Chapter 4
British Indophobia

British Indomania did not die of natural causes; it was killed off. The Indophobia that became the norm in early-nineteenth-century Britain was constructed by Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism, and its chief architects were Charles Grant and James Mill. The key texts are two: Grant's "Observations on the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to morals; and the means of improving it" (1797), and Mill's *History of British India* (1817). They require our close attention. But first, to get a sense of the changing spirit of the period, it will be useful to take a brief look at John Shore's biography of Sir William Jones.

John Shore's Life of Jones

That the public mood in Britain, which nurtured Indo-mania in the eighteenth century, had decisively changed as the century carne to a close is evident in the biography of Sir William Jones written by John Shore, Lord Teignmouth, and published in 1805. By then, aspects of Jones's character had begun to lose the glamour they had in his lifetime. Shore's biography shows the points at which he felt that Jones's reputation was in need of the attentions of what we have come to call a spin doctor, providing clues to the new mood. Shore focused principally on Jones's religious beliefs and politics.

Shore, Orientalist and protégé of Jones in Calcutta, had become a member of the Clapaham Sect of Evangelicals after returning to England. To the increasingly popular Evangelical movement, Jones's religious views now seemed excessively rationalistic and, although filled with references to God, were by the measure of the new standard of religiosity noticeably lacking in references to Christ. Shore devotes several pages to quotations from the publications and letters of Jones, but it is apparent that he finds only just enough to make a favorable case: As a Young man, wanting to satisfy his doubts about scripture, Jones had read the Old and New Testaments in the original and developed a rational proof that the former prophesied the coming of Jesus as the Messiah in the latter (Shore 1805:65-67). His professed willingness to accept the results of a purely rational examination of the truths of the Mosaic account of man's primitive condition regardless of whether they proved favorable to Scripture could now seem dangerously akin to the skepticism of Voltaire, the very thing Jones had argued against. This acceptance of secular reason was of course the basis of the anniversary discourses, and it now needed defending from the very religion that Jones had championed in the discourses. In the culmination of his treatment of the issue Shore did his best to place Jones on the honor roll of Protestant scholar-heros with Bacon and Newton and Locke, as innovators in science who had tested scripture with reason and found it sound, to their great praise "and we may hope to their eternal happiness" (1805:331). The note of defensiveness is new and unmistakable.

As to political views, Jones had been a radical Whig who proposed a greatly enlarged franchise and was sympathetic to the cause of the American Revolution, views that got him in a certain amount of trouble in his lifetime.[1] Shore is at pains to show that Jones "was not tainted with the wild theories of licentiousness, miscalled liberty, which have

[1]. Three political pamphlets of Jones were controversial. *An inquiry into the legal mode of suppressing riots, with a constitutional plan of future defense* (1780, reprinted four times) opposed the use of the army as a means of suppressing disturbances such as the Gordon riots and argued instead for the use of local militias under the form of the *posse comitatus*. *The principles of government* (1782c, reprinted seven times), "written by a member of the Society for Constitutional Information," aimed to show, through a dialogue between a scholar and a peasant, that principles of good government could be inculcated in the unlettered and that, therefore, the franchise should be enlarged (sevenfold, as Jones estimates) to include all adult males excluding only paupers. This was the object of a famous libel case leading to Fox's Libel Act of 1792 (Cannon 1990:185-186). *A speech of William Jones, Esq. to the assembled inhabitants of the Counties of Middlesex and Surry, the Cities of London and Westminster, and the Borough of Southwark* (1782d) also advocated a very substantial increase of the franchise and the limiting of royal power.

been propagated with unusual industry since the revolution in France" (1805:400), and he asserts that Jones would have moderated his views had he lived to see the doleful outcome of that event.

On the other hand, aspects of the Orientalist self-image are muted in Shore's *Life*; there are only truncated examples of the obligatory references to the signs of Orientalist knowledge leading to love: friendship with Indian scholars, and the tears of the pandits at Jones's death (1805:411). Meantime, the scandal of Wilford's fraudulent pandit came to Shore's knowledge only after the body of his biography had been set in type, and he was obliged to acknowledge it in his preface and to defend Jones's reputation against the anticipated charge of gullibility. Overall one has the sense of a turning tide and the feeling that Shore was hard put to reconfigure the image of Jones so that it would catch the new religious and political mood, which was shaped by Evangelicalism and the darkened assessment of the French Revolution in the age of Napoleon. The new mood was not favorable to Orientalism, and ultimately it turned to Indophobia. The texts of Charles Grant and James Mill were its most eloquent expressions.

Charles Grant's "Observations"

Charles Grant was a Scotsman, an India hand, and an Evangelical who, after returning to Britain, became very influential in the councils of the East India Company. The "Observations on the . . . Asiatic subjects of Great Britain" (1796) is a very long policy paper that makes the case for an aggressively Anglicizing and Christianizing stance toward India and its culture, in opposition to the prevailing Orientalist policy of respect for Indian laws, religion, and custom that had been set in motion by Warren Hastings. It is above all a direct attack on Hinduism and Indian civilization and on the Indomania of Grant's contemporaries and fellow servants of the Company (Embree 1962:148). Its influence was immense. It invented the reform agenda for British India and in doing so created a justification for British rule. It would be difficult to overestimate its importance since some form of Grant's view, secularized into a notion of progress, dominated the apparatus of British rule until 1947 (Embree 1962:157). Accordingly I will consider its argument in some detail. I will, however, abstract it from the masses of proof texts that Grant assembled from travelers, Orientalists, and

translations of Indian works, by which he gave it the weight and gravity that is the sign of a well-informed review of the question.

Grant tells us that it was "chiefly written in 1792," and it is well to keep the time horizon in mind. On the one hand the first volume of the *Asiatic researches* had been published only four years earlier. The prior texts for Grant were mostly pre-Jonesean, such as François Bernier's *Travels in the Mogul empire* (1656-68), Halhed's translation of the *Code of Gentoo laws* (1776), and, on Hindu religion, passages from Abu'l Fazl's *A'in-i Akbari*, translated by Francis Gladwin (1783-86), and Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (1785). He did not cite Jones himself except in footnotes that appear to have been added later.[2] The proof texts, therefore, belong largely to the first phase of the new Orientalism before or at the time of the formation of the Asiatic Society. On the other hand the feel of the piece is very post-Jonesean, and it represents the beginnings of a turning tide. The new sensibility is found in the Evangelicalism of its religious stance, which was to be a growing force in British life, and also in its alarm at the course of the French Revolution. One seems to see, in the passage about to be cited, a feeling that at the bottom of the deepening crisis of France lay the irreligion propagated by Voltaire, which, in Grant's view, was in some way connected with the favorable portrait of Hindu society and religion purveyed by the English Orientalists Voltaire so admired, Dow and Holwell. Not terribly successful at first, the "Observations" was a foretaste of things to come. It was trotted out in 1813, with the backing of Wilberforce and the Evangelicals, who were demanding that Company-ruled territories be opened up to missionaries, and again in 1833, when the East India Company charter was up for renewal before Parliament and when Company policy was subjected to parliamentary scrutiny and debate. Grant's text seemed to gather power with each appearance.

