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Introduction: History in Translation

> 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*

SITUATING TRANSLATION

In a post-colonial context the problematic of *translation* becomes a significant site for raising questions of representation, power, and historicity. The context is one of contesting and contested stories attempting to account for, to recount, the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages. Since the practices of subjection/subjectification implicit in the colonial enterprise operate not merely through the coercive machinery of the imperial state but also through the discourses of philosophy, history, anthropology, philology, linguistics, and literary interpretation, the colonial "subject"—constructed through technologies or practices of power/knowledge[1]—is brought into being within multiple

1. "[Power] produces knowledge . . . [they] directly imply one another,"

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 that 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. Classical philosophical discourse, however, does not simply engender a practice of translation that is then employed for the purposes of colonial domination; I contend that, simultaneously, translation in the colonial context produces and supports a conceptual economy that works into the discourse of Western philosophy to function as a philosopheme (a basic unit of philosophical conceptuality). As Jacques Derrida suggests, the concepts of metaphysics are not bound by or produced solely within the "field" of philosophy. Rather, they come out of and circulate through various discourses in several registers, providing a "conceptual network in which philosophy *itself* has been constituted."[2] In forming a certain kind of subject, in presenting particular versions of the colonized, translation brings into being overarching concepts of reality and representation. These concepts, and what they allow us to assume, completely occlude the violence that accompanies the construction of the colonial subject.

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says Foucault (*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan [New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1979], p. 27). He further suggests that the "individual" or the subject is "fabricated" by technologies of power or practices of subjectification.

2. Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 230.

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.[3] These become *facts* exerting a force on events in the colony: witness Thomas Babington Macaulay's 1835 dismissal of indigenous Indian learning as outdated and irrelevant, which prepared 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 unchanging 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. 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 or unprepared. Translation is thus deployed in different kinds of discourses—philosophy, historiography, education, missionary writings, travel-writing—to renew and perpetuate colonial domination.

My concern here is to explore the place of translation in contemporary Euro-American literary theory (using the name of this "discipline" in a broad sense) through a set of interrelated readings. I argue that the deployment of "translation" in the colonial and post-colonial contexts shows us a way of questioning some of the theoretical emphases of post-structuralism.

Chapter 1 outlines the problematic of translation and its relevance to the post-colonial situation. Reading the texts of different kinds of colonial translators, I show how they bring

3. Said, discussion with Eugenio Donato and others ("An Exchange on Deconstruction and History," *Boundary* 2 8, no. 1 [Fall 1979]: 65–74).

into being hegemonic versions of the non-Western other. Because they are underpinned by the powerful metaphysics of translation, these versions are seen even in the post-colonial context as faithful pictures of the decadence or depravity of "us natives." Through English education, which still legitimizes ruling-class power in formerly colonized countries, the dominant representations put into circulation by translation come to be seen as "natural" and "real." In order to challenge these representations, one must also examine the historicist tenets that endorse them. I will, therefore, discuss the pertinence of the critique of historicism to a world undergoing decolonization. Given the enduring nature of Hegelian presentations of the non-West and the model of teleological history that authorizes them, a questioning of the model could underwrite a new practice of translation.

In chapter 2, I examine how "translation" works in the traditional discourse of translation studies and in ethnographic writing. Discussing the last two, which are somewhat marginal to literary theory, may nevertheless help us sharpen our critique of translation. Caught in an idiom of fidelity and betrayal that assumes an unproblematic notion of representation, translation studies fail to ask questions about the historicity of translation; ethnography, on the other hand, has recently begun to question both the innocence of representation and the long-standing asymmetries of translation.

In chapters 3, 4, and 5, my main focus is the work of Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, and Walter Benjamin (an earlier critic who is becoming increasingly important to post-structuralist thinkers). My analysis shows how translation functions as a "figure" in all three thinkers, becoming synonymous or associated with a major preoccupation in each: allegory or literature in de Man, the problematics of representation and intentionality in Derrida, and the question of materialist historiography in Benjamin. Pointing out the configurations of translation and history in Benjamin's work, I describe the kind of reading provided by de Man and Derrida of Benjamin's important essay "The Task of the Translator." My argument is that Walter Benjamin's early writings on transla-

tion are troped in significant ways into his later essays on the writing of history, a troping that goes unrecognized by both de Man and Derrida. (I use *trope* to indicate a metaphorizing that includes a displacement as well as a re-figuring.) The refusal of these major proponents of deconstruction to address the question of history in Benjamin suggests a critical drawback in their theory and perhaps indicates why deconstruction has never addressed the problem of colonialism.

