

VOL. 41.2

2011

THE YEARBOOK
OF
ENGLISH STUDIES

Editor

JOHN BATCHELOR

Victorian World Literatures

Guest Editor

PABLO MUKHERJEE

Maney Publishing

for the

Modern Humanities Research Association

Contents

	PAGE
ABSTRACTS	ix
Introduction: Victorian World Literatures By PABLO MUKHERJEE	I
ARTICLES	
Globalizing Victorian Studies By PRIYA JOSHI	20
The Worlding of the Jingo Poem By ELLEKE BOEHMER	41
Robert Louis Stevenson and the Meiji Enlightenment By MICHAEL GARDINER	58
Richard F. Burton, Polygamy, and the Worlding of the American West By DANIEL BIVONA	73
The Age of the Novel, the Age of Empire: Howells, Twain, James around 1900 By JONATHAN ARAC	94
The Romance of the Outlands: The <i>Fin-de-siècle</i> Adventure Story between History and Geography By RICHARD MAXWELL (with KATIE TRUMPENER)	106
Eating Tongues: Australian Colonial Literature and 'the Great Silence' By PATRICK BRANTLINGER	125

Globalizing Victorian Studies

PRIYA JOSHI

Temple University

Only connect!
(E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (1910))

Introduction

Victorian studies is under review. Contributors in the pages of its eponymously titled premier research journal have remarked on the limitations posed by the term ‘Victorian’, which Amanda Anderson protests has remained ‘anachronistically wedded to the person of the queen’.¹ Kate Flint further laments the term’s ‘unmistakable national, and nationalist, overtone’, which, she insists, stands as an obstacle to ‘the understanding and conceptualization of transnational issues’.² Over the last two decades, however, the field has been vitalized by post-colonial-themed scholarship, and insights from Empire have helped to remodel, if not fully remove, the national focus.³ Clearly, more remains to be done in reviewing fully the conceptual and theoretical uses of the term. Two questions point the way.

Might *preserving* ‘Victorian’ as a designation, but relocating it both across the globe and beyond the time frame determined by royal rule, generate insights that the term’s current usage, with its containment to history and geography, obscures? Recognizing the cultural traffic spawned around the globe by Victorian ideology and policies, ‘Victorian’ resembles a migratory practice with far more lasting global impact than other nineteenth-century practices, such as Romanticism, for example. Unlike the latter, which began as an aesthetic

The National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Institute for Indian Studies, the University of California, Berkeley, and Temple University supported the research for this paper, which would have been impossible without the extensive courtesy of the director, librarians, and staff of the Connemara Public Library, Madras (Chennai), for which I am profoundly thankful. The paper was delivered as a Nicholson Lecture at the University of Chicago; my thanks to audiences there, at the University of Iowa, and at the Penn History of Material Texts Seminar for useful feedback. Special thanks to Ian Duncan, Sangita Gopal, and Peter Logan for their perceptive and timely input, and to Daniel Ryan Morse for research assistance. This paper is dedicated to Orfeo Fioretos, whose keen intelligence has shaped it.

¹ Amanda Anderson, ‘Victorian Studies and the Two Modernities’, *Victorian Studies*, 47 (2005), 185–203 (p. 195).

² Kate Flint, ‘Why “Victorian”? Response’, *Victorian Studies*, 47 (2005), 230–39 (pp. 230, 231).

³ See, for instance, Ian Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Patrick Brantlinger, *The Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Priya Joshi, *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

(c) Modern Humanities Research Assn

phenomenon with political impulses, 'Victorian' was initially a *political* practice heralded by monarch and Parliament before it became a force in just about every realm, including aesthetics. Taking a cue about migrations from Charles Darwin, that ultimate Victorian, one recognizes that not all migrations are the same: routes and durations vary, often considerably. Thus, while in some places such as the US 'Victorian' remains a quaint designation for real-estate marketing, in other parts of the world its currency is far more systematic and substantial. One way to refresh the field is by studying indigenous Victorianisms as numerous essays in the present volume pursue, in this case by analysing the writing of the period from different parts of the world. Another is to recover the broader practices of the period and to renovate its nomenclature, as my study here proceeds to do.

This essay locates itself in one of the other parts of the world — India — and poses a second question: might 'Victorian' be a term whose real use lies in *indexing* a set of preoccupations rather than confining those preoccupations to history and geography? While Flint, Anderson, and others convey their discomfort with the term and note its limitations, they conclude their remarks without providing an alternative.⁴ Instead, these scholars cogently identify potentially productive research agendas that might be precisely what Victorian studies needs in order to go beyond national, and nationalist, limits. Key among these projects is the call for a focus on transnational studies (Flint) and comparative imperialisms (Marcus). Yet, while post-colonial research in Victorian studies has already embraced transnational themes in its focus on parts of the Empire such as Scotland and India during the long nineteenth century, it has nevertheless preserved the sense that the Victorian metropolis was hegemonic and defined the terms of production in the colonial periphery, if not by direct economic power then by indirect cultural influence. In these studies, be they of Scott or Bankim, the Victorian metropolis has persisted in shaping the key terms of study, notably the novel, print, capitalism, and authorship. If these cases are indicative, the persistence of English (and not even British) priorities in them underscores that a different kind of transnational study is now in order, one where the cultural and economic hegemony of the metropolis is no longer dominant, so that other circuits and relations, long-observed in the centre-dominated model, become evident.

⁴ Scholars such as Martin Hewitt have persuasively demonstrated a number of defining characteristics of the Victorian period; see Hewitt, 'Why the Notion of Victorian Britain *Does* Make Sense', *Victorian Studies*, 48 (2006), 395–438 (pp. 396–97). I propose instead a study that is based not on historical configurations but on *cultural* ones that may have had their origins in Victorian Britain but postdate it temporally and exceed it historically. See also Sharon Marcus, 'Same Difference? Transnationalism, Comparative Literature, and Victorian Studies', *Victorian Studies*, 45 (2003), 677–86; and Irene Tucker, 'International Whiggery', *Victorian Studies*, 45 (2003), 687–97.

‘Victorian’, in this revisionary practice, might be used as a conceptual springboard liberated from the restrictive temporal and spatial markers now current. But this is not a call for Dickensian joinery (a return of chintz curtains and bric-a-brac alongside mid-century modern); rather, it is an appeal for a different project altogether, one that explores the half-life of Victorian ideas and ideals in a period far outside the Victorian metropolitan sphere and its legible historical boundaries. Ideally, such a project might renovate Victorian studies and open new avenues of research. Equally likely, it might restore ‘Victorian’ to the position and appellation it currently enjoys and dismantle other practices in its wake.

