

Protean Scripts and Multiforms of Drama: Tracing Canonization and Longevity on and Off Stage

V. Kalaranjini

M.Phil., Research Scholar,

Bharath Institute of Science and Technology,

Selaiyur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600 073

ABSTRACT

Canonization of a work of literature contributes significantly towards its survival and celebration across time. Shakespeare, although having borrowed liberally from the sources that were then in existence, continues to entertain both as a canon and a phenomenon centuries after the passing of his Elizabethan stage. His texts, regarded as indisputable masterpieces, add to this popularity. Factors including his colonial context, the scope that the language presents for translations and the several ways in which we encounter Shakespeare too are significant contributors that cannot be ignored. Through the lens of performance, Shakespeare continues to reach us as plays, both well and ill-executed, making it vital to look at what happened to his sources and the inevitability of their shadowing in the process of the creation of the Shakespeare phenomenon.

This feature of Shakespearean plays is often used as the proof for a certain permanence associated with Shakespeare, and more widely with proscenium theatre itself. Drama, however, cannot be studied in isolation from its performative aspect primarily because the feature makes it a distinct form. Performances, in contrast with the dramatic text, evolve at the hands of every director who makes it his play. Therefore, when we attribute permanence to a proscenium play, Shakespearean or otherwise, we would only be accounting for the playwright and the script which does not in itself become the play.

The argument of permanence is often highlighted during attempts to undermine the relevance of forms such as street theatre. With the scripts of some of the most iconic street plays being increasingly made available online, the permanence can be at par with the proscenium scene. There is, however, a need to make the other factors that lead to the creation of a Shakespeare more inclusive as it can determine what generations inherit as socio-cultural history, art, theatre and literature itself.

Taking Shakespeare as a premise, this paper attempts to study drama and plays both within and outside the constructs of a proscenium as evolving performances and the problems with the assumption of unchanged longevity imposed on a genre of the said sort in the process of its elevation into the canons.

Keywords: canonization, performance, drama, permanence, proscenium, street theatre

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a dense network of cultural allegiances and class beliefs.¹ It holds the capability to influence what influences us, what we identify with, treasure, trust or distrust. Literature, functioning within and outside the constructs of our consent to it, shapes our views of much we have been accustomed to calling *our* lives; the pronoun redundant with our often ambitious belief that it is beyond influences and built on our terms. In this respect, literature becomes a part of our everyday existence as we view and perceive people, things and events around us. Paradoxically, we seem most influenced when we analyse it the least. It has been emphasised many times over, in a myriad of contexts, that it is important that we read literature, primarily fiction for its own sake and accept it on its own terms. It is, however, important to realise that though this gives us a way of dealing with the text itself, we cannot overlook the way this text reaches us; the why behind our exercise of reading it and the how behind how it reached our ears or bookshelves.

In the age of the internet and those leading up to it, lists have played a major role in this process as have the catalogues at book fairs and the spots on an attractive shelf at a busy bookstore. Irrespective of the variety of ways in which we try to establish our unbiased nature towards a piece of literature, some biases function in the way of its reaching us or the other way round. This could probably explain why certain books, well-written or otherwise, reach the wider market while some others remain in the dark for long until they are discovered by chance, and by all means not often enough either. Marketing and the saleability of the work apart, some works of literature appear to always be read and remain always talked about. They appear on almost every other list one comes across, both as favourites or on the other end of the scale. The point to note is that even the reader or critic who appears to loathe the piece itself cannot bring himself to not write about it. These lists are fascinating for how they can keep up the illusion of objectivity on many fronts. The objectivity attributed to the list may not, again, be the effort of the critic himself. Depending on the authority held by these figures, we arrive at what we may recognize as our cultural literature or the canon.

