DREAMSCAPES: BLURRED REALITIES AND BLENDED IDENTITIES
India on the Nineteenth-Century French Stage

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India featured in a large number of performances on the nineteenth-century French stage. The term "contact zones" coined by Mary Louise Pratt in her article "Arts of the Contact Zone" designates spaces where two cultures "meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (34). The nineteenth-century French stage functioned as an ideal contact zone, providing a dynamic forum for the construction of French and Indian identities. My corpus is selected to demonstrate the breadth and diversity of India as a trope in nineteenth-century theatrical performances. In the dissertation, I analyze the plays both as text and performance. In addition, I situate the plays within the context of their time. Theater reviews are an important tool in achieving this contextualization: they allow a play to be studied *in situ*, giving a glimpse of the social, political, and cultural circumstances surrounding the production. The effects of a turbulent political and social environment are studied by investigating shifts in audience reactions to the same play or to a similar one over a period of time. The study considers an author's avowed intentions, as recorded in an accompanying preface, along with both the text of the play and the audience response chronicled in press reviews, to see if intention, expression, and reception coincide. The effort is to understand the play as a dynamic event that occurs simultaneously in two directions. On the one hand, the play is shaped by its environment; on the other, it works to inform and influence the audiences who witness it. The nuanced interaction between the Self and the Other is rendered more visible through this approach. With the support of

colonial and post-colonial theories such as Orientalism, subalterneity, and hybridity, the issues that are disclosed in this analysis of nineteenth-century French theater are rendered current and relevant.

The dissertation is composed of three main chapters. Each chapter is unified in theme, viz. Historical drama, Bayadères, and Sanskrit drama. Different plays with similar themes or different adaptations of the same play are compared to each other. Shifts in time and perspective are recorded, both in the creation as well as the reception of these plays. The treatment of stereotypes is studied in all three chapters. In addition, for each chapter, a specific issue that is particular to that section of the corpus is highlighted: problems of veracity in ostensibly factual historical accounts for Historical drama, the challenges of reconciling reality with imagination (contrasting the actual visit of Indian dancers in France to the theatrical representations of bayadères) for the chapter on bayadères, and challenges of translation for Sanskrit drama. This reveals the complex underpinnings of plays that could appear banal at first glance.

The dissertation unfolds the manner in which the French contend with India in the role of the Other during the nineteenth century, when interest in India was at its peak in France. Even when reduced to a finite number of stereotypes, India is perceived as a space of excess; its complex and multifaceted nature is exacerbated by its size and distance from France. India is found to be overwhelming and beyond the reach of French possession, physical or ideological. India cannot be easily co-opted into French narratives of identity-formation: any construction of national, racial or cultural identity, whether of the French Self or the Indian Other, is shown to be unstable. Over the course of the nineteenth century, India reverts to being the place of myth and fantasy it has been since medieval times. Nevertheless, traces of India's presence on the nineteenth-century stage linger in twenty-first century France in subtle but unmistakable ways.

To my father, R.D. Kolekar (1931-2015), in gratitude for sharing his love of learning with me. I know that he would have been prouder and happier than anyone else.

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NOTES

1. Names of authors and others during the nineteenth-century and earlier often have several variants in spelling; for example, Anquétil-Duperron appears both with and without the accent and hyphen. Similarly, Indian names are transliterated into English and French in a variety of ways. For consistency, I have chosen a popular variant, and used it throughout the document.
2. Sanskrit names have been simplified. To make them easier to read, I have adopted the New York UP Clay Sanskrit Library's usage of an acute accent to indicate stress, and a middle dot to indicate a semantic break in a compound word. For further information on CSL conventions, please see www.claysanskritlibrary.org.
3. *Encyclopædia Britannica* is shortened to *EB* in in-text citations.

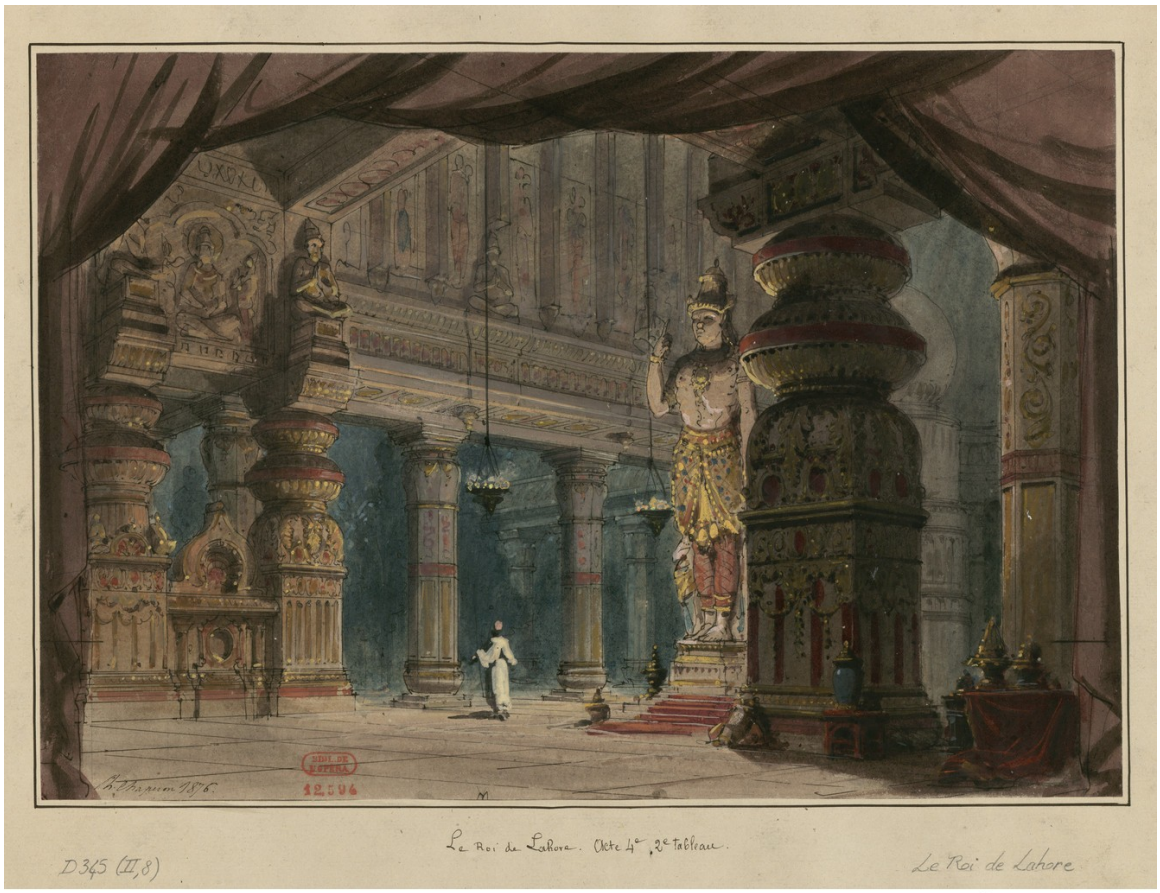

Figure 1. "Luxe, calme et volupté": A set for *Le Roi de Lahore* (1883). Source: gallica.bnf.fr.

Puits de l'Inde, tombeaux, monuments constellés,

. . .

Cryptes, palais, tombeaux, pleins de vagues tonnerres!

Vous êtes moins brumeux, moins noirs, moins ignorés,

Vous êtes moins profonds et moins désespérés,

Que le destin, cet antre habité par nos craintes . . .

(Victor Hugo, 1839)

1 INTRODUCTION

> *Que de fois en songeant à ce pays étrange, qui pour nous restera à l'état de chimère, nous nous sommes créé d'éblouissants mirages!* (Gautier "L'Inde" 283-84)

Théophile Gautier's description of India, written towards the middle of the nineteenth century, reveals some curious notions. "Songeant," "étrange," "chimère," "éblouissant," and "mirages" are all words that evoke dream landscapes, fantastic and unreal. Gautier tells us that this dream is a recurrent one, giving it a haunting quality. Equally indicative is his use of the future tense, implying an unchanging state: "ce pays étrange qui *restera* à l'état de chimère" (emphasis added). The word "chimère" suggests multiple layers of unreality. As a mythical beast, the chimera is cobbled together from a lion, a goat, and a dragon. A third of the animal is already imaginary, and in its entirety it is both monstrous and fantastic. When India is referred to as a chimera, it is seen as an illusory and artificial construct – fascinating, but with something of the grotesque about it. There is no possibility of India becoming real to Gautier; it is, and will stay, a fantasy. Was this perception of India uniquely Gautier's, or was it similar to how the French generally perceived India? For the French Self, was India always to remain a mythical entity, a conceptual Other rather than a country with its own geographical and cultural reality?

Since the late twentieth century, questions of Self and the Other have been the subject of intense exploration and debate. Stephen Morton, in a work introducing the theories of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, summarizes what the Other has historically meant for the European Self:

> Throughout the history of western culture and thought, there are certain people, concepts, and ideas that are defined as 'Other': as monsters, aliens or savages who threaten the values

> of civilised society . . . Such 'Others' have included death, the unconscious and madness, as well as the *Oriental, non-western 'Other'* . . . (Morton 37, emphasis added)

In the Middle Ages, India exemplified the monstrous "Oriental, non-western 'Other'": one only has to think of the "cynocéphales" and other fantastic beasts that populated ancient and medieval lore on India. Medievalist Jacques Le Goff affirms that ". . . les merveilles de l'Inde ont inspiré les imaginations occidentales; . . . les chrétiens du Moyen Age y mettaient de fantaisie et de rêve" (289). Imagination and fantasy were projected on a geographically distant entity to create an idea of India that was persistent, resisting alteration. As Gautier's words show, the medieval conception of India as a fantastical oppositional figure of the Other lasted well into the enlightened nineteenth century.

The Other is not only an exemplum of difference; the construction of the Other involves a projection of the Self onto the Other. Morton continues with his definition of the Other, saying that ". . . the 'Other' is relegated to a place outside of or exterior to the normal, civilised values of western culture, yet it is in this founding moment of relegation that the sovereignty of the Self or the same is constituted" (37). Constructing the Other in one's imagination has, as its corollary, the construction of the Self. Creating identity in this manner is neither new nor unusual in French literature. From *La Chanson de Roland* (c.1100) to Montesquieu's *Les Lettres Persanes* (1721), the Other has been utilized to render visible the differences and the similarities between the French Self and the Oriental Other. In *La Chanson de Roland,* seen as a foundational epic in the construction of French identity, the French Self and the Oriental Other are startlingly alike.[1] The symmetrical construction

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[1] Jane Gilbert's article "The *Chanson de Roland"* examines the role of the epic poem in the construction of French identity, particularly during times of war: ". . . the *Roland* has been invoked in wartime to symbolize and galvanize French resistance; during the siege of Paris in 1870 the great medievalist Gaston Paris lectured at the Collège de France on '*La Chanson de Roland* et la nationalité

of the Self and the Other is ruptured by the assertion that "Paien unt tort e chrestïens unt dreit" (Short 90) ("Les païens ont le tort, et les chrétiens le droit" (91)),[2] which puts the French Self in a position of unequivocal moral superiority; since the distinction is based on religion, it cannot be contradicted.[3] Once vanquished, however, the Other is seen more kindly. When Charlemagne brings Bramimonde, the Saracen queen of Spain, to France, "Mais n'ad talent li facet se bien nun" (240) ("il ne lui veut, d'ailleurs, que du bien" (241)). She is still escorted under guard, though, showing that a trace of the threat from the Other remains. The Other can be brought into the fold by removing the religious impairment, as is shown by Bramimonde's conversion to Christianity. The distinction imparted by religion is effaced and the Other is subsumed into the Self, losing its identity: even Bramimonde's name is changed to Julienne. The threat posed by the Other disappears as the Other ceases to exist; significantly, the *Chanson* ends with Bramimonde's conversion. The Oriental Other in the *Chanson* is represented by the Saracens, who, as the rulers of Spain, are the proximate threat to the Franks. However the reference to other Eastern races and peoples extends the domain of the Other to a further, mythical horizon. The *Chanson* does not linger on differences in color and race, these issues being more difficult to resolve, but repeatedly refers to religion, which can be changed through conversion.

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française,' and Raoul Mortier published clandestinely all the extant French *Roland* versions under the Occupation in 1940-4" (21).

[2] The medieval text as well as the modern French equivalents are taken from the 1990 edition of *La Chanson de Roland,* edited and translated by Ian Short.

[3] Even when a Saracen is admirably brave, like the Emir de Balaguer, he cannot measure up to his French counterpart because of his religion: "Fust chrestiens, asez oüst barnet" (84) ("s'il était chrétien, ce serait un vrai baron" (85)).

Montesquieu's *Les Lettres Persanes,* on the other hand, uses the gaze of the Other as a satirical tool to criticize French political, social and religious mores in the last years of Louis XIV's reign. Framed as an epistolary exchange between Persian travelers and their correspondents in Persia and elsewhere, the *Lettres* compares diverse aspects of Persian and French civilizations. The seemingly naïve gaze of the Other strips pretension, and lays bare the flaws of French civilization, culture, and political structure. Despite the unveiling of French hypocrisy and flawed ideology in Usbek's and Rica's letters, one is aware that Usbek is living in France because he fled Persia and a tyrannical monarch to save his life. At the same time, Usbek himself seeks to maintain a similar absolute power over the inmates of his harem, albeit from a distance. Thus the France depicted in the *Lettres* still has a perceptible advantage over Persia which is suffering under despotic rule. The Orient is held up as a threat to French values and serves as warning against the abuse of power. One sees, as Jean Starobinski says, "sous l'image de la France, celle de l'Orient despotique: ainsi se produit un effet de surimpression, où apparaissent soudain les risques d'une *orientalisation* de la monarchie française" (Preface 24). The threat from the Orient is not a physical one, but comes from its values and the example it sets – Morton's summation of the Other as a threat to "civilized values" holds true here. The subsumption of the Other into the Self is here a danger, one to be avoided. Keeping the two separate is key to maintaining one's identity and moral supremacy. Both the *Chanson* and the *Lettres* use the strategy of symmetrical construction of the Self and Other: one to portray the inherent superiority of the Self; the other, to criticize the Self through its similarity to the Other. In both the *Chanson* and the *Lettres,* however, the Other serves as a convenient foil for the Self, emphasizing and enhancing the qualities that are seen as intrinsic to the Self, be it religious superiority (*Chanson)* or social and cultural mores (*Lettres)*. Despite the increased exploration of different countries in the Orient, and the knowledge gained during the intervening

centuries, both the medieval *Chanson* and the Enlightenment-era *Lettres* depict the same notions at play: one, a belief that the Self is superior, and two, that the Other poses a threat to the Self.

As Morton points out, issues of Selfhood and Otherness are longstanding preoccupations. They were, however, debated with particular intensity during the latter half of the twentieth century. Colonialism and its aftermath prompted an investigation into concepts of identity and alterity that focused on race and power imbalances. Edward Said's groundbreaking *Orientalism* (1978) spurred intense research into the rationale and causes of embodying the Orient as the quintessential Other. *Orientalism* elucidates how representations of the Other functioned as a hegemonic device, designed to keep the Orient in its place, one subservient to the needs of the Western powers. *Orientalism* was the first theory to posit the Orient as a theatrical construction of the European Self. Focused on the Middle East, with only cursory mentions of India in the role of the Other, Said's work claims that Western depictions of the Orient indulge in reductionism that deny not only its diversity—geographical, linguistic, cultural—but its dynamic and multi-faceted reality. The term "Orient" itself negates its size and diversity: the tellingly small word represents a vast geographical swathe east of Europe.

In the aftermath of *Orientalism,* colonial discourse has been the subject of earnest study and debate. Said's stark binarism has been challenged, and thinkers such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Ashis Nandy, among others, have provided a more nuanced approach. The study of colonial discourse, whether through the lens of Orientalism, subalterneity, or other colonial/post-colonial theories, necessitates grappling with ideas of Selfdom and Otherness, as both identities are shaped by this opposition. Given the self-referentiality of any definition of the Other, if India was seen as alien and monstrous, illusory and dreamlike, how did France see itself in relation to India? How did the French

constitute their identity with reference to India as the Other? A wealth of scholarly work is now available to explore the interplay of the French Self and the Indian Other in French literature.

1.1 EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP

Kate Marsh, Faith Beasley, Dorothy Figueira, Binita Mehta, Jackie Assayag, and Kate Teltscher are among the many authors who have studied the depiction of India in French literature over the centuries. Kate Marsh's seminal work, *India in the French Imagination: Peripheral Voices, 1754-1815* (2009) is of particular interest since it deals with representations of India in the beginning of the nineteenth century and the decades immediately preceding it. Marsh affirms that:

- while techniques such as "feminization, mythologization and the employment of other markers of alterity to designate the inferiority of Indians and their mores" are common to both the British and the French in their depictions of India, the "historicizing and philosophizing strategies are distinctively French."
- after 1763, the French presence in India was prominently featured in various genres of French literary production.
- French writers used India to posit a "hypothetical, benevolent French rule overseas" in opposition to the despotism of the British. The imaginary potential of India was fully exploited in the French construction of India, making the French *comptoirs* in

> India a *lieu de mémoire* of what might have been, rather than what was (Marsh 139-140).[4]

These concepts provide valuable background for further research. Other scholars offer insight into different ways of portraying India in French literature over time. Faith Beasley studies interactions between India and France during the seventeenth century. Her work is particularly helpful in understanding the effect that contact with India had on Louis XIV's France. In her article "Versailles meets the Taj Mahal," Beasley paints a picture of India as it was seen in France before it became implicated in the figure of the Orientalized inferior Other. In *L'Inde fabuleuse: le charme discret de l'exotisme français (XVIIe-XXe siècles)* (1999), Jackie Assayag focuses on the fabled appeal of India over centuries. "Quelles que soient les forces mobilisées pour la combattre, l'idée grossière et fantasque d'une Inde . . . est toujours

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[4] Pierre Nora popularized the concept of *lieux de mémoire* in his three-volume opus published between 1984 and 1992. His 1984 definition of *lieu de mémoire* as "unité significative, d'ordre matériel ou idéel, dont la volonté des hommes ou le travail du temps a fait un élément symbolique d'une quelconque communauté" is reproduced in *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*. Nora highlights the role of imagination: "Even an apparently purely material site . . . becomes a *lieu de mémoire* only if the imagination invests it with a symbolic aura ("Between Memory and History" 19). A *lieu de mémoire* exists because of loss: "There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory" (7). This is particularly apt in the case of French holdings in India. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 between the French and the British ended any dreams of French hegemony over India. The small trading *comptoirs* left to the French after this treaty served to anchor French memory to lost opportunities and allowed the imagination to create counterfactual scenarios. As Nora says, ". . . *lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications" (19).

prêtre [sic for prête] à renaître," he says, continuing that "la raison ne saurait étouffer l'imagination" (9). Binita Mehta, in her *Widows, Pariahs, and Bayadères* (2002), examines stereotypical images of India in French plays from the eighteenth to the twentieth century and the manner in which they confirm Edward Said's Orientalist theory. Kate Teltscher's *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600-1800* (1995) is a valuable scholarly resource that analyzes how Europeans rendered India in literary and non-literary texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Teltscher modifies Edward Said's stance on the basic premise of colonial discourse, viz. the "unshakeable assumption of European superiority, with the East always functioning as the West's negative foil" to propose a less-stable sense of European self, one that accounts for the inherent "inconsistencies, contradictions and instabilities" of European representation of the East that Said neglects (6). Mehta and Teltscher are also among those who broadly subscribe to Said's Orientalism, but Dorothy Figueira finds his assumption of a hegemonic agenda problematic. In her book *The Exotic: A Decadent Quest* (1994), Figueira prefers the broader term "exoticism" and studies the "non-West" that is positioned in India, rather than India itself. With a hermeneutical model partially drawn from Gadamer (*Exotic* 2-18), she tackles both the French and the German appropriation of India for the purposes of self-understanding. Figueira's investigation assigns "a positive value to exoticism by seeing it embedded in individual rather than collective agendas." Explaining that her approach is more socially and culturally based, and more psychologically inflected, than the Gadamerian hermeneutical model allows, she seeks to "identify how the Gadamerian concept of prejudice in the form of specific exotic clichés elucidates the dynamics of exoticism" (11).

The list of books mentioned here is by no means exhaustive. The extensive bibliography at the end of this dissertation indicates the wealth of material published that pertains to literary interactions between France and India. From the works touched upon,

however, certain essential aspects of the portrayal of India in French literature emerge. Among these, four concepts stand out:

1. Stereotyping: There are a limited number of stereotypes that designate India, viz. wealth, sati, bayadères, pariahs, and a corrupt and powerful religious establishment represented by the Brahmins, or "Brames" as the French called them.

2. Self-referentiality: This is implicit in the representation of India as the "Other," as the very definition of "Other" in Morton's definition points out. Each of the authors mentioned have treated this aspect in their work.

3. Imagination: The imaginary plays a crucial role in any treatment of India, both in how India is portrayed as well as in how the French role in the subcontinent is envisioned.

4. Orientalism: Said's groundbreaking theory of Orientalism has had an extraordinary influence on any study which involves the Other. Any scholar treating the subject contends with Said, either proving him right, partially agreeing with him or criticizing the shortcomings of his theory before postulating their own. Said cannot be ignored in any colonial or post-colonial research, including this dissertation.

This study will especially focus on these aspects in nineteenth-century French theater, as they are integral to any understanding of the Indo-French dialectic. By focusing solely on nineteenth-century representations of India on stage, existing lacunae that inhibit a holistic understanding of the topic will be addressed, as explained below. To this end, a representative corpus of nineteenth-century French theatrical representations of India has been chosen. In the case of plays that have been previously studied by scholars, they will be analyzed from a different perspective, exploring new fields of enquiry.

1.2 WHY THE NINETEENTH CENTURY?

While Europeans wrote about India for centuries, the nineteenth century was a particularly fruitful time for encounters of the literary kind between France and India. The proliferation of works could be seen as the culmination of a centuries-long process. The discovery of a sea route to India in 1497-98 by Vasco da Gama increased European travel and exploration in the sub-continent, changing India from a metaphor for all things strange and wonderful to an actual geographical space with its own culture and character. Travel accounts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had provided a wealth of detail on people, culture and government as well as commercial possibilities. In the seventeenth century there were, among others, the well-known travelogues by François Bernier and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier. In the eighteenth century, the travel accounts of Pierre Sonnerat and Anquetil Duperron stand out. These continue to be published in various critical editions even today. Another very important source of detailed information on India was the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* written by Jesuit missionaries traveling in India, China and other countries of the region.[5] Of the thirty-two volumes published during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several are dedicated to India. The first-hand accounts by the travelers and missionaries were then reproduced in various historical works, such as the influential *Histoire philosophique et politique des deux Indes* (1770) by Abbé Raynal. Once colonization of India was under way, events in India had greater portent than before. The possibility of territorial control of India with access to its immense wealth meant that European countries regarded the region with greater interest and an acquisitive eye. The *Compagnie des Indes* established in 1664 by Colbert joined the other companies already established in India by

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[5] The *Lettres* were also written from the Americas, "les Indes occidentales," providing information on native populations and practices.

the different maritime powers in Europe. The Portuguese had their trading company in India since the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Dutch and the British from the beginning of the seventeenth. The presence of the different European powers in India had implications for commerce and politics in both India and Europe. The rivalry between France and Britain was especially bitter. This meant that political happenings in India were directly linked to French and British encounters in Europe; they often had territorial implications through treaties and were diligently reported in French media. For the French, India as a colony was not a completely far-fetched idea: they did indeed start on the path towards political dominance before ceding place to the British. Under Joseph-François Dupleix, the French Governor-General in India between 1742 and 1754, France reached the height of its power in India, controlling substantial territory in southern India, with Pondichéry (now Puducherry) as its capital. Losses to the British soon followed, however, and in 1763, the Treaty of Paris reduced French holdings to the five *comptoirs* of Pondichéry, Yanaon, Mahé, Karikal and Chandernagor. These few pockets remaining under French control in the nineteenth century kept France's engagement with India alive. Given India's vulnerability to European colonization, a notion of asymmetrical relative power continued to prevail in French minds despite the lack of actual hegemony. As *lieux de mémoire,* the five *comptoirs* constantly served as reminders of "what could have been" and facilitated the creation of imaginary scenarios of French rule over India.

Historically, the nineteenth century was a crucial time for the shaping of national identities in both France and India. France was seeking its place on the world stage while undergoing significant political, economic and social upheaval within its borders. Despite seven political regimes between 1800 and 1900 (not counting the brief 100 days of Napoleon's comeback in 1815), France still engaged with Britain in the battle for territory within Europe and for colonial supremacy overseas. There was a relentless progression

towards modernity within France's borders that was accompanied by a parallel movement towards greatness on the world stage. The conquest of Algeria in 1830 was a pivotal moment. Successful colonization was itself a destabilizing force on established ideas of nationhood and self-identity as French settlers crossed the boundaries of Europe into Africa. The French had to grapple with the idea of Algeria's local populations also being a part of the French empire. On the economic front, industrialization transformed the economy, but growth was accompanied by social unrest due to rising inequalities. The political and social turmoil impacted the literature of the time. Literary greats like Victor Hugo and Alphonse de Lamartine were politically engaged; others, Charles Baudelaire among them, expressed the trauma that accompanies swift and profound economic and social change. Still others such as Gautier rejected the utilitarian in their crusade for beauty in art, "l'art pour l'art." This period of tumultuous change was also reflected in the literary landscape through the various movements—Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism—that were born during the century. The transformation of Paris under Baron Haussmann is a powerful metaphor for the changes that swept France during the nineteenth century: medieval structures were erased to usher in an era of modernity and global puissance.

As for India, it was undergoing a period of even greater upheaval, with more and more local kingdoms coming firmly under the yoke of Britain. It started the nineteenth century under the rule of the East India Company and ended it as the jewel in Britain's crown. India, once the distant land of myth and mystery, had, by 1862, become a British possession: Britain made a powerful statement of ownership during the Great Exhibition of London, when India was packed, transported, and put on display. It was during the nineteenth century that India made the transition from a country of fabled riches to a British colony that would end up epitomizing the "Third World." France was an interested spectator, even though it was not an active player in the transformation. The volatility in

both France and India during the century meant that ideas of the French Self and the Indian Other were constantly shifting in the imagination. This instability, reflected in the literature of the time, invites further research and analysis. The socio-political issues that influence the corpus will be discussed more extensively in the relevant chapters.

On the literary front, the discovery of Sanskrit texts by European scholars during the eighteenth century was an extremely significant event which propelled linguistic exploration into Indo-European languages. Sanskrit language and literature became the object of considerable scholarly interest and investigation in Europe, including France. Thus, by the nineteenth century India was more than a mythical land of marvels, it was one that could interest a more diverse and informed public. India was present in all genres, be it novels, poems, theater, journalism, or historical accounts.

Dramatic literature was particularly fecund, appearing in various registers: adaptations of esoteric Sanskrit plays, grandiose operas and satiric vaudeville. Plays on India spanned the century, with some plays being revived decades after their first performance. Despite this significant presence in theater, exclusive focus on theatrical representations of India during the nineteenth century has eluded scholarly research, furnishing instead only a part of the corpus examined by Mehta, Marsh, Assayag and others. Most of the scholarly publications in the field investigate larger time periods and/or broader subject matter. In these studies, general conclusions are drawn, for example, on the role of the imaginary and self-reflexivity, concepts which have become axiomatic with time. In other cases, representations of India are used to buttress a particular theory or viewpoint (e.g., Figueira). These works offer valuable insights, but can also function as starting points for further investigation into the specifics of nineteenth-century theatrical practices in representing India.

1.3 WHY THEATER?

This study tackles how India was seen in the role of the "Other." The theater is an almost inevitable choice of genre as there can be no better place to offer up, visually, an expression of what is essentially a mental construction of India as the Other. Visual imagery dominates our perception of the world; literally and/or metaphorically, the gaze is invoked in any allusion to knowledge or self-perception. A theatrical representation has the opportunity to make a greater impact on a larger audience than a purely textual or aural medium. The theater provides both the physical and conceptual space to effectively portray an idea or a person in a certain manner. In the process, it reduces the world it portrays to the size of the stage. Significantly, Said used theater as a metaphor for the entire treatment of the Orient by the West:

> . . . the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. (*Orientalism* 63)

According to Said's description, the Orient is compressed to fit the confines of the European imagination. In staging the Orient, the West shapes it according to its will and fancy, with the Other unable to retaliate. Other theories studying the East-West paradigm do not, however, discount the role of the Other to the extent that Orientalism does. While Orientalism claims that the East is passive and the West has sole agency, theoreticians like Homi Bhabha and Ashis Nandy show how the West is influenced by its own creation of the East. The Other, even when colonized, has an influence on the Self and changes it in some measure, even with the balance of power clearly unequal.

One theory that has gained currency in recent times, that of "contact zones," is particularly appropriate to the study of theater. A highly useful and flexible term developed by Mary Louise Pratt in the early 1990s, the term "contact zones" is now used extensively to study spaces of engagement between cultures in various disciplines such as ethnography, transculturation, and post-colonial studies. Pratt uses the term "contact zones" to refer to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other. . . " ("Arts" 34). Literature is such a contact zone, being a social space where disparate cultures can engage with each other. Ideological and cultural traditions can be endlessly debated, refashioned, appropriated, and disseminated. This creates relationships that reflect changing times and positions of power. Jean Starobinski takes note of this dynamism, stating that "l'œuvre littéraire . . . se manifeste comme un trajet, c'est-à-dire comme un système de relations variables établies, par l'entremise du langage, entre une conscience singulière et le monde" (*Relation critique* 15). A literary work that presents a different culture from the reader's own creates a "contact zone," albeit through a highly personalized experience for the individual reader. On a broader scale, but no less personal, is the space of theatrical encounter. Theater, through its very nature, functions as an ideal contact zone, as it "invokes the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect" (Pratt *Imperial Eyes* 8). As an area of encounter, dramatic literature is rich in potential. It contains within itself the germ of performance, bringing to life the articulation of different voices. Once produced on stage, it is no longer a simple collaboration of two parties, the playwright and the reader, but a team production. Dramatic performance moves beyond the text to allow multiple perspectives to prevail. The actor, the director, the costume and set designers, all add to the playwright's vision. Body language, voice, and movement on stage allow the text to be interpreted in subtly different ways. The public also plays a part by shaping the play

through its likes and dislikes, since, after all, the ultimate aim is to attract an audience. In fact, "theastai," the Greek word that is at the root of "Theater," means to "behold." This notion brings the role of the audience to the forefront and staging and seeing become closely allied. In the case of theater, the "trajet," the variable relationships that Starobinski refers to, plays out on a wider scale, given that the number of people involved in the creation and consumption of the production is far larger than for a literary work, a novel read, for example, in the solitary space of an armchair. Treating theater as a contact zone makes the stage a space for two-way interaction. This enables the examination of the plays in the light of theories such as those proposed by Bhabha and Nandy.

The importance of theater in the nineteenth century, both as a literary and an economic activity, is another reason for my privileging theater over other genres. Harold Hobson estimates that in Paris in 1851 there were 259 new plays and 646 revivals, with receipts of 7,100,000 francs, buttressing his claim that the theater was the principal source of Parisian entertainment (3-5). Authors hoped to make their mark in theater both for the prestige and for the money, and hardly anyone was exempt:

> Rares sont les auteurs qui ne cèdent pas à la tentation du théâtre, quitte à y connaître l'échec. En 1847 . . . Charles Laudre évalue à 900 le nombre d'écrivains vivants ayant à un moment de leur carrière apposé leur nom sur une affiche de théâtre. De Chateaubriand à Zola, de Mme De Staël à George Sand, de Balzac à Flaubert, les plus grands composent pour la scène. (Gengembre 8)

Theater was thus highly present in public life and correspondingly important as an indicator, maybe even an influencer, of cultural and social preoccupations. The goal of this study is to examine a select corpus of nineteenth-century theatrical representations of India within the political, cultural and social milieu of its time, which purpose is admirably served by the prominence of theater in the nineteenth century.

1.4 THE CORPUS

My corpus consists of representative examples of different types of performances that are set in India, selected to showcase the wide variety of topics that inspired French playwrights. These run the gamut from highly intellectual and informed forays into Indian culture to state-approved political propaganda. The corpus is divided into three sections, each studied in a chapter:

1. *Historical drama*: The plays *Tipoo-Saib ou la prise de Séringapatam* by Gobert and Dubois (1804) and *Tippô-Saëb* by Étienne de Jouy (1813) are compared to a historical event, the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan during the Fourth Mysore War in 1799. This war decided the fate of the British and the French in the battle for hegemony over India. An excellent example of historical rewriting by the French, Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb* is discussed in many scholarly works, demonstrating, inter alia, French wishful thinking, Orientalist discourse, and Napoleonic propaganda. By subjecting Jouy's play to close analysis and by comparing it to the one by Gobert and Dubois, I uncover hidden nuances in the plays, revealing their complexity as well as their pertinence to today's world.

2*. The bayadères*: Of the many clichés that symbolized India for the French, the bayadères were the most beguiling. India's famed temple dancers were an important trope in French theater and provoked some of the biggest operatic and balletic successes of the nineteenth century. The two plays that are studied as illustrative of their genre are Étienne de Jouy's *Les Bayadères* (1810) and Eugène Scribe's *Le Dieu et la bayadère* (1830). I also look briefly at *Le Roi de Lahore* (1877) and *Lakmé* (1883), as they are representative of operas set in India towards the end of the nineteenth century.

3. *Sanskrit drama*: Two plays from Indian antiquity were translated multiple times and were performed on stage. These were Shúdraka's *Mṛichhakaṭikā (The Little Clay Cart)* and Kali.dasa's *Abhijñāna/śākuntala (The Recognition of Shakúntala),* estimated to have been

composed between second century BCE and sixth century CE. *Le Chariot d'enfant* (1850) by Joseph Méry and Gérard de Nerval and *Le Chariot de terre cuite* (1895) by Victor Barrucand, both adaptations of Shúdraka's play, are studied. Théophile Gautier's *Sacountalâ* (1858) and Ferdinand Hérold's *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ* (1895), two differing adaptations of Kali.dasa's play, are also analyzed.

Some of the plays such as Étienne de Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb* and Théophile Gautier's *Sacountalâ* have been studied before, by Figueira, Mehta and others. This dissertation aims to build upon their research and provide a deeper understanding of the plays by considering them from different angles.

1.5 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Instead of treating a play like an isolated text containing a message that can be decoded, I situate the corpus within the context of its time. Theater reviews, though a minor literary sub-genre, are an important tool to achieve this contextualization:

> The first *feuilletons* were . . . columns of drama criticism, a subject of riveting interest in a Paris of some 630,000 people in 1815: although almost half this number were literate, in the early part of the century it was the stage that was the principal public forum for the imaginative exploration of social and political attitudes. . . . (A. Levi 280)

The existence of multiple reviews for theatrical performances discloses diverse viewpoints that are brought to bear upon a single event. A hitherto static text acquires a dynamic dimension when different perspectives are taken into account, such as the author's expressed intentions or the audience's reactions. The success or failure of a play at the time of performance is not solely dependent on merit; nor does success guarantee that a work passes the test of time to survive to our days. The works of Scribe and Jouy, for example, were enormously successful when first produced in the nineteenth century, but are

virtually forgotten now. Nevertheless, their work did have a role to play in the contemporary literary and cultural world. It is important to situate their work in their time to grasp their significance and understand their relevance to more recent events. As the editors of *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, a collection of theater reviews by Gautier, point out:[6]

> Le succès ou la chute, sur ce terrain chanceux du théâtre, ne préjugent pas toujours la valeur intrinsèque d'une œuvre dramatique; mais ils ont au moins leur raison d'être à l'heure où ils se produisent, raison que l'on peut difficilement apprécier à distance, c'est-à-dire quand les circonstances ne sont plus les mêmes et que les impressions du moment se sont effacées. (1 : I-II)

Press reviews provide us with eyewitness accounts of otherwise ephemeral events in the past. They allow a play to be studied *in situ,* as it were, giving us a glimpse of the social, political and cultural circumstances surrounding the production, thus creating a broader "contact zone." This allows for a deeper understanding of both the work and the society it was created in/for. Press reviews allow common trends and contradictory opinions to be analyzed. The effects of a turbulent political and social environment are studied by investigating shifts in audience reactions to the same play or a similar one over a period of time. This allows the examination of identity as a constantly evolving concept; as Said states, identity, whether of the Self or the Other, is not a fixed concept but one in constant flux, being adjusted and re-adjusted continuously:

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[6] By naming the collection of press reviews as "*Histoire de l'art dramatique,"* the editors show how journalism acts as a historical record of events. Journalism, with its focus on the here and now, is generally perceived as impermanent as each new issue renders the earlier one obsolete. Presented as a collection of twenty-five years, however, Gautier's reviews track the development and growth of the dramatic art itself.

> The construction of identity . . . involves the construction of opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from "us." Each age and society re-creates its "Others." Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of "other" is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process. . . . (Afterword to *Orientalism* 332)

In this dissertation, I seek to illustrate that theater effectively demonstrates the complex "historical, social, intellectual and political" process of asserting identity. The study considers an author's avowed intentions, as recorded in an accompanying preface, along with both the text of the play and audience response recorded in press reviews, to see if intention, expression, and reception coincide. The effort is to understand the play as a dynamic event that is shaped by its environment while simultaneously informing and influencing audiences. The nuanced interaction between the Self and the Other is rendered more visible through this approach.

Given that the subject matter deals with the French Self and the Indian Other, studies in Orientalism, subalterneity and other forms of colonial and post-colonial theory are used to examine the corpus. This also serves to render current and relevant the issues that are disclosed in my analysis of nineteenth century French theater.

1.6 STRUCTURE

The dissertation is composed of three main chapters and a conclusion followed by a bibliography. Pictorial illustrations are provided where appropriate and available. Each chapter is unified in theme, viz. Historical drama, Bayadères, and Sanskrit drama. Different plays with similar themes or different adaptations of the same play are compared to each other. Shifts in time and perspective are recorded, both in the creation as well as the reception of these plays. For each chapter, an issue that is particular to that section of the

corpus is highlighted: problems of veracity in ostensibly factual historical accounts for Historical drama, the challenges of reconciling reality with imagination (contrasting the actual visit of Indian dancers in France to the theatrical representations of bayadères) for the chapter on bayadères, and challenges of translation for Sanskrit drama. The treatment of stereotypes is studied in all three chapters. The conclusion summarizes the findings and indicates the potential for further research.

1.7 PERSONAL ANTECEDENTS

While it is true that literary texts are the primary subject matter of this dissertation, reading a text is done through the filter of personal experiences. Education and life experiences inform one's thinking and approach to any intellectual endeavor. In addition, this dissertation seeks to present literary texts as events, thereby drawing political, cultural and social aspects into the study. However desirable a scholar's objectivity may be, it is not always dispassionate. Biases, conscious or unconscious, intended or unintended, find their way into any work: hence this brief note on my own antecedents.

I was born in post-colonial India in Puducherry (formerly Pondicherry), an erstwhile French *comptoir*, with a multi-cultural Indian background. I am also a Francophile and a naturalized American. While my dissertation focuses on the dialectic between the French Self and the Indian Other, I cannot put myself squarely on one side or the other. I have lived in the United States of America for over two decades, which puts me on the exterior both with regards to India and to France. Acting as a spokesperson for a particular identity is inevitably unstable and complicated. Gayatri Spivak articulates the nature of this complexity; in many interviews, references are made to her antecedents, i.e. her Indian citizenship, her resident-alien status in the USA and her biculturality:

> The question of 'speaking *as*' involves a distancing from oneself. The moment I have to think of the ways in which I will speak as an Indian, or as a feminist, the ways in which I will speak as a woman, what I am doing is trying to generalise myself, make myself a representative, trying to distance myself from some kind of inchoate speaking *as such.* There are many subject positions which one must inhabit; one is not just one thing. (*Post-colonial critic* 60)

Spivak's observation captures the difficulty of assuming a single identity to speak from. A scholar like Spivak is still a woman, a feminist, a migrant. Along with her intellectual choices, her gender and her origins continue to define her, as is the case with all of us.

In an ideal world, scholarship would be entirely objective and unbiased. On the other hand, the experience of different cultures prevents an entrenched binarism. I look upon this as an advantage and a privilege since it allows me to see issues from different perspectives. The privilege comes with a price. Echoing Spivak, I believe that "… to an extent, I feel I've earned the right to critique both places. . . . I am bicultural, but my biculturality is that I'm not at home in either of the places" (*Post-Colonial Critic* 83). The intrinsic fluidity of self-identification is, for me, a lived experience. In this dissertation, I indulge my love for French language and literature while still being aware of my Indian roots and my present status as a denizen of the privileged western world. Writing this in the current political climate, however, I am made conscious of the inherent instability of this privilege, given the fact that deeper issues of race, religion, and color continue to remain contentious in a highly advanced twenty-first century.

2 STAGING HISTORY: WAR TRIANGLES

Figure 2. Tippoo's Tiger. Mysore c.1795. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Tippoo's Tiger is a mechanical organ in a wooden case depicting a British soldier being mauled by a tiger. It is said to have been inspired by the death of a young Scotsman, the son of General Hector Munro, who defeated Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan in 1781. The decoration and the painting are Indian and the mechanism is said to be of French manufacture. This artifact embodies the Tipu Sultan story: the Tiger is Tipu, attacking the British with the help of the French. After his defeat and death, Tipu's wealth is appropriated by Britain and put on display, transformed into a symbol of British supremacy.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Early in the nineteenth century, two plays were staged which treated an event that actually occurred, and, in addition, was very recent: the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan during the Fourth Mysore War in 1799.[7] The plays were *Tipoo-Saib ou la prise de Séringapatam* by Gobert and Dubois (1804) and *Tippô-Saëb* by Étienne de Jouy (1813). The existence of these two very different plays allows me to compare them with each other as well as the actual historical event. To this end, I provide a historical background before studying the French plays. These plays are fictional dramatizations of the event, notwithstanding the authors' assertions of veracity. However, the "non-fictional" accounts by historians, both at the time and much later, show a strong subjective bias as well. Accounts deemed as historical are carefully contrived to relate a particular story, illustrating Barthes's denial of the intrinsic difference traditionally ascribed to each form: "Je veux dire que je ne puis me prêter à la croyance traditionnelle qui postule un divorce de nature entre l'objectivité du savant et la subjectivité de l'écrivain, comme si l'un était doué d'une "liberté" et l'autre d'une "vocation," propres toutes deux à escamoter ou à sublimer les limites réelles de leur situation. . . " (*Mythologies* 10). There are multiple historical versions of Tipu's story, showing the existence of bias by various parties. The version of events presented by the British is the most widely known, but it is not a single unequivocal rendering of events. The British accounts were ruled by expediency and their official stories are as staged as any theatrical event. A narrated story, whether overtly fictionalized, as in the case of the French plays, or ostensibly factual, as in official records, changes when

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[7] Variously known as Tippu Sultan, Tippoo Sahib, Tipu Sahib, Fateh Ali Tipu etc., I will refer to him throughout, except in direct citations, as Tipu Sultan, a widely accepted version of his name. I have similarly settled on "Hyder Ali" for Tipu's father.

viewed at different times and from different viewpoints. Representation, whether historical, artistic, literary or critical, involves issues of point of view and partiality. Peace and war between nations, as well as personal friendships and enmities among different actors, influence how a story is told and viewed. Identities shift and merge, sometimes emphasizing racial and cultural differences, sometimes blurring the distinctions between them. The Oriental despot plays a dominant role in both historical and theatrical versions: the stereotype is confirmed, but attributed to British, French and Indian figures in turn. The shifting political climate of the early nineteenth century has a kaleidoscopic effect on the simple, almost banal, plotlines of the French plays, rearranging them to show complex, contradictory images. Viewed through contemporary lenses, Tipu's story is transformed from a historical tragedy set in distant India to a self-reflexive critique.

2.2 TIPU'S STORY

Figure 3. Tipu Sultan by Edward Orme (1805). © British Library.

Tipu Sultan (1750-1799), ruler of Mysore and a fierce enemy of the British, was a highly controversial figure both during his lifetime and after his death.[8] Known as the "Tiger of Mysore," he was reputed for his bravery and his military successes in the late eighteenth century.[9] His resistance to the British forces gave him the stature of a patriot in the eyes of Indians. He also had a reputation as a tyrant who was cruel to Hindus and Christians. The British popularized his image as a ruthless despot, thus portraying themselves as saviors and legitimizing their eventual victory over him. Opinions are divided about his religious intolerance, and he is still discussed in scholarly treatises globally as well as in popular media in India.

Tipu's father, Hyder Ali (1722-1782), was a general under the Wodeyar kings of Mysore. In the midst of internecine feuds of succession, Hyder Ali became powerful enough to hold the Wodeyar family prisoner and became the *de facto* ruler in 1761. The British, the Marathas, and the Nizam of Hyderabad were his three main enemies, and he fought several wars with them, separately or through various fluctuating alliances. He studied the military strategies of France's most successful commander in India, Jean-François Dupleix, and hired European mercenaries, mainly French, in his army.

In all, there were four wars fought between the British East India Company and Hyder Ali/Tipu Sultan. In the first war (1767-1769), Hyder Ali reached Madras, the stronghold of the British and dictated the terms of the peace treaty. One of the terms was

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[8] The French refer throughout to the "Anglais." However, I have chosen to use the term "British" other than in direct citations, so as to be more representative of the populations who were involved in colonizing the Indian subcontinent, either on behalf of the East India Company or the British Crown. The Scots, in particular, had a very strong presence.

[9] The tiger was also Tipu's symbol: most of the objects surrounding or representing him, like his throne, his soldiers' uniforms, etc., were emblazoned with tiger motifs.

that the British were to come to his aid if he was attacked; however, they did not send troops to assist him in his war with the Marathas in 1771. In the second war (1780-1784), Hyder Ali and Tipu allied with the French and again prevailed against the British. The end of this war saw significant numbers of British captives in Tipu's custody (Hyder Ali died of illness in 1782).[10] In the Third Mysore War (1790-1792), the British allied with the Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad, and this time Tipu was defeated and two of his sons were held hostage by the British till Tipu fulfilled the terms of the treaty. The final war in 1799 which ended with Tipu's death and a decisive victory for the British was an epoch-making one: it signaled the era of British dominance in India. Talk of treason by one or more of Tipu's trusted advisors was rife, and the speculation continues today.[11] However inevitable it may have seemed in later years, it was never a foregone conclusion that the British would triumph. The battles were intense, and Hyder Ali and Tipu were credible deterrents to British expansion in India. The conflicts between Tipu and the British directly involved the French, both ideologically and militarily. French historian Joseph-François

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[10] The *Encyclopædia Britannica*, in its entry for Hyder Ali states, "In his dying words, Hyder implored Tippu to make peace with the British." I see this atypical usage of purple prose as a vestige of the British bias against Tipu. The mention of Hyder Ali's dying words, along with the usage of "implored" sentimentally charges Tipu with filial disobedience. The concluding line in the entry for Tipu continues to compare Tipu unfavorably with his father: "He proved cruel to his enemies and lacked the judgment of his father, however."

[11] The first important victory for Britain was at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 between Robert Clive and Nawab Siraj ud-Daula. Like Tipu, the Nawab was allied with the French. In this battle as well, the British victory was ensured through bribery and betrayal; the British promised the throne to Mir Jafar, the commander of the Siraj ud-Daula's armies, in exchange for his betraying the Nawab. Defeating Tipu put the British on the path to total domination and ended French hopes in India.

Michaud (1767-1839) details the various ways in which the British were vulnerable after the Third Mysore War, and regrets the opportunity to gain the upper hand over the British lost by the French through "l'imprévoyance du Directoire" (1: 195). For his part, Tipu certainly made an effort to persuade various regimes in France to ally with him. He sent one delegation to Paris in 1788 to the court of Louis XVI, and another to Mauritius in 1798 with appeals to the Directoire. The French promised military help, but could not follow through. The amicable exchanges between the French and Tipu, however, were enough to alarm the British who launched the Fourth Mysore War. Tipu died defending his capital Seringapatam (now Shri.ranga.pattana).[12]

Both during Tipu's lifetime and after his death, different groups saw him differently. For the British, Tipu was an enemy to be reckoned with, one who learned tactics from the Europeans in order to use it against them. For the French, Tipu was an enemy of their enemy. He was seen as a potential ally and a courageous warrior with whom they could challenge the British. For the Indians, Tipu was a warrior who could challenge the British, a ruler who modernized and administered his kingdom effectively, and a tyrant who ruthlessly exterminated local populations that were in his way. He was a Muslim who ruled over a Hindu kingdom. Before his father Hyder Ali and after Tipu, it was the Mysore Wodeyar family that ruled over the territory. The Wodeyar family was loyal to Britain, having had the throne and half the territories controlled by Tipu restored to them by the British. Sections of the Indian population hailed Tipu as a martyr and a patriot who held out against the British. Tipu's story, therefore, is a charged one that is told and retold from

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[12] The vernacular name is transcribed in various ways. The British called it Seringapatam, and the French referred to it as Séringapatam. For consistency, I use the British version as it is simpler, other than in direct citations.

different points of view. This bias makes accounts by the English, the French, and the Indians equally suspect: each of them is an unreliable narrator. Any attempt to set the record straight on the basis of evidence is hotly contested with evidence from other sources.[13]

2.2.1 Performances in Real Life and their Real-life Consequences

There are several events associated with Tipu, a highly colorful figure, which took on dramatic qualities through their sensational nature. The visit of Tipu's ambassadors to Versailles in 1788 is one such spectacle. People flocked to see the delegation, attracted more by their exoticism than the political import of their visit: " . . . le nom de Tippoo-Saïb eût un moment de célébrité chez un peuple léger qui étoit plus frappé par l'originalité des costumes asiatiques, que de l'importance de nos possessions dans l'Inde" (Michaud 1: 138-39).

[13] Kate Brittlebank makes a determined effort to unravel the controversies surrounding Tipu and presents a more realistic representation in her book *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy*. She reveals how contradictory official records from various parties are. The multiplicity of sources only confuses the issues instead of adding information.

Figure 4. Tipu's ambassadors at Versailles in 1788. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

Tipu's diplomatic mission to the French capital was a riveting show, complete with merchandising, including ladies' fans and teacups decorated with images of the ambassadors.[14] Their exoticism was not employed solely in a light-hearted manner, however. Jasanoff speaks of the prevalence of the ambassadors' portraits and their integration into contemporary French politics, adding that "[p]erhaps their most unusual appearance of all was in pamphlets by contemporary philosophes, where they served as mouthpieces in the debates about despotism and monarchy that were echoing through Paris's prerevolutionary salons" (161). Another stereotype that accompanied the delegation

[14] Examples can be found at the National Galleries of Scotland's website, *tigerandthistle.net,* which documents events of interest in Tipu's life, linking them to paintings and other works in various museums.

was the fabulous wealth and opulence associated with India.[15] Jasanoff states that the Indians brought gifts of gold, diamonds and pearls (160). These, however, did not meet French expectations. Kate Marsh describes how the ambassadors and the gifts they brought were disappointing to the French (37). In addition, the French were aware that the British were watching the visit with keen interest. The French had to scramble to make sure that the mismatch of expectations and reality did not make them a laughing stock: ". . . après les exagérations des journaux, la modicité de ces dons jetteroit un ridicule sur l'embassade que les gazettes étrangères et spécialement les papiers anglais se permettroient mille plaisanteries" (Letter from La Luzerne cited in Marsh 37). Neither side got what they anticipated, however. In the accounts of appeals for help from Tipu, it is often ignored that the alliance involved a quid pro quo that was potentially beneficial to both parties. The French were in India for mercenary reasons. While commercial exploitation of India was the primary goal of European presence in India, European soldiers, including the French, were employed in the armies of various Indian kingdoms. Tipu's final defeat at the hands of the British devalues his stature as the ruler of a rich kingdom, one who could have been a powerful and beneficial ally for the French. Tipu had sent his envoys with a specific list of requests including, among others, signing an offensive and defensive treaty and providing soldiers and artisans, particularly foundry workers. Louis XVI sent back 98 artisans, a specially designed Sèvres porcelain service, and some plants, seeds and bulbs from his garden.[16] Given the economic crisis brewing in the country on the eve of the French

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[15] According to *tigerandthistle.net,* a contemporary observer reported that everyone was trying to get tickets to gain entry to the palace during the official reception for the envoys. A rumor claimed that three casks of diamonds were to be rolled about in the galleries.

[16] This service found its way into the hands of British collectors after the sack of Seringapatam. The Sèvres teacups from the service ended up in the collection of Robert Clive's family (Jasanoff 191).

Revolution, the timing of Tipu's appeal was unfortunate. In Michaud's words, "Ils demandoient des secours contre les Anglais; le gouvernement français ne put leur donner que des spectacles et des fêtes" (1: 139). Nevertheless, during the ambassadors' visit, the French exerted themselves to dazzle the visitors.[17] Tipu's ambassadors were entertained by their hosts and provided entertainment with their own exotic presence.

The next display of friendship between the French and Tipu took place in Tipu's kingdom, after the French Revolution. This time, French republican ideas were celebrated through the planting of the Liberty tree, honoring the Jacobin Club of Seringapatam, in May 1797. The ceremony took place in Tipu's presence, and with a display of his military might. The French and Indian attendees were asked by the President of the club, François Ripaud, to swear to the cause: "Citoyens, jurez-vous haîne aux rois, exceptant Tippoo-Sultan le

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The British, ultimate victors, got all the spoils, including objects of goodwill presented by Louis XVI to Tipu Sultan, a symbolic usurpation of the Franco-Indian alliance. The sheer number and value of artifacts looted by the British from Tipu's kingdom and found in British museums and in private collections testify that the wealth that the French public expected to see on display during the ambassadors' visit to Paris, did in fact, exist. As things turned out, the French got the spectacle while, a few years later, the British got the wealth.

[17] According to Michaud, Tipu Sultan put two of the ambassadors to death for gushing over the French King's wealth and the splendor of Christian France and the King's court. The greatness of France and its prosperity, Michaud insists, caused envy in far-off lands, while "des plaintes séditieuses" led to a revolution that destroyed its resources (1: 141-42). On the other hand, Jasanoff blames France's economic crisis on the failure of the embassy. She does substantiate the assertion that obtaining gifts of expensive porcelain instead of the military alliance he wanted made Tipu furious (161). I have not been able to find corroboration for Michaud's claim that Tipu had his ambassadors killed.

victorieux, l'allié de la république française; guerre aux tyrans, amour pour la patrie et pour celle du citoyen Tippoo?" (Michaud 1: 175-76). Maya Jasanoff describes this ceremony as "one of the strangest cross-cultural juxtapositions in Imperial history," and admits that it is, "at one level . . . almost laughable." The implications, however, are serious. This ceremony involving "Citoyen Tipou," "the world's only Jacobin king," attested to an almost forty-year relationship between Mysore and France (149-151). While self-serving and, in the end, a mostly empty gesture, the formalization of the Indo-French relationship through visible ceremonies such as this one made it harder to ignore. The potential threat that it contained made it incumbent on the British to destroy the alliance before it actually fructified.

