

## XIII

### **‘A Moderate Infusion of Oriental Learning’: Representations of the East India College at Haileybury and its influence on constructing the Company official.**

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*This essay explores two artefacts relating to the early history of the East India College at Haileybury and its specific mission in training new civil servants in India. The first of these artefacts is ‘A Letter to Lord Grenville on the East India Company’s Establishment for the Education of Their Civil Servants’ written in 1813 by the Rev. T.R. Malthus, Professor of History at the East India College. The letter reveals the tensions between education and empire and the ambiguity over how best to ‘construct’ the Company official. This letter will be juxtaposed with a newspaper article from 1830 containing a copy of a wood engraving of the College. Published in ‘The Mirror’, the article chronicles the educational progress of the Honourable East India Company’s aspiring civil servants. These artefacts reveal how the education of the imperial official was inextricably tied to imperial expansion in India throughout the nineteenth century.*

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**W**riting to the East India Company’s Court of Directors on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1800, Lord Wellesley would urge the Company to establish an educational institution to train recruits for their future careers in Indian administration. As a colonial administrator in India, Wellesley had already founded the training college at Fort William, Calcutta. To consolidate Company power, Wellesley harnessed the importance of education as a way to secure the rapid territorial expansion and growing prominence of the EIC which had begun to ‘dispense justice to millions of people [...] and administer a vast and complicated system of revenue’.<sup>1</sup> Within five years of Wellesley’s missive, a report had been commissioned to examine precisely the kind of education required for Company

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Wellesley, *Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley*, 5 vols (London: J. Murray, 1826), I, p.325.

officials or ‘writers’, and ‘Haileybury House near Hertford’ was chosen as the site of the East India College. From 1806 to 1858, there were 1985 admissions to the College and eighty-eight percent of those students ultimately entered the Indian Civil Service. Haileybury graduates would carry out the bulk of work of governing India, as dictated by the British Government, for more than seventy years.

The East India Company or ‘Charter’ Act of 1813 stipulated that no person should be sent to India without having completed four full terms at Haileybury and should receive a certificate demonstrating he had complied with the rules and regulations therein. Haileybury students, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two, were nominated by the Court of Directors and tended to be ‘their sons and nephews and friends’: the scions of Anglo-Indian families who saw the Indian Civil Service as their natural, and lifelong, career.<sup>2</sup> As such, Company Directors had perpetuated a system of patronage and the important debate of how competent such candidates were for the positions within the Indian Civil Service had been largely ignored. The foundation of the East India College, however, did little to assuage the intractable debate on how best to train Company officials and variances of opinion on the College’s function, as well as Company interference in their nominees’ education, lasted throughout the fifty-two years of its existence.<sup>3</sup>

The East India College adopted a curriculum that was wide in scope, covering Classics, Mathematics, Political Economy, History and Law alongside Hindi and regional languages depending on whether a student was headed for one presidency or another. Engaging tutors were held in the highest regard, teaching fostered immense intellectual growth and, from 1839 onwards, *The Haileybury Observer* was published, testament to the creative talents of its students in poetry and literature.<sup>4</sup> In later years, Oxford’s Boden Professor of Sanskrit, Sir Monier Monier-Williams remarked that ‘the mental training which I gained at old Haileybury was so varied and excellent that nothing at all equal to it [...] was to be had either at the University or elsewhere’.<sup>5</sup> Public displays of the College’s success were not uncommon and much needed at a time when the success of its students was inextricably tied to that of the Company. The school was prominent in the public imagination, its progress scrutinised in the Houses of Commons and Lords and its value discussed in newspapers across Britain.<sup>6</sup> The first artefact that this article examines was taken from newsprint.

Figure 1. is a wood engraving of, and commentary on, the East India College. It appeared in *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction* on 6 March 1830, evoking both the idyllic,

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<sup>2</sup> George Campbell, *Memoirs of my Indian Career* (London, MacMillan, 1893), p.8.