As is the case with any list, there are a variety of subjective viewpoints that come into the creation of the canon as well. While we use the term *subjective* here, it may not always be the subjective view of one individual. Rather, it reflects the views of a group of people, their beliefs,

¹Nelson, Camilla. "Friday Essay: the Literary Canon Is Exhilarating and Disturbing and We Need to Read It." *The Conversation*, 25 Oct. 2019, <https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-the-literary-canon-is-exhilarating-and-disturbing-and-we-need-to-read-it-56610>, 18 Nov. 2019.

ideas and concerns with and of literature. This gives the makers of such a list, as with those of any other, the power to decide upon how representative the list should be; more importantly perhaps, on whom the list should represent. There are several reasons often cited for the choice of a particular work into the literary canon including its universality and tastefulness, the ability of these works to adapt spatially and temporally. In a class of students unacquainted to these texts, however, it is not uncommon to find all of these points vanish almost into thin air. More often than not, such a situation levels more than one accusation on the students in question - their lethargy, their lack of commitment to the work or the decadent, modern blindfold through which they are trying to place the classic. It would not do to summarily reject all aspects of a literary canon but the decadent-modern brand of criticism that the students receive could lead us to a questioning of the so-called adaptability of the work itself. Further, we need to ask if a work of literature can be universal at all and what belies the attempt to make it so.

For any person attempting to place this pertinent question in the context of theatre, the predicaments are manifold. Firstly, theatre has long been considered the most democratic of the artforms. Even after the disappearance of the *talkies*, theatre has made itself available to the masses in a variety of forms. There is, without doubt, another brand of theatre played out to a more exclusive, *elite* audience. Even as such an extreme exists, on the other end we have plays that took to the streets, running the threat of arrest or worse still, assault. Such theatre, the theatre of the streets, hardly finds recognition at par with its supposedly sophisticated counterparts. We continue to have people who consider it a matter of sophistication to have read and to be able to quote a little this or that from Shakespeare while they remain almost aloof to Indian playwrights, including Kalidasa or Bhasa. Again, even on this plane, a recalling of street theatre seldom happens. It is hardly talked about in schools, except when a very different form of it, like a minimal play organised in the streets lacking anything of what encompasses the real political street theatre, is played out for creating awareness on some health hazard or social issue. Street theatre, the political and aesthetic art form that traces its roots back to the agitprop theatre of the Soviet Union, has been a form of protest and is, therefore, essentially anti-establishment. This too is among the reasons as to why it seldom accomplishes the kind of acceptance the elite version of its proscenium counterpart gains. As we grasp this, however, it is equally important to understand that this is just one part of a range of complex and consequently interesting issues.

When one reaches Shakespeare, especially, this does not seem like an easy way to answer the given question. He was a troupe manager in his times and could not have held much of a reputation. Five centuries later, a sizeable population both from the theatre-going crowd and the academia look up to him for all things theatrical. He is widely performed, translated and adapted, continuing to reach us in the most common of our everyday events. We use his name as a fun jibe, praise, a layman synonym for the language, although we no longer use it on his terms. It does not, however, stop there. A few years back, we had a Malayalam film titled *Shakespeare M.A. Malayalam*, because its protagonist was an aspiring dramatist, not even an English one at that. How did this particular playwright, who borrowed so heavily from existing sources and whose plot-lines had very little inventiveness, if any, to them become this phenomenon? Further, it is imperative to wonder what happened to his sources in this process. The justifications of universality resurface bringing with it the statement that he has survived and is hence, time-tested. This is another interesting question to ponder about since it not just creates a Shakespeare but almost simultaneously makes it seemingly impossible for a street play to reach that place.

Survival in theatre is almost entirely impossible for the simple reason that a play is a constantly evolving piece of work. To attribute a permanence to it, or allude to its survival would be the same as calling it inflexible and consequently a badly written play. Drama, on the other hand, the text that becomes theatre is comparatively permanent and survives for long. This permanence is, again, just one aspect of the process. The stage is, due to the variety of ways in which he envisions and uses it and the actors moving on it, the space of the director. Drama in the hands of each director becomes an entirely new play, forever changing and evolving, gaining new meaning and adapting. This remains true to both the proscenium and the street, although it is more discussed in the case of the former perhaps simply due to the amount of theorizing that always surrounds it. Again, the permanence of drama by itself cannot be called the survival or permanence of Shakespeare or any other dramatist because drama becomes its distinct genre primarily because it is meant for performance.

One of the most interesting of the series of questions that led to the work on this paper was on how the momentary nature of the subjects that street theatre dealt with could be the most evident reason for it not attaining the permanence or an interested eye of the canon that its proscenium counterpart has so often courted. The branding of the concerns of street theatre as momentary presents a deeper class construct. The concerns of street theatre are political as opposed to the largely recreational subjects that interest the proscenium, and its patrons and audience consist of the non-elite, the struggling working classes and the ordinary masses. It takes very little to identify that the oppression of the oppressed or the struggle of the workers are not isolated, momentary events in the annals of history. They do not lose their relevance over time but are left outside the classroom or the study, often for the same reason that we readily accept to divorce political discussions from our concept of education. The effect in both cases is saddening, not to mention ultimately disastrous.