After tracing the history of the East India Company in India Grant comes to the "State of society and manners among the people of Hindostan," and he comes straight to the point of his polemic, the attack upon Indomania.

> It has suited the views of some philosophers to represent that people as amiable and respectable; and a few late travellers have chosen rather to place some softer traits of their characters in an engaging light, than to give a just delineation of the whole. The generality, however, of those who have writ-

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2. Charles Grant was elected to membership of the Asiatic Society shortly after its founding, but his record of attendance shows that his interest was casual at best (eight meetings in all), and he gave no papers, according to the *Proceedings* (Asiatic Society 1980). The citations and narrative of the "Observations" show no evidence that he knew Sanskrit.

> ten concerning Hindostan, appear to have concurred in affirming what foreign residents there have as generally thought, nay, what the natives themselves freely acknowledge of each other, that they are a people exceedingly depraved. (1796:20)

This uncompromising judgment falls especially upon those Indians who are under British rule, the Bengalis, and among them especially the Hindus, and the content of their moral depravity (which Grant descants upon at length) is that they are lacking in truth, honesty, and good faith to a degree not found in European society. Grant is blunt in the interest not of condemning the Indians but of determining "their true place in the moral scale," an expression I ask readers to remember because it will become of considerable theoretical importance later in the chapter. What he insists upon is the universality of this great depravity in Hindu society, giving it a general moral hue, "between which and the European moral complexion there is a difference analogous to the difference of the natural colour of the two races" (1796:25). But the purpose is neither condemnation for its own sake nor to assert the permanent inferiority of another race. Although Grant's description of the Indians is unfavorable in the extreme, "his wish is not to excite detestation, but to engage compassion, and to make it apparent, that what speculation may have ascribed to physical and unchangeable causes, springs from moral sources capable of correction" (1796:31).

Passing to the moral sources of this depravity, Grant considers in turn the influence of climate, of government and laws, and of religion. He largely dismisses the first. The climate of India is undoubtedly less favorable to the human constitution than that of Europe, but as a cause of the Hindu character too much has been imputed to climate. It is not to nature but to human institutions, namely to government, laws, and religion, that he looks for the formative causes.

Government

Grant's argument relies heavily upon the trope of Oriental despotism. This idea, by which Aristotle had contrasted the unfreedom of the Persians with the liberty of the Greeks, had been revived since the Renaissance and applied to the Ottoman Empire to contrast it with Europe, and then generalized to other Eastern regimes, especially that of Mughal India.

Despotism, the mode of government generally prevailing in the East, appears to have existed at all times among the Hindus, Grant says, and has greatly influenced the formation of their character. When an

individual is dependent on the will and caprice of another he becomes degraded in thought and action. All regard for what is valuable in life is reduced to personal interest and all thought for the public good and the future is lost in the precariousness of the present hour. Fear is the main principle of action, leading to distrust; as arbitrary power does not lead one to expect truth and justice in government officers, it does not produce integrity and veracity in its subjects.

The character of the Hindus must have been debased in several respects by their oppression by numerous invaders—in this much Grant agrees with the tenets of Indomania, which inclined to attribute the shortcomings of contemporary Hindu society to the burden of Muslim rule, from which it would be enfranchised by British rule on Orientalist lines. But Grant opposes this by arguing that the government of Hindus, too, has always had a despotic character, since long before the invasions of Muslim adventurers. The Hindus "did not receive the despotic form of government from the Tatters, nor were they degraded only when they became subject to Mahomedan conquerors."

> They have had among themselves a complete despotism from the remotest antiquity; a despotism, the most remarkable for its power and duration that the world has ever seen. It has pervaded their government, their religions, and their laws. It has formed by its various ramifications the essentials of the character which they have always had, as far as the light of history goes, and which they still posess; that character, which has made them a prey to every invader, indifferent to all their rulers, and easy in the change of them; as a people, void of public spirit, honour, attachment; and in society, base, dishonest, and faithless. (1796:32)

Although the ancient Hindu form of government scarcely exists any longer, except in Nepal, their laws and religion remain. Grant develops his proof of the debasing effects of Oriental despotism upon the Hindu character through a long series of damning quotations regarding Hindu law and the Hindu religion.

Law

The whole fabric of Hindu law is "the work of a crafty and imperious priesthood, who feigned a divine revelation and appointment, to invest their own order, in perpetuity, with the most absolute empire over the civil state of the Hindoos, as well as over their minds" (1796:35). The priestcraft theme, a distinctly Protestant motif, was by no means Grant's invention; it was a critique of Catholicism turned to

new purposes in India. The laws themselves, taken from Halhed's translation of the *Code of Gentoo laws*, are quoted at length under five heads: laws giving the privileges and duties of the ruler; laws establishing the privileges of the superior castes; laws that give a direct sanction to immoralities; laws that promote oppression and injustice; and laws that show a spirit of cruelty (1796:36ff.). The rubrics suffice to convey the drift.

Religion

As to religion, the proof of its contribution to the general moral depravity of the Hindus is again rendered under five heads: ceremonial and pecuniary atonements (showing that sin can be repaired by ritual, without true repentance); doctrines relating to transmigration (which promotes, Grant alleges, a sense of fatalism about one's condition rather than a sense of personal responsibility); the characters of Hindu deities (largely to do with sexuality—their "abandoned licentiousness" and the worship of the *lingam*); modes of worship (including hook-swinging and the institution of temple prostitutes); and superstitious opinions affecting daily life (largely rites of prognostication and healing) (1796:46ff.). Besides Gladwin's translation of Abu'l Fazl's *A'in* and Wilkins's translation of the *Gita*, Grant appeals to the authority of a number of (Protestant) missionaries and travelers going back to Roger, Baldeus, Bernier, and a number of the older authorities. It is clear that this bill of particulars in the condemnation of Hinduism is not here drawn up for the first time, but builds upon a (largely missionary) tradition of condemnation.

But if indeed abject slavery and unparalleled depravity are the characteristics of the Hindus, and if such are the consequences of Hindu government and religion, "how has Hindostan flourished under that system, as it is said to have done in ancient times?" (1796:58). The "ancient splendour of India" that has been a foundational truth for Indomania is a decided obstacle to his argument, and Grant meets it by returning to climate, which is now cast in a benevolent role. India certainly possesses advantages, but they are derived from nature—genial climate, fertile soil—not government. Political institutions had cramped its natural powers, produced general corruption, and failed to defend the country against foreign invasion.

