

RETHINKING ENGLISH

Essays in Literature, Language, History

edited by
SVATI JOSHI

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Translation, Colonialism and the Rise of English

TEJASWINI NIRANJANA

... the passion for English knowledge has penetrated the most obscure, and extended to the most remote parts of India. The steam boats, passing up and down the Ganges, are boarded by native boys, begging, not for money, but for books. . . . Some gentlemen coming to Calcutta were astonished at the eagerness with which they were pressed for books by a troop of boys, who boarded the steamer from an obscure place, called Comercolly. A Plato was lying on the table, and one of the party asked a boy whether that would serve his purpose. "Oh yes," he exclaimed, "give me any book; all I want is a book." The gentleman at last hit upon the expedient of cutting up an old *Quarterly Review*, and distributing the articles among them.

—Charles Trevelyan

(*On the Education of the People of India*)

The introduction of English education in India is inextricable from the process of subjection/subjectification under colonialism. The colonial 'subject' constructed through practices or technologies of power/knowledge,¹ participates willingly, like the boys from Comercolly, in his/her insertion into the dominant order. As the historian Ranajit Guha suggests, English did not owe its importance as "an emblem of power" within the education system to official sponsorship alone.² English becomes a mark of status through a complex production of the colonial subject within multiple discourses and on multiple sites. One such site is *translation*. Translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism. What is at stake here is the representation of the colonized, who need to be produced in such a manner as to justify colonial domination, and to beg for the English book by themselves.

In the colonial context, a certain conceptual economy is created by the set of related questions which is the problematic of

translation. Conventionally, translation depends on the western philosophical notions of reality, representation and knowledge. Reality is seen as something unproblematic, 'out there'; knowledge involves a representation of this reality; and representation provides direct, unmediated access to a transparent reality. These concepts render invisible what Jacques Derrida calls the logocentric metaphysics by which they are constituted. Here I should point out that classical philosophical discourse does not merely engender a practice of translation that is then employed for the purposes of colonial domination; I contend that, simultaneously, translation in the colonial context creates and supports a conceptual economy which works into western philosophy to function as a philosopheme, a congealed base unit which does not require further breaking down through analysis. As Derrida suggests, the concepts of 'western metaphysics' are not bound by or produced solely within the 'field' of philosophy. Rather, they come out of and circulate through various discourses at different levels and in different ways, providing thereby "a conceptual network in which philosophy *itself* has been constituted."³ Perhaps the philosophical self-understanding of late eighteenth—and nineteenth—century Europe would not be possible without the philosopheme of translation. In forming a certain kind of subject, in presenting particular versions of the colonized, translation brings into being overarching concepts of reality, knowledge, representation. These concepts, and what they allow us to assume, completely occlude the violence which accompanies the construction of the colonial subject.

Translation thus produces strategies of containment. By employing certain modes of representing the Other—which it thereby also brings into being—translation reinforces hegemonic versions of the colonized, helping them acquire the status of what Edward Said calls representations or objects without history.⁴ These become *facts* exerting a force on events in the colony: witness Macaulay's dismissal of indigenous learning as outdated and irrelevant preparing thus the way for the introduction of English education.

In creating coherent and transparent texts and subjects, translation participates—across a range of discourses—in the *fixing* of colonized cultures, making them seem static and un-

changing rather than historically constructed. Translation functions as a transparent presentation of something that already exists, although the 'original' is actually brought into being through translation. By implying that representation is adequate to a pre-given reality, that which is historical is made 'natural'. Paradoxically, translation also provides a place in 'history' for the colonized. The Hegelian conception of history that translation helps bring into being endorses a teleological, hierarchical model of civilizations based on the 'coming to consciousness' of 'Spirit', an event for which the non-western cultures are unsuited and unprepared. Translation is thus deployed in different kinds of discourses—philosophy, historiography, education, missionary-writing, travel-writing—to renew and perpetuate colonial domination.

The discourses of colonialism produce Trevelyan's "native boys" whose hunger for English marks their willing acceptance of subjection. This acceptance is ensured by the hegemonic texts about the colonized civilization by philosophers like Hegel, historians like James Mill and Orientalists like William Jones. 'Scholarly' discourses, of which literary translation is conceptually emblematic, help maintain colonial rule by showing its 'subjects' how best they can shape themselves. This is accomplished in part through a process of 'othering' which involves a teleological notion of history, which views the knowledges and ways of life in the colony as distorted or immature versions of what can be found in 'normal' western society. Hence the western Orientalist appropriates "the power to represent the Oriental, to translate and explain his (and her) thoughts and acts not only to Europeans and Americans but also to the Orientals themselves."⁵

That translation became part of the colonial enterprise is obvious from late eighteenth century British efforts to obtain information about the people ruled by the merchants of the East India Company.⁶ A. Maconochie, a scholar connected with the University of Edinburgh, urged the British sovereign (in 1783 and again in 1788) to take such steps "as may be necessary for discovering, collecting and translating whatever is extant of the ancient works of the Hindoos."⁷ Although Maconochie hoped that by these translations European astronomy, "antiquities," and other sciences would be advanced, it became

clear in the projects of William Jones—who arrived in Calcutta in 1783 to take his place on the bench of the Supreme Court—that translation would serve "to domesticate the Orient and thereby turn it into a province of European learning."⁸