The final question that this paper tries to deal with is how this can be taken into the classrooms, making theatre available to students, as theatre in its entirety rather than the text. Further, it tries to understand how the classrooms, especially in schools, could become the places to effectively counter the elitism that colonial canons bring and if it is possible to give students a more democratic, decolonised idea of theatre.

Canonization and Cultural Transportation

Shakespeare's *Othello* tells the story of the tensions in a romantic love staged against the backdrop of an interracial union, ultimately leading to a catastrophic end. The play takes shape in Renaissance England, the hay-day of expansion and colonialism as well as transcultural interaction. The catastrophe that befalls Othello and those around him appear to stem from the various consequences of the 'unnatural' union. Othello realises this, making the plot's progression and the carving of Shakespeare's widely regarded super-villain Iago rely on the conflict internal in Othello. Iago's schemes thus become less of inventive villainy and are simply a reiteration of the thoughts and apprehensions that were already present in the Moor. The play, projected from its colonial backdrop, echoes the sentiments of the people it was staged for, their

fears of interracial interaction and its consequences. In the space it created in this respect, *Othello* kicked off a specific line in the evolution of modern drama in Bengal.²

In 1848, as part of the Sans Souci Theatre's production of the play, an Indian man, Bishnucharan Adhya, essayed the role of the tragic hero. The audience of the performance was chiefly British as were most of the other members of the cast. Adhya's performance, as the doubly Othello, was met with reviews that carried what appears to be a good deal of cultural insecurity and bias.³The opinions brought out in the papers reflect a line of thought prevalent since the inception of the Calcutta Theatre and the New Playhouse under the patronage of the British Empire. The theatres were intended to provide British performances of plays by English playwrights, most important of them being Shakespeare. The exclusivity of the crowd alluded to the myth of English cultural sophistication and preponderance. Consequently, Adhya assuming the stage especially in the role of the Venetian Moor with his complexities was a threat not just to the social fable but to the purpose it essayed in the larger scheme of English colonial interests in India.

Studies have attempted to gauge the Indian and South Asian adaptations of the play from many perspectives. There have been rampant discussions on how there exists or existed an academic Shakespeare meant for the intelligentsia while there were translations and adaptations for the proletariat audience. The distinctions, as with all forms of theatre, are not watertight and weave together in a 'performed hybridity'⁴ achieved by many South Asian adaptations of the play. This feature is not exclusive to *Othello* alone and can lead us to a variety of perspectives, although for this paper, the most important of those would be the fact that for whatever reasons, Shakespeare has continued to be on stage as a phenomenon, inciting curiosity and holding a little something of his own even while being subjected to experimentation across genres.

Another interesting example is *The Tempest*, regarded in many literary circles as the last play written by the Bard. The colonial overtures in *The Tempest* are anything but elite manifestations. There is very little, if there is, that does not meet the spectator's eye. The lack of grand tragedy behind which an *Othello* can hide is non-existent in the case of a *Tempest*. Magic and comic timing are the only preservers available, though they are powerful in their own right. *The Tempest* continues to be adapted and performed, as resistance or as a template for

²Sengupta, Rangeet. "Speak of Me as I Am': Baishnavcharan Adhya and Othello in Kolkata." *Academia.edu*,

www.academia.edu/31731558/Speak_of_me_as_I_am_Baishnavcharan_Adhya_and_Othello_in_Kolkata, 23 Nov 2019

³The review published in *Englishman* on 14 September 1848 concluded "...that he failed, in every sense of the word, in conception and execution." *Calcutta Star* called the actor "a real unpainted nigger Othello". The reviewer goes on to point out the "hidden" dark face of the actor and the anxiety that it would lead to cultural and racial contamination of the English theatre and the society in Calcutta.

⁴Parmitha Kapadia and Craig Dionne (ed.). *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England

superficial reconciliation. This continuing reverence to the text even as it becomes a tool of subversion keeps it relevant across time.