The third Indo-French dramatic encounter that I wish to mention is one that Tipu did not want publicized. Four ambassadors from Tipu's court were sent to Mauritius with François Ripaud, a pirate and the head of the Jacobin society mentioned above. For discretion's sake, they were sent with a cargo of black pepper to make it appear as a trading venture. Despite Tipu's requests, the Governor of Mauritius received the ambassadors publicly and made an official proclamation of his promises of help. The ambassadors left letters to be sent to the Directory in France and returned to Seringapatam, with a motley crew of 100 headed by General Chapuis, and some seeds and plants. What Tipu wanted was arms and European-trained troops; what he received was, once more, spectacle, pomp and some interesting flora.

Actual military help, the ten thousand Frenchmen that Tipu Sultan was so anxiously waiting for, almost became a reality when Napoleon reached Egypt. Napoleon wrote a letter to his "très grand ami, Tippoo-Saïb" informing him that he was leading "une armée innombrable et invincible, plein du désir de vous [Tipu] affranchir du joug de fer de l'Angleterre" (reproduced in Michaud, 1: 377). Unfortunately, the British intercepted this letter. Combined with the arrival of the soldiers from Mauritius, this letter served as casus

belli for Lord Wellesley to attack Mysore. The visible displays of association between the French and Tipu were a substitute for actual military alliance, which could have defeated British aspirations in India. The performative nature of these demonstrations spurred the British to take action on a scale befitting the danger they implied, rather than the danger they actually constituted. Chapuis's band of 100 soldiers was hardly enough to help defeat the British, but the British could and did use their arrival as justification for attacking Tipu in 1799. Jasanoff, however, points out that while this was the ostensible reason for the war, Wellesley had made his war plans well before Napoleon arrived in Egypt, so convinced was he of Franco-Mysorean collusion (165). The British management of the conflict was thus just as carefully crafted and staged as any theater performance.

2.2.2 Media Representations – Painting Tipu in Lasting Colors

The Mysore wars decided the course of Indian, British, and French history, and their crucial nature meant that, as Teltscher states, "the four Mysore wars were more extensively chronicled than any preceding Indian campaign" (229). Key moments were rendered in art and print media, and widely disseminated in Britain.[18] These propaganda materials, among others, have since served as durable metaphors of the triangular relationship. One of many visual representations of the event, an often-reproduced painting by Robert Home, depicts the gracious reception of Tipu's young sons as hostages by Cornwallis. It highlights the moral superiority of the British, kind to their enemies in victory. Edward Said states that the arrival of Napoleon in Egypt signals the inception of Orientalism as a sustained, deliberate creation of the Orient by the West. The Orient in this view comprises Islamic countries of

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[18] The storming of Seringapatam, for example, "inspired at least six plays, a panorama, countless prints, pamphlets, and eyewitness accounts" (Jasanoff 174).

the near and mid-East ("Edward Said on Orientalism"). I believe that in India, it is the defeat of Tipu Sultan that functions as the beginning of Orientalism. It was at this juncture that Britain began to deliberately craft an image of India that was part of their long-range plans. Events that had happened much earlier were refashioned and retold. Holwell's narrative of the deaths in the "Black Hole of Calcutta" had limited impact in Britain, both when it first occurred in 1756 and when it was published in 1758.[19] This incident was popularized and converted into a "poignant foundation myth of British India" in the nineteenth century (Colley 255). Britain's colonial aspirations were given shape, ideologically and politically, when its goals in India included territorial expansion alongside commercial exploitation. The British government also became more involved in the activities of the East India Company, and information about events in India was more widely disseminated among the British people as well.

The British portrayal of Tipu as an Oriental despot is not a uniform, unchallenged picture. The first two wars between Hyder Ali/Tipu Sultan and the English East India Company had resulted in the Company being defeated. The Company was not always seen positively in Britain, and its detractors reviled its tactics in India and elsewhere. The Company was discouraged from engaging with the local kings: commerce, not territorial conquest, was seen as its primary aim. Descriptions of the tyranny of Hyder and Tipu were often juxtaposed with accounts of the Company's pernicious actions, with the implication

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[19] According to Holwell's account, he and 145 other British soldiers were imprisoned overnight in an eighteen-foot square punishment cell. Only 23 survived, the others having died of suffocation, dehydration or being trampled. Historians have established that the numbers were highly exaggerated. Colley shows the discrepancy in how the event was viewed in Britain by contemporaries without too much importance, and how it was later inscribed into imperial history as a defining moment.

that any treatment received at the hands of Hyder and Tipu were retaliations for the Company's own behavior. A letter written by an ensign in the British army, John Charles Sheen, describes the sack of the fort of Anantpur, with "four hundred beautiful women either killed or wounded with the bayonet, expiring in one another's arms, while the private soldiers were committing every kind of outrage, and plundering them of their jewels, the officers not being able to restrain them" (cited in Teltscher 232). A few years later, these charges were categorically denied by the directors of the East India Company and a retraction by Sheen was published. This retraction, however, did not have the shock value and reach that the original letter had, and stories of the rape of Anantpur continued to circulate (233). It was not just the Orientals who were shown to be cruel and despotic; British commanders, such as Brigadier-General Mathews under whose command atrocities such as those at Anantpur in 1783 were carried out, were seen as equally so.

By the same token, the Indian rulers were sometimes recognized as not completely evil. Hyder Ali was acknowledged to have virtues as well:

> He [Haidar] had been, greatly through their own fault, and partly through their interference with his designs, a bitter, and very nearly fatal enemy, to the English East India Company; but it would be disgraceful and mean, on that account, to suppress his virtues, or endeavour to conceal his great qualities." (*Annual Register,* qtd. in Teltscher 231)

Hyder Ali was compared to Frederick the Great of Prussia, and Tipu to Achilles "with all that this implied in terms of martial valour and classical physique" (Colley 298). Colley concludes that "As would always be the case, non-Europeans of power, rank, and—in the case of Haidar and Tipu proven military success—could deflect and correct a racially hostile European gaze (and *vice versa*)." In the 1780s, before Tipu was defeated, Colley points out that Tipu was described as "easy," "affable," "agreeable," "fair, with a pleasing countenance." This contrasted with his descriptions after his death: " . . . his bust was corpulent, his thighs

rather short . . . *His complexion was swarthy and much darker than that of men of high family in the east* . . . A promiscuous intercourse with the [female] sex had left its effects on the Sultan's body" (298, cited from a eye-witness description of Tipu's corpse by a senior Scottish army officer). Once power was established over Tipu, his body was shown as darker, of a lower stratum even among his own race, differentiating him to a greater degree from the victors. Sexual differentiation is carried out through allegations of debauchery, with implications of impotence. However, the same writer concludes his description of Tipu's expression in death thus: " . . . gentle and contented . . . a tranquil and courteous air for which he was distinguished when alive," showing that earlier impressions of Tipu linger in the author's mind (Colley 299).

There was a distinct ambivalence in British descriptions of Tipu's person and military prowess, but the imperative of establishing the notion of British superiority in India meant that Tipu's image had to be ultimately devalued. Teltscher describes the various positive and negative portrayals of Tipu and points out that, in either case, " . . . they are constructed around the figure of the oriental despot and are intended either to substantiate or discredit this stereotype" (233). His association with the French ensured his greater vilification. Defeating Tipu was the tipping point: "Where earlier discussions of Mysore, and of empire in India in general, had stressed the perils and pitfalls of engagement, victory over Tipu Sultan encouraged a shift toward open celebration of Company and British rule - a shift bolstered, crucially, by what was now public evidence of Tipu's collaboration with the French" (Jasanoff 170-171).

After Tipu's death, his reputation as a cruel despot was consciously and extensively propagated, through a dissemination of captive narratives detailing the suffering of British

soldiers in Seringapatam,[20] artifacts such as Tipu's Tiger, and official documents including translations of Tipu's personal letters found after his death. By translating and presenting carefully selected letters written by Tipu Sultan himself, while framing them with commentaries and suggested interpretations, the *Select Letters of Tippoo Sultaun* (1811), edited by William Kirkpatrick, uses Tipu's own voice to "place him within the familiar category of oriental despot" (Teltscher 235).

The British now had power not only over Tipu's dominions, but the desire, ability and means to paint a story for the world in a manner of their choosing. It was not just through plays and stage spectacles in London, of which there were many, that the British staged Tipu's fall. Through official parades celebrating their victory, during which Lord Wellesley symbolically lowered the Standard of Tipu to the earth (Teltscher 255), through paintings showing the British as gracious and kind towards Tipu's sons, through triumphant displays of Tipu's wealth in Britain, the most celebratory and durable of all spectacles was that of the British. As victors, the British had that privilege.

2.2.3 Tipu and Napoleon: Oriental and Orientalized despots

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[20] Colley and Teltscher document the calculated strategy whereby the stories of captives in Seringapatam were consciously adopted and repurposed through skillful editing. They were seen as shameful and humiliating in the beginning, a proof of Britain's weakness, as they included descriptions of forcible circumcisions, an affront to their masculinity. They were later publicized as examples of Tipu's unconscionable tyranny towards British soldiers. It was part of a two-prong strategy which denied or downplayed British excesses while simultaneously highlighting individual suffering of British captives. Colley compares this media strategy to that of the United States in the post-Vietnam period.

The humiliation was Tipu's and the victory was Britain's, but France was highly visible in this staging of history, both through their direct involvement as well as through comparisons between Napoleon and Tipu:

> In the 1790s, as in the 1780s, British propaganda never focused exclusively on Tipu as 'Other', as an Asian prince and a proponent of Islam. It also aligned him with the prime Christian, European enemy. Tipu and Napoleon, in this version, became two sides of the same coin.
>
> Thus despotism was not a characteristic attributed to Tipu solely or even primarily because he was an Indian or Muslim ruler. It was rather—in the British propaganda version—something he shared with Napoleon, yet another usurper. (Colley 297)

These dramatizations of events, conflating Tipu and Napoleon, are fascinating in the way they play with stereotypes. They confirm Said's theory that ". . . the vocabulary employed whenever the Orient is spoken or written about—is a set of representative figures, or tropes. These figures are to the actual Orient. . . as stylized costumes are to characters in a play; they are like, for example, . . . the particolored costume worn by Harlequin in a *commedia dell'arte* play" (71). On the one hand, Tipu is othered in various ways to create the stereotype of the Oriental despot. Brutal and barbaric in the captive narratives, feminized in the description of his corpse, revealed as superstitious and ignorant in the published translations of his diaries, he is even shown lacking when compared to his father. Tipu's person and his wealth are owned by the British to display as they will. On the other hand, it is curious how Napoleon is also Orientalized, given that he is after all a fellow European. Equally intriguing is the application of an Oriental stereotype to a British commander. Teltscher observes that "discussions of the character and government of both Hastings and Tipu share a central term—that of 'oriental despotism'" (233). This implies that it is not just that the Oriental is threatening; if someone is a threat, he must be Oriental. Bayly describes how "oriental despotism" practiced by some indigenous rulers, including

Hyder and Tipu, and "company despotism" were ironically similar in their ideology and practices (59-60). Likewise, Teltscher states that "The real threat represented by Tipu resulted from his blurring of distinctions between East and West in his appropriation of European ideas, tactics and individuals" (238). It was not, therefore, the cruelty or despotism of the Oriental that the British needed to defeat; it was the increasing Westernization of the enemy, bolstered by help from the French. It was the creation of another version of themselves that they were trying to stifle at birth. To prevent this "blurring of distinctions," military might had to be accompanied by a justificatory story, the creation of stories of Self and the Other which clearly differentiated between the two: "By erecting a wall of difference between East and West, the rhetoric of oriental despotism helped to conceal the similarities between the two powers' policies: the British were freed from the recognition of disturbing correspondences with their enemy" (Teltscher 238). The British extended their strategy to create correspondences between their two enemies, Napoleon and Tipu.

Thus, the various constructions of identity, carefully crafted by the British, the French, and the Indians, all blur and blend into a series of distorted images: Tipu and Hastings, Tipu and Napoleon, Tipu effeminized, gendered, and in all guises, othered. As Homi Bhabha contends, "The construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference - racial and sexual" ("Other Question" 19). This racial and sexual differentiation, with India as the colonial subject, is evident once India is colonized; it becomes problematic to explain when it is Napoleon who is Orientalized.

Figure 5. Double profile of Napoleon. (No attributable source found).

Politics of racial and sexual differentiation, however, are not the prerogative of the West. Just as there is a conflation of Tipu and Napoleon and a grouping of the French and the Indians together against the British, there is a similar blending and blurring of European identities in the mural of Pollilur.

Figure 6. The mural at Pollilur by an unknown Indian artist. © Otto Money, Source: tigerandthistle.net.

Figure 7. The British square. © Otto Money. Source: tigerandthistle.net.[21]

Tipu had the mural painted on the wall of his summer palace to commemorate his victory against the British. His French allies and his British enemy are all painted similarly, clad in red, and it is difficult to distinguish between them.[22] The French are depicted with mustaches – only this attribute of masculinity, shared between them and Tipu's army, puts them both on the same side, and in opposition to the British, who have a feminine look.[23] As

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[21] The painting can be examined in detail and with better resolution at https://battle-of-pollilur-painting.com.

[22] For the turbaned Indian, the hat was the main distinguishing feature of the European. Jasanoff points out that the French, bearing Indian mustaches and European hats, were at once both Indian and French, and neither (159).

[23] Just as, for Tipu, the difference between the British and the French was one of degree, not of kind, the French were able to see that the interests of the different warring kingdoms in India were not essentially separable. Malartic, the Governor-General of Mauritius wrote to Tipu, urging him to reach out to the other kingdoms he was currently feuding with: "Dites-leur que vos ennemis sont aussi les

with racial differentiation, gendering is another tool on which stereotyping relies. If Tipu painted the British without mustaches, the British carried it a step further: among all the Tipu artifacts that were avidly collected, was one-half of Tipu's mustache, cut from Tipu's body by a British officer (Jasanoff 182).

2.2.4 Tipu Sultan, Worthy of the French Stage

The French attempted to counterpoise the British media-blitz with other narratives, historical and fictional. Maistre de la Tour and François Michaud, among others, wrote extensive accounts of the Tipu-British-French engagement, adopting a voice of studied impartiality. Michaud nevertheless shows a wavering ambivalence. For him, the British are invaders, who do not respect treaties or natural laws that give people "un territoire et une patrie, qui doit être pour lui seul un asyle sacré" (1: 97). But he cannot but admit the "barbarie" of Tipu, along with "un secret intérêt pour un malheureux prince qui n'a eu pour historiens que ceux qui ont envahi son empire, et lui ont arraché sa vie" (1: 97). Michaud relies heavily on the British for most of his information, and he gives the British credit for their "générosité envers Tippoo-Saïb vaincu; mais il faut avouer que leurs historiens ont trop décrié sa mémoire" (2: 9). Starting off with an attitude of sympathy, Michaud finally adopts a judgmental tone, assuming a knowledge of and authority over Tipu: "je sens cependant qu'en n'exposant que la vérité, il reste encore assez de choses à blâmer dans la conduite de Tippoo-Saïb, pour qu'on ne puisse pas admirer ses vertus, lorsqu'on déplore ses malheurs" (2: 10). He claims to have the final word on Tipu, superseding that of the British and everyone else: "Je vais rassembler ici quelques traits de sa vie, qui achèveront de faire

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leurs, et que le temps est arrivée [sic] se debarrasser [sic] de vos ennemis communs" (Michaud 1: 310).

connoître sa politique, et qui fixeront enfin l'opinion qu'on doit avoir de son caractère" (2: 10). This tone of intellectual superiority and moral right to pass judgment on both the British and the Indians pervades both Maistre de la Tour's and Michaud's accounts, and flows through into the theatrical performances discussed here.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Tipu's death and the circumstances leading to it provided material for three plays and some parodies in French. The three plays were *Tipoo-Saib, ou la prise de Séringapatam: Mélodrame historique en trois actes, en prose* by MM Gobert and Dubois (1804), *Tippô-Saëb, Tragédie en cinq actes et en vers* by Étienne de Jouy (1813), and *Tippo-Saïb ou la destruction de l'Empire de Mysore* by Henri de Brevannes (1813). The first two were performed on stage and will be analyzed in this chapter.

Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb* and Henri de Brevannes's three-act tragedy relied on Michaud's historical account to describe the fall of Seringapatam. Brevannes asserts that he was putting the finishing touches to his play when he discovered, through an announcement in the *Journal de l'Empire*, that rehearsals for Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb* were ongoing. He then decided to publish his play instead of staging it. Brevannes, unlike Jouy, provides detailed stage directions for exotic sets, providing the reader with a means of visualizing the setting and providing some local color. There are no French characters in the play, though reference is made to the rivalry between France and Britain. The play is violently anti-British, but also includes a love interest for Tipu.

Since audience reactions and critical reviews allow me to situate the performed plays in their contemporary setting in a more meaningful manner, I have chosen to study the plays that were performed, i.e., Gobert and Dubois's *Tipoo-Saïb* and Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb*, and not Brevannes's play. Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb* is analyzed at greater length than Gobert and Dubois's play for several reasons. Firstly, Jouy was a well-known author and personality of

the time, unlike Gobert and Dubois about whom not much is known. Secondly, Jouy's play was a bigger production that Gobert and Dubois's, and it was reviewed extensively in the press. Finally, and perhaps most usefully, his work is also annotated in great detail, giving us a wealth of information about the factors that influenced his work.

2.3 GOBERT AND DUBOIS'S *TIPOO-SAÏB, OU LA PRISE DE SÉRINGAPATAM*

Tipoo-Saïb, ou la prise de Séringapatam: Mélodrame historique en trois actes, en prose, by Messieurs Montgobert (pseud. Dominique-François Gobert) and Jean-Baptiste Dubois was first performed in 1804 (16 Thermidor, year 12) at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin. The music was by Alexandre Piccini and ballets and stage direction by M. Aumer.

2.3.1 Dominique-François Gobert and Jean-Baptiste Dubois

Not much is known about Gobert and Dubois. Both Gobert and Dubois are called "directeur de salle de spectacle" in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France's catalog, and appear to have been prolific playwrights.[24] Dubois was the director of the Théâtre de la Gaîté between 1808 and 1820. Gobert and Dubois wrote and produced several melodramas in the early nineteenth century, among them *La Fausse Marquise* and *Le Petit Mendiant*. Most of them were produced at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin. This was a bourgeois and popular theater that staged ballets, melodramas and comedies; Gérard Gengembre calls it "le temple du drame romantique" (49-50).

[24] http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb39496638z.public

2.3.2 Plot and Staging

Tipoo-Saib is a melodrama in prose, interspersed with ballets and musical interludes. The plot is a simple one, condensing the events of the Mysore wars into three acts following a linear path. It starts at the British camp where Tipu's sons are held hostage in pathetic conditions, subjected to physical and psychological cruelty. They sleep on straw, with only rotten fruit to eat, and are confronted with the imminent death of their father by means of a strident banner "A LA MORT DE TIPOO-SAIB" in front of the British officers' tent. Miss Jenny, a young Englishwoman, and Adèle, a young Frenchwoman, are their only champions. Jenny is the sister of Milord Stuart, one of the British generals, and is affianced to the other British general, the cruel Lord Selmours. Adèle is in India as the result of a shipwreck.[25] The two young women personify the forces of good in the play. Miss Jenny is good at heart, but weak and fearful. She would like to save the Sultan's sons and defy her vicious fiancé, but lacks the temerity to do so. This weakness is due to her origin and identity, since when Adèle enjoins her, "Oublie ta naissance, ta patrie, deviens française comme moi," she is able to rise above her failings and perform heroic tasks as an honorary Frenchwoman (6). Lord Selmours refuses to return the children to Tipu despite having received vast sums of money: "dix indiens peuvent à peine résister au fardeau des coffres remplis d'or . . ." (13). The two women then decide to free the children and take them back.

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[25] In the play, Adèle's presence in India is accidental, fortuitously so for the Indians. She does not arrive there with an idea of exploitation or personal gain. The playwrights choosing a shipwreck to deposit her on the Indian subcontinent may not have been entirely unmotivated: François Ripaud, the Jacobin, did wash up in a shipwreck near Mangalore, on India's western shore (Jasanoff 162). Ripaud, however, was an unprincipled pirate who fooled Tipu into believing that he represented the Directoire and that they would help Tipu.

This they manage to do without being intercepted by the British, so that Tipu is dramatically able to produce them when Selmours asks Tipu to surrender his capital city in exchange for his sons. The British attack Seringapatam, are almost defeated, but manage to prevail. Tipu is engaged in single combat with Selmours when an English soldier stabs him (in the back, since he is facing Selmours?). After a protracted interval, he breathes his last, still longing to die in his children's arms. But before his death, he has the satisfaction of watching Selmours, who refused to allow his children near him at the hour of his death, struck dead by lightning. All the highly dramatic events in the play are interspersed with musical interludes, dances to celebrate the return of Tipu's sons, and scenes of battle, culminating with a lightning strike.

According to the review after the first performance, Selmours gets married on the battlefield with thunder and lightning all around, before being struck dead – the marriage does not occur in the printed version, but the dramatic death of Selmours does.

Its lack of literary merit notwithstanding, the play bears a closer look, as it offers a snapshot of the times in which it was performed. The plot that Gobert and Dubois contrived took the most memorable events of the Tipu saga and angled them, in some cases anachronistically, to present a peculiar paean to French virtues. The British held Tipu's sons as hostages between 1792 and 1794; in the play this event is placed directly before the storming of Seringapatam in 1799. The story of Tipu's sons' captivity was the subject of widespread British propaganda. The British media blitz portrayed the British as kind, humane overlords, treating a tyrant's sons with generosity; it "explicitly contrasted British

military virtue with Tipu's reputed systematic cruelty" (Colley 303).[26] Robert Home's painting is a celebrated example of the propagation of the myth:

Figure 8. Lord Cornwallis receiving Tipu Sahib's sons as hostages at Seringapatam; 1793-94. By Robert Home © National Army Museum, London.

Major Dirom's description of the scene casts a reassuring light on the hostage situation, lest there be any concern:

> Lord Cornwallis, who had received the boys as if they had been his own sons, anxiously assured the vakeel and the young Princes themselves, that every attention possible would be shewn to them, and the greatest care taken of their persons. Their little faces brightened up;

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[26] Colley agrees with Mildred Archer that it was the "most illustrated episode" of the Mysore wars, and notes that there were "umpteen paintings, engravings, prints, souvenirs, and even embroideries of it, as well as books, poems, and newspaper accounts" (303).

> the scene became highly interesting; and not only their attendants, but all the spectators were delighted to see that any fears they might have harboured were removed, and that they would soon be reconciled to their change of situation, and to their new friends. (Qtd. on tigerandthistle.net and Teltscher 248)

Colley states that the young princes were, in fact, cossetted and made much of. Teltscher agrees, adding that "Tipu's sons were lionized by Madras society, they sat for portraits and were even invited to a ball thrown in Cornwallis's honour" (249). Teltscher explains this treatment of Tipu's sons and the open praise that the British gave them as mild, decorous and generous: " . . . because, as hostages, they embody the concept of a subdued Mysore . . . once tamed and under British control, Mysore can be transformed into a gorgeous Eastern spectacle" (249).

This celebration of Britain's compassionate side is directly contradicted by Gobert and Dubois, in a rather caricatural manner. Their play shows the princes "couchés sur la paille," given "un fruit gâté" as nourishment (12). Starved, they fall on the food that Jenny kindly brings them: "Comme ils dévorent ces faibles alimens!" The playwrights completely deny the message that the British were at pains to publicize, that of the British as kind and paternal. The British are cruel, monstrous and barbaric – adjectives that the British used to demonize Tipu are turned against them. Importantly, Gobert and Dubois stress the treacherous nature of the British. "Perfide" is repeatedly used to qualify the British, as is "traître."[27] Their lack of honor is stressed in the second Act, where Selmours, despite having received the ransom, refuses to honor the agreement with Tipu and let the children go. Deliberate cruelty is another charge laid at their door, as evinced by the banner calling for Tipu's death, and keeping Tipu from his sons at the moment of his death. Similar to the

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[27] Perfide/perfidie occur seven times in the text, while traître/trahison occur six times. "La perfide Albion" was a stock phrase describing Britain in the nineteenth century.

captive narratives that the British offered as proof of Tipu's systematic and sustained ruthlessness, but reversing its imputation, Gobert and Dubois's play presents a story of captivity where the British are barbaric, and the Oriental is kind, generous and loving. The goodness of the Indians is their weakness, assert Gobert and Dubois. Abdul, the Sultan's envoy bitterly tells Selmours and Stuart: " . . . cette faiblesse qui nous fit vous recevoir comme des frères, cette bonté qui nous décida à vous permettre d'établir ici votre commerce, cette amitié qui vous donna plusieurs villes pour faciliter vos commerces, voilà ce qui nous a perdus " (15). While making reference to Tipu's stature as a warrior, he is more often described as "malheureux," and shown to be a very emotional father, frequently shedding tears. There is no mention of the princes' mother, with Tipu showing all sentiment; this could be seen as feminizing, if not for the fact that French literature of the time shows men weeping as quite normal.[28] The sentimentality of Tipu regarding his family and his lack of rational judgment is criticized by his own people:

> LA JEUNE FILLE: " Comme le Sultan aime ses fils! malgré les dangers pressans qui le menacent, il s'occupe de fêtes, de plaisirs, et pense bien moins aux anglais qu'il apperçoit dans nos plaines, qu'à ses enfans qu'il ne peut appercevoir encore." (20)

It is however immediately countered with a description of his bravery and courage:

> Tipoo-Saïb est un héros que le péril ne peut épouvanter; homme d'état quand la politique l'exige, il a dans le conseil cette raison, cette sagesse, cette prévoyance d'un ministre consommé; guerrier, il montre sur le champ de bataille et la bravoure d'un soldat et la prudence d'un général ; dans son palais, au milieu de sa famille, ce n'est plus qu'un sujet accessible à tous les sentimens privés de l'amour et de la nature . . . (20-21)

Although Napoleon is not mentioned in the play, Kate Marsh sees, in the glowing terms attributed to Tipu above, "the image of Napoleon - a fearless statesman, who has all the

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[28] In *La Dame aux camélias* by Dumas fils, to cite just one example.

derring-do of a foot soldier and the tactical knowledge of a general, in addition to being a family man" (101). While this praise of Tipu evokes Napoleon, it is still diminished by the criticism immediately preceding it, as well as the charge of weakness that immediately follows the acclaim cited above: "s'il mérite un reproche, c'est d'avoir été trop faible envers les anglais" (Gobert and Dubois 21). While one could assume that these charges equally applied to Napoleon, it could also be that the authors intended to show that while Tipu shared attributes with Napoleon, he was still a weaker version of the Emperor.

This assimilation of Indian and French identities on the same side of the equation, as enemies of the British, appears to bother Gobert and Dubois at a certain level. Racially, the British and the French are similar, while the French and the Indians are not. Gobert and Dubois try to redress this by emphasizing the racial otherness of the Indians. There is a scene where Tipu, having sent the ransom to release his sons, is expecting their return to Seringapatam. He arrives on stage "précédé et suivi de nègres, indiens, indiennes, bayadères, et soldats indiens" (21). The presence of "nègres" seems to be essential even when geographically displaced. Is the presence of Tipu, *indiens*, *indiennes* and *bayadères* as well as the local color provided by the sets not adequate to establish Otherness? Are the racial markers between Indians and the French not strong enough to establish a distinction, once the similar interests of the two have been established? Or perhaps Gobert and Dubois see no distinction between "nègres" and "indiens." Like "indiennes" and "bayadères," they were all variations on the same exotic theme.

Along with questions of identity, Gobert and Dubois distort other stereotypes as well. Gender-roles are reversed, as are notions of Western civilization and Oriental barbarity. The heroic figures in a play which has an Indian king, two British generals and assorted male characters are two young women. France is represented by a feisty young woman, Adèle, who embodies nobility, courage, generosity, audacity, pride and

independence (all adjectives used to describe her in the course of the play). She is ably seconded by another young woman, English by race, who is transformed to a higher being, becoming an honorary Frenchwoman by Adèle's example and exhortation. While the perfidious nature of the British is repeatedly stressed, Jenny's transformation implies that it is not race which determines character, but nationality, which can be assumed – i.e., the ideals that the French promote can be adopted for the good of all. Stuart, Jenny's brother, weakly shares her sentiments, but, by virtue of his position as a British soldier, cannot act on his feelings: "Les Indiens nous aimaient, ils nous chérissaient, pour les récompenser de leur généreuse amitié, nous portons la guerre dans leurs foyers, nous les livrons au désespoir . . . " (Gobert and Dubois 8). He cannot adopt "Frenchness" the way Jenny does with Adèle's encouragement as he is too strongly constrained by his nationality as an Englishman. As such, he is greedy, cruel and untrustworthy; there is no alternative.

There is a systematic reversal and refutation of established tropes: it is the Occidental who is barbaric, and not the Oriental; it is the women who are courageous and achieve the impossible, while the men are treacherous (Selmours), ineffectual (Stuart) or sentimental (Tipu). Frenchwomen, whether real or adopted, are superior to both the British and the Indian men. The feminization of India has been written about extensively by Kate Marsh and others, but in this case, British masculinity is also diminished by the strength of the women. There is no evocation of the physical attributes of Adèle and Jenny – when they are performing the "masculine" role, these are rendered immaterial. This applies, however, to the European women alone. The only Indian women appearing on stage are bayadères: their bodies are put on display, not their strength or intelligence. The study of bayadères in the next chapter will bring this point home.

In *Tipoo-Saïb*, as in other plays, there is a literary reclaiming of French honor, which was perhaps perceived as diminished because, in actuality, the French were unable to help

Tipu. Jenny tells Adèle that she has realized that the French are not what they seem: ". . . sous les apparences de la légèreté, de l'inconstance, on pouvait cacher une âme ardente et sensible" (7). The French not sending Tipu the help he needed, despite his long-standing relationship with them, was perhaps the "inconstance" referred to, and "légèreté" the shows and the spectacles offered instead. In the play, Adèle and Jenny actually do what they set out to do and render real service to Tipu by saving his sons. Peace, love and nurturing are promoted, and war mongering is decried. Paradoxically, however, the play's popularity was largely due to the battle scenes enacted on stage. The play covers the romantic angle as well, but again through negation: it is unrelenting hate, instead of love, expressed by Jenny to her fiancé Selmours.

The farrago of fact and fiction that is *Tipoo-Saïb* repeats stories around Tipu's death that were current at the time, showing that the authors had access to a great deal of information about the siege and capture of Seringapatam. In the play, Tipu is lying wounded, close to death, and a couple of English soldiers want to steal his gem-studded belt, prepared to hasten his death if required. Tipu kills them instead. In the *Narrative Sketches of the Conquest of Mysore,* published in 1800, it is claimed that an English soldier attempted to steal Tipu's jewel-studded belt as the Sultan lay wounded.[29] Tipu slashed at the soldier with his sword, but the soldier killed him with a bullet to the temple (86, also cited in Jasanoff 182). Michaud mentions two soldiers and an unrelated bullet to the temple (2: 39-40). The climax of the play, which shows the cruel General Selmours struck dead by lightning, is again corroborated. The story goes that at the end of Tipu's funeral, there was a terrible storm and a number of British soldiers were killed, among them two Lieutenants (Michaud 2: 9, *Narrative Sketches* 95). When journalists assert the ending of their play was hardly

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[29] The author of this compilation is unknown. It claims to be "collected from authentic materials."

credible, Gobert and Dubois indignantly defend themselves against the accusation, stating that historical accounts exist that relate the incident. The play thus takes events that were popularly associated with Tipu and creates an alternative universe that reverses their import. Except, of course, that the death of Tipu cannot be denied. If the play itself appears implausible, it is so only by a question of degree, since Tipu's story is the stuff of legend, even in historical accounts of the time.

2.3.3 Reception

Only a few reviews available of the play are available. The published version of the play has a short preface in which the authors briefly address some of the criticism that the play received when performed. They also claim some credit for its success. The authors mention that the stage director Aumer received the most praise by critics, but they believe that, having given Aumer an occasion to display his skills, they deserve some of the credit. They start with a curious observation: " . . . nous avons crû devoir ne rien altérer des faits consacrés par l'histoire; cependant c'est cette exactitude qui a nui à la première représentation." They continue that once they responded to the public's wish for "humanity" and removed all the painful memories, "ce qui pouvait lui offrir des souvenirs trop pénibles," they are rewarded with large audiences. They do not elaborate on what comprised these difficult memories, or mention what changes were carried out. Considering, however, that the play was performed a scant five years after the death of Tipu, memories of how close they came to defeating the British before failing could not have been very pleasant. The additional implication is that the public in France was aware of and affected by events in far-off India (assuming that the authors accurately portrayed the reason for the poor audience response to the premiere). Having access solely to the published version, I am unable to ascertain all the changes that Gobert and Dubois made to the script that was first staged; the published reviews make reference to only one of these

changes, an implausible scene at the end of the play. The published version is a highly romanticized and sentimental tale, fictionalizing the Mysore wars; it appears to avoid any historical reference that could touch a nerve. The authors also mention the success achieved by the sets, costumes, the battle scenes and the ballet pieces. According to their preface, the visual elements set before the audience were well received; the content and the script, not so much. The comments by the authors are borne out by the scant press reviews available. *Le Journal des arts, de littérature et du commerce* dated 20 Thermidor Year 12 (8 August 1804), published an acerbic review of the play. As the authors noted, the ballets and the sets were appreciated while the characters and the plot were ridiculed. Despite this, the reviewers find that the play is likely to attract a crowd, since all the details are "soignés." They also signal that the play is likely to undergo changes, confirming the authors' statement in the preface that they had to modify the play. An article ten days later, on 18 August 1804, in the same *Journal* confirms that *Tipoo-Saib* is indeed having a successful run. Unlike with audiences, the changes made in the script did not endear it to the critics, who bluntly opine, after reiterating their praise for the dancing and the sets: "Ce bruyant mélodrame est devenu tellement à la mode, que si l'on en retranchait les paroles, on y viendrait également." Despite the dubious literary value of the text, the play did have a role in familiarizing audiences with Tipu's name and his story. The play shows how contemporary events in India were connected to France, and demonstrated the global repercussions of Franco-British rivalry.

The acute polarization resorted to by Gobert and Dubois successfully avoided the censors' condemnation for treating a contemporary event and a sensitive one at that. France is represented by Adèle, "a female figure of Liberty," as Marsh calls her (101), thus avoiding all mention of French kings, past or present. The weak plot enlivened by sensational staging and implausible events (even if they may have actually occurred in some form) worked to

their benefit and assured them of a successful run. Etienne de Jouy, dealing with the same topic, had his play taken far more seriously by the censors and could not stage it for a couple of years.

2.4 JOUY'S *TIPPÔ-SAËB*

2.4.1 Victor-Joseph-Étienne de Jouy

Victor-Joseph-Étienne de Jouy (born 1764 or 1769, died 1846) is best known as a playwright, critic and journalist.[30] Soldier in the colonies and in France, adventurer, litterateur and political weathervane, Jouy led a life rich in colorful anecdotes, as his biographies attest. He was elected to the Académie Française in 1815; his biography in their annals lists an impressively long list of published works. His *Hermite de la chaussée d'Antin, ou observations sur les mœurs et les caractères français au commencement du XIXe siècle* (1812), a five-volume series of light-hearted reflections on Parisian life, were extremely popular. Many of his comedies, vaudeville shows, plays and operas had successful runs. He wrote the librettos for Gaspare Spontini's *La Vestale* (1807), *Fernand Cortez – Le mariage par imprudence* (1809), Charles Simon Catel's *Les Bayadères* (1810), and Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829), all of them well received. He was a fervent admirer of Voltaire and Racine. Since Jouy figures largely, both in this chapter and the next, a fairly detailed biography of Jouy is

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[30] Biographical information on Jouy comes from the following sources: Assayag's *L'Inde fabuleuse*, the Académie Française's website, www.academie-française.fr/les-immortels/victor-joseph-etienne-de-jouy, the *Nouvelle biographie,* and the *Nouveau dictionnaire des girouettes.* Assayag gives his year of birth as 1769; the Académie Française gives 1764; the *Nouvelle biographie* mentions both, stating 1764 as more likely.

useful. His knowledge of India and his interactions with Napoleon are recounted in Jouy's various commentaries.

Jouy was actively political, aligning himself with various factions as expedience decreed. He often ended up on the wrong side in the turbulent political climate, being in turn imprisoned, condemned to death, or exiled. Just as often during the Empire, the Restoration, and the July Monarchy, he convinced the ruling powers of his loyalty. This earned him a place in the *Nouveau dictionnaire des girouettes, ou nos grands hommes peints par eux-mêmes* (1831). His opera, *Pélage ou le roi et la paix* (1813), is in praise of Louis XVIII, his *Fernand Cortez* lauds Napoleon, and he died under the patronage of Louis Philippe. He served in various important administrative positions, his last one being that of Chief Librarian at the Bibliothèque du Louvre.

As a soldier, he served in India between 1787 and 1790. Spending his formative years in India had a lasting effect on him, and he speaks nostalgically of it in his preface to *Tippô-Saëb*:

> J'ai passé les premières années de ma jeunesse aux Indes orientales, dans ces belles contrées qu'arrosent le Gange et l'Indus, au milieu du peuple le plus antique, le plus doux, le plus aimable de la terre; j'ai vécu sous l'influence ou plutôt sous le charme de ces mœurs immuables, de cette religion poétique… (v)

The preface and the *Précis historique* that precede the published play not only contain a lot of information, but also reveal the biases and motivations that underlie his work. Jouy claims that he was twice in Tipu's presence.[31] Having lived in India and succumbed to its

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[31] The *Nouvelle Biographie*, which is highly anecdotal in tone, states: "Présenté à Tippo-Saïb, qui aimait les officiers français, il l'étonna par un trait d'audace, et reçut de lui un collier de filigrane en or tressé de sa main. Tippo-Saïb l'admit ensuite aux fêtes de son sérail et à ses chasses (90).

charms, Jouy adopts a voice of knowledge, authority, and sympathy while speaking of Tipu. In his *Histoire d'Ayder-Ali-Khan* (1783), Maistre de la Tour insists on spelling Hyder Ali's name as "Ayder," as more accurately indicating in French the Indian pronunciation of the name, which the British spelling, Hyder, does not (1: xi-xii). Jouy similarly corrects the transliteration of Tipu's name, which he feels the British have deformed, though he still spells Hyder with an "H." The French imitate the British, he says, and write it as "Tippoo-Saïb" instead of the "Tippô-Saëb" which "les Indiens prononcent exactement comme je l'écris" (*Tippô-Saëb* 79). British ownership of India is challenged on a linguistic level by the French, as evidenced by Jouy, Maistre de la Tour, Michaud and others. The French make an effort to know India intellectually, to then claim to speak for India without the bias that the British exhibit. However, as Marsh points out, they are, in fact "appropriating the Indian voice for a specifically Gallo-centric end" (109). In the case of Jouy, it is mainly through denouncing the British that his personal interest in India and in the events surrounding Tipu is expressed. A strong thread of hatred and vengeance runs through the preface. On the one hand, Jouy speaks on behalf of the Indians to bring to light the depredations of the British: " . . . j'avais été témoin des maux affreux que l'avarice et la politique anglaises ont versés sur ces climats" (vi). On the other, his play is a means of personal retaliation against the British who have been defaming the French on the London stage: "les outrages que le caractère français reçoit journellement sur les théâtres de Londres" (viii). The moral outrage expressed is thus not completely altruistically motivated, but is an expression of personal and national hatred felt for Britain, "une nation constamment ennemi, même au sein de la paix" (viii-ix). Similarly, the greatness of Tipu is underlined, but again tinged with self-interest. He calls Tipu a "Mithridate indien," a victim of treachery, and explains that he is not "un sujet indigne de la Scène Française" (his capitalization).

While Gobert and Dubois's stated objective is to present an accurate account of historical events (they rely on both English and French sources), Jouy's elucidated goal is to challenge the British version of the events. Both plays portray the British in a very unflattering light. Jouy makes his intentions clear in his *Précis historique*. The British are the dominant storytellers with regard to Tipu, and the French effort—by Michaud, by Jouy—is to present a different view to the world, one in which the British are not morally and militarily superior. Jouy and Michaud can offer their alternative interpretation of events, but it is the British who control their access to information. Jouy regrets that Michaud only had access to British accounts for the latter part of his *Histoire*, because national self-interest colors their accounts:

> Tout à la fois avocats, juges, et, parties dans une cause que le succès a décidé en leur faveur, il est trop évident qu'ils ont écrit sous l'influence de leur intérêt et de leur politique, et qu'en admettant les faits on doit être constamment en garde contre les conséquences qu'ils en tirent, et contre la manière dont ils les présentent. (xiii)

Jouy hopes to one day expose the "mensonges hardis" perpetrated by the British in India and in Europe, but in this particular instance, he confines himself to relating the historical facts shown in his play. He traces the history of the Kingdom of Mysore and the relationship between Hyder-Ali and the French, the circumstances of his rise to power, as well as the cruelty of the British towards the Indians, in order to explain "la haine implacable" that Hyder and Tipu felt towards the British.

Jouy and Michaud, whom Jouy relies on for a lot of his historical information, feel that they have a right to speak for the Indians, to propose a story that is not the British one. They have a stake in the matter since they have a common enemy. But even though they range themselves on the side of the Indians, they show themselves as superior to both parties. They ignore the motivations that drive the French in India. Jackie Assayag points

out that Jouy entirely elides the commercial and mercenary benefits that Frenchmen like Ripaud and the real-life Raymond obtained from their alliances with Indian Kingdoms. In the case of Raymond, he actually fought for the Nizam against Tipu, but Jouy uses his name to represent France in his play: unintentionally apt, as it reveals the nature of the changing alliances of the French in India. Assayag decries Jouy's "prétentions historiques" and his "orientalisme orienté" (117). "In the colonial discourse," Bhabha says, "that space of the other is always occupied by an *idée fixe:* despot, heathen, barbarian, chaos, violence" (*Location* 101). Jouy's Tipu fully illustrates this paradigm.

2.4.2 Plot and Staging: "Sur des pensers nouveaux faisons des vers antiques"[32]

The detailed preface and "Précis historique" of *Tippô-Saëb* set the stage for the actual play, which is in five acts composed in alexandrines. Jouy's play is a tragedy in the classical style. The three unities of space, time and plot are maintained. The action takes place in a twenty-four hour period, with all the violent action happening off-stage. The basic premise of the play is the siege of Seringapatam ending in Tipu's defeat and death. Despite his assertions of veracity in the preface, Jouy takes significant liberties in presenting this historical event. Tipu appears in his own name, of course, but the other characters are entirely imaginary, or created by Jouy by combining characteristics of different persons who existed at the time, and who had some bearing on the events in question. He uses recognizable names for the main characters: Raymond for the French General at Seringapatam and Tipu's main advisor, and Lalley for Raymond's confidant. Raymond and

[32] André Chenier, cited by Assayag (108).

Lally were both names well known in France.[33] He makes it clear in an endnote, however, that the character of Raymond is based on General Chapuis, who headed the French forces from Mauritius. Two of Tipu's children, Abdal and Moza (Abdul Kalick and Mooza-ud-deen), appear in their own guise, but the character of Tipu's daughter, Aldëir, is fictitious. Aldëir and her companion Évané are the only female characters in the play, and are only incidental to the action, unlike Gobert and Dubois' heroines. Jouy names the British envoy as Weymour. He is supposed to be the son of Duncan (based on Matthews, responsible for the rape and pillage of Anantpur). The most significant change, however, is Jouy naming Tipu's minister as Narséa, a Hindu, to represent Mirsadek, Tipu's Muslim minister, as it transforms Mirsadek's act of treason against Tipu into a religiously motivated act.[34] The other minor characters in the play are Akmed, Narséa's confidant, Idalkan, a palace officer, Évané, Aldëir's confidant, and sundry officers and palace staff.

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[33] Thomas Arthur de Lally-Tollendal, known as Lally-Tollendal, was the Governor General of French colonies in India. It was under his leadership that the French lost these colonies and he was executed for high treason in 1761. Voltaire strived to have his name cleared after his death, but was only partially successful, as the judgment was quashed in 1778, but reinstated in 1784 (*Encyclopedia Larousse*). Raymond was the leader of the French forces allied with the Nizam of Hyderabad. The British coerced the Nizam to give up his alliance with the French and maintain British troops on his territory instead. This coalition of the British and the Nizam of Hyderabad's forces was Tipu's main enemy. There was also another General Lalley (Jouy calls him de Lalley) who commanded troops under Hyder Ali (Michaud 1: 47).

[34] This demonstrates that Jouy is aware of differences in Hindu and Muslim names, as well as of religious biases in the sub-continent. It also foreshadows the British deliberate policy of "divide and rule" whereby they effectively pit the Hindus and the Muslims against each other. This culminated in the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan at the time of independence in 1947.

The characters are divided into distinct camps. The British are, of course, the villains, "partout détestés, ces brigands d'Albion" (*Tippô-Saëb* 11). Narséa, Tipu's minister is in collusion with them. Akmed, while Narséa's confidant, wavers in his loyalties. The rest of the characters fall into the group headed by Tipu and Raymond, who are united in their hatred of the British and their wish to halt the British conquest of India. Hatred for the British on the part of the Indians is justified, as the British aim to destroy India ". . . embraser l'Indoustan, / Par le fer, le poison . . .," and kill its people: "Dans nos fertiles champs fait naître la famine: / Trois millions d'Indiens expirent sur ces bords;" (10). The French and Tipu's interests are, however, closely aligned. Raymond tells Lalley, when Lalley protests that they should be serving their own country, instead of serving Asian tyrants:

> Où la servirions-nous avec plus de succès?
> Ne combattons-nous pas l'ennemi des Français?
> C'est ici, cher Lalley, qu'un jour, vengeant la terre,
> Un bras victorieux doit frapper l'Angleterre. (26)

French hatred for England is deep-rooted and strong. Raymond tells Narséa his feelings towards England:

> . . . je les hais plus que vous.
> Je compte en frémissant leurs crimes politiques,
> Leurs lâches trahisons, leurs rigueurs tyranniques; (11)

When the play opens, Seringapatam is under siege by the British. Each of the main characters has a goal to achieve. Tipu's aim, of course, is to save his kingdom from the British. To this end, he has an alliance with the French, and he has sought help from the Afghan ruler. To facilitate this, he organizes a marriage between his daughter and the Afghan prince, Sha Zeman. He also hopes to buy the Marathas' cooperation, and thus decisively defeat the British. He offers the British a truce in order to buy time till his Afghan allies reach him. Raymond wants to help Tipu and defeat the British. He believes that this is

in France's best interests. He does not recommend dealing with the British as they are not to be trusted. He reluctantly agrees to protect the envoy, Weymour, as it is only when he guarantees Weymour's safety that the British agree to send an envoy. Weymour has a personal reason to hate Tipu and wants nothing more than to kill him. Narséa colludes with Weymour, as he too wants to see Tipu dead and Raymond dishonored. He hates Tipu for wanting to destroy Hindus and their religion and also for preferring Raymond's counsel to his own.

Each of them strategizes to achieve his ends. Raymond wants Tipu to escape from the fort, join the Afghan force and attack the British from outside; he feels that the siege provides more scope for British perfidy. All Tipu needs is some time. Raymond reminds Tipu that the Afghanis are on their way, and so is Napoleon. This directly implicates Napoleon within the action of the play:

> Tandis que sur le Nil le héros des Français,
> Embrassant ta défense en ses vastes projets,
> Pour s'unir à ton sort et délivrer l'Asie,
> Peut franchir en vingt jours les mers de l'Arabie. (12)

But Raymond's advice is ignored, and the British are approached for a truce. Weymour, when he arrives at the fort, hides the fact that he is the son of Tipu's worst enemy, Duncan. He tries to break the alliance of the French and Tipu by making it a condition of the truce. Tipu refuses. The British have not lost anything, though, by Tipu's refusal. They have Narséa to open the gates of the fort for them. Narséa has, furthermore, convinced the Hindu battalions to fight against Tipu, on the side of the British. Thus Weymour's visit to Seringapatam has no real logic behind it, other than to facilitate Narséa's goal to discredit Raymond. This he does by implying that Raymond is in league with the English. Why else would the English ask Raymond to guarantee the envoy's safety, and why would Raymond

help Weymour escape once Tipu has ordered him imprisoned? Raymond, of course, does this to stand by his word, even if it is given to the perfidious British. All through the play, Raymond tries to guide Tipu in accordance with his ideals of honor. At the end of the play, he saves Tipu's children from the British, at the risk of his own life. Thanks to Raymond, Tipu is able to see his children on his deathbed (unlike in Gobert and Dubois's version). The ending of the play, echoing reality, leaves Tipu dead, and all hope of defeating Britain lost, not only for the Indians, but for France as well.

In Jouy's play, unlike in Gobert and Dubois's, the women have no role to play. The men dominate the action. The British are cruel and treacherous; Tipu is a brave soldier but not a good general; Narséa, the Brame, is duplicitous and egoistic;[35] only the French are shown as acting with courage, intelligence, honor and foresight. On stage, even if they do not manage to save Tipu's life, they do help him reach his children before he dies. This was something that was denied him in reality. Jouy acknowledges in his footnote that Tipu's body was found outside the walls of the fort, trying in vain to return to his family. However, in the play, once he does see his children, he prefers to die in Raymond's arms: "J'expire entre vos bras, ma mort est moins affreuse" (77). It is for Raymond to declaim the closing verses of the play, which he does on a note of vengeance, proclaiming a just doom for the British:

Tippô, du sein des morts fait trembler des vainqueurs;

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[35] Brame is the most common term used in French for Brahmin priests, usually denoting a position of power in the religious establishment rather than the Brahmin caste as a whole. I therefore keep the term Brame for the characters referred to as such in the corpus. Here Jouy uses the term for the Brahmin minister, implying all the negative attributes associated with the term. The poverty-stricken Brahmin is common in Indian tales, while that of the powerful, authoritarian Brame predominates on the French stage.

Que ta cendre féconde enfante des vengeurs;
Qu'ils se liguent partout; que leurs haines profondes
Poursuivent à la fois l'ennemi des deux mondes;
Et, victime à son tour des plus cruels revers,
Que sa chute console et venge l'univers. (78)

Jouy speaks for both France and India when he wishes for the eventual destruction of the "ennemi des deux mondes," but other than the expression of hatred and vengeance that permeates the play from the beginning, there is no plan to make that happen.

The balance of power between Tipu, the French and the British is indicated linguistically through the adroit use of the pronouns "tu" and "vous." Raymond uses "tu" for Tipu, and so does Weymour. Talking with each other, Raymond and Weymour use "vous." Weymour even addresses Raymond flatteringly as "Noble et vaillant Raymond," and calls him "un héros que j'admire" (26)! But Tipu is "roi barbare," "monarque perfide," and "prince destructeur" (28). While Tipu is ostensibly the hero of the play, Raymond is superior to both Tipu and the British. Both parties trust in his honor and his bravery, and value his contribution to the Indian cause very highly. Tipu is presented as courageous, but hotheaded and lacking in honor. He almost kills the British envoy, Weymour, even though he has promised his safety, and threatens to kill all the British prisoners in the opening scene.[36] Jouy's Tipu is painted as a superstitious and foolhardy tyrant, rather than a formidable warrior and an able ruler.

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[36] During the Second Mysore war, the French Admiral Suffren handed over British seamen into Tipu's custody, an event that incensed the British. Teltscher says that "Suffren's act was regarded as one of complete betrayal, a breach of European solidarity . . . The French admiral delivered the prisoners into a captivity which threatened their religious, personal and national identity" (240). When it was

Jouy relies on characterization and versification to engage the audience. Even though the play is set in India, he does not give any stage directions that could add local color. Unlike Gobert and Dubois's melodrama whose success was based on appealing music, colorful sets and loud action, the spotlight in Jouy's play is on his stagecraft and the actors' talent. Talma's performance as Tipu was highly appreciated, and Damas (playing Raymond) received approbation as well. Jouy mentions that M. de Saint-Romain (the General Chapuis who led the French forces in the final battle), actually attended the performance, and was loud in in his acclamation of Talma's portrayal of Tipu (*Œuvres complètes* 18: 103-104). Again from Jouy, we know that the costumes were meticulously created, to the extent that the Order of Hyder was worn by Damas on the right side, as it was supposed to be, rather than on the left, as was usual in France.[37] Neither Jouy nor the reviews that I have found speak of the production quality in terms of sets or the music.

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to their advantage, the British did feel racial kinship with the French. Jouy paints Tipu's threat to kill British prisoners as inhumane, and Raymond as noble for restraining him.

[37] Apparently the performance was repeatedly interrupted with cries of "l'ordre à gauche," which Jouy sees as "malveillance," but which also testifies to the audience's attention to detail. Jouy states that he had to write to the newspapers to explain that this particular order, the Order of Hyder, was supposed to be worn on the right (*Œuvres complètes*, 18: 104).

Figure 9. Costumes for *Tippô-Saëb.* Source: gallica.bnf.fr.

2.4.3 Reception

Tippô-Saëb was a distinct success with audiences. There were nineteen continuous performances and Marsh mentions that each of them met with a standing ovation, including the premiere where Napoleon himself offered one (102). In the press, however, there were only a few positive reviews; most were highly derogatory.

Jouy's play was critically reviewed at different points: by the censors when first submitted in 1811, by audiences and critics when performed in January 1813, later that year when his play was published, and in 1823 when his *Œuvres complètes* was published. Jouy replied to the criticism at each juncture, in essence creating a prolonged conversation between author and audience. Unlike an ephemeral theatrical performance, the criticism and rejoinders in print provide a lasting record of how the play was perceived and treated at various points in time. The political volatility of the time meant that the play was viewed through different lenses on each occasion. The Mysore - French connection had lasted

through decades, through various governments in France. Thus, seeing Tipu on stage could successively remind the public of Louis XVI, of the Directoire, or of Napoleon. When France was at war with England, *Tippô-Saëb* found favor with the French, and in times of peace, the reverse was true. *Tippô-Saëb*, "cette tragédie si belle en temps de guerre," could not be staged in peacetime "de peur que les injures grossières contre les Anglais . . . n'attirassent quelques plaintes au Gouvernement, et quelques *désagrémens* à l'auteur . . . " says Fortia de Piles, a contemporary of Jouy's (8-9). The British thus controlled Tipu's story even when related by the French. Tipu's depiction on stage transcends that of a stereotypical Oriental despot to reveal more complex underpinnings, based on the vagaries of political exigency. This is evident in the reception of *Tippô-Saëb,* both by officialdom and lay audiences.

