

The Imperial Design and Shakespeare

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Abstract: My paper aims at showing that Shakespeare worked within an imperial paradigm. The basis for saying so is that in Europe, starting with the ancient Greece, the idea of the empire was pre-formulated before the establishment of an empire. That is, the empire was invented before it was actualized. The Greeks, followed by the Romans, read the map of the world from a moral premise. They imagined an empire with Athens as the centre, implying that the lands away from the centre were the locations for barbarians, who were morally inferior and bestial. Such a view of the empire has been called 'poetic geography' by Giambattista Vico, an eighteenth-century philosopher. My point is that the poetic geography was not only created by the Greeks and the Romans in respect of their empires, but the English also had pursued a poetic geography before the English/British Empire took shape. In this pursuit Shakespeare had been used as an agency to further the imperial cause. But Shakespeare had been at best a double-edged agency, because while he was found useful in pushing the imperial agenda he also became the site of resistance for the colonized.

I. Introduction:

Cleopatra [to Antony]: If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

Antony: There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned.

Cleopatra: I'll set a bourn how far to be loved.

Antony: Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.

(*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act 1, Scene 1, 14-17.)

Antony's utterance, "Thou must needs find out new heaven, [and] new earth" refers to the new geographical spaces that were being discovered by explorers before and during Shakespeare's time. The Norton Anthology of Shakespeare's works, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, et al., has a footnote saying that this line introduces the imperial theme of the play (Norton 857). Though anachronistic to the time of the play's events, the idea of the empire was a commonplace in Shakespeare's England. *Antony and Cleopatra* was written in 1606-07, but the year before, in 1606, Shakespeare had his tragic king, Macbeth pursue, achieve and die for "the imperial theme" (*Macbeth*, 1.3.128).

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In this paper, I'm going to show that Shakespeare worked within an imperial paradigm, when the aspirations of the English geographers and explorers were in tune with the monarchical desire for an expansion of the English territories. Shakespeare was a child of his age, and though in the quotation above it is the empire of love that Antony is willing to give preference over the political empire, but the desire for an empire, especially after the English victory over the Spanish Armada at Gravelines off the French coast in 1588, fired the imagination of the English men for a global dominance. My paper will elaborate this point, while it will also show that as Shakespeare was working within an imperial paradigm, it (the paper) is therefore not so much about how Shakespeare has used the imperial trope in his plays as about how he himself has been used in the design.

To understand the English monarchical ambition of an empire, one analogy perhaps will suffice. Akbar, the great emperor of Mughal India (reigning time: 1556-1605) and Elizabeth, the great queen of England (reigning time: 1558-1603) were contemporaries, and perhaps unknown to each other. Both were very enlightened monarchs, but while Akbar didn't feel it necessary to form a fleet, Elizabeth signed a charter on the last day of the year 1600, permitting a group of London merchants to form a company called the East India Company. What happened after that is history, and my paper will deal with how in subsequent centuries Shakespeare was received in India (by India, I mean the subcontinent before the partition in 1947) in a mixed way—revered, and also appropriated for India's national cause. That is, Shakespeare in India, and also now in Bangladesh, has never been de-historicized. He has either been used as a representative imperial figure authenticating a seamless monolithic identity, which is the English/British imperialism or as a veritable ground to form the voice of resistance. This dualistic aspect of the use of Shakespeare, as I will show, however, doesn't remain unique to India only, but, as Werner Habicht and Coppelia Kahn report in their essays, "Shakespeare Celebrations in Times of War" and "Remembering Shakespeare Imperially" respectively, that "not only England but other countries, too, came to claim him as their national poet" (Habicht 441).

I've spoken above about the English desire for an empire. I'll elaborate on this point later, but for now it is necessary to realize that the Eurocentric imperial paradigm had been at work long before the English had a vision of it. The Greeks, the Romans, the Spanish and (debatably) the Turkish had preceded the English in forming empires. But in my paper, I'll discuss briefly how the genesis of the empire was formed in ancient Greece, and how it was adopted subsequently by the Romans, and how, finally, it came to the English.