In the final chapter, with the help of a translation from Kannada, a South Indian language, into English, I discuss the "uses" of post-structuralism in post-colonial space. Throughout the book, my discussion functions in all the registers—philosophical, linguistic, and political—in which translation "works" under colonialism. If at any point I seem to dwell on only one of these, it is for a purely strategic purpose.

This work belongs to the larger context of the "crisis" in "English" that is a consequence of the impact of structuralism and post-structuralism on literary studies in a rapidly decolonizing world. The liberal humanist ideology that endorsed and was perpetuated by the civilizing mission of colonialism is still propagated by discourses of "literature" and "criticism" in the tradition of Arnold, Leavis, and Eliot. These disciplines repress what Derrida, in the words of Heidegger, calls the logocentric or ontotheological metaphysics by which they are constituted, which involves all the traditional conceptions of representation, translation, reality, unity, and knowledge.[4]

There have been few systematic attempts to question "English," or literature, or criticism from a post-colonial perspective, let alone such a perspective that also incorporates insights from contemporary theory.[5] In order to help challenge

4. Post-Romantic literary criticism, for example, relies on a concept of the text as a unified, coherent, symbolic whole that can be re-presented or interpreted by the critic. Derrida would argue that the text is "always already" marked by representation; it was not suddenly brought into being through the "originality" of its "author."

5. See, however, Gauri Viswanathan, "The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India," *Oxford Literary Review* 9, nos. 1–2 (1987): 2–26. Viswanathan's book *Masks of Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) provides a finely detailed discussion of the ideological uses of English

the complicity of these discourses with colonial and neo-colonial domination, I propose to make a modest beginning by examining the "uses" of translation. The rethinking of translation becomes an important task in a context where it has been used since the European Enlightenment to underwrite practices of subjectification, especially for colonized peoples. Such a rethinking—a task of great urgency for a post-colonial theory attempting to make sense of "subjects" already living "in translation," imaged and re-imaged by colonial ways of seeing—seeks to reclaim the notion of translation by deconstructing it and reinscribing its potential as a strategy of resistance.

Given the dispersed nature of its existence, we shall have to approach an understanding of the "post-colonial" through a variety of nodes: the intersection of the present with a history of domination,[6] the formation of colonial "subjects," the workings of hegemony in civil society,[7] and the task, already under way, of affirmative deconstruction.[8]

In beginning to describe the post-colonial, we might reiterate some of the brute facts of colonialism. Starting with the

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literature in colonial India. I should also mention here Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's famous challenge to Eng. Lit. (Ngũgĩ et al., "On the Abolition of the English Department," reprinted in Ngũgĩ, *Homecoming* [1972; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill, 1983]); Chinua Achebe's essays in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (London: Heinemann, 1975); and Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, vol. 1 (1980; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1983).

6. *History*, like *translation*, is a term under constant interrogation in my text. I shall suggest later some of its relevant uses in the post-colonial situation.

7. *Hegemony* and *civil society* are terms used by Antonio Gramsci. Definitions will be provided later in the discussion. Gramsci's famous work is the series of fragments collected in *Quaderni del carcere*, available in English as *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971). Autobiographical circumstances determine my examples of "practices of subjectification," most of which are from colonial and post-colonial India.

8. See chapter 6 for an example of translation as affirmative deconstruction.

period around the end of the seventeenth century and continuing beyond World War II, Britain and France, and to a lesser extent Spain, Portugal, Germany, Russia, Italy, and Holland, dominated—ruled, occupied, exploited—nearly the entire world. By 1918, European powers had colonized 85 percent of the earth's surface.[9] Not until after World War I (referred to by some non-Western writers as the European Civil War) was the process of decolonization initiated. Of course, we cannot speak here of a swift or complete transition to a post-colonial society, for to do so would be to reduce the ruptured complexities of colonial history to insignificance. The term *decolonization* can refer only crudely to what has, in the language of national liberation struggles, been called the "transfer of power," usually from the reigning colonial power to an indigenous elite.

