began accepting students in 1806, using the castle

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Farrington, *The records of the East India College Haileybury and other institutions* (London, 1976), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, 'Recruitment and training of British civil servants in India, 1600–1860', in Ralph Braibanti, ed., *Asian bureaucratic systems emergent from the British imperial tradition* (Durham, NC, 1966), p. 117.

<sup>12</sup> For Charles Grant's role in the foundation of the college, see Henry Morris, *The life of Charles Grant, sometime member of parliament for Inverness-shire, and director of the East India Company* (London, 1904), pp. 250–8.

<sup>13</sup> *A preliminary view of the establishment of the honourable East-India Company in Hertfordshire for the education of young persons appointed to the civil service in India*, 1806, London, The British Library, India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR), J/1/21/fos. 514–21, p. 11.

as their temporary base, before moving to the newly completed college (and current site of Haileybury Imperial Service College) in 1809. The Charter Act of 1813 recognized the college and stipulated that all appointees would have to complete four terms at Haileybury before proceeding to India.<sup>14</sup>

Haileybury's foundation reflected a widespread conviction that expert knowledge and writing skills were more necessary to the Company than ever before as a result of its burgeoning judicial and administrative responsibilities. In other respects, the Company was riven with conflict in the early nineteenth century, prominent points of contention being its trade monopoly and commercial status, its territorial expansion and conflicts with regional powers, the Protestant evangelization of its Indian subjects, the forms of land tenure to be established in its territories, and the desirability of crown control, among other things.<sup>15</sup> On the necessity of educating the Company's civilian officials, however, all parties were agreed. In addition to the Company's growing political prominence in the subcontinent, a variety of factors, including the spectre of past corruption within its ranks, as well as evangelical influences and an emergent professional ethic within British society more broadly, combined to produce a consensus around the need for better-trained imperial officials.<sup>16</sup> More generally, this unanimity reflected the belief that, whatever changes might ultimately take place within the Company, its success would to some extent always rely on the character and ability of its agents. Marquess Wellesley, governor-general of the Company from 1797 to 1805 and founder of Fort William College in Calcutta, expressed this consensus when he claimed that 'the wisest system of government will but imperfectly answer its ends, unless means are at the same time taken for providing persons duly qualified for the conduct of the system'.<sup>17</sup>

Despite this relative accord on the necessity of educating the Company's civilian officials, within a few years Haileybury would develop into a prominent point of national debate. The school was widely condemned as a hotbed of violence

<sup>14</sup> Farrington, *The records of the East India College*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>15</sup> For debates on Company's commercial status and privileges, as well as contemporary arguments in favour of the crown, see H. V. Bowen, *The business of empire: the East India Company and imperial Britain, 1756–1833* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 6–19. For the missionary debate, see Penny Carson, 'The British Raj and the awakening of the evangelical conscience: the ambiguities of religious establishment and toleration, 1698–1833', in Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian missions and the Enlightenment* (Richmond, 2001). For contemporary debates on territorial settlements as well as the desirability of general war or of extending the system of subsidiary alliances, see C. H. Philips, *The East India Company, 1784–1834* (Manchester, 1940), pp. 200–4 and 213–16, respectively.

<sup>16</sup> Bowen, *The business of empire*, p. 15; Ian Bradley, *The call to seriousness: the evangelical impact on the Victorian* (London, 1976), pp. 160–1; Peter Jupp, 'The landed elite and political authority in Britain, ca. 1760–1850', *Journal of British Studies*, 29 (1990), pp. 53–79, at p. 64; Philip Harling, *The waning of 'Old Corruption': the politics of economical reform in Britain, 1779–1836* (Oxford, 1996), p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Montgomery, ed., *The despatches, minutes and correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley, K. G. during his administration in India* (London, 1836), p. 322.

and insubordination because of riots which erupted there in 1808, 1809, 1810, 1815, 1822, and 1837.<sup>18</sup> Most of the disturbances involved destruction of property and attacks on college staff, most notably the watchman and the steward, and generally reflected student resentments about curfew and other college regulations (though a few contemporaries speculated that some students were purposefully seeking expulsion to avoid being sent to India).<sup>19</sup> In addition to these occasional bouts of defiance, students were infamous for drunkenness and gambling in nearby Ware and Hertford, and many accrued sizeable debts there.<sup>20</sup> *The Times* advertised these problems with relish. ‘All those who, during the last few years, had been conversant with Indian affairs, must have heard, in the most distant parts of the country, the unpleasant reports spread abroad, relative to the Institution of Haileybury’, a Company proprietor complained.<sup>21</sup>

Such outbreaks of student aggression and misbehaviour were not uncommon in nineteenth-century England; students in Oxford and Cambridge were equally prone to rioting, brawling, and other acts of indiscipline, while Eton, Rugby, and Winchester were all three wracked by student uprisings around the same period.<sup>22</sup> Still, Haileybury’s reputation for lawlessness and misconduct seems to have especially captured the public imagination because of its affiliation with the Company.<sup>23</sup> As an anonymous contributor to an 1817 edition of the *Morning Post* phrased it, ‘who that is alive to the interests of his country can be indifferent to a question which involves the test of qualification for the several departments of a government, whose control extends over a population of sixty millions of human beings?’<sup>24</sup> Joanna Innes has hypothesized that England’s position as a world power meant that the education of its ruling elite was perceived to be less problematic than the instruction of members of the lower social orders.<sup>25</sup> In the case of Haileybury, however, it was precisely Britain’s dramatic imperial expansion and the increased political

<sup>18</sup> Cohn, ‘Recruitment and training’, p. 135.

<sup>19</sup> Patricia James, *Population Malthus: his life and times* (London, 1979), pp. 180–1, 214, 232, 326.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Debate at the EIH, Feb. 25 – Haileybury College’, *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, 4 (July–Dec. 1817), pp. 56–81, at p. 59.

<sup>22</sup> Sheldon Rothblatt, ‘The student sub-culture and the examination system in early nineteenth-century Oxbridge’, in Lawrence Stone, ed., *The university in society* (London, 1974), p. 270; H. C. Barnard, *A short history of English education: from 1760–1944* (London, 1947), pp. 20, 21.

<sup>23</sup> For early nineteenth-century criticisms of public schools, see David Newsome, *Godliness and good learning: four studies on a Victorian ideal* (London, 1961), pp. 3–4; R. L. Archer, *Secondary education in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 1921), p. 52.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Philalethes’, ‘East India College’, *Morning Post* (London), 24 Feb. 1817, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Joanna Innes, ‘“National education” in the British Isles, 1765–1815: British and Irish variations on a European theme’, *Annales: histoire, sciences sociales*, 65 (2010), pp. 1087–116, at p. 1098.

and administrative responsibilities that followed in its wake that invested the education of a particular segment of the British elite with such importance.