Desire precedes reality. The empire has a physical reality, of course. But the vision of it is formed earlier. For example, Elizabeth's famous speech to her troops at Tilbury on the eve of the Battle of Armada concluded with—"we shall

shortly have a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people" (www.tudorhistory.org/..Tilbury.html), and the imperial desire can be found latent there, though the English actually got to materialize their imperial dream with the subjugation of Ireland by the end of the sixteenth century and effecting the union with Scotland at a later time. These two moves resulted into the creation of (Great) Britain in 1707. The period afterwards saw the rapid expansion of British territories almost all over the globe and thus by the end of the eighteenth century the British Empire became a reality.

II. The Greek View:

The invented concept of the empire was called 'poetic geography' by Giambattista Vico, an eighteenth-century philosopher. I owe heavily to John Gillies for using the idea of the poetic geography. In his excellent book, *Shakespeare and the geography of difference* (1994), Gillies expounds that from ancient time geography was never taken in a literal sense. A moral vision was always interpolated into a geographical description. The map was read morally by the ancient people. He brings up Vico for discussion because the latter has explained that the Greeks used the word *oikumene* in a symbolic sense. The word implied in its meaning both the house and the world. It was also a flexible term used for home in an expanding pattern. That is, as more information about new geographical lands was becoming available the meaning of the word extended to include those new spaces as forming the margins or the borderlands. Like the expanding frontier concept of America, *oikumene* had acknowledged the idea of something beginning at the centre and spreading outward toward the border. (Analogous to this is the image of the wheel, the inner cog and widening spheres.) The Greeks had two other terms for defining this expanding pattern: *Hestia* and *Hermes*. *Hestia* was actually the Greek goddess of the hearth. She would keep the centre in control. And *Hermes* was the god of voyage. That is, he would go out to the border. The centre-border dichotomy had made possible a moral interpretation to form. Athens was the *Hestia* or *vesta* (the walled-in city), and beyond it, particularly beyond the Hercules' Pillars at Gibraltar, the lands were labeled as *eschatia* or end-zones. Vico is of the opinion that the Greeks had imagined their known world in this moral pattern even before Herodotus, the fifth-century Greek historian, had demarcated the Hellenic Empire as spreading from Sythia in the north to Ethiopia in the south, and from Asia in the east to Gibraltar in the west (Gillies 5). Following Vico's suggestion Edith Hall, the British classicist and historian, has explained that the fifth-century Athenian politics had labeled all non-Hellenes as barbarians. This scheme gave two benefits to the Athenians. They were the superior race, and the others were comfortably denominated as forming one single race—the barbarians. Edward Said, as Gillies also notes (4), objected to the Eurocentric discourse, continuing from Aeschylus to T. E. Lawrence, as it interpreted the Orient in a vision of

sameness. Aristotle's concept of 'natural servitude' as expounded in *Politics* also encouraged racial discrimination (Gillies 15), implying that there was a master race and there was a slave race. The barbarians were deformed, lecherous and carnivorous, as Shakespeare imagined: "And of the Cannibals that each other eat, / The Anthropophagi and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders" (*Othello*, 1.3.142-44). And of course Caliban has been portrayed as a near-cousin of the Anthropophagi.

The imperial discourse was initially developed on the basis of racial differences, on the difference between 'us' and 'them', and Gillies gives ample examples from Greek and Roman myth and literature to develop the idea that cross-race marriages, called miscegenation, was thought to be bringing disaster for the partner belonging to the Hellenic race. Aeschylus' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Euripedes' *Medea*, Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and Shakespeare's *Othello* are some of the texts he discusses to explain the concept of blood pollution through miscegenation. For example, in *Metamorphosis*, which has the Tereus-Philomel myth retold, Procne, the Athenian princess and Philomel's sister becomes an infanticide because she has married Tereus, the Thracian slave-king. Similarly, in *Othello*, Othello must kill Desdemona, not because she is assumed to have committed the sin of adultery, but because Othello as 'the other' (the Moor) must fulfill his role as a jealous husband (Gillies 14-15)—a common trait assigned to the barbarian.