As translator and scholar, Jones was responsible for the most influential introduction of a textualized India to Europe. Within three months of his arrival, the Asiatic Society held its first meeting with Jones as President and Warren Hastings, the Governor-General, as patron. It was primarily through the efforts of the members of the Asiatic Society, themselves administrators and officials of the East India Company's Indian government, that translation would help "gather in" and "rope off" the Orient.⁹

In a letter, Jones, whose Persian translations and grammar of Persian had made him famous as an Orientalist even before he came to India, declared that his ambition was "to know *India* better than any other European ever knew it."¹⁰ His translations are said to have been read by almost everyone in the west who was literate in the nineteenth century.¹¹ His works were carefully studied by the writers of the age, especially the Germans—Goethe, Herder and others. As soon as Jones' new writings reached Europe, the shorter pieces were eagerly picked up and reprinted immediately by different periodicals. His translation of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* went through successive reprints. Georg Forster's famous German translation of the translation came out in 1791, after which the play was translated into other European languages as well. As a twentieth century scholar puts it, "It is not an exaggeration to say that he altered our [i.e. Europe's] whole conception of the eastern world. If we were compiling a thesis on the influence of Jones we could collect most of our material from footnotes, ranging from Gibbon to Tennyson."¹² Evidence for Jones' lasting impact on generations of scholars writing about India can be found even in the preface of the 1984 Indian edition of his discourses and essays, where the editor, Moni Bagchee, indicates that Indians should "try to preserve accurately and interpret the national heritage by treading the path chalked out by Sir William Jones. . . ."¹³

My main concern in examining the texts of William Jones is not to compare his translation of *Shakuntala* or Manu's *Dharmashastra* with the so-called originals. Rather, what I propose

to do is to examine the 'outwork' of Jones' translations: the prefaces, the Annual Discourses to the Asiatic Society, his Charges to the Grand Jury, his letters and his 'Oriental' poems, to show how he contributes to a unilinear, teleological model of civilization which, coupled with a notion of translation that presupposes the transparency of representation, helps construct a powerful version of the 'Hindu' that later writers of different philosophical and political persuasions incorporate into their texts in an almost seamless fashion.

The most significant nodes of Jones' work are (a) the need for translation by the European, since the natives are unreliable interpreters of their own laws and culture; (b) the desire to be a law-giver, to give the Indians their 'own' laws; and (c) the desire to 'purify' Indian culture and speak on its behalf. The interconnections between these obsessions are extremely complicated. They can be seen, however, as feeding into a larger discourse of improvement and education that interpellates the colonial subject.

In Jones' construction of the 'Hindus', they appear as a submissive, indolent nation unable to appreciate the fruits of freedom, desirous of being ruled by an absolute power, and sunk deeply in the mythology of an ancient religion. In a letter, he points out that the Hindus are "incapable of civil liberty," for "few of them have an idea of it, and those who have, do not wish it" (LWJ, p. 712). Jones, a good eighteenth century liberal, deplores the "evil" but recognizes the "necessity" of the Hindus being "ruled by an absolute power." His "pain" is much alleviated by the fact that the natives are much "happier" under the British than under their former rulers. In another letter which refers to the Americans, whom Jones admired, he requests them not to be "like the deluded, besotted Indians, among whom I live, who would receive Liberty as a curse instead of a blessing, if it were possible to give it to them, and would reject, as a vial of poison, that, which, if they could taste and digest it, would be the water of life" (LWJ, p. 847).

Jones' disgust is continually mitigated by the necessity of British rule and the 'impossibility' of giving liberty to the Indians. He brings up repeatedly the idea of 'Orientals' being accustomed to a despotic rule. In his Tenth Annual Discourse to the Asiatic Society, he says that a reader of "history could

not but remark the constant effect of despotism in benumbing and debasing all those faculties which distinguish men from the herd that grazes; and to that cause he would impute the decided inferiority of most Asiatic nations, ancient and modern. . . ."14 The idea of the 'submissive' Indians, their inability to be free, and the native laws which *do not permit* the question of liberty to be raised are thus brought together in the concept of Asian despotism. Such a despotic rule, continued by the British, can only fill the coffers of the Company: "In these Indian territories, which providence has thrown into the arms of Britain for their protection and welfare, the religion, manners, and laws of the natives preclude even the idea of political freedom; but . . . our country derives essential benefit from the diligence of a placid and submissive people . . ." (OAH, pp. 99-100).

The glorious past of India, according to Jones, is shrouded in superstition, "marked and bedecked in the fantastic robes of mythology and metaphor" (OAH, p. 100), but the now "degenerate" and "abased" Hindus were once "eminent in various knowledge."¹⁵ This notion of an Indian Golden Age seems to contradict Jones' insistence on the unchanging nature of Hindu society: "By *Indian* I mean that whole extent of the country in which the primitive religion and languages of the *bindus* prevail at this day with more or less of their ancient purity . . ." (TAD, p. 6). He appears to avoid the contradiction, however, by distinguishing, although tenuously, the "religion and languages," which have not changed, from "arts," "government" and "languages," which have become debased (TAD, pp. 7-8). Jones' distinction seems to sustain the paradoxical movement of colonial discourse in simultaneously 'historicizing' (things have become debased) as well as 'naturalizing' (things have remained unchanged) the degradation of the natives. We can see the same movement in the historian James Mill, although he dismisses Jones' notion of a previous Golden Age and posits instead an unchanging state of barbarism.