The question of the adapted Shakespeare for proletariat audiences belies elitism often regarded as inherent to the academia. There is much evidence that suggests that this dramatist, in his time, accounted for just a little more than an ordinary troupe manager. He could not have held the reputation that he holds today, not only among his people but in cultures and contexts that are remote from him. Shakespeare borrowed amply from the sources already in existence at the time, but he distinguishes himself, at least to the Western audience, with his dramatic technique. These, along with his colonial inclinations, make him resourceful in the neocolonial pursuit. The imposed colonial exclusivity of access to Shakespeare and the Indian attempts to overstep and subvert this idea continues to keep Shakespeare in the spotlight, making it a symbol of the cultured elite and intelligentsia, subsequently elevating him to the canons. Shakespeare has, in this fashion, outgrown the stage that was probably his singular concern when he was writing his plays (except for *King Lear*, perhaps) and has gained the scholastic spotlight that ultimately led us to what we perceive today as the necessity of taking these pieces to classrooms where they often replace dramatists who have said very similar things albeit not in Elizabethan English.

The universal Shakespeare is another factor that contributes to the manifestation of Shakespeare as a global phenomenon. In an evident overstepping of the political realm into the cultural one, every introduction to Shakespeare attempts to lend him a universal spirit. The creation of the 'regional Shakespeares' and the understanding that it is Shakespeare who leaves space for working out such arrangements sustains Shakespeare as there is an obligation to relate and own the plays thrust upon the reader or the audience. The predicament is deeply rooted in denial to let Shakespeare be English, influenced and fueled by English interests and contexts. As a result, a student is believed to be lacking something essential to their education if they find it tricky to place Shakespeare's very English plays in their own regional contexts or drudge through the versified conversations without glowing with delight. Such approaches further the elitist principle and extends exclusivity, aiding in the ensuing ideological hegemony. In this timeline, Shakespeare's many sources, including established works of the time, move into silent shadows that are rediscovered only, and paradoxically, amidst academic preoccupations, their stark obscurity becoming the dull backdrop against which Shakespeare glimmers as canon.

Although the discussion so far has been around Shakespeare, as he is the most recognised among the group, these aspects remain significantly similar for most of the proscenium theatrical scene. Granted and governed by theoretical study, critical review and propelled by erudite conspiracy, proscenium has, in its essence, remained a medium of elite communication and entertainment, granting it a spot in the direct view of the makers of the canon and vice-versa.

Colonialism, Translation and Performance

"But the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately

*in themselves...It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves: for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own."*⁵

The constructs of colonialism often seep very deep into the social fabric of colonised societies, replacing tradition, practices, symbols, languages and memories. Where such a mechanism succeeds, it obliterates the culture within which it takes shape. The erasure of such consciousness, especially in the case of a people's language and literature, can take years of toil to recover. Even in the scenarios where such a toil may succeed, it leaves behind a Calibanian dilemma of cultural identity with diminished scope for real reconciliation. The people and their mindscapes become irrevocably intertwined with the ideas of the imposed colonial culture and are continually reduced to a relative experience and seldom understood without the validation from the colonial position. The imbalance in such cultural transaction lingers on in statements that regard Kalidasa as the Shakespeare of India, for instance. In any genre of literature, such influence becomes a panopticon force⁶, setting conjectured benchmarks that are inconsiderate and irrelevant to the context of the people in question. It becomes a representation of neo-colonialism, a symbol of violence on regional, linguistic and artistic identity and a lingering image of cultural hegemony.

In theatre, such an imposition becomes even more significant because theatre is an art form of the masses. Its engagement with the audience and their contribution to bringing it into existence has made theatre a form that echoed the pulse of the audience. When hegemony makes its presence in the gallery, the performance loses its context, distancing it from the nature of its form. A play in that respect becomes less relatable to the audience outside of a closed circle and meets the concerns surrounding it in a stupor.

Colonialism is an important agent in the creation of Shakespeare as a canon and contributes to the Shakespearean phenomenon globally. Translation, however, has essayed an interesting role in the process, especially in the global context. In spite of the tedious process of translating verse in many languages, Shakespeare continues to be translated, for performance and otherwise. Shakespearean plays are written primarily for performance and have a very distinct oral and gestic aspect to them. The translator must take into account the physical demands of the actor, and ensure that the verbal fabric is supported by the actions of the body and the modulations of the voice.⁷ Even as there exists more than one bad translation in the market, Shakespeare continues to be appropriated, studied and performed, adapting both to the abundance and lack of the means and measures. On the other hand, Kalidasa and other classical Indian dramatists are never opened to the possibility of such interaction. The dynamics and rigidity of a language that functioned as a vehicle of caste distinctions add to the difficulty of translating the texts.