III. The Roman View:

The poetic geography also worked as the basis of the Roman Empire. The transition of the poetic paradigm of the empire from the Herodotean *Polis*-centred Athenian geography to the Roman discourse of empire seems rather naturally consequential. Rome became the *medius mundi locus* (the centre of the world). Ovid relates a Roman proverb: "The land of the other nations has a fixed boundary: the circuit of Rome is the circuit of the world" (Gillies 10). Gillies, however, remarks that "[w]hat this and similar proverbs suggest is that Roman *imago mundi* [the image of the world] was as much a construction of poetry and rhetoric as of factual geography" (10). He mentions J. Oliver Thompson as having observed that in order to keep their vision of imperial supremacy intact the Romans did not recognize the existence of China.

During the Roman Empire the imperial poetics became bifurcated between an autochthonous (single-entity) view of empire and a pluralistic view. Augustus Caesar (the first Roman emperor) was a conservative imperialist, and, as Edward Gibbon has pointed out, he was keen on having the Roman Empire confined 'within those limits which Nature seemed to have placed on its permanent bulwarks and boundaries: the Atlantic Ocean on the west; the Rhine and Danube on the north; the Euphrates on the east; and toward the south, the sandy deserts of Arabia and Africa' (in Gillies 10). The pluralistic view of the empire came from

Alexander's travelling and voyaging temperament and in *Antony and Cleopatra* it is Antony who represents this view. In the play, Caesar refers to his (Antony's) commanding all the following kings from the East: "He hath assembled / Bocchus, the King of Libya; Archelaus / Of Cappadocia; Philadelphos, King / Of Paphlagonia; the Thracian King Adallas; / King Malchus of Arabia; King of Pont; / Herod of Jewry; Mithridates, King / Of Comagene; Polemon and Amyntas, / The Kings of Mede and Lyconia; / With a more larger list of scepters" (3.6.69-76).

Roman natural historians like Pliny, Pomponius Mela and Gaius Julius Solinus have followed the Herodotean poetic geography when they referred to the distant (*terminus and finis*) places as being the habitats of barbarians and monsters (that is, the other) and where marvels and supernaturalism could be encountered. Conceiving of Italy as superior to the exotic lands was a commonplace in Roman geographic discourse.

IV. The Biblical View:

Gillies then is of the opinion that the Renaissance habit of 'reading the classics in the light of the Bible' (18) may show a convergence of the ancient other with the other of the Old Testament. The source of the Biblical other is to be found in the episode recorded in Genesis, IX, 21-5. One day, Prophet Noah, after working in his vineyard, became drunk and fell to sleep with his body uncovered. Ham, Noah's youngest son, entered the tent and saw his father in that embarrassing position. But instead of covering his body, he came out of the tent. The implication is that he did something unbecoming (often guessed as incestuous homosexuality) to his father. Noah's other two sons, Shem and Japheth, however, covered their father's naked body without looking at him. When Noah woke up he realized what had happened to him. Noah then cursed Canaan, Ham's youngest son, to become responsible for starting the slave generations. Thus the Canaanites of the Old Testament are portrayed as promiscuously as the barbarians. Gillies, therefore, argues that the imperial trope had converged the Aristotelian barbarian, the Biblical Canaanite, and the Renaissance exotic figures (African and American) together as representing the other (19).

V. The English View:

The Greek and Roman poetic geography can be seen as transported to England with the same imperial tropoi in the sixteenth century when England was emerging as an imperial power, a status it definitely started to gain after the defeat of the Spanish Armada at Gravelines on 12 August 1588.

Lesley B. Cormack in his essay, "Britannia Rules the Waves?: Images of Empire in Elizabethan England" (1998) argues that in Elizabeth's time there was an English Empire envisaged even before the English started their explorations and

colonial conquest. Studying the images etched through engravings and illustrations on the title pages and frontispieces of travel books, atlases and maps, he points out that the study of geography in England during Elizabeth's time had developed into an imperial view on the basis of three 'underlying assumptions': the first was the belief that 'the world could be measured, named, and therefore controlled'; the second belief was that the English were superior to other peoples and nations and thus had 'the right . . . to exploit other areas of the globe'; and the third belief was that the study of geography gave the English a sense for self-definition (2).

The first utterance about a possible English Empire was made by Sir Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII's Chief Minister, in the *Act in Restraint of Appeals* (1533) when he drafted the speech explaining why the English Church should secede from the Papal Church: 'this realm of England is an empire' (2).