Although one cannot see as negligible the importance of the transfer, it would be naive to believe it marks the "end" of domination, for the strength of colonial discourse lies in its enormous flexibility. By colonial discourse I mean the body of knowledge, modes of representation, strategies of power, law, discipline, and so on, that are employed in the construction and domination of "colonial subjects." *Discourse* is used here in a sense not incompatible with Michel Foucault's notion; as the rest of this chapter will show, however, my use of the term is not exclusively dependent on the Foucauldian framework. Colonial relations of power have often been reproduced in conditions that can only be called neocolonial, and ex-colonials sometimes hunger for the "English book" as avidly as their ancestors.[10]

9. For a graphic description of the ambitions of imperial powers, see Edward Said's classic, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

10. Although many critics of imperialism describe contemporary Third World societies as "neocolonial," I shall use the term *post-colonial* in order not to minimize the forces working against colonial and neocolonial domination in these societies. I have in mind especially the Indian context, from which I draw most of my examples. Also, it is more likely that economists rather than cultural theorists would use *neocolonial.* This is not to posit two separate realms

The post-colonial (subject, nation, context) is therefore still scored through by an absentee colonialism. In economic and political terms, the former colony continues to be dependent on the ex-rulers or the "West." In the cultural sphere (using *cultural* to encompass not only art and literature but other practices of subjectification as well), in spite of widely employed nationalist rhetoric, decolonization is slowest in making an impact. The persistent force of colonial discourse is one we may understand better, and thereby learn to subvert, I argue, by considering translation.

By now it should be apparent that I use the word *translation* not just to indicate an interlingual process but to name an entire problematic. It is a set of questions, perhaps a "field," charged with the force of all the terms used, even by the traditional discourse on translation, to name the problem, to translate translation. *Translatio* (Latin) and *metapherein* (Greek) at once suggest movement, disruption, displacement. So does *Übersetzung* (German). The French *traducteur* exists between *interprète* and *truchement*, an indication that we might fashion a translative practice *between* interpretation and reading, carrying a disruptive force much greater than the other two. The thrust of displacement is seen also in other Latin terms such as *transponere, transferre, reddere, vertere.* In my writing, *translation* refers to (a) the problematic of translation that authorizes and is authorized by certain classical notions of representation and reality; and (b) the problematic opened up by the post-structuralist critique of the earlier one, and that makes translation always the "more," or the *supplement*, in Derrida's sense.[11] The double meaning of *supplement*—as providing both

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of analysis, but merely to suggest that a term appropriate at one level may not be as accurate at another.

11. In *Positions* (trans. Alan Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981]), Derrida defines *supplement* as an "undecidable," something that cannot any longer "be included within philosophical (binary) opposition," but that resists and disorganizes philosophical binaries *"without ever* constituting a third term . . . ; the *supplement* is neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence" (p. 43).

what is missing as well as something "extra"—is glossed by Derrida thus: "The *overabundance* of the signifier, its *supplementary* character, is . . . the result of a finitude, that is to say, the result of a lack which must be *supplemented.*"[12] Where necessary, however, I shall specify narrower uses of *translation.*

My study of translation does not make any claim to solve the dilemmas of translators. It does not propose yet another way of theorizing translation to enable a more foolproof "method" of "narrowing the gap" between cultures; it seeks rather to think through this gap, this difference, to explore the positioning of the obsessions and desires of translation, and thus to describe the economies within which the sign of translation circulates. My concern is to probe the absence, lack, or repression of an awareness of asymmetry and historicity in several kinds of writing on translation. Although Euro-American literary modernists such as Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Samuel Beckett persistently foregrounded the question of translation, I have not discussed their work, since it has, in any case, been extensively dealt with by mainstream literary critics, and since the focus of my interrogation is not poetics but the discourses of what is today called "theory."