The presentation of the Indians as 'naturally' effeminate as well as deceitful often go hand in hand in Jones' work. In an essay on Oriental poetry, he describes the Persians as characterized by "that *softness*, and *love of pleasure*, that *indolence*, and *effeminacy*, which have made them an easy prey to all the

western and northern swarms. . . .¹⁶ Persian poetry is said to greatly influence the Indians, who are "soft and voluptuous, but artful and insincere. . . ."¹⁷ Jones' obsession with the insincerity and unreliability of the natives is one that appears in his work—usually in relation to translation—as early as the 1777 *Grammar of the Persian Language*, a copy of which was sent by Samuel Johnson to Warren Hastings. In his Preface to the *Grammar*, Jones stresses the need for East India Company officials to learn the languages of Asia. Speaking of the increasing interest in Persian (used as the court language in India at the time), he puts it down to the frustration of the British administrators at receiving letters they could not read: ". . . it was found highly dangerous," says Jones, "to employ the natives as interpreters, upon whose fidelity they could not depend."¹⁸

As a Supreme Court judge in India, one of Jones' most important projects was to translate Manu's *Dharmashastra*. In fact, he began to learn Sanskrit primarily so that he could verify the interpretations of Hindu law given by the pandits. In a letter, he wrote of the difficulty of checking and controlling native interpreters of several codes, for "Pure integrity is hardly to be found among the Pandits and Maulavis, few of whom give opinions without a culpable bias . . ." (LWJ, p. 270). Before embarking on his study of Sanskrit, Jones wrote to Charles Wilkins who had already translated a third of the *Dharmashastra*: "It is of the utmost importance, that the stream of Hindu law should be pure; for we are entirely at the mercy of the native lawyers, through our ignorance of Shanscrit, [sic]" (LWJ, p. 666). Interestingly enough, the famous Orientalist's attempt to reveal the former greatness of India often manifests itself as the British or European task of translating and thereby *purifying* the debased native texts. This Romantic Orientalist project slides almost imperceptibly into the Utilitarian, Victorian enterprise of 'improving' the natives through English education.¹⁹

Even before coming to India, Jones had formulated a solution to the problem of translating Indian law. Writing to Lord Cornwallis in 1788, Jones mentions once again the deceiving native lawyers and the unreliability of their opinions. "The obvious remedy for this evil," he writes, "had occurred to me before I left England" (LWJ, p. 795). This remedy is, of course, the substitution of British translators for Indian ones. Jones, like

his patron Warren Hastings, was a staunch advocate of the idea that Indians should be ruled by their own laws. However, since they certainly could not rule themselves or administer their own laws, these laws had first to be taken away from them and 'translated' before they could benefit from them. Another manifestation of the natives' insincerity was what Jones called "the frequency of perjury." The "oath of a low native" had hardly any value at all, for everyone committed perjury "with as little remorse as if it were a proof of ingenuity, or even a merit. . . ."²⁰ Jones hoped to make this perjury "inexpiable" by settling once and for all—in another act of translation—the method of taking "evidence" from Indians (LWJ, p. 682), making them punishable by their own (translated) laws.

It is clear that Jones saw the compilation and translation of Manu as "the fruit of [his] Indian Studies," for he hoped it would become "the standard of justice to eight millions of innocent and useful men" in a kingdom that Fortune threw into Britain's lap while she was asleep (LWJ, p. 813). The discourse of law functions here in such a way as to make invisible to both colonizer and colonized the extensive violence of the colonial encounter. The translated laws would discipline and regulate the lives of "many millions of *Hindu* subjects, whose well-directed industry would add largely to the wealth of *Britain*" (LWJ, p. 927). For, according to the translator, "those laws are actually revered, as the word of the Most High, by nations of great importance to the political and commercial interests of *Europe*."²¹ Jones' translation went through four editions and several reprints, the last published in Madras in 1880. Although in the later years of Company rule and under the direct rule of the British Crown Indian law was ostensibly formulated according to western models, the presence to this day of separate civil codes for different religions suggests that the laws actually derive from Orientalist constructions and translations of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' scriptures.

Apart from the fact that giving Indians their own laws would lead, in Jones' logic, to greater efficiency and therefore to greater profit for England, there is perhaps also another reason for employing 'Indian' law. As Jones had pointed out in his Tenth Anniversary Discourse, the "laws of the natives preclude even the idea of political freedom" (OAH, p. 100). This idea,

seen as a *reliable* (because western) interpretation of the 'original' text, begins to circulate among various styles of discourse, having been set in motion by a concept of translation endorsing as well as endorsed by the 'transparency' of representation. This kind of deployment of translation, I suggest, concludes with or enables the construction of a teleological and hierarchical model of cultures which places Europe at the pinnacle of civilization, and thus also provides a subject position for the colonized.