The greatest exponent of an English/British Empire was Dr John Dee. He was an MA from Cambridge, 'but also a mathematician, astronomer, geographer and an occasional necromancer' (2). He became an astrologer to Elizabeth and advised her on hydrographical and geographical matters. In his book *General and Rare Memorials Pertayning to the Perfect Arte of Navigation* (1577) he 'proposed that Elizabeth establish a Royal Navy to protect England from pirates, the English fishery from incursions, and to aid the establishment of a British maritime empire' (3).

Dee's book had an engraving on the title page which symbolizes his imperial spirit. It shows Elizabeth commanding the ship of state, called Europa (3). On the rudder of the ship is hanging the Royal coat of arms as a gesture that England had the supremacy and, therefore, should claim the leadership of Europe. The illustrated title page of the book also contains Dee's prophetic claim that if Elizabeth ignores this opportunity of transforming England into a maritime power then she will ever rue it. Cormack describes:

On the fortress to the left, Elizabeth holds out her right hand to grasp fortune's forelock and the laurel wreath she holds—undoubtedly by founding her great Royal Navy. Britannia, kneeling on the shore, desires Elizabeth to seize her opportunity with a 'fully-equipped expeditionary force', as her scroll states. This navy is to be much more than a coast guard patrolling for pirates; rather it will begin the divinely sanctioned creation of an English Empire. God, Elizabeth, and St. Michael on the right fight back the darkness on the left and the naval force will soon capture the foreign ships at sea. (3)

The second important figure in providing Elizabeth the incentive for an empire is Richard Hakluyt. He was a widely traveled man and published his travel narratives during 1598-1600 which became popular reading. His geographical descriptions recapitulate the English imperial hope: "The rude Indian Canoa

halleth [controls] those seas, the Portingals, the Sarcenes, and Moores travaile continually up and downe that reach from Japan to China, from China to Malacca, from Malacca to the Moluccaes: and shall an Englishman, better appointed than any of them all (that I say no more for our Navie) feare [fear] to saile in that Ocean: What seas at all doe want piracie: What Navigation is there voyde [void] of perill?' (5)

That England had the right to foreign lands through 'first discovery' was further echoed in the works of another Englishman, John Wolfe by name, who translated a Dutch adventurer's travel book into English in 1598. Jan Huygen Linschoten's book *Discours [sic] of Voyages* of course spoke of the imperial aspirations of another European country, but in Wolfe's having engaged himself in a translation of this work may be seen the indication that he hoped to reconstruct a similar imperial identity for England. He wrote: 'I doo not doubt, but yet I doo most hartely [heartily] pray and wish, that this poore Translation may worke in our English Nation a further desire and increase of Honour over all Countreys of the World, and as it hath hitherto mightily advanced the Credite of the Realme by defending the same with cur Wodden Walles . . .' (6).

So for the English nation a further increase of honour over all countries depended on how much initiative was the Queen willing to take. Wolfe also saw the likelihood of spreading Christianity along with the territorial expansion: 'So it would employ the same in forraine [foreign] partes, as well for the dispersing and planting true Religion and Civill Conversation therein' (6).

Another key figure with the imperial dream for the English nation was Christopher Saxton, who published his atlas in 1579. Sir Thomas Seckford, master of Requests, acted as the patron on behalf of the government to fund the publication of the atlas, and the material was chosen from Caxton's own surveying. Thus Caxton's atlas became a sure indication of the government's active interests in geographical explorations: 'This atlas marks an important development in government interest in a visual representation of the country, providing as it does the first clear image of the entire span of England, county by county' (7).

Caxton's atlas had on its frontispiece a message that England was a powerful nation and that using the knowledge of the geographical science it could become 'a self-sufficient and omni-competent state' to be ruled over by 'a wise monarch' (7).

Another exemplary figure to give shape to the English poetic geography was Sir Walter Raleigh. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London for eleven years and during that time he wrote his classic *The History of the World*, which though narrates the events from creation up to the birth of Christ, yet had enormous implications for the early modern England. The book was written in order to excite the interest of Henry, Prince of Wales, 'in imperial adventures in general

and in supporting Raleigh's conquistadorial bid to find El Dorado in particular' (9). With the early death of Henry, however, Raleigh's hope for 'a glorious English or even British Empire to rival Spain' also perished.