When Jouy submitted his play to the censors in 1811, it was summarily rejected. Censorship was extremely rigorous in the Napoleonic era. The law of 1807 reduced the number of theaters from 33 to 8, assigning genres to each of these (Gengembre 36). Every play had to be submitted to the authorities, who scrutinized it closely, passing judgment not only on its suitability for audiences, but also its literary merit (Cahuet 180-181). Plays that directly or indirectly praised Napoleon were preferred, while those that treated sensitive topics were forbidden. Theater thus became an instrument of propaganda, a means of disseminating information favoring the regime. *Tippô-Saëb* was strongly censured.[38] The censor, Duc de Rovigo, explained that ". . . une tragédie dont le sujet n'est au fond et ne peut être que le triomphe de nos éternels ennemis et l'affermissement de la puissance coloniale

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[38] Holtman states that Napoleon recommended to Jouy that he write *Tippô-Saëb (*153-54). While this is possible, the censors' reaction about the timing makes it seem unlikely. Napoleon's reactions when he saw the play indicate, however, the great interest he took in Tipu's story.

des Anglais dans le continent de l'Inde, serait aujourd'hui déplacée sur la scène française" (Welschinger 248, Cahuet 179). In addition, the censors felt that

> . . . malgré l'éloignement des lieux, un événement récent et presque contemporain, auquel peuvent avoir contribué des personnes qui vivent encore au milieu de nous, qui réveille à la fois et le souvenir de Louis XVI, allié de Tippo Saëb et le souvenir du parti révolutionnaire qui avait envoyé ses agents dans l'Inde, ne saurait convenir au théâtre. (Cahuet 179-180)

For the censors, the mention of Tipu recalled the visit of his ambassadors to Paris, and thus to Louis XVI. In the early years of Napoleon's ascent, anything that could allow the public to reminisce about the erstwhile Bourbon kings was not seen as desirable. Tipu's overtures to the Directoire were not forgotten either. The recentness of the events complicated the issue.[39] The censors reminded Jouy that Racine himself was criticized for showing events in *Bajazet* that were half a century old, and which did not concern the French government. But in this case, " . . . [la politique du gouvernement française] fut liée quelque temps à la destinée de Tippo-Saëb dont le sang fume encore!" However, it only took two years before the play could be performed, with some very minor modifications.

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[39] In 1883, Jean Richepin's *Nana-Sahib* was performed at the *Porte St. Martin* theater. This play also treated contemporary events in India, specifically the conflict between the British and Nana Sahib, a prominent Maratha leader in what the British called the Indian Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Richepin's play, though gory, mainly revolved around an imaginary love story between Nana Sahib and a woman called Djamma, played by Sarah Bernhardt. The reviews of the play show that it was not very much appreciated by audiences or critics. Neither was it affected by any kind of censorship. By the time the events described in Nana Sahib took place, the French were no longer directly involved in Indian affairs, and the play appears to have been judged solely on its literary merits and not through a political lens.

The performances themselves were a success with audiences, though the majority of critics denigrated the plot, the characterization, the versification and everything else. Critics also suggested improvements to the play. Dealing with a contemporary event, and one which the French were intimately involved in, meant that despite Jouy's claims of first-hand knowledge and personal interest in the affair, others were able to challenge him on factual issues. In addition, they felt entitled to suggest alternative plotlines, displaying their engagement with the issue. Julien-Louis Geoffroy, the best-known critic of the day according to J.M. Thompson, reviewed the play for the *Journal de l'Empire*.[40] He wrote at least three reviews, each of them negative and fairly long. In his review of the premiere, Geoffroy gives readers the historical background of the play and suggests alternate aspects of Tipu's story that Jouy could have treated to better effect, such as the time when the British took Tipu's sons hostage. He praises Jouy's drawing of Tipu's character, and some "vers brillans" and "tirades énergiques," but insists on "le défaut d'action, de variété et d'ensemble." His next review on 2 February 1813, is similarly acerbic, this time criticizing characterization in the play, including Tipu's, saying that "quelques littérateurs" objected to Jouy's "peinture trop vraie et trop naturelle" of Tipu's character as a brutish, barbarous and unintelligent despot,

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[40] Geoffroy (1743-1814) was a professor of literature. There is a five-volume collection of his reviews titled *Cours de Littérature dramatique* (1819). He was opinionated and highly influential; Gengembre estimates that he reached around a hundred thousand readers (80). The publishers of his *Cours* state that even if his judgment was wrong in many cases, the majority of his opinions were endorsed by audiences (1: 8). He is referred to in many works: in the biography of Talma and in *The French Stage* by Carlson, among others. Geoffroy also advised Napoleon on media strategy; there is a letter from Napoleon to M. Fouché that mentions Geoffroy's recommendation to carry out sustained attacks against the English in the press (Thompson 118).

and again reiterating how illogical the character of the English ambassador was.[41] His third review, on 8 February 1813, was just as unflattering as the others, and included personal insults directed at Jouy. According to the editors of the *Cours dramatique,* Geoffroy was known for his "acerbe" and "trenchant" reviews (1: 8). However, the acrimonious personal exchanges between Geoffroy and Jouy are curiously reminiscent of the hatred and vengeance percolating through the play. With Talma, Geoffroy expresses his disapproval through silence. Talma was regarded by many as the greatest actor of the time, but Geoffroy was highly critical of him ("François-Joseph Talma"). In his review of *Tippô-Saëb,* Geoffroy describes the prowess of the various actors, praising Damas and Fleury (playing Raymond and Weymour) and criticizing Baptiste aîné. He mentions the actors playing the more minor roles, but is strangely silent on Talma's playing Tipu. The only reference is mildly derogatory: " . . . à l'exception du sultan et de son scélérat de ministre, les autres rôles rentrent dans le drame" (review of 30 Jan 1813). The omission of Talma's very name is striking. Geoffroy's criticism, while specific and well reasoned, underscores the fact that

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[41] The interchange between Jouy and Geoffroy became quite personal. Jouy responded in a letter to the editor of the *Journal de l'empire* on 3 February, correcting the error Geoffroy made with the name of the English ambassador, calling him Stuart's son instead of Duncan's (as Jouy called him; the real name was Mathews). He also accused Geoffroy of malice. Geoffroy replied in his next review that the name was immaterial, and that the ambassador remained "un étourdi et un fou." He also refuted the charge of malice, and said he was only being kind to Jouy by teaching him "les secrets d'un métier qu'il exerce avant de l'avoir appris." The feud appears to have carried on for years, with Jouy insulting Geoffroy even after the latter's death (Piles 9). I wonder if Jouy's fervent admiration of Voltaire turned Geoffroy against him – in the preface to the *Cours de littérature dramatique*, the publishers mention Geoffroy's "attaques réitérées" against Voltaire, primarily for philosophical reasons.

representation of any kind, whether historical, artistic, literary or critical, involves issues of point of view and partiality.

Jouy responds at length to the censors and to his critics in the published preface to his play. He considers the censor's objections as well as the criticism against his plotting and characterization. Even though his play is based on real-life events, his audience expects a certain formulaic script that Jouy deviates from, and he explains this in his preface. His defense against criticisms of his plot is that is his story is "circonscrit dans les bornes les plus étroites de la vérité historique" (*Tippô-Saëb* v), conveniently ignoring the many ways in which he manipulates those "bornes." He mentions his credentials – his personal knowledge of and fondness for India and his having personally met with Tipu. One of the accusations was that his play was too simple and did not include a love story. He claims that he could very easily have included a love story between the French general and the Sultan's daughter. He believes, however, that this would have been an "absurdité romanesque" in the style of Lemierre's *La Veuve du Malabar*, since a love story between an European and an Indian woman who throughout her life does not see any man but her father and her husband would be stretching the bounds of credulity too far.[42] Another criticism levied was that throughout the play, the principal character was in a hopeless situation, and there was no way out of his predicament. Jouy brings in Racine to support him: in *Phèdre* and *Ariane*, the protagonist's situations were equally incapable of amelioration, but this did not prevent these plays from being successful, he says. Despite all

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[42] *La Veuve du Malabar* (1770) by Antoine-Marin Lemierre presents an alternate reading of history as well, though it is set in a geographically imprecise region at an indeterminate time. It does, however, mention the rivalry between the British and the French, presenting the French *mission civilisatrice* as superior to the ruthless commercial exploitation of India by the British.

this justification, the reaction to the printed edition was scarcely more encouraging. The *Journal général des théâtres* dated March 31, 1816, says, "… il y a grand fracas, beaucoup d'action, mais point de plan et peu d'intérêt." The *Journal de l'Empire*, dated October 15, 1813, was more positive. This time, it was not Geoffroy who reviewed the play, but a critic who calls himself "B." B calls it "un des plus beaux succès qu'un auteur puisse espérer." Talking of the reaction of the critics vs. audiences, B says ". . . les critiques ne l'ont pas ménagé . . . [mais] Il y a . . . dans cet ouvrage des qualités faites pour justifier la faveur qu'il a reçue du public." In a rather lengthy review, B defends *Tippô-Saëb* from its detractors, liberally quoting from Jouy's preface, citing verses that he particularly likes. Nevertheless, he also admits that Jouy should have added some local color, "un éclat dont elle manque dans la partie descriptive."

Another critic with strong opinions was Napoleon, "le héros des Français" as Jouy calls him in the play. Though Napoleon gave it a standing ovation at the premiere, he called Talma in to see him the morning after the premiere and explained to him all the things he found wrong with it, giving concrete suggestions for improving the play.[43] Napoleon took a direct and personal interest in theatre during his reign and wished, at one point, to take over the censor's role himself (Cahuet 177). His comments on *Tippô-Saëb* reveal not only his strong opinions on the matter of dramatic literature, but also his strategic thinking. It is fascinating to see Napoleon express what he would have done in Jouy's place as an author and in Tipu's place as a beleaguered ruler (Jouy 18: 101-03). Napoleon suggests a different opening scene with Tipu center-stage and a love-interest for Tipu with a woman in his

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[43] Some reports say that he invited Jouy to visit him, but that Jouy declined. Refusing the Emperor's invitation seems rather unlikely, and Jouy himself refutes this rumor in his "Anecdotes."

harem.[44] Tipu was supposed to have spent the beginning of the battle in his favorite's company, according to Chapuis (Jasanoff 170). This shows the strong connection between sexuality and the Orient in people's minds; the audience finds its absence remarkable. Napoleon finds Aldëir, Tipu's fictional daughter who symbolizes filial loyalty, completely superfluous: she does not respond to the sexual stereotype. Tipu's character, he judges, was accurately portrayed. Interestingly, Jouy's effort to create a religious conflict misses its mark with the Emperor - Napoleon feels that Tipu having a Brahmin as his minister and trusting him absolutely is dramatically improbable. Believing it to be historically true, he nevertheless considers that Jouy should have changed it.[45] He also roundly criticizes Raymond: " . . . il donne parfois des conseils quand on ne lui en demande pas, et discute trop souvent les ordres avant de les exécuter.— Il aurait mérité que le sultan, d'un revers de son sabre, lui fit sauter la tête quand il s'avise de faire sauver l'ambassadeur anglais." Napoleon is, on the whole, approving of Jouy's portrayal of Tipu, but criticizes Tipu's real life decisions:

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[44] Napoleon had also mentioned *La Veuve* in his criticism; it is not sure if Jouy is quoting Napoleon or if Napoleon had read a version of Jouy's preface before he made the comment.

[45] In real life, Tipu did have a Hindu advisor, Purnaih, who was said to be loyal to him; it was his Muslim minister Mirsadek who betrayed him. Jouy acknowledges that his cleverness in creating a Hindu – Muslim conflict passed unappreciated: in the first edition of his play, he names the character Narséa (a Hindu name) instead of Mirsadek (or Mir Sadiq; he was a Muslim), and mentions his substitution in his "Précis Historique." This allows him to have a Brahmin villain, as happened often in French plays on India. In the *Œuvres complètes*, he changes the name to Mirsadek, but keeps him a Hindu, quite sure, with reason, that no one would even notice the change in name. Mirsadek, for Jouy, Napoleon, and perhaps the French in general, would become a Brahmin.

> Tippô-Saëb en s'enfermant dans les murs de sa capitale après la perte de la bataille décisive de Malavely avait fait une faute d'écolier, une faute qu'un caporal de mon armée n'aurait pas commise, et que j'avais prévue: dans ma lettre d'Egypte, je recommandais à Tippô-Saèb de tenir la campagne, fût-il réduit à dix mille hommes. . . . (*Œuvres* 18: 103)

Jouy reproduces Napoleon's critical advice, and his own rejoinders to it, in the "Anecdotes" that accompanied *Tippô-Saëb* in his *Œuvres complètes.* Despite the praise that Jouy lavished on the Emperor within the play, Jouy makes it known that he did not support Napoleon, and was in turn, not liked by the Emperor. Jouy counters Napoleon's critique of Tipu's actions with the observation that Napoleon committed a worse error than Tipu's sequestering himself in his fort, when he boarded the British ship HMS Bellerophon. At least Tipu's military error only cost him his life, he snipes. As for Napoleon advising Tipu to fight with ten thousand men, Jouy points out that when Napoleon took refuge in Paris, he did so with sixty thousand men. In keeping with the theme of revenge pervading *Tippô-Saëb*, Jouy takes the opportunity to criticize Napoleon's military strategy much in the same way the latter derided Jouy's artistic talents. He points out the parallels between Tipu's reversals in war and Napoleon's, and ties both back to his play: "Cet ouvrage fut joué dix-neuf fois, et ne fut interrompu que par cette série d'événements désastreux qui amenait chaque jour des rapprochements plus directs entre les revers du chef de l'empire français et les malheurs auxquels le sultan du Myzore avait succombé"(*Œuvres* 18: 103).

This is quite opposed to the heroic description of Napoleon in the play. Justifying his reputation as a "girouette," Jouy presents a rather different take on the Emperor and his popularity with the public, implying that when *Tippô-Saëb* was performed, the public used the occasion to express their disapproval of the Emperor. Apparently, Napoleon had asked audiences not to wait for him before starting a performance on stage, even if he had indicated that he would arrive; in return, the audience would ask for the actors to return

backstage and recommence the play if the Emperor arrived during the first act. Jouy states that, during the premiere of *Tippô-Saëb*, audiences neglected this courtesy: "Napoléon ne reçut pas cette espèce d'hommage à la première représentation de Tippô-Saëb; le public laissa continuer la tragédie dont la première scène n'était pas achevée" (*Œuvres* 18: 99).

Jouy's portrait of Napoleon in 1823 subtly underscores Napoleon's faults. Criticism of the Emperor is presented as public opinion, not personal:

> La censure n'avait pas fait disparaître tous les vers de cette tragédie où l'ambition désordonnée du sultan du Myzore, son despotisme, sa passion pour la guerre, sont présentés comme la source des malheurs publics; au retour de Moskow, ces passages furent applaudis avec affectation, tandis que la peinture non moins vraie mais beaucoup plus vigoureuse des crimes du gouvernement anglais dans les Indes, fut reçue assez froidement: il me sembla même qu'on me savait mauvais gré de chercher à justifier Napoléon de la haine qu'il portait à des ennemis qui, depuis trois siècles, nous ont juré une guerre d'extermination dont le flambeau ne s'est pas éteint sur la tombe du prisonnier de Sainte-Hélène. (*Œuvres* 18: 99)

All the explanations and justifications did not help Jouy get critical approval of his work. When the play was published in his *Œuvres complètes*, this is how the newspaper *L'éclair,* dated 5 April 1823, reacted: ". . . aucune couleur locale . . . on croit autant entendre un Champenois qu'un Indien. . . l'action est d'une nullité. . . ses héros sont les plus grands causeurs du monde, et . . . sont toujours ennuyeux. . . incapable de reproduire les passions de ses héros, tout son art s'est borné à flatter celles de son auditoire: l'auteur s'est fait écho du parterre." When this particular critic is talking of the "auditoire" and the "parterre," it is not clear whom he is referring to. Is it the play's original audience, which included the Emperor, and who is praised in the play, but derided in the "Anecdotes"? While the critic does not refer directly to Jouy's personal views on Napoleon, as expressed in the *Œuvres complètes* edition, he refers to Jouy's other plays that evoked the Emperor: *Bélisaire,*

forbidden by the censors, where Jouy "laissât réciter en public l'apologie de Bonaparte," and *Sylla*, again with allusions to Napoleon. The critic finally concludes in disgust that "Je ne sais ce qui est le plus scandaleux ou de voir un homme louer hautement l'usurpateur, ou de l'entendre se plaindre de ce qu'on ne trouve pas cela bon: on a pitié du public, lorsqu'il se laisse duper par de pareils charlatans." The final condemnation is of "la décadence de l'art dramatique en France" and the low standards of a certain section of the audience where "M.de Jouy est la coqueluche d'un certain public: on veut des allusions révolutionnaires; elles tiennent lieu de tous les autres talens." This review acknowledges Jouy's popularity with audiences and also supports Jouy's claims that the audience superimposed current political events in France on his politico-tragic plays. This superimposition effectively subverted the deliberate use of theater as a tool for propaganda during Napoleon's reign, as it also provided a forum for audiences to express their views on current events.

Throughout its lifecycle—performance, publication, publication in an anthology—*Tippô-Saëb,* like the real Tipu Sultan, was open to different and contradictory interpretations, both in regard to the content and its reception. The salient fact is that people knew about Tipu, a deceased king in a far-away kingdom, and could engage with the play. If Jouy felt he had the authority and knowledge to speak intimately of Tipu, so did many among his audience. Napoleon certainly felt that he was qualified to do so, both in his status as a powerful ruler, and as someone who was involved, albeit through his physical absence, in Tipu's defeat and death. In addition, audiences related the play to their current political situation and used it to pass judgment on more than the merits of the play itself.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED talk, "The Danger of a Single

Story," describes the dangers inherent in accessing a culture through a single viewpoint, as it precludes an understanding of inherent complexity, favoring instead a facile one-dimensional stereotype. At the same time, disseminating stories that effectively create this stereotype is a function of power:

> Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of *nkali*:[46] How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.

In Tipu's case, it is undeniable that it is the British who create Tipu's image, through their appropriation of his body, his possessions, his thoughts, and ultimately, his story. Whether presented as historical accounts or through storytelling, the British staging of history dominates the discourse. The French make an effort to challenge this intellectual hegemony, and to provide an alternative to the prevailing British story. In both Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb* and Gobert and Dubois's *Tipoo-Saïb, ou la prise de Séringapatam,* they express understanding and sympathy for the Indians and put themselves on the morally righteous side of the conflict. In the very act of speaking for the Indians, however, they tip the balance of power in their favor. Though displaced in time and space, the words of bell hooks, written in 1989, perfectly captures this power imbalance:

> No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk. (241)

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[46] Igbo word meaning "to be greater than another."

Casting the French as "colonizers" in India is perhaps only partially justified. As Assayag points out, the French did not have a formal strategy of colonization until later in the century. Their actions in India were motivated by mercenary considerations. The contrast that the French are at pains to draw between British mercantilism and their own *mission civilisatrice* is thus rather hypocritical. Any help demanded by Tipu was to be compensated through granting the French East India Company trade monopolies in spices and other exotic goods, as well as direct payment to the troops. Gobert and Dubois might pretend that the French arrival was a serendipitous accident for the Indians, and Jouy might portray the French as an altruistic moral compass for the degenerate Tipu, but if the French colonization of India remained imaginary, that does not mean it was not highly desired. On the other hand, Tipu believed that the French could help him defeat the British, and he was willing to become "Citoyen Tipu" if it helped him achieve his goal. Tipu's dogged determination to pursue ties with the French through several changes in French politics demonstrates his belief that he needed a European ally to defeat Britain, although following Malartic's advice to build ties with his Indian neighbors might have stood him in better stead. Binita Mehta believes that:

> There was no real friendship between the French and Tipu; both distrusted each other and used each other for their own ends. The French exploited Hyder and Tipu for the money and resources they could provide, while Tipu used the French to put an end to Britain's expansion of its empire in India. (103)

Both the plays discussed in this chapter ignore the commercial aspect in the triangular battle for supremacy in the sub-continent. They highlight instead the emotional and ideological aspects. This places the focus on personalities and allows for the elision of Tipu and Napoleon, with its attendant implications of stereotyping and feminization.

As a consequence, the Indian element gets sidelined, particularly in the conversation surrounding Jouy's play. Contemporary politics and personal enmity (between Jouy and his critics, between Jouy and Napoleon) overshadow Tipu and his achievements. The very lack of local color in Jouy's play, the fact that it could as well be a "Champenois" speaking as an Indian, aids the assimilation of French and Indian identities. Napoleon is seen just as often on stage as Tipu is, both in his greatness and in his defeat. The repeated superposition of Napoleon on Tipu's image by both the British and the French "displays and displaces the binary logic through which identities of difference are often constructed – Black/White, Self/Other" (Bhabha *Location* 3). The careful crafting of Tipu as the traditional Oriental despot (itself an image reinforced through continual repetition both on and off stage) and the casting of Napoleon in Tipu's image again illustrates Bhabha's premise: "The social articulation of difference, . . . , is a complex on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (*Location* 2). For the British, Napoleon and Tipu are quite interchangeable, and viewed negatively. At various moments, for the French, Tipu is Napoleon and Napoleon is Tipu, but the value attributed to each is either positive or negative, varying according to the moment of perception. Tipu could be seen as a ruler as brave and powerful as Napoleon, or Napoleon could be seen as a despot, or as lacking in military strategy, as Tipu. The opposition of Self and the Other, of the Orient and the Occident, usually clearly articulated on racial lines, finds itself straddling identities. In co-opting Tipu to represent Napoleon, when it is done to the latter's detriment, the French authors adopt the British story, as in this caricature by a French artist.

Figure 10. Satirical print by Louis-François Charon (1815). Parodies an official portrait by Ingrès, "Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne". © British Museum.

Despite their avowed assertions of presenting an alternative, Jouy and other French authors end up strengthening the dominant "single story" articulated by Britain. After Napoleon's defeat, the tragedy of *Tippô-Saëb* could have created an empathetic bond with the Indians. What occurs, however, is the distancing of Napoleon himself in his alignment with the inferior, unlucky Other.

3 *JETÉ(ES)* INTO THE FIRE – THE BAYADÈRES ON STAGE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

> *Le seul mot de bayadère éveille dans les cerveaux les plus prosaïques et les plus bourgeois une idée de soleil, de parfum et de beauté. . . .* (Gautier "Les devadasis dites bayadères" 245)

Devadasis, sati, Brahmins and pariahs—clichés that represented India for the French public—repeatedly found themselves on stage in nineteenth century France. The bayadère, an amalgam of the sati and the devadasi, was the most popular stereotype of all. This popularity was due to the highly romanticized descriptions, first by travel writers and then by others, which sparked the imagination of the public. As Said notes, "[The] Orient studied was a textual universe by and large; the impact of the Orient was made through books and manuscripts, not, as in the impress of Greece . . . through mimetic artifacts like sculpture and pottery" (*Orientalism* 52). From the late thirteenth century onwards, starting with Marco Polo's travel accounts, India's temple dancers have been described in various texts (Bor 40). These texts created, over the centuries, an image of exotic temple dancers who were the epitome of beauty, sexuality and extreme loyalty. The textual construct then moved on to the stage in the nineteenth century, thereby acquiring a human dimension, that of the French ballet dancers who portrayed them on stage. The bayadère was featured in several hugely successful operas and ballets: *Les Bayadères* (1810)*, Dieu et la bayadère* (1830), *La Bayadère* (1877), and *Lakmé* (1883)*,* to name just a few. One set of performances was unlike all of these, however: a troupe of Indian dancers visited France in 1838 and performed at the Théâtre des Variétés for almost a month.

Given the longevity and popularity of the bayadères as a theme in France, there is a profusion of works to choose from in the nineteenth century itself. As icons of popular

culture, the bayadères allow insight into themes and events that occupied the public's attention. For my corpus, I have chosen operas and ballets that effectively combined the figures of the devadasi and the sati and were also hugely popular when performed. Étienne de Jouy's *Les Bayadères* was performed in 1810. Its long run on stage and the coverage it received in the press show the audience's engagement with the spectacle. As with *Tippô-Saëb,* Jouy provides extensive commentary that discloses the cultural and political signification of the opera. Jouy's notes explain how opera was used as propaganda during the Napoleonic era and reveals its shortcomings as a political tool. Eugène Scribe's *Le Dieu et la bayadère* (1830), the next opera I examine, reveals changing trends in society and entertainment. Théophile Gautier's multiple reviews of this opera disclose his views on the aesthetics of performance. I will also present, very briefly, Louis Gallet's *Le Roi de Lahore* (1877) and Edmond Gondinet and Phillippe Gille's *Lakmé* (1883) as representative of the spate of operas set in India towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Amidst these works of imagination featuring bayadères, the show by the troupe of devadasis from India stands like a lonely island of reality. The devadasis were a corporeal manifestation of the temple dancers heretofore encountered only through text and impersonation. Articles in the press often described them as "poésie" (poésie vivante, poésie indienne. . .): poetic communication was inscribed both within their bodies and their dance. While there is no libretto to provide a textual basis for analysis, articles by Nerval and Gautier, among others, provide us with detailed descriptions of the person and performance of these dancers. I will study these articles to analyze how the public received the devadasis. Their visit to France was a moment of truth as illusions about their beauty and perfection were put to the test. French notions of feminine beauty, as well as beauty in dance, were confronted with their Indian counterparts. Some people were able to appreciate different cultural norms while others were discombobulated. When the French

expressed their opinion of the devadasis, however, they revealed their own fantasies and prejudices. Issues of race, color and artistic endeavor influenced how the bayadères, both real and imaginary, were perceived within the cultural and political ethos of the nineteenth century.

A significant trope, the bayadères were featured on stage throughout the century. The popular French ballets and operas brought India closer to France, while paradoxically pushing it further away. They afforded more opportunities for the public to see India on stage, but the very repetition of images turned them into clichés, which then placed the focus on French aspects of the production, the music and the dance. India became a durable frame for showcasing French talent. The clichés that were perpetuated, however, have their own import. They present a peculiar view of Indian tradition seen through the bias of contemporary French culture. For example, the sati and the devadasi were transformed into the bayadère on the French stage for operatic effect. In order to demonstrate the extent of their trivialization and perversion, I will first present an explanation of the terms "sati" and "devadasi," before treating their evolution into the bayadère. I will then examine the various instances of bayadères on stage.

3.2 SATI

Defining sati is hugely problematic, even for an Indian – or, perhaps, especially for an Indian, for whom the various nuances lurking beneath the simplistic English usage of "sati" as an event cannot be easily elided. In the words of John Stratton Hawley, sati "*. . .* describes the ritual according to which a Hindu wife follows her husband to his death by ascending his pyre with him or ascending one of her own shortly afterward" (3). In many Indian languages, however, *Sati* does not necessarily refer to a widow who immolates

herself, but represents a virtuous woman, devoted to her husband and faithful to him (Hawley 12-13).[47] The action of sati is seen as a means of avoiding widowhood. The origins of sati are often traced to a goddess, who, in a mythological tale, killed herself—through a unspecified yogic method in one of the earliest versions, through fire in later stories—infuriated by an insult to her husband Lord Shiva, who thereafter avenged her death (Dehejia 50).

For the French, sati was self-immolation by a widow on her husband's pyre and was inseparable from the idea of India. Travel accounts by Europeans from as early as the fifteenth century commented on sati.[48] Among them were the highly influential writers François Bernier and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier in the seventeenth century, and Pierre Sonnerat and Anquetil Duperron in the eighteenth. As Duperron pointed out, by 1771, any travel writer who hoped to be believed had to include an eyewitness description of sati.[49] Their personal value judgments colored their descriptions, as Marsh explains:

> . . . in the seventeenth-century accounts analyzed by Teltscher, the woman committing sati is either dishonest (the traveler Daniel Moginié asserts that women are forced to commit the

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[47] To avoid confusion between the various usages, I will henceforth use a lower-case "s" for "sati" in its accepted English usage, as an event or an action that is committed, and "*Sati,*" italicized with an uppercase "S" to denote the woman, other than in direct quotations.

[48] Just between 1745 and 1815, at least 30 fictional works claiming India as the setting and 135 travel accounts were published in French (Marsh 23, 152). Sati and bayadères were among the common tropes featured (24).

[49] In a hand-written note annotating his work, Duperron stated: "J'ai ajouté ce trait pour me délivrer des mille et une questions que l'on me faisoit sur les usages du pays; en cela, j'ai manqué à la vérité. Le voyageur de retour a tout vu, assure tout, de peur d'affoiblir son témoignage dans ce qu'il sait réellement vrai" (Deloche et al. "Présentation" 23, also qtd. in Marsh 50).

> act of *sati* after poisoning their husbands) or she is a victim of superstition (as presented by Sonnerat, who consistently terms the woman 'victime', and most memorably by Voltaire). (50)

Sati was also romanticized and eroticized by Italian voyagers, in particular by Niccolò dei Conti in the fifteenth century. An English translation of his travelogue describes sati thus: "She who was the most dear to the deceased, places herself by his side with her arm round his neck, and burns herself with him" (Major 6). According to Figueira, "De Conti romanticizes the *satī's* martyrdom by describing it as a burning (in the sense of passionate) embrace that the *satī* bestows upon her husband" (*Exotic* 57). Figueira opines, "In these early accounts, the tension between erotic fascination and moral repugnance that will remain a central dynamic of the Western representation of this ritual is already present" (*Exotic* 31).

Figure 11. Illustration for sati from Sonnerat's *Voyages aux Indes,* Vol. 1 (1782). (Illus. no. 15). Source for the book: gallica.bnf.fr

The information on sati provided by early travelers influenced future historians and other writers in France. Montaigne used sati to illustrate different mores in far-away countries (1: 93). Voltaire presented it as yet another example of religious despotism, where Brahmins forced women into this inhumane act (2: 407). Both praised the courage of the women (Voltaire 1: 235, Montaigne 2: 369). Sati served, as expediency dictated, as examples of diverse concepts such as religious despotism, idealized womanhood, social decay and so on. Through books and theater, an impression was created that sati was ubiquitous in India. Yet, "[m]odern research confirms what traditional brahmanical treatises imply—that sati has always been very much the exception rather than the rule in Hindu life" (Hawley 3). Sati was outlawed in 1829, while new legislation in 1987 made the glorification of sati illegal. Scattered occurrences, however, keep the controversy alive.[50] Currently, it is a focal point of post-colonial feminist discourse by Gayatri Spivak, Ashis Nandy, Lata Mani and others.

Sati had dramatic and commercial implications on the French stage. It gave opportunities for French heroism and served to express French superiority over Indian barbarity. The most popular example is that of General Montalban rescuing the beautiful widow Lanassa from the pyre in Antoine-Marin Lemierre's *La Veuve du Malabar* (1770). Spivak points out that ". . . it was imperialist to erase the image of the luminous fighting Mother Durga and invest the proper noun Sati with no significance other than the ritual

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[50] The furor after Roop Kanwar's death in 1987 led not only to the legislation mentioned above, but a spate of academic enquiry into the practice. Of these, I have found two volumes especially illuminating. *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India,* edited by John Stratton Hawley, explores the controversial nature of sati from different viewpoints. *Ashes of Immortality: Widow burning in India,* is an authoritative work by Catherine Weinberger Thomas which examines the phenomenon of sati in its traditional, historical and modern aspects.

burning of the helpless widow as sacrificial offering who can then be saved" ("Subaltern" 34). Even this limited significance of sati was further diminished through its long trajectory on the French stage. The main draw of sati was the sheer spectacle created by a pyre on stage, attracting large audiences. Later plays that conflated the *Sati* and the devadasi further corrupted the gravity of sati.

3.3 DEVADASIS

The term "devadasi" is again a highly charged term that eludes a simple definition. In Davesh Soneji's words, ". . . today the term "devadāsī" is used to index a vast number of communities of women who are generally glossed by English phrases such as 'sacred prostitute' or 'temple dancer.' . . . the literal translation of the word ('slave of god') is all too often taken as a closed definition of the category" (*Unfinished Gestures* 6). Soneji relates how the devadasi system functioned during the period when European writers were writing about them:

> From the sixteenth to early twentieth century, devadasis have functioned as temple servants and secular courtesans, typically organized in guilds . . . [They] lived in matrilineal homes, had sexual relationships with upper-caste men, and were literate at moments in history when most South Indian women were not. On the other hand, . . . courtesans were commodities regularly bought and sold through the intercession of the court. In other contexts, as the mistresses or 'second wives' of South Indian elites, they were implicated in a larger world of servitude that focused on the fulfillment of male desires.[51] (Introduction xiii)

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[51] Prior to that time, Soneji postulates the existence of separate categories of professional dancing women, courtesans, prostitutes, and temple women, as seen throughout South India's literary,

Sexuality was indeed a component of a devadasi lifestyle, but compulsion and victimhood did not always follow. As temple servants, they were an integral part of the religious establishment, having well-defined duties in prayer rituals. In larger society, sexuality, often with a commercial component, was a part of their lifestyle. They also enjoyed a degree of empowerment and freedom that was denied to other Indian women – freedom to own property in their own name and access to education and skills.[52] Their non-conjugal sexuality was initially not condemned. However, the nineteenth century in India was a time when the devadasis' lifestyle was under the most stress: from Victorian morality, reduced court and temple patronage during British imperialism, and a growing reformist movement. It is against this background that the visit of the devadasis to France in 1838 has to be seen. Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, social, cultural, and economic factors were slowly undermining the foundations of devadasi livelihood, culminating in its abolition by law in 1947.[53] The depiction of "temple dancers" in European accounts, however, remained static through the centuries. Like sati, it was a staple of travel accounts from Marco Polo

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epigraphic, and oral histories. These coalesced into the devadasi identity seen from the sixteenth century onwards.

[52] The devadasis who visited France in 1838 signed the contract with Tardivel in their own name, exhibiting both literacy and agency.

[53] The dance form of the devadasis has survived through elitist repackaging but the devadasi tradition has not. The impact of the abolition and the suffering caused by the rehabilitation of devadasis, or lack thereof, is still being discussed today by many authors and in many fields. Davesh Soneji's book *Unfinished Gestures* provides insight into this issue through interviews with living devadasis. Spivak discusses the devadasi's status as a subaltern as well ("How to Teach a 'Culturally Different' Book").

onwards. Bernier, Tavernier, Sonnerat etc. all described these dancers and portrayed them both as victims of the Brahmins and as prostitutes.

Figure 12. The bayadères in Sonnerat's *Voyage aux Indes* (1782), Vol. 1, Illus. no. 9. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

Sonnerat finds Indian women, in general, "laides, mal-propres et dégoûtantes," except some of certain castes, who are cleaner and not so repulsive, he says (1: 29-30). His description of bayadères talks about their life-style and their dress and jewelry, without detailing their physical appeal (or lack thereof). However, some of their eye-movements and gestures, he says, "annonce la plus grande volupté" (1: 41). Other eighteenth-century writers such as Pierre Poivre, Anquetil Duperron and Abbé Raynal use titillating language to describe them. Expressions like "lascif," "séduisantes," "paroissent comme nues" are common (quotations in Marsh 44). Marsh reveals how the same description, with minor word changes, appears in three different histories: by Maistre de la Tour in his history of Hyder Ali, by an anonymous author describing the visit by Tipu Sultan's ambassadors to

Versailles in 1788, and by Michaud in his *Histoire des progrès* in 1801. They all center on "three key ideas: the bayadères as court dancers, the exceptional nature of their physical bodies and their youth" (Marsh 43-45). Even though the accounts purport to describe specific dancers at particular events, they are all identical. Individuality is stripped from the dancers, and they function more as an ideological construct, as "a marker of India, a French textual construction which is self-referential and self-perpetuating" (Marsh 47). A bayadère, repeatedly evoked, becomes a synecdoche not only for the Indian woman, but for the Oriental woman:

> BAYADÈRE: Mot qui entraîne l'imagination. Toutes les femmes de l'Orient sont des bayadères (v. odalisques) (Flaubert, *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*).

In Flaubert's definition, the identity of the Indian woman gets subsumed into a larger Oriental one. But other nineteenth-century writers fragment the identity of the Indian woman on caste lines. Descriptions of devadasis in travel and historical accounts are usually accompanied by a mention of their caste, with attendant implications for the castes they can have relations with. "Nineteenth-century theories of race did not just consist of essentializing differentiations between self and other, they were also about a fascination with people having sex – interminable, adulterating, aleatory, illicit, inter-racial sex," says postcolonial theorist Robert Young (161). In the Indian context, not only can "inter-racial" evoke European and Indian races, but the hierarchical stratification within Indian society itself allows for equivalencies between "inter-racial" and "inter-caste." The preoccupation with race and class in nineteenth-century France was echoed in their discourse on India. In addition, the religious context of devadasis heightened the notion of illicit sex. The word "bayadère" thus had vast potential to engage the imagination, as Flaubert contends.

Jacob Haafner's travel accounts form an exception to the general trend of negative portrayal of the bayadères. Haafner, a Dutchman who had lived in India and Sri Lanka for

more than thirteen years, painted the lifestyle of the bayadères with more detail and sympathy than other travel writers. In *Reize in eenen Palanquin* (1808), translated as *Voyages dans la péninsule de l'Inde et dans l'île de Ceylan* (1811), Haafner describes his love affair with the dancer Mamia, who was beautiful, devoted, and faithful. Countering prevailing narratives about victimization of devadasis by Brahmin priests, Haafner writes, ". . . il leur est, au contraire, permis de choisir un amant à leur gré, soit dans l'intérieur du temple ou ailleurs, pourvu qu'il soit de l'une des castes supérieures, ou de conserver, pendant toute leur vie, l'état de virginité" (115). He describes them as modest in appearance, even those of the lower castes. They are faithful and not avaricious, he says, unlike European courtesans who ruin one man before moving on to the next (Haafner 116). Haafner's Mamia exhibited the self-sacrificial nature that stage bayadères later did; she died an early death saving Haafner from a shipwreck (Haafner 506-7, Bor 48). Both Gautier and Nerval acknowledge Haafner as one of their sources of information about the bayadères (Gautier "Les devadasis" 246; Nerval 239), which is perhaps one of the reasons for their seeing bayadères in a positive light.

3.4 MELDING THE SATI AND THE DEVADASI, CREATING THE BAYADÈRE

The *Sati* exemplified the courageous and faithful Indian woman. She was shown as a young and beautiful widow, often rescued by European heroes. Her horrific end on the pyre implied supreme loyalty and sacrifice. On the opposite end of the moral spectrum was the devadasi. Her liaison with the temple and her role as a courtesan, with both roles integrated within the framework of society, broke several European taboos. Unsurprisingly, fantasies were created around her. It was perhaps inevitable that the two figures that captured the public imagination should meld together, with the pyre acting as a purification ritual to

transform the devadasi into the *Sati*. The result was the bayadère of the French stage. Jackie Assayag sums up the phenomenon as the "prodigieuse invention d'une femme, à la fois hiérodule et courtisane, qui sublimait son désir dans la mort; singulier retournement enfin qui transformait la déesse de la licence sexuelle en héroïne de la fidélité conjugale s'auto-sacrifiant pour son époux – spectacle total" (41).[54]

The term "bayadère" was itself a corruption of the Portuguese *bailadera,* a dancer, and was probably first used by Sonnerat (Bor 46). Joep Bor traces the blending of the sati and devadasi traditions to Abraham Rogerius, a Dutch Calvinist minister. Rogerius's 1651 work, *Open-Deure tot het Verborgen Heydendom* (1651) was translated into both German (1663) and French (*La Porte ouverte, pour parvenir à la connaissance du paganisme caché*, 1670). In Rogerius's version, a god called Dewendre spends the night on earth with a woman that Rogerius refers to repeatedly as a "whore." After a night of serving the god for payment, she wakes up and finds him dead. Her friends try to dissuade her from jumping into the pyre as she is not married to him, but she insists on doing so. At that point Dewendre gives up the pretense of death, and carries her off to heaven, pleased with her loyalty (Bor 54).[55] In Rogerius's tale, the denigrating reference to the "whore" taints the act

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[54] Assayag sketches the instances of the bayadères in various genres of French literature over the centuries, including in various operas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His chapter "Exotisme" in *L'Inde fabuleuse* demonstrates the strength and popularity of the trope. Joep Bor provides valuable insight into the life-style of the devadasis as well as their performances on the French and British stage.

[55] This tale is presented as an origin story by Jouy and others. The only reference to a similar story that I have been able to find within the Indian canon is a reference by Lakshmi Vishwanathan, a present-day Bharatanatyam dancer and dance scholar. She relates the legend of Manikka Nachiyar, a devadasi in a famous novel in Tamil, an Indian language. The tale is similar to Rogerius's in plot, but

of sati itself. Haafner's highlighting the fidelity of devadasis fits in within his generally positive depiction: "il y a plusieurs exemples de ces danseuses qui se font brûler avec le corps de leur amant" (Haafner 116-17). The most influential author who disseminated the motif of the loyal courtesan committing sati was perhaps Goethe. He retells Rogerius's legend in his poem *Der Gott und die Bajadere* (The God and the Bayadère). Most of the operas featuring bayadères, including the ones in my corpus, acknowledge Goethe's poem as their inspiration. I therefore present a brief analysis below.

3.4.1 *Der Gott und die Bajadere* [56]

Goethe's poem *Der Gott und die Bajadere* (1797) and Rogerius's tale have similar plots, but are presented differently. Goethe's story casts Mahadöh (Mahadev, another name for Lord Shiva) as the hero/divinity. Goethe's poem presents a heroine who is quite different from the image of a whore that Rogerius presents. Goethe's courtesan is beautiful and talented, but he portrays her more as a young child desperate to please, highlighting her marginalization and vulnerability.[57] He talks of her "corruption," but by evoking her status as a lost child both at the beginning and the end of the poem, he makes her into an object of sympathy rather than seduction. He focuses more on her biddability and

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not in tone. This is not an origin story for sati or for devadasis, but the story of an exalted temple dancer where, in Vishwanathan's words, "fact and fiction mingle"(49).

[56] Source: http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/johann-wolfgang-goethe-gedichte-3670/392

[57] Scholars have speculated on the identity of the heroine, finding in her a symbolization of his mistress Christiane Vulpius, marginalized through her rejection by Weimar culture (reference to this is made by Nicolas Boyle in *Goethe: Revolution and Renunciation (1790-1803),* 500-01, and Figueira in *"*Flambierte Frau" 61*).*

obedience to male domination than on her physical attributes. She epitomizes docility and uncomplaining submission. With this, he moves his heroine closer to the loyalty of the sati, moving away from the sexual figure of the bayadère. When he uses her "corruption" to justify her testing and punishment, Christian notions of sin and redemption are introduced, as is passage through flames—hell—before she finds her deserved place in heaven. In Goethe's poem, both aspects of Christian womanhood are evoked: the sexuality of Eve and the devotion of Mary. His bayadère combines the two iconic figures, creating a metaphorical Hindu *avatar* of the Christian concepts. The funeral pyre acquires an additional signification: it becomes a means of purification that burns away Eve's sexuality and transforms her into Mary.

In the sati tradition, the flames heighten the value of a woman committing sati, endowing her with an aura of divinity. Her sacrifice furthers the wellbeing of her living family and her dead husband; *Sati,* already a virtuous woman and a good wife, becomes empowered to bless her family and her descendants. In both the Indian tradition and in the Christian construction of Goethe's poem, the flames are transformative. However, in the case of Goethe's bayadère, her basic value as a human being, her human heart ("menschliches Herz"), is recognized only after she expiates her sin through death. Alive, she is less than human. Furthermore, the only benefit accruing is for her in the afterlife, as per Christian belief. The setting is exotic, but the moral is not especially Indian; it is more a story of gendered submission than a culturally unique tale.[58] Figueira calls the woman an "Indian Mary Magdalene," and her death as a "Liebestod" ("Flambierte Frau" 59). This reading places the bayadère/sati within the traditional canon of European Opera.

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[58] Said says of Goethe, Hugo, and others that "[at] most, the "real" Orient provoked a writer to his vision; it very rarely guided it" (*Orientalism* 22).

Goethe's poem with its idealization of the submissive prostitute (not the wife/widow), along with the deification of her lover, inspired many romanticized, exotic, operatic and balletic versions of the story. It had immense influence in French literary circles, as Gautier, Jouy and Scribe all acknowledge. An anonymous journalist who reviewed the visit of the Indian dance troupe to Paris called Goethe one of three "éditeurs" responsible for creating the bayadères of French imagination ("Les Bayadères," *Palamède* 274). Passing through several literary texts, as well as the French stage, the bayadère soon became an iconic figure.

3.5 JOUY'S *LES BAYADÈRES*

3.5.1 Antecedents and Approach

Étienne de Jouy's *Les Bayadères* was performed early in the nineteenth century, in 1810. This opera was shaped by the political exigencies of the time, as were other theatrical productions of the Napoleonic era. In addition, Voltaire and Goethe also influenced the opera's conception, performance and reception. The post-Napoleonic edition of Jouy's works includes his anecdotal notes, which, free from the Emperor's censorship, include criticism of Napoleon's person and policies. Jouy's verbose commentary creates a frame for the opera, extending it beyond the stage. Along with the text of the libretto, there is a preface called *Notice historique sur les bayadères* in the first edition (1810), and a *Préambule historique,* as well as a postface, *Notes anecdotiques,* in the *Œuvres complètes* edition (1823).

3.5.1.1 *Voltaire's Contribution to Les Bayadères*

Jouy was a fervent lifelong admirer of Voltaire's, and based his opera *Les Bayadères* on Voltaire's *L'Éducation d'un Prince* (1764). Despite closely basing his first two acts on Voltaire's poem, Jouy makes this attribution explicit only in a brief sentence at the end of an

eight-page preface.[59] Voltaire sets his poem in Italy. Outside France, but still close enough to allow an effective opposition between Occident and Orient, *L'Éducation d'un prince* is a scathing allegorical indictment of the French royal court. The excessive power wielded by the Church is also condemned. *L'Éducation d'un prince* has a well-meaning but weak hero, the Italian prince Alamon, and a strong, intelligent heroine, Amide. Amide's beauty and sensual appeal do play a role, but Voltaire does not dwell on it, concentrating instead on her shrewdness and her loyalty to Alamon. While the love story forms an integral part, Voltaire's poem is primarily a cautionary moral tale. Importantly, by alluding to the unhappiness and suffering of the people under Alamon, the poem contains the threat of internal revolution as well as external attack. *L'Éducation d'un prince* is a political tract, with barbs directed against the power of organized religion and the weaknesses of a well-meaning but powerless ruler.

In Etienne de Jouy's hands, Voltaire's plot finds itself both weakened and perverted. The main theme is carried through: a weak ruler under the thumb of organized religion is saved by the love and loyalty of an intelligent and intrepid heroine. However, in the *Notice historique* which prefaces his libretto, Jouy explicitly places the focus on sexuality and not political correction, virtually nullifying Voltaire's moral agenda. As Voltaire does in his *Essais*, Jouy paints the devadasis as victims of the Brahmins, but does not dwell on that aspect either. Voltaire's plot is made subservient to the motif of exotic feminity, the bayadères, and to the setting of the play, which is now India. The opera is thus appropriately called *"Les Bayadères,"* without the political overtones of *L'Éducation d'un*

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[59] Voltaire himself had converted *L'Éducation d'un Prince* to a libretto called *Le Baron d'Otrante,* but it was never performed (Kubo 79).

prince. In a later edition of the opera, as part of his *Œuvres complètes,* Jouy removes the reference to Voltaire, even though the plot remains the same as before. Posterity, however, ignores this disengagement. Excerpts of the opera on YouTube continue to associate Voltaire with *Les Bayadères*, as we see in this example:

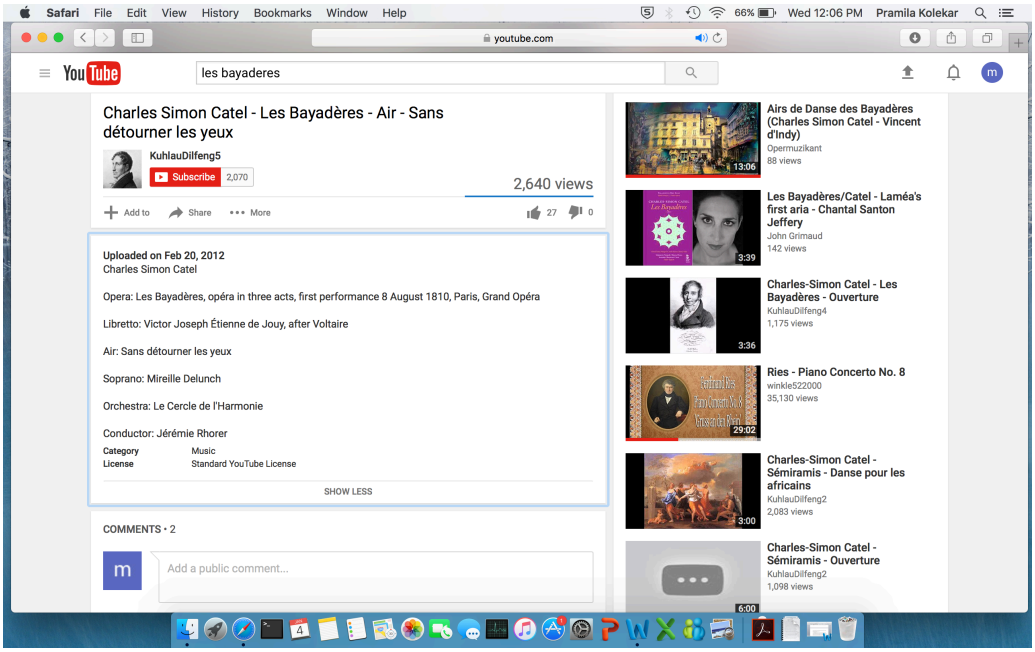

Figure 13. *Les Bayadères* on YouTube. Screenshot taken January 1, 2017.

3.5.1.2 *Goethe and* Les Bayadères

The first two acts of *Les Bayadères,* closely based on Voltaire's poem, could logically stand alone. Jouy, however, added a third act with a sati scene, which resembles the ending of Goethe's poem, *Der Gott und die Bajadere*. In his later preface (1823), Jouy acknowledges this similarity, contending that both he and Goethe based their poems on the same Indian legend of the origin of the bayadères. This contention, while admitting the similarities between the two works, asserts that Jouy did not get his inspiration from Goethe's poem, but from its original source. Perhaps Jouy realized that his opera could benefit from the association with Goethe, hence the reference to Goethe in the later edition.

3.5.1.3 *Napoleon and* Les Bayadères

When *Les Bayadères* was conceived and performed, opera was part of the Napoleonic propaganda machine. The *beaux arts* were simultaneously supported through subventions and controlled by censors, with Opera occupying a special place. It was the means by which the Emperor celebrated his glory through extravagant spectacle (Chaillou Preface I). Rigorous guidelines were set for operas staged during this period: Napoleon took a personal interest in the Opera, telling the Comte de Rémusat, "Vous ne devez mettre aucune pièce nouvelle à l'étude sans mon consentement" (qtd. in Chaillou 17). Topics had to be historical or mythological, featuring gods, kings and heroes (Chaillou 131). The opera could not refer to any of France's former rulers other than Charlemagne, who could be compared to Napoleon. Other than the *pièces de circonstances* which were specially commissioned, a jury examined all operas for literary and artistic merit. The censors also ensured that it was politically appropriate for the time when it was staged.[60] Military themes of triumph and valor, seen as inspirational, were particularly desirable.

Étienne de Jouy was especially successful in navigating this system of political control. Five of Jouy's operas were staged during the Empire. Ayumi Kubo says that "the military theme is present in all of [Jouy's] librettos that reached the stage during the Empire . . . all his narratives dealt with heroic individual action in one way or another"(9). David Chaillou puts Jouy at the top of the list of composers of the imperial era, saying, "[il] occupe

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[60] Lecomte, Chaillou, and Kubo, among others, examine the role of the state in regulating performances during the Napoleonic era and provide details of the selection process. This rigorous process sometimes failed, as the removal of Jouy's *Fernand Cortez* (1809) attests. Originally commissioned to support Napoleon's invasion of Europe, it had the opposite effect, as the public supported the Spanish instead (Chaillou 211, 219, 69, 233). Like *Tippô-Saëb*, *Fernand Cortez* also gave audiences an opportunity to criticize Napoleon.

une position charnière dans l'histoire de l'opéra français . . . Tout en restant influencé par la figure titulaire de Voltaire et son esthétique toute classique, Jouy annonce le grand opéra français du XIXe siècle . . . Jouy était aussi le dramaturge contemporain le plus joué sur la scène de l'Opéra" (91).[61]

Jouy's relationship with the Emperor appears to have been a complicated one. Jouy himself, in his post-Napoleonic writings, is at pains to disassociate himself from the Emperor's favor. Jouy claims, "Je n'avais jamais été dans les bonnes grâces de l'empereur, et j'étais, je crois, le seul homme de lettres de cette époque sur lequel sa faveur ne se fût point étendue" ("Notes Anecdotiques" *Œuvres* 18: 99-100). Despite Jouy's frequent unflattering comments on the Emperor and his protestations that he was not indulged by the establishment, he did, in fact, enjoy its favors, according to Chaillou:

> Jouy n'en était pas moins un proche de l'Empire. Nommé censeur de *La Gazette de France* en France en 1808 . . . il connaissait les enjeux politiques du moment puisqu'il contrôlait le contenu du journal. . . . Charles Monselet . . . le traite même avec subtilité de "grognard littéraire," tant son nom est accolé à la littérature de l'époque impériale. (Chaillou 94)

Whether he was willing to admit it or not, Jouy did further the Emperor's agenda. The very fact that *Les Bayadères* was seen as apolitical and harmless attests to how successfully it conformed to the strictures laid down by the authorities. Paradoxically, Jouy's post-Napoleonic critiques contribute to keeping alive the conversation around the Emperor's involvement in theater and by extension, the role played by authoritarian regimes and censorship in the world.

Napoleon's presence—and absence, if we consider that it permitted Jouy's acerbic post-Napoleonic critiques—invest a contemporary political significance into the sphere of

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[61] Of the top five operas in 1810, in terms of receipts, three of them were Jouy's: *Les Bayadères, Fernand Cortez* and *La Vestale* (Chaillou 466).

stage performance: "Napoléon est en quelque sorte le *deus ex machina* qui fait le lien entre les événements politiques contemporains et la fiction, entre la réalité et le mythe" (Chaillou 315-316). The Emperor's actual presence affected performances at the Opera in many ways. Sometimes his presence was carefully orchestrated to create a dramatic impact, as in the case of *Trajan,* where the pomp of the ruler's arrival on stage and in the audience was synchronized and the music that was composed for Napoleon's ascension to the throne was played (311), effectively making Napoleon part of the performance. Elaborate arrangements had to be made for his security (Chaillou 305). The performance line-up was sometimes determined by Napoleon's schedule and wishes. Artistes were often changed from the roster, so that the best performed before the Emperor. Napoleon chose to attend only the "meilleurs ouvrages," with all of Jouy's operas qualifying for the honor. In addition to being a sign of esteem, the Emperor's presence showcases these operas as successful examples of propagandist materials. Napoleon's presence was not always an advantage, artistically speaking. When he attended *Les Bayadères*, the music was altered to conform to his musical tastes, transforming it completely.