The problem of Haileybury students' apparent shortcomings was given added urgency, at least in the eyes of Company administrators, by the growing number of Indians with an English-language education. In the words of modern historian Thomas Metcalf, 'by his mimicry of English manners, the *babu* [English-educated Indian] reminded the British of a similarity they sought always to disavow; and, steeped in English liberalism, he posed by implication, if not by outright assertion, a challenge to the legitimacy of the Raj'.<sup>26</sup> The fear surrounding English-educated Indians is apparent in the speeches which the chairman of the court of directors delivered at the end of every semester at Haileybury. In these speeches, the chairmen noted the progress of English-language education in India, which they used as a spur to encourage Haileybury students to devote themselves more assiduously to their studies. In 1844, at the end of the fall semester, Chairman John Shepherd asked his students to 'remember, that the natives of India are making rapid strides in education. How will you feel, if you find yourselves inferior in talent or information to any of them?'<sup>27</sup> The following year, alluding to four Indian medical students present at the ceremony as guests of the Indian industrialist Dwarkanath Tagore, Chairman Sir Henry Willock admonished Haileybury students that 'when the natives of India were thus emulous of mental improvement, the pupils who might be hereafter called to the performance of important and onerous duties in that vast empire, should never neglect the opportunities afforded them for the cultivation of their faculties'.<sup>28</sup> Many contemporaries expressed the opinion that their 'mental ascendancy' was the keystone of British power in India, but the intellectual superiority of the Company's future administrators, far from being universally taken for granted, was instead perceived to be something that had to be actively pursued.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, the education of the Company's recruits was considered to be of especial importance to Britain's imperial fortunes.<sup>30</sup>

The cumulative effect of all these concerns was that Haileybury was widely scrutinized and discussed, and remained broadly controversial until its closure in 1858. Periodically, these smouldering resentments sparked into flame: in 1817, after some particularly egregious acts of student insubordination; in 1822, following some highly publicized expulsions; in 1824, in anticipation of the repeal of the parliamentary clause which required students to

<sup>26</sup> Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 106.

<sup>27</sup> 'East India College, Haileybury', *Times* (London), 20 Dec. 1844, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> 'Haileybury College', *Times* (London), 30 June 1845, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Grant, *A view of the system and merits of the East-India College at Haileybury; being the substance of a speech delivered in the court of East-India proprietors, on the 27th February 1824* (London, 1826), p. 114.

<sup>30</sup> For more on the 'empire of opinion', see Joseph Sramek, *Gender, morality, and race in Company India, 1765–1858* (New York, NY, 2011), p. 2.



spend four terms at Haileybury before proceeding to India; in the years 1831 to 1833, leading up to the Company's charter renewal; and in the early 1850s, in anticipation of the college's closure and the establishment of open competition. At such moments, the college re-emerged as a major topic of discussion, and this discussion played out in various forums. Within the Company, Haileybury was formally debated in the general court of proprietors (composed of Company stockholders) and the court of directors (a board of twenty-four men elected by the stockholders to administer the Company's affairs). These debates were transcribed and published in the *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* and *The Times*. The latter actively opposed the college and frequently expressed this antagonism in its editorials, as well as publishing anonymous letters from readers on various sides of the question. *The Times*, perhaps because of its status as one of the leading newspapers of the day, was the most common vehicle for these discussions, but other papers likewise gave their readers the chance to weigh in by way of anonymous letters. Some of these anonymous commentators identified themselves as Company employees or stockholders, while others claimed to be unbiased observers speaking on behalf of public interests. The college was also debated in the House of Commons and House of Lords, though these debates often echoed discussions within the court of proprietors and court of directors given that many of the most outspoken stockholders and directors were also MPs or peers.<sup>31</sup> Besides these debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords, the parliamentary inquiry of 1831–2 gave many Company officials the chance to put their opinions on the college before the public. Finally, a few pamphlets were published on the subject of the college, most famously those authored in its defence by Thomas Malthus (professor of political economy at the college) and Robert Grant (Company director and son of the college's founder Charles Grant). In brief, the debate was carried out in various arenas and called forth a cacophony of voices, each making its own unique pronouncements.

Despite this rich diversity of opinion, the Haileybury debate has often been cast, rather simplistically, as a struggle between avaricious directors who worried that new academic requirements might obstruct the previously straightforward path from nomination to appointment, and high-minded reformers striving towards a more qualified civil service.<sup>32</sup> According to one acerbic letter published in the *Morning Post* in 1817, the stockholders' true fear was that 'it [the college] may eventually expose a blockhead, or degrade a libertine nephew, or a Scotch cousin' (a reference to contemporary stereotypes about the power of Scottish patronage networks).<sup>33</sup> There is certainly some basis to this historiographical emphasis on patronage; many supporters of the college valued the institution as a healthy check on the patronage system, while those

<sup>31</sup> Bowen, *The business of empire*, p. 95.

<sup>32</sup> Thiessen, 'Anglo-Indian vested interests and civil service education', p. 46.

<sup>33</sup> 'Philalethes', 'On the East India College', *Morning Post* (London), 20 Mar. 1817, p. 2.

who benefited from the existing arrangements were loath to see their prerogatives encroached upon.<sup>34</sup> Certain elements of the controversy, for instance contemporary objections to the professors' right to expel students or punish them by rustication, seem to have been driven exclusively by these interests.<sup>35</sup> The problem of patronage also became more and more central over time; the final years of the debate were particularly taken up with this issue, culminating in Charles Wood's 1853 Government of India Act, which abolished patronage within the East India Company.

Still, by assuming that the college's critics were motivated purely by financial interests, we are in danger of replicating the very rhetoric which supporters of the college employed to discredit their opponents in the debate. Though often portrayed as money-grubbing merchants, the college's most vocal critics were actually leading voices of reform within the general court of proprietors as well as in parliament, political radicals who, though divided in their attitudes to many key issues (including the Company's trade monopoly and the desirability of colonization in India), nevertheless regularly united to expose systematically the policies of the Company's directors to the scrutiny of the shareholders and the wider public. This so-called 'party by the wall' or 'group in the corner', led by Randle Jackson, Douglas Kinnaird, and Joseph Hume, actively pressed for a number of reforms, most notoriously the freedom of the press in India.<sup>36</sup> As H. V. Bowen has observed, for many Company shareholders the value of their stock lay, not solely in the profit they might derive from it, but the opportunity it provided to participate actively in Indian affairs.<sup>37</sup> Rather than dismissing the more abstract complaints of the college's critics as mere window-dressing, it is therefore worth exploring what other questions, aside from patronage, they might have perceived to be at stake in the Haileybury debate. The remainder of this article will address some of these apprehensions. To begin with, the following section will discuss how the Haileybury debate overlapped with contemporary disputes in educational theory. Significantly, commentators expressed a range of concerns which reflected these broader discussions. There was no single standard form of education on offer in Britain, and, accordingly, commentators drew on a medley of competing theories in their efforts to determine how best to educate the Company's recruits. To understand fully why East India College proved to be such a flash point of debate, one must contextualize it in terms of these pressing domestic disagreements.

<sup>34</sup> Timothy L. Alborn, 'Boys to men: moral restraint at Haileybury College', in Brian Dolan, ed., *Malthus, medicine, & morality: 'Malthusianism' after 1798* (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 33–6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>36</sup> Philips, *The East India Company*, p. 219; Miles Taylor, 'Joseph Hume and the reformation of India, 1819–1833', in Glen Burgess and Matthew Festenstein, eds., *English radicalism, 1550–1850* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 292–4.

<sup>37</sup> Bowen, *The business of empire*, p. 86.