Cormack stresses that all these books with 'underlying imperial themes' (8) were avidly read by students, many of whom later on 'went on to public careers of one type or another' (8). The Elizabethan commonplace books were full of imperial aspirations, and one such book was owned by Sir Julius Caesar, who made his entries under the heading of 'The Singularities of England' (9).

On the basis of the remarks by the English geographers culled above, we can agree with Cormack about an English poetic geography preceding the English/British Empire:

But in order to conquer the world in this way, the English first needed a vision of themselves as an imperial nation. This self-image as an independent and omni-competent country, as well as one with the potential to control other countries and regions of the world, had to precede the acquisition of an empire and so the English needed an imperial ideology before they could begin to construct an empire in deed. The creation of this ideology of empire was aided by the study of geography. (10)

So when Shakespeare was dealing with the world map in his plays, he couldn't but be inspired by the imperialistic notions of the English geographers, and secondly, he couldn't have avoided the Greek and Roman way of moralizing geography (Gillies 4), and, third, as J. D. Rogers noted in 1916, he had laid all his scenes within the known world: 'Shakespeare's scenes are almost always laid inside what the ancients called the civilized world, the Christian Christendom, and the geographers' Europe' (in Gillies 4). He (Rogers) further said that even the island in *The Tempest* is a piece of Italy transformed into a New World landscape for a day or two.

VI. The Imperial Design: Shakespeare in India:

In the remaining part of the essay I am going to discuss how Shakespeare has been considered an imperial agency as well as an appropriated figure in the modern time.

In the early part of British regime in India, immediately after the Fort William College was founded in Calcutta (Kolkata) in 1800, English officers who had newly arrived in India were supposed to learn the Indian languages at this college. With this aim Indian classics like *Bhagavadgita* and *Sacountala* (i.e. *Abhijnananashakuntalam*) were translated into English, and this trend continued until the beginning of the 19th century. A painting of the time shows William Carey, the founding father of English missions in India, being taught an Indian

language 'by an intense-looking local *pandit* by the name of Mrityunjaya' (Trivedi 10).

All this, however, instantly changed with Lord Macaulay's submitting the 'Minute on Indian Education' to the Governor-General on 2 February 1835, in which he by way of advising the British to rule India effectively, said that England needed to create 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect' (in Trivedi 11).

Accordingly, to propagate English learning through institutionalized efforts three universities were soon established, all in 1857, at Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai) respectively.

Macaulay's policy, however, has produced two permanently debilitating tendencies for the English-educated people of India. First, it is basically a 'downward filtration' policy in which an elitist 'small group of Indians with British style education supposedly spread enlightenment to the masses' (Altbach 453). For this the English-educated class in India has become isolated from the mass people. Second, this group suffers from what Trivedi has called 'the colonial double-bind', that is, the tension between allegiance and resistance toward English largely, and toward Shakespeare in particular (25).

Shakespeare's introduction in the pedagogy of English Departments at Indian universities appeared to have solved a problem facing the British policy makers. Before even the universities started operating, the missionaries had already begun their job of proselytizing the local people in many parts of India, and the language they used was English. The policy makers thought for a while that probably the religious way was the best method for spreading the learning of English among the Indians. But it soon became clear to them that it would create unwarranted religious conflicts between the converting and the converted people on the one hand and between the imported religion, Christianity, and the indigenous religions of India. They then came up with the idea of imparting the humanistic and secular ideas that the English literary texts were so full of, and thought that it was to be done by setting up Departments of English Studies in the universities newly set up. They, perhaps rightly, thought that the secular education would be more functional in motivating the minds of the Indians (Viswanatahn 431).

Obviously as a natural choice, Shakespeare, being the foremost English writer, became also the supreme literary figure in the pedagogy and the syllabus. At this juncture, one remark by Carlyle, made in his lecture 'The Hero as Poet' (1840), is relevant to quote. He asked his countrymen to make a choice between India and Shakespeare, and claimed that the Indian Empire might one day go away, but Shakespeare would stay:

Consider now, if they [Trivedi supplies the noun: 'foreign nations'] asked us, Will you give up your Indian Empire or your Shakespeare, you English; never have had any Indian Empire, or never have had any Shakespeare? Really it was grave question. Official persons would doubtless answer in official language: but we, for our parts, should not we be forced to answer; Indian Empire or no Indian Empire; we cannot do without Shakespeare! Indian Empire will go at any rate, some day; but this Shakespeare does not go, he lasts forever with us, we cannot give-up our Shakespeare! (in Trivedi 12)

Carlyle's views reflect the eternal double-bind that the Indian educated people had to go through with regard to Shakespeare.