But again, the ancient splendor of India as recorded by Greek and Latin authors and recently revisited in the Rev. William Robertson's

Historical disquisition concerning the knowledge which the ancients had of India of 1791 (which makes claims for the refinement of ancient Indian civilization and the happiness resulting from government policy) would not just go away, and Grant returns to the subject in a long footnote in which he attacks Robertson for painting a picture that is "far more beautiful than the original." Robertson falls in with the view, advanced by the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment, of a progressive development of society starting from the savage state and conceives the original inhabitants of Hindostan to have advanced from such a state "through a long series of internal improvements, to the highest stages of refinement, unaided even by the accession of extraneous lights" (Grant 1796:58n.). Grant opposes Robertson's position with an argument upon the facts of the Tower of Babel narrative: So far from beginning in a state of savagery, he says, it appears more probable that mankind already had the habits of civilized life at the time of its dispersal from the plains of Shinar, and humans would, "without sinking into barbarism, soon spread into the luxuriant regions of India, where the rich abundance of the soil would speedily lead them to the arrangments of a regular society." The profile of early Indian history is not a rise from savagery to civilization, but from an initial civilized life to greater refinement under the rich abundance of its soil. Savagery is not the initial condition of the human race but a fall from an initial state of civilization. Moreover India's civilization derived from outside India. It is here for the first time, in a footnote attacking Robertson's progressivist, social-evolutionary interpretation of Indian history, that Grant makes contact at last with the premier Orientalist of his age, making common cause with Jones's Mosaic ethnology. Jones's "Discourse on the Hindus" is pressed into service in support of the argument that, in respect of the brahmin system of religion, law, and science, of which Robertson makes so much in developing proofs of the progressive view of Indian civilization, they did not spring up in India but from a source nearer the original seat of the human race after the flood of Noah. And in any case, learning was monopolized and concealed by the brahmins, and it "spread little light among the great body of the people" (1796:59n.). As to the wealth of India, it was the result of nature's special bounty in the warmer zones, but it was largely monopolized by princes, brahmins, and chief persons of the other castes.

Robertson constructed the "ancient splendor" interpretation largely upon the accounts of India in Greek and Latin, especially that of the Seleucid ambassador Megasthenes, who was sent to the court of Can-

dragupta Maurya in the fourth century B.C. Against the very favorable picture of India given in Megasthenes and other ancient writers, Grant asserts the claims of a different, far more negative reading, in which the splendor of ancient India becomes a sign for the cruelty of its polity. In this reading, large armies, abundance of jewels and "effeminate" finery, richly endowed temples of fine workmanship and great cost, large bodies of priests, and so forth, would appear striking to the eye of a foreign ambassador living in the capital, but there is no reason to think this wealth was spread widely among the population. Indeed, there is no reason to believe that the common people ever lived upon anything but rice or coarse grains, ever wore anything but a loincloth or a half covering of ordinary cotton, ever lived in anything better than huts of mud brick with straw roofs. "Such is the present style, and such in all probability it ever has been, not because the people preferred this, but because they had no choice" (the same).

Thus Grant's diagnosis: The general depravity of Hindus results from government, laws, and religion—in short, from moral causes. The cure must be of the same kind.

> The true cure of darkness, is the introduction of light. The Hindoos err, because they are ignorant; and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them, would prove the best remedy for their disorders; and this remedy is proposed, from a full conviction that if judiciously and patiently applied, it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honourable and advantageous for us. (1796:60)

In a word, the cure Grant proposes is education in the arts, philosophy, and religion of the English, and the best way of communicating British light and knowledge is through education conducted in the English language. It is perfectly in Britain's power, Grant argues, to teach the Hindus English and, through simple writings in that medium, gradually and progressively to educate them in the elements of British arts, philosophy, and religion; they will "silently undermine, and at length subvert, the fabric of error" (the same). English is a key that will open to the Hindus a world of new ideas.

It is not warrantable to infer, Grant argues, that because the Hindus are at present in a low state, they must remain so forever. The history of nations that have risen from rudeness to refinement shows the Contrary, otherwise the Britons "ought still to be going naked, to be feeding on acorns, and sacrificing human victims in the Druidical groves."

In fact, his policy proposal goes to the further civilization of a people who had already made considerable progress in the ancient past but who, owing to the fraud and imposition of the brahmins, "were rendered first stationary, then retrograde" (1796:63).

But is there not, in the era of the French Revolution, a serious flaw in the reasoning? Will not the people learn to desire English liberty, a share in the government. of their country and commissions in the army, and finally throw off English rule and assert their independence? Will not the communication of the Gospel and of European light lead to popular government and the assertion of independence? Grant considers these objections carefully and concludes that the influence of climate will prevail over love of liberty. Indolence, pusillanimity, and insensibility will be partially amended by moral improvement, but the tropical sun will still be oppressive. There is, then, no rational ground for apprehending that the Indians will become turbulent for English liberty. The spirit of English liberty is a growth of ages, and is not to be caught from a written description of it, especially by distant and feeble Asiatics.

What, finally, are the best means of perpetuating Britain's empire in India, in Grant's view? It is here, as we come to the nub of the thing, that Grant insists on the distance between the two peoples.

> At present, we are every way different from the people whom we hold in subjection; different in country, in language, in manners, in customs, in sentiments, and in religion; their interest also, for the reasons mentioned in the early part of this memoir, they must conceive to be different from ours. What then can be a healing principle with regard to all these points, but a principle of *assimilation, a common-bond*, which shall give to both parties the reality and the conviction of mutual benefit from the connection? Without an uniting principle, a conjoining tie of this nature, we can suppose the country to be, in fact, retained only by mere power; but in the same degree than an identity of sentiments and principles would be established, we should exhibit a sight new in the region of Hindostan, a people actively attached, cordially affected to their government, and thus augmenting its strength. (1796:82)

We thus arrive at the grand question: How shall the British make the Indians love them? It had been the aim of Alexander, Grant says, to establish his authority in the affection of the nations he had subdued—so Robertson's *Disquisition* had recently recalled—by abolishing all distinctions between the victors and the vanquished; thus his European and Asiatic subjects were incorporated and became one people, by obey-

ing the same laws and by adopting the same manners, institutions, and discipline. In short, they were assimilated. Britons should apply this principle; however they should not follow Alexander's policy fully. It would suit neither the British nor the Indians "that the distinctions between the two races should be lost" by intermarriage (the same), nor should the British impose upon India laws framed for their own country. They should rather attach their subjects to themselves by affection and interest, by winning them to their religion and sentiments, and in doing so add to the happiness of the Indians and render British authority permanent and secure.

Thus Grant constructs the case, giving a new reading to Orientalist productions, that the Indians are "every way different" from the British. It was nothing new to say the two were different; what told against the tide of Indomania, which had been running toward a sympathetic understanding and tendency to emphasize the common humanity of Europeans and Indians, was the new insistence that the Indians were different in "every way."[3] The materials that Grant used were the ones produced by the Orientalists themselves; what differed was the reading. It cannot be an accident that, in constructing the case for difference "every way," Grant entirely suppressed mention of the Jonesean doctrine of a kinship between European languages and Sanskrit, and hence between Europeans and Indians, even while citing the very third anniversary discourse in which the connection is made plain.