This essay is an effort to review Victorian study by focusing on categories other than ‘Victorian’ or ‘England’. With history and geography thus temporarily suspended, it is hoped that both categories will eventually be renovated. Located in India, the paper summons the help of the theoretical and empirical apparatus of post-colonial studies, which has already played an effective role in thinking beyond the containers of history and geography and in conceptualizing social and cultural movements in a transnational perspective. Within this framework, India provides a deep archive of often overlooked evidence on the extensive half-life of things Victorian. In the present-day structures of the nation’s law, jurisprudence, architecture, education, and civil society, among others, Victorian thinking and ideology continue to be amply present and unmistakably visible whether or not they are always explicitly acknowledged. University courses (including the study of English literature), social clubs, urban design, political structures, public culture, the Penal Code (crafted by Macaulay and still in place), and even, on occasion, cuisine: all bear the marks of their origins in Victorian practice, yet they do so at a time when those practices and their ideologies no longer have the propulsive force of political authority. In this context, to consider the Victorian in India today is to examine what is less a matter of filiation — namely, the legacy of a colonial past on the present — than a matter of affiliation, namely a relationship that has developed *and gets reproduced* because it addresses preoccupations and practices of the moment.⁵ To uncover the Victorian in India, therefore, is not (just) to expose a genealogy, but, more significantly, to provide a nuanced understanding of how ideas and ideologies are dispersed, mutate, and are reauthorized far from their source and often independently of it. In this approach ‘Victorian’ may more usefully index what Wai Chee Dimock in a different context has called a ‘spectrum of affinities’, rather than particular history or geography.⁶

⁵ See Edward Said for a slightly different explanation of these terms in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 16–25.

⁶ Wai Chee Dimock, ‘Genre as World System: Epic and Novel on Four Continents’, *Narrative*, 14 (2006), 85–101 (p. 86).

As a book historian committed to the material life of the text, I believe that the project of reviewing Victorian study can most persuasively be accomplished theoretically if it is grounded in material conditions. Thus I shall anchor my conclusions on the circulation of print and ideas as evident from the social life of one Victorian institution that appeared in India in 1855, was dedicated in 1896, and has prospered continuously ever since. During this period India went from colony to nation, Empire gave way to Liberalization (in India) and globalization (elsewhere), books became texts, print became digital, and the very name of the city where the institution is located changed from Madras to Chennai. The Connemara Public Library, which serves as my empirical case, stands as an index of these changes and gestures towards the shifting calculus of categories that enable one to think about the three crucial terms that 'Victorian' and 'Empire' both expose and obscure: history (of a long nineteenth century), geography (Britain and India), and culture, which connected metropolis with periphery, however unevenly.

Studying institutions such as public libraries enables us to scrutinize the way in which identities were fabricated in colonial and formerly colonial India through the public spaces and civic institutions that shaped them. As such, this essay explores 'Victorian' as a *longue durée* phenomenon with a centre of gravity now located in India both when it was under the flag of Empire, and in the post-1991 period when India lifted its stringent controls on the free market, liberalized its economy, and ushered in an exuberant embrace of that form of material desire known as globalization.

The sections that follow discuss the culture of reading, the role of institutions, historical trends in Madras, and conclude by exploring the continued relevance of Victorian studies in understanding the diverse phenomena collected under globalization.

Reading in the Age of Liberalization

Benedict Anderson has slyly noted that books, consumed in what he calls the 'lair of the skull', leave few textual or representational remains of their consumption.⁷ How they work on the subject's imagination, what they do there, and what the social outcome of reading is remain among some of the hardest questions for cultural historians to contend with. Despite these lacunae in the historical record, scholars have never shied away from making broad claims that connect

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. and enlarged edn (London: Verso, 1991), p. 35.

reading with revolution,⁸ the novel with nationalism,⁹ or reading institutions such as libraries with their users.¹⁰ However, as the historian Roger Chartier has observed, the three poles of reading have largely been kept apart in academic discourse: that is, the analysis of texts (or textual criticism), the history of books and ‘beyond that [. . .] all forms that bear texts’ (or bibliography), and the study of practices that ‘seize on these objects [. . .] and produce differentiated uses and meanings’ (or cultural history).¹¹ Chartier’s work, inspired by the scholarship of the ethnographer Michel de Certeau, is an effort to bring these poles closer together. While de Certeau spoke evocatively, even poetically, of readers (‘readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write’),¹² Chartier examines the social practices associated with reading, asking questions like ‘Do books make revolutions?’, a question premised not on readers but on reading, not on the noun but on the verb and the social sphere in which the activity occurs.

The study of readers tells us less about the *mind* of the reader than it does about the historical and social context in which reading occurs. In short, the history of *what* is read is possibly more revealing than the history of *how* a singular reader reads. Rather than neglecting readers whose histories remain elusive and largely limited by their singularity, I propose placing them *after* the initial analysis of their broader practices, which are clearer to discern and often more revealing of social and historical meanings. The history of reading that I pursue here and elsewhere includes the history of what is read, when, by whom, and where. If we cannot arrive at a clear view of the reader by these methods, we may at least be able to discern how aggregate reading practices across time reveal *mentalités* that might not otherwise be legible were one solely to focus on the singular reader.

As I have shown elsewhere in the context of nineteenth-century India, what books came to be read, when, and why provides an important index to the social and cultural landscape of the time. Even when readers left few legible

⁸ Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁹ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; and Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for “Indian” Pasts?’, *Representations*, 27 (1989), 1–26.

¹⁰ Simon Eliot, *A Measure of Popularity: Public Library Holdings of Twenty-Four Popular Authors, 1883–1912*, History of the Book — On Demand Series, 2 (Oxford and Bristol, 1992); Paul Kaufman, ‘The Community Library: A Chapter in English Social History’, in *Libraries and their Users: Collected Papers in Library History* (London: Library Association, 1969), pp. 188–222. See also Kaufman, in *Libraries and their Users: ‘In Defence of Fair Readers’*, pp. 223–28, and ‘Some Reading Trends in Bristol, 1773–84’, pp. 28–35.

¹¹ Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Century*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 2–3.

¹² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 174.

traces of individual responses, the aggregate figures of reading preference as visible in purchasing and borrowing records from bookstores and public libraries indicate readers' responses to an economic and ideological landscape that the readers themselves had no particular hand in creating but over which they nonetheless exercised voice, if not influence. The consumption of books that I and others study is different from that of other commodities in that literacy as well as purchasing power is required. Pierre Bourdieu's claims notwithstanding, books and their consumption are implicated in an economy that is not just about consumerism. Specifically in the case of post-Liberalization India, books and readerly preference are an index of, and not an object in, the embrace of material desire with which we may characterize globalization in the late twentieth century.

The exchanges that the consumption of books makes visible tell us much about the real and imagined topography of readerly desires as readers attempt to master their social landscape and contend with its contradictions. This was true of Menocchio, the sixteenth-century miller in Carlo Ginzburg's study *The Cheese and the Worms* (1980); it was true of nineteenth-century readers of novels in the early American republic in Cathy Davidson's *Revolution and the Word* (1986); it has been true of American readers of romance novels in Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984); and true in Michael Denning's account of working-class reading in nineteenth-century America in *Dime Novels* (1987). What 'truths' might we elicit from readerly practices in India in the century following 1910?