I will now refer to certain responses, both welcoming and resistant, to Shakespeare, as recorded by Harish Trivedi, in his book, *Colonial Transactions* (1993).

An Indian echo of Carlyle's view is to be found in the Preface by Professor C. D. Narasimhaiah, the editor of *Shakespeare Came to India* (1966), a quatercentenary commemorative volume:

The title is not so fanciful as it appears to be when we remember that of many things that came to India from England few in the long run are really as important as Shakespeare. For the England of trade, commerce, imperialism and the penal code has not endured but the imperishable Empire of Shakespeare will always be with us. (in Trivedi 23)

And like Narasimhaiah, William Miller, who taught Shakespeare in south India had taken him as a moral yardstick. He said, 'If the Indian student but heeded the lessons Shakespeare had to offer, he would have gained a master plan by which to lead his whole life' (in Trivedi 14). The title of his collected edition, *Shakespeare's Chart of Life* (1905) clearly reflects the way he wanted to use Shakespeare as a pedagogical device to build the (moral) character of his colonized students.

Among the resistance group, on the other hand, we find Smarajit Dutt, who published his commentaries between 1921-1930 on *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*, each sub-titled as *An Oriental Study*, showing that many passages in Sanskrit poetry could match and excel many similar passages of Shakespeare. In one of his prefaces he quotes a Sanskrit couplet which goes like this: 'Slavery enforced by brute force is degrading enough. Your Majesty! / But slavery of the mind is truly a hundred times more deplorable' (in Trivedi 14). The couplet anticipates the Nigerian writer Ngugi Wa Thiongo's famous utterance: 'The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of spiritual subjugation' (C. L. Innes 136).

Similarly Ranjee G. Shahani in his book, *Shakespeare Through Eastern Eyes* (1932) points out that Hamlet had certain lack of depth, and that Shakespeare couldn't be called a thinker. J. Middleton Murry wrote in his introduction to the book: 'There is little in this book with which I agree . . . That truth on the one side of Alps is falsehood on the other comforts me greatly' (in Trivedi 15). *TLS* reviewer called it a book of protest.

Even in translation Shakespeare was manipulated to produce the voice of protest. For example, Munshi Ratna Chand, in his translation of *The Comedy of Errors* (1882), sarcastically identifies England as a very tiny country which couldn't be found on the body of Nell (Trivedi 17). Now, Nell is Adrian's large-bodied kitchen-maid, and so the humour in dwarfing England cannot be lost on us, the non-English.

On the other hand, Lala Sitaram (1861-1937) was what Macaulay would have liked to see. He translated six plays in Urdu and fourteen in Hindi. In his preface he said that the idlers of India had better read Shakespeare to learn 'the tenderness of Cordelia, the fortitude of Edgar, the fidelity of Kent and the heroism of Henry V' (in Trivedi 18).

Jayavijaya Narayana Singh Sharma, who had translated Charles Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* in 1912 had compared Shakespeare with Kalidasa and said that the latter was much older, and so more prestigious.

VII. Shakespeare in the two tercentenary volumes: Valorization and Appropriation

World-wide, however, the debate whether Shakespeare was a global phenomenon serving the 'autochthonous identity' (Kahn 456) of the English or a figure to be nationally appropriated came to a head when in 1864 and in 1916 respectively, the tercentenaries of Shakespeare's birth and death were observed. Habicht and Kahn, whose two essays I have mentioned earlier, have taken up the issue, and while Habicht emphasizes the point that in spite of the strenuous relationship between Germany and England in the 1860's, it is Germany whose celebration of Shakespeare's tercentenary of birth bespeaks their love for the Bard, Kahn, on the other hand, notes that the commemorative volume on the tercentenary of death, entitled *A Homage to Shakespeare* (1916) evokes the autochthonous view no doubt, but it has also accommodated strong non-English nationalistic appropriations. While Habicht speaks only about German and American appropriations, Kahn records other appropriating voices from Asia and Africa.