## II

In a pamphlet addressed to Baron William Wyndham Grenville (who famously opposed the college in the House of Lords in 1813), Professor Thomas Malthus argued that the issue of East India College had ‘nothing to do with any general innovation in the modes of instruction to be recommended in this country’. In Malthus’s view, the matter of how to educate the Company’s recruits was rather ‘one of those practical questions, which must often come before a statesman... how to supply a particular want most effectively, as well as most economically’.<sup>38</sup> Malthus thereby attempted to simplify the question by isolating the discussion over Haileybury from the more abstract debate over educational methods which so preoccupied the British population at large during the early years of the nineteenth century. As novelist and educationist Sarah Trimmer expressed it in the first edition of her periodical *The Guardian of Education* (1802), ‘there never has been a time since the creation of the world, when the important business of EDUCATION was more an object of general concern in any civilized nation, than it is at the present day in our own’.<sup>39</sup> The moral and political threat posed by the French Revolution, as well as a growing conviction of the ameliorative power of formal learning, had combined to render education a point of special interest.<sup>40</sup>

Given the significance accorded to education as well as the broad differences of opinion on educational methods, some critics felt that it was unethical to impose a particular kind of education on Company recruits. Since Company directors and proprietors were usually connected to Haileybury’s students through ties of kinship, it is perhaps unsurprising that many stockholders objected to what they perceived to be the Company’s unwarranted abrogation of the parents’ right to choose the appropriate form of education for their children among the many alternatives available at the time. Douglas Kinnaird felt that he was living through ‘an *epoch* in the history of education. Greater improvements had been made within the last twenty years than for five centuries before’, a situation which demanded that parents be allowed the flexibility to grasp ‘the advantage of every honest improvement’.<sup>41</sup> Arguments like this echo the opinions of eighteenth-century radicals like Joseph Priestley who viewed a father’s right to decide his children’s education as a fundamental civil liberty.<sup>42</sup> Commentators on the East India College debate who espoused

<sup>38</sup> Rev. T. R. Malthus, *A letter to the Rt. Hon. Lord Grenville, occasioned by some observations of his Lordship on the East India Company’s establishment for the education of their civil servants* (London, 1813), p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *The guardian of education: a periodical work*, 1 (Bristol, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Mary Hilton, *Women and the shaping of the nation’s young: education and public doctrine in Britain, 1750–1850* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 11; Alan Rauch, *Useful knowledge: the Victorians, morality, and the march of the intellect* (Durham, NC, 2001), pp. 2, 22.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Debate at the EIH, Feb. 25 – Haileybury College’, *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, 17 (Jan.–June 1824), pp. 314–45, at pp. 319, 320.

<sup>42</sup> Innes, ‘National education’, p. 1096.

these views tended to feel that an exam, which would test the proficiency of appointees destined for India, would be preferable to a college.<sup>43</sup>

Supporters of the college, or at least those that proposed reforming rather than abolishing it, argued that it was precisely the lack of standardization of education in Britain which made the institution of a college for future Company recruits so necessary. One of the primary reasons that the college had been founded, according to the committee's report, was so that recruits 'should not be left to such chance of acquisitions as the routine of Public or Country Schools may, under all varieties of Situation, Tutorage, Example, and other circumstances, incident to Persons collected from every part of the United Kingdom, afford them'.<sup>44</sup> In Britain, a person's knowledge or skill could differ radically according to socio-economic and regional background.<sup>45</sup> By overseeing the education of future civil servants, the Company could better ensure that these young men met certain set standards of learning. In addition, personal knowledge of the students over long periods would allow professors to root out unscrupulous or dissipated young men. Commentators advancing these arguments suggested that a student's performance at the school was the best test of an individual's character, and objected to open examinations (as opposed to a two-year stint at the college) on the grounds that 'religious and moral principles and habits cannot be ascertained by a mere examination at the India House'.<sup>46</sup>

Although the Company thus sought to impose order on the varied and uneven state of education in England at the time, the lack of institutionalization nevertheless created certain problems of definition where East India College was concerned. In particular, nobody could decide whether Haileybury should be considered a school, a college, or a university. Though it might seem like mere semantics, the question of Haileybury's status as an institution had serious implications with regards to the kinds of disciplinary measures to be employed there. Whereas at a school students were closely supervised by their instructors and subjected to physical punishment when necessary, college or university students were allowed more freedom for independent study, and their teachers fulfilled a purely academic role. Indecision on this question arose from the range of students accommodated by the college, which included young men aged from sixteen to twenty. As historian John Roach has pointed out, whereas now individuals are expected to transition to different educational stages at particular ages, these conventions were only

<sup>43</sup> See for example Douglas Kinnaird's proposal, 'East India House', *Times* (London), 26 Feb. 1824, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Report of the committee appointed to enquire into the plan for forming an establishment at home for the education of young men intended for the Company's civil service in India*, 26 Oct. 1804, IOR, J/2/1, p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> John Roach, *A history of secondary education in England, 1800-1870* (London, 1986), p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> 'A civilian', *A letter to the chairman, deputy-chairman, and court of directors, of the East-India Company, on the subject of their college, at Haileybury* (London, 1823), p. 8.

beginning to develop by the end of the eighteenth century; as a result, Haileybury's student body was varied and its disciplinary regime difficult to decide upon.<sup>47</sup> Both sides of the issue had their advocates; while one writer to *The Times* in 1811 objected 'that a young man of 20 or 21 – mature in the eye of the law – eligible to high situations in the state – and in the fullest ripeness of manly spirit – [should] be subjected to the common corporal discipline of a school', others decried 'the attempt against all experience and knowledge of human nature, suddenly to change boys of sixteen into men of twenty'.<sup>48</sup> A college or university format, by leaving students largely to themselves, was supposed to encourage the virtues of independence and self-discipline requisite for a position in India. Opponents of the college format, however, contended that this permissive system gave teenage boys an inflated sense of their own self-worth, thereby encouraging disorder, idleness, even insubordination. In the end, a consensus proved nigh impossible to obtain; Charles Lushington, secretary to the government of Bengal from 1823 to 1827, condemned Haileybury in the parliamentary inquiry of 1831–2 as a 'nondescript establishment, where the youths are subjected to an ill-defined restraint, vacillating between the coercion of a school and the liberal and manly discipline of a university'.<sup>49</sup>

To complicate matters further, although educating Company recruits all together at one institution did promise a greater degree of standardization, many Company directors and proprietors were uncomfortable with the idea of a public education for future Company officials. In this respect, the Haileybury debate dovetailed with contemporary disagreements about the relative value of a public versus a private education. Although education outside the home was becoming more widespread, many authorities continued to present education in the home as more conducive to the development of virtue. When one instructor was responsible for a large numbers of boys, it was feared that children would be left unsupervised and therefore vulnerable to the pernicious influences of their peers.<sup>50</sup> In her famous *Letters on the elementary principles of education* (1825), Elizabeth Hamilton, noted novelist and essayist, argued that it was too much to expect 'that boys completely left to their own disposal, goaded to idleness and dissipation by example, incited by the same means to sensual gratification, and destitute of guide or monitor, should voluntarily

<sup>47</sup> Roach, *A history of secondary education*, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> 'A Friend to the Good Government of India', 'To the editor of the Times', *Times* (London), 13 Dec. 1811, p. 3; 'Debate at the EIH, March 5 – Haileybury College', *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, 4 (July–Dec. 1817), pp. 378–88, at p. 382.