The reading preferences among patrons in Madras's oldest public library illuminate social anxieties not always immediately evident elsewhere. Founded during the ascendance of Victorian social reform movements, five years after the historical passage of the 1850 Ewart Act in England that funded free public libraries across that nation, the Connemara Public Library exposes the dialectic of modernity in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India as revealed through the borrowing patterns of two roughly homologous groups in Madras between 1910 and 2003. Records of who patronized this inherently public space and what they consumed enable us to document the way in which preoccupations with economic mobility, a state increasingly hostile to its subjects/citizens, and the eventual pressures of global capital as manifested in India played out during the half-century prior to Independence in 1947 and the half-century following it. An analysis of the different narratives that emerge from examining the shifting culture of textuality and print across a single century that saw the ascendance of print followed by that of other media such as film, television, and the Internet reveals the particular and shifting social meanings available from scrutinizing the evolving circulation and consumption of an 'old media' (print and books) in a changing economy.

Connemara Public Library

The origins of the Connemara Public Library in Madras are closely located in Victorian social ideology and political preoccupations as practised in the metropolis.¹³ The institution's founding and the wide support it enjoyed throughout the colonial period exemplify British liberal imperialism at its most articulate. Subsequently, in the period following Independence when the political landscape in India changed dramatically, the library exposes the outcome of Victorian ideas in a context and moment perhaps unanticipated by their origins.

The Connemara is both more and less than a typical public library: initially appended to the Government Museum of Madras in 1855, it was loosely modelled on the British Library, which from 1753, the year of its founding, until 1997 was appended to the British Museum. Like the British Library, the Connemara had a deposit mandate (it remains one of four deposit libraries in India). There were no fees, and no membership restrictions (a fairly unusual practice among Indian public libraries) except for a minimum age limit for visitors and readers of seventeen years (now lowered to fifteen years). The Connemara, therefore, tended to draw a large and varied cross-section of the literate Indian community to its reading rooms, and the deposit mandate ensured that readers encountered an extensive and varied collection in English and regional languages, attracting specialist scholars, and lay members of the public looking for leisure reading. In 1910 the library reported 18,374 users; by 1997 that number had risen to 358,993, an almost twentyfold increase.

Perhaps because of the library's association with the Government Museum, its collection inevitably reflected the scholarly bent of the affiliate institution. A large part of the collection's funding during the early years of the last century went towards the purchase of titles in anatomy, biology, zoology, arts and industry, mineralogy, botany, geology, and forestry — all disciplines 'in the higher branches of literature and science', 'useful' to the economic development of the Madras Presidency, as Lord Connemara, the Governor of Madras, reported during the 1890 dedication of the library as separate from the Museum. However, history, religion, literature, languages, and the arts were not neglected, the Governor averred, so that 'young men and old men, possibly ladies, may come here and enjoy the pleasures of literature and reading for its own sake'.¹⁴ Holdings in these subjects were, on average, proportional to those found in similar libraries in the UK, the USA, and France for the same period.

Figure 1 graphically documents the manner in which stock in the library kept abreast of users. Before Independence there were slightly more titles in stock

¹³ For a fuller history of this phenomenon see Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

¹⁴ Quoted in *Know your Connemara* (Madras: Department of Public Libraries, 1973), p. 2.

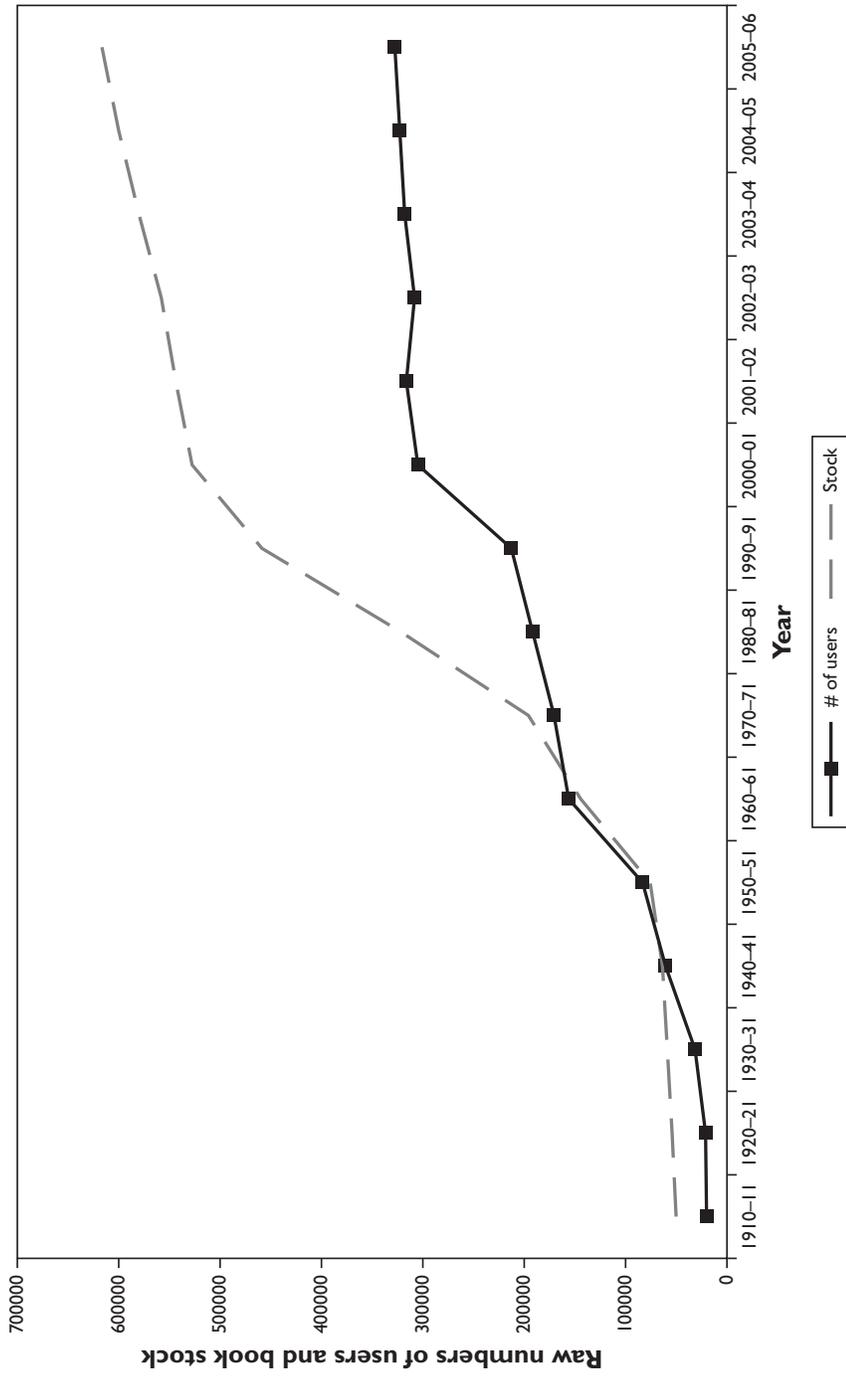


FIGURE 1 Increases in users and stock at Connemara Public Library, Madras, 1910–2006. The data in Figures 1–6 is taken from the library’s Annual Reports (1910–2006).