The political situation in the 1860's was like this: Germany and Denmark were at war on the question of Schleswig and Holstein, the two German-speaking provinces, which Denmark annexed violating the international treaties under their new king Christian IX. Prussia, under Bismarch, claimed them for Germany.

Britain was officially neutral, but wanted to aid Denmark militarily. And the people of England took up anti-German stand. Against such a backdrop, arrived a delegation from Frankfurt to join in the 1864 Shakespeare tercentenary festival at Stratford. The spokesman of that delegation referred to 'this cold and critical age' (Habicht 441) in which Shakespeare was the greatest bond. One German Frankfurt professor, a member of that delegation said, 'We almost grudge you the accident of his birth. With us he is the national poet. Shakespeare's writings first roused the Germans to a consciousness of their powers, and made us enter the lists with you in a race of literary emulation' (Habicht 443). The official message reiterated the fact that Anglo-Saxons who conquered Britain came from German territory, and with their 'old Teutonic virtues gained their footing as emancipators and expellers of Latin corruption' and thus prepared the ground for Shakespeare (Habicht 443). In Germany, with Schlegel-Tieck translation (1825-33) Shakespeare was rediscovered and he became the third classic after Goethe and Schiller (Habicht 448). "The German attacks were mainly directed against contemporary Englishmen, who were no longer worthy of Shakespeare. Professor Joseph Kohler had exclaimed in 1915: 'We know they do not understand Shakespeare, . . . We, by contrast, have grasped the giant and made him ours' (in Habicht 452). The German slogan was 'Deutschland is Hamlet' and 'England is Iago' (Habicht 453).

America, which hadn't entered the war by 1916, had a more neutral ground to celebrate Shakespeare, and *New York Times* from February to April 1916 in its Sunday editions 'offered readers a series of lavishly illustrated Shakespeare supplements that covered every aspect of the author's life and work, including its reception in Germany, France, and Russia'; for 'as a world conqueror, Shakespeare makes all military heroes seem insignificant' (Habicht 454).

About *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* Kahn says that it's characterized by what Ania Loomba has called 'complex reciprocity'. This paradox is obvious in the sense that the volume was edited by Sir Israel Gollancz who was the first Jewish professor of English literature in England (at Kings College, London) and Honorary Secretary of the Shakespeare Tercentenary Committee, but the volume, as Sir Walter Raleigh, the holder of the first chair in English Literature at Oxford, claims forges the 'historical link between Tudor England, colonization, Shakespeare, and the British Empire' (457). The book uses Shakespeare 'as a signifier of autochthonous English identity' with the hope that he would be an icon of unity in the face of the 'bloody divisions of the Great War' (457).

That Shakespeare had become synonymous with the British Empire is the subject matter of a poem, "Dream Imperial," by William Pember Reeves, written as late as 1916 and is included in *Homage*. In this poem, as Kahn says, Reeves makes Shakespeare both spokesman and inspiration for the 'warring, trading, reading race' that 'won the sea for wise Elizabeth', then 'Moved surely outward to

imperial space' (462). In *Homage* again, Kahn sees a comment by Sir Walter Raleigh bearing on the same theme that Shakespeare became the spokesman of 'the English race' (465). Thus Kahn says that the anthology *Homage* aims at 'folding Shakespeare into the racialized discourse of empire' (465).

Kahn then speaks about the paradox that characterizes the volume: 'Shakespeare is the quintessential English poet, and yet he speaks to all people, of all times and nations' (460). She quotes from Israel Zangwill's sonnet "The Two Empires" which contains this duality: 'If e'er I doubt of England, I recall / Gentle Will Shakespeare, her authentic son' (460).

Kahn then enlists the resistance group.

First is Douglas Hyde. He was an Irish poet and revolutionary. His lifelong mission was to reinstate Gaelic (Irish language) as the national language of Ireland. In his poem "How it fared with a Gael at Stratford-on-Avon," he speaks about "a Gael's" change of heart from hating the English into forgiving them because of Shakespeare (466).