As I suggested earlier, Jones' desire to purify Hindu law, art or philosophy is another version of the British discourse of improvement. Jones, who wished to recover for Indians the lost glories of their own civilization, describes his task in "A Hymn to Surya" (1786), one of his series of 'Indian' hymns immensely popular in Europe, structured by the figures of the lost Golden Age, the debased and ignorant present, and the translator from a remote land:

And if they (the gods) ask, "What mortal pours the strain?"

.....

Say: from the bosom of yon silver isle,

"Where skies more softly smile,

"He came; and, lisping our celestial tongue,

"Though not from *Brahma* sprung,

"Draws Orient knowledge from its fountains pure,

"Through caves obstructed long, and paths too long obscure."²²

In some poems, like "A Hymn to Ganga" (1785–86), Jones shifts the first-person pronoun away from himself to provide a subject position for the colonized, making the "Hindu" speak in favour of the British, who "preserve *our* laws, and bid *our* terror cease" (TOL III, p. 333, emphasis added). Here the discourse of law actually seems to foreground violence, but only to place it in a *pre-colonial* time; or, in other words, to suggest that the coming of the British led to the *proper* implementation of the Indians' *own* laws and the end of 'despotic' violence and 'terror'.

Two main kinds of translators of Indian literature existed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: administrators like William Jones and Christian missionaries like the Serampore Baptists William Carey and William Ward. Although

these missionaries had to function mainly from Danish soil because of the reluctance of the Company's government to let proselytizing disrupt its relations with its subjects,²³ their indefatigable work in preparing western-style dictionaries and grammars of indigenous languages fed into the Orientalist project. The missionaries were among the first to translate Indian religious texts into European languages. Often these were works they had themselves textualized, by preparing 'standard versions' based on classical western notions of unity and coherence. On the evidence of these authoritative translations, missionaries berated Hindus for not being true practitioners of Indian religion.²⁴ Their only salvation, the missionaries would then claim, lay in *conversion* to the more evolved religion of the west. The missionaries' theology arises from a historicist model that sets up a series of oppositions between traditional and modern, underdeveloped and developed. This kind of attempt to impose linear historical narratives on different civilizations legitimizes and extends colonial domination.

William Ward's preface to his three-volume *A View of the History, Literature and Mythology of the Hindoos*²⁵ is instructive for the virulence with which it attacks the depravity and immorality of the "Hindoos". Their religion, manners, customs and institutions are shown to be characterized, like those of other pagans, by "impurity" and "cruelty," which appear in their most "disgusting" and "horrible" manifestations among the "Hindoos" (p. xxxvii). The author claims, in his obsessive references to "native" sexuality, to have witnessed innumerable scenes of "impurity," for the "Hindoo" institutions are "hotbeds of impurity," and the very services in the temples present "temptations to impurity" (pp. xxxvi–vii). Unlike William Jones, however, Ward—writing in the second decade of the nineteenth century—does not see the present state of the Hindus as a falling away from a former Golden Age. Instead, like James Mill, the historian, who quotes him approvingly and often, Ward sees the Hindus as corrupt by nature, lacking the means of education and improvement because of their religion's hold over them. He suggests that the "mental and moral improvement" of the Hindus is the "high destiny" of the British nation. Once she was made "enlightened and civilized," India, even if she became independent, would "contribute more

to the real prosperity of Britain" by "consuming her manufactures to a vast extent." Ward remarks on the "extraordinary fact" that the British goods purchased annually by India "are not sufficient to freight a single vessel from our ports:"

But let Hindoost'han receive that higher civilization she needs, that cultivation of which she is so capable; let European literature be transfused into all her languages, and then the ocean, from the ports of Britain to India, will be covered with our merchant vessels; and from the centre of India moral culture and science will be extended all over Asia, to the Burman empire and Siam, to China, with all her millions, to Persia, and even to Arabia . . . (p. liii).

The entire "eastern hemisphere" would then become Christian. In the age of the expansion of capitalism, interpretation and translation would help create a market for European merchandise. And as the missionary texts help us understand, translation comes into being overdetermined by religious, racial, sexual and economic discourses. It is overdetermined not only because multiple forces act on it, but because it gives rise to multiple practices. The strategies of containment initiated by translation are deployed across a range of discourses, allowing us to name translation as a significant technology of colonial domination.

The righteous disgust of Ward's writing is echoed uncannily by the 'secular' philosophy and historiography of James Mill, who constructs a version of 'Hindoo nature' from the translations of Jones, Wilkins, Halhed, Colebrooke, Ward and others.²⁶

Mill's *History of British India*, published in three volumes in 1817, until quite recently served as a model for histories of India.²⁷ The Indian people, both Hindus and Muslims, were for Mill characterized by their insincerity, mendacity, perfidy and venality. "The Hindu, like the eunuch," he said, "excels in the qualities of a slave." Like the Chinese, the Hindus too were "dissembling, treacherous, mendacious, to an excess which surpasses even the usual measure of uncultivated society." They were also cowardly, unfeeling, conceited, and physically unclean (p. 486).²⁸ In defining the Indian, Mill sought to give by contrast a proper picture of the 'superior' European civilization. As Edward Said has pointed out, "the Orient has helped to

define Europe (or the west) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience."²⁹

Mill declares that to "ascertain the true state of the Hindus in the scale of civilization" is of the greatest practical importance for the British. The Hindus need to be understood before they can be properly ruled, and to consider them as highly civilized would be a grave mistake (p. 456). In order to prove his thesis, Mill sets out to discredit the Orientalists who spoke of a Golden Age, often by a skilful citation of their own works. Mill's strategy is first to demolish the idea that India ever had a history, and then to suggest that the state of the Hindus bears comparison with primitive societies, including that belonging to Britain's own past, that show evidence of the childhood of humankind. The maturity-immaturity, adulthood-childhood opposition feeds right into the discourse of improvement and education perpetuated by liberalism in the colonial context.