<sup>3</sup> Callie Wilkinson, ‘The East India College Debate and The Fashioning of the Imperial Officials, 1806 – 1858’, *The Historical Journal*, 60.4 (2017), pp. 943-969 (p.960).

<sup>4</sup> *The Haileybury Observer*, A Miscellany by the Students of the East India College (Hertfordshire, Part 1, 1840).

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Lawrence Lowell, *Colonial Civil Service The selection and training of colonial officials in England, Holland and France* (New York, 1900) p.14.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Lynn McCartor, *The John Company’s College: Haileybury and the British Government’s attempt to control the Indian Civil Service*. (Doctoral thesis, Texas Tech University, 1981).

imperial grandeur of the Haileybury buildings created by the architect William Wilkins and the academic excellence that was to be discovered within its walls. More than twenty years on from Haileybury's foundation, *The Mirror's* correspondent writes admiringly of the educational methods afforded to students and the prowess they display, in intellect and creativity. Entry into Haileybury, despite the distinct advantages afforded by patronage, were rigorous and involved an educational test for entrance for all nominees. After 1809, nominees had to submit to an interview before a committee of the Directors where they would be questioned on their 'character, connections and qualifications' in order to ascertain whether they were suited for life in India.<sup>7</sup> However, at the time of Haileybury's foundation, there were no exact requirements set out for 'British' education and it left the Company with two predicaments; firstly, how to choose an appropriate education that would befit the role of the Company official and secondly, what form a competent imperial official would take. The debate on education could also not be taken in isolation, or within the simple parameters of pedagogy. Since most of Haileybury's students had been nominated by the Directors, their parents were likely to be either Company stockholders or have familial ties to the members of the Court and thus exerted influence over their sons' educational pursuits. The correspondent for the article in Figure 1 appears to have given some thought to the 'diligence and application' (ll. 10-11 in the final paragraph of Figure 1.) shown by the students at Haileybury but fails to acknowledge the extent to which patronage had succeeded in only placing nominated students at the College.

The correspondent refers to Haileybury as a College and the use of the term is in itself unsurprising - it was named as a 'College' not a 'School' from its inception. A reader of this piece in 1830, in a weekly periodical such as *The Mirror*, would assume that the East India College was a higher educational institution. However, what makes the use of the term interesting is that, in practice, the Court of Directors had fashioned an establishment more akin to a school, with all its trappings. Supporting the idea of a strict disciplinary boundaries, one Company Director, Robert Grant, recommended a period of 'watchful guardianship' within which time the 'pupil can acquire the power to stand'.<sup>8</sup> Evidently, some Company Directors deemed the success of their future administrators in India to be predicated on their ability to handle a school regimen. Discipline was of intense concern to the Company and a primary factor in its decision to base the East India College in England. Reverend T.R. Malthus, one of Haileybury's tutors, was of the opinion that it was easier to manage the temperaments of young men in England rather than India 'where suddenly possessed of an unusual

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<sup>7</sup> Lowell, p.233.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Grant, *A View of the System and Merits of the East-India College at Haileybury* (London, Kingsbury, 1826) p.72.