Grant and Macaulay on Education

What Grant's new version of the policy of love amounts to is this: The Indians should assimilate to the ways of the British, but the British should take care not to assimilate to the ways of the Indi-

[3]. The following passage from Percival Spear, I would argue, is in direct lineal descent from Grant's "Observations":

> The contact of two races so dissimilar in character, in culture and in institutions as the English and the Indian raises the problem of the contact of cultures in its most acute form. Mutual influence is easiest when two cultures are basically the same; radical difference tends either to mutual repulsion, or to absorption of one by the other. (Spear 1963:126)

This point of view could not be more different from the Orientalist view of Hamilton, cited earlier, about how indifference gives way to empathy through the mastery of language.

ans—and the two races should remain distinct. Alexander had his men take Asian wives as a part of the assimilation policy; Grant wanted to omit that part. East India Company servants, who often took Indian wives or concubines in the eighteenth century, were now to observe racial endogamy and promote the cultural assimilation of Indians to England without themselves succumbing to "the disease of indianization" (Farrington 1976:6). We might call this policy one-way asexual assimilation. It became the official creed of nineteenth-century British India.

The change it brought to the sexual politics of empire was immense. The British rulers of Bengal in the eighteenth century were men who, except for an elite few like Sir William Jones who brought his wife with him, had little or no prospect of finding European wives and who, many of them, took Indian ones; in the nineteenth century the new creed of endogamy made English domesticity in India normative and brought British women to India in large numbers. The signs of the old dispensation are those eighteenth-century portraits of Englishmen dressed as Indian gentlemen smoking hookahs or watching Indian dance performances; the sign of the new dispensation are the handbooks of British-Indian domesticity, such as F. A. Steel and G. Gardiner's *Complete Indian housekeeper and cook* (1909).[4]

A change so momentous inevitably had effects upon the learning of Indian languages, in ways that are only partly known. Several of the new Orientalists, such as Alexander Hamilton and Sir John Shore, had Indian wives, and it cannot but have helped them develop a fluency, if not in Sanskrit and Persian, at least in Hindustani and other modern languages. Richard Burton said that the Indian wife was a walking dictionary of Hindustani (Burton 1893, 1:135). Halfway through the nineteenth century George Smith considers the effects of the change in sexual relations on language learning in a highly ambivalent backward glance charged with alternating feelings of repulsion and regret. Smith looks at the eighteenth-century British rulers of Bengal from the vantage of the sexual dispensation we have come to call Victorian:

> Cut off from European society, separated, by correspondence, from England by a distance in time of nearly two years, they were driven to find in

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[4]. Kenneth Ballhatchet's *Race, sex and class under the Raj* (1980) was the first systematic study of the sexual politics of British India, concentrating on the military and the regulation of prostitution. The changing sexual mores of the British rulers of India, of course, had British origins. Lawrence Stone (n.d.) dates the onset in England of the sexual morality we call "Victorian" at about the beginning of the nineteenth century or a bit before, that is, just about the time of Grant's memorandum on education.

> native society what we now have in all the luxuries and amenities of English civilization. Never since these have been so largely introduced overland, and added at once to the comforts and inefficiency of both branches of the Service, have they known the natives so well, or been so much beloved by them. At the same time, this state of things was accompanied by evils of the very worst character, dissipation and debauchery of all kinds, and concubinage of a thoroughly oriental character. The absence of a middle Anglicised class of natives, who might save the trouble of personally attending to the details of duty, put many of our countrymen in positions, where, as we know, the tendency was to become so enamoured of native life, and so well acquainted with the native language, as to forget the dignity and nationality of the Briton, the responsibility and duty of the Christian. Hence all the linguistic likings and power of the British were diverted into a vernacular and utilitarian channel, and a facility acquired in it which we shall look for in vain now. With the vices and follies of our early rule of India, have we not also given up much of the manliness and common sense? Do not passing events teach us that Clive was wiser than his modern successors, that his policy of ruling Asiatics on oriental principles, was wiser than that of white-washing them with semi-Anglicism? (Smith 1857:251)

But much the largest effect Grant had upon India, and upon the British study of Indian languages, had to do with his role in the formation of educational policy, leading to the "white-washing" of Anglicism of which Smith was to complain. In a word, the educational effects of the impulse to promote one-way assimilation were two: to promote the teaching of English to Indians, and, paradoxically, to institutionalize in England the teaching of Indian languages to prospective civil servants.

Grant's Anglicist policy as it applied to the education of Indians was fostered by Charles Trevelyan and given memorable expression by Thomas Babington Macaulay (scion of a famous Evangelical family) in his well-known *Minute on Indian education* of 1835. It aimed, in Macaulay's words, through English-medium instruction in the arts and sciences of Europe, to form an elite class that was "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay 1835:249), what Smith in the passage given above called the "middle Anglicised class" of Indians. The government of India, unable to educate the mass of Indians directly, would do so indirectly through this class; by a process of "filtration" or interpretation, European learning would be conveyed to the Indian masses by their Anglicized betters (Macaulay 1835:249; Clive 1973:chap. 12). English not only is the language of India's rulers but has become a repository of the best of European thought. By contrast the literatures of Arabic and Sanskrit

contain "medical doctrines which would disgrace an English Farrier—Astronomy, which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school—History, abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long—and Geography, made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter" (Macaulay 1835:242-243).

Macaulay's *Minute* is a masterpiece of English polemic prose, making brilliant use of satire to oppose the Orientalist establishment, and in doing so it has been more successful than it deserves to be in casting the anti-Anglicist position of the Orientalists as a stand-pat conservatism. It is important not to take Macaulay's polemic characterization of the opposing position for the simple truth, as it so often is. In fact, the Orientalist position with which H. H. Wilson and other luminaries of the Asiatic Society were identified did not argue against the modernizing and Europeanizing objective of the Anglicist policy, but it held that science would not take root in Indian society unless it was taught through the Indian languages and through the modernization of their literatures. Opposing the "filtration" metaphor of the Anglicists with the metaphor of "engrafting" European learning upon the rootstock of Indian civilization, advocates of the Orientalist policy for education wished to develop the powers of the Indian vernaculars to become effective vessels of the new learning so that European knowledge should become domesticated to the Indian scene. In doing this they treated Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic as the equivalent of the Latin and Greek through whose literatures English and the other modern languages of Europe had been developed and had become repositories of the highest civilization. Thus Newtonian astronomy, for example, was to be grafted upon the astronomical knowledge of India contained in the Sanskrit texts of Jyotisa, through which European science would be seen to be a further, more perfect development of the Indian astronomical science. In a very real sense the clash of the Anglicist and Orientalist educational policies was an argument within the paradigm of modernization, not a clash of progressives and conservatives.