Framing Mill's *History* is his comment that "Rude nations seem to derive a peculiar gratification from pretensions to a remote antiquity. As a boastful and turgid vanity distinguishes remarkably the oriental nations they have in most instances carried their claims extravagantly high" (p. 24). Throughout the book, Mill uses again and again in connection with the Hindus the adjectives "wild," "barbaric," "savage" and "rude," thus forming by sheer force of repetition a counter-discourse to the Orientalist hypothesis of an ancient civilization.

The very same descriptions provided by the Orientalists as evidence of the high civilization of the Hindus are declared by Mill to be "fallacious proof." The "feminine softness" and gentleness of the Hindus, for example, was taken to be the mark of a civilized community. Mill, on the other hand, suggests that the *beginnings* of civilization are compatible with "great violence" as well as "great gentleness" of manners. As in the "savages" of North America and the islanders of the South Seas, mildness and the "rudest condition of human life" often go together (pp. 287-88). As for the austerities prescribed by Hinduism, they tend to co-exist with the encouragement of the "loosest morality" in the religion of a rude people (p. 205). If the Orientalist would remark on the rough tools but neat and capable execution of tasks by the Hindu, Mill comments that "a dexterity in the use of its own imperfect tools is a common attribute of a

rude society" (p. 335). Should anyone suggest that the Hindus possessed beautiful poetry, Mill comes back with the remark that poetry points to the first stage of human literature, where the literature of the Hindus seems to have remained (p. 365).

Mill further consolidates his teleological model of world history by drawing on what he calls his knowledge of human nature, which appears in a variety of guises but displays an "astonishing uniformity" with regard to the different stages of society (p. 107). The trial by ordeal prescribed by Hindu law, for example, was common "in the institutions of our barbaric ancestors" (p. 108). Mill picks up the theories of, say, William Jones, about the Indo-Aryan origins of European civilization and then employs them in a way that actually clarifies for us their ideological underpinnings. In other words, Jones' speculations about the Indo-Aryan past allow Mill to establish the relationship of equivalence between the British past ("our barbaric ancestors") and the "Hindu" present. Both the Orientalist and the Utilitarian discourses end up producing a similar historicist model and constructing the colonial subject in a similar fashion. Mill draws directly on Jones' view of Hindu law when he says that the account of creation in Manu is "all vagueness and darkness, incoherence, inconsistency and confusion" (p. 163), and the religious ideas of the Hindus are "loose, vague, wavering, obscure, and inconsistent." The "wild mythology" and "chain of unmeaning panegyric which distinguishes the religion of ignorant men" (p. 182) is characteristic of the rude mind's propensity to create that which is extravagant, "fantastic and senseless" (p. 163). Compare this with Jones' description in the preface to his translation of Manu of the system created by "deception and priestcraft," "filled with strange conceits in metaphysics and natural philosophy, with idle superstitions . . . it abounds with minute and childish formalities, with ceremonies generally absurd and often ridiculous . . ." ³⁰

Nearly half of the twenty-eight footnotes in Chapter I of Mill's *History* mention William Jones, while the footnotes of Chapter II are divided primarily between Halhed's translation of the *Code of Gentoo Laws*³¹ and Jones' translation of Manu's *Institutes*. Quoting judiciously from these two texts (as well as from Colebrooke's *Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Successions*),³² Mill manages to establish that the Hindu laws are

not only unjust but absurd. He quotes from Halhed's preface to the *Code of Gentoo Laws* to the effect that Hindu morals are as gross as Hindu laws, the latter grossness being a result of the former (p. 125, n. 90). From Charles Wilkins' translation of the *Hitopadesha*, a collection of fables,³³ Mill obtains a picture of the "abject," "grovelling" Hindu (p. 509, n. 55) whose self-abasement provides him with proof of the despotic Hindu state; and from William Ward, of course, Mill procures "superabundant evidence of the immoral influence of the Hindu religion" and the "deep depravity" produced by it (p. 240, n. 182).