3.5.1.4 *Jouy's Exposition*[62]

The value of Jouy's exposition lies in the fact that it establishes him as an authority on bayadères. Any similarities with stories recounted by others reinforce the validity both of his version and theirs; disparities are justified by a difference in perspective and/or

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[62] The *Notice historique sur les bayadères* in the first edition of *Les Bayadères* and the *Préambule historique* in the later *Œuvres complètes* edition have some differences in structure and content. My discussion in this section refers primarily to the first edition, with any exceptions clearly signaled in the bracketed citation as "*Œuvres."*

regional variations, given that India is large and complex. Since he had stayed in India, his claim of first-hand knowledge is believed. His origin story and other details regarding the bayadères were reproduced in several other places (reviews in journals and encyclopedias), not only in connection to his own opera but to others that followed, such as *Le Dieu et la bayadère.* Jouy thus played an important role in shaping the image of the bayadères in the public imagination.

Jouy reproduces, with some embellishments, Rogerius's tale of the courtesan jumping on to the funeral pyre and being saved by Dewendren. Presenting this as the origin story of the bayadères, he gives a religious background to the sati and bayadère amalgam: "On lit, dans un des *Puranas* (poèmes historiques et sacrés) . . . " He claims that it was through divine ordinance that courtesans were attached to temples as "devadasis," translating this term as "favorites" of the god and not "servants." He provides several extraneous details which all hint of deviant sexuality. For example, he informs us that after a novitiate of some months, and some very strange ceremonies—"des cérémonies trop étrangères à nos mœurs pour en faire mention,"—the young devadasi initiate is marked on her left breast with the sign of the temple.[63] By not describing the "cérémonies," Jouy allows the readers' imagination free rein to imagine scenarios that would most shock their sensibilities.[64] Jouy is at pains to provide a religious frame for his bayadères through the

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[63] Vishwanathan states that the branding was on the upper arm (41). There is no mention on visible branding on the Indian dancers who visited Paris, even in the minutely detailed accounts of their person.

[64] Anquétil-Duperron was a conscientious reporter in general. He reported having seen, in a Shiva temple near Pondicherry, the "lingam [phallic symbol] sur lequel les jeunes brahmines perdent leur virginité" (Anquétil-Duperron xxix, also qtd. in Deloche et al. 23). However, he also tells us that he could not enter the inner sanctum, which is where the idol would be placed. Deloche et al tell us that

legend he recounts as well as through the religious terminology he uses, such as "noviciat" and "initiées" (8). He does not explicitly call them courtesans, but implies it. Their beauty is a given: ". . . la beauté est une condition indispensable, qu'aucune considération de naissance et de fortune ne peut remplacer . . ." (7-8). In the first few pages of his work itself, India is unequivocally painted as a place of sexual excesses. Dewendren (which translates to King of the gods, aka Lord Indra) is transformed to Demaly, a name that does not evoke a Hindu divinity. Demaly's 1200 women conjure up the archetypical Oriental harem. By transforming the "devadasi" into the "favorite" of the god, as well as through the suggestive branding "au dessous du sein gauche" (both in placement and with its connotations of servitude and commodification), Jouy adds explicit sexual overtones (8).[65] Jouy's description of the bayadères' dance pretends to present an objective account, but he limits the entire repertoire of the devadasis to one sexual pantomime: ". . . leurs divertissements, dont l'idée principale est toujours la même. . ." (9). He divides the dance into three parts. The first part is marked by "une sorte d'irrésolution, d'inquiétude vague," he says, while

> dans la seconde [partie], qui a pour objet de peindre les ardeurs du désir, les transports de l'amour, on peut adresser aux Bayadères un reproche que méritent rarement nos actrices, celui de se pénétrer trop profondément de leur rôle, et d'arriver par l'imitation, trop près de la nature. La troisième partie . . . se termine par une espèce de bacchanale. (9-10)

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he either imagined the ritual—which is both theologically unacceptable in Hinduism and appears physically impossible—or repeated an "on-dit." In the absence of knowledge, there is no constraint on imagination, which is what Jouy encourages.

[65] I have not been able to find corroboration of details such as an enforced fifteen-year service at a temple; these were perhaps an exaggeration of existing mores, like the branding, or products of Jouy's imagination.

By comparing the Indian bayadères with French actresses, Jouy emphasizes the formers' lubricity. Having dismissed a dance tradition existing for millennia in a few lascivious terms, he praises "les molles inflexions de leurs corps . . . la grâce et la variété des attitudes, l'expression délicieuse de leurs yeux . . . la beauté remarquable" (10). A reader's imagination is kindled, but I wonder what the effect would be on a prospective spectator of the opera. With French artists (who rarely immerse themselves in their role, according to him) playing the roles of the bayadères on the stage, is he perhaps apologizing that viewers might not get the erotic treat they were expecting?

Jouy alternates allusions to licentiousness and abstinence, throwing both into sharp relief: ". . . les Bayadères ne se nourrissent que de végétaux, et sont astreintes de nuit et de jour à des prières, à des ablutions dont rien ne peut les dispenser" (11). Jouy opportunistically makes his bayadères take on the militarily heroic role as well, adding it to the roster of religious and sexual duties he gives them: ". . . dans les réjouissances publiques, . . . elles ont coutume d'exécuter un pas militaire, dans lequel ces jeunes filles font preuve d'une adresse extrême à manier les armes" (11). Thus Jouy justifies the inclusion of the military theme in this opera. Jouy also compares the bayadères to Rome's vestal virgins. He concludes, rather ambiguously using the verb "jouir," that "les Bayadères ont le même emploi et jouissent des mêmes prérogatives" as the vestal virgins (12). He emphasizes the notion of sexual duties under Brahmin control: "On eût puni la bayadère pudique avec la même rigueur qui frappait la vestale infidèle à ses serments" (*Œuvres* 19: 112).

Jouy's long preface focuses entirely on the physical appeal of the bayadères, ignoring the heroine's ingenuity and loyalty. It guides the readers' imagination, allowing them to visualize the opera through an exotically sensual lens. This transforms a political plot featuring a strong and resourceful heroine into a vehicle for displaying feminine charms. Even though the majority of the action in *Les Bayadères* is based on Voltaire's poem, Jouy

only briefly mentions *L'éducation d'un prince*. He immediately moves the focus back to India, concluding his *Notice* with "les détails en ont été recueillis sur les lieux mêmes où j'ai placé l'action de ce drame lyrique" (12). Jouy was a skilled raconteur who, by asserting a personal knowledge of India in his preface, textually convinced his readers and his audience that what he showed them as India was accurate.

3.5.2 Plot and Staging

Despite all his assertions of authenticity, however, Jouy's opera presents an India that has very little to do with reality. The opposition of Occident and Orient that Voltaire portrays is missing from Jouy's setting, but Jouy creates a semblance of this polarity by calling one camp "Indiens" and the other "Marattes" (for the Marathas) though both are native to the Indian sub-continent. This creates the illusion that the Marathas are external to India, and that they are its enemies. Jouy exemplifies Edward Said's premise that "[w]ords such as 'Orient' and 'Occident' correspond to no stable reality that exists as a natural fact. Moreover, all such geographical designations are an odd combination of the empirical and the imaginative" (331). Despite Jouy's asserting that his representation of India and the bayadères is authentic, he treats "Inde" and "Indiens" as fluid concepts, combining the "empirical and imaginative." The name of the Maratha general, Olkar, resembles that of an actual Maratha ruler, Holkar, but the rest of the names are vaguely Indian/Oriental/Muslim-sounding and ring false.[66] The sets and costumes follow the same

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[66] Narséa, the name he gives the "Grand Brame," is fairly authentic and is also the name he gives Tipu's Brahmin minister in *Tippô-Saëb*. Other names, such as "Hyderam," are problematic. "Hyder" is the name of Tipu's father, and a Muslim name, while "Ram" is the name of a Hindu deity. The creative

pattern. The sumptuous staging and costumes, whose cost totaled 150,000 francs, were quite expensive for the era, says a later nineteenth-century scholar, Arthur Pougin. The costumes, according to Jouy, were scrupulously faithful and based on a bayadère's outfit brought from India. The engravings that survive show that the sets and the costumes, like the names that Jouy makes up, appear to be Oriental without being quite Indian. The costumes are a strange mélange of styles that evoke primitiveness and sexuality. The women wear diaphanous garments, but there are men and women wearing tribal-looking grass skirts, animal skins (?) and a variety of feathered headgear (reminiscent of ancient Roman helmets?), quite thoroughly blending various identities to create a peculiar kind of oriental Indians. Set against minarets and domes, the scene in the engraving below fits several stereotypes of the exotic Oriental Other. The second engraving shows women dancing in a garden with palm trees, again a marker for the East.

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geography combined with unrealistic names create a sense of disorientation for an Indian reader like me.

Figure 14. Engraving for Jouy's *Les bayadères*. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

Figure 15. Engraving for Jouy's *Les Bayadères*. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

While the sets by Isabey were exotic, the music and the dance, the core elements of the opera, were French. Like other operas of its time, the opera contained divertissements or dance interludes. The innovation in this opera was that the dance sequences, choreographed by Gardel, were well integrated into the plot, as could naturally be expected of an opera based on bayadères. The *pas de schall/châle*, where the artistes danced with a long filmy scarf, was highly applauded and imitated in other ballets. Some of the best artistes performed in *Les bayadères*: Caroline Branchu was an uncontested celebrity; Louis Nourrit (known as Nourrit père) and Henri-Étienne Dérivis (Dérivis père) were highly regarded as well (Chaillou 27, Pougin 7). The large cast, fabulous sets and costumes heralded the size and spectacle associated with grand opera.

The opera opens with a scene in the opulent *zénana,* the "logement des femmes" as Jouy calls it. This reiterates two stereotypes at once, those of wealth and sexual excess. Political intrigues permeate the king's love life, with each of King Demaly's three favorites claiming the support of an important person in the court: a powerful minister, the harem intendant, Rustan, or the Grand Brame. It is Demaly's duty to marry, but he is in love with a bayadère, Laméa, who is forbidden to him because she belongs to the temple.[67] Demaly is also reluctant to celebrate his wedding when the Marathas are threatening to attack the kingdom. Narséa, the Grand Brame, prophesizing that Demaly will defeat the enemies, insists that the Gods want Demaly to marry. Demaly defers to the Brame's decision, thus revealing the supremacy of the Brames within the power structure in the kingdom and paralleling Voltaire's plot. As the bayadères dance to commence the wedding celebrations, the Marathas attack. Narséa gets Laméa to hide the kingdom's treasure, Vishnu's diadem, in

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[67] Jouy is also said to have been in love while in India with a young girl called Laméa, killed in an adventurous encounter, lending this part of the tale an autobiographical flavor (Empis 655-56).

a hidden temple. The Indians (Demaly and his people) are defeated by the Marathas. Demaly is imprisoned. Olkar, the chief of the Marathas, wants the treasured diadem, but Demaly, despite being tortured, refuses to reveal its location. Olkar is enamored of Laméa. He hopes to find out the secret through her and Laméa pretends to cooperate. She is secretly planning a rebellion with the help of troops from Ellabad (Allahabad?) who are on their way to help Demaly. Laméa plans a ruse to defeat Olkar: she informs him that the most discreet way to get him the treasure would be to plan a huge celebration, during which she could sneak out. Olkar agrees. At the celebration, the rebels are disguised as jugglers and bayadères. The bayadères arrive, announced by "la mélodie la plus voluptueuse" (Jouy *Les Bayadères* 47).[68] They artfully seduce Olkar and his soldiers. In Jouy's words:

> . . . elles se mêlent aux Marattes: tandis que les unes exécutent autour d'eux les danses les plus voluptueuses; d'autres brûlent des parfums; d'autres sur le dernier plan leur versent dans des coupes d'or des liqueurs enivrantes: la musique, la danse, les chants, les parfums, les breuvages, tout est mis en usage pour séduire les compagnons d'Olkar, qui partage bientôt le délire de ses guerriers. (49-50)

Having brought the Marathas under her control, Laméa and her bayadères disarm them. They cover the sounds of the battle raging outside with the sounds of their singing and dancing. Demaly is freed, joins the troops from Ellabad, and defeats the Marathas. This event concludes the first two acts, and could very well have provided a logical ending to the opera.

The third and final act deviates from Voltaire's plot. The bayadère legend is incorporated into the tale, bringing it closer to Goethe's poem. Demaly proposes to Laméa, who refuses even though she loves him. His three favorites (last seen in the first scene)

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[68] Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all quotations in this section are from Jouy's 1810 edition of *Les Bayadères*. The quotes from the *Œuvres complètes* edition of *Les Bayadères* are indicated as such.

initially compete to marry him, but once it is disclosed that Demaly was shot by a poisoned arrow during the battle and is on his deathbed, they withdraw in horror. Laméa, hearing of this, rushes to his side at the banks of the river Ganges, where both the marriage altar and the funeral pyre are erected. The stage directions for this scene read: "Le théâtre change et représente un vaste bûcher sur les bords du Gange: au sommet du bûcher décoré de tous les insignes de la souveraineté, s'élève une espèce de pavillon où le corps du Raja est censé déposé derrière un rideau de pourpre" (*Œuvres* 19: 165.). There is a dramatic sati ceremony with all the bayadères, at the end of which Laméa sets the pyre alight: "la flamme court sur une ligne horizontale et allume les quatre autels qui forment les coins du bûcher" (*Œuvres* 19: 167).[69] This sensational scene makes sati a public spectacle of pomp and circumstance. The fact that it heralds death and suffering are rendered inconsequential. The public expects to see a blazing pyre created for its entertainment, and the playwright and his collaborators oblige. Of course, on stage, Laméa is saved by Demaly, fictionally recouping the tragedy. Once the obligatory sati scene is accomplished, the scene reverts to one of princely splendor, showing Demaly on his fabulous throne. Framed between scenes of wealth and splendor, as well as the bayadères' dance sequences, the trope of sati becomes just one of the special effects offered to the audience.

A grand wedding celebration ends the opera. The King had to trick Laméa in order for her to marry him, but the bayadère does become the queen. She is accepted by the people and enjoys earthly rewards for her loyalty. The people benefit as well:[70]

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[69] The stage directions from the *Œuvres complètes* edition are more dramatic than the first edition, which does not explicitly describe the lighting of the pyre.

[70] The *Sati's* sacrifice is traditionally expected to bring prosperity and happiness to her family. Here it the prevention of sati and the marriage that heralds the well being of the kingdom's subjects (an

De l'heureuse alliance

Des vertus et de la puissance

Que tous les cœurs soient satisfaits;

Et que le bonheur des sujets

Du prince soit la récompense. (71)

The third act of the opera successfully merges the devadasi and the sati, perpetuating the idea promulgated by Goethe in his *Gott und die Bajadere*. Laméa, however, is not the lost young child that Goethe evokes, but is resourceful and assertive, similar to Voltaire's heroine. Jouy takes two poems by famous authors and cobbles them together, creating an idealized feminine persona who is strong enough to save a kingdom and loyal enough to be willing to sacrifice her life for her lover.

3.5.3 Reception

Like all other librettos created at the time, *Les Bayadères* had to be submitted to the censors and to the jury. The jury approved: "Le jury a entendu avec le plus grand plaisir cet ouvrage qui lui a paru parfaitement coupé, d'un intérêt touchant et présentant un spectacle varié" (qtd. in Chaillou 146). The focus on female sensuality diverted attention from the political content (it was based on Voltaire's "L'Éducation d'un prince," after all).[71] Audiences agreed with the verdict of the jury, and *Les Bayadères* was the most successful opera of 1810 (Chaillou 466). It was continuously performed till 1813, then revived in1814, and again in the 1820s (Kubo 78). Contemporary critics were favorably disposed as well. The

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extended notion of family), which is a less-disturbing idea. Of course, the French audience is not expected to be aware of these underlying notions.

[71] Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb* (and *Fernand Cortez*), on the other hand, were seen as overtly political; in part, perhaps, because they featured strong heroic men, inviting comparisons with Napoleon, positive or negative.

leading critic of the time, Geoffroy (who was to prove so disparaging of Jouy's talents in his reviews of *Tippô-Saëb*), was quite complimentary of *Les Bayadères.* He praises the music, the dances, the performance of the artists and the sets. He does find the opera "assez vide d'action, mais rempli de danses charmantes et de morceaux de musique fort agréables" (*Cours* 5: 213). However, perhaps because of Geoffroy's disapproval of Voltaire, he does not mention Voltaire's contribution to the plot.[72] The political angle is completely discounted in the review as well. Like Jouy in his preface, Geoffroy highlights the sensuality of the performance and repeats the word "volupté" several times. Sensual delight is linked both with India and with the opera. India's function is limited to providing suitable subjects for the French opera: "Les peuples dont la religion s'accorde avec les sens, chez qui la volupté est une partie de la morale, peuvent fournir de bons sujets d'opéra"("Catel" *Cours* 5: 211). Jouy's ascribing martial talents to the bayadères turns out be inspired, as it is found particularly thrilling: "Ce mélange d'images voluptueuses et guerrières est plein de charmes; et le sexe faible, prêtant sa mollesse et ses grâces aux exercices du sexe fort, offre la plus piquante et la plus jolie des mascarades" (214). Battle, normally a male preserve, becomes "piquante" when it is women wielding arms. As in *Tipoo-Saib ou la prise de Séringapatam*, the women in *Les Bayadères* are resourceful and outwit the men. In the latter, however, the women's physical attributes are emphasized to a far greater degree. George Touchard-Lafosse, in his *Chroniques secrètes et galantes de l'opéra* (1846), attests that the physical charms of the dancers cast all the other aspects of the production, though of high quality, into the shade. Touchard-Lafosse praises the commercial success of the opera. *Les*

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[72] In the preface to *Cours de littérature*, a collection of Geoffroy's theater reviews, the editors refer to Geoffroy's "attaques réitérées contre Voltaire" (5: vi).

bayadères, with its scantily clad women, he says, was instrumental in rescuing the Opera from "morne atonie":[73]

> *Les bayadères* surtout procurèrent d'excellentes recettes: indépendamment de la gracieuse musique dont Catel avait animé un poème assez intéressant, jamais, je crois, on n'avait vu à l'Opéra tant de charmes en exhibition : jamais plus riche bazar de séductions ne s'était offert aux habitués de l'orchestre. Les trois actes de l'œuvre lyrique étaient une joûte incessante de seins découverts, d'épaules nues, et les métiers de je ne sais quelle ville manufacturière avaient surpassé les plus claires mousselines de l'Inde, pour accuser les formes des jeunes bayadères. Il ne s'était trouvé d'épais tissus que pour les vieilles. La réussite de l'opéra indien fut, avant tout, un succès de musée. (142-43)

These reviews show how Jouy's treatment and the location in India change Voltaire's ideological plot into an unchallenged feast for the senses. Thought and reason do not intrude. India speaks to the heart, says Geoffroy when he compares dances in *Les Bayadères* and another opera that had similar dances, *Cythère assiégée*. In the latter, he says, "Ces scènes sont des beautés de comédie plus ingénieuses que sensuelles" whereas, "les beautés des *Bayadères* . . . produisent plus de sensations que d'idées, et occupent singulièrement les yeux et les oreilles, au grand soulagement de l'esprit et du cœur" (215). The sensuality of the bayadères also overpowers the other idea of the woman as loyal and sacrificing: the third act is found to be "rempli d'héroïsme, mais d'un héroïsme un peu froid" – an ironic choice of words, considering that it refers to a jump into the flames of the funeral pyre.

After forty-six performances, *Les bayadères* was reduced from three acts to two in 1814. Sylvan Suskin states in his 1972 PhD dissertation that this was because critics complained about the lack of dramatic continuity and the mismatch between Voltaire's plot and the sati narrative (192, 268-69). Or perhaps cost was a factor: the elaborate sets in the

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[73] He gives the year as 1802, when in fact the premiere was in 1810.

third act were bound to be expensive. Whatever the reason, the third act was later reinstated. Other than some short periods of the two-act performances, *Les Bayadères* was usually performed with all three acts.[74] Jouy himself disengages his opera from Voltaire's in the *Œuvres complètes* (1823) edition of *Les Bayadères* and politics is deliberately set aside, with the focus firmly placed on the sensual aspects of *Les Bayadères*.

Politics, in the person of Napoleon, nevertheless looms large over the conception and performance of *Les Bayadères*. Chaillou cites a letter from the Comte de Rémusat, dated 31 Aug 1810, in which he indicates Napoleon's desire to see *Les Bayadères* performed at the opera a couple of days later.[75] The letter concludes, "Faites toutes vos dispositions avec votre prudence ordinaire pour que les désirs de l'Empereur soient remplis. D'ailleurs vous savez que ses désirs sont des ordres" (309). While the last sentence unequivocally reveals the authoritarian nature of Napoleon's reign, the fact that it was written at all makes me wonder if there had been any prior recalcitrance on the part of the Opera director. During the performance "par ordre" of *Les Bayadères*, the music needed to be altered. The Emperor preferred his music *pianissimo*. Having been falsely informed that the music was "très bruyante," the Emperor, "l'homme du monde qui faisait le plus de fracas, et qui le redoutait le moins," and "aux oreilles duquel le bruit du canon et de la chute des empires avaient si

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[74] *Le Dictionnaire des opéras*, *Le Miroir* of 7 Mar. 1823 and *Le Figaro* of 23 Dec. 1827 mention two acts, while *Le Monde illustré* of 6 Dec. 1873 mentions three acts at the opening of the Nouvel Opéra. The *Œuvres complètes* de Jouy (Vol. 19), published in 1823, still has three acts.

[75] Initially Napoleon's chamberlain, the Comte de Rémusat was later appointed "Surintendant des spectacles," and often addressed notes to the Director of the Opera (Chaillou 43). Regarding the desired performance on 2 September 1810, Suskin states that, in fact, the Emperor's plan to visit the opera changed, and it was not until 23 September 1810 that the performance "par ordre" took place in front of the Emperor and Empress (183).

souvent retenti," ordered the conductor to play the music *à la sourdine*. Catel's music was rendered unrecognizably monotonous, with the bewildered public crying out for it to be played "plus haut! plus haut!"[76] Relating this anecdote, Jouy concludes that it was a good thing that the success of the opera was assured by the ten preceding performances; otherwise, "il est probable que la cabale des sourdines eût fait tomber la pièce" (*Œuvres* 19: 171-72).[77] Politics thus shaped *Les Bayadères* from inception to reception. It appears paradoxical that the reason that *Les Bayadères* continued to be staged even after the regime changed was because "[c]es pièces, sans véritable couleur politique, pouvaient aisément satisfaire le nouveau pouvoir en place" (Chaillou 339). Censors searching for political allusions, as they did for *Tippô-Saëb,* could have objected to many aspects of the libretto. Depending on when it was read, it could show unflattering references to royalty or the shadow cast by the Napoleonic era, etc. The staging strategies, however, which focused on fabulous sets and scantily clad bayadères, precluded any serious ratiocination, producing "plus de sensations que d'idées," as Geoffroy phrased it. By all accounts, succeeding monarchs had no complaints against the theme of *Les Bayadères*. It was chosen for the inauguration of the new Opera house in 1821, during the rule of Louis XVIII.

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[76] The description of *Les Bayadères* in *Le Grand dictionnaire universel* relates the surprise and impatience of the audience, curbed only out of respect for the Emperor's presence (407).

[77] In other cases, the Emperor's presence at a performance increased audience enthusiasm, and, temporarily, receipts, according to Chaillou (312-13).

Figure 16. Performance of *Les Bayadères* at the inauguration of the new Opéra. Source: gallica.bnf.fr.

3.5.4 *Les Bayadères* today

Catel's music has recently been revived as a forgotten classic. An audio CD was released in September 2014, with a recording of *Les Bayadères* conducted by Didier Talpain, and performed by the Solamente Naturali, Svetoslav Obretenov National Bulgarian Choir and Musica Florea orchestras. Excerpts are available on YouTube. Despite Jouy's great success in the nineteenth century, his reputation is dwarfed by Voltaire's in the modern world. Associating his libretto with Voltaire, as is done in these videos, grants it a greater value in the minds of audiences:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UTM7kBvr4c - Air, *Sans détourner les yeux*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyyjqhhdjrA - Grand Finale of the Second Act

Perhaps Jouy would see it as just homage to a writer he himself idolized.[78]

Reviews of the modern performance are also available. These naturally rate the quality of the music, not the libretto or the staging. Despite the passage of time and changing tastes, they continue to be generally positive. A French opera set in India does, however, prompt mentions of unrepentant orientalism, in essence echoing the nineteenth-century reviews. The French site classiquenews.com uses phrases like "fresque lyrique à grand effectif d'un orientalisme enchanteur," "convoquent une Inde fantaisiste," and "s'il est question d'orientalisme, la question est plutôt de s'émouvoir et de s'alanguir." In the historical development of opera, *Les Bayadères* is presented as a precursor of grand opera: "annonce déjà le grand opéra à venir (celui de Meyerbeer)."[79] In another review, on a website based in the United Kingdom, Hugo Shirley states that Laméa, like Jouy's heroine in *La Vestale,* is a "sacred dancer sworn to celibacy."[80] This is amusing, considering the effort Jouy expends in detailing the sexual "duties" of bayadères in his preface.[81] Some associations are so strong that they endure for centuries, such as the idea of India as "enchanteur" and "fantaisiste." The idea of Laméa as a "sacred dancer" also invites a comment on her sexuality. "Sacred" and "sexual" are seen as antithetical: the modern review

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[78] The *Nouvelle Biographie* says that, at a very young age, Jouy "apprit Voltaire par cœur" (90).

[79] www.classiquenews.com/cd-catel-les-bayaderes-1810-talpain-2012/

[80] An example of a bayadère sworn to celibacy does apparently exist, strangely enough. In 1768, a six-year old bayadère called Bebaiourn (sole survivor of three bayadères reportedly kidnapped by a French sea captain) allegedly arrived in France and danced *le pas de schal* for the French Royal court. She is said to have later become a Catholic nun and a companion to Princess Louise-Marie of France. The young Ouricka (who inspired *Ourika* by Claire de Duras) is said to have died in Bebaiourn's arms ("Bayadères" *Monthly Chronicle* 478-80).

[81] www.gramophone.co.uk/review/catel-les-bayad%C3%A8res

in its rather casual description of Laméa takes the divorce of religion and sexuality for granted.[82] The devadasis, by combining religion with sexuality, inscribed this polarity within their bodies. They were, however, seen as more desirable precisely because of the notion of debauchery this implied - a fact that Jouy and others capitalized on. Whichever the century, it would appear that religion and feminity bring in their wake a reflection on sexuality: vestal virgins, Catholic nuns, sacred dancers…

3.6 SCRIBE'S *LE DIEU ET LA BAYADÈRE OU LA COURTISANE AMOUREUSE*

3.6.1 Augustin-Eugène Scribe

Augustin-Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) was without doubt one of the most prolific and successful authors of the nineteenth century. Known as the inventor of "la pièce bien faite," he wrote more than four hundred plays, alone and in collaboration. He is regarded as "one of the great masters of the neatly plotted, tightly constructed well-made play" ("Eugène Scribe" *EB*). The audience that Scribe cultivated was the rising bourgeoisie, and his plays reflected their concerns. His numerous librettos—almost 140, among them *Muette de Portici* (1828) with Auber, *Robert le diable* (1831) with Meyerbeer and *La Juive* (1835) with Halévy—were very popular. He also worked with Donizetti, Cherubini, Rossini and many others. The sheer volume of his work was astonishing, but more importantly, he cast a long shadow, geographically and temporally, as his extended influence on theater and operatic practices attests. In 1861, when he died, the *New York Times* published a lengthy article, which, though not all complimentary, acknowledged the influence that he had in the literary world:

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[82] The review also gets some other details of the plot wrong, hence the adjective "casual."

> Less a dramatist than a manufacturer of comedies, vaudevilles and opera librettos . . . The English and American, not less than the French theatres, owe some of their longest and most sensational "runs," during the last quarter of a century, to the marvelous ingenuity and inexhaustible sprightliness of SCRIBE. So often, indeed, and in so many ways, has he been translated, "traduced" and "adapted," that one regards with suspicion the genuineness of every "original American drama" until he has first searched for its origin in SCRIBE. ("Death of Eugene Scribe") [83]

Scribe was responsible for another innovation as well. The appearance of the scenarist in ballet started with Scribe in 1827, when he anonymously contributed the scenario for *Le Somnambule.* Guest writes that even though Scribe's name did not appear on the printed scenario, nor was it announced on stage, "it was no secret" that Scribe was the librettist (*Romantic Ballet* 127). Until then the choreographers were responsible for the ballet as a whole. Having scenarists permitted more innovative and original scenarios (Guest *Romantic Ballet* 14-15). Scribe's librettos employed dramatic techniques developed for his *pièce bien faite* model, modified for the exigencies of opera/ballet. He was elected to the Académie Française in 1834. Unlike Jouy, whose biography reads like an adventure novel, Scribe's personal life does not appear to have created waves.

The music for *Le Dieu et la bayadère* was composed by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (1782-1871). Auber and Scribe collaborated on thirty-eight operas between 1823 and 1864, and *Le Dieu et la bayadère* counts among their successes. Auber's success has been partly attributed to Scribe's "expertly tailored" librettos ("Daniel-Francois-Esprit Auber" *EB*).

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[83] The article mentions that unlike Alexandre Dumas, he actually gave credit to his collaborators.

3.6.2 Plot and Staging

Le Dieu et la bayadère, *ou la courtisane amoureuse*, a hybrid ballet-opera with both singers and dancers in lead roles, premiered on 13 October 1830. It was directed by Solomé with sets by Ciceri. It followed the highly successful formula of Scribe's previous opera, *La Muette de Portici* (1828). Scribe had created the mute role of Fenella because the Opera had "no great soprano at the moment, and a mime role would create a sensation" (qtd. in Guest *Romantic Ballet* 133). *Le Dieu et la bayadère* was created to give Marie Taglioni a similar role. Marie Taglioni, one of the best-known Romantic dancers, is credited with being one of the first to dance *en pointe.* Since her miming skills were disappointing, the opera showcased her dancing prowess (187). Her father, Filippo Taglioni choreographed the show. The male lead was sung by the tenor Adolphe Nourrit (the son of Louis Nourrit, the tenor who sang Demaly in *Les Bayadères*). The story unfolded through a combination of aural and visual modes of expression. While Nourrit and the others sang their lines, Marie danced and gestured to convey the message indicated in the libretto. The sets and the costumes placed the opera in an exotic setting. There are several versions of the costume designs in the archives of the BnF. The set by Hipployte Lecomte appears more authentic, with brown-skinned people:

Figure 17 and Figure 18. Costumes for Nourrit (L'Inconnu) and Taglioni (Zoloé) by Lecomte. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

These costumes—*dhoti* and shawl for the male and saree with a separate bodice for the woman—look more Indian, and are modes of dress that are still current in India. The hairstyle for the woman, with flowers in her hair, is also authentic, as are the bracelets and anklets she wears. The posture of the female dancer is open and joyful as she gazes upwards and her feet suggest movement. The colors and patterns are vivid and bold. Overall, this set of pictures show characters that look strongly Indian. There is another set of costume drawings which show people with lighter skins and more westernized costumes. The man's outfit in the illustration below could conceivably be Indian (given the Mughal tradition in India), but the length and the style appear more generically Middle Eastern/Oriental. The woman's costume is westernized, and very similar in length and form to the Romantic tutu that Marie Taglioni would debut in *La Sylphide* two years later and which would become

hugely popular.[84] It is also more conservative, keeping the waist covered, and the pose in the drawing suggests a bayadère who is tamed and more conventional. The costumes suggest a weakening of the perceived "Indian-ness" of the bayadères, and foreshadow the less-sexualized character that Marie Taglioni brought to the role:

Figure 19 and Figure 20. Alternate costumes for Nourrit and Taglioni. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

It is quite likely that the costumes shown in Figures 19 and 20 were actually used, since the following picture is often reproduced to show Marie Taglioni as a bayadère.

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[84] The Romantic tutu was shorter in length than previous ballet costumes, ending between the knee and the ankle, and left the neck and shoulders bare. It was also lighter and fuller and was quickly adapted by the ballet world once Taglioni wore it *La Sylphide.*

Figure 21 and Figure 22. Marie Taglioni as the bayadère and Marie Taglioni in *La Sylphide.* Source: gallica.bnf.fr

The Romantic tutu is indelibly associated with Marie Taglioni, and the bayadère costume that Taglioni wears contributes to the "Taglioni-ization" of the bayadère.

In terms of plot, Scribe's version is comparatively simpler and more linear than Jouy's. He does not offer a preface or other note to make the opera intelligible to the audiences.[85] In addition, the combination of Indian and occidental frames of reference allow the audience to relate to the opera without much effort.

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[85] The firm Roullet published and sold *Analyses de pièces de théâtre* (1842-1872) at the Opera. These resemble programs that are provided at performances today. An undated digital version of the "Argument" of *Le Dieu et la bayadère* contains a plot summary for Scribe's *Le Dieu et la bayadère*, as well as a synopsis "*Historique."* The *Historique* does not mention Jouy by name, but appears to be based on Jouy's preface. The lack of a preface by Scribe was compensated here by including Jouy's.

Figure 23. An 1866 set for *Le Dieu et la bayadère.* Model by Charles-Antoine Cambon and Joseph Thierry. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

Scribe sets his opera in Kashmir, with mountains in the background. The opening description of the sets quickly sketches in the required markers of Indian otherness: banana trees (lush fertility and strange foliage), a grand palace (wealth), "une espèce de pagode" (religious/architectural symbol), people and officers in exotic costumes. Scribe simplifies the India-tropes. The names sound exotic, but are not difficult to pronounce: Olifour, Ninka, Fatmé, Zoloé, L'Inconnu (Brama)…[86] Scribe gives the bayadères "cistres" and "tambours de basque" for instruments, making them resemble gypsies (12). There is also a eunuch among the cast of characters, invoking a harem. Like the visuals and the characters, the plot contains highly recognizable tropes. The opening scene depicts a town with an oppressed

[86] Unlike the names in the adaptations of Sanskrit dramas like *Sacountalâ* which amused and annoyed audiences.

population, corrupt judges, and the arrival of divinity in the form of a stranger seeking refuge: traces of the Christian narrative can be seen. The presence of "tchop-dars" (officers) among the people, and a dissolute judge hint at a population under a repressive, perhaps foreign rule - to me, this is reminiscent of Roman troops in ancient Judaea.[87]

Closely based on Goethe's poem, Scribe offers a few modifications, some of which evoke Jouy's *Les Bayadères*. Goethe's entire story unfolds outside the bounds of society, except at the end, when society steps in and surrounds the young girl at the moment of her death. Scribe's version has the entire populace of the city oppressed and suffering. Further marginalization occurs for Scribe's heroine, Zoloé, the lead bayadère. She is a stranger to the region, does not speak the language, and is therefore silent throughout the opera. She only communicates through dance, while the other bayadères sing as well. Expressly or fortuitously—given that the opera was created to highlight Marie Taglioni's dancing prowess—the marginalization and vulnerability of the *Bajadere* in Goethe's poem is reflected through this lack. Though voiceless, Zoloé, however, is assertive and quick thinking, like Jouy's Laméa. She saves the Inconnu's life by helping him escape and by hiding him in her house. Along the way, it is revealed that the Inconnu is Brama, an Indian divinity. Brama cannot get back to his heavenly abode until he experiences a woman's true love. He has realized that this is very rare on earth, having searched for it in palaces and harems for some time. He marvels that he finds the love he has searched for in a courtesan. Zoloé repudiates material wealth, selling even her personal jewelry to obtain food and necessities for her lover.[88] Unlike Goethe's god, Scribe's Brama is appreciative of her efforts and does not harp on her sinful past. He does test her, however, by paying attention to the other

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[87] It is not without modern parallels either.

[88] Like Vasánta.sena in *The Little Clay Cart.*

bayadères to make her jealous. The self-abasement shown by Goethe's *Bajadere* is reflected in Zoloé's expressions of lack of self-worth and her offering to be his slave. She gestures: "Laissez-moi près de vous! laissez–moi obéir, vous servir, être votre esclave . . . . je vous le demande à genoux" (35). When soldiers come looking for Brama, she shows herself ready to die on the pyre constructed out of her hut's remains, rather than reveal Brama's hiding place in the cellar. Brama then rescues her and carries her to heaven. Three well-entrenched dramatic conventions associated with India are fulfilled in this one scene: the "chaumière," evoking the pariah, the blazing pyre of the sati, and the splendid wealth of the East shown in Brama's magnificent garb and the glimpse that the audience gets of the Indian paradise. The latter sets a trend. In future operas, like *Roi de Lahore* (1877), *La Bayadère* (1877) and *Lakmé* (1883), visions of celestial splendor become the focal point, rather than the funeral pyre.

The role of Zoloé was one of Marie Taglioni's most successful roles. One of the highlights of the opera was the *pas de châle,* a common piece by this time. It was rendered striking by the ingenious choreography by Filippo Taglioni for his daughter: "The pink scarves of the dancing girls floated and hovered in the air in the most ingenious combinations, . . . and—at a most striking moment—stretched out fan-wise with their ends gathered together beneath Taglioni's foot, making her appear like Venus emerging from the waves on her shell" (Guest *Romantic Ballet* 188). *Le Dieu et la bayadère* established Marie Taglioni as "the" bayadère, an association which had far-reaching consequences. Her persona as a dancer did not resemble the Indian devadasis described by Jouy and others. Gautier credits her with "la grâce aérienne et virginale" and calls her "une danseuse chrétienne, . . . elle voltige comme un esprit. . . " (*Histoire* 1: 38). For Gautier, "chrétienne" implies a celestially oriented and spiritual woman, with virginity an essential characteristic. He described Fanny Elssler, another famous dancer of the time, as "païenne," since she

dances with her whole body and is more human (*Histoire* 1: 38-39); she appeals more to the senses than Marie does.[89] The pagan woman is sensual, while the Christian woman is spiritual: a woman's sexuality and religion are even used to describe styles of dancing. The bayadère, though she represents both the sacrifice of the *Sati* and the sensuality of the devadasi, is more sensual than devoted in the minds of French audiences, thanks to spectacles such as Jouy's *Les Bayadères.* Thus creating the role of the bayadère for Marie Taglioni seems counter-intuitive; one can better imagine Fanny Elssler in the role, given Gautier's description of the two. Nevertheless, there was such a strong association between Marie Taglioni and Zoloé that reviewers often wondered if the opera would remain in the repertoire once she stopped dancing the role. Publishers annotated the score with the note that Zoloé could be played by an actress if a suitable dancer were not found (Smith 30-31). However, the opera continued to be performed with a dancer in the lead role, with Louise Fitzjames, Carlotta Grisi, and Guglielmina Salvioni among others. French dancers appropriated the image of the bayadères so successfully in the public imagination that when the troupe of Indian dancers arrived in Paris in 1838, the latter were seen as curiosities, rather than claimants to the roles played by their French counterparts.

3.6.3 Reception

The extremely long run enjoyed by *Le Dieu et la bayadère* is the best indicator of its success. It reached its 100th performance in about eight years, and continued to be performed in Paris and elsewhere (Smith 30). Though it has largely disappeared from the repertoire, one still finds music from the opera on YouTube; for example, the Overture

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[89] The characterization of Taglioni as "Christian" and Fanny as "pagan" is repeated often: Kisselgoff, Engelhardt, Harris et alia.

performed by the Gothenburg Opera Orchestra, from an album released in 2013: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovvKxlBadng. Acknowledged as the precursor of the more popular and still widely performed *La Bayadère* by Marius Petipa, it forms an integral part of the balletic tradition.

During the nineteenth century, it was reviewed at various points, several years apart, with different dancers playing the lead. Most of the reviews of *Le Dieu et la bayadère* included a brief description of the religious and sexual connotations associated with bayadères. This attempt by the reviewers to frame the play "in context," helped create a single story for the bayadères, reiterating the strange combination of sensuality and religion in India.[90] The ethereal and "chrétienne" dancing of Marie Taglioni imposed a western aesthetic on an eastern concept, but succeeded in receiving the most praise. Nathaniel Willis, an American visitor, was dazzled by Taglioni's performance. Struck by the weightless quality of her dancing, he says, "if she were to rise and float away like Ariel, you would scarce be surprised" (qtd. in Guest *Romantic Ballet* 189). The opera as a whole received mixed opinions from critics. For the initial run in 1830, individual performances were praised, like that of Adolphe Nourrit and Marie Taglioni. A few reviewers, like Nourrit's biographer, Quicherat, praise Auber's music, but, in general, the libretto and music were not well received. The detailed and sarcastic review in the *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* in 1830 points out all the deficiencies in the libretto and the music. The *Journal des comédiens*, whose reviewer seems to be quite familiar with Hindu mythology, is also quite contemptuous of Scribe's skills as a librettist, while admiring the music, the sets, and the dancers (15 October 1830). Again in 1830, *La Revue de Paris* offers a singularly

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[90] Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED talk, "The danger of a single story," discussed in the concluding section of the previous chapter, underscores the dangers of unidimensional portrayals.

revealing review of *Le Dieu et la bayadère*, both through what it says and what it doesn't. It does not explain to its readers the history or origin of the bayadères, concentrating on subjecting the "French" aspects of the opera to critical evaluation. The reviewer examines the opera strictly in terms of plot, score and performance, ignoring the setting and the trappings of exoticism. There is no mention of Goethe, which is unusual for reviews from this period. Starting with "[I]l n'est personne qui ne rappelle . . . ," the opening paragraph establishes a reference point from a western fairy tale: the story of the fairy Candide, transformed into a rabbit, who, on being saved from hunters by a prince, gratefully showers him with gifts. He also points out the cruelty of the Inconnu/Brame, viewing the opera from a more feminist angle than other reviewers:[91]

> Ce n'est lorsqu'elle lui a sauvé la vie en acceptant l'amour d'un autre amant, vieux et laid, lorsqu'elle a subi, sans laisser altérer sa tendresse, les dédains calculés auxquels il la condamne, lorsqu'il a vainement essayé de blesser son amour propre de femme par la vue des soins qu'il rend à ses compagnes; lorsqu'enfin, plutôt que de le livrer aux ennemis qui le poursuivent, elle s'est laissée traîner sur un bûcher, ce n'est qu'alors qu'il consent à croire à son amour. . . .(169)

It is a strangely impersonal review, mentioning neither Scribe nor Auber by name, but criticizing both. The praise conferred on Marie Taglioni is unusually moderate: "Mlle Taglioni a été, à son ordinaire, suave et gracieuse dans le rôle de la Bayadère amoureuse. Ce rôle au reste ne comportait pas un grand développement de talens mimiques; les proportions en sont étroites, et la danse y tient beaucoup plus de place que la passion." This review stands out from the others not only because it ignores the exoticism of the bayadère

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[91] This dry enumeration of the travails of the unfortunate young woman is in sharp contrast to the adulatory tone of reviews of Goethe's poem which glide over the sufferings of the young girl, perhaps seeing it as expiation of her sins and therefore well-deserved.

trope, but also because of its impersonal tone and the restrained encomium it gives the celebrity performers, seeming to damn with faint praise. If other reviewers had reacted similarly, the identification of Marie Taglioni with the bayadère would likely not have happened.

The biggest complaint of leading reviewers is the hybrid nature of the opera. In the *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, Henri Castil-Blaze, who signs himself XXX, complains about Zoloé being "mute." For a musician, he says, it is annoying to have the opera interrupted by characters dancing: "[il] ne peut voir, sans impatience, une danseuse serpenter au milieu d'un opéra pour faire boîter les morceaux d'ensemble, éborgner les duos, et lui offrir un rond de jambe à la place du *mi bémol* qui manque à l'accord vocal." Like Castil-Blaze, Gautier also dislikes the structure of hybrid opera, even while he admires Zoloé's dancing. He expresses his displeasure of the mélange in all his reviews, making the point that while Zoloé's dancing leaves nothing to be desired, the mixture of ballet and opera is off-putting:

> . . . Zoloé's way of speaking is to perform a *pas*; her *ronds de jambe* are phrases and her *jetés battus* the equivalent of words. She conveys love, passion, sorrow and fear by her steps and gestures, as a singer does with arias and notes. This is the convention of her art, and one's mind easily accepts it. There is nothing in pure opera or pure ballet that offends against logic, once the mode of transmitting ideas has been accepted. But the mixture of the two comes as a shock and puts one off . . . .(example from 26 January 1866, *Gautier on Dance* 315)

On the whole, however, critics admit that the opera is a successful production. The singing and the dancing as well as the costumes and the sets are greatly admired. Henri Castil-Blaze concludes his review with ". . . malgré [les] défauts, la *Bayadère* est un opéra très curieux à voir; il a complètement réussi, et renferme des éléments de succès, des beautés d'exécution qui doivent accroître la faveur que le public vient de lui accorder" (15 October 1830). Critics

were aware that the lack of intellectual merit in Scribe's opera did not detract from its audience appeal, as borne out by its extremely long run in the repertoire of the Paris Opera.

Théophile Gautier reviewed *Le Dieu et la bayadère* many times, with several years between reviews. The multiple reviews show Gautier's interest both in this opera and in India/bayadères. Gautier was unimpressed by the libretto and compares it unfavorably to Goethe's poem in his 1844 review.[92] Gautier's many reviews focus on the dancers, particularly the person playing the part of Zoloé. In November 1837, his mordantly humorous critique hinges on the unsuitability of Louise Fitzjames for the role of Zoloé. She was extremely thin: "maigre comme un lézard," he says, and "elle est diaphane comme une corne de lanterne, et laisse parfaitement transparaître les figurants qui se trémoussent derrière elle." The only reason for the choice, he surmises, could have been that ". . . Lafont étant un dieu fort lourd, pour ne pas rendre *son vol* impossible quand il remonte au ciel d'Indra, l'on a jugé à propos de lui adjoindre une danseuse impondérable" (his italics, *Histoire* 1: 73). Gautier also criticizes the choices made to add local color to the opera, primarily the coloration of the "bayadères chanteuses" and the "bayadères danseuses". The former are "couleur de chair" while the latter are "café au lait," wearing stockings and gloves of an undefinable color, and their faces are "négligemment barbouillé[s] d'ocre ou de jus de réglisse, ce qui les fait plutôt ressembler à des ramoneurs qu'à ces voluptueuses enchanteresses dorées avec un rayon de soleil . . ." Poetry is turned pedestrian by the failed attempt at exoticism. Shoddy imitations offend Gauthier's aesthetic: an authentic color

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[92] Gautier praises Goethe for his "faculté d'assimilation" and his "chef d'œuvre de poésie" and derides Scribe for turning a sacred drama into an "opéra comique." Gautier alleges that Scribe does not believe in the precepts of the Hindu religion; therefore his libretto is "[percé d']une certaine ironie." Gautier takes the opportunity to explain some tenets of Hinduism, revealing that he is better acquainted with the subject than Scribe.

should be composed, says Gautier, failing which, "il faudrait admettre tout bonnement que les négresses sont blanches" (*Histoire* 1: 73-74). Ironically, Gautier demands authenticity in shades of coloring, and then uses "négresses" to refer to all women of color. His comment lends credence to Fanon's assertion that ". . . le véritable Autrui du Blanc est et demeure le Noir. Et inversement" (131). "Le Noir" epitomizes the quintessential Other, encompassing all races other than the European.

The desire for authenticity leads Gautier to wonder, more than once, how it would be if a genuine bayadère played the role on stage: "Croit-on . . . qu'un rôle de bayadère n'offrirait pas un attrait fort vif, exécuté par une véritable bayadère de Calcutta . . . ?" ("Les Danseurs espagnols" 97 and elsewhere). A few months after this comment, in August 1838, a troupe of Indian dancers arrived in Paris, who could have made his wish come true. Unfortunately, this did not happen. When the hypothetical possibility of having a real bayadère play Zoloé is lost, Gautier expresses deep regret. The inherent potential expressed by the conditional mood before their arrival—"Croit-on . . . qu'un rôle de bayadère n'offrirait pas un attrait fort vif. . . ?"—is replaced by an acknowledgement of a lost opportunity, wistfully expressed through the pluperfect subjunctive "C'eût été cependant un curieux et charmant spectacle que *le Dieu et la Bayadère* joué par une troupe indienne, et qu'Amany la cuivrée remplissant le rôle de Taglioni la blanche!" (1844 review, *Histoires* 3: 217). The visit of the Indian dancers in 1838 was a momentous event, marking a moment of rupture in the general perception of bayadères as well as in Gautier's reviews of *Le Dieu et la bayadère.*[93] To better demonstrate the impact of the devadasis' visit, I will mimic the

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[93] Like Jouy's Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic commentaries on *Les Bayadères*, Gautier's different reviews give us a diachronic view of the passage of *Le Dieu et la bayadère* on the stage.

rupture by discussing their visit before returning to reviews of *Le Dieu et la bayadère* post-1838.

3.7 DEVADASIS IN FRANCE

3.7.1 Antecedents

Les Bayadères and *Le Dieu et la bayadère* had scripts crafted by Jouy and by Scribe and French dancers played the role of the bayadères. For the Indian devadasis who visited France in 1838, it was not one text but the entire literary canon featuring bayadères (which included almost everything written about India, fiction and non-fiction) that defined their role for the French public. The Indian dancers played themselves; person and performance were inseparable. They faced high expectations of beauty and sensuality. People like Jouy had asserted the ostensible superiority of Indian dancers over French dancers vis-à-vis mimetic talent. It was thus expected that reality would trump imagination: ". . . c'est que, d'après le principe que les copies, dans la nature ou dans l'art, restent toujours bien au-dessous des modèles, tout le monde se figurait que la vraie bayadère, la bayadère pur sang réunissait un idéal de perfections auquel ne pouvait atteindre l'effet désespéré de la conjecture et du rêve" (*Palamède* 275). The visit by the devadasis also represented the only opportunity for nineteenth-century French audiences to see Indian bayadères in France.[94]

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[94] Six-year old Bebaouirn's arrival in 1768 was the only precedent. Other than Amany and her troupe, there were no other visits by devadasis reported in the French press of the nineteenth century. Jean Frollo in *Le Petit Parisien* (16 April 1889) talks with excitement of a troupe of "bayadères" from Java. By this time, the term includes dancers from all parts of the Orient, including Northern Africa. The

Thus, anticipation was high, to say the least, when a French impresario called Tardivel brought the troupe of dancers and their accompanying musicians from a temple near Pondicherry to France. Newspapers even tracked the arrival of their ship.[95]

3.7.2 Events

The troupe first arrived at Bordeaux, where they were the talk of the town.[96] The female dancers were Amany, aged 18, Saoundiroun and Ramgoun, aged 14, Veydoun aged 6, and Tillé, the duenna, aged 30. Ramalingam, Saravanim, and Deveneyagorn, the male musicians who accompanied them, played the cymbals, the reed flute and the Indian cylindrical drum.[97] The *Courrier de Bordeaux* reports that there was a great demand at the library for Abbé Raynal's work on India, affirming the strong link between written sources and bayadères in the French imagination. Both men and women in the troupe were minutely examined and their every action was noted and commented upon. The *Courrier* printed a long and detailed description of the dancers, their costumes, their performance, etc. Myriad juicy tidbits of gossip were added concerning their lives at the temple and in

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article describes "bayadères" from different countries, but admits that "la vraie patrie des bayadères, c'est l'Inde." It also gives details of Amany's visit in 1838.

[95] The *Palamède* says "L'itinéraire de M. Tardivel à travers l'Océan n'est pas moins connu que celui de l'obélisque" ("Les Bayadères à Paris" 275).

[96] The *Figaro* of 24 June 1835 mentions that M. Tardivel had brought the devadasis to Bordeaux, when in actual fact they arrived in Bordeaux in 1838; the news that he had hired them probably made it to France in 1835 ("Bulletin des théâtres").

[97] The Indian names are transliterated in several different ways. I am referring to them with a set of spellings commonly used for them in France. These days, the names are usually written in English as Ammani, Sundaram, Rangam, Vedam, Thillai, Ramalingam, Saravanam and Devanayagan.

Bordeaux. The desire of the troupe to please their hosts and the need to maintain their own traditions, primarily culinary, led to many difficulties. These were humorously recounted in the newspaper. Other newspapers picked up the article and it was reprinted in *L'Entracte* (9 August 1838, Marseille*), L'Indépendant* (12 August 1838, Paris) and other journals. When the dancers arrived in Paris on 8 August 1838, the Parisian press took up the baton and extensively covered their visit.

Their first performance in Paris was a private one for journalists, with Nerval, Gautier and Jules Janin, another famous critic of the time, forming part of the group. The journalists' reviews were, on the whole, admiring in tone and whetted the curiosity of the Parisian public. The dancers then performed at the Tuileries for the royal family. The troupe's public performances were not at the Opera, but at the Théâtre des Variétés, a less prestigious venue.[98] The first time they performed, the audience was so impatient to see them that they did not allow the opening act, a witty prologue by French entertainers, to be completed ("Au jour le jour" *Le Gaulois,* Gautier "Variétés" 164). Unlike the operas and ballets that showcased the French bayadères, the Indian dance troupe did not have fabulous sets: local color was provided by "quelques sycomores en toile peinte et deux vases" (*France littéraire*, 491). Also, there was no large orchestra providing the music, since the Indian dancers had only three instruments accompanying them—the bare minimum necessary for an Indian dance performance. French audiences found Indian music primitive and monotonous, perhaps because it is homophonic, based on melody, unlike western music which is polyphonic/harmonic. Given the paucity of sets and musical accompaniments, the

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[98] One article suggests that since the Indian dances rely on eye movements and facial expressions, much of the content would have been lost in a larger venue (C.T. 15). I concur. On the other hand, the prestige, pomp and spectacle that the Opera provided *Le Dieu et la bayadère* were also lost.

focus was solely on the dancers. The Indian troupe danced several pieces, of which *Le pas des colombes*, where they twirled a large scarf into the shape of a dove while dancing, was highly admired. Gautier found it superior to the *pas de châle* and other "enchevêtremens de foulards plus ou moins indiens" common in the opera ("Débuts des bayadères" 165). *Le Malapou*, a fast-paced ending piece, and the "dance of the daggers" by fourteen-year old Saoundiroun impressed audiences. Nevertheless, the speed of the dancers and the energy they displayed caused a feeling of "vertige" among the viewers. The Indian dance tradition, earlier called Sadir and now renamed as Bharatanatyam, is very different from ballet. Unlike ballet with its aerial quality, Bharatanatyam is strongly rooted to the ground. It features percussive footwork that maintains a strong rhythm. Bent knees keep the center of gravity low, and leaps and bounds return firmly to the earth.[99] Audiences conditioned by Marie Taglioni's ethereal style (she was among the first dancers to dance *en pointe*), which Gautier describes as "aérienne," "virginale," and "chrétienne," would have found Bharatanatyam particularly unsettling. Bharatanatyam is more "pagan" than "chrétienne," to use Gautier's terms. Bharatanatyam is also highly mimetic. The miming of stories unfamiliar to the audience meant that the viewers had to invent scenarios for themselves; Tardivel, who functioned as their interpreter in France, does not seem to have adequately explained the dances to the audience, if at all. The viewer's interpretation could be expressed in flattering terms ("suave et doux," by C.T.) or lewd ones ("lascif" by B.D) depending on the beholder.[100]

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[99] An excerpt from a Bharatanatyam performance in Marseilles in 2009: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6P1pmWI1Mo

[100] Many articles in the French press of the time are signed with initials. I was able to discover the identity of some famous journalists like Henri Castil-Blaze, who signed his articles as XXX. I have not found out who the others are, such as "B.D." and "C.T." I will therefore refer to them with their initials.