In this particular aspect, the theatre of the streets has more in common with Shakespeare than Shakespeare's proscenium counterparts in India. This appropriation and adaptation of language to find common ground in the vernacular parlance keep both ill-translated Shakespeare and street theatre alive, handing them the ability to be fit into everyday

⁵Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. James Currey Ltd., England 1986

⁶Michel Foucault. *Discipline And Punish : the Birth of the Prison*. Pantheon Books, New York 1977.

⁷Jean-MichelDéprats. "Translating Shakespeare for the theatre." *Ilha do Desterro A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies* [Online], 0.36 (1999): 071-085. Web. 11 Nov. 2019

contexts even as they fit into it for nearly opposite purposes. In this respect, they present a certain readiness for cultural transaction and interaction. The case, however, is quite different for the unabridged, exclusive Shakespeare as the language, in this case, is remote, temporally and spatially. The exclusive Shakespeare moves in a very closed, elite circle that does not reflect the idea of democratic theatre. He cannot be adjusted to suit a contemporary scheme since the language is archaic. The newspaper boy hawking the headlines of the day in *Procession*, for instance, can be adapted and made to speak the headlines of any timeline to suit the context. It is nearly impossible to exercise that liberty with five-century-odd-years-old Shakespeare. Again, it boils down to the essential difference in the purpose that *Procession* and a Shakespearean play attempt to scale, and their intended audience.

Curriculum acts as an important apparatus of the canonization process since the canon is popularized through its authority in the classroom. In the said context, it is worth noting that a majority of Indian curriculum, especially in schools, have limited Indo-Anglian writing. Although poetry and short fiction pieces fare better marginally, drama continues to remain the forte of colonial dictates. With little or no introduction to other dramatists, Shakespeare continues to reach Indian children, like many of their peers worldwide, as a little-disputed synonym for theatre itself. Considering that schools have almost always been the playground for the assertion of nationalistic sensibilities, it is ironical that the students get to very little, if any, introduction to Indian playwrights in the proscenium or street. The processes of decolonisation, especially in the neo-colonial context, must begin within the schools. There is an urgent need to open up the pedagogy of drama as part of literature classes in schools to accommodate Indian playwrights, both those that write in English and those that are translated to the language. A shying away from this diversity and the multitude of theatrical experimentations and thoughts that India has been home to is often bespoke of the class-consciousness, linguistic prejudice and a general aversion towards traditions of protest. Better communication needs to take place to resolve these impediments and take concrete steps in the decolonization of theatre.

Drama, Theatre and Permanence

Conversations about the lack of diversity of forms in literary canons and the apparent overlooking of the genre of street theatre often conclude with an allusion to the permanence of proscenium plays as opposed to the momentary nature of political street theatre. Several reasons lead to this statement, not the least among them being how proscenium plays are widely recognised, the difference in the exposure they beget, the surface momentariness of political concerns, and the larger construct of class-consciousness in literature in general, and more specifically in theatre. Although this presents a wide range of issues, plays in themselves can never attain permanence.

Drama refers to the play text meant for enactment or performance. In this respect, it is the forte of the playwright who envisions the performative aspects of the drama as they write. The process of playwriting, therefore, presupposes an audience who witness and participate in the performance viz. the play. Even as the script is an important part of the play depending on the form and training, the performance is essentially the director's forte after the scripting phase. The director is conscious of the idea behind the multiple dimensions of a drama and chooses the one that best suits the context and meaning she wishes to work with or represent. To this effect, the director may choose to employ dimensions that are present outside the constructs of the script through the actors, the properties, the mode of presentation, costumes and any other tool that she may find fit. Although it does not diminish the contributions of the playwright, the

play derives its multiple meanings through the interventions of the director who connects the three elements viz. the drama, the actor and the audience, in the fold of the play. A good drama, therefore, is the one that adapts with the director and can make itself relevant in the passage of time or change of space. In this manner, the play is a piece of constantly evolving literature that adapts and reinvents itself as it interacts with each new director, attaining newer meanings and representation.