<sup>49</sup> *Report from the select committee on the affairs of the East India Company; with minutes of evidence in six parts, and an appendix index to each*, House of Commons Papers (HCP) (1831–2), VIII, vol. 1, p. 107.

<sup>50</sup> Sophia Woodley, "'Oh miserable and most ruinous measure": the debate between private and public education in Britain, 1760–1800', in Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin, eds., *Educating the child in Enlightenment Britain: beliefs, cultures, practices* (Farnham, 2009), p. 28.

betake themselves to improvement'.<sup>51</sup> This argument concerning the contaminating influence of public schools was made all the more convincing by the fact that many schools of the period were notoriously susceptible to disciplinary problems, Haileybury included. In light of these well-publicized disturbances, critics of public forms of education, and of Haileybury College in particular, were inclined to believe that youths should be educated at home with their parents. Joseph Hume, for one, contended that parents would keep their sons' 'morals pure and untainted, by taking care to keep them apart from the contagion of that vice, which it was now too late to deny, had been found unhappily to exist in Hertford College'.<sup>52</sup>

Supporters of the public format, by way of retort, argued that exposure to nefarious influences actually allowed youths to develop a resistance to vice. This was an argument that was commonly made in support of public schools more generally. According to renowned educationist Vicesimus Knox, 'the sweets of liberty never before tasted, and the allurements of vice never before withstood, become too powerful for resistance at an age when the passions are strong, reason immature, and experience entirely deficient'.<sup>53</sup> Supporters of Haileybury were especially quick to point out that parents who were afraid to subject their children to the rigours of public school ought to think twice before shipping them off to India. In the words of director Robert Grant, 'if you dread his proving too weak even for that modified trial, then how can you reconcile it to your feelings or your conscience, to insist on his facing, without any previous fortification, the far more formidable dangers of an Indian residence'. From this perspective, time spent at East India College constituted a crucial touchstone on the path to a successful career abroad, such that Grant admonished parents of prospective Company servants that 'it is your bounden duty first to subject him to the probation of a public education'.<sup>54</sup> Arguments like this were predicated on contemporary assumptions about the injurious effects of the Indian environment. The climate was believed to have a degenerative impact on the British physique, while the despotic system of government in India was feared to promote tyranny and profligacy.<sup>55</sup> An anonymous commentator emphasized the importance of a moralizing education for Company civil servants since 'the power and affluence which every European, connected with the government of India, possesses, and the obsequious dispositions, and lax

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *Letters on the elementary principles of education* (2 vols., Boston, MA, 1825), II, p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> 'Debate at the EIH, Feb. 25 – Haileybury College', *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, 4 (July–Dec. 1817), p. 79.

<sup>53</sup> Vicesimus Knox, *Liberal education: or, a practical treatise on the methods of acquiring useful and polite learning* (London, 1789), p. 38.

<sup>54</sup> Grant, *A view of the system and merits of the East-India College*, p. 74.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Harrison, *Climates and constitutions: health, race, environment and British imperialism in India, 1600–1850* (Delhi, 1999), pp. 219, 125; E. M. Collingham, *Imperial bodies: the physical experience of the Raj, c. 1800–1947* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 2.

habits of the natives of that country,...are causes which expose him to unusual temptations'.<sup>56</sup> A public education in Britain, it was argued, would socialize Company servants, allow them to sow their wild oats, and thus inoculate them somewhat against the potentially ruinous moral effects of residence in India.

In short, though generally agreed on the need for a more educated staff, there were a number of viable alternatives to the education provided at Haileybury, and marked disagreement about which of these various forms of education would in fact yield the best public servants. The college's disciplinary regime and its nature as a public school were particular points of dissent. Historians have often emphasized eighteenth- and nineteenth-century perceptions of public schools as centres of political education and important sites for cultivating elite masculinity, but the Haileybury debate suggests that this was far from being a point of universal consensus.<sup>57</sup> There were also aspects of the debate which centred on even more fundamental differences, however, namely, what kind of public officer the college was ultimately supposed to produce. Contemporaries wondered precisely which qualities they should prioritize, and what sentiments they ought to foster in these future Company administrators. Some of these ideological points of dispute overlapped with broader debates in educational theory, particularly regarding the ultimate aims of education, while others were more imperial in nature, to do with the recruits' connection to the land of their birth as well as the ideal relationship to be cultivated between Company recruits and the Indians they were meant to administer. In his work on the debate surrounding the figure of the nabob in eighteenth-century Britain, Tillman Nechtman has argued that domestic Britons attacked the nabob because they wanted 'to throw up barriers between what they imagined as a stable, secure, and unitary British centre and the tumultuous collection of outposts they called empire'.<sup>58</sup> Although the nabobs ceased to be so vehemently vilified in the nineteenth century, judging from the Haileybury debate some people continued to fear the 'Indianization' of Britain's imperial agents, though others, significantly, felt that the Company's recruits should be encouraged to feel more empathy and accountability to Indian society. The following section will explore these underlying points of contention, beginning with the debate over the college's curriculum.

### III

Perhaps the most obvious source of ideological difference animating the debate was the question of the relative value to be accorded to Oriental versus

<sup>56</sup> 'A civilian', *A letter*, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> Michèle Cohen, 'Gender and the private/public debate on education in the long eighteenth century', in Richard Aldrich, ed., *Public or private education? Lessons from history* (London, 2004); Waite, 'Beating Napoleon at Eton', pp. 407–24.

<sup>58</sup> Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: empire and identity in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 10.

European learning. Which would serve the Company better in the long run: students with a practical knowledge of Indian language, culture, and history, or students with a firm grounding in European subjects like political economy, classics, and European history? Heretofore historians have understood this aspect of the debate in terms of an Orientalist and Anglicist opposition within the Company, that is, those who preferred imperial administration along British lines and therefore encouraged a British education for future Company officials, versus those who advocated governing India in an Indian idiom and therefore argued that the curriculum should focus primarily on India-related subjects. Haileybury has conventionally been portrayed as an Anglicist institution which favoured a European curriculum, and its critics as Orientalists. Eric Stokes has pointed to the Utilitarian bias operating at the college, while Keith Tribe has illustrated how in Haileybury's political economy course in particular India was addressed only as an entity in need of reform.<sup>59</sup>

Many of the college's critics, particularly within the Company, certainly grumbled that students were insufficiently trained in Eastern languages and practices. In the opinion of Company administrator Alexander Duncan Campbell, for instance, the college had especially neglected to instruct students 'in the peculiar tenures of land in India, ignorance of which leads subsequently to the greatest errors'.<sup>60</sup> Campbell's views on the subject are substantiated by the accounts of former Haileybury students. Monier Monier-Williams, in his memoir, noted of Richard Jones (professor of history and political economy from 1835 to 1854) 'that, when on one occasion he had to give us some lectures on Indian History, he simply shirked carrying out his programme, excusing us from attending in the lecture-room, and directing us to make an abstract of a certain number of chapters in Elphinstone's *History of India*'.<sup>61</sup> There is certainly evidence to suggest that the education provided at Haileybury reflected Anglicist inclinations within the Company, and that opposition to the college was probably galvanized by competing Orientalist views.