Translations of inscriptions on monuments are used selectively by Mill (p. 469; p. 504, n. 30). Claims of nobility or antiquity are immediately dismissed as wild fabrications, while anything that shows the depravity of the Hindus is considered as legitimate evidence. Mill trashes the *Puranas* as false history, but is willing to accept evidence from the play *Shakuntala* regarding the political arrangements and laws of the age (p. 133, p. 473). History is dismissed as fiction, but fiction—translated—is admissible as history. Mill embeds in his text several quotations from the writings of Captain Wilford (also one of Hegel's authorities) in *Asiatic Researches*, who says that "The Hindu system of geography, chronology, and history, are all equally monstrous and absurd" (p. 40), and that the whole stock of Hindu historical knowledge could be contained in a few quarto pages of print (p. 423). The language is remarkably similar to that Macaulay was to use less than a decade later to denounce Indian education. As Ranajit Guha has pointed out, Mill begins his *History* with a chapter on the ancient history of the Hindus, and then interrupts the text with nearly five hundred pages or nine chapters on the 'nature' of the Hindus (that is, their religion, customs, manners, etc.).³⁴ These nine chapters, predominantly in the present tense, perform the function of dehistoricizing the situation of the Hindus, establishing thereby their eternal and unchanging nature, as also their place in a hierarchy of civilizations.

As Examiner or chief executive officer of the East India Company in London from 1830 on, James Mill influenced a number of modifications in Company policy. His son J.S. Mill wrote in his *Autobiography* that his father's despatches to

India, "following his *History*, did more than had ever been done before to promote the improvement of India, and teach Indian officials to understand their business."³⁵ When William Bentinck became Governor-General in 1828, he acknowledged his indebtedness to and discipleship of James Mill. Although Mill was sceptical about the efficacy of formal education,³⁶ in his passion for "useful knowledge" he supported Bentinck's attempts to introduce educational reforms. For Bentinck "the British language" was "the key to all improvements" and "general education" would lead to "the regeneration of India."³⁷

The Radical or Utilitarian discourse was supplemented by the Evangelicals, whose horror of Jacobin atheism spurred them to propagate missionary activity in all parts of the rapidly consolidating British empire. Evangelicals such as William Wilberforce and Charles Grant (members of the Clapham Sect) and their supporters held positions of great power in government as well as the East India Company. However, Wilberforce's 1793 motion to allow Christian missionaries into India was defeated in Parliament. It was only with the Charter Act of 1813 that the Evangelicals won a major victory. Although it renewed the Company's charter for operations, the Act broke the Company's monopoly by allowing free trade, and also cleared the way for missionary activity in India. Given the Evangelicals' belief in the transformation of human character through education, and their conviction that conversion to Christianity required some amount of learning, their victory with the 1813 Act included the provision of an annual sum of Rs.100,000 for the promotion of education for the natives.³⁸

As early as 1797, however, Charles Grant, a director of the Company and its Chairman for many years, had presented to the Court of Directors a privately printed treatise in which he advocated English education in India.³⁹ Entitled *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals; and on the means of Improving it*, Grant's treatise argued that the "lamentably degenerate and base Hindus," "governed by malevolent and licentious passions" and possessed of only a "feeble sense of moral obligation," were "sunk in misery" due to their religion. Supporting his allegations with copious quotations from Orien-

talist and missionary translations of Indian texts, Grant contended that only education in English would free the minds of the Hindus from their priests' tyranny and allow them to develop individual consciences.⁴⁰ Anticipating his opponents' argument that English education would teach the Indians to desire English liberty, Grant asserted that "the original design" with which the British came to India, that is "the extension of our commerce," would best be served by the spread of education. In phrases we hear echoed by William Ward and later by Thomas Macaulay, Grant points out that British goods cannot be sold in India because the taste of the people has not been "formed to the use of them;" besides, they have not the means to buy them. English education would awaken invention among the Indians; they would initiate "improvements" at home as well as "acquire a relish" for the ingenious manufactures of Europe. For Grant, as for Macaulay after him, this was "the noblest species of conquest . . . and wherever . . . our principles and language are introduced, our commerce will follow."⁴¹ In a phase described by Ramakrishna Mukherjee as the period of transition from mercantile capitalism to the hegemony of the British industrial bourgeoisie, Grant's arguments seemed especially appropriate.⁴² British commerce would benefit substantially from the coinciding of "duty" and "self-interest."⁴³

For years a controversy raged between Orientalists and Anglicists as to whether the money set aside for education by the Act of 1813 was to be used for indigenous education or western education.⁴⁴ Finally, the compulsions of the changing nature of Company rule enabled, during Bentinck's tenure, the Resolution of 7 March 1835, which declared that the funds provided should "be henceforth employed in imparting to the Native population knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language."⁴⁵ Schools and colleges were set up by the British; Persian gave way to English as the official language of the colonial state and the medium of the administrative system went hand-in-hand, therefore, with a reversal of Cornwallis' exclusionary policies and an induction of more and more Indians into the hierarchy, a move enabled by English education. Given this rather obvious 'use' of English, the Committee on Public Instruction, of which Macaulay was

President, emphasized higher education in English and disregarded large-scale primary schooling.