Theatre is the space in which the three components of a performance interact. It is, therefore, the space for which drama is written. In theatre, the performances evolve in two respects viz. adaptability and the audience. Adaptability of the play is its evolution for the context of its performance. A play employs several cultural symbols and imagery, at times creating newer ones, to convey its intended meaning. Symbols are physical manifestations or concepts that convey meaning. These meanings change with regional and cultural contexts. Thus, a performance of *The Tempest* in England and the same in any one of its colonies would not deliver the same set of meaning. Further, outside of the colonial binding, it is unlikely that the production staged in two erstwhile colonies would transport the same meaning. This, however, is not confined to the proscenium plays alone. All forms of theatre, including the choice of the form itself and its performance in a given context, lead to sets of symbols.

The audience of the play further this evolution by being recipients and interpreters of these symbols. The playwright, and more prominently the director, are entrusted with the task of assuring that the symbols reach the audience in the manner in which it was intended. The audience, therefore, is not a group of passive viewers. More specifically, each member of the audience is a spectator who brings their interpretations, experiences, interactions, prejudices and understanding to decode the play. The spectator of a play is someone who experiences the play without merely watching it. Although the director works towards communicating a certain meaning, they cannot entirely chart the course of the audience. Therefore, with every performance, the play evolves at the hands of the director who creates the symbols, the context to which the play adapts, and the audience who add their experience to the performance. Since none of these can be charted or kept constant at any two different points of space and time, no play can attain permanence. This, in turn, makes all theatrical performances on a level field irrespective of their approaches and pursuits.

Class Consciousness and Permanence in Theatre

Street theatre refers to the strictly political performances that trace their roots in the agitprop theatrical traditions of Soviet Russia.⁸ The form, therefore, is essentially a mode of proletarian protest, leftist in its approach and mostly, anti-establishment. Street theatre by its very nature is opposite to the establishment that creates the canon, rendering it nearly impossible for the establishment to encourage, let alone prescribe, these plays for systematic study. With the availability of the scripts of some of the most iconic Indian street plays online and in open access⁹, it is no longer possible to attribute this factor as the basis for the momentariness of street theatre since drama, or the play text being the only part of the play that attains permanence if any.

Street theatre caters to an everyday audience and functions on an economical and minimal setting, with little or no props such that it can remain affordable. As opposed to the

⁸Hashmi, S. *The Right to Perform*. SAHMAT, 1989.

⁹JANAM : *Jana Natya Manch* , <http://jananatyamanch.org/playslist.htm>.

exclusivity of the proscenium, street theatre functions on the principle of inclusivity and accessibility. Although it employs the rawest form of the theatrical trade, street theatre cannot rely on elite reviewers or ratings to gauge its success. Since it 'cannot be experienced from the anonymity of the darkness'¹⁰, the distance between the performer and the audience is greatly diminished. To achieve its purpose, therefore, a street theatre performance must exploit the cultural horizon that the proletarian audience is introduced to and study the institutional mass media to fashion a 'people's culture' and position their pieces in this cultural space.¹¹

In all these respects, the essential point of difference between street theatre and its proscenium counterpart remains that street theatre operates on the belief of political purpose while the elite proscenium is largely recreational. From the standpoints of adaptability and audience, a play like *Machine* can remain relevant to any workers' struggle around the world. Its abstract essence is universal to the political end it seeks and its regional positioning is within a universal conflict. The play, however, still evokes suspicion about its continued relevance since it does not cater to the audience that goes and watches plays. Instead, the play is taken to the workplaces and protest grounds of an audience that cannot afford time or money to go to the theatre. It encourages dissent, open communication, disturbance and interaction where the proscenium expects decorum and silence. Thus, the spirit of dissent becomes the disability barring street theatre access into canonization or academia. Another significant deterrent is the myth of sophistication and taste being natural to the proscenium-going theatre enthusiast. The snobbish brushing away of proletarian aesthetics is a major exercise of elitist power that seeks to control speech¹² and expression.