The second figure Kahn mentions is 'the distinguished American scholar Charles Mills Gayley, professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, for some thirty years' (466). In his poem, titled "Heart of the Race," Gayley claims that 'Shakespeare isn't simply an English speaking poet but rather an Anglo-Saxon one, committed to the ancient virtues of law and freedom. In his book, *Shakespeare and the Founders of Liberty in America* (1917) Gayley elaborates the idea that the 'the blood of America', which is Anglo-Saxon beats in the same "Heart of the Race" as England's (469).

The third contributor belonging to Kahn's resistance group is Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, a South African, a renowned black journalist and an activist for native rights. He edited several newspapers and was one of the founder members of the African Native National Congress (later the African National Congress). The credit of writing the first novel in English by a black African goes to him and also he translated four plays by Shakespeare into his native language, Setswana. In the volume, however, his contribution, "A South African's Homage" goes without his name, and is published side by side on facing pages both in Setswana and English. The English version is the following:

I had but a vague idea of Shakespeare until about 1896 when, at the age of 18, I was attracted by the Press remarks in the Kimberley paper, and went to see *Hamlet* in the Kimberley Theatre. The performance made me curious to know more about Shakespeare and his works. Intelligence in Africa is still carried from mouth to mouth by means of conversations after working hours, and, reading a number of Shakespeare's works, I always had a fresh

story to tell. I first read *The Merchant of Venice*. The characters were so realistic that I was asked more than once to which of certain speculators, then operating around Kimberley, Shakespeare referred as Shylock. All this gave me an appetite for more Shakespeare, and I found that many of the current quotations used by educated natives to embellish their speeches, which I had always taken for English proverbs, were culled from Shakespeare's works. (in Kahn 471)

Platzee thus 'engages' Shakespeare not to uphold the English-speaking tradition, but to 'preserve and/or reinvent his own culture' (Kahn 472).

Like Hyde and Platzee, the Asian scholar, namely Maung Tin, the founder of the academic study of Burmese literature in his native country, offers another example of 'complex reciprocity'. In his essay, he assesses Shakespeare not in terms of the Western apotheosization but in terms of how Shakespeare can be useful in 'the development of Burmese literature' (477).

Thus Hyde, Plaatje and Tin write about Shakespeare in a way that he becomes more relevant to their respective cultures than to Shakespeare's own English culture. What happens as a result is that these three writers do not take Shakespeare in binary opposition to their own cultures, a concept which is called hybridity by Ania Loomba or Martin Orkin, in which the local scholars of Shakespeare become segregated from their own cultures, but rather they appropriate him (467), as much as we found Trivedi reporting of some Indian scholars doing. In hybridity the relationship between the dominant culture and the local culture is determined by an either/or situation, that is, one touch of Shakespeare is thought of spoiling the 'originary bond between the natives and their own cultures' (469). What Kahn appreciates about the three scholars is that they have come out of the web of hybridity and are not scared of using Shakespeare to make interventions in their own cultures.

Kahn's concluding remarks about *Homage* are that it shows Shakespeare both as a signifier of 'the Anglo-Saxon race', once again proving the 'unbridgeable gap' between the colonizer and the colonized, and Shakespeare being used and transformed by the colonized 'in ways never intended by the colonizer' (478).

VIII. Conclusion

In this paper I've swept across a large terrestrial as well as idealistic map, starting with the Greek civilization down to the postcolonial world, in order to see how Shakespeare has figured as a representational phenomenon in both sustaining an imperial view and resisting it. In arguing the point, I've generously taken help from scholars, and that there's an amazingly large amount of scholarship done

over this theme is a further proof of the appropriateness of my query that I'm not alone in feeling this way about Shakespeare that he's both English and global.

Though studying Shakespeare in Bangladesh isn't the most popular preoccupation, still the historical imperatives of the past induce us to reckon with Shakespeare on many counts, which I would like to put here in this way:

1. Is studying Shakespeare in Bangladesh an outlandish affair?
2. Is the English Language itself for us a barrier in appreciating Shakespeare?
3. How does my appreciation of Shakespeare conform to or collide with my resentment of anything that smacks of English imperialism or, in today's context, English linguistic imperialism?
4. Is my decision to translate Shakespeare the best way of appropriation?

I hope that readers of this paper will find that to find answers to the questions above I've written the essay.

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