In their struggle against the Orientalist establishment, entrenched in its authority over matters of cultural policy since the times of Hastings and the first formation of the Asiatic Society, the Anglicists propounded a countertheory to that of the Oriental renaissance. It was not, now, the study of Sanskrit and Indian antiquities that would bring a second renaissance to the West, as the study of Greek learning had been the foundation of the first Renaissance. Rather, as Macaulay argued in his famous *Minute*, it had been the diligence of the English in

studying Greek and Latin literatures during the Renaissance, when almost everything worth reading was contained in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans, that had put English literature ahead of the Greek, the Latin, and the Sanskrit:

> Had our ancestors acted as the Committee of Public Instruction has hitherto acted [in supporting Arabic and Sankrit scholarship]; had they neglected the language of Cicero and Tacitus; had they confined their attention to the old dialects of our own island; had they printed nothing and taught nothing at the universities but Chronicles in Anglo-Saxon and Romances in Norman-French, would England have been what she now is? What the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India. The literature of England is now more valuable than that of classical antiquity. I doubt whether the Sanscrit literature be as valuable as that of our Saxon and Norman progenitors. In some departments—in History, for example—I am certain that it is much less so. (1835:243)

Thus the renaissance idea became contested territory, in which the Orientalists, having identified Sanskrit as the Greek or Latin of India, were now answered by Macaulay, who believed English to be to India as Greek and Latin had been to England, and who regarded Sanskrit and Arabic as no better than repositories of a completely outmoded knowledge, although he had studied neither, as he freely admitted. Insofar as the Anglicist position tended to prevail over the Orientalist one (without entirely overcoming it), Evangelical influence drove British policy down a path that tended to minimize and denigrate the accomplishments of Indian civilization and to position itself as the negation of the British Indomania that was nourished by belief in Indian wisdom.[5]

The other side of the education question that divided the Orientalists and the Anglicists concerned the training of the Company's British personnel.

Until the end of the eighteenth century British lads as young as fifteen years old were sent to India to become "Writers" in the East India Company service. The administrative responsibilities the Company acquired with the conquest of Bengal and the defeat of the French in South India created a need for better training of its servants, and in 1800, Marquess Wellesley, the governor-general, founded his "University of the East," the College of Fort William at Calcutta, where all

[5]. Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest* (1989) explores this territory more fully than I can here.

Writers were to follow a three-year course before proceeding to their posts in Bengal, Madras, or Bombay. The course included what were regarded as the three classical languages of India (Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit), six modern languages (Hindustani, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, and Kannada), and Indian law. Wellesley turned to the membership of the Asiatic Society for professors of the college, H. T. Colebrooke becoming in this way the first European to hold a professorship of Sanskrit. Indians were appointed as assistants for language teaching. The formation of the College of Fort William completed the triangle of overlapping institutions—the governing council, the Asiatic Society, and the College of Fort William—through which Orientalists circulated in the formation of their particular conjuncture of power and knowledge, and the teaching of Indian languages, which heretofore had rested on the private arrangements individuals made with pandits and munshis, was now institutionalized under British auspices. Moreover, the College of Fort William, as David Kopf's admirable study (1969) shows, became an important public space in which, through the juxtaposition of British Orientalists and Indian teachers, British Orientalism contributed to the profound restructuring of Bengali upper-class culture. A few years after its founding, the court of directors made provision for similar schools in Madras and Bombay, although the original plan was that all recruits were first to be educated at Calcutta, and secondarily at Madras and Bombay if, at the determination of Calcutta, they were to be assigned outside of Bengal (see also Farrington 1976:3-7).

Nevertheless, the formation of the College of Fort William, which Wellesley had undertaken without consultation and on his own authority, did not sit well with the Company grandees in London. For one thing, there was the question of patronage. Members of the court of directors were used to controlling appointments to writerships and collecting large fees for doing so. What would become of that arrangement if Calcutta could decide who passed into the service and where they were to be sent? There was also the question, dear to the Evangelical cause, of the bad effects of early exposure to India on British youth. It was not long before the court of directors decided to set up the East India College in England, which it did in February of 1806, first in Hertford Castle, which it had leased for the purpose, and then in Haileybury, its permanent location, which it occupied until its dissolution in 1858. Haileybury did not eliminate the College of Fort William; a compromise was reached whereby the first two years of training would be passed at the East India College, followed by further training in the

College of Fort William—or at Madras or Bombay, after the stranglehold of Calcutta was relaxed a few years later.

Charles Grant played a critical role in this development, and the report of the 1804 committee on the question of the formation of the East India College, whose recommendation carried the day, was largely his work (East India Company 1804; Farrington 1976:7). A principal motive was to make sure that British boys were not exposed to the dangers of Indian culture too soon and to give them a fortifying inoculation of European culture before shipping them out.

> Nor ought it to be the only object of such a system to form good servants for the Company; the system should Aim also at making them good subjects, and enlightened Patriots. They are to leave their Native Country at an early Age, to pass many years of Life among People every way dissimilar to their own; their sphere of action is placed at a remote distance from the Parent State; they are to manage interests of the highest value to that state; and our vast acquisitions there with the continually increasing number of Europeans in those territories, tend to strengthen their Attachment to that Quarter. It is therefore of importance that the Young Men, before their departure, should be imbued with reverence and love for the Religion, the Constitution, and the Laws of their own Country; and hence the plan of their studies should comprehend some elementary instruction in those most essential branches of knowledge. Those branches will also be best learnt before the Young Men have launched out into the World, which without such instruction they would go unfortified against erroneous and dangerous Opinions. (East India Company 1804:15)

We see here the signature idea of Grant: The Indians are a people "every way dissimilar," and British lads are not to assimilate to them.

While, then, the East India College would insure that its servants did not become too attached to India, it had nonetheless to include in its course of study the rudimentary instruction in Indian languages that the candidates would continue in India, whether at the College of Fort William or in Madras or Bombay. Thus the same impulse that founded the East India College as a means of cultural inoculation made it also the means by which the teaching of Indian languages (both "classical" and "vernacular") was institutionalized on European soil. Alexander Hamilton, member of the Asiatic Society and retired officer of the East India Company's army, became, by virtue of his appointment to the East India College, the first Sanskritist to hold a professorship in an institution of higher learning in Europe.

The Company aimed high, hoping to create a college that was the

equivalent of those of the established universities. Offering high salaries and a university-like status, it largely succeeded in attracting a distinguished staff, as Farrington notes. Initial appointments included

> Bewick Bridge, mathematician and Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, Edward Christian, Downing Professor of Law at Cambridge, William Dealtry, mathematician and Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, Thomas Malthus, political economist, Alexander Hamilton, the Sanskrit scholar, and Charles Stewart, former Assistant Professor of Persian at the College of Fort William. These six alone published some thirty-seven books during their careers at the College. (Farrington 1976:8)

The Company's 1804 report is particularly revealing on the condition of the study of Indian languages and literatures in Britain. It is a reproach to our country, the report argues, that in spite of our vast connection with the East no steps have been taken to make provision at home for the learning of Oriental languages. Retired Company servants are indeed capable of teaching them in England, but having passed through the service they are not willing to stoop to the condition of private teachers of languages. Thus the knowledge of languages acquired in India dies with them in Britain, and, notwithstanding the large numbers of Oriental scholars retiring to their native soil, no store of Oriental learning is formed at home (1804:18). Britons learned Indian languages in India, and since their knowledge did not reproduce itself, Orientalism relied on a perpetual recourse to the pandits and munshis in India itself.