The post-colonial distrust of the liberal-humanist rhetoric of progress and of universalizing master narratives has obvious affinities with post-structuralism.[13] Derrida's critique of representation, for example, allows us to question the notion of re-presentation and therefore the very notion of an origin or an original that needs to be re-presented. Derrida would argue that the "origin" is itself dispersed, its "identity" undecidable. A representation thus does not re-present an "original"; rather, it re-presents that which is always already represented. The notion can be employed to undo hegemonic

12. Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 290.

13. In fact, I use even the terms *post-colonial* and *Third World* with some hesitation, since they too can be made to serve a totalizing narrative that disregards heterogeneity.

"representations" of "the Hindus," like, for example, those put forward by G. W. F. Hegel and James Mill.[14]

Another aspect of post-structuralism that is significant for a rethinking of translation is its critique of historicism, which shows the genetic (searching for an origin) and teleological (positing a certain end) nature of traditional historiography. As I have already suggested, of immediate relevance to our concern with colonial practices of subjectification is the fact that "historicism" really presents as *natural* that which is *historical* (and therefore neither inevitable nor unchangeable). A critique of historicism might show us a way of deconstructing the "pusillanimous" and "deceitful" Hindus of Mill and Hegel. My concern here is not, of course, with the alleged misrepresentation of the "Hindus." Rather, I am trying to question the withholding of reciprocity and the essentializing of "difference" (what Johannes Fabian calls a denial of coevalness) that permits a stereotypical construction of the other. As Homi Bhabha puts it: "The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (that the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the *representation* of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations."[15]

The "native boys" about whom Charles Trevelyan, an ardent supporter of English education for Indians, wrote in 1838, are "interpellated" or constituted as subjects by the discourses of colonialism. Trevelyan shows, with some pride, how young Indians, without any external compulsion, beg for "English."[16]

14. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (1837), trans. J. Sibree (New York: P. F. Collier, n.d.), pp. 203–35; cited henceforth as *PH*. Mill, *A History of British India* (1817; New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1972); cited henceforth as *HBI*.

15. Bhabha, "The Other Question," *Screen* 24, no. 6 (November–December 1983): 27.

16. Under colonial rule, "the individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection*, i.e. in order that he shall make the

"Free acceptance" of subjection is ensured, in part, by the production of hegemonic texts about the civilization of the colonized by philosophers like Hegel, historians like Mill, Orientalists like Sir William Jones.[17] The "scholarly" discourses, of which literary translation is conceptually emblematic, help maintain the dominance of the colonial rule that endorses them through the interpellation of its "subjects." The colonial subject is constituted through a process of "othering" that involves a teleological notion of history, which views the knowledge and ways of life in the colony as distorted or immature versions of what can be found in "normal" or Western society.[18] Hence the knowledge of 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."[19]

TRANSLATION AS INTERPELLATION

That translation became part of the colonial discourse of Orientalism is obvious from late-eighteenth-century British efforts to obtain information about the people ruled by the merchants of the East India Company. A. Maconochie, a scholar connected with the University of Edinburgh, urged the Brit-

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gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself' " (Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971], p. 182; emphasis in original). *Interpellation* is a term used by Althusser to describe the "constitution" of subjects in language by ideology.

17. I do not mean to lump together Hegel's idealism, Mill's utilitarianism, and Jones's humanism-romanticism. Their texts are, however, based on remarkably similar premises about India and the Hindus. For a discussion of how these premises led eventually to the introduction of English education in India, see my "Translation, Colonialism and the Rise of English," *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 15 (1990): 773–79. I am grateful to Rajeswari Sunder Rajan for her perceptive criticism of my attempt to relate translation to the beginnings of "English" in India.

18. Ronald Inden, "Orientalist Constructions of India," *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986): 401–46.

19. Ibid., p. 408.

ish sovereign (in 1783 and again in 1788) to take steps "as may be necessary for discovering, collecting and translating whatever is extant of the ancient works of the Hindoos."[20] 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 India in 1783 to take his place on the bench of the Supreme Court in Calcutta—that translation would serve "to domesticate the Orient and thereby turn it into a province of European learning."[21]

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.[22]

In a letter, Jones, whose Persian translations and grammar of Persian had already made him famous as an Orientalist before he came to India, declared that his ambition was "to know *India* better than any other European ever knew it."[23] His translations are said to have been read by almost everyone in the West who was literate in the nineteenth century.[24] His works were carefully studied by the writers of the age, especially the Germans—Goethe, Herder, and others. When Jones's new writings reached Europe, the shorter pieces were eagerly picked up and reprinted immediately by different pe-

20. Quoted in Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree: Indigenous Indian Education in the Eighteenth Century* (New Delhi: Biblia Impex, 1983), p. 9.

21. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 78.

22. Ibid.

23. Letter to Lord Althorp, 2d Earl Spencer, August 17, 1787, in *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. Garland Cannon (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 2:751; emphasis in original. Hereafter abbreviated as *LWJ*.

24. A. J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960), p. 82.

riodicals. His translation of Kālidāsa's *Śākuntala* 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."[25] Evidence for Jones's 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."[26]

My main concern in examining the texts of Jones is not necessarily to compare his translation of *Śākuntala* or Manu's *Dharmaśāstra* with the so-called originals. Rather, what I propose to do is to examine the "outwork" of Jones's translations—the prefaces, the annual discourses to the Asiatic Society, his charges to the Grand Jury at Calcutta, his letters, and his "Oriental" poems—to show how he contributes to a historicist, teleological model of civilization that, coupled with a notion of translation presupposing transparency of representation, helps construct a powerful version of the "Hindu" that later writers of different philosophical and political persuasions incorporated into their texts in an almost seamless fashion.

The most significant nodes of Jones's 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 lawgiver, 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 ex-

25. R. M. Hewitt, quoted by ibid., p. 76.

26. Bagchee, foreword to Jones's *Discourses and Essays* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1984), p. xvi.

tremely complicated. They can be seen, however, as feeding into a larger discourse of improvement and education that interpellates the colonial subject.

In Jones's 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, Jones bids the Americans, whom he admired, 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 them, and would reject, as a vase of poison, that, which, if they could taste and digest it, would be the water of life" (p. 847).

Jones's 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."[27] The idea of the "submissive" Indians, their inability to be free, and the native laws that *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 East India Company: "In these Indian territories, which providence has thrown into

27. "On Asiatic History, Civil and Natural," in *Discourses and Essays*, p. 99. Cited hereafter as OAH.

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."[28] This notion of an Indian Golden Age seems to contradict Jones's 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 *hindus* 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 "knowledge," which have become debased (pp. 7–8). Jones's 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 shall see the same movement in the historian James Mill, although he dismisses Jones's 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 goes hand in hand in Jones's 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."[29] Persian poetry is said

28. "Third Anniversary Discourse," in *Discourses and Essays*, pp. 7–8. Abbreviated in my text as TAD.

29. Jones, *Translations from Oriental Languages* (Delhi: Pravesh Publications, n.d.), 1:348. Cited henceforth as *TOL*. The feminization of the "native" is a fascinating trope in colonial discourse but will not be discussed further at this time.

to greatly influence the Indians, who are "soft and voluptuous, but artful and insincere."[30] Jones's obsession with the insincerity and unreliability of the natives is a trope 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 a court language in India), 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."[31]

As a Supreme Court judge in India, Jones took on, as one of his most important projects, the task of translating the ancient text of Hindu law, Manu's *Dharmaśāstra*. In fact, he began to learn Sanskrit primarily so that he could verify the interpretations of Hindu law given by his pandits. In a letter, he wrote of the difficulty of checking and controlling native interpreters of several codes, saying: "Pure Integrity is hardly to be found among the Pandits [Hindu learned men] and Maulavis [Muslim learned men], few of whom give opinions without a culpable bias" (*LWJ*, p. 720). Before embarking on his study of Sanskrit, Jones wrote to Charles Wilkins, who had already translated a third of the *Dharmaśāstra:* "It is of the utmost importance, that the stream of Hindu law should be pure; for we are entirely at the devotion of the native lawyers, through our ignorance of Shanscrit [*sic*]" (p. 666). Interestingly enough, the famous Orientalist 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

30. *TOL*, 2:358.

31. Jones, preface to *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771; 8th ed., London: W. Nicol, 1823), p. vii. The recurring emphasis on *infidel*ity suggests the existence of a long, if repressed, tradition of resistance on the part of the colonized. I hope to explore this notion elsewhere.