Considering the debate over the curriculum solely in terms of an Orientalist–Anglicist opposition, however, ignores the ways in which this discussion mirrored contemporary debates regarding the relative value of a practical versus a classical education. Around the turn of the century, there was a growing demand on the part of the British public for an education that would serve more utilitarian purposes, as pioneered by the dissenting academies.<sup>62</sup> The modernization of the school curriculum was a gradual and uneven process,

<sup>59</sup> Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, p. 52; Tribe, 'Professors Malthus and Jones', p. 339.

<sup>60</sup> HCP (1831–2), VIII, vol. 1, p. 190.

<sup>61</sup> IOR, J/1/21/fos. 514–21, p. 6; Frederick Charles Danvers, Sir M. Monier Williams, Sir Stuart Colvin Bayley, Percy Wigram, etc., *Memorials of old Haileybury College* (Westminster, 1894), p. 70.

<sup>62</sup> Nicholas Hans, *New trends in education in the eighteenth century* (London, 1998), p. 13.



however, and in one respect English education remained relatively unchanged during this period, namely, in the value placed upon the classics. In part, the continuing importance of the classics can be attributed to mere inertia; they were a well-established part of the English curriculum, and it would have required a strong and concerted effort to dislodge them from their privileged place.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, many contemporaries were convinced that classical instruction did have lasting value, though not in the same way, perhaps, as instruction in sciences or mathematics. The contest between a classical and a practical education thereby reflected differing opinions, not just regarding the ideal content of the education of the ruling classes, but its ultimate aims.

The question can be boiled down to the relative prioritization given to practical learning versus character building. Was it more important for students to possess the relevant facts, or to be ingrained with the correct habits and principles? Although some commentators insisted that the college's curriculum ought to focus more specifically on subjects of immediately practical use, such as Indian languages, others argued that the classics could provide a virtuous pattern for incipient governors to follow. Great classical figures were meant to act as models for action, and proponents of a classical education hoped that classical learning would imbue students with particular virtues.<sup>64</sup> Thomas Malthus was a particular proponent of this truism, and defended the college's classical curriculum on the grounds that 'when a youth is reading Demosthenes and Cicero, or even Homer and Virgil, he is unquestionably gaining something besides mere words' whereas 'when he is applying to the Oriental languages, he is really getting little more than the possession of an instrument'.<sup>65</sup> Joseph Batten, principal of Haileybury from 1815 to 1837, likewise argued that 'much of the European education at the college is of a kind not to show itself directly in the immediate discharge of official duties, but in the general enlargement of knowledge and elevation of intellectual character'.<sup>66</sup> In other words, much of the debate raging over the college's curriculum was in fact a debate over whether the aim of the college ought to be primarily the inculcation of particular dispositions or the provision of a practical set of skills, mirroring the contest playing out between proponents of classical and practical forms of education respectively.

Related to this question of dispositions was the problem of identity formation. Some commentators enthusiastically endorsed a liberal, British education, despite the obvious utility of a more Indian-oriented curriculum, because they sought to bind the college's students more firmly to the mother country through ties of sentiment, habit, and shared beliefs. This desire to produce

<sup>63</sup> Frank M. Turner, 'Victorian classics: sustaining the study of the ancient world', in Martin Daunt, ed., *The organisation of knowledge in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2005), p. 161.

<sup>64</sup> Knox, *Liberal education*, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Rev. T. R. Malthus, *Statements respecting the East-India College, with an appeal to the facts, in refutation of the charges lately brought against it, in the court of proprietors* (London, 1817), p. 100.

<sup>66</sup> HCP (1831–2), VIII, vol. 1, p. 237.

good British subjects was made explicit in the initial report of the college committee. The report acknowledged that these young men were ‘to leave their Native Country at an early Age, to pass many years of Life among People every way dissimilar to their own’. As a result, it was ‘of importance that the Young Men, before their departure, should be imbued with reverence and love for the Religion, the Constitution, and Laws of their own Country’.<sup>67</sup> The Company proprietors wanted to ensure that their representatives, though resident in India, would continue to cherish the same loyalties and values as themselves. As Ann Stoler has argued, ‘managed hearts were critical to the colonial project’.<sup>68</sup> Imperial regimes were just as interested in the private feelings of imperial officials as they were in their public activities. Company directors sought to create institutions and introduce policies that would encourage particular dispositions and attachments which would, in turn, consolidate the social and political division between ruler and ruled. Company proprietors were, to borrow Stoler’s term, keen to ensure that recruits had ‘the right affective profile’.<sup>69</sup> Historians have often focused on the means by which imperial subjects were excluded from various rights and realms of activity, but alongside this process of exclusion was one of inclusion, that is, an attempt to forge affective ties with Britons who went east.<sup>70</sup>

This endeavour to strengthen the connections between Company recruits and the land of their birth seems to have been informed, at least in the early decades of the nineteenth century, by the discomfort surrounding the possibility of a colonial society forming in India. This was a topic which was hotly debated at the time. There were those who felt that an influx of European immigrants would inject a much-needed dose of capital into the Indian economy and provide a model of industry and virtue for the Company’s Indian subjects. Others worried that permanent settlements of Britons would tarnish the image of superiority which the Company sought to cultivate in the subcontinent, as well as potentially undermining the Company’s authority by introducing a discourse of political rights into India and thereby acting as a radicalizing force on Indian society. As a result, until 1833 the East India Company insisted on its right to control migration to India, to deport British subjects, and to delimit the areas in which they could reside or hold property (though ultimately the Charter Act of 1834 revealed that few Britons were interested in settling permanently in India anyway).<sup>71</sup> Part of the reason why the Company decided to

<sup>67</sup> IOR, J/2/1, p. 15.

<sup>68</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the archival grain: epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense* (Princeton, NJ, 2009), p. 40.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>70</sup> For a classic example, see Uday Singh Mehta, ‘Liberal strategies of exclusion’, pp. 59–86, and other essays in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world* (Berkeley, CA, 1997).

<sup>71</sup> P.J. Marshall, ‘The whites of British India, 1780–1830: a failed colonial society?’, *International History Review*, 12 (1990), pp. 26–44, at pp. 28–9.

found a college in England was precisely to preclude the possibility of recruits becoming too deeply rooted in India. Randle Jackson, though an ardent opponent of the college, nevertheless used the example of the thirteen colonies to argue for the necessity of educating Company recruits in Britain, suggesting that ‘the independence of America was hastened, perhaps a century or two, by the colleges and seminaries that were spread over the surface of that country. Partialities and affectionate feelings towards the adopted country replaced those, which, under different circumstances, would have been cherished for Great Britain.’<sup>72</sup>