For about a month, the Indian dancers were lionized (and criticized) by the public before disappearing from public view in France. Their next engagement was in London. Their short passage through Paris was a watershed moment: the bayadères of French imagination collided dramatically with reality. The extensive coverage in the press sheds light not only on the dancers and their performance, but also on the expectations and prejudices that shaped their reception.

3.7.3 Study in Contradictions: Imagination versus Reality

The first reaction to the arrival of the devadasis was disbelief. Rumors abounded that it was a hoax, leading early visitors who met the dancers to testify to their reality through the definitive sensory test: touch.[101] ". . . nous avons même *touché* les bayadères," says Nerval, adding "mais dans le sens le plus convenable du mot." He wants to make sure that the dancers are really "noir doré" and not dyed with "jus de réglisse" ("Les bayadères à Paris" 238). Another contemporary journalist, Cuvillier Fleury, brags that he touched "leurs bras et leurs épaules." Seeing the devadasis was not enough to prove their existence. Dreams, after all, are also visual phenomena: the evidence of one's eyes has to be substantiated through touch, a sensory input harder to counterfeit. Once the physical reality of the dancers was established, however, they were still placed within the imaginative framework created for them through legend. It was difficult for the French to disconnect empirical reality from the intellectual, imaginative and cultural "reality" that had so far defined the devadasis. The aspects that were most strongly associated with bayadères were sati (sacrifice), sensuality, religion and licentiousness. Journalists relied on

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[101] Like pinching oneself to establish the difference between dreaming and wakefulness, people felt the need to touch the bayadères to move them out of dreams and into reality.

information obtained from written sources to impute these aspects to the devadasis. Newspapers were keen to establish a link between devadasis and sati. Coincidentally, even the address where the devadasis stayed—23 allée des veuves—invites a connection between the dancers and widows, and, by extension, sati. It is almost as if the devadasis could only be seen with the flames of the funeral pyre framing them. One article, signed "C.T.," reproduces elements from the article in the *Courrier de Bordeaux* and others, and is rather lurid and sensational in tone. It reproduces the imperialist narrative that works like *La Veuve du Malabar* propagated (and Spivak disapproves of). C.T. alleges that Tillé, the duenna, was a widow who was saved by the British authorities just as she was climbing on to the pyre. It was to escape from the memories of her deceased husband that she agreed to travel to France, it continues sentimentally. Another common assertion in several articles is that Tillé had to bring her young charges back to India "pures de tout amour chrétien," else "les infidélités au dieu jaloux, ou plutôt à ses ministres, les conduirait sur le bûcher" (C.T.).[102] Presenting the pyre as punishment for infidelity on the part of the bayadères, rather than the expression of loyalty and sacrifice that sati originally signified, extends Goethe's example of punition for past sins into the present. Infidelity is portrayed as a capital crime, and the pyre is a strong deterrent. Did the journalists believe that the devadasis would perhaps have indulged in relationships with Frenchmen without this restraint?

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[102] Logically, the devadasis are exempt from the tradition of sati since their spouse, the temple divinity, does not ever die. From an act of sacrifice for the husband's soul and for the family's well-being, sati is transformed in various texts into an act of love (Mamia), into a purification ritual (Goethe), finally becoming an act of punishment in the articles referenced here.

Besides death, the other overarching association is, of course, sexuality. The demeanor and lifestyle of the Indian dancers while in France was very modest and retiring, causing confusion, disappointment and even displeasure among the local populace. Sexual availability was nevertheless imputed through descriptions of their lives while in India. Both through innuendo—"Nous ne dirons pas, et pour cause, à quoi elles emploient le temps"—and explicit references—"ces femmes font publiquement trafic de leurs charmes," B.D. describes the sexual relationships of devadasis with Brahmins while in India in insulting terms ("Les Bayadères" in *L'Indépendant* 26 August 1838). He derides in one breath the devadasis and the Brahmins ("Il paraît que dans le principe elles étaient exclusivement réservées à servir de passe-temps aux brahmes") as well as Hindu gods ("représentés . . . par de grossières idoles"). The religious duties of the devadasis are mentioned but presented as depravity, since the focus remains on their sexual liaisons with Brahmins. Conjecture about their lives in India aside, the sleeping arrangements of the Indian troupe while in France are often commented upon. Their enforced celibacy, as the reviewers see it, is a subject of great interest. The difference in caste between the dancers and the musicians is underlined, and how it prevents any relations between them: "Les hommes leur tient compagnie, mais à distance respectueuse. La loi leur défend d'approcher de ces prêtresses et de les toucher. Elles sont sacrées pour eux et pour nous" (Fleury). Given that the journalist asserts earlier in the same article that "moi, j'ai touché leurs bras et leurs épaules," the interdiction on touching seems to allude to one of a different nature. The journalists had to touch them to ensure that they were "real" Indians, and not impersonations. But once established as real, the Indian women cannot be touched by the Frenchmen. It is almost as if there is a wall of flame creating a barrier between the Indian devadasis and the Frenchmen, like the metaphorical pyre that frames the devadasis of imagination. Deprived of closer contact with the devadasis, the frustrated journalists make

haste to decry their worth. Journalists like Fleury and B.D. show a strong desire to equate them to avaricious courtesans that they are familiar with. The devadasis are decried as being mercenary for accepting payment to perform in France: ". . . ces saintes femmes savent compter, et il paraît qu'elles n'éprouvent aucun scrupule à passer de la pagode de leur dieu ou des bras de leur amant dans l'officine d'un notaire" (Fleury). This judgmental tone is then extended to all dancers: "C'est à peu près là le seul trait de ressemblance qu'elles aient avec les danseuses de tous les pays." Fleury's gratuitous references to money and the devadasis' supposed lovers in India reveals his rancor at their inaccessibility.[103]

Often in the same article that talks of the dancers' licentiousness, primitivity and innocence are attributed to them as a matter of course. The troupe goes to bed at eight o'clock, Fleury says, "sur des nattes, enveloppée dans des manteaux, les hommes en haut, les femmes en bas. . . ." Nothing disturbs their slumber, since "il n'y a dans ces simples cœurs ni amour, ni ambition, ni ressentiment, ni jalousie, rien de ce qui cause des insomnies." Tillé watches over them, but her presence suffices: "il n'y a guères que la femme de trente ans qui veille, c'est à dire qu'elle s'endort toujours la dernière." Painted as simple and innocent, the Indians are denied basic human feelings such as love, jealousy, ambition and resentment. Even though the journalist cannot communicate with the Indians, since they have no common language, he presumes to understand their mind and their emotions. Their conversation revolves around the past and the future, alleges Fleury, since ". . . pour elles, pauvres exilés! le présent est morne, triste et décoloré." It is not just Fleury who expresses pity for the Indian women. Nerval says: "Pauvres femmes! À les voir si jeunes et en

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[103] Fleury is also aggrieved that the musicians treat their instruments as sacred and won't let him touch them, given that even the sacred dancers allow him to touch their legs. He makes disparaging remarks about the musicians' lower caste, as if to put them in their place.

apparence si naïves, et si confiantes en nous et en notre ciel, on se sent pris pour elles d'inquiétude et de pitié" (238).[104] They are seen as peaceful and inactive, almost lifeless: "Elles ne savent rien faire, ne travaillent jamais. . . Mais elles sont fort douces, et leur oisiveté n'engendre ni vivacité ni querelles. Leurs entretiens sont paisibles comme leurs mœurs" (Fleury).[105] An aged *Invalide*, stationed at their door guards these peaceful people (from kidnapping attempts, says Gautier). It is hard to believe that the indolent and apathetic people described above could have produced this performance at the Tuileries:

> Telle est la danse des bayadères : quelque chose d'étrange, d'insolite, d'impétueux, de passionné, de burlesque; un mélange de volupté et de retenue, d'entraînement et de décence, de fureur et d'abandon; . . . On voudrait les retenir; on a pitié de leur fatigue; on craint qu'elles n'expirent sous vos yeux; mais le mouvement de ronde continue, il vous reprend, il vous entraîne, comme dans ces jeux équestres où un coursier lancé à toute bride emporte le cavalier sans haleine dans le cercle inexorable qu'il décrit. (Fleury)

Fourteen-year old Saoundiroun's dexterity with daggers in the "pas des poignards" should also have negated the impression of weakness and lassitude: "Elle tient de chaque main un poignard acéré et tranchant, et elle exécute avec ces armes une infinité des mouvemens étranges. . . ." (Fleury).[106]

One quality of the dancers that all the witnesses concur on is their stamina. This seems to render them not superhuman but strangely less human. More than one reporter,

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[104] Other journalists make similar comments as well. The Indian woman visiting France invokes pity by her displacement to a hostile environment. We also see this pity in Baudelaire's "À une Malabaraise." The number of references to this subject almost makes it a trope by itself.

[105] This is not a new idea among the French. Says Voltaire on the pacificity of Indians: "semblables à ces animaux paisibles que nous élevons . . . pour les égorger à notre plaisir" (*Essai*: 1: 60).

[106] The military aspect evoked by Jouy in *Les Bayadères* is authenticated by Saoundiroun's prowess.

Nerval and Gautier included, comment on the fact that even after a vigorous dance, the dancers don't sweat: Gautier uses the expression "chevaux de bonne race" while Fleury uses the term "coursier" (Gautier "Devadasis dites bayadères" 254). The lack of perspiration is disconcerting to viewers.[107] One journalist concludes that ". . . la nature les a faites pour la vigueur plus que pour la grâce" (*France littéraire* 495). Another aspect that unfailingly evokes comment is that the women wear sparkling nose rings. Some people get accustomed to it and find it not displeasing, whereas for others, it becomes the one aspect of their appearance that they cannot accept.

Figure 24. Young Bharatanatyam dancer today, wearing traditional jewelry including the nose rings. From my personal collection.

Even if the impression created by the actual bayadères is negative, the French still feel a misplaced sense of possession in their regard. The reviewer from *La France littéraire* does

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[107] Since the dancers came from Pondicherry with its hot and extremely humid climate, I personally find it unsurprising that the dancers did not perspire in France's far cooler and drier weather, even though it was August.

not want to send them to London. Political rivalry with the British is never far when India is concerned: ". . . ce n'est pas assez pour eux d'avoir exploité au profit de leur égoïste bien-être, d'avoir nivelé sous leur joug commercial le sol fertile de l'Indostan, ils veulent encore en attirer jusqu'à eux la poésie vivante, pour la déflorer plus à leur aise" (*France littéraire* 497). The Indian dancers and their bodies become stand-ins for India; the words "fertile" and "déflorer" introduce an element of sexual exploitation.[108] The French opinion that contact with Britain is harmful and exploitative, both for the country and for the dancers, is unequivocally expressed.

Both adulatory and derogatory articles, however, express fascination and amazement. Fleury's article expresses contempt as well as unwilling respect. At the Tuileries, Fleury says, the dancers treated the royal family with deep respect but treated all others as equals; they behaved with "une sorte de dignité douce et tranquille qui n'était pas l'orgueil et qui ne ressemblait pas non plus à de l'abandon." The apparent decency of the devadasis puzzled many on-lookers, not just Fleury. Finding it difficult to let go of their preconceived notions, the reviewers relate scandalous stories gleaned from travel writings, but refrain from similar comments on the actual dancers they met, sometimes explicitly mentioning their modesty in appearance and demeanor (C.T., "Les bayadères" *Palamède*, Gautier). Tillé is derided for being a prude and a puritan. Even the dancers' modest appearance, though, is sometimes seen as suspect. The coarse remarks of B.D., C.T. and

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[108] France's encounter with the Indian dancers forms a strange parallel to the colonial situation. Even though it is a French impresario who brings them to Europe (like the French Governor Dupleix who first used the tactics that the British then employed to conquer India), they spend only a month of their contract term of eighteen months in France, spending most of their time in London. France's engagement with them is so transient that it occupies more space in the imaginary than in reality.

others show that they feel cheated of their due when they see the well-covered Indian women. People like B.D expected to see almost-nude women performing barely concealed sexual acts in public, akin to what Jouy promised in his preface to *Les Bayadères*. Unlike the dancers in *Les Bayadères* with their "seins découverts" and "épaules nues," clad in fabric thinner than "les plus claires mousselines de l'Inde," the Indian dancers left no part of their bodies visible. The reviewer in *La Palamède* finds their concealing costumes "disgracieux" and Fleury remarks that "Les Bayadères sont couvertes avec un soin qui trahit la susceptibilité de leur pudeur, et les ombrages de leur époux absent." B.D. in *L'Indépendant* surmises that this is a deliberate strategy: "Il est possible . . . que ce soit là un raffinement de tactique galante. L'expérience, sans doute, leur a enseigné que l'étalage de leurs charmes émousserait le désir au lieu de l'irriter, que l'imagination est plus facile à séduire que la vue." For B.D., India is all about sex that is illicit, immoral and perverted; even six-year-old Veydoun's energetic dance provokes this comment: ". . . la pantomime pleine de caractère et d'énergie d'un petit diable femelle, âgé de six ans, qui promet une Almée délicieuse à quelque brahme crasseux." The journalists also repeatedly highlight the status of these women as courtesans, while reiterating that their favors were not available to European men. Would the devadasis have been perceived differently if texts like Abbé Raynal's or Sonnerat's had not treated them as "whores"? They may have been seen more positively if more writers had depicted them in a positive light like Haafner did. The reactions expressed by Gautier and Nerval (both of whom mention Haafner) are quite different from those of C.T., B.D. or Fleury. If, however, prudery and hypocrisy were the order of the day, as Gautier tells us in his famous preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin,* the derogatory comments in the press are not to be wondered at. Most people found it difficult to view the reality of the devadasis, without the intervening filter of (hypocritical) moral judgment; Nerval and Gautier were among the exceptions.

3.7.3.1 *Nerval and the Bayadères*

For Nerval, meeting the bayadères was a moment of triumph. In his article dated 12 August 1838 in *Le Messager,* he exults in the fact that he, a mere *feuilletoniste*, got to meet the bayadères even before the king did.[109] The general populace was granted access to them only after presentation to the court. It is a moment of truth for Nerval, who, like the others, bases his imaginary bayadère on written texts. While waiting in the antechamber, the very tinkling of their anklets brings literary universes to Nerval's mind, raising memories of Eastern women in books that he has read: Vasánta.sena in *The Little Clay Cart*, and Mamia, from Haafner's account. Textual imagery appears to influence Nerval highly, since even after he sees them he keeps juxtaposing descriptions of what he sees with recollections from texts he has read. But unlike some of the other journalists, he does not recall moralistic historical accounts or operatic representations. The associations created in his memory span the ages and the globe. For him, ". . . cette scène étrange et grandiose . . . rappelait à la fois . . . la Bible, et les récits bizarres de la vie des clans de l'Écosse, dans les romans de Walter Scott" (240). When Nerval sees the men, he immediately sees them as Celtic in origin, "bardes celtiques," and "du clan Mac-Fergus," faithfully preserved from racial impurity by being safely sequestered far away in India: "Il semblerait qu'il se soit conservé le même depuis que *Rama,* le héros celte, fit . . . la conquête des Indes occupées jusque-là par les races noires, qu'il refoula dans l'Éthiopie. Le type d'homme . . . tient . . . de la race

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[109] All quotations from Nerval's article are reproduced from the version reprinted in *Le Chariot d'enfant* 2002 edition, pp. 237-244.

blanche par la forme, de la race noire par la couleur."[110] Nerval's keen eye distinguishes the skin as being "noire sans être huileuse, . . . presque la teinte abyssinienne, sans arriver . . . au foncé du noir mozambique" (240). By juxtaposing Celtic adjectives and African ones, he creates a race of Indians that are an African branch of a Scottish clan. He attributes their beauty to their racial purity: "leur visage porte le type irrécusable d'une race primitive et non-mélangée. Vous les aviez rêvées plus blanches, peut-être, mais non pas mieux faites, plus vives et plus séduisantes" (238).[111] The combination of dark color with "white" form is an unexpected one and negates preconceived notions. He is only able to describe them effectively by having recourse to different racial types spread across the globe, leaving one to question if, in fact, racial purity is a pre-requisite to beauty—or if racial purity exists at all. Primitivity, though, forms part of his perception of Indians. Even while he refers to "danses primitives," he nevertheless concedes the existence of complexity: "[Nous] ne savons pas encore en distinguer les nuances diverses et caractéristiques." The inclusion of "encore" admits of the possibility of deeper understanding, given time and familiarity. While acknowledging that he cannot understand their performance, he neither rejects the performance itself nor does he accept the status quo. Nerval believed that comprehension was possible if an effort were made. Sometimes all that is required is a simple translation: "La mimique est fort belle et fort expressive," he says, "et nous regrettons qu'on n'ait pu

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[110] This was the opposite of theories postulated by Schlegel et alia., whereby the Celts originated from India (Brix and Le Couëdic 24).

[111] The French seemed to have trouble in racially profiling the Indians. C.T. describes Amany thus: ". . . ses traits ont quelque chose d'européen assez prononcé; sans la couleur de sa peau, on la prendrait volontiers pour une Anglaise. Son nez est aquilin, sa bouche bien dessinée. . . " B.D, however, finds that the women's features "[n'affectent] point ces belles lignes régulières qui sont, chez nous, le type de la beauté, mais ce rapproche, au contraire, du type *nègre*, surtout par la forme camarde du nez. . . "

nous donner une traduction des paroles" (241). It was a pity that Tardivel did not provide the translation ; perhaps his knowledge of Tamil was inadequate to the task.

On the whole, Nerval's tone is one of satisfied curiosity. The dancers lived up to the promise of their textual counterparts. Several years later, in 1850, his play *Le chariot d'enfant*, featuring the beautiful Vasánta.sena and her tinkling anklets, brings memories of Amany back to the fore, just as Amany's arrival had brought Vasánta.sena to his mind. From text to real life and back to a text, the circle is complete.[112]

3.7.3.2 *The Bayadère of Gautier's Dreams*

Gautier's interest in India was of long duration. India was a land of mystery that occupied his imagination from a young age: "[d]epuis notre enfance, nous avons regardé avec une curiosité avide et superstitieuse toutes les gravures, tous les dessins, tous les recueils qui se rapportent à cette mystérieuse contrée . . ." ("L'Inde" 282-83). Its mystery was perhaps what appealed the most to him. He relates how he often dreams of India and its marvels while walking around Paris. "Que de fois, en songeant à ce pays étrange, qui pour nous restera à l'état de chimère, nous nous sommes crée d'éblouissants mirages!" ("L'Inde" 283-84). Gautier's use of words like "chimère" and "mirages" reveals that despite all the information he had acquired, Gautier's India was primarily a creation of his own

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[112] Figueira states that "It was in her death that Amani most inspired Gérard de Nerval. He would end his life in the same manner. The bayadera appears on several occasions in Nerval's work. The name *Amany (sic)* glossed a manuscript of his poem 'Erythrea'" (*Exotic*35). Gautier mentions Amany's death by hanging in his 1844 article (*Histoires* 3: 217). However, Ivor Guest states that there is no proof of this: "There seems to be no report of Amany's death in the London press of the time, nor does any record of her death appear in the General Register of Deaths" (*Gautier on Dance* 136). It is possible, nevertheless, that both Nerval and Gautier had heard rumors of Amany's death.

imagination, retaining its dream-like quality throughout his life. As for bayadères, the word itself evoked "une idée de soleil, de parfum et de beauté" ("Les devadasis dites bayadères" 245).[113] Gautier rather unwillingly feels Marie Taglioni's claim on the identity of the bayadère: "Les jambes élégantes de mademoiselle Taglioni soulevant des nuages de mousseline vous reviennent aussi en mémoire, . . . La bayadère très peu Indoue de l'Opéra se mêle malgré vous à la devadasi de Pondichéry . . ." (245). His visit to the bayadères was a crucial moment for him: "Nous n'étions séparé d'un des rêves de notre vie, d'une de nos dernières illusions poétiques, que par une simple porte, et nous éprouvions une singulière émotion, mêlée d'attente et d'anxiété . . ." (247). It is a moment of truth in two ways: not only did the Indians have to live up to Gautier's expectations, Gautier himself needed reassurance that his depiction of Indians in *Fortunio* was accurate. Once he meets the Indians, though, he congratulates himself on his prescience and triumphantly asserts that he would not change a word about his *Fortunio* characters.

When the Indian troupe comes in, Gautier is enraptured by them. It is a multi-sensory experience for him that involves sight, sound, touch, and even smell ("une vague odeur de parfums d'Orient remplissait la maison" (247)). Gautier reserves most of his attention for Amany, the eighteen-year-old lead dancer. He paints a detailed portrait, even describing the shape of her ankles and toes. He describes the color of her skin, shading in subtle aspects, using animalistic metaphors: "une nuance olivâtre et dorée à la fois, très chaude et très douce . . . une nuance fauve comme l'or . . . qui rappelle certains tons du pelage des biches ou des panthères." To the touch, her skin is "plus soyeuse qu'un papier de riz et plus froide que le ventre d'un lézard" (248). His fascinated gaze sees her as an exotic

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[113] All quotations in this section, unless otherwise specified, are reproduced from this article, which describes Gautier's first meeting with the Indian dancers and is the most detailed.

wild animal, beautiful beyond his dreams.[114] He uses words like "distinction extrême," "délicatesse," "élégance," "de plus parfait," and "sans pareilles." He attributes this perfection to racial purity, as Nerval does: "toute l'habitude du corps annonce une force et une pureté de sang inconnues dans notre civilisation, où le mélange des classes efface et rend frustes toutes les physionomies" (248). The unmitigated praise he bestows on Amany is worth noting. Gautier attributes both strength and looks to unmixed race: miscegenation is seen as a deterioration of intrinsic quality. We see this in his description of Fanny Elssler, another contemporary dancer. He greatly admired Fanny Elssler, but he was critical of her "lack of race."[115] Fanny Elssler has a lot to commend her in terms of beauty and talent, but her features and her coloring war with each other, and displease Gautier's aesthetic tastes. For Gautier, all racial types, whether Germanic, Spanish or Indian have their claims to beauty, so there is no value judgment on relative superiority or inferiority. It is purity in looks and style that is Gautier's prime concern. He might find Amany strange—he uses expressions like "asiatique et sauvage," "étrangement gracieux" and "coquettement sauvage," but no less appealing in ways that are different enough to be noticeable. Seeing Amany at close quarters does not dilute the illusion for him, but reinforces the distance between his world and hers. Unlike most of the others who describe the bayadères, Gautier does not linger on

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[114] Gautier tended to make his comparisons with the animal world, and they were not always complimentary: he described Louise Fitzjames as "un lézard" and "un ver à soie" (*Histoire* 1: 73).

[115] Her dark hair bothers him, as it does not harmonize with her otherwise Germanic beauty:

. . . la teinte foncée de cette chevelure tranche un peu trop méridionalement sur le germanisme bien caractérisé de sa physionomie . . . . Cette bizarrerie inquiète l'œil et trouble l'harmonie de l'ensemble; . . . Deux natures et deux tempéraments se combattent en elle; . . . Elle est jolie, mais elle manque de race; elle hésite entre l'Espagne et l'Allemagne. ("Mademoiselle Fanny Ellsler" 374).

the sensuality either of the dancers or the dance form. The closest he comes is describing one of the pieces as "d'une tristesse et d'une volupté profondes, une mélancolique complainte d'amour et d'abandon" (253). He is impressed with the dancers' stamina, as they don't exhibit any signs of exertion at all: "Ces corps de bronze, mis en mouvement par des nerfs d'acier, sont comme les chevaux de bonne race, qui ne suent jamais" (254). Gautier, like Fleury, cannot find parallels to their stamina other than with reference to horses. However, unlike Fleury, Gautier's article is generally positive. Given Gautier's tendency to describe dancers in rather colorful terms, usually through comparisons with animals, this cannot be taken as specifically derogatory to Amany or as a racially negative comment. It fits in, however, within his general policy to see actresses (in which group he includes dancers, both male and female), "sous le côté purement plastique," since, for him, "une actrice est une statue ou un tableau qui vient poser devant vous, et l'on peut la critiquer en toute sûreté de conscience" ("Mademoiselle Fanny Elssler" 372). However, in Amany's case, he apparently struck up a friendship, moving beyond seeing her as a "statue" or a "tableau." He visited her several times in Paris, bringing her gifts of tobacco. He sees her as a young girl, "une fille bien élevée et de bonne caste . . . Elle avait de fort bonnes manières, pleines de dignité et de grâce. . . " (*Histoire* 3: 217).[116] He remarks that she did try to bite into the cherries that adorned Mme. Sand's hat, though he absolves her since they were absolutely lifelike. This was, he tells us, "le seul trait de sauvagerie que nous lui vîmes commettre" (*Histoire* 3: 217). His earlier description of Amany, which liberally used the adjective "sauvage," appears to have been an attribute of looks rather than temperament. Gautier

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[116] When he mentions her being of a superior caste, he adds that the male musicians remained standing in her presence; this difference in caste precluded any kind of relationship between them. Mention of the dancers' caste is almost inevitable in any journalist's report.

speaks of Amany with affection. The lack of a common language prevented both communication and cultural understanding. Despite this, or perhaps because of the lingering mystery of the encounter, Amany made a great and lasting impression on Gautier. The bayadères moved from imagination to memory, and in the process, anticipation turned to nostalgia and continued to haunt him all his life. For Gautier, even the real bayadère was dreamlike, as evanescent as perfume. The reality of Amany was felt only briefly, before she retreated back into Gautier's imagination, to resurface at various moments in different guises, as Shakúntala, as the *Péri* or as the long-dead princess in *Le Pied de la Momie.* In his libretto for *Sacountala* (1858), he included bayadères among fantasy creatures like undines, demonstrating that they never really lost their mythical aura for him. Six years after the visit, Gautier relates with sadness that Amany committed suicide in London: "On dit que le *spleen* l'a prise à Londres, et qu'elle s'est pendue, --pauvre fille!" (*Histoires* 3*:* 217). He had, however, the satisfaction of meeting the bayadère he had dreamed of, confirming that she was just as wonderful as he had imagined. In his poem "Les Papillons," he tells "la bayadère aux yeux de jais" that "J'irais à vos livres mi-closes/Fleur de mon âme, et j'y mourrais" (*Poésies* 1: 205). Whether it is the bewitching Spanish gaze he describes in *Voyage en Espagne* (1843), or a ceramic vase by Jules-Claude Ziegler, Amany becomes an exotic lodestone that he constantly turns to.[117] In 1844, while watching Marie Taglioni dance in *Le Dieu et la bayadère,* he reminiscences at length about Amany, coming full circle from

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[117] "La bayadère Amany, lorsqu'elle dansait le pas des Colombes, peut seule donner une idée de ces œillades incendiaires que l'Orient a léguées à l'Espagne;" ("Voyage" 369). "Le vase indou, mince, allongé, semble avoir emprunté ses broderies aux corsets d'Amany. . ." (Gautier qtd. in Goncourt 93).

thinking of Marie Taglioni while waiting to meet Amany.[118] Starting with " . . . venons-en à la représentation de mademoiselle Taglioni," he goes on to spend a page and a half describing his encounters with Amany, before spending the last paragraph on the actual performance of *Le Dieu et la bayadère* that he is supposed to be reviewing. While the majority of Parisians might have associated Taglioni with the role, Gautier always harked back to Amany.

Gautier also wrote about the revival of *Le Dieu et la bayadère* on 22 January, 1866. He praises Guglielmina Salvioni: "Mlle Salvioni, who has been cast in the rôle of Zoloé, has greatly developed its dramatic side. She mimes and sketches it with Italian passion. As played by her, the Bayadère is no longer, so to speak, a mute character. Her gestures speak" (*Gautier on Dance* 316).[119] Marie Taglioni's bayadère was famous because of her technique and Salvioni developed its dramatic side, but the role of Zoloé was still marked with "Italian passion." The devadasis had visited Paris without leaving a mark on the stage role that purported to represent them.

3.7.4 Polarized reception: causes and effects

Reactions to the Indian dancers were highly polarized. Their reception at the Château des Tuileries lasted eight to ten hours and "leur succès a été immense," says C.T. Nerval and Gautier, as well as artists such as Jean-Auguste Barre, found them exquisite.

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[118] At the age of forty, Marie Taglioni's danced her four-performance farewell season, one of which was *Le Dieu et la bayadère*. In a stellar career with no dearth of leading roles, the role of the bayadère was one of those most closely associated with her.

[119] Another journalist Ruelle finds Salvioni's dancing "trop exagérée" and "trop continuellement dramatique" (*L'Orchestre* 3 February 1866). Taglioni's more impersonal dancing seems to have defined the role for subsequent dancers.

“L’admirable beauté d’Amany, la perfection de formes de Saoundiroun et de Ramgoun ne furent guère comprises que par des peintres, des sculpteurs et des artistes” says Gautier (*Histoire* 3: 216). Of all the renowned ballet dancers in Paris during his career, Jean-Auguste Barre sculpted four dancers: Marie Taglioni, Fanny Elssler, Amany, and Emma Livry, Marie’s protégée. Amany was in august company.

Figure 25. Statue of Amany by Jean-Auguste Barre. Source: *Le Magasin pittoresque,* gallica.bnf.fr

Articles which praised the Indian dancers as whole-heartedly as Nerval and Gautier were rare. The reviewer in the *La France littéraire* admitted that he did not have the “moindre goût pour la danse des bayadères.” His article was nevertheless accompanied by an editorial footnote that his opinion was not shared: “nous abandonnons à son auteur la responsabilité d’une opinion qui lui est personnelle et que nous sommes loin de partager” (491). This kind of divided opinion reflects contemporary reviews of the dancers, with even the negative ones being leavened with grudging praise of the dancers’ talent and their

energy. The *Palamède: Revue mensuelle des échecs et autres jeux* contains two articles on bayadères. The first one appears to be based on written research. It serves to introduce and counterbalance the review that follows, that of the devadasis' performance in Paris. The two articles, which are unsigned, present us with juxtaposed views that oppose each other. The first article, which reproduces Haafner's love story with Mamia, is highly adulatory of the devadasis, but does not make any reference to Amany's troupe. The second article, a scant ten pages later, is a review of Amany and her group's performance at the *Variétés.* The tone of the second review is mainly one of disappointment.[120] The critic traces the creation of the bayadère myth by Abbé Raynal, Goëthe and the Paris Opera, and blames them for creating expectations that could not be fulfilled. None of these entities had actually seen a bayadère, he says, but over all, they had succeeded in creating the impression that the reality exceeded their fulsome praise. He himself is highly disappointed, with their appearance, their costumes and their dance. He admits that their eyes are sparkling, but it seems to not be enough to make up for the rest. As for their dancing, he admits that some find it "un drame passionné" or "de la poésie," but concludes "[c'est] de la poésie indienne, et nous avons le malheur de ne pas entendre le sanscrit" (276). All in all, he concludes, "M. Tardivel a détruit une de nos illusions." What should have been a gift for Parisian audiences becomes instead a loss. It is an irrecoverable loss, as the real bayadères can no longer be yearned for. There is no longer the possibility of them being more beautiful and more appealing than the best of Parisian dancers. The loss of an illusion is also evoked by the critic in *La France littéraire,* but on a larger and deeper scale. He remarks that the dancers are traveling

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[120] The negative review of the dance troupe gives the impression that the revue described failures on stage, i.e. "échecs." It is, however, the game of chess that the title refers to; there are descriptions of games interspersed with reviews of other events.

through France and England without getting to know either country. In addition, they are misunderstood and unappreciated by their audiences. Ultimately, "[elles] n'auront retiré aucun fruit de leur long voyage, et nous auront apporté la perte d'une illusion" (*France Littéraire* 497).

A certain amount of illusion is required to keep a dream alive. Reality is too harsh, and needs to be packaged with some make-believe. As Gautier said, if Amany had appeared in *Le Dieu et la bayadère*, placed in context, and in settings that were appropriately fabulous, she might have been a huge success. When the dancer's talent was placed by itself before "une foule sceptique en chapeaux ronds et en habits noirs," her success was unlikely (*France littéraire* 496).

There seems to have been an entrenched desire on the part of the general public to not know the real Other, who was overwhelming in her strangeness. *La France littéraire* admits this and cites incomprehensibility of cultural norms as a reason: "Si les Bayadères ont un défaut pour nous autres Français, . . . c'est d'être trop Bayadères. . . C'est que pour admirer, il faut comprendre, et que nous ne saurions, malgré tout, comprendre les Bayadères" (495).The "malgré tout" rejects Nerval's belief that given time and familiarity a certain amount of effort, a deeper understanding is possible. Taste is also hard to alter. Seemingly small aspects such as the fact that they did not appear to perspire after vigorously dancing or the large nose rings they wore rendered them not merely exotic, but bizarre. Reviewers admit that the bayadères are not at fault if they are not appreciated: "Notre cœur, affadi par toutes ces grâces françaises, ne saurait goûter la saveur âcre et presque brutale de la pantomime indienne" (*La France littéraire* 496). In his 1844 review, Gautier relates that the amazing dance troupe from India only created "une médiocre impression." He states that "Le public français, qui avait admiré et accepté Taglioni comme

le type de la bayadère, ne comprit rien à la bayadère véritable."[121] *La France littéraire* states that travelers and historians are not to be blamed for the praise they heaped on the bayadères since "Nous avions pu rêver les Bayadères plus blanches, peut-être, plus gracieuses, plus aériennes, plus idéales, mais non pas à coup sûr plus belles, mieux faites et plus richement parées . . ." (495). The adjectives "blanches" and "aériennes" point to the contribution of Marie Taglioni towards forming the image of the bayadère. Color, agrees Gautier, was the ultimate barrier to acceptance: "on ne leur pardonna pas d'être jaunes comme une feuille de tabac de la Havane ou comme des statuettes de bronze florentin . . . Le blanc de perle, la poudre de riz et le rouge végétal eurent le dessus." The lack of receptivity reflects a want of openness to different experiences of beauty. The Parisian public is hidebound in its tastes: "substituer une pirouette à une autre est un de ces attentats qui ne se pardonnent pas. L'étiquette et le *statu quo* régissent nos plaisirs" (Histoire 3 : 217). The "nos" does not include Gautier since, for him, the association of the bayadère with Taglioni was reversed once he met Amany. It appears that he was in the minority in this regard, however. People's "dream" bayadères created by Abbé Raynal, Goëthe et al and fostered by French impersonations created such a strong association that the "counterfeit" version replaced, displaced, and ultimately rejected the real Indian bayadères. The Other could be known and appreciated only insofar as she could be imitated by the Self.

Alfred Delvau's 1867 article summarizes the visit of the bayadères. He places them in the ranks of short-lived Parisian celebrities, analyzing the reasons for their evanescent success:

> Des bayadères! On avait les visions adorables que procure le haschisch; . . .

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[121] Taglioni embodied the exotic Indian *bayadère* not only for Paris, but for London as well. (Engelhardt 515)

> Elles avaient débuté le 22 août 1838 . . . le 18 septembre suivant elles donnaient leur représentations d'adieu. Soit que de si belles danseuses inspirassent des sentiments de jalousie trop violents aux danseuses ordinaires—qui ne brillent pas toujours par la beauté; soit que l'étrangeté de leurs allures fatiguât un peu les yeux et l'esprit de leurs admirateurs bourgeois, . . . , après avoir disparu de l'affiche, elles disparurent aussi de la circulation. On avait beaucoup parlé d'elles avant de les voir; on en parla encore beaucoup après les avoir vues,-- et quelques temps après on n'en parla plus du tout. (105-06)

This was not quite accurate, however. Amany's name did not completely disappear and was linked to Gautier's for a very long time. More than thirty-six years after the visit of Amany and her troupe, in 1874, the journal *Le Gaulois* relived their visit in detail, in an article occasioned by a group of Algerian dancers visiting Paris. The newspaper printed excerpts from Gautier's review of their show and called them "les vraies lionnes de l'année." In 1927, almost a century after Amany's visit, André Levinson of *Le Temps* talks about Amany in his article "Danse et l'exotisme." He mentions her dancing the *pas du Colombe*, and the role she played in inspiring Gautier's *Péri*, as well as in the romanticization of ballet. Delvau turned out to be wrong in saying "on n'en parla plus du tout." In large part thanks to Gautier's immortalizing Amany in various works, she attained a level of enduring celebrity.[122] The fact that the press speaks positively of them decades after the Indian dancers left Paris indicates that Amany's magic lived on textually through Gautier's poetic description. The trope of the bayadères came a full circle, whereby text created illusion once more. As Said phrased it, "Memory of the modern Orient disputes imagination, sends one back to the

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[122] Ronsard's "Quand vous serez bien vieille" comes to mind. Though Gautier did not need her to ensure his immortality, Amany, grown old, could very well have said of Gautier: "[Il] me célébrait du temps que j'étais belle."

imagination as a place preferable, for the European sensibility, to the real Orient" (*Orientalism* 101).

3.8 MORE BAYADÈRES

In describing the parodies that Jouy's *Les Bayadères* engendered, Sylvan Suskin points out that parody was a "circuitous compliment typical of French musical history." Within a month of the premiere, two were staged: *Les Baladines : parodie des bayadères,* arranged by Merle, Ourry and Chazet, and *Le Manufacture d'indiennes, ou le triomphe du Schall et des queues de chats* by Dioeulafoy and Gersin (Suskin 265). Amany and her troupe did not lack for parodies either. In September 1838, barely a month after Amany and her troupe performed at the *Variétés*, the parody *Les Bayadères* by Paul de Kock and Valory debuted at the *Folies-Dramatiques.* Burlesque versions of the pieces performed by the Indian dancers took the stage. Another vaudeville, *Les Bayadères: vaudeville en 1 acte*, by Carmouche and Dumanoir, also played at the *Théâtre des Variétés*.

Parodies and vaudevilles aside, there were a host of operas and ballets featuring bayadères during the course of the century. Among them, *Le Roi de Lahore* (1877), an opera with music by Jules Massenet and a libretto by Louis Gallet, was extremely successful. The opera *Lakmé* (1883), with music by Leo Délibes and a libretto by Edmond Gondinet and Philippe Gille, was another extremely popular one, its music still extant. *La Bayadère* (1877), a ballet choreographed by French dancer Marius Petipa to Ludwig Minkus's music, premiered in St. Petersburg, Russia, and continues to be performed today. In all three, the beautiful heroine dies at the end, but not on the pyre: in *Le Roi de Lahore*, she stabs herself; in *Lakmé*, she eats a poisonous datura leaf; and in *La Bayadère,* she is bitten by a poisonous snake. In *La Bayadère*, the heroine is, naturally, identified as a bayadère, but in the *Roi de*

Lahore and *Lakmé*, she is a priestess in the temple. Themes of death and eternal love prevailed, with scenes of celestial splendor. The musical score and the ballet choreography became the main focus, while India was a strategic choice for a fairy-tale setting: "Le tout est d'avoir assez de tact pour savoir choisir son milieu. En cela, M. Louis Gallet a fait preuve d'habilité: son intrigue se déroule dans l'Inde, le pays par excellence des fantaisies" (Kerst "Le Roi de Lahore" 211). Indianization served to glamorize a plot that might not have worked otherwise:

> Dans *Lakmé* . . . l'influence des milieux agit extraordinairement. Supposez cette même action se déroulant en France, ou même en Europe, vous tombez aussitôt en pleine banalité; au contraire, donnez-lui l'encadrement des forêts de l'Inde, tout de suite elle s'idéalise, les moindres détails deviennent ravissants… et vous voilà conquis par le rêve de cette réalité. (Kerst "Lakmé" 245)

"Réalité" and "rêve" are once more indistinguishable when it comes to India. India's appeal as an appropriate setting for fantasy was uncontested. Its representation, however, evolved.

The operas and ballet mentioned above mark a shift in staging preferences. Sati, for so long the defining marker of India, had become a fixture on stage for India-themed shows after *La Veuve du Malabar.* For the French audience, repeatedly showing the burning pyre on stage weakened links with real Indian widows, their suffering, their loyalty, or their courage – all attributes which had aroused praise or horror earlier. Already trivialized by the textual descriptions of the horrified/heroic westerner who saved widows, sati was further discounted by its theatrical function: merely adding sensationalism on the operatic stage. Widows committing sati had transformed into courtesans dying on the pyre. The next step did away with the pyre, but kept the notions of love, sacrifice and religion intact. While the funeral pyre was an integral part of the plot and staging of *Les Bayadères* and *Dieu et la bayadère*, it did not attract any special attention. In contrast, in *Dieu et la bayadère,* the

fabulous scenes depicting heaven were highly admired, and thereafter, many operas and ballets included celestial views which added the necessary notes of wealth and splendor.

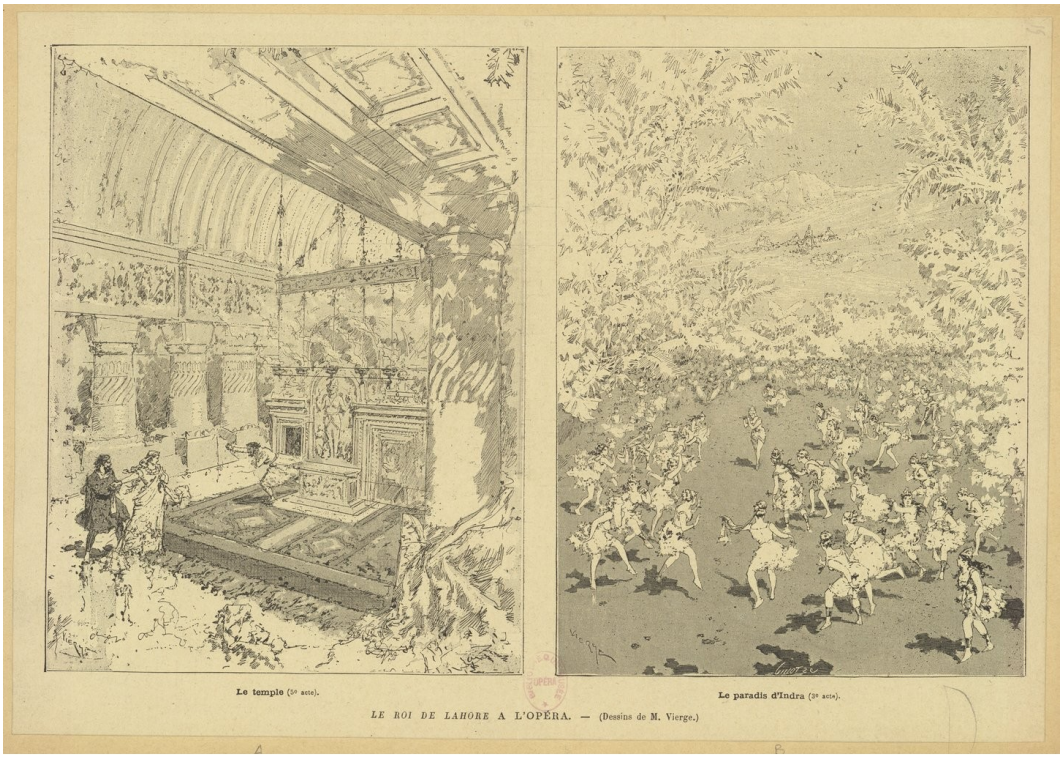

Figure 26. The temple and Indra's Paradise in *Le Roi de Lahore.* Source: Gallica.bnf.fr

The scenes of heaven in *Le Roi de Lahore* were so dazzling that the audience needed dark glasses, says a contemporary journalist, Daniel Bernard in *L'Union* (*Opinion de la presse* 11].

Another change, after the success of Marie Taglioni as the bayadère, was the process of decoupling bayadères and Indian coloring. She did not have her skin colored and the costumes for her role in *Le Dieu et la bayadère*, though Indian in inspiration, were sufficiently un-Indian so that her identity superseded that of the bayadères of legend. She did not resemble, in any way, the real devadasis who visited Paris. The process was complete when Théodore Banville wrote of Mlle. de Reszké, the blond priestess in *Le Roi de Lahore*: "elle n'a rien changé à sa beauté polonaise et à sa ruisselante chevelure blonde, et elle a eu bien raison; que l'Inde s'arrange comme elle voudra!" (*Opinion de la presse* 10).

Gautier's remark that "il faudrait admettre tout bonnement que les négresses sont blanches" came to fruition, and India was powerless to do anything about it.

Figure 27 and Figure 28 Mlle Reszke and the costume designed for her in *Le Roi de Lahore*. Source: Gallica.bnf.fr

Bayadères continued to be featured in songs, satire, scholarly treatises, dictionaries and encyclopedias throughout the nineteenth century. A search for "bayadère" on the Bibliothèque Nationale de France's digital collection site, gallica.bnf.fr, returns 2909 entries for the nineteenth century, compared to 14 for the eighteenth, 942 for the twentieth, and 2 for the twenty-first century, demonstrating that the term peaked in popularity in the nineteenth century (search conducted on 9 January 2017). In popular culture, bayadères came to denote dancers in general, rather than just Indian temple dancers. In fashion, the term "bayadère" referred to a striped fabric, which definition endures today: le-dictionnaire.com defines *bayadère* as "danseuse sacrée hindoue" and "(textile) tissu multicolore à large rayures" (accessed 9 January 2017).

3.9 CONCLUSION

Today, rather than evoking India's temple dancers, the word "bayadère" is recognized by people through its association with the still-extant ballet *La bayadère*. The French opera has quite successfully appropriated the term. Dance and beautiful women continue to be associated with India, but these days it is Bollywood dancers and the Indian Miss Universes and Miss Worlds who create that link in the popular imagination.[123]

During their nineteenth-century trajectory on the stage, the bayadères encompassed a range of ideas, concepts and associations from burning odalisques to striped fabric. The original concepts that bayadères had been based on, devadasis and sati, were somewhat modified but the overarching themes of death, sex and religion prevailed. India continued to be seen as larger than life and as a place of fantasy through fabulous sets and large casts. India was a stage where fantasies could play out; showing India on stage created a space of Otherness which could then be utilized as desired. Reiterating Said's portrayal of the Orient as a stage is particularly apt in this context:

> . . . the Orient is the stage on which the whole East in confined. . . On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate . . . The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. . . . In the depths of this Oriental stage stands a prodigious cultural repertoire whose individual items evoke a fabulously rich world: . . . settings, in some cases names only, half-imagined, half-known; monsters, devils, heroes; terrors, pleasures, desires. (63)

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[123] As of January 2018, Indian women have won the Miss World title six times (highest number along with Venezuela) and the Miss Universe title twice.

Through the passage of the centuries, India remained "half-imagined, half-known." On the nineteenth-century French stage, the bayadères promised pleasures beyond imagination. Abbé Raynal and Goëthe and others of their ilk may have created the desire for the bayadères, but the opera dancers, by being present (and perhaps available) made their attractions accessible.

The idea of the Orient proliferated enough that exotic "sex tourism" did not require actual travel to distant lands. Using Flaubert as an example, Said examines this desire for a different sexual experience and its commodification:

> In all of his novels Flaubert associates the Orient with the escapism of sexual fantasy. Emma Bovary and Frédéric Moreau pine for what in their drab (or harried) bourgeois lives they do not have, and what they realize they want comes easily to their daydreams packed inside Oriental clichés: . . . the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe. . . . What they looked for often—correctly, I think—was a different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden; but even that quest, if repeated by enough people, could (and did) become as regulated and uniform as learning itself. In time "Oriental sex" was as standard a commodity as any other available in the mass culture, with the result that readers and writers could have it if they wished without necessarily going to the Orient. (190)

Even though Said was not specifically referring to India, one could easily substitute "bayadères" for the term "Oriental sex" in the last sentence. Said interjects that the quest for a "type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden" is a valid one. This view is borne out by the constant opposition seen between the "chrétienne" and the "paienne": Christian notions of sin were imbued within the sexuality of the European woman, while the Oriental woman, on the other hand, or quite simply, the "other" woman, was seen as a

sexual being unencumbered by connotations of sinfulness.[124] In the case of the bayadères, writers and readers had specifically created equivalence between bayadères and sensuality. Transferring this equivalence to the opera's own dancers meant that bayadères came to stand for any dancer in general.[125] The bayadères became a "standard commodity" that was available without going to India (or waiting for India to come to France). It can be argued that the commodification of women thus becomes part of the larger issue of gender and exploitation. The essential difference between this exploitation and Orientalization is that while a small segment of the French female population came to be seen as "bayadères," the entirety of women of the Orient were seen as sexually available. Flaubert's satirical definition, "toutes les femmes de l'Orient sont des bayadères," makes this point.

Exoticism also permitted liberties that would perhaps not be acceptable otherwise. It allowed clothing that was improper, such as that of Jouy's bayadères. A gaze that crossed the bounds of propriety was admissible when the object was unusual and exotic, or even when it pretended to be. This propensity of seeing/portraying the Other according to different standards of propriety continues today. Distance and "primitivity" continue to form excuses for a more permissive code of conduct. Gayatri Spivak alludes to this intrusive gaze (in her case, a traumatizing experience as a nineteen-year-old) and concludes: "It's like women in *National Geographic,* where they are allowed to have bare breasts. I was not someone with whom they had the same rules, the same sexual code of behavior" (interview cited by Ray, *Writing Spivak* 4). For the Indian dancers in Paris, this took the form of

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[124] Unless, of course, guilt is superimposed on the woman, as in Goethe's depiction of the bayadère.

[125] The term "bayadère" was adopted to denote the connection between the opera dancers and sexual availability; for example, an erotic volume titled "*Les amours, galanteries et passetemps des actrices: ou confessions curieuses et galantes de ces dames,"* (1890) attributes authorship to a "bayadère of the opera."

extremely minute attention paid to their bodies, their sleeping arrangements, etc. Amany and the others are studied with fascination and deep curiosity, with the journalists even touching them to confirm their strange reality. Concomitantly, when exoticism is seen as primitivity, it takes on a different allure. When Gautier watches Spanish dancers, he finds that their primitivity and openness rob the actions of sexuality:

> Comment se fait-il que cette danse si chaude, si impétueuse, aux mouvements si accentués, aux gestes si libres, ne soit nullement indécente, tandis que le moindre écart d'une danseuse française est d'une immodestie si choquante? C'est que la *cachucha* est une danse nationale d'un caractère primitif et d'une nudité si naïve qu'elle en devient chaste. . . ("Les danseurs espagnols" 95)[126]

Perhaps Nerval, Gautier, and others like them viewed the Indian dancers through this filter of difference. While Gautier does not deny the imprint of religion and sensuality in Amany's dance, he describes her performance with more delicacy and without the moral judgment that other heavy-handed journalists employ: "Amany . . . était poëte et écrivait des hymnes dans le goût du *Cantique des cantiques*."[127] In sharp contrast to Gautier, the disgruntled

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[126] *L'Entracte* reports that the Indian dancers attended a performance of *Le Dieu et la bayadère* in Bordeaux, and that "elles [the Indian dancers] ont trouvé nos danses fort licencieuses." When asked to explain, the Indians contended that ". . . nos danses à nous sont voluptueuses, mais les vôtres sont licencieuses, parce qu'elles le sont à *froid*." Whether this is, in fact, the opinion of the Indian dancers, or whether it is a rhetorical strategy using the other to express one's own opinion, is unclear, given Tardivel's inadequate interpretive efforts in other forums. The journalist adds: "Cette opinion, dont je ne me fais pas l'éditeur responsable, mais seulement l'historien, m'a paru digne d'être consignée ici" (*L'Entracte* "Suite et fin" 3).

[127] To give an idea of the content: https://bible.catholique.org/le-cantique-des-cantiques/4516-chapitre-1

accounts of Fleury and B.D, among others, make it apparent that the latter expected devadasis to embody the sexual depravity and availability that Jouy and Raynal etc. had promised. For them, the Orient suggested ". . . not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies. . ." (Said *Orientalism* 188). Fleury and B.D preferred to think of the devadasis as deviant prostitutes. However, the Otherness which had inspired desire in the sphere of imagination was absent in reality. If the devadasis' untiring dancing exhibited "deep generative energies," their stamina paradoxically made them less feminine in viewers' eyes ("la nature les a faites plus pour la vigueur que pour la grâce") and led to comparisons with horses ("coursier," "chevaux de bonne race"). Even if the bayadères did inspire desire in beholders' eyes, the fact that they were strictly off-limits to the Christian audiences heightened the reviewers' frustration and challenged their notional superiority. The desire engendered by the fantasy bayadère rebounds and returns to French women: the bayadères of the French opera rather than Amany and her group. The devadasi's dance achieved the sensual potential it promised only when danced by her white counterpart. Exotically garbed French women were familiar to audiences in terms of color and standards of beauty, but different enough to kindle the imagination with promises of Oriental sex. Ballet was a familiar dance medium that French audiences could appreciate and enjoy (and immodest "écarts" were received as such) with India providing an appropriate setting for the imagination to unfold. With the Indian devadasis, on the other hand, French audiences were forced to make an effort to establish cultural equivalences for comprehension. Conditioned by what they had read and seen until then, French audiences were mostly unable to reconcile the reality with the image. Ultimately, the French dancers became substitutes for the Indian dancers that they set out to represent, to the extent that the original dancers lost the significance that they earlier had for the French public.

The effort made by the Indian dancers to present an authentic version of themselves did not receive the appreciation it deserved. The Hindu religion proscribed crossing the seas. For the devadasis, breaking the taboo would have involved great determination, as they would likely have had to face penalties and purification ceremonies before resuming their ritualistic religious duties. Once in France, therefore, the dancers went to great lengths to maintain the tenets of their religion in matters of food, demeanor and ritual. They led very disciplined and secluded lives while in France, this being, perhaps, a condition of their returning to their previous lives in India. Given their extremely short stay in France, assimilating French culture in their manner of living or their performance was impractical. It is also possible that this was Tardivel's strategy to maintain their novelty. The devadasis performed in Paris as they would have in Pondichéry. This very authenticity, however, hampered communication.[128] When Amany expressed love and loss through her dance, it did not touch the audience. In India, the dancing by Amany and her group would have been seen as mimesis. The dancers would have been judged on their skill in enacting stories and in interpreting moments from life and ritual, from myth and legend – the languishing lover,

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[128] This echoes the more powerful but vain attempt to communicate an important message in an incident related by Spivak in her article "Can the Subaltern speak?" Spivak relates the story of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri whose death was an attempt "to 'speak' by turning her body into a text of woman/writing." Bhaduri was a freedom fighter. Finding herself unable to carry out an assassination assigned to her, she hanged herself. She waited for menstruation before killing herself, not wanting her death to be seen as the result of an illicit pregnancy. This effort failed totally, despite the care taken by the young girl to prevent misconstruction, as even within her family, her death was misunderstood. This injustice caused Spivak to first cry out that the subaltern cannot speak; Spivak later clarified that while the subaltern did speak, it was her listeners who failed to understand, and thus failed her ("Subaltern" 34-35).

the angry inamorata, the suppliant devotee... In France, the audience was not privy to the culture that produced these memes. The dancers were judged, not according to how well they portrayed Lord Shiva or Lord Krishna (deities often featured in the repertoire), but on how closely they corresponded to the bayadères the audiences expected. Thus, the devadasis' message was lost and their voice muted. For communication to be complete, it requires both cultural knowledge as well as receptivity on the part of the audience. Without these, there is a double loss: not only were French audiences deprived of knowledge of the Other which was proffered to them, but they were unable to judge the extent of their loss. Did it occur because "assumptions about race represent a closing down of creative possibility, a loss of other options, other knowledge"(Landry and MacLean 4)? The process of "unlearning" the myths surrounding the bayadères and reeducating themselves could have perhaps compensated for the deprivation experienced due to the loss of illusion.[129] In the attitudes expressed by Gautier, and Nerval, we see a willingness to set aside preconceived notions, allowing them to learn from the experience of meeting actual bayadères. It was a transformative experience for them whereby Amany came to represent the bayadère and not Marie Taglioni. Nevertheless, the brevity of the encounter meant that Amany quickly gained a mythical status herself, becoming, for Gautier, one among "undines" and other fairy-like creatures.