than there were users; after Independence in 1947 the number of readers and titles was roughly equal; by the late 1960s the number of titles in stock towered above the number of users (a trend typical in most libraries of this kind elsewhere). In summary, between 1910 and 2006, while the library's stock increased over tenfold, the number of users increased almost twentyfold. On the occasion of the library's formal separation from the Government Museum and the inauguration of its own building in 1896, Arthur Havelock, then colonial Governor of Madras, intoned cheerlessly: 'We have a magnificent hall, a splendid reading room and beautiful bookshelves; but I regret to say the bookshelves are at present but poorly furnished.'¹⁵ In striking contrast, a 1973 house history concluded with the following observation:

Like any other growing institution, [the Connemara Public Library] has its own problems; but these have arisen mainly from its popularity and continued success. Physical sources have not increased in direct proportion to the demand for our services. Sometimes it seems that it is not good to be too popular and too successful! Like a butterfly emerging from its cocoon, the Connemara Public Library has changed from a secluded place containing old books to one of the country's chief source[s] of knowledge.¹⁶

In 1981, in order to meet readers' demands, the library authorities added a textbook section containing titles used in university courses; and in 1994 a civil service study room was added, where graduates preparing for the national civil service exams had access to specialized materials. New buildings were constructed, and the original teak and stained-glass reading room with its fabled Indo-Saracenic roof that Lord Havelock had bemoaned, became a storage space, as a video room, a Braille library, computers, and the Internet made increasing demands on the physical infrastructure. About a decade ago, the leading English-language Madras daily, *The Hindu*, ran a story on the library's centenary and noted: 'The Library, according to old timers, shaped the thought of many who later became leaders in public life including at least two former chief ministers, M. Bakthavatsalam and C. N. Annadurai.'¹⁷

The Connemara Library today remains a vibrant and bustling space. Its collections have continued to grow in response to readers' requests, as has its readership. While it has become fashionable in some, usually elite, circles in India to lament the death of the book and the evaporation of readers, none of that is really visible in this public institution, which has continued to thrive since its origins as an appendage to a colonial museum in 1855. In contrast to the decades up to the 1980s, when 'very old persons' were its main users, today about

¹⁵ *Know your Connemara*, p. 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁷ 'Pride in Shreds', *The Hindu*, 12 August 1996, no p. It is important to note the range of caste positions in the two chief ministers mentioned: Bakthavatsalam, of the high-caste, Tamil Brahmin, elite, and Annadurai, of the anti-Brahmin, DMK organization structure. My thanks to Priya Kumar for this useful detail.

two-thirds (65 per cent) of the Connemara's users are between the ages of fifteen and thirty, with those aged sixty or more comprising between 5 and 10 per cent of total users. 'Readers are the masters here', observed the Connemara's director in a 2007 interview: 'The development of the library in the future cannot be stopped by anybody but the readers whom the administration has to serve.'¹⁸

Reading Trends

Establishing what individual readers read and how they do so is always extremely difficult. Book historians, therefore, have focused on answering such questions by examining aggregate statistics of circulation and consumption from which they have made analytical explorations of broader processes. Few libraries, however, have retained systematic records on circulation: Paul Kaufman's pioneering research located circulation data from a year or two of a Welsh library here, a Bristol or Bath lending library there,¹⁹ and Jan Fergus has provided a number of keen insights from data on Samuel Clay's Lending Library in Warwick.²⁰ Records from colonial India have tended to be slightly more available; most of these findings have been reported elsewhere.²¹ The Connemara's librarians preserved meticulous records of book circulation by subject between 1910 and 1920 and again between 1996 and 2003. From these statistics we can begin to address books and their readers in this Indian public institution and explore how the social life of the institution may have evolved across the twentieth century as the ideals behind its foundation encountered dramatically changing environments.

The data from the Connemara Public Library tell a story about readers' relationship to an economic landscape and the use they made of the library in order to master it. Among the many continuities across the century of records available, Figure 2 reveals that, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end, the circulation of literature as a percentage of the total titles requested remained stable at approximately 20 per cent.

¹⁸Data on the age profiles of users and the future of the Connemara Public Library were provided by N. Avadaippan, director of the Connemara Public Library (February 2007). In addition to the statistics quoted above, readers between thirty and forty years comprised 10 per cent of the Library's users; those between forty and sixty years, 20 per cent; and those between fifteen and twenty years, 10 per cent.

¹⁹See Paul Kaufman's essays in *Libraries and their Users*.

²⁰Jan Fergus, 'Eighteenth-Century Readers in Provincial England: The Customers of Samuel Clay's Circulating Library and Bookshop in Warwick, 1770-1772', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 78.2 (1984), 155-213; see also her *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²¹See Priya Joshi, 'The Circulation of Fiction in Indian Libraries, ca. 1835-1901', in *In Another Country*, pp. 35-92; see also Joshi, 'Futures Past: Books, Reading, Culture in the Age of Liberalization', in *Books without Borders: Perspectives from South Asia*, ed. by Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond, 2 vols (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), II: pp. 85-99.