Macaulay did not think it necessary for the entire Indian populace to learn English: the function of the new education was, to recall the now notorious phrases, "to form a class who may be interpreters between us (the British) and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."⁴⁶ A law-giver like William Jones, Macaulay, who also formulated the Indian Penal Code, spoke of the time when India might become independent, when the British would leave behind an empire that would never decay, because it would be "the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws."⁴⁷

Macaulay's brother-in-law, Charles Trevelyan, wrote how the influence of the indigenous elite would secure the "permanence" of the change wrought by western education: "Our subjects have set out on a new career of improvement: they are about to have a new character imprinted on them."⁴⁸ The agent of this change would be "English literature," which would lead to Indians speaking of great Britains with the same enthusiasm as the British themselves. "Educated in the same way, interested in the same objects, engaged in the same pursuits with ourselves, they become more English than Hindus . . ." looking upon the British as their "natural protectors and benefactors," for "the summit of their [the Indians'] ambition is, to resemble us."⁴⁹

In his 1835 Minute on Indian education, Macaulay, who was an avid reader of Mill's *History*, claimed he had not found a single Orientalist "who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia,"⁵⁰ and Trevelyan, who combined the Evangelical and Radical Utilitarian impulses towards India, agreed that Indian knowledge was "worse than useless."⁵¹

As Gauri Viswanathan points out in her meticulously researched essay, "The Beginnings of Literary Study in British India," the introduction of English education can be seen as "an embattled response to historical and political pressures: to tensions between the English Parliament and the East India Company, between Parliament and the missionaries, between

the East India Company and the native elite classes."⁵² Extending her argument, I would like to suggest that the specific resolution of these tensions through the introduction of English education is enabled discursively by the colonial practice of translation. European translations of Indian texts prepared for a western audience provided to the 'educated' Indian a whole range of Orientalist images. Even when the anglicized Indian spoke a language other than English, 'he' would have preferred, because of the symbolic power attached to English, to gain access to his own past through the translations and histories circulating through colonial discourse. English education also familiarized the Indian with ways of seeing, techniques of translation, or modes of representation that came to be accepted as 'natural'.

I have used 'translation' in this essay to refer to that set of practices which, authorizing and authorized by certain classical notions of representation and reality that underwrite teleological models of history, ultimately contributed to the rise of English education in India. The philosopheme of translation grounds a multiplicity of discourses which feed into as well as emerge out of the colonial context. Just as translation is overdetermined, so is the 'subject' under colonialism. The demand for English education on the part of the colonized is clearly not a simple recognition of 'backwardness' or mere political expedience, but a complex need arising from the braiding of a host of historical factors, a need produced and sustained by colonial translation.

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NOTES

1. ". . . [Power] produces knowledge . . . [they] directly imply one another," says Michel Foucault [in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 27]. He suggests also that the 'individual' or the subject is 'fabricated' by technologies of power or practices of subjectification (*assujétissement*).

2. Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India: A Nineteenth Century Agenda and Its Implications* (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi, 1988), p. 22.
3. Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 230.
4. Edward Said, discussion with Eugenio Donato and others, presented in *Boundary 2*, 8:1 (Fall 1979), as "An Exchange on Deconstruction and History," pp. 65–74.
5. Ronald Inden, "Orientalist Constructions of India," *Modern Asian Studies*, 20:3 (1986), p. 408.
6. Ranajit Guha describes, for example, the colonial compulsion to acquire information about land ownership as manifested in the writing of economic histories of India. See Guha, *An Indian Historiography*, Lecture One.
7. Quoted in Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree: Indigenous Indian Education in the Eighteenth Century* (New Delhi: Biblia Impex, 1983), p. 9.
8. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 78.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Letter to Lord Althorp, 2nd Earl Spencer, 17 August 1787, *The Letters of Sir William Jones, Vol. II*, ed. Garland Cannon (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 751. Italics in the original. Subsequent references are cited as LWJ in the text.
11. A.J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 82.
12. R.M. Hewitt, quoted by Arberry, p. 76.
13. Bagchee, Foreword to Jones' *Discourses and Essays* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1984), p. xvi.
14. "On Asiatic History, Civil and Natural," in *Discourses and Essays*, p. 99. Subsequent references are cited as OAH in the text.
15. "Third Anniversary Discourse," in *Discourses and Essays*, pp. 7–8. Subsequent references are cited as TAD in the text.
16. William Jones, *Translations from Oriental Languages I* (Delhi: Pravesh Publications, n.d.), p. 348. A discussion of the feminization of the 'native'—a fascinating trope in colonial discourse—is beyond the scope of this paper.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 358.
18. William Jones, Preface to *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (London: W. Nicol, 1823), p. vii. The infidelity of the colonized could be seen as a strategy of resistance. This notion is one I intend to explore in a future paper.
19. For a discussion of the shared assumptions of Orientalists and Anglicists with regard to the practice of *sati*, see Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on *Sati* in Colonial India," in *Cultural Critique* (Fall 1987), pp. 119–56. Gauri Viswanathan suggests in her essay, "The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India," *Oxford Literary Review*, (Vol. 9, Nos. 1–2, 1987), pp. 2–26, that the move to anglicize education for Indians actually draws on the "discoveries" of Orientalism. I shall discuss