Perhaps it is this status of legend that confers a certain immortality on the Indian dancers who visited Paris. The devadasis Amany, Tillé, Saoundiroun and the others in the troupe are known by name beyond Indian shores, and have not sunk into oblivion like countless other Indian devadasis of the time. The troupe and their performance are resuscitated in modern memory through the power of the Internet, which disseminates

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[129] "Questions of Multi-culturalism" in *The Post-Colonial Critic* (Spivak 59-66).

knowledge of their visit to France and London through blogs and scholarly articles. The bayadère as a trope is also still alive both on the printed page and on the stage: in ballets like *La bayadère* and in the alluring heroines she inspired Gautier and Nerval to create. She once again inhabits the space of dream and imagination, fueling fantasies through staged illusions. It is as a fictional construct that the legendary bayadère is found most enchanting.

4 CREATIVE TRANSFORMATIONS: SANSKRIT THEATER ON THE FRENCH STAGE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

> *Jouer* Le Chariot de terre cuite *et* L'Anneau de Sakountala *en 1895, ce n'était pas entraîner le public vers un exotisme mystérieux; au contraire, c'était tout à la fois reprendre une vieille tradition et se référer à l'actualité.* (Robichez 308)

Jacques Robichez (1914-99), professor at the Sorbonne and author of *Le Symbolisme au théâtre*, succinctly captures the familiarity late nineteenth-century French audiences felt at seeing India on stage. By 1895, the French public was conversant enough with India and its dramatic tradition that staging an adaptation of a Sanskrit play, "une vieille tradition," was "se référer à l'actualité." The juxtaposition of the two terms lends itself to multiple interpretations. India represented an ancient civilization while its appearance in France tied it to an immediate, local presence; at the same time, the "vieille" could refer to the fact that in 1895, *Le Chariot de terre cuite* et *L'Anneau de Sakountala* were new versions of plays performed on stage almost half a century earlier, now rendered in a topically relevant manner. The audience did not need an introduction to "mysteriously exotic" India, being already acquainted with it. By the late nineteenth century, there was knowledge built up through centuries of travel and historical writings. The visit of Tipu's ambassadors in 1788 and the devadasi troupe in 1838 were exciting events that were remembered for a long time. India was present in different literary genres and registers. Antoine Lemierre's sensational *La Veuve du Malabar* (1770), an example of France's *mission civilisatrice,* was still popular in the nineteenth century. Joseph Méry's sensational novels set in India were highly successful, and *Héva* (1844), the first in his Hindu trilogy, went through thirty

editions in his lifetime. On stage, there was a variety of plays dealing with different Indian subjects. The plays on Tipu Sultan early in the nineteenth century depicted French and Indian ties, rewriting history in the process. The bayadères had become popular attractions in ballet and opera. Indian themes were recognizable enough that vaudeville shows and parodies that distorted them proved funny to audiences.

While all these India-themed plays built on perceptions of India created over the previous centuries, Sanskrit drama in France was a nineteenth century phenomenon. Based on recent discoveries of Sanskrit texts, it was a bridge that arced over centuries, linking fifth-century India with nineteenth-century France. The two plays from the Sanskrit dramatic canon whose French translations are mentioned in the opening citation are particularly significant in this regard. Kali.dasa's *Abhijñāna/śākuntala, The Recognition of Shakúntal*a, a fifth-century Sanskrit masterpiece, and Shúdraka's *Mṛichhakaṭikā, The Little Clay Cart,* dated between 2 BCE and 6 CE, are acclaimed examples of Sanskrit drama which enjoyed a fair degree of popularity in France. There was a reasonably large corpus of extant Sanskrit plays that were translated into French.[130] However, only a few of them were actually performed on the French stage. Of these, *The Recognition of Shakúntal*a and *The*

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[130] The *Catalogue Rondel* of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France has approximately 150 entries in its section "Théâtre hindou." Of these, there are about 60 entries for publications in French during the period 1803 and 1900 (both years inclusive). It is difficult to estimate the exact number of plays translated since the entries include several collections—complete works and selected works of major Sanskrit playwrights among them—as well as scholarly studies and critical works. It is nevertheless clear that the œuvre of Kali.dasa, Bháva.bhuti, Sékhara, Shúdraka and others were translated several times by different authors. *Shakúntala* and *The Little Clay Cart* were the only ones performed, as revealed by the Catalogue Rondel, and my own research online and elsewhere. For more information on the Rondel catalogue, see http://bbf.enssib.fr/consulter/bbf-1985-05-0453-002.

Little Clay Cart were translated multiple times and were adapted for the stage more than once.[131] The reappearance of the plays in 1895, decades after their first staging, testifies to the strong impact they had on French authors and audiences. The symmetry in their performance at two different points in time, the 1850s and the 1890s, (as well as the fact that these were the only two Sanskrit plays actually staged), make them ideal candidates for analysis and comparison. *The Recognition of Shakúntal*a and *The Little Clay Cart* have therefore both been chosen for study. Of the many translated versions of these popular plays, I have chosen the ones that were performed as they offer extra dimensions of interest, such as staging practices and audience reaction. For *The Recognition of Shakúntala*, the staged versions were Théophile Gautier's *Sacountalâ* (1858) and Ferdinand Hérold's *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ* (1895). *The Little Clay Cart* was performed as *Le Chariot d'enfant* by Joseph Méry and Gérard Nerval, (1850) and *Le Chariot de terre cuite* by Victor Barrucand (1895). Comparing the two versions of each play allows us to understand the cultural, political and social environment of their production at two distinct points in the nineteenth-century. It also permits us to place these plays within a larger context, i.e. the evolution of dramatic practices during the century.

The journey of Sanskrit plays from India to France is quite dramatic in itself. As with many developments in the Indian sub-continent from the seventeenth century onwards, the roles played by France and Britain in bringing Sanskrit drama to Europe were closely

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[131] The various versions of the Sanskrit plays in France had different names. To avoid confusion, I use the names *The Recognition of Shakúntala (*or *Shakúntala)* and *The Little Clay Cart* to refer to the Sanskrit originals. I have chosen the English versions of the names for general usage instead of the Sanskrit ones for two reasons: one, because I rely on recent English translations as a basis of comparison, and two, the English names are more transparent to readers.

entwined.[132] A reference in the Jesuit *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses* by Père Cœurdoux (1691-1779) led to William Jones's discovery of Sanskrit *natacs* or plays and triggered a wave of Indomania in Europe.[133] The discovery of Sanskrit plays provided an older and at least comparably sophisticated alternative to the Greco-Roman dramatic tradition. European scholars were excited. English translations of Sanskrit literature by Charles Wilkins (*Bhagavad-Gîtâ* in 1785), William Jones (*Sakountalâ* in 1789), and Horace Hayman Wilson (*Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus* in 1827) were swiftly followed by French translations, initially via the English and later from the original Sanskrit texts themselves. In France, Silvestre de Sacy started the *École des langues orientales vivantes* in 1795, and in 1814, a chair for Sanskrit was created for Sacy's disciple, Antoine-Léonard de Chézy. The *Société Asiatique de Paris* came into being in 1821. Modern historian Douglas McGetchin says that "[a]t the beginning of the nineteenth century, France clearly dominated Oriental studies in Europe; Paris housed outstanding manuscript collections and brilliant scholars in Oriental language" (41).

Translation of Sanskrit plays into French moved from the scholarly domain to popular culture when they were performed on stage. Sanskrit drama introduced new

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[132] In this, it echoes most historical events during the eighteenth and nineteenth century in India. Britain's role dominates current-day thinking because of their successful colonization, but France's presence in India colored developments there quite significantly.

[133] Sir William Jones, British Orientalist and jurist, is famous for postulating the common origins of Sanskrit, Latin and Greek. Père Cœurdoux, however, did so twenty years before Jones. A 1967 article by John J. Godfrey in the Journal of the American Oriental Society explains how this happened, and elaborates on the connections between Anquétil Duperron, William Jones and Père Cœurdoux. Filippo Sassetti, an Italian traveler to India, also noted some similarities in vocabulary between Sanskrit and Italian in 1583 (mentioned, among others, in McGetchin 197).

elements into France's perception of India. The quality of the literature, its complexity and sophistication, underscored India's attributes as a great civilization, hitherto appreciated for its spiritual heritage. Sanskrit drama allowed French authors an additional avenue to explore India. Ancient Sanskrit plays were used to carry a modern message to audiences and were adapted in various degrees to appeal to French tastes. Translation, with its particular opportunities and limitations, added a layer of complexity to the plays. A distant and unknown tradition was brought within reach of understanding by finding parallels and common reference points: comparing Sanskrit stories with ancient French tales, enumerating Shúdraka's similarities to Shakespeare, classifying Kali.dasa's plays as Romantic drama, etc. The techniques and strategies utilized in translating and adapting ancient Sanskrit plays to contemporary France were quite intriguing and invite further exploration.

4.2 THE IMPACT OF TRANSLATION/ADAPTATION

Ancient Sanskrit texts were brought to life on the French stage after traversing thousands of miles and multiple centuries from the site of their creation. Translating a text is challenging even when issues of cultural difference are not exacerbated by both time and distance. In *Sur la traduction*, Paul Ricœur talks at length about the difficulties of translation, and the apparent impossibility of the task, given that "[d]es plages d'intraduisibilité sont parsemées dans le texte" (11). He explains further that:

> Non seulement les champs sémantiques ne se superposent pas, mais les syntaxes ne sont pas équivalentes, les tournures de phrases ne véhiculent pas les mêmes héritages culturels; et que dire des connotations à demi muettes qui surchargent les dénotations les mieux cernées du vocabulaire d'origine et qui flottent en quelque sorte entre les signes, les phrases, les séquences courtes ou longues. (13)

Ricœur's words illustrate the ample challenges that Sanskrit drama posed for French authors. Some of the translations were scholarly works written for an erudite readership; others were meant to be performed on stage to entertain a wider public. In either case, Sanskrit drama made its own peculiar demands. One was the age of the plays, their creation being estimated between second century BCE and sixth century CE. European audiences were accustomed to the Greco-Roman dramatic conventions, and the Indian tradition was completely unknown. Reaching a French reader involved bridging a substantial geographical, cultural, and temporal distance. A Sanskrit text thus had to undergo substantial changes in what Venuti called a "recontextualizing" process: ". . . situating it in different patterns of language use, in different literary traditions, in different cultural values, in different social institutions, and often in a different historical moment" ("Adaptation" 30). Each of the aspects that Venuti alludes to was particularly challenging. There was a relative lack of linguistic support and contextual information. While the texts were ancient, Sanskrit was still a new discovery in the nineteenth century and there were few, if any, dictionaries or other tools available to facilitate its learning. The French were enthusiastic in their efforts to fill these lacunae, but it was still an arduous task. Sanskrit drama is not composed solely in Sanskrit: characters speak in either the elevated register that is Sanskrit or in various related vernacular languages known as Prakrit. Shúdraka's *The Little Clay Cart,* for example, has at least six identified dialects of Prakrit (Shúdraka 617). As required by dramatic convention, the male high born important characters all speak in Sanskrit, while women of equal standing speak Śaurasenī, one of the vernacular languages. Other characters, based on their birth, occupation and role, speak different Prakrits. Language does not function solely as a gender or class marker. Form serves to differentiate between abstract thought and the mundane. Characters speak in both prose and verse: matter-of-fact conversation is in prose but a profound thought or philosophical musing is in

verse. Mime adds another layer of expression: "The dramatic text, which is written in alternating passages of prose and of verse in various meters, is chanted and sung (and perhaps in part spoken) and is enacted visually through formal schemes of dance movement, symbolic hand gestures, and codified facial expressions" (Baumer and Brandon xiv). The Sanskrit dramatic tradition is a highly sophisticated and elaborate system with unique characteristics not always reproducible in translation – an example of the "plages d'intraduisibilité" that Ricœur refers to.

Confronted with an intransigent text, a European translator in the nineteenth century had no option but to be creative, particularly in the earlier part of the century when the study of the Sanskrit language itself was still underway. Faced with the lack of semantic and cultural equivalencies as well as the presence of half-spoken connotations or unspoken messages, the translator becomes a contributor to the meaning transmitted. Of the many possible interpretations of a text, a translator makes one definitive choice, discarding the others. As the original linguistic, social and cultural context is not available to the reader of the translated work, a translator adds his own subtext. This operates as both a tremendous gain and a comparable loss:

> When translated, the source text undergoes not only various degrees of formal and semantic loss, but also an exorbitant gain: in attempting to fix the form and meaning of that text, the translator develops an interpretation in the translating language that ultimately proliferates cultural differences so that the translation can signify in the receiving situation. Although these differences undoubtedly relate to features of the source text, they work only in the translating language and culture and therefore release different effects. (Venuti, "Adaptation" 30)

French translators, in particular, routinely made changes to the original, playing the role of both interpreter and critic. According to Ricœur, world classics like the Bible, Shakespeare,

Dante, Molière etc. are incessantly reworked because of dissatisfaction with existing translations (15). For the same reason, multiple translations of the same Sanskrit work appeared at short intervals. Translators vied with each other to produce a work that they believed was true to the original. There were at least eight translations of Kali.dasa's *The Recognition of Shakúntala* into French before 1900. There was a divergence of opinion on the manner of handling these texts which had rather serious consequences. There were two camps: translators who believed in being semantically faithful to the text, and others who wanted to convey the ''spirit'' of the text. The latter were named "fleuristes," "ces traducteurs qui sèment de "fleurs" les textes originaux et s'opposent aux partisans de versions plus fidèles" (Brix and Le Couëdic 14). McGetchin believes that the battle between the *fleuristes* and the *anti-fleuristes* over translation methods and the aims of Oriental scholarship started the decline in French Indology and allowed Germany to gain ascendancy in this field (41-54). The focus on scientific accuracy led to the public losing interest, says McGetchin: "by rejecting French literary conventions, Oriental studies eroded support from governmental and intellectual circles" (54). The consequences for dramatic texts were particularly dire, since most of the translated plays, being unduly pedantic, did not make it to the stage. David Johnston, an active modern translator of plays from Spanish to English, believes that

> . . . the distinction that we may make between the play text and the act of performance marks the line of demarcation between literature and drama . . . A play text is a special form of scripting which, even from the pen of the most prescriptive of dramatists, cannot be taken as anything other than providing a springboard towards performance. ("Pragmatics" 57-58)

When the *anti-fleuristes* paid attention to the letter rather than the spirit of the Sanskrit plays, they moved them from drama to literature, and in doing so, rendered them

unplayable; in effect, they sacrificed the innate dramatic nature of the plays in the interests of accuracy.[134]

Among the *fleuristes* who succeeded in adapting Sanskrit drama for the stage were Gérard de Nerval and Joseph Méry. While translating *The Little Clay Cart,* they focused solely on the romantic plotline and ignored the political one. They defended their adaptation, *Le Chariot d'enfant*: ". . . nous avons fidèlement rendue [l'œuvre], si non toujours selon la lettre, au moins toujours selon l'esprit" (Méry and Nerval 65). Barrucand, in the preface to his version of the same play, *Le Chariot de terre cuite,* talks of ". . . la traduction vraie où l'esprit doit parler à l'esprit" as well (23). Hippolyte Fauche, translator and noted Indologist of the era, decried the originality shown by Nerval and Méry and strived for a more semantic translation, translating directly from Sanskrit in 1861. He found that his efforts were not appreciated either, and was accused of "pédantisme maladroit et souvent inexact" by yet another translator of the same play, Paul Regnaud, whose *Le Chariot de terre cuite* came out in 1876 (qtd. in Brix and Le Couëdic). Personal predilections and critical motivations did affect the ultimate choices made by the playwrights, but these were not the only reasons. Dorothy Figueira finds that, compared to German translators who tried to remain faithful to the original texts, the French were wont to "franciser" le text (*Translating* 31). Changing the text to conform to French tastes was quite common, and Figueira believes that readers had

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[134] The argument between the *fleuristes* and the *anti-fleuristes* is still relevant. Johnston discusses the modern debate on different forms of translation in his article "Theatre Pragmatics." By transposing his argument to the nineteenth-century Indology conflict, we can perhaps understand the decline in public interest after the fleuristes lost: "[a]t the heart of the creation of the playable translation is a dramaturgical remoulding, because such a remoulding creates the vehicle which transports—the root meaning of the verb to translate—the audience into the experience of the play" (58). The *anti-fleuristes'* academic rigor led to a loss that was never recouped.

a role to play in the translation of the text: "In French translation, the reader, to a certain degree, determined the text: 'la grande règle de toutes les règles est . . . de plaire au lecteur français'"(Anon, cited in *Translating* 29). "Notre ambition était de faire lire *Sacountala,*" say Abel Bergaigne and Paul Lehugeur, in the preface to their translation in 1884, and admit to having removed some verses, among them "deux passages d'assez mauvais goût . . . [qui] pouvaient fatiguer inutilement le lecteur" (ix). Théophile Gautier went even further in making *The Recognition of Shakúntala* attractive to French audiences: he transformed the play into a ballet and did away with all verbal communication.

Such a radical transposition brings us to the question: up to what point does a work remain a translation? When does a work move from being a "translation" to an "adaptation"? Both translation and adaptation involve a significant degree of interpretation and the words are often used interchangeably, but they are not synonymous. Johnston spells out the degree of difference:

> [I]n the final analysis, every act of translation for the stage is an act of transformation. The distinction between translation and adaptation is one which is difficult to understand fully, unless it is to refer to translation as the first stage of linguistic and broadly literary interrogation of the source text, and adaptation as the process of dramaturgical analysis, the preparation for re-enactment. ("Pragmatics" 66)

By this definition, performances on stage of *Shakúntala* and *The Little Clay Cart* on the French stage were, in fact, adaptations of Kali.dasa's and Shúdraka's plays, moving beyond a simple translation. Gautier's ballet transposes the play to a different genre entirely, subsuming Kali.dasa's plot into his production.

The interpretive choices of the French translators/adaptors found expression both in the actual performance of the play as well as in the published versions. The printed translations allowed authors to directly communicate with readers through an introduction, a preface or a postface. It gave them an opportunity to address any critical reviews that the

performance received in the press. In addition, these accompanying notes allowed them to express and defend their social and political views or, quite simply, to display their erudition. Méry, Nerval, Hérold, Barrucand – all the French playwrights whose work is discussed here disclose their motivations and provide additional information through a preface or similar note. The sequence is almost like a dialogue: the playwright offers his play to the audience who express their views by attending or ignoring the performance. The press offers a further opportunity to proffer an opinion, mainly through critical reviews (though readers could also send in letters). The playwright uses the published version of the play to offer an explanation or further information. Sometimes, authors used the press as a medium to react to criticism in a timely manner, as Jouy did in his duel with Geoffroy over *Tippô-Saëb*. Gautier's libretto for *Sacountalâ* does not have an explanatory introduction, but Gautier reviewed his own ballet in the press, influencing its reception in a more direct manner.

The productions of *The Recognition of Shakúntala* and *The Little Clay Cart* at two different times in the nineteenth century disclose not only the translators' choices but also reveal public expectations. Since they were performed several decades apart, it is possible to make a dynamic comparison of the environment they were produced in. This exercise illustrates Lawrence Venuti's postulation that "The hermeneutic relation can be seen not only as interpretive, fixing the form and meaning of the source materials, but as interrogative, exposing the cultural and social conditions of those materials and of the translation or adaptation that has processed them" ("Adaptation" 25). Translation thus functions as a bridge between two disparate cultures, with the translator playing a crucial role, as Ricœur notes: "Deux partenaires sont en effet mis en relation par l'acte de traduire, l'étranger—terme couvrant l'œuvre, l'auteur, sa langue—et le lecteur destinataire de l'ouvrage traduit. Et, entre les deux, le traducteur qui transmet, fait passer le message entier

d'un idiome dans l'autre" (8-9). The French authors who brought the Indian "étranger'' to French audiences not only revealed aspects of ancient Indian drama, but through their creative and interpretive choices, exposed contemporary French tastes and trends. It simultaneously functioned as the revival of an ancient tradition and a current event: "reprendre une vieille tradition et se référer à l'actualité," as Robichez declares.

4.3 SHÚDRAKA'S MRICHHAKATIKĀ, THE LITTLE CLAY CART

Mṛichhakaṭikā or *The Little Clay Cart,* popular in France in the nineteenth century, is still performed in various languages and cities around the world. A preface to a 13th century version of the play states that the author is King Shúdraka, but it is not certain that this is the case.[135] Scholarly theories abound about the authorship of *The Little Clay Cart*: some fragments have been traced to a play by Bhasa (third century CE) called *Charu.datta.* The date of its composition is as doubtful as its author. It has been variously dated as having been first written in first or second century BCE, fifth or sixth century CE, with the thirteenth-century version being transmitted to our times (Acharya xx - xxvi).[136] Despite its age, *Mṛichhakaṭikā* or *The Little Clay Cart* has proved to have an enduring relationship with audiences through the ages. As recently as 2008, the play was performed at the Oregon

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[135] There is a character named Shúdraka in other Sanskrit novels and poetry, so he could very well be a fictional character. Some historians mention that a king named Shúdraka died in 169 BC, which is a little too early for the play to have been written by him. Despite the uncertainty, *The Little Clay Cart* is universally attributed to Shúdraka, and that tradition is followed in this study.

[136] In order to compare them with the French translations, all references to the original play are to Diwakar Acharya's 2009 translation into English, published by the Clay Sanskrit Library, New York University Press (CSL).

Shakespearean Festival.[137] *The Little Clay Cart* reached the Western world through Horace Hayman Wilson's translation into English, as part of the *Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus* (1827). Alexandre Langlois's French version of the anthology quickly followed, called *Chefs d'œuvre du théâtre indien* (1828). This included *Mṛichhakaṭikā,* which Langlois called *Le Chariot d'enfant.* It was the precursor to several other translations.

Nineteenth century dramatist and reputed literary critic Jules Lemaître offers the ultimate accolade: "J'avoue que rien, dans les théâtres grecs, anglais et français, ne me paraît supérieur à cette comédie indienne" ("La Semaine dramatique").

4.3.1 Plot

At first glance, *The Little Clay Cart* is a love story. It is also a critical social commentary with religious and political undertones. Diwakar Acharya, a modern translator of *The Little Clay Cart* (2006) summarizes the play thus:

> It is an action-packed romantic situational comedy of manners that sketches a vivid tableau of town-life in ancient India while narrating the star-crossed romance between two unlikely figures: Charu.datta, a Brahmin merchant reduced to poverty by his generosity, and Vasánta.sena, a rich and kindly courtesan. (xix)

Acharya highlights the romantic aspect in his synopsis. In the prologue to the play itself, the character of the stage director introduces the play to the audience with the following verse: "A story of the festivities of true love, / the course of justice, the corruption in business, / the behavior of crooks and how destiny disposes" (Shúdraka 7). The second overview shows the different threads that are interwoven in the play. Among the French translators, there were some who, like Acharya, focused on the romantic story and others who focused on the socio-political reform, both of which are integral part to the story. Sylvain Lévi, a

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[137]http://www.oregonlive.com/performance/index.ssf/2008/02/osf_2008_the_clay_cart.html

reputed nineteenth century Indologist, calls *The Little Clay Cart* a "veritable chef d'œuvre," and attributes the play's "longévité robuste aux richesses latentes du génie: chacune des générations successives y reconnaît de bonne foi son idéal, et les revendique à son tour comme un patrimoine naturel" ("Théâtre Indien à Paris" 828).[138]

The plot that Shúdraka created was a rich and complex one that braided several stories together and tied them all together at the climax. The lovers, Charu.datta (a nobleman recently fallen on hard times) and Vasánta.sena (a renowned courtesan), are present from the first act onwards, as are the crooks. And there are crooks aplenty, including a thief and a gambler, but the main obstacle to "true love" is the villain: the king's corrupt, greedy, and lecherous brother-in-law, Samsthánaka, who occupies a high post in the king's court. Samsthánaka is enamored of Vasánta.sena, but she rejects him in favor of Charu.datta, the hero. Enraged, he strangles her and leaves her for dead in the king's garden, and successfully blames the murder on Charu.datta. The motive is thought to be Vasánta.sena's jewelry, found in Charu.datta's house. Vasánta.sena is rescued by a Buddhist monk, and manages to arrive in time to save Charu.datta from being executed for her murder. The two then rush to save Charu.datta's wife who is planning to immolate herself, believing that her husband is dead.

The several subplots intertwined with the main one explore other themes. There is a religious thread woven through the play, propagating Buddhist precepts for the most part. A masseur turned gambler rehabilitates himself by becoming a Buddhist monk (the one

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[138] *Le Théâtre Indien* was Lévi's doctoral dissertation, and became a standard treatise on the subject. He taught Sanskrit at the Sorbonne, toured India and Japan in 1897-98, and wrote several books on India. He also wrote a dictionary on Buddhism in collaboration with Japanese Buddhist scholar Takakusu Junjirō (*EB*).

who saves Vasánta.sena). While the play functions within the framework of the Hindu caste system, the playwright pokes fun at several Hindu practices, particularly Brahmin ones. The thief Shárvilaka is a Brahmin and uses his sacred thread to help him steal from Charu.datta's house.[139] It is a comic scene, but has satirical religious and social overtones. Hegemony is challenged at every turn, be it social, political or religious.

On the political front, King Pálaka had earlier imprisoned a cowherd, Áryaka, because of a wizard's prediction that the cowherd would become king. Áryaka escapes from prison and hides in Charu.datta's cart. Charu.datta helps him get rid of his fetters and lends him his cart to escape from the king's guards. At the end of the play, Áryaka kills King Pálaka and becomes the new ruler. He rewards Charu.datta with lands and a high position in his government. Vasánta.sena is rewarded by being given the status of Charu.datta's wife. Metaphorically, Vasánta.sena the courtesan dies for love of Charu.datta to be reborn as his wife. The play ends with everyone alive and happy. The good characters are rewarded, the evil are forgiven.

The motif of the cart weaves its way through the entire story. The toy cart, referred to in the title of the play, appears in a small, though crucial, scene towards the middle. After Vasánta.sena spends the night with Charu.datta, she comes across Roha.sena, Charu.datta's young son. He is in tears because he wants a golden cart to play with, like the one his neighbor has. His own toy is made of clay, a sign of the family's impoverished status. Vasánta.sena takes off her jewelry and decorates the cart with it, turning the clay cart into a golden one. Symbolically, she gives up her wealth and luxury and becomes part of Charu.datta's life – on par with his wife who, due to Charu.datta's straitened circumstances,

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[139] The sacred thread across the body is worn by Hindus of the upper castes, and is essential in defining their caste status. Using the sacred thread to commit a crime is definitely sacrilegious.

wears no jewelry. Her removal of the jewelry symbolizes a cleansing of her past life, and later allows her to resist Samsthánaka's forcible advances with conviction. The jewelry also plays a pivotal role in turning the course of the play. When Vasánta.sena's jewelry is found at Charu.datta's house, it provides a convincing motive that condemns Charu.datta for her alleged murder. The cart is another dramatic figure that continues to affect the story. Vasánta.sena accidently climbs into Samsthánaka's cart instead of Charu.datta's, in turn allowing the political rebel Áryaka to climb into Charu.datta's cart. This defines the political course of the play, allowing Áryaka to escape, kill the king and take his place, and then reward Charu.datta for his help. The cart has a rich symbolic significance, allowing the play to move on the course it takes as well as facilitating the upward mobility of Áryaka, Vasánta.sena, and Charu.datta. It could also represent the journey through life, akin to the philosophical Wheel of Fortune.

Shúdraka's *The Little Clay Cart* is a controversial play by nature. It shows the marginal elements of society – the courtesan, the gambler, the monk, and the poor and lowborn people – as the agents of change. The thief acts out of good intentions and is remorseful after the act; a cowherd defeats the king and rises to the throne, and of course, the courtesan marries the high caste hero. These characters both transform themselves in the course of the play as well as revolutionize the social and political landscape. Shúdraka skillfully weaves the myriad plotlines together into a long but coherent and plausible tale.

In addition to being long and complex, with ten acts and several sub-plots, the original play is composed in a combination of Sanskrit and Prakrit. The language spoken depends on the gender and social class of the speaker. This allows for additional manipulation: for example, the cowherd who becomes king at the end of the play speaks in Sanskrit throughout, subversively attesting to his kingly nature even while he is initially assumed to be socially inferior. Added to the size and the intersecting plot lines, these

nuances make the task of the translator, already faced with the challenge of transposing it across cultures, even more daunting. Taking a foreign text and making it not just accessible, but comprehensible to an entirely new audience involves an act of conscious appropriation; choices are made at every juncture about content, language and presentation.

This deliberate exercise of choice is evident in key differences between the two versions of *The Little Clay Cart* discussed here. The first adaptation for the French stage was by Joseph Méry and Gérard de Nerval in 1850. The version by Victor Barrucand was performed almost fifty years later, in 1895. The first one is in verse, the second in prose. Méry and Nerval filter out religious and political events from the play and concentrate on the feminine angle making it a little lighter in terms of plot. They include a song in the middle as well. Victor Barrucand however, approaches his translation differently: he underlines the religious and political aspects both in his preface and in his translation, and downplays the feminine angle. This raises a few questions: do the translators' personal predilections lead them to highlight different aspects of the original play? Is it that the plays were composed in different times: i.e. was the political, social and cultural environment during the middle of the nineteenth century different from that during the end of the century? Or both? An analysis of the two adaptations of the play allows us to better understand the possible motivations that drove the translators.

4.4 MÉRY AND NERVAL'S *LE CHARIOT D'ENFANT*

4.4.1 Gérard de Nerval and Joseph Méry

Providing Nerval's biography and describing his connections with the Orient would be superfluous as scholars have extensively studied Nerval's fascination with the Orient and its religions, people, legends and philosophy. I therefore only indicate aspects directly concerned with *Le Chariot d'enfant.* One of Nerval's most popular novellas, *Sylvie* (1854),

relates the story of a man in love with three women. This theme of a man in love with more than one woman is found in *The Little Clay Cart* as well; so also the Orient and an idealized religion. He did not entirely take advantage of this opportunity to showcase all these themes, as detailed analysis of the play will show. Nerval's interest in *The Little Clay Cart* and in the character of Vasánta.sena was of long standing. It is evoked in his 1838 article for *Le Messager* that describes the visit of Amany and her troupe of Indian dancers to Paris. He hears the dancers before he sees them, and their anklets remind him of Vasánta.sena: "Dans la pièce voisine résonne un doux carillon métallique qui rappelle à notre pensée les clochettes d'or de la courtisane Vasantasena, l'héroïne du drame indien publié dernièrement par W. Jones . . . " (Méry and Nerval 239).[140]

Nerval's collaborator, Joseph Méry (1797 - 1867), was a prolific writer in a variety of genres. Like Nerval, he was also friendly with Hugo, Gautier and Dumas. Forgotten now, he was well known in his time and the volume of his literary output was astonishing. He was referred to as "Le Roi de l'esprit" (Brix and Le Couëdic 27). Méry wrote several novels on India, including a highly successful trilogy: *Héva* (1843), *La Floride (1846)* and *La Guerre du Nizam (1847)*. Due to his many successful works on India, Méry was regarded as an expert on India, and it was assumed that he had visited the country and knew it well. He countered that "J'ai sur mes devanciers un avantage considérable pour peindre ce paysage; je ne l'ai jamais vu" (qtd. in Brix and Le Couëdic 27). Probably meant as a witty riposte, it nevertheless reveals that Méry could treat India authoritatively despite never having visited it. This also supports Said's contention of the Orient as a creation of the West.

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[140] It was Horace Wilson and not William Jones who first translated *The Little Clay Cart.* William Jones was famous for his translation of *The Recognition of Shakúntala.* Gautier, in his review of *Le Chariot d'enfant*, also gives William Jones the credit (*La Presse* 21 May 1850).

4.4.2 Antecedents and Approach

When Méry and Nerval first adapted the play for the French stage in 1850, it is likely that they based it on the 1828 translation by Alexandre Langlois (Brix and Le Couëdic 35).[141] Most of Méry and Nerval's information on India came from travel writings by Tavernier and others. Méry and Nerval collaborated on two other works besides translating *The Little Clay Cart* together between 1849 and 1851 (Brix and Le Couëdic 26-29). Méry and Nerval changed the title from *The Little Clay Cart* to *Le Chariot d'enfant* "The Child's Cart," as did Langlois.

The preface to the printed version of the play gives Méry and Nerval an opportunity to justify and explain their choice of subject. They start off by lauding the intelligence of the Parisian public, able to appreciate an ancient play from far away, an obvious exercise of *captatio benevolentiae* (Brix and Le Couëdic 42). They then remind the audience of France's links with India, viz. the few colonies that remain, the role that French mercenaries played in wars between the English and the Indian rulers, most notably Tipu Sultan's army. Napoleon's presence in Egypt and Syria is presented as a means of reaching India: "Napoléon, on le sait, ne chercha à se frayer un passage à travers l'Égypte et la Syrie que pour soutenir encore contre l'invasion anglaise ces nations, qui correspondent à nous par une affinité lointaine" (Méry and Nerval 66). The British are presented here as the Other, and Napoleon's campaign in Egypt and Syria is but a means of impeding Britain's colonial designs. Méry and Nerval go further in proposing an affinity between India and the French. Noting that Indians, Franks and Celts are said to come from the same Indo-Germanic racial stock, they suggest that it is not surprising that both Indian and French theatrical characters

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[141] Baron d'Eckstein's translation of sections of the play in *Le Catholique* (1828) was also available to Méry and Nerval.

and customs are similar. Méry and Nerval attempt to reduce the temporal, spatial and cultural distance by reminding French audiences of previous contacts with India, and commonalities between the two countries.

4.4.3 Plot and Staging

Méry and Nerval simplified Shúdraka's plot and reduced the length. Considering the length and complexity of the original—ten acts, more than thirty characters, several dialects and a complicated plot line—this is quite understandable. Méry and Nerval reassure French audiences that they have remained faithful to the original, if not in letter, at least in spirit - an acknowledgment that they have, in fact, made changes. They attest that they have not left out anything noteworthy:

> Le travail des auteurs français n'a consisté qu'à élaguer quelques scènes incidentes, multipliées dans l'œuvre originale . . . Tel est l'épisode d'*Ariaka*, pâtre-conspirateur qui, à la fin de la pièce, immole le roi Palaka. . . . Nous pouvons dire du moins qu'aucune scène importante de l'œuvre primitive n'est absente de la nôtre. . . . (69)

However, one of the "incidental" scenes they removed is the political revolution where the despotic king and his corrupt retinue are deposed and a cowherd ascends the throne. The ripples that this event creates affect every aspect of the play, but Méry and Nerval contrive to ignore this while creating their adaptation. The deliberate removal of the political aspects of *The Little Clay Cart* is perhaps explained by the fact that the previous play that the two authors had collaborated on, *Une nuit blanche,* had been suspended because the character of King Soulouque of Haiti, portrayed as a despot, was seen as alluding to Louis Napoleon. Given the political turbulence in the mid-nineteenth century, this exclusion was likely a

prudent one.[142] However, Méry and Nerval ignore the religious overtones in the original as well. In the postface, they mention the fact that scholars had drawn parallels between Christianity and Buddhism, comparing Charu.datta to Christ, Vasánta.sena to Mary Magdalene, and Shárvilaka to the Penitent Thief, but their translation of the play does not have a religious or philosophical bent.[143] Curiously, they also remove some exotic elements: the description of the eight different courtyards that Charu.datta's friend Maitréya crosses in order to meet the courtesan as well as the sati scene where Charu.datta's wife is about to leap into a funeral fire, convinced that her husband is dead. Both scenes afford an opportunity for some splendid décor and lavish sets.[144] Sati was a proven crowd pleaser as well, but Méry and Nerval did not show this spectacular event on stage.[145]

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[142] The play was performed during the Second Republic (1848-1852), after the revolution of 1848 when King Louis-Philippe had to abdicate and flee to England, and before the establishment of the Second Empire. Considering how short-lived the Second Republic was, ignoring the political element was perhaps the better choice for Méry and Nerval.

[143] For an Indian audience, Áryaka being a cowherd would create an association with the story of Lord Krishna, who grew up as a cowherd, and killed his uncle Kamsa, who was a corrupt and evil ruler. For a Christian audience, it is the relationship between Charu.datta and Vasánta.sena that appears to create religious parallels, but of a different nature.

[144] There were very few stage directions in the script, with hardly any details, and no indications regarding costumes. This has led some critics to believe that Méry and Nerval's adaptation was hastily contrived. The other theory is that Pierre Bocage wanted to save money by using the sets of a revue *De Paris à Pékin* that was banned and therefore never performed (Brix and Le Couëdic 42-43).

[145] Compared to the first production of Lemierre's *La Veuve du Malabar* in 1770, the second one in 1780 enjoyed a far greater success because a magnificent funeral pyre was added on stage and the number of characters multiplied (Mehta 60).

The primary focus is, nevertheless, on the female element in the play. Vasánta.sena, the courtesan, is the most important female character and gets most of the attention. But the role of Charu.datta's wife, named Madhavia by Méry and Nerval (Dhuta in the original), is comparatively much larger in their adaptation than in the original. She appears in the opening scene, and the audience is thus alerted to the fact that Charu.datta is married and has a son, Roha.sena – his identity as a family man is underlined. Madhavia, the wife, is present when Charu.datta first meets Vasánta.sena; she even comments on her beauty. As the love story between Vasánta.sena and Charu.datta unfolds, Madhavia is a spectator. Vasánta.sena takes Madhavia's place when the villain Samsthánaka plots to kidnap Charu.datta's wife as revenge for Vasánta.sena's preferring Charu.datta to him.[146] She thus saves Madhavia's life. Her selfless act is rewarded when, at the end of the play, Madhavia invites Vasánta.sena to be her "sister"; in other words, Charu.datta's second wife. There was no religious or legal prohibition against polygamy in India until the mid-twentieth century but the legitimation of an adulterous relationship with a courtesan is quite scandalous by nineteenth-century French societal standards.

The nineteenth century French approach to prostitution in all its forms exhibits a striking dichotomy. One the one hand, officialdom sought to keep it invisible and regulated (Bernheimer 16). On the other, artists (e.g. Manet, Degas) and littérateurs (e.g. Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862), Zola's *Nana* (1880)) kept the spotlight trained on the women at different levels of the profession, drawing attention to their existence, their suffering and also to their

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[146] In order to avoid bringing Áryaka and the political plot into their story, Méry and Nerval use the cart for Madhavia's kidnapping. Vasánta.sena takes her place, which then enables the scene in the garden where Samsthánaka tries to kill Vasánta.sena for rejecting him. Méry and Nerval change the strangulation to stabbing and contrive that Charu.datta finds her there, and is, in turn, found by the guards with her blood on his hands.

pernicious effect on society (Balzac's *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838-1847)). Courtesans did figure on stage and were presented sympathetically, but not to the extent that Vasánta.sena is. One such example is that of *Jenny l'ouvrière* by Adrien Decourcelle and Jules Barbier (1850), but this play, like others, still proclaimed the iniquity of the courtesan's life. In *Jenny l'ouvrière,* Jenny marries the only man to whom she served as mistress in order to redeem herself in her father's eyes. Even when she lived an immoral life, it was monogamous and for a short while. There were also courtesan-authored memoirs, such as Céleste Mogador's *Adieu au monde* (1850) that attempted to challenge masculine hegemony over women's voices, but these books were roundly condemned. Charles Bernheimer, in his *Figures of Ill repute* (1989) summarizes the trend prevailing in nineteenth-century literature:

> In the Romantic literary tradition from Rousseau through Sue, the figure of the reformed prostitute is plotted to support a conservative patriarchal ideology. The destabilizing force of the prostitute's erotic body can be safely evoked, if only in disguised or displaced manner, because the narration is structured to contain and discipline her unruly energy. The loving prostitute exemplifies the renunciation of a predatory female sexuality in submission to paternal Law. Thus, Lauretta Pisana is securely quarantined in her convent, Marion de Lorme is abandoned to her mourning, Fleur-de-Marie, though a princess, is consumed with morbid guilt and dies. (52)

According to Bernheimer, the prostitute is "never sufficiently reformed" (52). In comparison to the other famous literary courtesans of the time, such as Marion Delorme in Victor Hugo's eponymous play (1831) or Marguerite Gautier in *La Dame aux camélias* (1852) by Alexandre Dumas *fils,* Vasánta.sena enjoys a vastly superior fate. She is not condemned or killed off to appease French sensibilities, neither does she need to defend her past. She is united with her lover and is elevated to the status of his wife, all with the support of the first wife. While a French courtesan was shown as a threat to society, a

foreign one was treated sympathetically by Nerval and Méry.

The playwrights attempt to justify this deviation from nineteenth-century literary and social norms in the postface to the play. Méry and Nerval do this by ignoring Vasánta.sena's pivotal role in the play entirely. Deflecting attention from her to Charu.datta, they address the "reproche fondé sur l'amour conçu par l'honnête Tcharoudatta pour une courtisane" (213). In an attempt to excuse his moral lapse, they first attribute it to a different cultural environment "où *ces femmes* sont autrement considérées qu'en Europe" (213, emphasis added), i.e. Charu.datta was not as degenerate as one might suppose. Lest this grant undue respectability to a courtesan, even one far away, Méry and Nerval add that Vasánta.sena is nevertheless not considered the equal of Madhavia, who belongs to a superior caste.[147] As for Charu.datta's falling in love with Vasánta.sena, they cite Boileau's injunction to give great men some human failings: "Toutefois, aux grands cœurs donnez quelque faiblesses" (214). Méry and Nerval present Charu.datta's falling in love with a courtesan as an exceptional action and a pardonable weakness. Charu.datta is absolved of his "weakness" by virtue of his perceived moral superiority in other areas. Méry and Nerval's entire explanation focuses attention on Charu.datta. Within their play, however, it is the women who take the initiative more than once, and are the real protagonists. Vasánta.sena courts Charu.datta, and Madhavia figures out how to repay Vasánta.sena when the latter's jewelry, deposited with Charu.datta, is stolen. A close reading of the play shows Charu.datta to be a rather passive character, someone to whom things happen. When Charu.datta hears that his wife is about to jump into the funeral pyre, he faints. It is for

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[147] This is another example of French class-consciousness. When it came to Amany and her troupe, the French highlighted the dancers' superior caste vis-à-vis the musicians. Here, Madhavia is shown as higher in caste.

Vasánta.sena to revive him and make him hurry to save his wife. It must be admitted, though, that at the end of the play, Charu.datta stands his ground and insists on forgiving Samsthánaka, even though everyone around him wants the villain punished. Charu.datta's character traits, i.e. his nobleness, his generosity, his gentleness, make him the hero of the play, rather than his acts. Charu.datta is further glorified when they cite a reviewer who compared Charu.datta to Christ and Vasánta.sena to Mary Magdalene. Méry and Nerval call Charu.datta "un homme parfait" rendered human by "l'excusable faiblesse de l'amour" (214). The explanation that Méry and Nerval provide reflects the male-dominated and hierarchical society of the time. In *Le Chariot d'enfant*, as in *Le Dieu et la bayadère,* the heroine has to almost die before her past can be erased in order to render her worthy of the male protagonist who is either a divinity or an "homme parfait." In Méry and Nerval's postface, however, the women's qualities or motivations are not even considered; perhaps these are seen as inconsequential. Charu.datta's wife is neither condemned nor admired for accepting Charu.datta's infidelity or for bringing Vasánta.sena into the family: a strange omission, since even if this may have been a common occurrence in ancient India, it was not so in nineteenth-century France.

Méry and Nerval also tackle political issues and other class barriers in the postface. They refer to King Shúdraka, the purported author of the play, as belonging to the Shúdra caste, the lowest caste among Hindus. They allude to a dynasty of Shúdra kings supposedly started by the author Shúdraka, and present the play as referring to historic events, citing M. Lireux of the *Le Constitutionnel* (a literary and political newspaper with liberal and Bonapartist leanings), and William Jones as authorities. Méry and Nerval left out the politically subversive portions of the original in their adaptation in deference to the times; Napoleon III's empire during the 1850s was authoritarian with strict censorship and limited civil liberties. But with their reference to Shúdraka as a historical figure, and by mentioning

the *Constitutionnel*, they nevertheless expose their political views.

Even without including the political content of the original in their adaptation, the love story Méry and Nerval focused on was controversial as it challenged social, cultural and sexual mores. Were the playwrights subtly advocating for acceptance of men straying from their marital vows? Were they pushing for marginalized women to be accepted? Was it more that "Love triumphs over all"? When Charu.datta's and Vasánta.sena's love triumphs, Méry and Nerval present it as a happy ending for all. Vasánta.sena is not punished for being the "other woman" and for threatening social order. The authors also resort to a puzzling subterfuge: in the preface they repeatedly refer to Vasánta.sena as a courtesan, but in the Cast of Characters, she is labeled as a "chanteuse" or singer. Was this a small effort to appease audience sensibilities? The term also points to an implicit equivalence: a "chanteuse" as a euphemism for courtesan. On the one hand, Méry and Nerval insist on the closeness between ancient Indian and contemporary French cultures, disregard the intervening centuries, explicitly say that man is the same in every age, and remark that the time when the play was composed seems to belong to a highly advanced civilization. On the other hand, they emphasize the spatial, temporal and cultural distance and attribute the difference in the treatment of women to this distance.

4.4.4 Reception

Critics responded to this "Marion Delorme en sari," in various ways, not often complimentary (Brix and Le Couëdic 43). Théophile Gautier, a good friend of Méry and Nerval, praises it highly. In the announcement for the play in *La Presse,* he draws attention to the age of the play, its parallels with Christian values, and the class struggles it depicts. He also mentions the topicality: "Il semble que la civilisation orientale, à cette époque, qui coïncide avec la réforme bouddhiste, ait présenté les mêmes phases que nos révolutions actuelles " ("Le Chariot" 259-60). He of course mentions the exotic setting: "les villes, les

palais, les forêts mystérieuses de l'Inde." He does not, in the announcement, mention the fact that the play is about a courtesan (which the playwrights focused on), but instead mentions the political and social parallels (which the playwrights were at pains to avoid in the play). Thus, even before the play was performed, the stage was set for its reception as a "revolutionary" play. A month after the announcement, Gautier reviewed the play for *La Presse.* The review functions as an affirmation of Gautier's scholarship and knowledge of India rather than a critical analysis. His poetic description is more lyrical than Méry and Nerval's verses:

> C'est ce mélange de grandeur et de naïveté, cette grâce efféminée et voluptueuse, cette langueur d'amour, cette profusion de parfums, ces ruissellements de perles, ces bruits d'ailes d'oiseaux, ces épanouissemens de comparaisons fleuries, tout ce luxe indien délicat et barbare qui font du drame de Méry et de Gérard une pagode sculptée en vers. ("Le Chariot" 270) [148]

Even though overt political content was missing in Méry and Nerval's adaptation, political debate surged outside of the theater and implicated the play. Pierre Bocage, the director at the Odéon, was a well-known Romantic actor and a man of republican sympathies. He had contested the 1848 elections under Lamartine's banner. In 1850, when he staged *Le Chariot d'enfant,* he was under close scrutiny by the authorities, since the Odéon received subsidies from the government. In general, newspapers with republican sympathies published favorable reviews of the play, including Paul de Musset in *National*, and Paul Meurice in *L'Événement.* Édouard Thierry in *L'Assemblée Nationale* and Thomas

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[148] Gautier includes "barbare" or a similar adjective in any description of India, giving his otherwise complimentary descriptions tinges of negativity and otherness; describing India as "barbare" would also render it more thrilling for his audiences.

Sauvage in the *Moniteur Universel* were extremely hostile towards Pierre Bocage.[149] Ultimately, the director was dismissed, the theater itself was closed on 30 May 1850, and all representations of *Le Chariot d'enfant* came to an end. Another favorable review was published after it closed, but this of course did not help. There had also been several satirical reviews appearing in papers like *La Caricature* which posted hilarious stories about Shúdraka being reincarnated and walking the streets. *Le Chariot* did create waves when it was performed, and might have had more success if political machinations designed to get rid of Bocage had not interfered. Most importantly, Méry's liberal and Bonapartiste leanings in his youth caught up with him in Pontmartin's famous review in *La Revue des deux mondes* of 15 May 1850, which implied that Méry's rhymes and epigrams had converted Shúdraka's play to a revolutionary one: ". . . une serre chaude où croissent et prospèrent, à l'abri de l'air extérieur, les tirades démocratiques et les maximes républicaines" (Brix and Le Couëdic 54).[150] This review succeeded in affixing the "revolutionary" label to the play from which it would never be decoupled. The audience supported this interpretation: ". . . le public salua surtout au passage les allusions aux méfaits des souverains et des ministres, et les théories démocratiques de Sarvilaka qui reprend aux grands personnages ce qu'ils ont pris au pauvre peuple" (Lévi "Théâtre Indien à Paris" 826). Pontmartin refers to the audience as "ce public inflammable, qui se fait jouer la *Marseillaise* dans les entr'actes!" (Lévi "Théâtre Indien à Paris" 826) The authors' own

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[149] All press reviews mentioned here are based on the introduction by Brix and Le Couëdic.

[150] Armand de Pontmartin (1811-1899) had a popular column, *Causeries du samedi* (similar to Sainte-Beuve's *Causeries du lundi).* Gérard Gengembre describes him as royalist, someone who "revendique l'autorité critique et se donne pour mission la 'réparation sociale et morale de la littérature'" (81). Pontmartin's review in *La Revue des deux mondes* is widely cited: among others, by Lévi and Barrucand in 1895, and by the editors of the 2002 edition of Méry and Nerval's play.

comments in the postface reported above only appeared in print after the play was performed, and as a response to the reviews, indicating that the reviewers who called the play "revolutionary" did so without the authors' explicit references to Shúdraka. Given the familiarity reviewers exhibited with Shúdraka's play, it was easy enough for them to find traces of its revolutionary content in Méry and Nerval's *fleuriste* adaptation; it was removing political associations that was impossible.

4.5 BARRUCAND'S *LE CHARIOT DE TERRE CUITE*

4.5.1 Victor Barrucand and His Collaborators

Victor Barrucand's *Le Chariot de terre cuite* was first performed on 22 January 1895 by the experimental theater company, the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*. Lugné-Poë was the director. Toulouse-Lautrec, André and Valtat designed the sets, and costumes were provided by the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*. There was a short lecture explaining the background of the play by Symbolist writer, critic and translator Téodor Wyzewa before the show.

Victor Barrucand preferred a literal translation of the Sanskrit title *Mṛichhakaṭikā*, and called his version *Le Chariot de terre cuite*. Barrucand's adaptation owes a lot of its interest to the individuals involved in the production. As with Méry and Nerval's romantic version of *The Little Clay Cart,* external circumstances and personalities contributed to politicizing Barrucand's play even more. The association of well-known political figures of the time such as Félix Fénéon and Lugné-Poë with Barrucand's production heavily influenced its reception. Brief background information on these figures, in addition to Barrucand, will therefore be provided.

Victor Barrucand (1864 to 1934) was a writer, poet, journalist and political activist. Barrucand was closely associated with *La Revue Blanche,* a prominent art and literary

magazine during the last years of the nineteenth century. His generous and utopian ideals (he advocated distribution of free bread to the masses) led him to fight for the less-fortunate in society. A staunch Dreyfusard, he wrote against anti-Semitic movements in France and Algeria. While in Algeria, he became aware of the abuses of colonization and fought against them, using journalism as his primary weapon. He first contributed to *Les Nouvelles,* after which he resuscitated a defunct newspaper, *L'Akhbar,* and made it the first bilingual newspaper in Algeria. He was seen as a "trouble-fête non respectueux" by all parties, and was unpopular among the French because of his relentless efforts to fight for the "indigènes" (Drouot and Vergniot 33). Among Barrucand's works were several collections of poetry, and a novel, *Avec le feu* (1900), which has been republished in 2005 and 2010. He is also known for posthumously publishing the works of Isabelle Eberhardt (1877-1904), a controversial explorer and author. According to modern scholars Christine Drouot and Olivier Vergniot, "Barrucand a payé par l'oubli le fait d'avoir été à l'avant-garde" (34).[151]

The director, Aurélien-François-Marie Lugné, commonly known as Lugné-Poë, was a French actor and theatrical producer who founded the celebrated theater company, the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre.* He headed the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* between 1892 and 1929. He put on plays by Maurice Maeterlinck, Henry Ibsen and Paul Claudel, among others, and is credited with discovering Alfred Jarry. As "a brilliant promoter of budding playwrights, he made significant contributions to the development of the French theatre by producing modern masterpieces by Continental authors, especially in the Symbolist mode" ("Aurélien Lugné-

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[151] Victor Barrucand is now receiving some attention for his role in Algeria. Historian Céline Keller's dissertation is titled "*Victor Barrucand (1864-1934), écrivain, esthète et militant en Algérie*" (2010). Keller continues to publish articles on Barrucand.

Poë" *EB)*. Modern scholar C.A. Swanson highlights Lugné-Poë's wider world-view: ". . . his specialty was the revelation to the French public of the outstanding dramatists of every foreign land that boasted a theater" (133). The *Théâtre de Œuvre* was connected with several known members of the anarchist movement, albeit the literary ones, Hérold and Barrucand among them. The theater was a private one where subscribers bought tickets for the entire season, and tickets for single shows were not sold.[152] Sylvain Lévi describes the "public habituel" of the *Théâtre de Œuvre* in 1895 as "un auditoire de novateurs résolus, esthètes, modernistes ou symbolistes" ("Théâtre Indien à Paris" 818).

Toulouse-Lautrec designed the playbill, as well as some of the sets. The face on the playbill was that of Felix Fénéon, who also introduced the play, draped in a sari.

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[152] According to the website of the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*, the theater worked on a rather unusual basis in 1920: "Aucune publicité, aucune vedette, les critiques sont reçues mais non invitées. On reste entre amis: acteurs, gens de lettres, public d'abonnés. . ." As a press article in 1895 mentions the functioning of the theater on a subscription basis I think is quite likely that the other aspects noted in 1920 applied in 1895 as well.