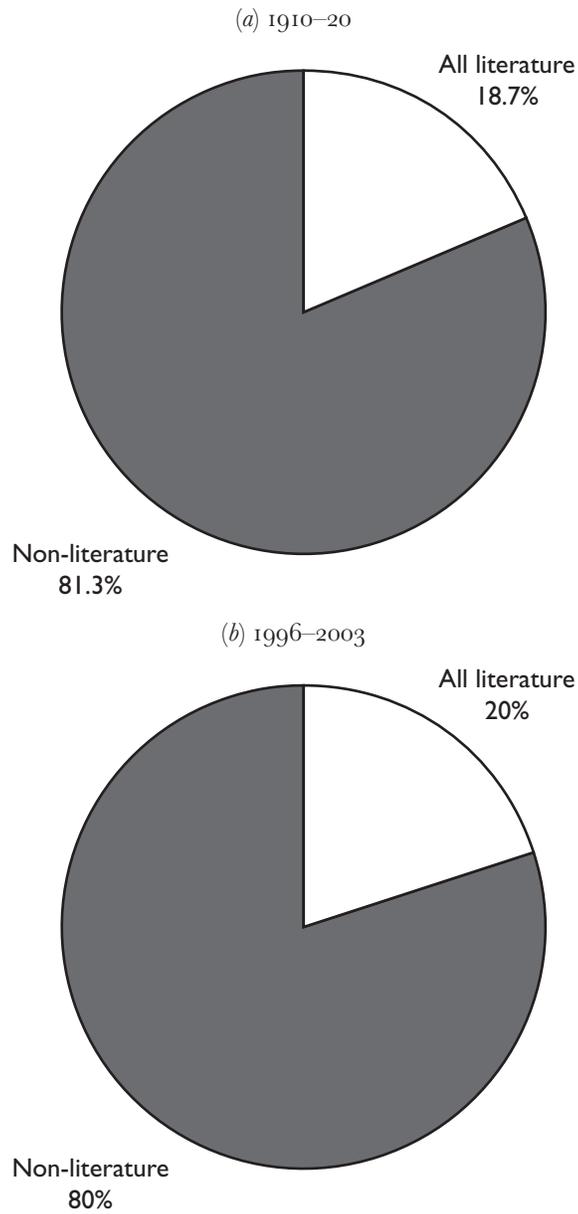


FIGURE 2 Continuity in book circulation at Connemara Public Library, Madras.

However, while literature continues to circulate at approximately 20 per cent of total titles (a general trend in public libraries elsewhere), when we examine in what *language* that circulation occurs, some discontinuities appear between the

earlier colonial period and the period following Liberalization in the 1990s. Literature in English, which constituted approximately 20 per cent of total library circulation in the period 1910–20 (Figure 3*a*), declines to less than 5 per cent in the period 1996–2003 (Figure 3*b*). Meanwhile, literature in Tamil and other regional languages (classified as ‘vernacular literature’ and included with the former), which constituted less than 1 per cent of the total circulation in the 1910–20 period (Figure 3*a*), increases to approximately 10 per cent of total titles circulated in the period 1996–2003 (Figure 3*b*). Illustrated differently, while literature *tout court* continues to circulate at about 20 per cent of total titles (Figure 4), English literature declines from comprising almost 99 per cent of total literature titles circulated between 1910 and 1920 to 22 per cent of total literary titles circulating in 1996–2003 (a 75 per cent drop; see Figure 4*a*). Meanwhile, Tamil (and vernacular literature) increases from 1.2 per cent of total literary circulation in the period 1910–20 to almost 48 per cent of total literary circulation in the period 1996–2003 (Figure 4*b*).

A closer look at the continuities of literary circulation underscores a story in which readers during the colonial period (here referenced by the 1910–20 data) turned to English literature in an effort to master the language and the culture of the colonial state in order to advance within a colonial economic landscape inherently hostile to them. The preference for Tamil literature in the 1990s, moreover, also underscores not just the passing of Empire and its priorities, but also tells the story about the turning away from the ‘outside’ world indexed by the English language and a turning inward to local or regional interests and priorities indexed by reading in Tamil and other languages such as Telugu. Bluntly, the rejection of English for literature in Tamil and regional languages appears to index a rejection of neocolonial priorities and the ‘triumph’ of post-colonial thinking in which nationalist preferences hold sway. This is the *local narrative*, embedded in local realities and experiences, that the data on reading make visible.

Yet, when the data on circulation are scrutinized more closely alongside broader practices, a second, more global story emerges. In 1991 India liberalized government controls on its economy and opened it up to foreign investment and global markets. Unforeseen opportunities resulted: the 2 per cent ‘Hindu’ rate of growth under the License Raj was replaced by an annual growth rate of 9 per cent. The number of billionaires in India today tops that in Japan, and economists at Goldman Sachs predict that by 2025 the economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China (‘BRICs’) could comprise over half the size of the G6, with India and China in the lead in wealth production.²² In short, not only is India a figure in the global economy, its production of wealth, goods, and

²² See Goldman Sachs, ‘Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050’ (October 2003) <<http://www2.goldmansachs.com/ideas/brics/book/gg-dreaming.pdf>> and *BRICs and Beyond* (November 2007) <<http://www2.goldmansachs.com/ideas/brics/BRICs-and-Beyond.html>> [both accessed 9 December 2010].

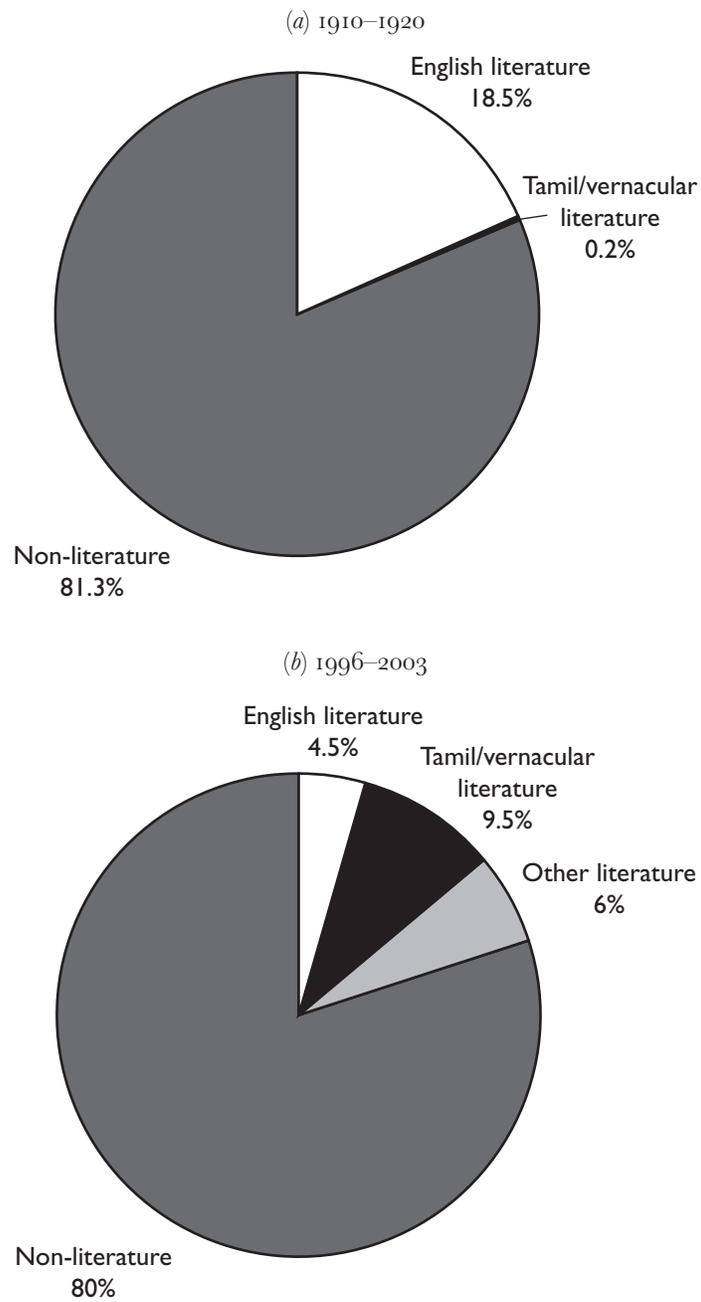
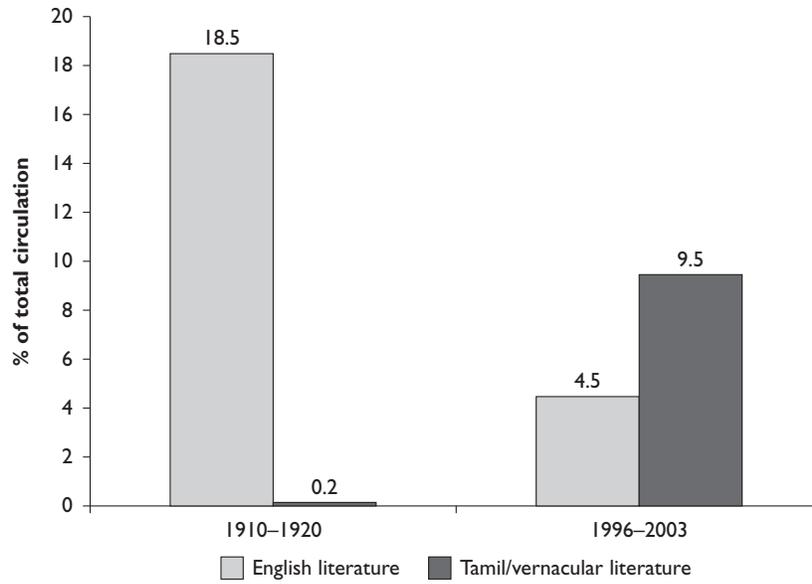