Although many people supported educating Company recruits in Britain for this reason, not everyone was necessarily convinced that the college in Hertfordshire was effectively instructing its students in British learning (and, implicitly, British values) as promised. Radical MP and Company proprietor Joseph Hume protested that Haileybury’s graduates were men ‘without a knowledge of the essential parts of the British constitution, [men] whose habits...were not fixed and settled, whose minds were not enlightened – in short, who could only be considered as half Englishmen!’<sup>73</sup> In response, supporters of the college presented the curriculum as unfailingly patriotic. Company director Robert Grant responded to attacks on the college’s Oriental instruction with exasperation, pointing out that it was unlikely that a ‘moderate infusion of Oriental learning...should have the effect of contracting the characters or dwarfing the minds (if I may so speak) of the students – of double-dyeing them, as it were, in Indian ink’. Indeed, Grant went so far as to ask, ‘what can be more characteristically English than the education actually received at the place in question’, particularly given that the young men were there ‘introduced to an acquaintance with the study of our laws, our constitution, and our religion, the England (if I may so speak) of England, that specific part of England which makes her what she is, the glory of the West, and the empress of the East’.<sup>74</sup>

It is worth noting that although the above commentators used the language of ‘Englishness’ and English virtues, they were both of them Scottish: Joseph Hume was born in Montrose, while Robert Grant, though born in Bengal, had family roots in Inverness. Indeed, notwithstanding that the Haileybury student body, the court of directors, court of proprietors, and the Company more generally were all heavily Scottish, Scotland and ‘Scottishness’ do not figure in the debate. This may have something to do with what Colin Kidd termed ‘the Anglicization of Scottish political discourse’, particularly Scottish

<sup>72</sup> ‘Debate at the EIH, 6th Feb’, *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, 3 (Jan.–June 1817), pp. 251–77, at p. 264.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Debate at the EIH’, *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, 3 (Jan.–June 1817), pp. 150–65, at p. 152.

<sup>74</sup> Grant, *A view of the system and merits of the East-India College*, pp. 60, 61.

eneration of 'English liberties, laws and constitution'.<sup>75</sup> As Martha McLaren notes, 'Scotland's intelligentsia, although proud of their own intellectual achievements, tended to see England's experience as the exemplar of modern political and social liberty.'<sup>76</sup> Tellingly, those who argued in favour of an 'English' education tended to emphasize precisely its legal and constitutional components, which, in their view, starkly contrasted with the 'Oriental despotism' that youths would supposedly encounter in India. Some historians have doubted the extent to which 'Britishness' outweighed local identifications in an imperial setting, but in the case of the Haileybury debate at least it appears that regional differences within the British Isles paled in comparison to the distinctions which commentators drew between Indians and native Britons.<sup>77</sup> In this particular context, Scotland's distinctive intellectual and cultural heritage appear to have been of less interest than the more general British institutions (private property, rule of law, individual liberty, and Western education) whose formative influence on 'character' was particularly emphasized in the early nineteenth century.<sup>78</sup> Commentators thus appear to have worked within a conceptual framework that was civilizational rather than national, a tendency which Peter Mandler has suggested was typical for the period.<sup>79</sup>

Even where the social implications of the education provided at Haileybury were discussed, 'Scottishness' did not figure in the debate. Many commentators complained that recruits were cordoned off at an exclusive institution where they were prevented from forming social networks with their wider cohort, but the proposed solution to this problem was generally to have the recruits educated at the English public schools and at Oxbridge. The goal was not so much to strengthen a young man's attachment to his local community, but rather to foster habits of gentlemanly sociability which would fit him for his place among Britain's elite.<sup>80</sup> This view was most notoriously expressed by Lord William Wyndham Grenville in a speech in the House of Lords in 1813. While Grenville recognized the necessity of educating the Company's civil servants, and was a strong advocate of this education taking place in England, he was nevertheless deeply opposed to the idea of a separate establishment being

<sup>75</sup> Colin Kidd, 'North Britishness and the nature of eighteenth-century British patriotisms', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp. 361–82, at pp. 374, 377.

<sup>76</sup> Martha McLaren, *British India and British Scotland, 1780–1830: career building, empire building, and a Scottish school of thought on Indian governance* (Akron, OH, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> Hilary Carey, *God's empire: religion and colonialism in the British world, c. 1801–1908* (Cambridge, 2011); John Mackenzie, 'Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English worlds? The historiography of a four-nations approach to the history of the British empire', in Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland, eds., *Race, nation, and empire: making histories, 1750 to the present* (Manchester, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p. 35.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Mandler, *The English national character: the history of an idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (London, 2006), pp. 37–8.

<sup>80</sup> George C. Brauer, *The education of a gentleman: theories of gentlemanly education in England, 1660–1775* (New York, NY, 1959), p. 118.

founded expressly for this purpose. From his perspective, ‘instead of forming them beforehand into an exclusive class, into something resembling a distinct cast of men, destined to administer government in remote provinces, they ought above all other public servants to receive, so long as they continue in England, an education purely English’. By this, Grenville meant an education in one of the great schools like Eton or Harrow, where, he contended, these future civil servants would most effectively ‘be imbued with the deepest tincture of English manners, and English attachments, of English principles, and I am not afraid in this case to say also English prejudices’.<sup>81</sup>

Grenville’s speech was delivered in the run-up to the Company’s charter renewal of 1813, and his comments on the college were informed by his aspirations for crown rule in India; by proposing free competition and public examination in place of a college Grenville was trying to assuage contemporary fears that valuable East India patronage would fall under the control of political parties.<sup>82</sup> Still, Grenville’s arguments were echoed for decades afterwards even by those who did not share his vision, by Company officials as well as peers and MPs, Scots as well as Englishmen. Joseph Hume (a staunch supporter of Company rule) applauded Grenville’s speech, deprecating the college as a ‘secluded monastery’ which was ‘calculated to destroy the native character of Englishmen’.<sup>83</sup> Likewise, in the parliamentary inquiry of 1831–2, a variety of witnesses complained that, as Alexander Duncan Campbell put it, ‘the whole of the civil service for India are insulated, like an Indian caste, from the rest of their fellow-countrymen’.<sup>84</sup> Young men who were not educated with their peers on British subjects at British institutions had, it appears, a dubious claim to be considered British at all, despite the fact that Haileybury was located in Hertfordshire and taught a curriculum not dissimilar from other British schools. Perhaps understandably, defenders of the college failed to see how Haileybury students, in the words of Thomas Malthus, could ‘lose the habits and feelings of British citizens’, given that they were ‘living under the British constitution, and seeing continually their parents and friends, and hearing their conversation’, but anxieties about the identification and attachments of Haileybury students were not so easily quelled.<sup>85</sup>

Critics did have some grounds for fears about Company servants forming a separate caste, for Company employees do seem to have composed a more or less discrete community. The existence of this Anglo-Indian network was largely due to the structure of the Company itself. Directors had the privilege of nominating individuals to positions within the Company, and they used this power to benefit their friends and family. Through nomination,

<sup>81</sup> *Hansard parliamentary debates*, first series, 1812–13, xxv (9 Apr. 1813), col. 751.

<sup>82</sup> Philips, *The East India Company*, pp. 187–8.

<sup>83</sup> *Hansard parliamentary debates*, second series, 1826, xiv (16 Mar. 1826), col. 1375.

<sup>84</sup> HCP (1831–2), VIII, vol. 1, p. 190.

<sup>85</sup> Malthus, *A letter to the Rt. Hon. Lord Grenville*, p. 19.