Canonization of Drama

Canonization of literary texts is a method of creating an authoritative list of literature that is the cultural capital of the culture in question. Owing to its official status and its constant scrutiny under the lens of governance and educational policy, a literary canon is simultaneously a form of institutional capital. In both these aspects, the canonization of drama can present some serious concerns. Firstly, drama as a genre cannot be divorced from its performative aspect and it is not possible to attribute permanence to a performance. Therefore, the canonization of drama deprives it of its most distinguishing feature. Further, theatre is a democratic art form meaning that its elevation into an institutional canon would divest it of its essence. In these respects, the canonization of drama can work against its livelier parts.

Moving from Drama to Theatre in the Classrooms

The study of drama in schools and institutions of higher education must not be exclusive or partial to the proscenium scene. The evolution of drama, as well as the social, political and cultural relevance of theatre as a form, can be studied only with the history and heritage of cultural resistance. The curriculum and pedagogy must, therefore, be expanded and made more inclusive. True to the spirit of theatre, the study of its different forms must be made as non-academic as is possible without making them irrelevant to the academic concerns. There

¹⁰Ghosh, Arjun. "Meanings of the Revolution", *Theatre of the Streets*, Jana Natya Manch, New Delhi, 2007.

¹¹Arjun Ghosh. "Meanings of the Revolution." *Theatre of the Streets*, Jana Natya Manch, New Delhi

¹²Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge. The Discourse on Language*. Vintage Books, 2010. p.216

is also a greater need to devise strategies and methods to turn literature classrooms into miniature performance spaces and engage the students in the study of performance and space along with the play-texts.

II. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, owing to the continuous evolution that a play text undergoes in the hands of a director, permanence cannot be attributed to any play performing inside or outside the constructs of a proscenium, Shakespearean or otherwise. Drama sustains as the text for a longer period but cannot by itself be regarded as the proof for the permanence of a play. With the availability of scripts of street plays online and for open access, the bridge along the lines of drama are blurred and both proscenium plays and street theatre have found a level field. The bias in the canonization of proscenium theatre as opposed to street theatre is a class divide that must be bridged. Canonization of drama presents two important predicaments that could alter the very nature of the genre, therefore, drama is ideally studied without canonical influence. Further, pedagogy and curriculum must be changed in a manner that can better accommodate diversity in form and bring performance into literature classrooms. In the globalised world of ideas, open interaction with theatrical traditions that court both pro and anti-establishment heritage of protest are an important investment in cultural education.

III. REFERENCES

- [1] Déprats, Jean-Michel. "Translating Shakespeare for the theatre." *Ilha do Desterro A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies* [Online], 0.36 (1999): 071-085. Web. 11 Nov. 2019
- [2] Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge. The Discourse on Language*. Vintage Books, 2010.
- [3] Foucault, Michel. *Discipline And Punish : the Birth of the Prison*. Pantheon Books, New York 1977.
- [4] Ghosh, Arjun. "Meanings of the Revolution." *Theatre of the Streets*, Jana Natya Manch, New Delhi
- [5] Hashmi, S. *The Right to Perform*. SAHMAT, 1989.
- [6] JANAM : *Jana Natya Manch* , <http://jananatyamanch.org/playslist.htm>.
- [7] "Nebo Literature." *Aristotelian vs Brechtian Drama*, <http://nebo-lit.com/drama/illusion-and-alienation-drama.html>.
- [8] Nelson, Camilla. "Friday Essay: the Literary Canon Is Exhilarating and Disturbing and We Need to Read It." *The Conversation*, 25 Oct. 2019, <https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-the-literary-canon-is-exhilarating-and-disturbing-and-we-need-to-read-it-56610>, 18 Nov. 2019
- [9] Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. James Currey Ltd., England
- [10] Livia Segurado Nunes, Back to the roots:Shakespeare and Popular Culture in the 20th and 21st centuries, *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* [En ligne], Ressources et prix du

mémoire, mis en ligne le 03 juin 2013, consulté le 22 novembre 2019.
<http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/1949>

[11] Sengupta, Rangeet. “‘Speak of Me as I Am’: Baishnavcharan Adhya and Othello in Kolkata.”

Academia.edu, www.academia.edu/31731558/Speak_of_me_as_I_am_Baishnavcharan_Adhya_and_Othello_in_Kolkata, 23 Nov 2019

[12] Singh, Jyotsna. “Different Shakespeares: The Bard in Colonial/Postcolonial India.” *Theatre Journal*, vol. 41, no. 4, 1989, p. 445., doi:10.2307/320