FIGURE 3 Circulation of literature by languages at Connemara Public Library, Madras.

(a) Changes in literature circulation



(b) Percentage of literature circulating by language

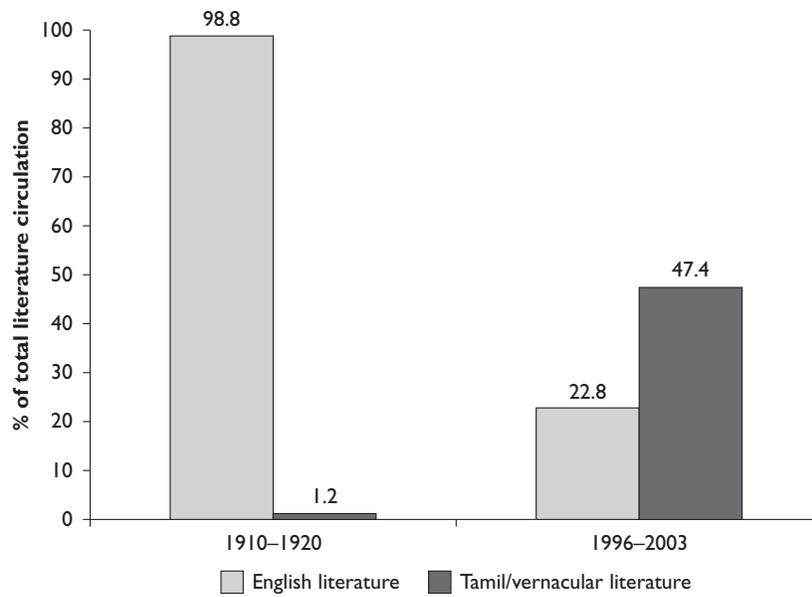


FIGURE 4 Changes in circulation of literature by languages at Connemara Public Library, Madras.

(c) Modern Humanities Research Assn

services makes it a major player that today influences the global economy in a number of key sectors, such as technology, finance, and management (all subjects in wide circulation in the library). Against these realities the Connemara Public Library has a second story to offer.

Following Liberalization, the Connemara Library introduced new collections in engineering, mathematics, and management (categorized under ‘technology’ in the Dewey Decimal System that the library still follows), which constitute roughly 30 per cent of total titles in circulation for the period 1996–2003 (see Figure 5*a*), in contrast to less than 1 per cent during the 1910–20 period. Of this 30 per cent, titles in engineering appear in the majority, circulating at close to 55 per cent; management is next, at 32 per cent, and then mathematics, at approximately 13 per cent (see Figure 5*b*).

Figure 6 combines these different statistics on circulation from the 1996–2003 period as a percentage of total circulation by subject at the library: engineering at 16.2 per cent, literature in Tamil and regional languages at 9.5 per cent, closely tied with management at 8.9 per cent, with mathematics and literature in English trailing at 3.9 and 4.6 per cent respectively.

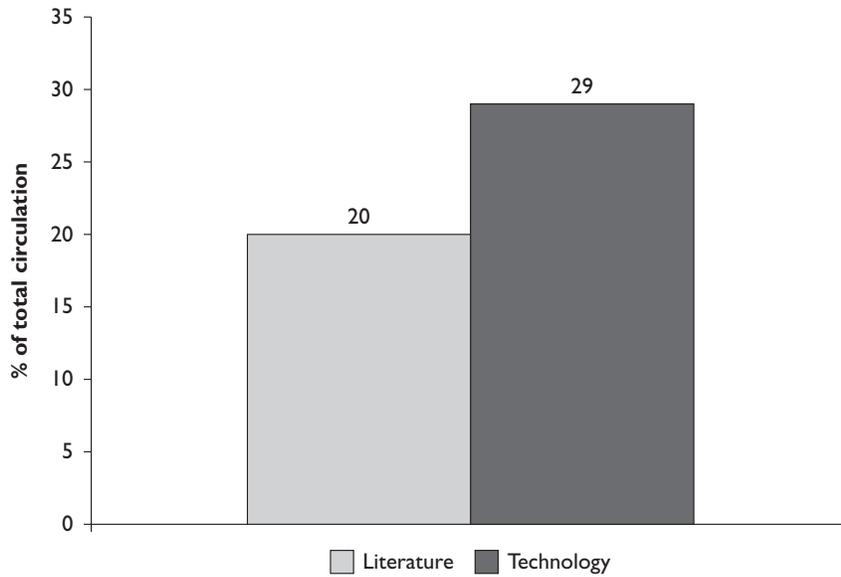
How might we put some of these data together, taking into account the social world of which the Connemara Public Library is an intimate part, a world in which Madras (now Chennai) is closely integrated into the global economy, providing and consuming goods, services, and labour for its economic and technical engines? The data on circulation and the discontinuities from the early twentieth century detail a story that highlights regional variations of globalization in which the persistence of colonial priorities has been replaced by a set of interests and commitments illegible in the framework provided by post-colonial study.