Company directors were able to establish potent family legacies. The Bosanquet family's influence on the Company is a good example. Three Bosanquets were elected to the directorate between 1759 and 1827; Jacob Bosanquet served in 1759, Richard Bosanquet between 1768 and 1773, and Jacob (II) between 1782 and 1827. By the 1820s, Bosanquets were spread throughout the various branches of the Company's civil, commercial, and maritime service. Family legacies such as the Bosanquets were strengthened through the establishment of marriage and friendship ties with other dominant families. This meant that fifty or sixty families formed a kind of society within a society, connected through friendship, marriage, kinship, and patronage.<sup>86</sup> Imperial power and wealth, it seemed, were increasingly monopolized by a narrow segment of society with ever more tenuous links to the nation. The discomfort surrounding this so-called Anglo-Indian caste, and the concomitant objection to the college at Haileybury (which threatened to compound the problem), can probably be traced to the desire to harness this power and wealth more directly to Britain.<sup>87</sup>

Contemporaries were also concerned about the ability of imperial officials to reintegrate into British society following their retirement from the Company's service. Part of the reason that Company officials were sent out at an early age was so that they could make their fortune in India and return to Britain while still in their prime, enabling them to marry, start a family, and participate in public life.<sup>88</sup> Company official John Sullivan, however, claimed that 'it is a common complaint among Indians [by which he meant former Company officials], that they are strangers in their own country, and a very irksome feeling it is'. This led Sullivan to 'give a decided preference to the education at the national universities, as calculated to make home more comfortable on his return to a man who is destined to reside for many years in so distant a scene as India'.<sup>89</sup> The ex-official's own comfort aside, the idea of a man returning to England without emotional or practical ties was unsettling. Political theorist Uday Singh Mehta nicely captured this feeling of unease: as he put it, 'the empire effects its power through the creation of a class of individuals who are rootless and who afflict the societies they touch with a similar contagion. Lacking society themselves, they unsettle the norms of both British and Indian society.'<sup>90</sup>

Some observers, however, felt that the real problem was that future Company servants were alienated early on from the society they were meant to administer.

<sup>86</sup> Bowen, *The business of empire*, pp. 121–2.

<sup>87</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, *The scandal of empire: India and the creation of imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), p. 21.

<sup>88</sup> Peter Penner, *The patronage bureaucracy in North India: the Robert M. Bird and James Thomason school, 1820–1870* (Delhi, 1986), p. 207.

<sup>89</sup> HCP (1831–2), VIII, vol. 1, p. 63.

<sup>90</sup> Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and empire: a study in nineteenth-century British Liberal thought* (Chicago, IL, 1999), p. 172.

Professor Thomas Malthus felt that, far from losing their connection to Britain, many future writers were at risk of not wanting to leave home at all. Malthus pointed out that ‘by their protracted stay in England, they strengthen so much all the ties which unite them to their friends and their native country, that they are too unwilling to leave it’.<sup>91</sup> In a similar vein, some Company men argued that recruits should be sent out younger so as to enable them to adapt more easily to an Indian way of life. Company official N.B. Edmonstone believed that ‘by going out early, they become more readily attached to the service. Moreover, at this stage of life the young recruits’ ‘habits [were] yet unfixed, and their dispositions more pliable, and therefore more easily accommodated to the change in their condition’.<sup>92</sup> As this suggests, although some commentators on the debate expressed disquiet at Company servants’ growing ties with India, there were those who felt that a closer connection between India and Britain was requisite if India was to be governed responsibly. Francis Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review* argued that ‘the condition...of Europeans, as mere sojourners in India, cannot be without evil influence on their conduct’. Jeffrey felt that when a position is taken up ‘far from that country, in which a man’s thoughts and wishes are centered,...it is but too natural to regard with indifference a conscientious fulfilment of its duties’.<sup>93</sup> For Jeffrey and others of his opinion, unless Britons abroad were somehow emotionally invested in India, they would have little incentive to behave ethically there. The problem was not their feelings of attachment to Britain, or lack thereof, but rather their detachment and disregard towards India.

An anonymous commentator on the debate resolved this issue in part by suggesting that officials, by developing emotional ties with their fellow Company men, would be encouraged to perform in an ethical way in India as a result of their desire to appear respectable in the eyes of their colleagues. The college could assist in this process by giving future writers time to interact with their cohort and to identify suitable friends and colleagues. In the words of director Robert Grant, time at East India College would ‘afford [the student] the means of selecting his associates; [and] fortify him against that danger of forming improper or injurious connexions to which a very young man suddenly planted amidst strangers could not but be more or less exposed’.<sup>94</sup> These respectable friends would encourage civil servants to adhere to certain standards of behaviour while in India. As a former civil servant put it, ‘the respectability of a man’s connexion has a powerful influence over his conduct. The stake and interest which he has in the public welfare is thereby increased; and he is urged to honourable exertion, as well

<sup>91</sup> Malthus, *A letter to the Rt. Hon. Lord Grenville*, p. 18.

<sup>92</sup> HCP (1831–2), VIII, vol. 1, p. 204.

<sup>93</sup> Francis Jeffrey, ‘ART. XI. Statements respecting the East India College, with an appeal to facts, in refutation of the charges lately brought against it in the court of proprietors’, *Edinburgh Review*, 27 (1816), p. 514.

<sup>94</sup> Grant, *A view of the system and merits of the East-India College*, p. 64.

by the fear of disgrace as the hope of reward.<sup>95</sup> Rather than identifying as narrowly British or Indian, identification as a Company man might provide a practical middle ground.

A common civil service identity at the College would also, it was argued, help create a comforting sense of community among civil servants in India. Haileybury principal Joseph Batten suggested that

even...if it had some of the tendencies to an Indian caste which have been attributed to it, there would be a compensation in its enabling those who are destined for the Indian service to form friendships, – at once a strength to that service, and a solace to themselves when separated from their native country.<sup>96</sup>

According to a former civilian, Haileybury made India into ‘a second home’ rather than ‘a land of strangers’. New appointees could thus draw on a pre-existing support network, so that, in his words:

whatever difficulties the novelty of his situation may at first create, they are removed by friends whom he finds already settled in the country; and, in the course of his future career, he can visit no part of the Indian empire where he will not be received under the hospitable roof of a fellow-collegian.<sup>97</sup>

Rather than viewing the Haileybury connection as a threat to the official’s British identity, in this case it was presented as a safety net; it connected the civil servant to a group of like-minded young men who could provide emotional and practical aid.

The debate over East India College, then, derived some of its force from fundamental divisions over precisely what constituted an ideal civil servant, and what qualities the Company should prioritize in their search for that ideal. Part of the problem was contemporary disagreement regarding the relative value to be accorded to practical knowledge over character-building, and, more specifically, to familiarity with Indian languages and customs over grounding in European ethics. The hearts of Company recruits were just as much a subject of concern as their brains, however; at the core of the debate were contemporary anxieties about the social effects of the imperial enterprise on the agents of empire themselves. Critics of the college, both inside and outside the Company, argued that segregation from British youths of similar age would estrange Company recruits from their country and their countrymen. The prevalence of such arguments suggests a relatively widespread belief that imperial officials were in danger of losing the habits and dispositions which fitted them for participation in British social life. Such rootless individuals would either remain permanently in India, thereby potentially unsettling the divide between Indian and Briton, or, if they ever returned to Britain, would

<sup>95</sup> ‘A civilian’, *A letter*, p. 10.