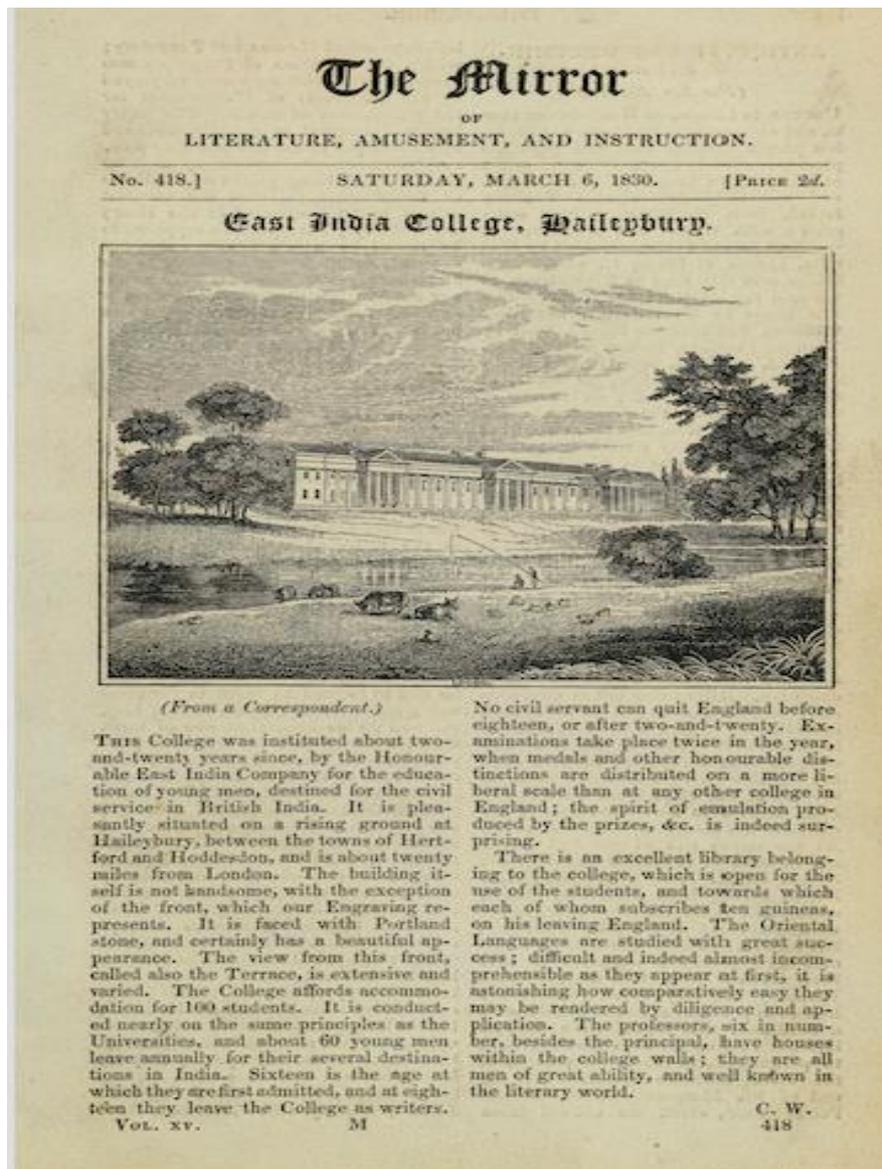


Figure 1: 'East India College, Haileybury', *Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, 6 March 1830, p.418.

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command of money [...] they would be tempted to indulgences of all kinds of novel forms'.<sup>9</sup> A former Haileyburian, George Campbell, remembers a school format rather than a college with 'a routine of classics and mathematics' that 'resembled all his previous years of schooling'.<sup>10</sup> This was not simply a question of semantics. Indeed, a collegiate atmosphere may have been more beneficial in moulding these young recruits into men who had the independence and foresight to undertake the task of ruling India. Notwithstanding the merits of these and other arguments, the Directors never managed to quell the debate on how exactly to run Haileybury and this had far reaching consequences on the type of Company official that was employed in Indian governance.

<sup>9</sup> 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 Directors* (London, J. Murray, 1817), p.52.

<sup>10</sup> George Campbell, *Memoirs*, p.9.