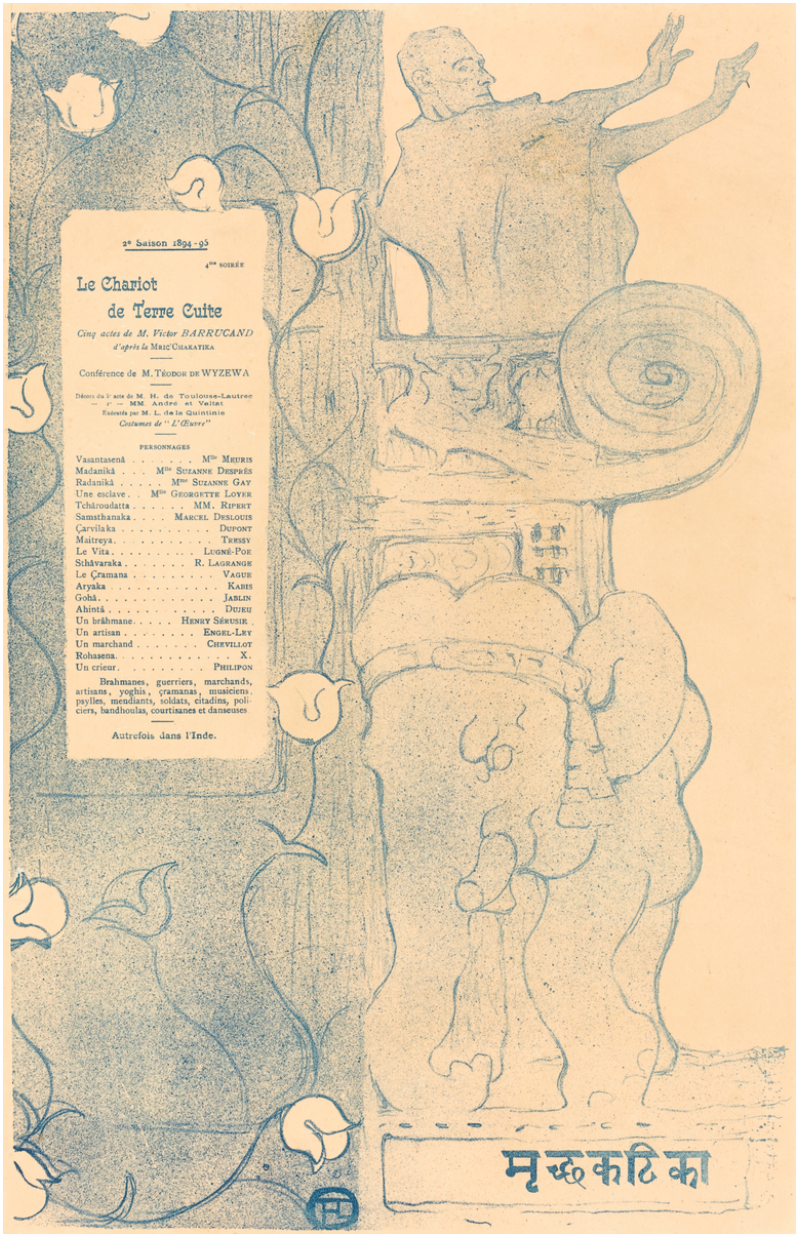

Figure 29. *Le Chariot de Terre Cuite* playbill by Toulouse Lautrec, featuring Félix Fénéon. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

Fénéon was one of the thirty people on trial for anarchism as a part of the famous "Procès des trente" in 1894.[153] Fénéon was acquitted, as were most of the accused. Fénéon's face on

[153] Fénéon's witty responses when questioned at the trial became legendary. Mallarmé spoke up in Fénéon's defense, upon the latter's arrest for the bombing of the Foyot restaurant in April 1894.

the playbill, with its characteristic goatee, was widely recognizable, given the notoriety afforded by the recent trial. Wyzewa's lecture before the performance also emphasized that the play was "absolument révolutionnaire" (Fouquier). Thus, even before considering the content of the play, *Le Chariot de terre cuite* was surrounded by political notoriety. This was further enhanced by Barrucand's own preface, which reads like a political manifesto enveloped in scholarly erudition.

4.5.2 Antecedents and Approach

There are three themes covered in depth in Barrucand's preface. One is the historical background of the discovery of Sanskrit texts, along with a comprehensive description of Sanskrit theatre practices. Barrucand takes pains to prove his extensive knowledge as well as his efforts to do justice to the original. His preface is full of Sanskrit terms; he summarizes all the research done up to that point and establishes the credentials of ancient Indian theater to assure audiences that they are reading a play that is worthy of their attention. The second theme is the political nature of the play itself and the various institutions it criticizes viz. the caste system and authoritarian government. The third is a treatise on Buddhism and its egalitarian and humanitarian precepts. Barrucand relies heavily on Michel Kerbaker, an Italian scholar of Sanskrit, who translated the first act of *The Little Clay Cart* into Italian in 1872. Barrucand's preface contains more than seven pages

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Implying that literature is more effective at undermining the system than violent weapons, Mallarmé is reported to have stated, in an interview published in *Le Soir,* 27 May 1894 " . . . il n'y avait pas, pour Fénéon, de meilleurs détonateurs que ses articles. Et je ne pense pas qu'on puisse se servir d'arme plus efficace que la littérature" (*Correspondance* 6: 287; also qtd. in translation in Lloyd 213).

devoted to Kerbaker's views. These reveal a Buddhist interpretation of the play and a criticism of Brahmanism. Brahmanism with its rigid caste system, and contemplative, ascetic philosophy was not concerned with the wellbeing of the common man, he says, citing Michel Kerbaker (28). Using Kerbaker to support his views on Shúdraka's intentions, Barrucand reveals his admiration and support for the liberal ideas he sees in *The Little Clay Cart*: "C'est vraiment une chose remarquable que la liberté antibrahmanique avec laquelle le drame indien place souvent le mérite personnel au-dessus des titres légaux de la richesse et de la naissance, exaltant les petits et les faibles, et couvrant de ridicule les personnages honorés et qualifiés" (32). The anti-establishmentarianism that Barrucand lauds is echoed in his own outspokenness, both in this play and in his journalistic activities. Writing in the more liberal *belle époque*, he does not show the political prudence that Méry and Nerval were constrained to earlier in the century.

Pontmartin's review of Méry and Nerval's play, which granted it a "revolutionary" label, had a long-lasting effect; Barrucand explicitly refers to it half a century later, and says Pontmartin made an error in blaming Méry and Nerval. He asserts that they did not deform the play by making it political; it is innately so, he declares, using Kerbaker as a neutral authority. At the outset, Barrucand affirms that he has chosen the play because the king alleged to be the author of the play, Shúdraka, "conservait encore un esprit militant d'un intérêt actuel" and continues, ". . . bien recevable dans notre société organisée, hiérarchisée, basée sur les privilèges et le monopole, comme l'était l'Inde brahmanique." He uses italics to emphasize the low-caste origins of the legendary Shúdraka ". . . *qui appartient à la classe des artisans."* He goes on to clarify that " . . . je n'ai point voulu diriger les flèches du Soûdra contre les institutions occidentales; l'ironie, c'est qu'elles y atteignent" (25). Barrucand's description of the hegemony of class and privilege strikes close to home, more so as he explicitly draws parallels between Brahmanical society and contemporary French society.

Barrucand does not hide that it is not just Shúdraka who advocates the overthrow of the existing order, it is Barrucand himself.

4.5.3 Plot and Staging

Like Méry and Nerval, Barrucand shortens and simplifies Shúdraka's extremely long and complex play, adapting it to the exigencies of French theater, as well as to his political beliefs. Charu.datta and Vasánta.sena's love story is integral to the plot, so he retains it, but he makes the love story as simple and linear as he can by removing all frills, Charu.datta's wife for one. She is conspicuously absent from the stage and does not even appear in the Cast of Characters. Charu.datta's son Roha.sena is present, as it is his toy cart that lends the play its name – he cannot be easily removed. The adulterous nature of Charu.datta's relationship with Vasánta.sena is, however, simply glossed over as a non-event. Barrucand gallantly places Vasánta.sena and the other female characters at the top of his Cast of Characters, and then proceeds to relegate them to a secondary level of importance without a qualm (which is the opposite of what Méry and Nerval do with their Cast List). In a political agenda like Barrucand's, women did not really play a role. Unlike Méry and Nerval's female-centric version of the plot, Barrucand constructs his play around Charu.datta as a great and good man. Barrucand carries out the key changes in his plot by subtly altering the characters to make them more in line with his ideals. Charu.datta is already painted by Shúdraka as philanthropic (his generosity during his glory days made him fall on hard times) and forgiving (he forgives his worst enemy, the corrupt court official who conspired to have him killed). Barrucand underlines that these qualities epitomize the Buddhist ideals of charity, compassion and generosity, even though Charu.datta is born a Brahmin. Buddhism and anarchism are shown to have parallels: "en émancipant leur esprit de l'autorité écrite et des traditions, elle suscite hors la négation de tout ordre préétabli le

principe de l'égalité et de la solidarité de tous contre les distinctions et privilèges de caste" (31). In keeping with this philosophy, Barrucand's Charu.datta, unlike Shúdraka's, rejects political office saying, "Il est aussi pénible à l'homme généreux de commander que d'obéir" (267). Sylvain Lévi's observations on the play are extremely valuable as they give us an insight into how a member of the audience and a contemporary expert in Sanskrit studies viewed this adaptation. Lévi finds that Vasánta.sena is more sympathetic to social outcasts and Shárvilaka, the thief, is more strident and bitter than in the original (827). He is portrayed as an anarchist " . . . un individualiste farouche, un anarchiste à la façon de 1894, une sorte d'Emile Henry en turban" (Robichez 312).[154] As for form, Barrucand's play is in prose. His characters have many in-depth conversations on politics and religion. Barrucand tries to make his case for social justice and the anarchist credo. According to Lévi, "Ses personnages, élevés à la même école, professent une commune doctrine: le dédain des lois, le mépris de la foule, la haine de l'autorité, l'orgueil farouche de l'indépendance" ("Théâtre Indien à Paris" 827). Shárvilaka exhorts the crowd to prevent Charu.datta's execution despite the court's ruling: "si vous étiez des hommes et non des enfants, vous marcheriez seuls et droits devant votre conscience." He does not trust them to do so, however: "Mais si je dis: N'acceptez d'autre tribunal de justice que celui de votre conscience—vous ne me comprendrez pas, car votre conscience est muette ou bien la justice n'y réside pas" (Barrucand 233-34). Despite Barrucand's sympathy for the poor and the suffering, it is tinged with bitterness at their refusal to think for themselves. Shárvilaka expresses contempt for the public at large: "Ce peuple d'aboyeurs est resté le même," he says, as the

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[154] Émile Henry was an anarchist, arrested and guillotined in 1894 (at the age of 21). He had set off a bomb in a busy café at the Gare Saint Lazare. At his trial, he was very vocal about societal injustices and corruption.

crowd cheers Áryaka after the coup (264).

The production itself was low-key. The sets were minimal due to the limited resources of the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*. The costumes for the crowd scenes were a rag-tag medley of whatever the actors could find. Some of them were covered mostly in paint: ". . . des bras, des jambes, des torses nus, barbouillés d'ocre ou de fusain" (Lévi "Théâtre Indien à Paris" 819). The grandeur of Vasánta.sena's palace was not shown. Thus, the production did not rely on any of the usual attractions of the exotic, such as spectacular sets or fancy costumes.

4.5.4 Reception

Mallarmé admired the "à-propos miraculeux du poème" (cited in the preface to the 1928 edition from a letter to Barrucand). Sylvain Lévi was also admiring of the way Barrucand had tailored it to existing circumstances. Lévi's educated opinion was that "Le succès, une fois de plus, a couronné l'audace. . . . L'intelligence et le goût du directeur, M. Lugné-Poe, ont tiré un parti surprenant de ressources modiques" ("Théâtre Indien à Paris" 818). Henry Fouquier finds Charu.datta's Buddhist generosity and forgiveness appealing "en notre temps de dénigrement, d'égoïsme avide et de haine féroce," a scathing indictment of late nineteenth century France.[155] He finds Charu.datta speaking "le langage du Christ" and, while admitting the revolutionary tone of the play, contends that the play "essaie d'y faire entrer un peu d'équité et de pitié."

Other reviewers, however, were more disapproving. They found that "Barrucand avait obéi à un souci d'actualité politique qui défigurait l'antique comédie" (Robichez 313). Along with the "anarchist" label, another adjective that accompanied Barrucand's *Le Chariot de Terre Cuite* was "scandalous." Unlike the "anarchist" label, which was intended by the

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[155] A description, however, that has universal and timeless validity.

author, the second one was a result of lack of funds. There is a mob scene at the end of the play when Charu.datta is about to be executed. The crowds for this scene were garbed in motley garments: ". . . beaucoup de foulards russes, d'écharpes roumaines, de dessus de lit algériens, de robes japonaises, quelques armures, quelques tapis de la place Clichy et même—tout arrive—des châles des Indes. . ." and, inspiring hilarity, ". . . l'un, ne craignant pas l'anachronisme, avait conservé son pince-nez." The crowds in the mob scene were unified in that were all covered in yellow pigment, not having the funds to wear "le classique maillot couleur chair." This was a major scandal: "C'est la première fois . . . que j'ai vu des hommes marcher tout nus sur la scène" (all citations from different reviews cited by Robichez 313). Lévi is more forgiving; he mentions the lack of costumes, but contends that "le public de l'Œuvre, moins épris de plastique et de couleur que de doctrine, a surtout applaudi . . . M. Victor Barrucand" ("Théâtre indien à Paris" 819). On Paul-Henri Bourrelier's blog, the play is described as a "représentation qui fait scandale par son message libertaire et la présence sur scène de figurants demi nus " (16 Feb. 2009). It is ironic that a strongly held political conviction expressed in no uncertain manner, in print, through art, and through theater, was taken to task more for scandalous costumes than for its message. Is it because the anarchist content was expected from Barrucand and Fénéon, but the (male) nudity shocked longstanding social conventions that are more strongly held?

4.5.5 *Le Chariot d'enfant* vs. *Le Chariot de terre cuite*: Different Times, Divergent Approaches

Mṛichhakaṭikā, *The Little Clay Cart,* as staged in France in 1850 and in 1895 reveals the turbulent nature of French society during the century. However differently interpreted by Barrucand and by Nerval/Méry, the *Little Clay Cart* was a subversive work when it was first written, and millennia later, it was still found to be so. The migration of the play from Ujjáyini to Paris covered vast geographical distance and thousands of years. But parallels

abound: as Barrucand points out, fifth century Ujjáyini appears to be quite similar to nineteenth century France, exhibiting rigid hierarchy and class inequalities, nepotism and corruption. The authors are highly class conscious: Méry, Nerval and Barrucand emphasize the probable low-caste antecedents of King Shúdraka, based on the inclusion of Shúdra in his name.[156] But the authors take contradictory approaches. Méry and Nerval mention class differences by saying that Vasánta.sena was not the equal of Charu.datta's lawfully wedded wife, "femme d'une caste supérieure," while Barrucand's assertion is that caste does not really matter, as Charu.datta is more Buddhist in action even though a Brahmin by birth. Barrucand's Vasánta.sena is also kinder to those below her. All those centuries ago, Shúdraka advocated the overthrow of the established order through religious and political revolution; Barrucand, in his own life and actions, proposes a similar solution to France's problems. Shúdraka glosses over the violence inherent in any revolution and underlines Charu.datta's mercy and compassion towards his erstwhile enemies. These are qualities that the French playwrights also promoted: Méry and Nerval for women considered beyond the pale, Barrucand in a broader social and political sense.

The translators also transform language and register in different ways. The two French translations are diametrically opposed in approach in the manner in which they respond to the original's usage of both prose and verse (the usage of both Sanskrit and Prakrit as class differentiators is ignored). Méry and Nerval avoid political minefields, focus on the love story, use verse, and add in a song. Verse here serves to render it lighter, more entertaining, and less profound. Barrucand focuses on his political message and uses prose

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[156] Curiously, Acharya's introduction to the 2009 translation of the play does not make any reference to Shúdraka's caste, or allude to the inclusion of Shúdra in the name. I am unsure if it is seen as self-evident or as unfounded.

that emphasizes a more serious and philosophical interpretation. In both French versions, language is manipulated, albeit in different ways, both from each other and from the original.

Another area of manipulation is the juxtaposition/opposition of Indian and French cultural identities. In the preface and/or postface to the plays, the translators are at pains to draw parallels between both cultures: between Buddhism and Christianity, the comparably highly evolved degree of civilization, common racial origins, etc. At the same time, they play up the exotic aspects that clearly separate the two cultures. Méry and Nerval explicitly state that Vasánta.sena's rehabilitation was permissible only because it was in a different and faraway culture. Nevertheless, the seeds of an idea have been sown; anyone, even a courtesan or a thief, can be a good person, can fall in love and be a worthy mate. Barrucand creates the cultural distance he needs for his ideas to be acceptable through sets that emphasize the otherness and the exoticism of the performance. He also prominently displays the name of the play—*Mṛichhakaṭikā*—in Sanskrit script on playbills and the printed cover. The face on the playbill is however, that of a recognizable anarchist.[157] One sees a tension here between the effort to assimilate identities and to benefit from the protection that a distance from the Other provides. Both French versions took the complex work that was the *Mṛichhakaṭikā* and adapted it into two quite different plays, both in their own ways controversial. Lévi sums up the Romantic and Symbolist versions, half a century apart: "Le romantisme a lu dans le drame . . . la réhabilitation de la courtisane par le repentir et l'expiation; un littérateur contemporain en tire la glorification des conditions irrégulières" (828).

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[157] Fénéon's profile is a famous one, immortalized in Paul Signac's Neo-impressionist painting, Opus 217, as well as Toulouse-Lautrec's playbill for *Le Chariot de terre cuite*.

4.6 KALI.DASA'S *ABHIJÑĀNA/ŚĀKUNTALA, THE RECOGNITION OF SHAKÚNTALA*

William Jones's translation of Kali.dasa's *Abhijñāna/śākuntala* in 1789 was a landmark event. It was the first text to be translated directly from Sanskrit, without the intermediary of Persian. It was perhaps the Sanskrit play the most appreciated by European audiences: Figueira estimates that "no fewer than forty-six translations in twelve different languages" followed Jones's translation during the nineteenth century (*Translating* 12). In 1791, Georg Foster translated the play into German. This created a surge of enthusiasm among German intellectuals such as Schlegel, Goethe and Herder. Goethe's verse in the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* of 1791 immortalized Shakúntala and is widely translated and cited:[158]

> Willst du die Blüthen des frühen, die Früchte des späteren Jahres,
> Willst du, was reizt und entzückt, willst du, was sättigt und nährt,
> Willst du den Himmel, die Erde mit Einem Namen begreifen
> Nenn' ich Sakontala dich, und so ist Alles gesagt. (cited in *Translating* 12 and elsewhere)

As with the bayadère, Goethe's poetry rendered Shakúntala irresistible. Abel Bergaigne, notable nineteenth-century Indologist, reproduces Goethe's verse in the preface to his translation, and comments on the great influence that it had on French writers. His translation reads: "Faut-il nommer les fleurs du printemps avec les fruits d'automne, le charme qui enivre avec l'aliment qui rassasie, le ciel avec la terre? C'est ton nom que je prononce, ô Sacountalâ, et ce seul mot dit tout " (III).

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[158] The circle is completed when Rabindranath Tagore, India's poet laureate, uses Goethe's verse to analyze the beauty of Kali.dasa's play.

The character Shakúntala first appears in the Indian epic *Maha.bhárata.*[159] Kali.dasa, elaborated on the story and created his play *The Recognition of Shakúntala.*[160] Kali.dasa's play was so popular that it quite eclipsed the *Maha.bhárata* version and became the default reference to *Shakúntala*. Lamartine was aware of the two instances and devotes a long section in his *Cours familier de littérature: un entretien par mois* to discussing *Shakúntala*, both the epic version and Kali.dasa's play: ". . . un chef-d'œuvre de poésie à la fois épique et dramatique, qui réunit dans une seule action ce qu'il y a de plus pastoral dans la Bible, de plus pathétique dans Eschyle, de plus tendre dans Racine. Ce chef d'œuvre est *Sacountala*" (330-1). He adds: "Je crus entrevoir, réuni dans un seul poëte primitif, le triple génie d'Homère, de Théocrite et du Tasse" (338). This extravagant praise from literary greats such as Goethe and Lamartine ensured prestige and celebrity for *Shakúntala*.

4.6.1 Plot

Kali.dasa took a minor episode from the great Indian epic, the *Maha.bhárata*, and dramatized it to create one of the most beguiling literary heroines of all ages and an enduring theatrical work. The plot summary provided here is based on a comprehensive 2006 translation into English of Kali.dasa's play by Somadeva Vasudeva, part of the Clay Sanskrit Library series. Shakúntala, the daughter of the celestial nymph Ménaka and the seer Vishwámitra, is adopted as a baby by the sage Kanva, and brought up in his hermitage. King Dushyánta chances on the hermitage when out hunting, and is welcomed by

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[159] The date of creation and authorship of the *Maha.bhárata* are uncertain, though the sage Vyasa is traditionally named as the poet. Composed of almost 100,000 couplets, it was transmitted orally for centuries before being written. It appeared in its present form circa 400 CE. The *Maha.bhárata* is one of India's two great epic poems, the other being the *Ramáyana* (*EB* accessed Dec. 7, 2017).

[160] Kali.dasa is generally believed to have lived during the 5th century, though this is again uncertain.

Shakúntala as the sage Kanva is absent. The king falls in love with Shakúntala and marries her according to *Gandharva* rites, a marriage by mutual consent. He promises her that any son born to her will be his heir. This is an important concession because even though he has no offspring at that point in time, he does have several wives at his palace. This declaration of intent establishes Shakúntala's preeminent status as his queen. Dushyánta gives Shakúntala his signet ring and then goes back to his kingdom, promising to send an escort for her. Soon after, the sage Durvásas visits the hermitage. The lovelorn Shakúntala is lost in thought, dreaming of her absent lover. She does not respond to Durvásas' call or fulfill her sacred duty as a hostess.[161] The irascible sage curses her: whomever she is thinking of will forget all about her. Shakúntala's companions at the hermitage rush over and beg him for forgiveness on her behalf – he softens the effects of the curse, saying that a token of recognition can break the curse. Shakúntala's friends, not wishing to worry her, do not tell her about the curse. Kanva returns to the hermitage, and when apprised of the situation, decides to send Shakúntala, who is pregnant, to the king's capital, Hastína.pura, along with an entourage from the hermitage. The scene of leave-taking, as Shakúntala bids goodbye to her family and the flora and fauna at the hermitage is one of the most lyrical and moving episodes in the play. On the way to the capital city, Shakúntala, as she washes in a stream, loses the ring. When the contingent from the hermitage reaches the palace, the king is welcoming and respectful, but curious about the reason for their visit. Dushyánta has forgotten all about Shakúntala. Seeing her so beautiful, but showing signs of pregnancy, he refuses to accept "another man's wife," even though he is tempted by her beauty. When

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[161] "*Atithee devo bhavah*" which translates to "A guest is equivalent to God" is a precept from Hindu scripture, signifying the importance of hospitality towards a guest. When Shakúntala neglected this duty, she committed a serious breach of custom.

asked for proof of her story, Shakúntala looks for the ring, but cannot find it. The king is inflexible. Shakúntala is crushed at the king's rejection, and calls out in prayer as she leaves the court. Her mother, the celestial Ménaka, appears in a flash of light and whisks her away. Shakúntala disappears, not to reappear till the end of the play.

In the meantime, a fisherman finds the king's signet ring in the innards of a fish, and brings it to the king. At the sight, the king regains his memory, and is racked by guilt and remorse for having rejected Shakúntala. He still does not have any offspring by his other queens, and is therefore without an heir, which adds to his sorrow.

Years pass, and King Dushyánta is requested by his celestial friend, Indra, to fight a demon for him. He is victorious in this, and on his way back from the heavens, stops at Golden Peak, a mountaintop that is reputed to be a holy place. There he meets a young boy playing with a lion. The boy bears a startling resemblance to the king, and identifies himself as a scion of the Puru family, King Dushyánta's lineage. Dushyánta is thus re-united with Shakúntala who forgives and accepts him when the role of Durvásas' curse is explained. The child grows up to be a great Emperor, and India gets its Sanskrit name, Bhárata, from him.

Compared to Kali.dasa's elaborate play, the story of Shakúntala in the epic *Maha.bhárata* is a short one. There is no curse to account for King Dushyánta's amnesia; he appears to have simply forgotten about Shakúntala once he returns to his palace and his other queens. After he insults and repudiates Shakúntala, a heavenly voice confirms that her son is indeed his own, and urges him to accept him as his heir. Dushyánta admits that without the external confirmation, there would have been doubts about his heir, and therefore he had to pretend to forget Shakúntala. To stop gossip, he needed the gods to intervene. Once paternity is proved, he joyfully accepts Shakúntala and his son, Bharata.

Kali.dasa fleshes out the characters briefly appearing in the *Maha.bhárata* and justifies their behavior. He adds Durvásas's curse, casting Dushyánta in a more favorable

light. Even the scene in the court when the king refuses to accept Shakúntala is carefully crafted to make it appear as if the king is acting with honor in rejecting her; Dushyánta cannot be faulted for his loss of memory. Durvásas is definitely short-tempered, but when Shakúntala's friends implore him, he does soften his curse. There is no villain in the play; it is fate that decides the course of the characters' lives. Kali.dasa created a fatalistic romance that diluted the strong personalities and free will of the protagonists shown in the epic *Maha.bhárata.* His story had no villains, and therefore no heroes who vanquished them. He created oppositions between the beauty and innocence of nature (the hermitage) and the corrupting influence of the city – a philosophy akin to Rousseau's. In creating a lyrically beautiful, innocent and naïve Shakúntala he perhaps painted the ideal woman of his times, a woman who was always protected and cared for by her father, her companions, her mother… The only time that Shakúntala acts of her own volition is when she marries the king in a private ceremony, without societal presence or approval. She pays a heavy price for this act of agency. Modern historian Romila Thapar sees a decline in the empowerment of women in the transition from the epic story to the play (73). The Shakúntala of the epic is "a forthright, free, assertive, high-spirited young woman who demands that her conditions, as stipulated at her marriage, be fulfilled" (Thapar 38). In Kali.dasa's play, Shakúntala is "shy, retiring and modest." The subservience of a wife to her husband is enunciated at various intervals in the play, by Kanva, and by his disciples when they leave her at the King's court, "because better that a wife be as a servant in the home of her husband, than live away from him" (73). In the epic, paternity and succession were the issues at stake, and were quickly resolved; in the play, it is romantic love which is at the forefront, but with negative implications. Shakúntala's marriage with Dushyánta becomes a shameful one that lacks social legitimacy. Her time as a single mother is spent outside of the earthly realms, in exile from society. Despite the king's love for her, providing the king with an heir is what

rehabilitates her. Kali.dasa's dramatization of a mythological episode channeled his own philosophy and the social dictates of his times. This process was repeated across the ocean centuries later, when his play was performed in France and elsewhere.

Kali.dasa's play follows the dictates of the *Bhárata Nātya.śāstra,* a meticulously detailed treatise on Indian dramatic conventions, composed by the sage Bharata (first century BCE or third century CE). The *Nātya.śāstra* provides specific directions on all aspects of theater. The three unities of time, place and plot, so important to the French classical stage, do not figure in the *Nātya.śāstra*'s precepts. The action in *The Recognition of Shakúntala* takes place over several years, beginning with Dushyánta's visit to Kanva's hermitage and ending when Shakúntala's son is a few years old. As for place, it moves from Kanva's hermitage to Dushyánta's palace, and then to the heavens and in-between: the mythical framework moves the characters around in various dimensions. The Romantic School is more in harmony with Kali.dasa's *œuvre*, as it prizes "the elevation of feeling above reason, in particular the emotions aroused by romantic love; the worship of nature as the proper environment for human life; and the understanding of the individual human soul as the site of universal conflicts" (Williams). Each French translator, however, adapted the play differently according to his own vision and the prevailing times. Eight different translations were published between 1803 and 1896 in France, which included the two successful stage productions: Théophile Gautier's *Sacountalâ* (1858) and Ferdinand Hérold's *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ* (1895).[162]

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[162] Antoine-André Bruguière in 1803, Antoine-Léonard Chézy in 1830, Hippolyte Fauche in 1859-60, Phillippe Edouard Foucaux in 1867, and Abel Bergaigne and Paul Lehugeur in 1884, by Gérard Devèze in 1886-88, and by André-Ferdinand Hérold in 1896 (*Journal of the American Oriental Society* 22: 239-40).

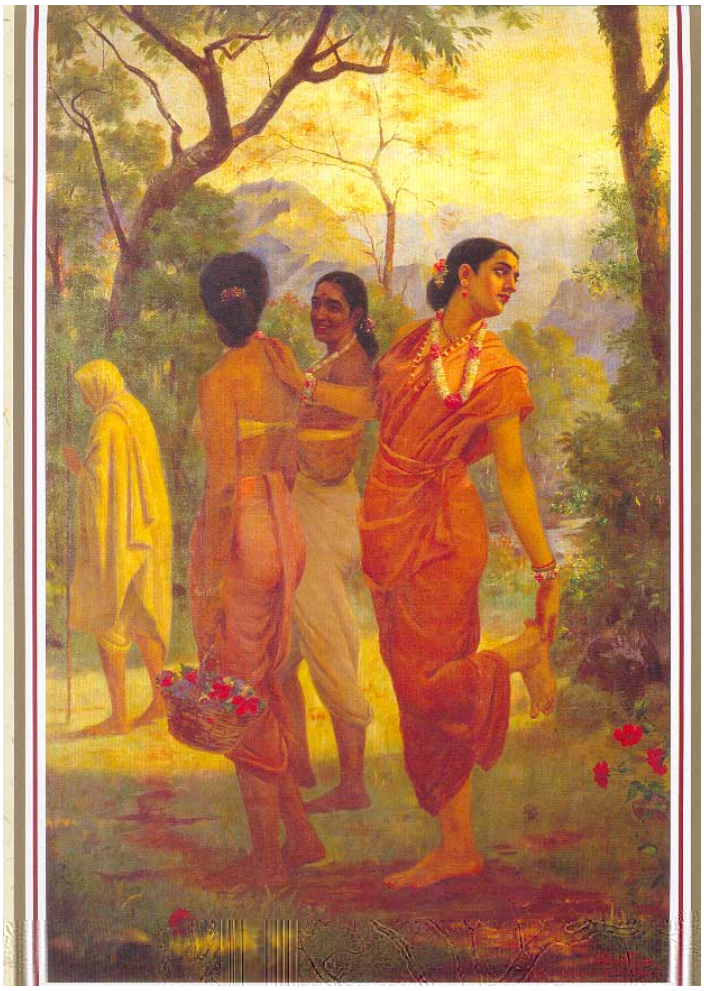

Figure 30. Shakúntala looking back at Dushyánta. By Raja Ravi Varma Kumar c. 1870.[163]

4.7 GAUTIER'S *SACOUNTALÂ*

Like Nerval, Théophile Gautier needs no introduction. Gautier features in this dissertation in various guises, as author, librettist, and journalist. His deep interest in India

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[163] Painted during the height of British power in India, this nineteenth-century Indian depiction of Shakúntala is also a westernized one. Ravi Varma was one of the first Indian artists to use Western techniques in painting. It is interesting that Shakúntala has lighter skin, compared to her friends.

is not fully explored here, but information helpful in analyzing the works of the corpus has been provided.

4.7.1 Antecedents and Approach

India was a natural outlet for Gautier's imagination. Suitably distant, imbued with mystery, Gautier could attribute all the fabulous characteristics he wanted to it. India features in many of his works; among them, *Fortunio*, *Avatar* and *Sacountalâ*. Meeting Amany in 1838 was a highly significant moment. Gautier, in effect, had found his muse. Figueira describes Amany's lasting influence on Gautier's life and the different characters in Gautier's *œuvre* that she inspired (*Exotic* 35, 187). In her words, "His reminiscences of Amani and her troupe are found in almost everything Gautier was to subsequently write. . . . Amani remained in Gautier's memory for the remainder of his life; he evoked her memory thirty-three years later (1871) when describing a performance of acrobats at the Cirque d'Hiver" (187). Ivor Guest, in his introduction to *Gautier on Dance,* concurs: "It was to Amany and the Bayadères that he looked back, twenty years later, when he was adapting Kali.dasa's *Sacountala* for a ballet" (xxv).

Gautier based his ballet on Antoine de Chézy's *La Reconnaissance de Sacountala* (Brix and Le Couëdic 14). In ancient Sanskrit theater, in full-length plays of four or more acts, such as *Shakúntala*, the dramatic poem fuses with music and dance to evoke the aesthetic delight, the *rasa* response desired, as prescribed by the Indian performing tradition (Baumer and Brandon 3).[164] In a ballet such as Gautier's, dance and music don't

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[164] The Sanskrit dramatic tradition is a highly sophisticated and elaborate system that aims to "induce in the spectator a feeling of aesthetic delight (*rasa*), and each element of the production is judiciously chosen and arranged so that this highest aesthetic affect may be achieved through the performance" (Baumer and Brandon xiv).

merely support the performance; they *are* the performance. There is no verbal communication. By re-crafting *The Recognition of Shakúntala* into a western dance form, Gautier avoided several challenges of translation. For instance, the alternating use of prose and verse, and of Prakrit and Sanskrit are no longer issues. The dialogue and the poetry are silenced and the spaces in communication thus created are filled in through other means. The onus is on the dancers, of course, to effectively communicate Gautier's plot to the audience, even though the audience probably has access to a printed synopsis.[165] Cultural context has to be elaborated through various strategies, since what is subliminally understood and accepted by an Indian audience needs to be explained to a French one. For example, in ancient India, a bare stage with minimal props, if any, was adequate to represent a forest or a palace and the audience's imagination would fill in the details. In Gautier's adaptation, ornately designed sets were required to set the tone and transport the audience to the exotic location representing India. Music is another means of communicating otherness. It can evoke the exoticism of the location by being different enough from Western music to seem Indian; however, it needs to be occidental enough to structurally create a framework for the ballet performances. The music, the choreography, and the dancers narrate the story, replacing spoken words with their own system of codification, a language that is understood by an audience that is familiar with it. In *Le Moniteur*, Gautier points out that his dancers are better able to translate Kali.dasa's poetry for the audience than Antoine de Chézy's scholarly efforts:

> M. de Chézy eût été bien étonné de voir Madame Ferraris interpréter couramment le sanscrit et le pãli [sic]]sans faire une faute, et rendre ainsi du bout de ses petits pieds les slokas qui

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[165] As mentioned earlier in chapter 3, the firm Roullet mentions selling *Analyses des pièces de théâtre* at the Opera between 1842 and 1872. It is likely that the synopsis for *Sacountalâ* was also available to audiences.

> lui ont donné tant de peine ; . . . à l'endroit où il fait une note hérissée de variantes, la danseuse commente le passage difficile en fermant à demi les yeux, en se penchant avec une volupté morte sur l'épaule de son danseur, et tout le monde comprend. ("Première Représentation" 378)

Verbal communication relies heavily on auditory or textual input; in a ballet the sensory input is more diverse. The final result is a production that is simultaneously Indian and French - or neither. In the case of Gautier's *Sacountalâ*, it tends towards the latter, being incorporated into a fantasy world that is created by Gautier's imagination.

4.7.2 Plot and Staging

Like the other translators, Gautier makes considerable changes to Kali.dasa's plot as well. He reduces the length from seven acts to two and makes the plot more linear. His adaptation is also more polarized. There are good characters and villainous ones. He creates a symmetrical good vs. evil framework: Kanva's powers are used for good, and Durvásas's for bad. Kali.dasa's Durvásas is a voice in the background, an agent who sets the wheels of fate in motion, and who thereafter disappears from the play. He has no personal enmity with either Kanva or Shakúntala. When Durvásas is affronted, he responds hastily with a curse, and when appealed to, he does what he can to soften the consequences of his short temper. Gautier's Durvásas, on the other hand, is a malevolent force who engages in a power-duel with Kanva, follows Shakúntala to Hastína.pura, the capital city, and does his best to prevent the lovers from reuniting.

Figure 31 Act 1. The hermitage in the forest. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

Figure 32 Act 2. Hastína.pura, Dushyánta's capital . Source: gallica.bnf.fr

The two sets of the ballet echo this opposition of good and evil. The first set is the hermitage, located in the deep forest, where one lives in peace and communion with nature and where love flowers between Shakúntala and the King. The second set is the King's palace in the city, crowded, luxurious and imposing. When Shakúntala is transplanted to a milieu that is not hers, she suffers humiliation. Another symmetrical opposition is created between Hamsati and Shakúntala. Hamsati, the King's favorite wife in the ballet, is a character fleshed out by Gautier (she exists only as a voice in the background in Kali.dasa's version). Fearing Shakúntala as a rival, Hamsati orders the torture and execution of Shakúntala. Gautier employs another India-cliché, that of sati: Shakúntala is to be burned on a funeral pyre.[166] An *apsara* (a celestial singer/dancer like Shakúntala's mother) transforms the flames to flowers and Shakúntala is saved. In the meantime, the fisherman brings in Dushyánta's ring and the king remembers Shakúntala. Hamsati begs forgiveness, which is granted. The ballet ends on a spectacular note with hundreds of cast members celebrating the couple's happiness.

Gautier removes Shakúntala's pregnancy from his storyline. The resolution of the play that Kali.dasa envisaged, i.e. the meeting of Dushyánta with his son, leading to his reconciliation with Shakúntala, is therefore not possible in Gautier's ballet. Figueira postulates that this excision could be due to the "limitations of a obviously pregnant heroine dancing during the repudiation scene" (*Translating* 230), which is quite likely. The simplified plot also allows Gautier to avoid thorny issues of illegitimacy, paternity etc., and focus on a love triangle.

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[166] Since Shakúntala is not a widow and she does not ascend the pyre by choice, this detail by Gautier obfuscates the signification of the rite.

Gautier takes the kernel from Kali.dasa's story and builds his ballet around it. His choice of India as the locale is explained by his fascination with the country and with Amany. He creates a love story with elements of magic, a battle of good vs. evil, and as many spectacular elements as he can dream up. With this ballet, he was able to construct an imaginary, idealized, colorfully exotic dream landscape to illustrate his idea of the perfect ballet:

> Un ballet demande d'éclatantes décorations, des fêtes somptueuses, des costumes galants et magnifiques ; le monde de la féerie est le milieu où se développe le plus facilement une action de ballet. Les sylphides, les salamandres, les ondines, *les bayadères,* les nymphes de toutes les mythologies en sont les personnages obligés. Pour qu'un ballet ait quelque probabilité, il est nécessaire que tout y soit impossible. Plus l'action soit fabuleuse, plus les personnages seront chimériques, moins la vraisemblance sera choquée . . . (*Histoire* 1: 6, emphasis added)

Despite having met Amany, he continues to include bayadères with mythological creatures. In the chimeric world that is Gautier's *Sacountalâ,* anachronisms abound: mythical beings as well as people from different geographical regions and religions are mixed in haphazardly. The corps de ballet comprises *fakirs* (Muslim ascetics) and "huit nègres" alongside the more appropriate *apsaras* (celestial dancers in Hindu mythology), bayadères, déesses, *rakkasas* (sic for *rakshasas*, malignant demons). The sheer scale of the ballet with more than 150 dancers on stage in the first act has all the unreal characters one could wish for, drawn from "toutes les mythologies." Gautier takes a great deal of artistic license with the original. His declaration on the title page that the ballet is "tiré du drame indien de Calidasá" acknowledges that the work is drawn from an existing source, and links his ballet securely to Kali.dasa's *œuvre*. However, the ballet itself exemplifies Gautier's vision of the perfect ballet, not Kali.dasa's dramatic skill. Given the fantastic nature of the ballet, it does not seem likely, either, that Gautier's transformations to the plot were in order to adhere to the three

unities of place, time and plot that French theater prescribed, as some authors—Figueira, Binita Mehta—have suggested. Complying with "vraisemblance" for Gautier meant having as little to do with reality as possible: "Plus l'action soit fabuleuse, plus les personnages seront chimériques, moins la vraisemblance sera choquée . . . " (as cited above).

The extensive re-imagining of Kali.dasa's work to fit into his definition of an ideal ballet leads me to believe that Gautier's intentions were not to faithfully present either India or Kali.dasa's *œuvre* to the French public. It was crucial to differentiate it from contemporary France, but the details of this difference were not very important. Gautier's India was a fantasy world that could easily accommodate Algerian music, fakirs and "nègres," alongside *apsaras* and *rakkasas* (sic). The irreality of the setting was an integral part of his vision. As cited above, he believed that "le monde de la féerie" was the ideal location for a ballet, and that it was necessary that "tout y soit impossible." Insofar as India could be made "féerique," he did so, with his spectacular sets, and his addition of generous doses of magic that included flames that conjured up pictures and a pyre whose flames were transformed into flowers. He also had eight horses galloping across the stage for the opening scene where King Dushyánta, hunting, chances on Kanva's hermitage. Since only two sets were needed, the entire budget could be applied to making them as dazzling as possible (286). The costumes were lavish even though there were more than 350 dancers. In all, he created a spectacle that quite distracted the viewers from the simple plot and any deviations from the original play that critics in the audience might have been familiar with. In contradistinction to the liberties Gautier takes with the plot and the characters are his efforts to add some degree of verisimilitude, through music, costumes and sets. These are described in Gautier's own review of *Sacountalâ* in the press.

4.7.3 Reception

Usurping the role of critic, Gautier changed the author/critic dynamic by playing both roles, speaking to the audience not just through his production, but of his production. A prolific drama critic, Gautier wrote for *Le Moniteur Universel* since 1855.[167] However, in order to justify reviewing his own ballet, Gautier mentions in the article that the usual reviewer having gone on vacation, he, Gautier, felt constrained to write the review himself, as it would otherwise not be covered: "Passer *Sacountalâ* sous silence? Notre amour-propre n'en souffrirait pas; l'auteur d'un livret de ballet est presque étranger à son œuvre, dont tout le mérite revient au chorégraphe, au musicien et au décorateur." ("Première Représentation" 376). Nevertheless, Gautier says, the newspaper has a duty to satisfy the public's curiosity about a performance at the Opera, and not let it pass by silently. Of course, Gautier had himself effectively silenced Kali.dasa's own voice by removing all spoken words; Kali.dasa's vaunted lyricism and his careful crafting of the play through dialogue were reduced to naught. By distancing himself from the ballet and giving his partners in the production all the credit, Gautier can present his point of view in a pseudo-impartial manner.[168] His view is endorsed by David Johnston, who suggests that ". . . given the various strands in theatre, requiring to be decoded by a whole series of different talents—actors, set-designers, directors, choreographers—even the author becomes simply another spectator of his or her own play" ("Pragmatics" 58). However it came about, reviewing the

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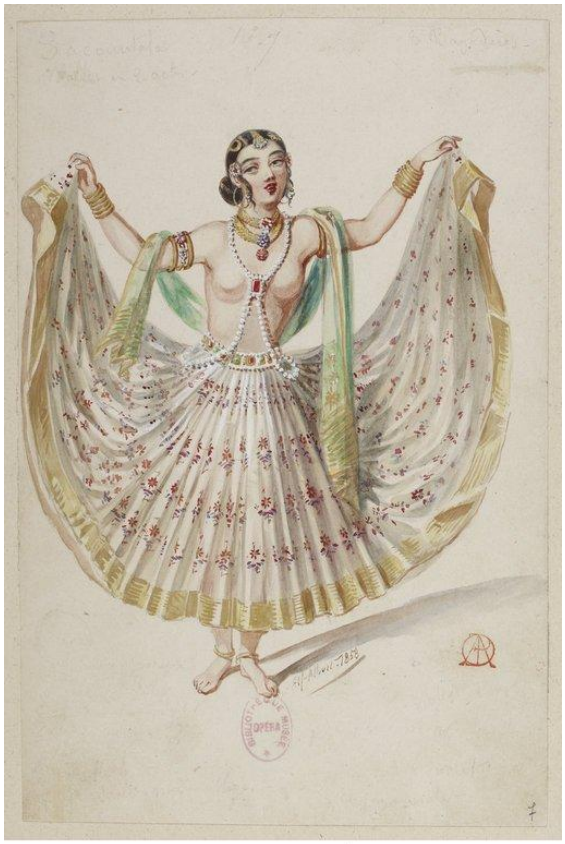
[167] http://www.theophilegautier.fr/biographie-theophile-gautier-49-60/

[168] *La Péri* forms a precedent. In 1843, in his letter to Nerval, Gautier adopts the same reasoning and describes the ballet in detail from the position of an observer, giving credit to the choreographer Jean Coralli, the music composer Friedrich Burgmüller and the principal dancers Carlotta Grisi and Lucien Petipa.

ballet allowed Gautier to explain his choices and satisfy his amour-propre that its many signal accomplishments were not overlooked. And, of course, he could help shape public opinion about the performance.

Crediting Kali.dasa with the basic idea of the ballet, Gautier establishes the honorable credentials of the 'fable'. He sums up his substantial changes to Kali.dasa's *œuvre* and justifies them as well in two succinct sentences, an act of compression that is reminiscent of his treatment of Kali.dasa's magnum opus: " . . . n'ajoutant que les scènes nécessaires pour rendre visible ce qui était en récit dans la pièce, ne retranchant que les voyages mythologiques du roi à la recherche de la Sacountalâ perdue, voyages qui débordaient du cadre ordinaire de deux actes" ("Première Représentation" 376-77). Gautier's vision emphasizes lush visuals at the expense of character development and nuanced plot, making it a more sensory and less cerebral experience. Gautier draws attention to the sets, music and costumes in his review, and underlines their authenticity. However, like most aspects of his ballet, these are approximations at best. The costumes were anachronistic in that they did not belong to the period in which Kali.dasa's play was set, but they did have Indian antecedents, being based on Rajput costumes. Gautier calls Hamsati's costume "splendidement et . . . courageusement exact" (381). The Indian painting of Shakúntala provided earlier gives a basis for comparing the Shakúntala of the Indian imagination (though articulated through western painting techniques) with the French one.



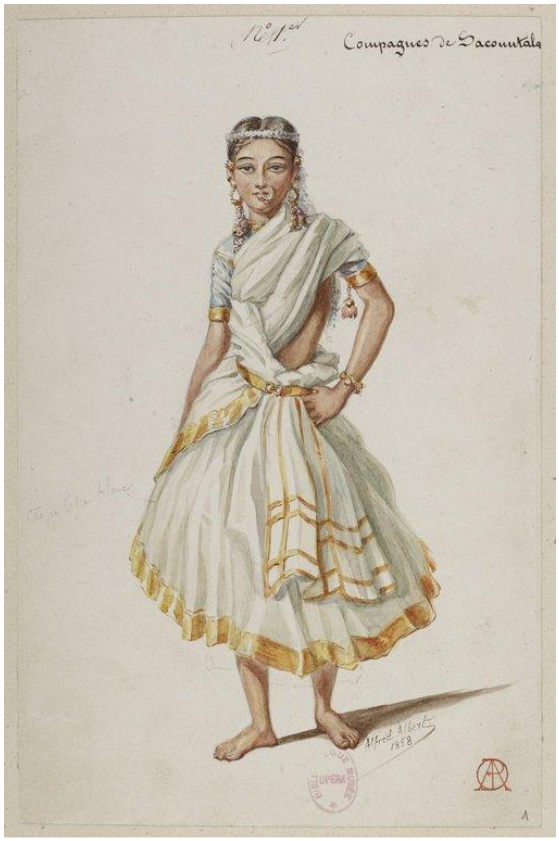


Figure 33 and Figure 34. Shakúntala's costume by Albert and costumes for Shakúntala's companions. Source: gallica.bnf.fr

The biggest attempt at legitimacy in local color was that the sets for the first act were drawn by M. Martin "qui a quinze ans habité l'Inde et s'est approprié les tons de l'ardente palette, dont le soleil là-bas colore les objets" ("Première Représentation" 377). Gautier did not want the Indian forest to resemble "Bas-Bréau [ou le] bois de Vincennes" (377). The emphasis is again on differentiating India from France. The efforts of the set designer result in decoration that is, in his opinion, "une des plus belles qu'on ait vues depuis longtemps à l'Opéra" (379). But the lush vegetation of the Indian forest, is, itself, "bizarre" for French eyes "accoutumés à des frondaisons plus sages" (377). Listing the bushes painted on the backdrops, "Amras, malicas, madhavis . . . " he continues, "mille arbustes ou fleurs dont les noms mélodieux comme de la musique, sembleraient barbares à

nos oreilles accoutumées aux grincements de la bise septentrionale " (377). He indicates an aesthetic conflict between the East and West: the vegetation looks bizarre to French eyes and the names of the bushes and flowers sound barbaric to their ears. He brings this aesthetic judgment into question, however, by implying that what is familiar is regarded as beautiful. By stating that names that sounded barbaric to ears used to the strident noise of the North wind were, in fact, melodious in themselves, was he anticipating that critics would react negatively (as they did), to the outlandish names of the characters in *Sacountalâ,* and trying to disarm them? Or was his calling the Indian names "melodious" and the sounds of the French language as "grincements de la bise" his own tongue-in-cheek swipe at the strange-sounding names? Gautier's description displays both his fascination with India and an acknowledgment of its overwhelming strangeness; his description of India is startlingly reminiscent of the unreal world he proposes as the ideal setting for ballets. Words like "bizarre," "barbare," "étrange" and "monstrueux" feature liberally in his six-page review: "bizarre" itself appears four times. Adjectives such as "gigantesque," "monumental," "immense" and other superlatives of size also give India an overpowering presence, reinforced when he concludes by calling India "cette terre excessive en tout" (380). His extravagant sets with galloping horses et al attempted to convey this excess.

Gautier's praise for the composer, the dancers and others involved in the production is, however, unequivocal. The dancing of Amalia Ferraris comes in for especial praise, as does Ernest Reyer's music. Gautier fancies that Kali.dasa himself would applaud Ferraris's interpretation of Shakúntala, and pretends that his dancers are unique in translating Kali.dasa's poetry in its essentials: " . . . pour la première fois peut-être l'enivrante poésie de Calidaça a été traduite dans son vigoureux parfum, ses langueurs pamées [sic] et ses roucoulements de tourterelle." (378). When he praises the artiste who danced Hamsati, the cruel wife, he says "Aucun détail du luxe bizarre de l'Inde ne l'a effrayée. . . " (381); an

interesting choice of words, since Hamsati's role is to frighten Shakúntala. Gautier's India is bizarre, monstrous and excessive even as it is luxurious. Though frightening, it is tamed and adeptly communicated by French artists to the extent that "Calidasa, si son âme errait dans la salle, a dû l'applaudir de ses deux mains d'ombre" (381).

While Gautier's review is understandably laudatory, other critics did not lag behind in praising the ballet. Since it was a ballet, the focus was transferred to aspects that could be judged competently by French audiences: the composer of the original score and the orchestra that provided the music, the talents of the dancers or the visual impact of the set décor. The music by Ernest Reyer got the most favorable reviews in the press.[169] Jouvin, the reviewer for *Le Figaro,* credited Reyer with the ballet's success: "L'honneur du succès revient de droit et tout entier au musicien" (cited by Binney 294). Reyer was certainly familiar with Eastern music, but his familiarity derived from a long stay in Algeria. There was only one discerning critic, Héquet for the *Illustrateur,* who pointed out that the music had more of an Arab flair than an Indian one (Binney 295). As for Gautier, he states in his review that Reyer created "une musique aussi locale, aussi indienne que possible" ("Première Représentation" 381). On the whole, the press was very favorable to *Sacountalâ*, and Gautier was quite justified when he called it a "rare triomphe" (381).

Edwin Binney, a twentieth-century expert on Gautier's ballets, postulates that the play's reputation prevented critics from being too harsh about the subject of the ballet (292).[170] Kali.dasa's play and the story of Shakúntala were known in literary circles through

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[169] Ernest Reyer also composed the music for Flaubert's *Salammbô.*

[170] Author of *Les ballets de Théophile Gautier* (1965), Binney shared Gautier's passion for India. His collection of manuscript paintings from the Indian subcontinent, regarded as one of the finest in the world, was donated to the San Diego Museum of Art in the late twentieth century: https://www.flickr.com/photos/thesandiegomuseumofartcollection/sets/72157627618651448/

the translation by Antoine-Léonard de Chézy. Lamartine's high praise for Indian theater and Shakúntala helped establish its literary credentials. The media's enthusiasm was not undiluted, however. The unfamiliar and difficult Indian names had critics complaining. Several critics freely mocked them. Binney cites Jouvin of the *Figaro*, who called Dushyánta (Douchmanta in Gautier's version) "en indien, qui a besoin de douches," and Monnier in *Le Journal pour rire* who described Durvásas as having "la tête dure comme un pot" (292). *Galignani's Messenger* felt that "Ces noms orientaux antiques . . . donnent à l'affiche un air ridicule, que le ballet ne mérite pas " (Binney 293). The success of Gautier's ballet does not appear to have been adversely affected by the incomprehensible and unpronounceable names, however. The star dancers did have names that were quite well known to audiences and critics, and these artistes were lauded. Amalia Ferraris in particular, who danced Shakúntala, got rave reviews for her performance.

It is the character of Shakúntala that gives the story its charm and its import. The strong, free, sexually liberated Shakúntala fighting for her child's rights in the Mahabharata was transformed by Kali.dasa into the innocent child of nature who relies on others to speak for her. Who plays Shakúntala and in what manner determines the shape of the story. It was thus with Gautier's ballet as well: *Sacountalâ* was identified with Amalia Ferraris and her performance. Binney remarks that Ferraris was known more for her technical virtuosity than for her dramatic ability (331). Casting her changed the nature of the ballet from a psychological drama to a brilliant expression of dance (286). The audience, however, accepted her without reserve. The identification of Amalia Ferraris with Shakúntala was so strong that once she stopped playing Shakúntala in 1860, Gautier's ballet was no longer staged, even though the last performances had attracted sizeable audiences (Binney 302). As with Taglioni and the bayadère, an Indian iconic image was once again successfully appropriated by a French ballet dancer. However, even when the ballet was no longer

staged, it lingered in public memory. After 1858, any references to *The Recognition of Shakúntala* in the media or subsequent adaptations are usually prefaced with a reminder of Gautier's ballet, indicating that his production is the one most likely to resonate with the reader, even after the passage of years.