The report goes on to say that political reasons argue for the formation of seminaries in Britain to promote the study of the most important languages of India and Asia. The French were doing so much better in this matter and had set a high value upon institutions of this kind. The French government encourages the study of Oriental literature, the report says, and it is pursued with ardor; Paris so abounds in persons proficient in Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and even "Shanscrit" that a scholar of our own (Alexander Hamilton) has written that he "conversed among them more frequently in Persian than in French, and that he daily witnessed among them conversations in Persian, Arabic and Turkish." It seems inexpedient "that whilst France flourished in Oriental learning, Britain should possess little productive stock of that kind within itself, and tho' rich in it abroad, where its riches are more exposed, continue still poor at home" (1804:18). Rivalry with the French, it would seem, was the best argument one could-make to the court of

directors for the establishment of professorships in Indian languages in Britain. Indomania and the wisdom of the Indians was not all what Charles Grant and the other members of the Company's committee had in mind; quite the contrary. Ironically, it was Indophobia that created the professorship of Sanskrit at the East India College, which Alexander Hamilton was the first to enjoy.

James Mill's History

James Mill's highly influential *History of British India* (1817)—most particularly the long essay "Of the Hindus," comprising ten chapters—is the single most important source of British Indophobia and hostility to Orientalism. It is convergent with Grant's "Observations" in a number of ways; indeed one is tempted to see it as a kind of secularized version of the latter. Mill, a Scotsman like Grant, was educated for the ministry and licensed to preach by the Presbyterian Church, but he lost his faith and exchanged it for the Utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham (of which Mill became the mouthpiece and chief publicist), with its faith in progress and in the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number. Accordingly Mill's prescription for the Indians is not conversion to Christianity, but modernization, and while Grant's "Observations" rode the broad stream of a popular movement (Evangelicalism), Mill's work, belonging to a sect of philosophical radicalism that was anything but popular, made its way by influencing a section of the elite. In addition to developing what can be read as a secularized version of Grant, Mill gave the whole project a theoretical base drawn from the social evolutionism of the Scottish Enlightenment authors—the very social evolutionism that Grant had opposed in his critique of Robertson—elaborating it in an all-out attack upon the British Sanskritists in the person of Sir William Jones.

The *History of British India* was a great success, both publicly (going into its fifth edition by 1858) and for its author personally. Mill had worked on it for many years while raising a large family on his earnings as a journalist. He educated his children himself, and the education of his son John Stuart Mill was based largely on the materials of the *History*. John Stuart served as research assistant to his father while the *History* was being written. (Thomas 1985.) Publication of the *History* established James Mill's credentials as an expert on India, in recognition

of which he was given a position in the East India Company offices in London, which solved his financial problems; he remained in Company service for the rest of his life, conducting a strenuous second career of writing and reviewing in the Utilitarian interest after hours. His book was a prescribed text at Haileybury for students preparing for the Indian Civil Service, and through it Bentham's Utilitarian philosophy acquired a considerable influence in the administration of India (Stokes 1959).

Mill's assessment of Indian civilization was cordially disliked by the distinguished Sanskritist H. H. Wilson, who was long the secretary of the Asiatic Society, the first Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, and the leading Orientalist in the generation after Colebrooke. He said, bluntly, of its contemptuous treatment of India's claims to civilization, "its tendency is evil" (Wilson 1858:xii). It is startling to find this phrase in Wilson's preface to the fifth edition of Mill—or rather, it is surprising that Wilson agreed to edit and continue Mill's history at all, since he was so fundamentally opposed to Mill's assessment of Hindu civilization. Perhaps he believed that by editorial corrections and replies in the footnotes to the errors and distortions of Mill's text he could minimize the damage of a work that would continue to exercise a great effect upon the British whether he liked it or not. In any case, the fifth edition comprises a text by Mill that is hostile to Indian civilization and editorial comments in the footnotes by Wilson that are hostile to the point of view of the text. Wilson's Orientalism is the veritable object of attack in Mill's analysis of Hindu civilization. It is rather as if the prey were trying to embrace the boa constrictor, and with about as much effect.

Mill's attack upon Orientalism begins with the question of authority, the issue of greatest vulnerability for him. As we have seen, Orientalist claims to authority rested on knowledge of languages as a means of access to the mind, and Orientalists such as Holwell used it to advance the claims of the new Orientalism against the (merely) eyewitness authority of the traveler and the missionary. Grant had been very supportive of the study of Oriental languages, although what he emphasizes in his attack upon what he considered the more superficial travelers (such as Megasthenes) is not language mastery but the authority of Europeans, such as merchants, who had long and intimate association with Indians—people, indeed, such as himself. In short, Grant's is the authority of the India hand, the one who asserts that he "understands the natives" because of long working relations with them. Mill had a considerable problem for his book in respect to these authority

claims because he knew no Indian languages and had never been to India. In the preface he addresses the issue by boldly attacking the authority of the India hand and Orientalist, turning a weakness into a strength by a bit of word magic.

The meat of the thing is the demonstration of a proposition that has been framed to minimize the content of the India hand's expertise in favor of that of the metropolitan stay-at-home, the proposition that one who brings to the writing of a history of India only those qualifications that can be acquired in Europe is better fitted "in an almost infinite degree" than one who brings to the task only those qualifications that can be acquired in India. Mill purports to show that the India hand's expertise is limited to the gathering of facts presented to his senses in the colony, while the higher-level mental functions are associated with the metropole: "the powers of combination, discrimination, classification, judgement, comparison, weighing, inferring, inducting, philosophizing in short: which are the powers of most importance for extracting the precious ore from a great mine of rude historical materials" (Mill 1858, 1:xxiii). That these are more likely acquired in Europe than in India, Mill judges, will not admit of much dispute. The India hand's gathering of facts recorded in native books that have not been translated and from conversations with natives, facts not yet recorded in writing, remains at the level of sense impression; moreover, once they are put in writing they become available to all. But any one individual can supply from personal observation only a fraction of the mass of facts upon which a full account of India must be based, so that the person best qualified for writing the history of India is not the observer of facts but one who can sift and weigh evidence skillfully. "As soon as every thing of importance is expressed in writing, a man who is duly qualified may obtain more knowledge of India in one year in his closet in England, than he could obtain during the course of the longest life, by the use of his eyes and ears in India" (the same). Thus the Orientalist and India hand are turned into mere eyewitnesses, and their authority is a wasting asset that perishes by the very act of publishing the results of their researches.