Beyond the Post-colonial

The turn to consuming vernacular language literature that is plotted in Figure 4 does not signify a rejection of the outside world, but rather a rejection of certain colonial priorities embedded in the term ‘post-colonial’. English and its literature are no longer deemed resources of hope in the post-Liberalization period. The colonial world and its persistent priorities of Anglicization have disappeared from the current landscape. In the prescient words of the late Indian scholar Meenakshi Mukherjee, who two decades ago was already pressing for a more useful organizing frame than ‘post-colonial’ to understand the formerly colonial world, ‘the colonising Other has assumed other forms and is no longer the major point of reference; the conflicts are located elsewhere’.²³

²³ Meenakshi Mukherjee, ‘Narrating a Nation’, *Indian Literature*, 35.4 (1992), 138–49 (p. 141).

(a) Circulation of composite categories as percentage of the total



(b) Circulation of technology titles

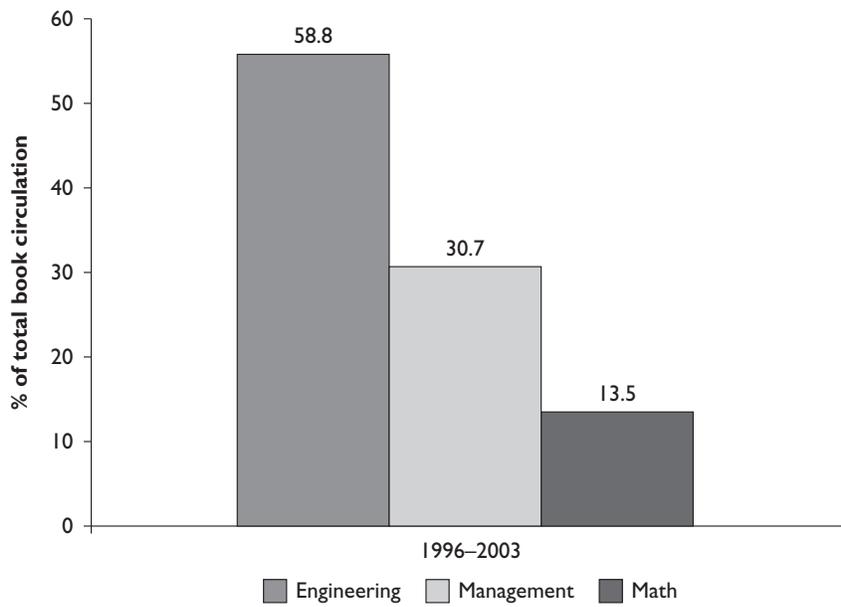


FIGURE 5 Circulation of other subjects at Connemara Public Library, Madras, during the period 1996–2003.

(c) Modern Humanities Research Assn

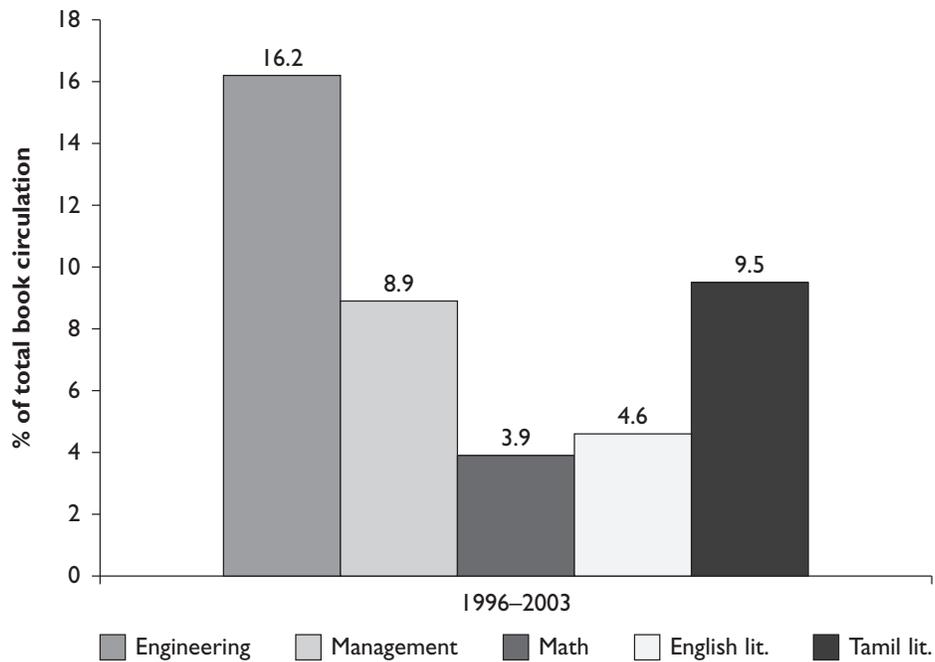


FIGURE 6 Circulation of titles by subject at Connemara Public Library, Madras, during the period 1996–2003.

And to understand this ‘elsewhere’ Tamil literature proves more satisfying than the literature in English that was once so popular at the Connemara Library.²⁴

Simultaneously, the library readerships’ preferences during the 1996–2003 period underscore an embrace of the global world. As a quiet but powerful engine in India’s technology corridor, Tamil Nadu indexes its close integration with the global economy by the increasingly wide circulation of engineering, mathematics, and management titles (see Figures 5 and 6). The transition from English to HTML that these data indicate across the last century marks a more complex story in which the mastery over globalization (HTML, engineering, management) is *accompanied by* a greater avidity for vernacular reading and local forms of leisure. If the Connemara Library’s circulation figures are accurate indices, these leisure reading preferences play a role in shaping a vibrant local identity in Chennai while simultaneously shaping and crafting an identity in command over the global world where expertise in engineering and management provides a crucial avenue for economic advancement.

²⁴ See Joshi, ‘Futures Past’.

Whereas the post-colonial framework tends to regard dual identities (sometimes named ‘mimicry’) as inherently unstable and worthy of reams of apologia, Chennai’s global identity as visible in this instance is, paradoxically, far more sturdy and flexible. Not only has it made peace with its past as it masters its environment (the ‘death’ of English in language and literature is one marker), but the bilingual reading practices of this new generation (for engineering and Tamil literature) also reveal an embrace of global realities *simultaneous with* an embrace of local conditions. Each *enables* the other, unlike the post-colonial framework, according to whose formulations one obliterated the other.