- this point more fully in the rest of my paper. See also Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1959; rpt. 1989) for a finely differentiated comparison of James Mill's attitudes with Thomas Macaulay's. Stokes argues that Mill was no Anglicist, since he did not think English education fulfilled the criterion of 'utility', and since he did not in any case believe in the efficacy of formal education.
20. William Jones, "Charge to the Grand Jury, June 10, 1787," in *The Works of William Jones, VII* (1799; rpt., Delhi: Agam Prakashan, 1979), p. 28.
 21. William Jones, Preface to *Institutes of Hindu Law*, in *Works VII*, p. 89.
 22. William Jones, *Translations from Oriental Languages II* (Delhi: Pravesh Publications, n.d.), p. 286, punctuation in the original. Subsequent references are cited as TOL II in the text.
 23. It was only with the Charter Act of 1813 that missionary activity was finally permitted on territory controlled by the East India Company.
 24. For a discussion of the textualization of Indian religion in the context of *sati*, see Lata Mani, "The Production of an Official Discourse on *Sati* in Early Nineteenth Century Bengal," in Francis Barker et al, ed., *Europe and Its Others I* (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1985), pp. 107–27.
 25. William Ward, *A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos: Including a Minute Description of their Manners and Customs, and Translations from Their Principal Works* (2nd edn., London: Kingsbury, Parbury and Allen, 1822). Subsequent references are cited in the text.
 26. See Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (1837), trans. J Sibree (New York: P.F. Collier, n.d.), pp. 204–25. Cited hereafter as PH. Not only do secular historiography and philosophy of history participate in colonial discourse, western philosophy itself (and the 'historicism' that is emblematic of it) seems to emerge in a certain age from colonial translation. The concept of representation put into circulation by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century translators of non-western texts grounds, for example, the Hegelian theory of world history.
- In India, says Hegel, "Absolute Being is presented as in the ecstatic state of a dreaming condition . . . the generic principle of Hindoo Nature" is this "character of Spirit in a state of Dream." Because "History" for Hegel refers to the "development of Spirit," and because Indians are not "individuals" capable of action, the "diffusion of Indian culture" is "pre-historical," "a dumb, deedless expansion" (PH, p. 206). Hence "it is the necessary fate of Asiatic Empires to be subjected to Europeans" (PH, p. 207).
- While Hegel is willing to grant that Indian literature depicts its people as mild, tender and sentimental, he emphasizes that these qualities often go hand-in-hand with absolute lack of "freedom of soul" and "consciousness of individual right" (PH, p. 225). The idea of the "pusillanimous," "effeminate" Hindus with their despotic Asian rulers, and their inevitable conquest by the west, is part of a Hegelian philosophy of history that not only interpellates colonial subjects but is *authorized* by colonial translations. Hegel's condemnation of the Hindu as cunning and deceitful, habituated to "cheating, stealing, robbing, murder-

- ing," appears to be an echo of similar denunciations in the writings of James Mill.
27. James Mill, *The History of British India, Vol. I* (1817; rpt., New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1972). Subsequent references are cited in the text.
 28. The German Indologist Max Mueller declared that Mill's *History* "was responsible for some of the greatest misfortunes that had happened to India" (J.P. Guha's prefatory note to the 1972 reprint of *History*, p. xii).
 29. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 1-2.
 30. Jones, *Works* VII, p. 88.
 31. Nathaniel Halhed, *Code of Gentoo Laws, or. Ordinations of the Pundits, from a Persian Language translation made from the original writings in the Shanscrit Language* (London: n.p., 1777).
 32. Henry Colebrooke and Jagannatha Tarakapanchana, *Digest of Hindu Law* (3rd edn., Madras: Higginbotham, 1864).
 33. See the collated version by Henry Colebrooke, *Hitopadesha* (Serampore: Serampore Mission Press, 1804).
 34. Guha, "Remarks on Power and Culture in Colonial India," unpublished ms., p. 59.
 35. J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, cited in Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, p. 49.
 36. See Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, p. 57.
 37. Bentinck, quoted in Percival Spear, *A History of India 2* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 126.
 38. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, p. 30.
 39. Grant's treatise was reprinted as a Parliamentary Paper in 1813 and again in 1832.
 40. For a discussion of the Clapham Sect's 'interests', see Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, pp. 30-33.
 41. Grant, quoted in Ramakrishna Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company* (1955; rev. edn., Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1973), p. 421.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. See Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, p. 33.
 44. For an extensive discussion of this debate, see B.K. Boman-Behram, *Educational Controversies of India: The Cultural Conquest of India under British Imperialism* (Bombay: Taraporevala Sons, 1942).
 45. Percival Spear, *A History of India*, p. 127. Eric Stokes argues that as early as 1813 the East India Company could not justify its trade monopoly, Indian "piece-goods" no longer had a market in Europe, and with the Company becoming a "purely military and administrative power" it absorbed all possible revenue surpluses (*The English Utilitarians*, pp. 37-38). What British rule could now do in India was not to extract tribute but to create a market for British goods. Besides, after the crushing of the Marathas in 1818, the main task was one of effectively administering the large territories acquired by the Company (*ibid.*, p. xv). English education would produce not only large numbers of native bureaucrats but also begin to create the taste for European commodities.

46. Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education," in *Prose and Poetry*, selected by G.M. Young (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 729.
47. Macaulay, "Speech of 10 July 1833," in *Prose and Poetry*, p. 717.
48. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1838), p. 181.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-92.
50. Macaulay, "Minute," p. 722.
51. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India*, p. 182.
52. Gauri Viswanathan, "The Beginnings of English," p. 24.