The situation of the India hand and Orientalist is even worse than that, for the testimony of a witness is inescapably partial, and only the judge who hears all the testimony is in a position to reach the truth. The very vividness of sense impressions compared with the effect of another person's description is liable to "hang a bias on the mind" (1858, 1:xxiv) and render the conception of a complex scene erroneous. The

India hand who wishes to write a history of India is caught in a fatal dilemma, Mill argues: either to examine a part of India's history minutely, or to take an overall view that is fated to be a cursory one. If the latter, it is a law of human nature that the effect of the cursory view is to strengthen the prejudices and confirm the prepossessions or false notions held by the observer. In the cursory survey the mind attends to those objects that fall in with the current of its own thoughts and confirm its previous ideas, by the principle of association of ideas. In contrast, the writer of a history of India who has never been a percipient witness in India (Mill, for example!) is placed in the position of a judge piecing together the fragmentary and interested testimony of witnesses: "Is it not understood, that in such a case as this, where the sum of the testimony is abundant, the judge, who has seen no part of the transaction has yet, by his investigation, obtained a more perfect conception of it, than is almost ever possessed by any of the individuals from whom he has derived his information?" (1858, 1:xxvi).

This is the burden of the case. Construing Orientalist knowledge as mere fact gathering, it consigns it to the level of description and reserves for activities of the kind Mill claims to exercise the superior dignity of philosophizing or, in our Own terms, of theory; then as now in the contest of description versus theory, description must always be the loser. By showing the two kinds of activity to be mutually exclusive he preempts the claim that his work must have less authority than that of someone who, like Jones, may be said to be well prepared both for the descriptive and for the theorizing part of the formation of a critical history of broad scope. But it is also a claim for the authority of the metropole over the colony, of the British philosopher over the India hand, and one, moreover, that is saturated with imagery of seeing: It asserts that one gets from the distance and great height of Britain a superior sight of India, more complete and balanced than one can get in India itself.

We turn now to Mill's theoretical frame for the study of Hindu civilization, which he announces in the following words: "To ascertain the true state of the Hindus in the scale of civilization, is not only an object of curiosity in the history of human nature; but to the people of Great Britain, charged as they are with the government of that great portion of the human species, it is an object of the highest practical importance" (1858, 2:107). Nothing would be gained from reciting the dismal details of Mill's assessment of the state of India's civilization in his long essay "Of the Hindus" (1858, 1:107-376, vol. 2:1-164), whose intent to

minimize the Indian accomplishment and to subvert the expertise of the Orientalist is evident on every page. It is a sorry showing for the claim that, untainted by direct knowledge of India and its languages, the critical historian is an impartial judge; it demonstrates, to the contrary, that theory offers inlets for prejudice the equal, at least, of impressions of sense. But it is worth clarifying further its relation to the Orientalists and to their ethnological paradigm.

As we have seen, Grant completely suppressed Jones's argument for a kinship between Europeans and Indians, even though he read and cited Jones's discourse "On the Hindus" and said nothing of the similarity of Sanskrit to Latin and Greek, which was its foundation. Grant was otherwise in sympathy with Jones's Biblical orientation and, indeed, he makes use of those aspects of Jones's version of the Mosaic ethnology to combat the progressive social evolutionism of Robertson's theory of India's ancient splendor. Mill, too, had read the anniversary discourses and was if anything much better read in the new Orientalism than was Grant; Mill, also, maintains a telling silence over the Jonesean doctrine and makes no mention of the similarity of Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek. The argument from silence was once regarded as a weak argument, to be used sparingly and with care, but for some time now authors have become responsible for the infinity of what they do *not* say, and they are liable to be charged with erasures, elisions, suppressions, guilty silences, and significant omissions. The argument from silence is made more easily today, but even by the higher standard of the past, the complete silence of Grant and Mill on the core argument of Jones is surely significant of a tendency to stress the difference "every way" of the Indians and the British.

Grant does not offer an alternative ethnological paradigm, beyond passing use of the phrase "moral scale" or "scale of humanity." In Mill the idea of the "scale of civilization" becomes the explicit theoretical foundation of his review of Hindu (and Muslim) civilization. By this he intends the idea of a staircase or progressive series of stages of development from rudeness, savagery or barbarism, and ignorance to order, regularity, knowledge and civilization. It is deployed as a framework within which India is judged to be very deficient and the Orientalists to have been lacking in judgment. Mill ignores the segmentary Mosaic ethnology of Jones and asserts the claims of an ethnology based on the scale of civilization and the idea that human history is a story of development in a series of stages from rude beginnings. In doing so he develops ideas that have exercised some of the best minds of the Scottish

Enlightenment, especially John Millar of Glasgow, whose *The origin of the distinction of ranks* (1806; first ed., 1771), he particularly notes as containing the earliest elucidations of the subject, although of course the ideal of developmental stages (hunting, herding, agriculture, commerce) was characteristic of several of earlier Scottish luminaries, among whom one would certainly include Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson. It is from this tradition that Mill draws his fundamental theoretical position in opposition to the radiating structure of the Mosaic ethnology.[6]

The direct confrontation with the Orientalists is found in the "General reflections" chapter with which the essay "On the Hindus" in the *History of British India* concludes:

> It was unfortunate that a mind so pure, so warm in the pursuit of truth, and so devoted to oriental learning, as that of Sir William Jones, should have adopted the hypothesis of a high state of civilization in the principal countries of Asia. This he supported with all the advantages of an imposing manner, and a brilliant reputation; and gained for it so great a credit, that for a time it would have been very difficult to obtain a hearing against it. (1858, 2:109)

But "the fancy magnifies the importance of a favourite pursuit." Jones was also motivated to exalt the Hindus in the eyes of the European masters so as to ameliorate the temper of their government. But his greatest weakness was that he held vague and indeterminate notions as to the signs of civilization, to which term, as with most men, he attached "no fixed and definite assemblage of ideas" (1858, 2:109-110).

Mill's attack upon Jones continues with a showing that Jones is promiscuous with his use of the term "civilization," applying it, for example, to the Arab poets of the Mu`allaqat prior to he advent of Islam. "If courtesy and urbanity, a love of poetry and eloquence, and the practice of exalted virtues be a juster measure of perfect society, we have

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6. Jane Rendall (1982) gives a very detailed showing of how the "philosophical history" of the Scottish Enlightenment informed the writings of the Scottish Orientalists, including Alexander Hamilton, James Mackintosh, William Erskine, John Leyden, Alexander Murray, Monstuart Elphinstone, John Crawfurd, and Vans Kennedy, as well as the writings on ancient Indian civilization of those who were not India hands, William Robertson and James Mill. Rendall shows that the stages of social evolutionism that one finds in Adam Smith and other writers was a strong form of philosophical history. This kind of historical writing was taught in Edinburgh by Dugald Smart and in Glasgow by John Millar (author of The *origin of the distinction of ranks*, 1806, a leading text of this approach). James Mill, however, developed the stage theory into an attack upon Orientalism, in which Dugaid Stewart concurred.

certain proof, that the people of *Arabia*, both on plains and in cities, in republican and monarchical states, were eminently civilized for many ages before their conquest of *Persia*" (Jones 1807, 3:50)—which state Mill, *per contra*, characterizes as "the wild, comfortless, predatory, and ferocious state of the wandering Arabs." "We need not wonder," he continues, "if the man, who wrote and delivered this, found the Hindus arrived at the highest civilization" (1858, 2:110).