The main contribution made by research on readers such as this, is to render empirical nuance to the ‘glocalization’ thesis that has much currency as a desired condition but little hard evidence to support it actively.²⁵ By bringing the Connemara’s reading statistics — and, in fact, the history and sociology of reading — into view, it is possible to provide evidence for ‘glocalization’ and its workings. The Connemara evidence makes clear that globalization in this instance is not competing with, but is *complementary* to, local identities. At the local level it is not ‘either/or’, as Benjamin Barber, among others, would claim (McWorld OR Jihad; the Lexus OR the Olive Tree), but ‘as well as’.²⁶

The Connemara’s readership indicates the development of identity not as a zero-sum game, as many post-colonial theorists would posit it, but as a positive-sum game in which the local and global are in considerable partnership and where the Manichean framework of colonial practices is, paradoxically, preserved — albeit in inversion — in post-colonial thinking. As the sociologist Roland Robertson has averred in a foundational essay, ‘globalization — in the broadest sense, the compression of the world — has involved and increasingly involves *the creation and incorporation of locality*’.²⁷ For him, as for others in the social sciences, the local is ‘an aspect of globalization’ and not a counterpoint to it.²⁸ Thus the encounter with global processes (usually shorthand for economic development involving labour and world markets) exposes heterogeneous outcomes that Robertson’s argument and the Connemara’s data amplify. In both cases the global order *diversifies* local practices (rather than homogenizing them or flattening them to conform to the ‘world’), bringing the local and its particular priorities into relief, as the Connemara’s reading practices further demonstrate. Embracing the global in Chennai — where this embrace is more

²⁵ See Roland Robertson, ‘Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity’, in *Global Modernities*, ed. by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage, 1995), pp. 25–44.

²⁶ See Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (New York: Ballantine, 1996); and Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor, 2000).

²⁷ Robertson, ‘Glocalization’, p. 40 (my emphasis). See also Jan Nederveen Pieterse, ‘Globalization as Hybridization’ in *ibid.*, pp. 45–68.

²⁸ Robertson, ‘Glocalization’, p. 30.

visible than it was in Madras — comes with the rise of the local and the surpassing of the colonial world in virtually total ways.

The Connemara story may, in a small way, be a harbinger of things to come. It may signal with some finality the death of the colonial order as it has persisted in post-colonial thinking, which has been slow to replace colonialism as the major point of reference or to understand conflicts in terms other than those inherited from colonial discourse. This may in part explain why the globalization debate first issued from keyboards of scholars unfettered by the shibboleths of post-colonial theory and its efficient binaries (thus Arjun Appadurai and Saskia Sassen, not Homi Bhabha or Gayatri Spivak).

The Connemara story further exposes a major blind spot in post-colonial thinking. Victoria may have brought both novels and trains to India, yet post-colonial theory has largely focused on culture (the novel) over the technologies of modernity (trains) in understanding the nineteenth-century Empire. The borrowing-patterns at the Connemara expose the shortcomings of this approach. Reading, itself a technology that had its origins in Victorian reform ideology, ushered in the arrival of modernity in India, where its effects diverged vastly from intentions and where subjects eventually became their own agents.²⁹ Globalization theorists such as Appadurai and Robertson have reckoned with these subtleties and incorporated them into their understanding of modernity, while the ruthless binaries of post-colonial theory have yet to embrace them fully.

More significantly, the Connemara case gestures towards a renewed reckoning with Victorian studies. The adjective ‘Victorian’ clearly incorporates so much more: ‘an entire social order’, as Irene Tucker somewhat ironically notes.³⁰ But ‘Victorian’ also embeds a set of configurations that have a transnational and transhistorical reach. One small but potent analogy of this phenomenon is the novel. By no means an exclusively Victorian — or even English — product, the modern novel is a form of English writing whose origins in a national history have been no impediment to its transnational travels. Not only is it a thriving form now claimed by virtually every nation as its own, the novel has been claimed by scholars such as Benedict Anderson to have produced the very concept of the modern nation far beyond its originary locus.

Like globalization, the term ‘Victorian’ captures the unevenness intrinsic in transnational economic and cultural encounters. A term with a specific origin in nineteenth-century England, ‘Victorian’ refers today not only to historical boundaries, but more cogently to a set of interrelated cultural, intellectual, and social preoccupations that far outlive the originary moment. ‘Victorian’ persists

²⁹ For an extensive treatment of this subject see Joshi, *In Another Country*.

³⁰ Tucker, ‘International Whiggery’, p. 687.

as a contact zone: a space of encounter, (mis)recognition, and, sometimes, refusal. It makes sense, therefore, to speak in terms of ‘half-lives’ — a concept originally used in nuclear physics to understand the activity of notable elements over extended if unpredictable periods of time. All elements have half-lives; only some, however, have half-lives that are significant enough to measure and track because their half-lives have major consequences on matter around them.

The migrations historically associated with ‘Victorian’ were no doubt enabled by the sheer power of the political and economic engine that propelled England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The term itself and many of the conditions associated with it, such as a relatively stable political order, had their roots in practices from earlier centuries that created what the historian Linda Colley identifies as an ‘immensely strong state’,³¹ one that in 1832 — even before Victoria assumed the throne — could eke domestic reforms without succumbing to the revolutions that rocked continental Europe in the following decade. (Lacking revolutions of their own, England’s writers had to search elsewhere: in Greece (Byron) or France (Wordsworth), as the Romantics did.) But the outcome of this ‘immensely strong state’ was not just the weak and belated nationalism that Colley and E. M. Forster (among others) identify. Rather, for our purposes, the state provided a powerful and centralized engine for the dissemination of ideas and values incubating within. It was hardly a Soviet-style command economy: as Adam Smith and others since have averred, many of the ideas that proliferated around Britain, such as capitalism and Liberalism had an ‘enlightened’ self-generated momentum that ensured their travels across the globe on well-protected sea lanes underwritten by the profits and purpose of Empire. The ideas migrated widely, taking root unevenly and unequally across the globe with varying half-lives.

Victoria died in 1901. Some of the ideas that characterize her reign, however contested and contradictory they were and remain, live on. Thus institutions such as libraries and printing presses, or Liberalism, or the law have a Victorian half-life far greater than the queen’s own. It is in order to understand more fully these ideas and their consequences that engenders the relevance of ‘Victorian’ even today. To confine the term to geography or history is to asphyxiate Victorian studies at its most generative. Renovating it, as this essay proposes, is to recognize and to help recover the significant half-life of Victorian ideas as well as the many centres that played a role in their circulation and dispersal. In this context the descriptions of Victorian transnationalism that scholars in the present volume and elsewhere record allow us to understand better the contemporary form of globalization to an extent that other inherently transnational

³¹ Linda Colley, ‘Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain, 1750–1830’, in *Past and Present* 113 (November 1986), 97–117 (p. 106).

approaches (such as those of post-colonial study) have failed to do. It is because the age's extraordinary legacies — and the institutions that preserve them — have shaped our own modernity that render 'Victorian' a term worth keeping even as we dismantle its historical and geographical boundaries. Transnational and transhistorical practices were always already part of its century; our own study is now catching up with them and deserves some time to do so. Victoria is dead. Long live Victorian studies!