The perpetuation of traditional notions about British governance in India and the Company's role in bringing law and order to the land continued to inflect thinking on the education of its administrators and nowhere more so than on the question of learning Indian languages. It is striking that *The Mirror's* correspondent remarks on the learning of Oriental languages in such a short article, commenting that Indian languages are 'studied with great success; difficult and indeed almost incomprehensible as they appear at first'.<sup>11</sup> Evidence to the contrary suggests that established notions of British superiority amongst aspiring writers meant that learning Indian languages was a low priority. Debates at East India House from 1809 show that the poor quality of education in Indian languages was a matter of contention. Many commentators felt such a system was 'injurious'<sup>12</sup> to their Indian subjects when in 1809 alone, 341 new Company officials would arrive in India 'to command foreigners with whose language and manners they were utterly unacquainted'.<sup>13</sup> Robert Grant had been adamant that 'a moderate infusion of Oriental learning'<sup>14</sup> would not suffice in the arduous task that civil servants faced during their Indian residency and sought more intensive language acquisition. In practical terms, the functioning of the EIC was entirely dependent on the agents that resided in the territory and the education debate was crucial in determining exactly what kind of official the East India Company ultimately wanted in India. Once the agents arrived in India, it became much more difficult to control their activities.<sup>15</sup> Haileybury was the Company's best chance to inculcate the values they wished to instil in their officials to ensure a long and successful career in India but they failed to decide on their priorities: were practical skills such as language acquisition more important than the development of character?<sup>16</sup> The debate on language acquisition revealed an institution unable to decide upon either its educational format or ultimate aims.

Haileybury was not short of detractors. To understand the defence of the East India College by Reverend T.R. Malthus in *A Letter to Lord Grenville on the East India Company's Establishment for*

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<sup>11</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>12</sup> Both Robert Grant and Lord Macaulay were critical of the behaviour exhibited by colonial servants under Company Raj. See Eddy Kent's chapter 'Corporate Culture in Post-Company Raj' in *Corporate Character: Representing Imperial Power in British India, 1786-1901*, (University of Toronto Press, 2014), p.203, for a discussion of Lord Macaulay's writings on the character of British agents and the 'notoriety of the nabob, the vulgar and avaricious stock character of British stage drama [...] whose ill-gotten fortunes are often represented as a threat to the domestic body politic'. Robert Grant wrote of the necessity of an institution such as Haileybury, which safeguarded against future injury to both writers and the EIC. If writers were not given sufficient training, Grant feared that 'the probationers would be misled by an evil company, and will prove idle, others will be disobedient; hints of removal will be given, hints of removal will not be taken, open dismissals will follow – grief, disappointment, complaint, recrimination...'. See Robert Grant, *A View of the System and Merits of the East-India College at Haileybury*, (London, Kingsbury, 1826), p.105.

<sup>13</sup> *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and Foreign India, China and Australia*, 20 (1825), p.563.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Grant, *A View of the System and Merits of the East India College at Haileybury* (London, Kingsbury, 1826), p. 60.

<sup>15</sup> Eddy Kent, *Corporate Character: Representing Imperial Power in British India, 1786-1901* (University of Toronto Press, 2014), p.3.

<sup>16</sup> Callie 'Wilkinson, The East India College Debate and The Fashioning of the Imperial Officials, 1806 – 1858', *The Historical Journal*, 60.4 (2017) pp.943-969 (p.959).

*the Education of Their Civil Servants*, we need to look at the criticism levelled against it, by Lord William Grenville. His views were expressed most vociferously in a speech at the House of Lords in 1813. Grenville was of the opinion that Company education should not be undertaken by a separate institution, a view completely at odds with Lord Wellesley who believed that offering Company recruits the opportunity to ‘associate freely in a collegiate atmosphere where they could lay the foundations of private character and public reputation’ was of the utmost importance.<sup>17</sup> Many commentators, such as Callie Wilkinson, worked on the premise of a ‘civilizational framework’ whereby British notions of the rule of law, liberty and character building were the foundations upon which an effective agency in India could be built.<sup>18</sup> Imbuing ‘Britishness’ into the learning of Company recruits, Grenville’s speech proposed that imperial expansion in India was best serviced through a system of education through schools such as Eton or Harrow, with ‘English manners, and English attachments, of English principles’.<sup>19</sup> Grenville’s arguments resonated throughout the decades of Haileybury’s existence and in the imperial world order. This understanding of English values in relationship to imperial constructs was typical. Catherine Hall sums up this understanding in the following terms: ‘one site for the making of those selves was in the formal processes of education: the bringing into being of new subjects and new subjectivities’.<sup>20</sup> Colonies such as India were spaces in which to create new societies with a natural order and hierarchy, through which the superiority of the British citizen could be firmly established.

The Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus was well placed to act as defender of the East India College, being one of the most respected political economists of the time and Professor of History and Political Economy at Haileybury. In his thirty-eight-page *Letter*, Malthus objects to the ‘severe censure’ passed on the College by Lord Grenville and it is in his defence that we see most clearly how Company education was beginning to alter old fashioned ideas of agents as ‘nabobs’ and replacing them with well-versed, knowledgeable Company officials with the skills to become competent administrators in the sub-continent.

The *Letter* both methodically refutes the charges and assumptions made against Haileybury and highlights the benefits of running such an institution for the overall benefit of Company and imperial rule. Malthus believes that it is the threat of ‘individual agency’ that is of concern, a rogue agent upsetting the imperial order, and so an institution whose ‘foundation must be judiciously laid in England and the superstructure systematically completed in India’ is the best safeguard against such

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<sup>17</sup> Eddy Kent, *Corporate Character: Representing Imperial Power in British India, 1786-1901* (University of Toronto Press, 2014), p.26.

<sup>18</sup> Wilkinson, p.962

<sup>19</sup> *Hansard parliamentary debates, first series, 1812-13*, XXV (9 April, 1813), col.751.

<sup>20</sup> Catherine Hall, ‘Making colonial subjects: education in the age of empire’, *History of Education*, 37.6 (2008) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00467600802106206>> [accessed 25 Jan 2018], p.774.

eventualities.<sup>21</sup> Underpinning all of Malthus' defence is the fact that the sentiments that Lord Grenville had expressed had consequences and the true character of Haileybury needed to be given due consideration in the public domain.

A recurrent, popular criticism of Haileybury emerges in Grenville's speech and subsequently in Malthus' *Letter*: civil servants, Grenville said, had become 'a distinct class like an Indian caste'.<sup>22</sup> In fact, much of the *Letter* focuses on the advantages of constructing such a separate breed of young men intended for Indian administration. Malthus, in his capacity as tutor, evidently disagrees with Grenville's stance and contends that Haileybury 'strengthens so much the ties which unite them to their friends and native country that they are too unwilling to leave it'.<sup>23</sup> There is little doubt that the Haileybury project seems to have been destined to create such a disparate colonial class. As seen in Figure 1. and discussed earlier in this article, the system of patronage was strengthened by the Directors' rights of nomination. Clearly, Company recruits were a separate class apart, being trained in the art of Company administration and given the opportunity because they had been handpicked by those in power. Malthus may have had the best intentions in defending the officials that Haileybury produced but would have had to concede that Haileybury was not in the business of statesmanship, and, in constructing agents of empire, they created 'instruments not sovereigns'.<sup>24</sup> Company officials were tools in the greater enterprise of Indian administration. In defending the 'sub-caste' that Haileybury apparently created, Malthus seems to forget the wider implications of failing to produce a colonial official who might have their own special enclave within British officialdom but would be, nevertheless, alienated from Indian society. It was widely known that Company servants were reluctant to 'act like rulers' in India and preferred to rule through Indian intermediaries, simply to preserve the status quo and propagate a non-interventionist stance that would ensure their own financial soundness in the ensuing decades.<sup>25</sup> The East India College, both as a project and institution, would always be called in to question if the fundamentals of Company rule remained imprecise.