4.7.3.1 *Le Pas de l'abeille*

Le pas de l'abeille is a well-known popular dance piece associated with Carlotta Grisi who played the lead role in Gautier's *La Péri* (1843).[171] *La Péri* relates the tale of a fairy who appears in Sultan Achmet's opium dream, and later takes the form of a slave to test his love. Set in Cairo, it features an Oriental harem with odalisques, slaves, and all the trappings of exotic fantasy. Modern scholar Brandstetter describes it as "a specific manifestation of theatrical exoticism. . . . [It] was composed of a mixture of pantomime elements, spirited dancing, erotic veils, and risqué performance" (169).[172]

Gautier is credited with introducing the *pas de l'abeille* into the French ballet repertoire. According to Guest, he "claimed to have heard of such a dance being performed in Egypt" (*Romantic Ballet* 373). In his libretto, Gautier calls it "un pas national connu au Caire sous le nom de *Pas de l'abeille*," and when Nerval was in Cairo, Gautier wrote him a

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[171] Grisi danced the title roles in *Giselle* and *La Sylphide* as well. According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Grisi as an artiste bridged the two branches of Romantic ballet that had been established by the ethereal Taglioni and the dramatic Elssler."

[172] Brandstetter describes a performance by Stasia Napierkowska in 1911. As part of an Oriental scene, Napierkowska danced the *pas de l'abeille*, culminating the scene with a *danse du feu*: "It is a human sacrifice. The captive offers up her life upon an altar of fire, which, gradually enveloping her writhing form brings the release for which she has prayed" (174). This has connotations similar to sati as some early European travelers portrayed it: death is described as escape from a worse fate, but the lexical choices carry underlying hints of sexual release.

letter in which he talked about the *pas de l'abeille*, expecting Nerval to have seen it performed in Cairo "dans toute sa pureté native" (*Histoire* 3: 84, letter dated 25 July 1843).[173] However, the resemblance of the *pas de l'abeille* with the scene in Kali.dasa's *Shakúntala* is startling. Even though *La Péri* was performed earlier, Gautier was probably familiar with Kali.dasa's *Shakúntala* before he adapted it in 1850, given his keen interest in India and his general erudition. The ancient play has a scene where Shakúntala, in the garden with her friends, is attacked by a bee. Dushyánta, watching her, emerges from hiding to save her from the bee; this is a crucial moment in the play when Shakúntala and the king first meet and fall in love. Gautier reproduces this scene in his ballet, which he describes thus: "Du calice d'une malica sort une abeille qui poursuit Sacountalâ, la prenant pour une fleur et cherche à se poser sur ses lèvres roses: les bonds agiles de la jeune fille l'ont bientôt conduite auprès du roi, qui se montre et chasse l'insecte bourdonnant" ("La première representation" 378). This gives the *pas de l'abeille* a sensual tone, but a relatively chaste one, compared to Grisi disrobing on stage in 1843, very delicately and gracefully, according to reports; the critic Jules Janin was very admiring (Guest *Romantic Ballet* 374). The muted *pas de l'abeille* in *Sacountalâ* is more in keeping with Shakúntala's character as an innocent maiden, marking a step back from the eroticization of the piece already seen in 1843.[174] This is how Gautier himself described Grisi's performance as the *Péri*:

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[173] He hedges his bets by continuing, "à moins que le pudique Méhémet-Ali n'ait exilé dans le Darfour toutes les almées sans exception. . . ." Mehmed Ali was the pasha and viceroy of Egypt (1805-48).

[174] A recent rendering of the piece from *La Péri* by the Brooklyn ballet is, however, more chaste than Carlotta Grisi's 1843 version and more like an innocent Shakúntala: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KX6iwtJhb4M.

> . . . sa pose, alors qu'elle est agenouillée sous les plis transparents, rappelle la Vénus antique souriant dans sa conque de nacre ; . . . comme la veste et l'écharpe, et le jupon où l'abeille cherchait à pénétrer, s'envolent prestement à droite, à gauche, et disparaissent dans le tourbillon de la danse ! comme elle tombe bien aux genoux d'Achmet, haletante, éperdue, souriant dans sa peur, plus désireuse d'un baiser que des sequins d'or. . . . (*Histoire* 3 : 84)

This description is reminiscent of Jouy's *Bayadères* clad in diaphanous muslins; audiences reacted as approvingly to the Péri and Shakúntala as they did to the bayadères.[175] The *pas de l'abeille* continued to evolve as a risqué dance, and Brandstetter documents how the dance had become "a more sophisticated form of striptease" by the beginning of the twentieth century (170). This Orientalization of exotic dancing led to stereotyping, as revealed through Flaubert's description of all oriental women as "bayadères/odalisques."

4.8 HEROLD'S *L'ANNEAU DE ÇAKUNTALA*

4.8.1 André-Ferdinand Hérold

André-Ferdinand Hérold (1865-1940) was a prolific author. He was a poet, dramatist and librettist, as well as a translator and critic and was closely associated with *Le Mercure de France*. He moved in Symbolist circles and was associated with Mallarmé, André Gide, and Maurice Ravel. A passionate Indologist, he translated several works from Sanskrit and also composed poetry based on Sanskrit works.

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[175] A reaction that was quite unlike the hilarity and shocked disapproval inspired by the nudity of the crowds in Barrucand's *Le Chariot de terre cuite.*

4.8.2 Antecedents and Approach

Despite the eight translations of Kali.dasa's play into French, there was only one other theatrical production in France during the nineteenth century. This was Hérold's version, *L'Anneau de Çakuntala*, which was performed at the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* on 10 December 1895.

Hérold's translation, intended for the stage, does not attempt to explain the play to the reader of the printed work, but does provide brief stage directions. In a short one paragraph "*Avertissement,*" which opens his 1896 publication of the play, he explains his choice of subject matter: "Je ne révélais pas, par zèle scientifique, un texte demeuré jusqu'ici mystérieux; je traduisais, par agrément, un drame célèbre, et qu'on peut facilement faire connaître dans son intégrité." Unlike other translators of Sanskrit plays, Hérold admits that his is not a literal translation, that he has been both critic and translator (5). He mentions other translations, more faithful and conscientious, such as the ones by Chézy, Hippolyte Fauche and Abel Bergaigne with Paul Lehugeur. Bergaigne's and Lehugeur's avowed reason for translating the play in 1884 was that it was not as well known as it merited. In 1896, by his very brevity, Hérold adds weight to his assertion that the play is famous; his *Avertissement* shows that he expects the deviation from the original text to be discovered. Unusually, Hérold does not refer to Gautier's *Sacountalâ* in his preface, but the work itself is dedicated to Judith Gautier, Gautier's daughter.[176]

Hérold explains his rationale for the changes made. In the *Avertissement*, he admits to removing "quelques phrases, qui me semblaient l'alourdir et en altérer, sans raison, la

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[176] As an Oriental scholar, Judith Gautier primarily focused on Chinese and Japanese themes, though she also wrote on India, *L'Inde éblouie* (1913) and *La Reine de Bangalore* (1887) among others.

beauté," explicitly passing judgment on the original text and exercising his creative rights in a work of translation.

4.8.3 Plot and Staging

Hérold transforms the lyricism of the original play, composed in alternating prose and verse and embellished with exotic metaphors, into rather banal prose. A comparison between the Bergaigne/Lehugeur text, which attempts to imitate the original in form, and Hérold's text, illustrates this. Here is an excerpt from the first Act, spoken by Shakúntala as she waters the plants in the hermitage:

> Comme des doigts, les rameaux de ce manguier me font signe d'approcher. (Hérold 20)
>
> Voyez, chères compagnes, le vent agite ces branches: le manguier semble me tendre les bras. Je veux répondre à son appel. (Bergaigne 19)

A few lines later, when Shakúntala is attacked by a bee:

> Au secours, mes amies: défendez-moi contre la méchante abeille. (Hérold 24)
>
> Au secours! Cette méchante abeille s'acharne sur moi! (Bergaigne 22).

There is also an impassioned verse where the besotted king, concealed in the bushes and watching Shakúntala and her friends, expresses his jealousy of the bee which brushes against Shakúntala's lips and eyes.[177] Hérold transforms this key scene into:

> O abeille, abeille qui frôles ses yeux et ses lèvres, que je t'envie (24).

Hérold's translation is all in prose, unlike the combination of prose and verse favored by Bergaigne and Lehugeur, but appears to echo the latter in curious ways. The scene with the bee is a significant one, as it marks the meeting of the King and Shakúntala. It also offers

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[177] Earlier in the century, Victor Hugo's *Hernani* created an uproar, when, in the first act, the King hides in the anteroom. By the end of the century, this scandal having blown itself out, the impropriety does not seem to attract comment. Or, again, perhaps Kings from more distant lands and times are not held to very high standards of conduct…

considerable potential for dramatic exploitation, which Gautier and others took advantage of, but Hérold does not seem to have done so.

In Hérold's play, lines were chanted on stage and not spoken. Robichez reproduces the critic Francisque Sarcey's comments, which appeared in *Le Temps*, 16 December 1895:

> Si l'on veut jouer *L'Anneau de Sakountala* il faut le jouer, non le psalmodier. Les acteurs de Lugné-Poe officient les vieilles œuvres sur un mode de plain-chant comme s'ils chantaient les uns la grand-messe et les autres les vêpres. . . . Cette diction étonne d'abord, puis elle agace. Elle finit par devenir insupportable. (310)[178]

The chanting resembles a description of contemporary performances of Sanskrit drama in India provided by Lévi: "Leur jeu consistait plus en déclamation qu'en action; dans les moments les plus tragiques ou les plus pathétiques ils restaient immobiles" (400-1). Ironically, this description by Lévi is of an 1880 production of *Târâ*, which was a Marathi adaptation of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline,* and is contained in a section titled "L'Influence européenne."[179]

The chanting of the lines in his version restores emphasis on verbal communication, and Hérold's more or less faithful translation of Kali.dasa's words puts the spotlight back on the literary aspects of the play, albeit without the poetry of the original. The other aspects of the production play a supporting role: the music, by Pierre de Breville added to the mood of

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[178] Jules Lemaître (1853-1914) of the *Journal des débats* is not as critical of the chanting: " . . . la comédie de Kalidasa a été fort agréablement, sinon jouée, du moins psalmodiée."

[179] A peculiar circularity of theatrical techniques is established if Lugné-Poë was influenced by this description in Lévi's work. It is possible that he did consult Lévi's authoritative volume, given that it had been published just a few years prior to Lugné-Poë production.

the scene. The sets were minimalistic. The published version of the play does not mention the actors who performed at the premiere. This was an unusual omission, since the usual practice of the times was to list the lead actors, the venue and the date of the premiere on the first page. Hérold presents the reader with a pure text. Even though the actors got good reviews, Hérold disassociates himself from the performance itself. Unlike the identification of Ferraris with Shakúntala in Gautier's ballet, it is Hérold's conception of Shakúntala which remains in people's minds, and not the actress who played her. While Gautier removed the verbal associations with Kali.dasa's play, Hérold did the opposite. The staging was also in stark contrast to Gautier's excess. A Symbolist performance, it was simple and restrained, and appealed to the small and refined audience attracted by the kind of experimental theater presented by the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*. Figueira draws comparisons between the Indian dramatic method and the French Symbolist school:

> The lack of psychological realism found in Indian theater, as well as its indifference to real life further contributed to the perception that it shared many characteristics with the Symbolists. Both accentuated the role of visual, poetic, and contemplative descriptions of nature. The simplified décor of Indian drama, with little or no props, was identical to that being presented at the Œuvre. (*Translating* 186)

The precepts of ancient Indian theater coincided here with the new and innovative Symbolist school of French theater. Experimental and avant-garde in the nineteenth century French theater, this production of *The Recognition of Shakúntala* retained an element of fidelity to its distant source. Whether this fidelity was intended or whether its alignment with the practices of Symbolist theater was a happy coincidence, it did manage to create a more authentic experience for the theatergoer. *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ* was a good choice for the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* and was one of the successes in its line-up.

4.8.4 Reception

Despite Sarcey's comments on the monotony of the recited lines, the play was well received by audiences and other critics. Both the *Mercure de France* and the *Figaro* posted positive reviews of the play. The reviewers, Henri Albert for *Mercure de France* and Henry Fouquier for *Le Figaro,* refer to Gautier's ballet, a half a century after the event, another indicator of the ballet's success. As for the play itself, emphasis is placed on the simplicity of its plot and its charm: "idylle charmante," "En sa simplicité, l'œuvre est charmante" (Fouquier*).* Catulle Mendès, [180] nineteenth century poet and literary critic, and Fouquier compare the story to that of Geneviève de Brabant,[181] a medieval tale, and "l'anneau de Polycrate," a Greek legend, drawing parallels between the known and the unknown for the audience.[182] The juxtaposition of the different traditions hints at a shared one, as if all stories were drawn from the same pool: "les peuples se redisent si bien les mêmes légendes éternelles." The age of the play is also underscored. Fouquier draws attention to the fact that when Kali.dasa wrote the play so many centuries ago, he was already evoking an ancient Vedic past that was no longer accessible. The pastoral scenes are thus presented as

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[180] Mendès was a prolific poet closely associated with Gautier and the *Parnassiens* as well as the Symbolists. He was briefly married to Judith Gautier.

[181]Geneviève was also falsely accused of infidelity and spent six years in a cave raising her son alone, before being reunited with her husband. Proust refers to the medieval tale in *Du côté de chez Swann.*

[182] Robichez decries the tendency of critics to form parallels when confronted with unfamiliar works: "Le critique, devant une œuvre inconnue, au lieu de chercher à saisir et à exprimer son apport original, tente de se rassurer, se réfère aux textes qui lui sont familiers, procède par comparaison avec une apparente agilité qui n'est qu'une forme de paresse d'esprit " (311).

a shared *locus amœnus* for the ancient Indian audience and for the modern French one.[183] Mendès draws satirical comparisons between scenes in the play and Louis XIV with his mistresses. In his review of *L'Anneau de Çakuntala,* he compares King Dushyánta with Louis XIV and Shakúntala with his mistress Louise de la Vallière. Dushyánta's hiding in the bushes and watching Shakúntala with her friends evokes the following comment: "Le roi Douçhanta, écoutant, sans être vu, dans le bosquet de lianes, Çakuntala qui ne cache rien de son rêve à ses deux amies, n'est-ce pas le roi Louis XIV, derrière la statue de Diane, surprenant, parmi les branches, le secret de Louise de la Vallière qui se croit seule avec Mlle de Chennerault et Mlle de Pons?" (3).[184] With this comment, Shakúntala's portrayal as a pure and innocent maiden is rendered sordid, and powerful rulers, be they Louis XIV or Dushyánta, are portrayed as ignoble.

The reviewers exhibit a striking familiarity with the play and the world of Sanskrit drama. Several reviewers explicitly mention that readers are familiar with the story of Shakúntala. Fouquier comments that the opening scene is taken from the epic *Ramáyana.*[185]

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[183] This evokes the Schlegelian theory that places India at the source of all science, art and religion, and claims the banks of the Ganges as the birthplace of the German people (Brix and Le Couëdic 12).

[184] Mlle Chennerault and Mlle de Pons are probably royal mistresses: Chennerault's name turns up in connection with Louis XIII, while de Pons could be Antoinette de Pons, mistress of Henri IV or Bonne de Pons d'Heudicourt, one of Louis XIV's mistresses. It is unclear what significance Mendès imputes to royal mistresses from different times conferring together; the uniting factor is that they referred to a king's adulterous relationships.

[185] Since Kings out hunting in the forest and chancing upon beautiful women/beautiful gardens/religious establishments such as monasteries (in western literature) and hermitages (in Indian literature) are a common trope, Fouquier's comparison hints at his own erudition—he has read the Ramayana — rather than being a significant instance of intertextuality.

Albert, in *Mercure de France,* underlines his erudition by stating his preference for a different play of Kali.dasa's, *Urvaci*, "moins connu des lettrés."[186] He knowledgeably continues elaborating the antecedents of the play. Just before summarizing the plot, he adds, "Rappeler l'intrigue, il en est à peine besoin," expecting his readership to have some familiarity with the text as well. It is a play that, for him, appeals to the senses, not to the intellect: " . . . le plaisir que nous y avons vu, dépourvu d'émotions intellectuelles, fut tout à la joie presque enfantine de voir et d'entendre des choses charmantes." The words used to describe the play are telling: he finds that it is barely a play, "à peine une pièce de théâtre selon les conceptions modernes."[187] Perhaps the poetic character and contemplative nature of the play was seen by him as merely a succession of beguiling images, a visual and auditory treat? Albert highlights the sensual appeal of the play, describing "la poésie savoureuse et caressante," and how "des femmes gracieuses ont répété avec tendresse de jolis mots d'amour, pleins de délicieuses naïvetés." Perhaps Hérold's lines were rendered lyrical when chanted on stage by beautiful young women; perhaps Albert's familiarity with

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[186] There is no mention of the unwieldy ancient Indian names that perturbed critics when Gautier's ballet was performed: another sign of a certain familiarity that was expected by the reviewers.

[187] The beauty of Kali.dasa's drama lies in poetic descriptions, its praise of nature and its contemplative tone, quite unlike the psychological and eventful progression of European plays. Émile Faguet, a dramatic critic for *Le Soleil*, who was a great influence on Lugné-Poë, explains how Indian theater is different from the French in that it blends "Drame" with "Roman": "Cette poésie dramatique essentiellement contemplative consomme pour nous la confusion des genres. Elle est un scandale de notre esthétique. C'est une raison de plus pour qu'elle nous soit un entremets très piquant. Je voudrais bien voir (…) une adaptation de *Sakountala* et du *Chariot de terre cuite* à l'Odéon" (*Le Soleil,* 6 Aug. 1888, cited in Robichez 73). This suggestion by Faguet may have contributed to Lugné-Poë's decision to include these plays in his theater company's line-up.

Kali.dasa's *œuvre* colored his appreciation of the play. Albert bemoans the fact that Lugné-Poë eliminated the sixth act of the play, "la ravissante scène du portrait," because "[elle] nous aurait fait voir encore quelques autres gracieux visages de jeunes filles indoues." Gautier's ballet was the staging of a fantasy world, but Hérold's play appears to have generated its fair share of fantasies. An ancient Sanskrit play translated into French in the nineteenth century and performed at a Symbolist theater would indicate a certain cerebral appeal for audiences, but it is the appeal of exotic femininity that ultimately dominates.

4.8.5 *Sacountalâ* vs. *L'Anneau de Çakuntala*: Poetry in Motion vs. Chanted Prose

The Recognition of Shakúntala was well received by audiences both mid-century and in the 1890s. The greater success of Gautier's ballet when compared to Hérold's can be attributed to several factors. Gautier borrowed the basic plot from Kali.dasa, but he cut it, changed it and made it fit into his vision. Setting the ballet in India was a good idea commercially because India was in vogue at the time and *The Recognition of Shakúntala* was widely written about. The timing was opportune: Romantic theater, operas and ballets were popular. Without productions like Gautier's, however, the esoteric appeal of Sanskrit drama would have had a limited audience, and would not have been accessible to the public at large. He gave people a spectacular show that contained images that people expected of India without any unexpected or unknown ideas/scenes that could shock the audience.

Hérold's adaptation was more literary and less focused on sets, costumes, and other accoutrements of theater. It attempted to present a faithful version of ancient Indian drama but this was intertwined with a progressive movement that was still new: Symbolism. Lugné-Poë had made a name for himself as an experimental director. The audience for his plays was more open to unknown concepts and expected something out of the ordinary. With *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ,* Lugné-Poë diverged from his endeavor to bring new and unknown drama to the *Œuvre* as the story of Shakúntala was already well known to Parisian

audiences, a fact that critics were unanimous in pointing out. It was the nature of the representation, which coincidentally resembled Indian theater practices in its minimalist approach, which was novel; the play itself was not. *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ* was a study in dichotomy: it encompassed ancient and modern, familiar and unfamiliar, East and West. Among the plays presented at the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*, it was a success, but commercially, it appealed to a more restricted audience.

4.9 CONCLUSION

Sanskrit drama was integrated into the ethos of nineteenth century France in numerous ways. It was a new and exciting discovery and a major literary field of exploration. By 1850, Langlois's and Chézy's translations of Sanskrit drama were well known and admired, with the majority of the approbation going to *The Recognition of Shakúntala*. Almost all of the famous French poets and authors had included India in their work in some manner or other. Mid-century, Sanskrit drama was part of the Romantic movement of theatre; at the end of the century, it embodied the precepts of the Symbolist school. Social and political concerns of these periods are reflected in the staging, performance and reception of the French adaptations of Sanskrit plays.

The two plays *Abhijñāna/śākuntala, The Recognition of Shakúntala* and *Mṛichhakaṭikā, The Little Clay Cart,* share several common characteristics. The most obvious one is that they are both chefs d'œuvre of Sanskrit drama. Chronologically, *The Little Clay Cart* was staged first, in 1850, but it owed credit to *The Recognition of Shakúntala* for creating a receptive audience, because of all the acclaim it received from famous scholars such as Goethe, Lamartine etc. The authors of both adaptations, Gérard de Nerval, Joseph Méry, and Théophile Gautier were close friends; all were highly interested in India. Amany

was Nerval's muse for *Le Chariot d'enfant* and for Gautier's Shakúntala. Unusually, Gautier reviewed both plays. In his role as theater critic, it was expected that he would have reviewed Méry and Nerval's play, but reviewing his own was rather atypical.

The second time both *The Little Clay Cart* and *The Recognition of Shakúntala* were staged was at the end of the century: Victor Barrucand's play in 1895 and Ferdinand Hérold's in 1896. The director Lugné-Poë forms the common link for the translations for these two performances. Both plays were risky productions, as Barrucand had a clear political message and *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ* experimented with form. Of the two periods in the nineteenth century when interest in Indian drama peaked, the plays staged mid-century were more female-oriented than the ones staged later in the century, and took fewer political risks.

The treatment of women in the plays is revelatory. Both plays are centered on alluring women, but the nature of their appeal is very different. In France, as elsewhere, Shakúntala, the character, becomes a metonym for the play itself. *The Recognition of Shakúntala, L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ, Sacountalâ* – all are finally referred to as *Shakúntala* (variously spelled), removing the distinction between the play and the character. Shakúntala is an idealized woman, presenting an image of beauty that is pure and innocent, shy and wild, in the way defenseless creatures in nature are. Shakúntala is the vine with beautiful and fragrant blooms that twines around the strong tree. Like the vine, she is beautiful but needs the support of a stronger entity to thrive: "Just as the *nava-málika* jasmine is united with 'Pleaser of the Forest,' a worthy tree, so may I too win a suitable bridegroom" (Kali.dasa 75). Shakúntala is silent and naive; it is her friends, Priyam.vada and Anasúya who speak for her. When she is lovesick, they suggest she write Dushyánta a letter. They prompt Dushyánta to accord her preeminent status among his queens, by offering to make her future son his heir. They plead with Durvásas to soften the curse. When rejected,

she is crushed, and is saved by her mother's divine powers. She is Kali.dasa's ideal Indian woman, perfectly beautiful, totally submissive, and highly dependent on others. These qualities entranced French scholars and audiences, and exemplified their vision of Indian feminity. The exotic packaging—the Indian forest—was fresh, yet reminiscent of a simpler, primitive past. Gautier's ballet strengthened existing stereotypes about India: its riches, its beautiful women, its ancient glories and, of course, sati. Shakúntala appealed to French audiences as she did not challenge any cultural or gender preconceptions, either Indian or French. When Shakúntala was expressed through ballet, the French public could appreciate her in a wholly new, yet familiar, way.

Vasánta.sena in *The Little Clay Cart* is more problematic. She challenges the social order by crossing class barriers. She blurs the line that divides women's sexuality between respectable spouses and kept mistresses. Vasánta.sena pursues Charu.datta and sacrifices her wealth, position and prestige as a successful courtesan for his love. By appearing in the nick of time, she saves Charu.datta from being executed. The reward for her sacrifices and for her timely action is the transformation from courtesan to spouse, moving from the public sphere to the private one. On stage, Vasánta.sena not only drew attention to courtesans as an existing part of French society, she actively sought to change the status quo. French theater evinced sympathy for courtesans who expressed true love à la *Dame aux camélias*, but did not wish for their entry into society. Vasánta.sena is a more assertive woman than Shakúntala, but both are, nevertheless, homologous with sensuality. It is for their beauty and their desirability that both of them are lauded. Vasánta.sena's love for a good man is seen as her biggest accomplishment, and her saving grace. Charu.datta's acceptance of her despite her past is seen as surprising and generous. Even though *The Little Clay Cart* has a strong political component, Vasánta.sena is excluded from it. Barrucand modified the plot to underscore Vasánta.sena's sympathy for the lower classes,

but did not think of increasing her political role. Women, for him, did not belong in the political sphere. Méry and Nerval's love story has little room for politics – again showing that in the nineteenth-century mind-set women and politics don't mix.

The productions in the 1850s were politically low-key, at least in intention. Méry and Nerval's efforts to remove the political revolution in the *Le Chariot d'enfant* is in itself telling, since it is an important part of the play. Despite the effort made to downplay the political aspects, the play nevertheless got labeled "revolutionary" because of Méry's political leanings in the past and the implications seen in the victory of the lower classes in the play, the thief, the courtesan and so on. Politics was behind Pierre Bocage's removal from the directorship of the *Théâtre de l'Odéon* which ended the performances of *Le Chariot d'enfant*. Gautier's *Sacountalâ* avoided any political statement and focused on celebrating exotic feminity.

In the 1890s, anarchism reared its head, and many literary figures were associated with it, including Félix Fénéon, Lugné-Poë and Victor Barrucand. Ferdinand Hérold's *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ* was political only by association with this circle, unlike Barrucand's unapologetically political *Le Chariot de terre cuite*. Barrucand incongruously preached Buddhist precepts of social equality and charity even while the play advocates the rejection of established government through violence. The play itself was adapted to the anarchist cause. By closely associating it with Fénéon through his face on the playbill as well as by having him introduce the play, it proclaimed its connections with France's contemporary political scenario.

On the whole, productions of *The Recognition of Shakúntala* were more successful than those of *The Little Clay Cart.* With eighty performances and 185,000 francs in receipts, *Sacountalâ* was the only adaptation of Sanskrit drama that succeeded in making a profit, according to Figueira (*Translating* 232). A major factor in the resounding success of

Gautier's ballet was, of course, the hugely expensive and extravagant sets. This was not the only factor, however, as Binney points out that most ballets produced at the time involved more complicated stage machinery and a higher number of sets than Gautier's ballet. Hérold's play, even though a Symbolist experiment with a minimalist approach, managed to please critics and audiences. Regardless of the style of adaptation, *Shakúntala* held a stronger appeal for audiences.

Both productions of *The Little Clay Cart* suffered from the limited budgets they were subject to. In Méry and Nerval's production, the sets used had been created for a different revue, *De Pékin à Paris,* which had been prohibited a few months earlier. This led to sparse décor and unremarkable costumes. The potential that India held for exotic and splendid sets and costumes was left unrealized. Straitened circumstances also affected the success of Barrucand's play. Aspects of the staging that could been played up, such as Toulouse-Lautrec's beautiful sets, were not the assets they could have been. The subdued lighting on stage meant that its "pastel colorations and luxurious tones were barely visible from the orchestra" (Knapp 158). The lack of funding for adequate costumes led to laughable anachronisms and scandalous "nudity." Like "revolutionary" for Méry and Nerval's version, "scandalous" was the adjective that thereafter identified Barrucand's play even though it was not nudity of a sexual nature, but under-clothed men in the crowd scene that shocked propriety. Since the beautiful women in Hérold's *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ* (staged a year later in the same theater), got appreciative reviews, perhaps skimping on costumes for the female leads would have made the play more successful?

Both as a Romantic and as a Symbolic production, therefore, *The Recognition of Shakúntala* had the advantage over *The Little Clay Cart.* Méry and Nerval did not completely place their play in the realm of fantasy as Gautier did and audiences found reflections of contemporary controversial topics. Méry comparing Vasánta.sena to Marion Delorme

brought the parallels home (Binney 321). It is probable that the play did not succeed because the analogies the adaptation evoked were too numerous, and the cultural distance created by Méry and Nerval was not adequate. *The Little Clay Cart* had a plot that, even toned down, could not be relegated to a far away past without a major effort – by transposing genres or through a huge budget, as Gautier did, for example. This perhaps was an effort that Méry and Nerval could not afford or did not want to expend. Half a century later, for Barrucand's version, its reputation as "anarchist" vied with its "scandalous" label, underlying the capricious nature of audiences and reviewers. The intended target was a political one; it ended up offending moral and social propriety.

By the 1890s, when Hérold's version of *The Recognition of Shakúntala* was staged, even the facets that had initially attracted attention (e.g. the strange names) did not excite any comment. As we saw in the reviews of Hérold's play, the public was expected to be familiar with these Indian names. By mentioning Gautier's ballet, reviewers indicated that the play had a French theatrical history. Assuming that Sanskrit drama was not totally new to audiences allowed Hérold and Lugné-Poë to take additional risks, as with the new format. An "exotic" framework allows more ambitious content, if known elements are included that reassure the audience. Thus a foreign play with its lines chanted and spare sets was more acceptable because it already had some level of credibility attached to it, thanks to the intellectual and performance history that preceded it. With the adaptations of *The Recognition of Shakúntala,* the public could enjoy the spectacle, admire the beauty of the protagonist, the quality of the dancing or the staging, and not feel threatened in any manner. Shakúntala proffered an unchallenging and benign version of the Other, evoking desire without inspiring fear. Both as a play and as a character, Shakúntala did not promote political unrest or challenge social norms. As a foreign drama, *Shakúntala* had an intellectual cachet, and as a colorful spectacle, it appealed to the senses. In the process it

also brought an esoteric play into the popular realm. Lamartine, Goethe and other scholars had highlighted the literary merits and cerebral appeal of Sanskrit drama. It was, however, the familiar concepts, particularly female beauty, rustic innocence, and Indian exotic stereotypes presented attractively that resonated with audiences. A play's success was thus less dependent on its merits than on the charm of the female character.

To conclude, Sanskrit drama afforded French playwrights an occasion to educate the public about Indian theater. They could have introduced audiences to its complexities as well as its charms and faults, an opportunity that they chose not to exploit. They chose different aspects to promote and to ignore, exercising their own priorities which were in line with French society at the time. Romila Thapar, talking of adaptations of *Shakúntala* in India, says: "We select from the past those images which endorse what we want from the present" (262). This is true of French adaptations of Sanskrit drama as well.

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> *Le seul véritable voyage, . . . ce ne serait pas d'aller vers de nouveaux paysages, mais d'avoir d'autres yeux, de voir l'univers avec les yeux d'un autre, de cent autres, de voir les cent univers que chacun d'eux voit, que chacun d'eux est. . . .*(Proust *La Prisonnière* 309)

Proust's poetic words, transplanted here to describe the theatrical experience of perspectival "looking," evoke the aspects of theater that this dissertation has endeavored to highlight. One of these is theater's existence as a community event which involves and validates different perspectives. Said's metaphorical description of the Orient as a construction of the West found literal expression in the staging of India in French theater. A contact zone *par excellence* for the French Self and the Indian Other to "meet, clash and grapple with each other" ("Arts" 34), French plays created an occasion for India and France to be seen "avec les yeux d'un autre." This led to a complex intermingling of both national identities while also helping to shape a French worldview during the nineteenth century.

The three chapters focusing on different kinds of plays—historical rewriting, the bayadères as a trope, and Sanskrit drama—reveal insights that were particular to each type. In addition, aspects emerge that are common across the chapters. Gobert and Dubois's *Tipoo-Saïb, ou la prise de Séringapatam* (1804) and Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb* (1813) portray Tipu Sultan's death at the hands of the British, a decisive moment in history for India, Britain, and France. The historical rewriting of Tipu Sultan's story casts the French in a morally superior position vis-à-vis the Indians and the British. Positive and negative stereotypes abound, both racial and ideological. There is, of course, the stereotype of Tipu as an Oriental despot, who cannot control his rage and is dominated by emotions rather than reason. The British are cast as "la perfide Albion," while the French epitomize courage and rational thought. The surprising level of detail in the plays shows how closely military developments in India

were tracked in mainland France. All these facets are revealed by textual analysis of the plays. Their performance and reception, however, expose how the plays reflect contemporaneous French events: the functioning of Napoleon's propaganda machine, Napoleon's waxing and waning popularity, and even the role played by his musical preferences in the exercise of power.

Étienne de Jouy's *Les Bayadères* (1810) and Eugène Scribe's *Le Dieu et la bayadère* (1830) show how two enduring images associated with India, the *Sati* and the devadasi metamorphosed into the bayadère. The trope of the bayadère evolved further in the course of the century, becoming closely identified with the French ballet dancers who performed the role. More generally, the term came to evoke the sexually available French stage performer. This evolution of the bayadère on the French stage was briefly interrupted by the visit of devadasis from India. Amany and her group of dancers challenged long-held preconceptions by their modesty in clothing and demeanor. Writers like Abbé Raynal and playwrights like Jouy and Scribe had led audiences to expect scantily clad lascivious women, and the Indian dancers did not fit the paradigm. Audiences found it difficult to reconcile expectations with reality, and the devadasis left the stage to the French dancers who usurped their identity.

The final selection of plays dealing with Sanskrit drama highlighted the intellectual and scholarly dimension of Indian studies in France, and the manner in which they trickled down to the public. Kali.dasa's *The Recognition of Shakúntala* and Shúdraka's *The Little Clay Cart* proved to be popular both with scholars and the general public, and contributed greatly to the dissemination of knowledge about India's cultural traditions. Despite their origins in ancient India, the adaptations of these Sanskrit plays—Théophile Gautier's *Sacountalâ* (1858), Ferdinand Hérold's *L'Anneau de Çakuntalâ* (1895), *Le Chariot d'enfant* (1850) by Joseph Méry and Gérard de Nerval and *Le Chariot de terre cuite* (1895) by Victor

Barrucand—became entwined with French cultural and political developments in the 1850s and 1890s.

In all three chapters, juxtaposing opposing ideas such as the Self and the Other, history and fiction, or imagination and reality has had paradoxical results: the binary opposition of these disparate elements surprisingly discloses a lack of real dichotomy. The Self and the Other are not distinct entities, and notions of identity are surprisingly fluid. When historical and stage versions of Tipu Sultan's story are examined side-by-side, when real-life bayadères are placed beside their French counterparts, and adaptations of Sanskrit plays are compared with the originals, we can see that all stories are creatively crafted, whether they purport to be fact or fiction. The concept of "reality" itself is shown to be both highly complex and inherently unstable; different modes of reality appear, rather than any simple opposition between reality and fiction. Empirical reality is difficult to distinguish from intellectual, imaginative and cultural reality. Establishing facts is challenging, as there are no incontrovertible assertions. When facts do not fit in with preconceived notions, for example, the Indian dancers' comportment in France, journalists insert information into their articles, gleaned from writers like Abbé Raynal, to correspond to the public's imaginary devadasis. Stereotypes are thus strengthened through repetition. However, the strong stereotypes of India and the Orient that emerge from the different plays are revealed to be multi-faceted and complex when seen from different frames of reference. This lends depth and interest to these stock characters; positive and negative attributes are shown to be a function of perspective and not always either innate or unchangeable.

Duality is, nevertheless, intrinsic to theater: the text is stable and enduring while the performance is evanescent. Paradoxically, it is at that fleeting and fragile moment when theater is present on stage that it is also the most powerful. The various elements of theater—visual, auditory, even haptic—come together to fulfill the potential promised by a

script. Through this expansion, the immutability attributed to a text is destabilized. The production choices made by the director, the cast and the crew, expand the author's conception or alter it: a Romantic production of *Shakúntala* is quite different from a Symbolist one. A reader can critically analyze a play by evaluating historical accuracy, assessing dramatic techniques and so on, to make a judgment on the literary merit of the play. In a performance, the merit of the play is contingent not only on the text, but the entirety of the production choices. In addition, the "cent autres" who are present and watching, the audience makes connections between the play and events outside of the text and further enlarges its scope. In other words, when a play is read as a text, the fourth wall of theater is intact: the reader is on the outside of the text, and the characters ignore his unobtrusive presence. A reader's personal experience may color his own reading, but unless he makes an effort to disseminate his reception of the book (and contingent, of course, on the influence he has) all subsequent readers' interpretations of the text remain unaffected. This is not the case during a public performance: there is an immediacy in the manner in which individual reactions affect how the performance is viewed by the group.[188] Sometimes random events decide how a text evolves into a performance. Budgetary constraints, for one, as the lack of costumes for the crowd scenes in Barrucand's *Le Chariot de terre cuite* proved. Another instance is that of casting choices which are often dictated by

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[188] When Hugo broke the hitherto sacrosanct rules of Classical theater with *Hernani,* it was audience reactions that gave physical expression—and a stronger significance—to the event. Whether it was the hissing and booing of sections of the audience at Hugo's use of the *enjambement* proscribed by purists, or the flamboyant red coats of Gautier and other Romantics supporting Hugo, the emergence of a new style of theater became an event of note. The preface of *Cromwell* allowed Hugo to explain his Romantic philosophy, but the performance of *Hernani* visibly anchored these precepts in the progression/history of theater.

exigencies, but have a lasting impact. Gesture and movement strongly influence the audience, but while body language usually helps communicate the inherent meaning of a text more effectively, it sometimes weakens or subverts the author's conception of the character. Amalia Ferraris who played Shakúntala, and Marie Taglioni who played the bayadère, were both technically brilliant ballet dancers, but had limited acting skills. Having Ferraris play Shakúntala created a certain vision of the heroine which was different from Kali.dasa's conception or even Gautier's. The audience's whole-hearted acceptance of a performer often shapes the character. Taglioni and Ferraris successfully appropriated the persona of the bayadère and of Shakúntala respectively, as audiences identified these roles with them. Marie Taglioni epitomized the bayadère to such an extent that even the real bayadères from India could not erase her imprint. The balletic prowess displayed by Taglioni westernized and diluted the stereotype of the bayadère as a hyper-sexualized Indian woman.

A performance is unpredictable in other ways as well. Given the symbiotic relationship between actors and the audience, it follows that no two instances of a show are exactly the same. The breaking of the fourth wall is possible at any moment, and for any reason. Some historically significant moments—social or political transformation, for example—render such a breach highly likely. Modern linguist and translator Kenneth McLeish accurately phrases the theatrical experience as "a series of moments of complicity between performer and spectator" where "[at] each of these moments, the performer reveals something to the spectator, or reminds the spectator of something already known - an emotion, an aspect of character, a relationship, a circumstance (such as a climate of political belief or religious thought) outside the specific content of the dramatic action but contingent on it" (153). One such moment of complicity was the staging of Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb.* The highly contextual audience reaction to the play reveals the critical role played by

the passage of time, and shows each performance to be an organic event that takes shape in an unpredictable manner. In Jouy's play, both the text and the staging endeavor to transport the audience to India at a certain moment in history where France's colonial aspirations were at a critical juncture. The capricious audience, however, brings the play back to France and to the current moment, a time when Napoleon was focusing on strengthening his rule within the country as well as expanding his empire. Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb*'s apparent success as a piece of propaganda—as confirmed by Napoleon's standing ovation—is subverted by the audience's reaction. Power is expressed by both sides: Napoleon can impose his tastes by altering the music for a performance, but the audience in turn exercises its power by refusing to restart the play for him, and by reacting to sections of the play that denounce tyranny. *Tippô-Saëb* becomes less a historical story set in India and more a contemporaneous French event with its own import. Similarly, the different productions of *The Little Clay Cart,* half a century apart, managed to become embroiled in a political controversy. In Méry and Nerval's version, the audience politicized what was essentially a love story, whereas Barrucand's version was an overt expression of the political views of the author and the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*. Having a controversial political figure like Fénéon on the playbill compromised the iconic value of the elephant and the Sanskrit script, superimposing French identity on the Indian one. The mild political content in the 1850s engendered a stronger reaction relative to the more strident political statements in the 1890s, when the audience took more note of the scandalous nudity of the cast (proving that costumes—or the lack thereof—have an enduring visual impact). Actual political events were dramatic enough in this period, such as Émile Henry's execution and the *procès des trente*, that the literary enunciation of anarchist ideology formed part of an already existing movement and did not create new waves. In both *Tippô-Saëb* and *The Little Clay Cart*, stereotypes became dynamic, moving beyond the concepts that they were originally meant

to signify, imbuing the French Self with the attributes that the Eastern Other was traditionally expected to embody. Overall, the Indian stereotypes shown on the French stage were more complex than mere Orientalist constructions of inferiority and difference. As Bhabha states:

> Stereotyping is not the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, over-determination, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of 'official' and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositionalities of racist discourse. . . . (*Location* 81-82)

A modern example of subverted stereotypes is the Broadway musical *Hamilton* (2015). The musical examines events that occurred roughly around the same time as those portrayed in *Tippô-Saëb,* the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[189] *Hamilton* is a contemporary example of political drama in performance crossing the limits of the stage and causing public debate. In November 2016, the memorable response of the cast and the audience to the presence of then Vice-President-Elect Mike Pence was a newsworthy phenomenon.[190] The booing by the audience, the statement made by the actors as well as

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[189] While *Tippô-Saëb* describes the demise of a nation (the kingdom of Mysore), Hamilton chronicles the birth of the USA. In the former, the Indian ruler is the despot, while in the latter, the British king occupies that role. Historical events at the cusp of the nineteenth century in *les Indes orientales* and *les Indes occidentales* display parallels: the British lost the Americas, gained India. In both parts of the world, the French fought British ascendancy, but lost.

[190] A sampling of news articles on the event: http://www.businessinsider.com/mike-pence-booed-at-hamilton-musical-2016-11

the reaction by Mike Pence and then-President-Elect Trump expanded the dramatic action beyond the theatrical stage to encompass the public at large, primarily through social media. *Hamilton*, a play set in a past historical moment, is made current by the non-white multicultural cast that expands the notion of American identity. The musical has thus gained new currency and the performance became an event that engendered its own controversy. *Hamilton* gained in popularity from President Obama's endorsement but was rendered a cause célèbre by then President-Elect Trump's disapproval.[191] The US audience's strong engagement with the play, as well as the political controversy it generated, is understandable, since *Hamilton* describes the founding of the US. However, the musical resonates even when geographically displaced. In *The New Yorker,* Daniel Pollack-Pelzner describes the success of *Hamilton* in London and discusses its relevance in two different parts of the world. Pollack-Pelzner says that King George's lines in the play that caution the newly-independent colonies got the most "knowing laughter":

> Oceans rise
>
> Empires fall
>
> It's much harder when it's all your call
>
> All alone, across the sea
>
> When your people say they hate you, don't come crawling back to me

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https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/19/us/mike-pence-hamilton.html?_r=0. On the one hand, President Obama had endorsed the play and its rebellious message; on the other, then President-Elect Trump berated the actors for speaking out.

[191] Associating the musical with current political events also came in for criticism: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/act-four/wp/2017/04/25/hamilton-is-associated-with-obama-its-a-better-musical-with-him-out-of-office/?utm_term=.b7949b910203

He wonders, "Was this a prophecy of Donald Trump's spiraling isolationism—the travel ban, the broken accords, the looming wall—or an admonition to Brexit leaders fumbling after the British Conservative Party's recent electoral setback?" Whether in Britain, the USA, France or India, audiences everywhere and in every century find "moments of complicity" with the action on stage. Like turning a kaleidoscope and seeing new images emerge from the same objects, watching Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb*, Shúdraka's *The Little Clay Cart* and *Hamilton* at different points in time and with small shifts in perspective allows different facets to emerge, lending new and contextual meaning to these plays.

Though the plays in the corpus are dated and unlikely to be revived, they have not entirely disappeared. Traces linger in the French cultural consciousness. The bayadère lingers in ballet and opera: the music of *Les Bayadères* (Charles Simon Catel) and *Le Dieu et la bayadère* (François Auber) is still occasionally performed. Hints of Gautier's ballet persist in Petipa's 1877 ballet *La Bayadère,* which remains part of the global ballet repertoire.[192] Kali.dasa's *Shakúntala* may not be remembered among its antecedents, but the *pas de l'abeille,* first performed in Gautier's *La Péri and* then in his *Sacountalâ,* continues to evoke eroticized Oriental feminity.

Shakúntala has also left an imprint in the plastic arts. The sculpture by Camille Claudel (1864-1943), first called *Sakountala* (circa 1888) represents the reunion of Shakúntala with her husband after their long separation. Marie-Claude Pietragalla, modern ballet artist and erstwhile General Director of the *Ballet national de Marseille*, avers that

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[192]The 2013 staging of *La Bayadère* by the Bolshoi Ballet in Russia is a sumptuous production; Gautier would probably have approved. The costumes of the corps de ballet are vaguely Indian/Oriental, but are more a creative blend of various cultures including Egyptian; the variations in headgear particularly stand out. The video is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pu4YVtKyvzc.

Camille doubtless watched Gautier's ballet. This is not impossible because even though Gautier's ballet was first performed in 1858, before Camille was born, it was a very successful ballet, and was perhaps revived. There were also many versions of *Shakúntala* performed in Europe, which Camille Claudel could have watched. The lean muscularity of the figures in Camille's sculpture evokes ballet dancers, lending credence to Pietragalla's assertion. In 1905, *Sakountala* was cast in marble and renamed *Vertumnus and Pomona*, while the bronze cast made by Eugène Blot the same year got the name *Abandon*. The sculpture thus moved from Hindu to Greek mythology and thence to a psychological state of being where societal norms are discarded and emotion takes precedence.

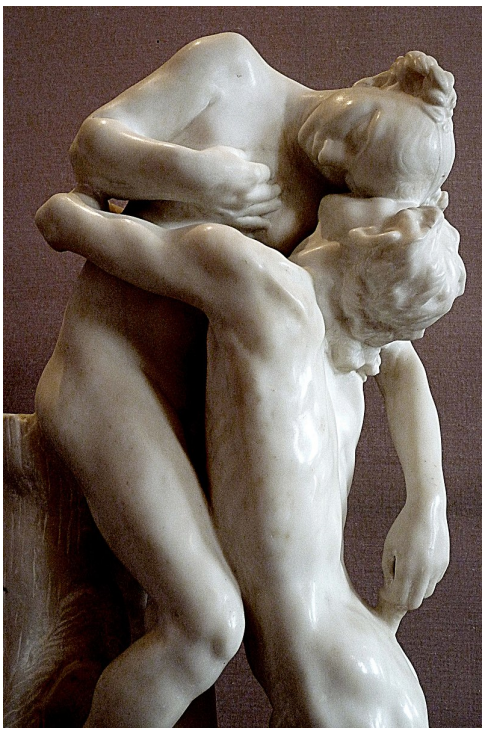

Figure 35. *Sakountala* by Camille Claudel. Photograph in public domain downloaded from Wikipedia.org[193]

[193] Better views of the sculpture as well as more details on its creation can be found at http://www.musee-rodin.fr/en/collections/sculptures/vertumnus-and-pomona.

Through this sculpture, however, Shakúntala has returned to ballet in a circuitous fashion. Pietragalla created and starred in *Sakountala* (2000), a successful ballet based on the life of Camille Claudel and her relationship with Auguste Rodin.[194] More recently, a French heavy metal band called Uncolored Wishes created a music video called *Sakountala* in 2014, based on the movie *Camille Claudel*.[195] The coupling of the mythical Shakúntala and Camille Claudel highlights the similarities in their stories: abandonment and anguish caused by the lack of legitimacy in their love affairs. While Shakúntala took refuge on a halfway plane between the earth and heaven before reuniting with her lover, Camille remained in limbo at the mental institute where she was incarcerated. The sexual and emotional abandon of Shakúntala's meeting with her lover depicted in the sculpture is transformed into the agony of abandonment by family and lover, into Camille's perpetual waiting for an imaginary reunion. Shakúntala, a metaphor for exotic beauty and innocence in nineteenth-century France, has metamorphosed into a tragic icon representing Camille Claudel in the twenty-first century.

From Kali.dasa's Shakúntala to Camille Claudel marks a long and complicated journey. The metamorphosis of Indian representations in France since the nineteenth century demonstrates steadily decreasing Indian-ness – images once strongly identified with India have become more amorphous in signification. Even the bayadères—so obsessively desired by the French that in the eighteenth century three of them were

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[194] Pietragalla also performed as Nikiya in Pétipa's *La Bayadère* (1995-96 season), one of her many starring roles. Describing her inspiration to produce the ballet she says that on learning of Gautier's ballet "le nom 'Sacountala' à la sonorité étrange produisit sur moi un effet merveilleux." She was later struck by the name reappearing on one of Camille Claudel's sculptures, which inspired her interest in Camille Claudel. www.faisceau.com/dans_pietra.htm

[195] www.youtube.com/watch?v=MISE8CxZNGI

kidnapped,[196] and in the nineteenth century the devadasis' ship was tracked across the sea—became primarily associated with French ballet dancers. Another option of dealing with the Other was to aspire to irreality in the first place. One could take Gautier's philosophy to heart and treat the stage as a place of fantasy where a bayadère becomes an imaginary creature, akin to nymphs and dryads. This displacement into fantasy operated successfully in the ballets and operas towards the end of the nineteenth century that showcased India as the dream locale par excellence. These ballets and operas did not make much of an effort towards authenticity. In shows like *Le Roi de Lahore* and *Lakmé,* well-known figures like bayadères, sati and temple priestesses became less Indian and more generally Oriental.

The overall dilution of Indian identity on the French stage could be explained by the reduction in India's importance to France, politically as well as culturally. Assayag estimates the relative position of India in the French Empire at the time of the *Exposition coloniale internationale* of 1931: "A cette date, l'Empire français s'étendait sur douze millions de km^2 et comprenait plus de soixante-quatre millions d'individus . . . Les Indes françaises couvraient, elles, cinq cent-huit km^2 et abritaient deux cent quatre-vingt six milles personnes" (*L'Inde Fabuleuse* 11). Over the course of the nineteenth century, Indian territories came firmly under British control. Scholarly research in Sanskrit and Indian culture had also moved to Germany, dislodging France from its pre-eminent position in that sphere. France, which had explored its connections with India more intensively than ever before during the nineteenth century, then relegated India to the mythical realms it had occupied for previous centuries, albeit with more familiarity: places in India, Lahore for

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[196] The story of Bebaouirn is briefly related in chapter 2. Bebaouirn's siblings killed themselves at sea, and Bebaouirn became a nun.

example, were not totally unknown, and names like Shakúntala or Holkar did not discombobulate the audience.

Amany's visit to France serves as a metaphor to explain the fleeting passage of Indian exoticism in France. Similar to the excessive reality of the bayadères ("elles sont trop bayadères") that French audiences could not come to terms with, India was both overwhelming and beyond the reach of possession, physical or ideological. Gautier talks of "les gigantesques prodigalités indiennes" and concludes that "[l'Inde], même dans sa beauté, a nous ne savons quoi de monstrueux, d'excessif, de démesuré . . ." ("L'Inde" 319).[197] One strategy to deal with this excess is of course, to siphon it into the world of fantasy, as Gautier and others did. As the critic Léon Kerst pointed out in 1877, India, "le pays par excellence des fantaisies," was the perfect setting for operas and ballets. As a dreamscape, India on stage combined fact and fantasy and allowed the identities of the Self and the Other to blur into each other. India was, for France, "une civilisation qui incarna . . . tour à tour, le Même et le Tout Autre" (back cover of *L'Inde inspiratrice).* Books published in French on India during the last twenty-five years echo the notion of India as a place of fantasy, with titles like *L'Inde. Des rêves, des peuples et des dieux* (2007) and *L'Inde fabuleuse: Le charme discret de l'exotisme français (XVIIe-XXe siècles)* (1999). Terms like "rêve" and "fabuleux," that defined India for centuries continue to do so in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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[197] Goethe expressed the same opinion in his *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poésie et Vérité*), says contemporary scholar Denise Brahimi, "La mythologie de l'Inde lui paraît un ramassis d'êtres monstrueux, les *abraxas,* idoles insensées qu'il stigmatise dans les premières pages du *Divan* . . . " (216). Goethe's gets credit for influencing several French scholars with his praise of Shakúntala, but his criticism would also have had an effect on the French.

Another significant aspect that emerges from analyzing the corpus is the predominant role that women play in shaping identity. Almost all the plays have women in central roles, except for Jouy's *Tippô-Saëb.* But even there, the absence of a woman is noticeable: Napoleon suggested that Jouy should have included a love-interest for Tipu right in the opening scene of the play. Gobert and Dubois's melodrama *Tipoo-Saïb, ou la prise de Séringapatam* features Tipu Sultan as well as historically important British military figures, but it is Miss Jenny and Adèle who are the protagonists and the real heroines. Their motherly instincts and desire for justice are fierce enough and strong enough to prevail over entire armies of men. The female figures on stage have a strong presence as characters and as artistes simultaneously, for example Shakúntala and Amalia Ferraris, both of whom leave traces that linger in audience memory for decades. Both real women like Amany and fictional ones like Vasánta.sena symbolized Indian feminity for the French and made a mark in French culture that is not easily obliterated. Courtesan or bayadère, real or fictional, Indian or French, the woman is objectified and sexualized, but she is indubitably present and remembered. The depiction of women, even in a far-from-ideal manner, incorporates these plays into the topical dialog on women's issues. It bears witness to the fact that, through the centuries, women have struggled against society's prejudices to make their voices heard. The real Amany broke traditional taboos to travel and perform in France while the fictional Shakúntala's travails arose from her attempt to marry Dushyánta without society's presence and approval. Camille Claudel fought nineteenth-century prejudices against women artists, and struggled to create her art. She is only now beginning to emerge from under Rodin's shadow.[198] In telling Camille's story, decades after her death,

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[198] The twenty-first century is perhaps the time for women to write themselves back into history. *Hamilton's* closing number, "Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?", shifts the focus from the

Shakúntala, another woman who defied society, albeit a fictional one, becomes a conduit. The trail continues: the Sotheby's auction-house catalog surmises that Rodin's sculpture *L'Éternelle idole* (1890-93) was inspired by Claudel's *Sakountala*, thus recognizing a woman's contribution to a male sculptor's universally acclaimed work.[199] Finding these traces re-inscribes women into the narrative and helps build a counterpoint to the "single story" that is universally propagated as history.

Figure 36. Rodin's *L'eternelle idole.* © Musée Rodin.

Akin to shades of coloration or threads in a tapestry that may pass unnoticed but which contribute to the effect of the whole, India as a theme subtly permeated French consciousness through literature, art, opera and dance. As Claudel's sculpture shows, Indian

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Founding Fathers to Eliza Hamilton, another nineteenth-century woman who reclaims her place. www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrMkdZtqiVI

[199] www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2014/impressionist-modern-art-evening-sale-n09139/lot.65.html

tropes penetrated the French social and cultural ethos in unexpected ways, demonstrating that "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha *Location of Culture* 37). An acknowledgement of this blending of cultural identities, may, as Bhabha says, "open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism or multi-culturalism of the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" (*Location of Culture* 38).

In closing, I return to Proust's words, as they encompass the entire domain of literary scholarly research. This dissertation has followed the trail of earlier research before branching out and more intensively exploring a certain area of nineteenth-century French theater. The term "d'autres yeux" is prolifically ambiguous: it implies looking at something from different perspectives as well as considering the views of "cent autres." This dissertation endeavored to look at nineteenth-century plays through various connotations of "d'autres yeux," leading to a veritable voyage of discovery through literary landscapes. I hope that in addition to contributing to existing scholarship, this work can provide avenues for further voyages of discovery.

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