<sup>96</sup> HCP (1831–2), VIII, vol. 1, p. 757.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.



remain outsiders incapable of integration. At the same time, there were others who felt that Company officials should have some feeling of connection and accountability to Indian society or, at the very least, to the Company, if they were to behave ethically. What these points of difference imply is that more than 200 years after the foundation of the East India Company in 1600, there continued to be people who regarded the relationship between India and Britain, and the position of the Company somewhere between, with concern.

#### IV

The East India Company had, by the time of Haileybury's foundation in 1806, become the foremost political player in India. Still, in response to the critics of Haileybury who argued that the Company had emerged triumphant on the subcontinent without the benefit of a college, Company director Robert Grant retorted that 'the heroism that can *win* empire has no natural affinity with the wisdom and virtue that *improve* and *consolidate* it'. In making this point, Grant distinguished between 'the martial energies adapted to seasons of danger and daring', and 'those less-shining qualities which are required for the business of ordinary government'.<sup>98</sup> The implication was that the Company's changing role in the subcontinent demanded a new range of skills and dispositions, calling for solid, reliable men of judgement and discretion, pencil-pushers rather than adventurers. For Grant (and he was not alone), the college represented a means of setting the deepening relationship between metropole and empire on a more sustainable footing, of securing the efficacious government of India by producing the most knowledgeable, capable, and morally sound officials possible. This was more easily said than done, however, and proved particularly troublesome given that Britain was in the midst of an epoch of experimentation and debate insofar as education was concerned. While everyone could agree on the basic axiom that Company officials ought to be well-trained, there was a lack of consensus on how best to go about training them.

In addition to producing qualified officials, contemporaries expected the college to cultivate young men who would preserve Britain's image of ascendancy in India, officials who could be relied upon to remain fundamentally 'British', nebulous though the concept was. The college, in short, was meant not just to train civil servants to perform their duties, but also to mediate the intimate affiliation between India and Britain. The college was supposed to ensure not just that Britons in India would always be perceived as superior to their Indian subjects, but that they would continue to identify strongly with the land of their birth, its laws, and its constitution; rigid distinctions were to

<sup>98</sup> Grant, *A view of the system and merits of the East-India College at Haileybury*, p. 10. Emphasis is in original text.

be maintained between colonizer and colonized. That being said, it was far from evident to everyone that a closer connection with India, or the development of a particular Company identity, was necessarily undesirable. Indeed, some felt that Company officials should become more, rather than less, connected to the land they were responsible for governing. This difference in opinion speaks to broader divisions regarding the relationship between Britain, India, and the Company, and how intimate that relationship should be. The fact that the College's relative success or failure was the focus of so much attention speaks to just how anxious some Britons were about the boundary between Britain and India, and about the ambiguous position of the Company as an institution which was somehow both British and Indian at the same time. The debate, in short, was about empire itself, and the attempt to wrestle with both the conceptual and practical problems that it posed.

Many of the fears which the college excited in interested onlookers proved, with time, to be illusory. For instance, there is little evidence to support the idea that Haileybury 'Indianized' its students. If anything, the testimonials of its graduates suggest that Haileybury imbued them with an arrogant sense of their own right to rule. This is captured in a phrase of Indian administrator Walter Scott Seton-Karr's in a speech he delivered at a dinner for former Haileybury students in Calcutta in 1864. 'It was there [Haileybury]', Seton-Karr claimed, 'that we first became cognizant of the fact that we were members of the civil service, a body whose mission it was to rule and to civilise that empire which had been won for us by the sword'.<sup>99</sup> Far from considering themselves somehow Indian, it is Bernard Cohn's theory that many of the boys left with a romanticized image of Britain with which India could never compare.<sup>100</sup>

Where the predictions of commentators were perhaps borne out was in terms of the bonds of masculine sociability forged between Haileybury students, attested to by the fact that Haileybury graduates continued to meet for reunion dinners long after the college itself had closed its doors.<sup>101</sup> A number of historians of modern Britain have hypothesized that elite boarding schools fostered a particular kind of masculine identity that shaped the future rulers of Britain and its empire in powerful ways; this certainly fits the stereotype at least of Haileybury students as muscular men of action.<sup>102</sup> After the school's closure and the institution of competitive examinations, this earlier generation of imperial administrators brought up at Haileybury was regarded with nostalgia. However imperfect the instruction provided at East India College, the

<sup>99</sup> Danvers, *Memorials*, p. 93.

<sup>100</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, *An anthropologist among the historians and other essays* (Delhi, 1987), p. 437.

<sup>101</sup> 'Old Haileybury, or the rulers of India', *Pall Mall Gazette* (London), 24 May 1895, p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> For the effect of public school education with reference to India, see Francis G. Hutchins, *The illusion of permanence: British imperialism in India* (Princeton, NJ, 1967), pp. 48–51.

events of 1857 seemed to vindicate it as a system of education. Though the introduction of competitive examinations appeared to ensure that students were more intellectually qualified for their posts, some feared that the so-called ‘competition-wallah’ lacked the character and grit of an earlier generation of Company officials.<sup>103</sup> As author R. W. Lodwick put it in his fictional account of the college,

how many of those men stood undaunted in the time of danger, and either aided in saving our Empire in India, or died gloriously as heroes at their posts, let the annals of the Indian Mutiny bear witness. Whether the new race of civilians are equally worthy of their position, it will require another crisis like the Mutiny of 1857 to prove.<sup>104</sup>

These feelings of veneration pose a sharp contrast to the criticisms of the early nineteenth century, when Company proprietor Thomas Lowndes claimed ‘that he was sometimes ashamed of being a member of the Company, because he apprehended it might be thought, that their conduct in India resembled that of the young men in Hertford college’.<sup>105</sup> The scandal surrounding the college was, it seems, largely eclipsed by the Mutiny. Since then, it has been largely ignored, or, when mentioned, has been presented in a simplistic manner that does not properly communicate the very real objections that the college inspired.

This article has sought to recuperate this long-forgotten debate and all the aspirations and anxieties that it brought to light, reminding us of the doubt and uncertainty usually obscured by the triumphalist imperial rhetoric of the period. Historians have often emphasized the assumptions of civilizational superiority that undergirded European imperial expansion, but the Haileybury debate tells a different story, suggesting how uncertainties about education, identity formation, and empire could intermingle. Contrary to conventional portrayals of the nineteenth century as an age of imperial confidence, many contemporaries were far from convinced of the character and abilities of the young men being sent out to represent them abroad. Imperial expansion, and the administrative responsibilities that followed in its wake, invested the problem of elite boys’ education with special urgency. Instead of complacently trusting in the supposed biological superiority of their recruits, commentators worried about how these young men might develop and behave in an imperial context. Reforming projects like the foundation of Haileybury were supposed to assuage these fears, but in fact the endeavour to educate the Company’s recruits raised more questions than it resolved.

<sup>103</sup> Penner, *The patronage bureaucracy in North India*, pp. 226–30.

<sup>104</sup> R. W. Lodwick, *John Bolt, Indian civil servant: a tale of old Haileybury and India* (2 vols., London, 1891), 1, p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Debate at the EIH, Feb. 25 – Haileybury College’, *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, 4 (June–Dec. 1817), pp. 157–77, at p. 169.