Many of the arguments that Malthus makes in his *Letter* are not only signifiers of attempts to undermine Haileybury, but also the changing face of the Company's administration in India. Until the early nineteenth century, the East India Company had functioned as a trading company, extracting the most profit for its stockholders and the pattern of ruling 'in the Indian idiom' had been preserved, thus

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<sup>21</sup> Reverend T.R. Malthus, *A Letter to Lord Grenville on the East India Company's Establishment for the Education of Their Civil Servants*, (London, J. Johnson, 1813), p.7.

<sup>22</sup> Malthus, *A Letter*, p.5.

<sup>23</sup> Malthus, *A Letter*, p.18.

<sup>24</sup> Kent, p.50.

<sup>25</sup> Jacob Thiessen, 'Anglo-Indian Vested Interests and Civil Service Education, 1800- 1858: Indications of an East India Company Line', *Journal of World History*, 5.1 (1994), p.24.

maintaining Indian culture and institutions.<sup>26</sup> At the time Haileybury existed, however, education and Christianity had emerged as the more prominent tropes in their ‘civilising’ efforts. Malthus repeatedly remarks that by providing such an education in England, the calibre of recruits had been enhanced and tutors had been ‘informed, at different presidencies in India [...] of a marked improvement in the conduct and attainments of the young men who have arrived since the establishment of the college in England’.<sup>27</sup> From an educationalist’s point of view, Malthus sought to create civil servants with the intellectual capability to make a difference in India. He wanted the antithesis of the Company man that the poet Thomas Love Peacock found at East India House in 1819:

From ten to eleven, ate breakfast for seven  
From eleven to noon, to begin was too soon  
From twelve to one, asked, ‘What’s to be done?’  
From one to two, found nothing to do;  
From two to three, began to foresee  
That from three to four would be a damned bore.<sup>28</sup>

Malthus wanted to replace these kinds of Company men with civil servants who ‘education will render a very much greater proportion out of a certain number competent to discharge the offices that require talents, information and industry’.<sup>29</sup> While Malthus would have acknowledged that, over the course of a long career in India, Company officials would have gained vast amounts of knowledge, he believed that Haileybury gave recruits the best possible start in setting the foundations for a deeper understanding and affinity to their role in India. To Malthus, the College represented a means of strengthening the ties between England and the territorial empire, and he recognised that the act of administering the Indian state required men with sound judgment rather than the clerks delineated in Peacock’s poem. It is for this reason he offers this impassioned defence of Grenville’s critique on Haileybury.

Contrary to the imperial image of the early nineteenth century, with its confidence and expansion, the artefacts that this article examines on the Haileybury debate evoke the uncertainty, disquiet and ambiguity over how to administer rule in India, calling into question the fitness of Company directors, the College itself and the officials who undertook daily acts of governance. The College’s many commentators were conscious of unruly indiscipline within its walls and concerned about the calibre of men bound for India. Conversely, the College flourished academically with high standards of

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<sup>26</sup> Catherine Hall, *Making colonial subjects: education in the age of empire*, *History of Education*, 37.6, p.783.

<sup>27</sup> Malthus, *A Letter*, p.34.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Love Peacock, ‘From ten to eleven’, quoted in H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire, The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain 1756-1833* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.144.

<sup>29</sup> Malthus, *A Letter*, p.27.

teaching and fostered a sense of camaraderie that lasted far into the careers of many Company men. Both artefacts prompt further questioning related to the attendant anxieties on the character and ability of those men sent to represent Britain in India. Imperial rhetoric engendered an imperial superiority amongst the Britons ruling over the Indian people, but there was a complacency as to the true mettle of the young recruits who were ultimately sent to serve in India. The East India College at Haileybury, in its relatively short existence, brought to light the discrepancy between the immense task of Indian administration and the woefully inadequate training of officials that had preceded its foundation. In the commentary from both artefacts, the narrative of the East India College is both one of the triumph of the Company rule in India and also of uncertainty as to how to secure its future. Despite objections to the function, suitability and concept of Haileybury, the College masterfully led the way in educating an entire generation of officials who ruled India in the early nineteenth century.

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