Here again there is little profit in prolonging the exposition of an argument whose point has been made. It is worth adding, however, that civilization is not a simple, homogeneous, readily measurable thing or quality. Mill shows once more how adept he is at making a virtue out of a difficulty:

> It is not easy to describe the characteristics of the different stages of social progress. It is not from one feature, or from two, that a just conclusion can be drawn. In these it sometimes happens that nations resemble each other which are placed at stages considerably remote. It is from a joint view of all the great circumstances taken together, that their progress can be ascertained; and it is from an accurate comparison, grounded on these general views, that a scale of civilization can be formed, on which the relative positions of nations may be accurately marked. (the same)

The effect of the complex and composite character of the components of "civilization" is that its content eludes definition, which gives the analyst—Mill himself—degrees of freedom to shift his ground at need. Nowhere is this more clear, perhaps, than in Mill's long discussion of the astronomy-and-mathematics issue that remained in his day a matter of continued discussion and that he evidently considered a capital point to settle in fixing the place of India in the scale of civilization. Taking comfort from Bentley in his criticism of the high antiquity attributed to Indian astronomy by Playfair and Bailly, Mill comes up against Colebrooke's masterly assessment of Indian algebra. The complexity of achievement of ancient Indian astronomy and mathematics cannot be entirely set aside, and he concludes by shifting assessment from its accomplishments to its purposes:

> Exactly in proportion as *Utility* is the object of every pursuit, may we regard a nation as civilized. Exactly in proportion as its ingenuity is wasted on contemptible and mischievous objects, though it may be, in itself, an ingenuity of no ordinary kind, the nation may safely be denominated barbarous.
> According to this rule, the astronomical and mathematical sciences afford conclusive evidence against the Hindus. They have been cultivated exclusively for the purposes of astrology; one of the most irrational of all

imaginable pursuits; one of those which most infallibly denote a nation barbarous; and one of those which it is the most sure to renounce, in proportion as knowledge and civilization are attained. (1858, 2:105-106)

Dugald Stewart: Sanskrit a Hoax

In the atmosphere of increasing hostility to the new Orientalism's claims for India's civilization, it was perhaps to be expected that resistance to the Indo-European concept should not stop at passing it over in silence or minimizing it, but should take the form of an outright rejection. The extreme of this rejectionism was realized in the counterclaim that the Sanskrit language was a fabrication of artful priests. The one who elected to make an ass of himself by declaring Sanskrit a fake was no less a personage than the leading Scottish philosopher of his generation, Dugald Stewart.

Stewart's conjecture, briefly put, was that the brahmins, coming into contact with the Greek language through the conquests of Alexander, which reached into the Panjab, invented a new language in which the words of their native dialect were joined with terminations and syntax taken from Greek. The brahmins quickly brought "to a systematic perfection an artificial language of their own, having for their guide the richest and most regular tongue that was ever spoken on earth;—a tongue, too, abounding in whatever abstract and technical words their vernacular speech was incompetant to furnish" (Stewart 1827:110). The very closeness of the correspondence between Sanskrit and Greek was turned to the advantage of this theory—it was closer, he argued, than could be accounted for by common descent—and some ways in which Sanskrit appeared closer to Latin were attributed to subsequent intercourse with Rome. In brief, the reason Sanskrit resembles Greek is not because the two are historically related through a common ancestral language as Jones had proposed, but because Sanskrit *is* Greek, in Indian dress; its antiquity goes no farther back than the time of Alexander. Stewart offers as an analogy the "kitchen Latin" of the monasteries of Roman Catholicism, spoken by half-educated friars who Wish to conceal their conversations from the servants. Sanskrit, he proposes in so many words, is "kitchen Greek," by which the brahmins keep their conversations from the ears of the profane. The whole argument is carried out under the distinctly Protestant trope of priestcraft, applied alike to Catholic clergy and the brahmins.

This ludicrous notion, as extreme in the other direction as the overheated imaginings of Wilford, has much to tell us of the deeper foundations of British resistance to the Indo-European concept. Indeed, examining the lead-up to this argument, one is struck by the confidence with which Stewart digs the pit into which he proceeds to fall.

The argument appears in the third volume of Stewart's *Elements of the philosophy of the human mind*, which appeared in 1827. His section on "Conjectures concerning the origin of the Sanskrit" is the culmination of a long disquisition on etymology, "considered as a guide to our conclusions concerning the origin and migrations of the various tribes of our species" (1827:80); it concludes with two appendices—al-together some seventy pages devoted to the critique of the new Orientalism. Stewart's error is the more interesting because it was so very well informed. He cites many of the Calcutta Orientalists including Dow, Halhed, Jones, Wilkins, and Colebrooke and unsigned articles in the *Edinburgh review* by Alexander Hamilton, whose identity he seems to know, referring to him as "a gentleman who authority is deservedly high in all matters connected with Indian literature" (1827:125-126). He is also familiar with some of the missionary literature outside the new Orientalism, Lord Monboddo, James Mill, and several of the writers on the astronomy question. He is, in short, well read in the literature of the new Orientalism and in other relevant writings, but he does not know Sanskrit. What emboldens him to take up so extreme a position against the experts?

It should be said in Stewart's favor that the problem he addresses is a real one and is central to the whole project of comparative philology: that of determining whether similarity of features between two languages is due to common descent of both languages from a common ancestral language or to the borrowing of those features by one language from the other. In the comparisons of vocabularies, the sifting of true cognate words from later borrowings is one of the major problems of method, and the criteria for such decisions were only gradually worked out in the course of the nineteenth century. Much the same, *mutatis mutandis*, can be said about the question of the relation of Indian astronomy to the Greek. Similarities between the two could be interpreted either by appeal to the idea of common descent or by borrowing in one direction or the other, and the means of deciding among these alternatives emerged only gradually.

It is quite natural therefore that when Europeans came upon similarities of Sanskrit to Greek or of Indian astronomy to Greek astronomy, some of them should have become advocates of the theory that

Indians had borrowed from Greeks. And, indeed, Stewart found such advocates. Edward Gibbon, in his history, had remarked, "I have long harboured a suspicion that some, perhaps much, of the Indian science was derived from the Greeks of Bactriana" (Gibbon 1776-88, 7:294). "To this hint, however," Stewart says, "I paid but little attention, till I found the same opinion stated with considerable confidence by the very learned *Meiners* in his *Historia de veto Deo*; who refers, in support of it, to the proofs alleged by *Bayer* in his *Historia regni Graecorum Bactriani*" (Stewart 1827:104). In fact, Stewart was appealing to the older writers whose works had been swept aside by the new Orientalism: Christoph Meiners's book was published in 1780, before the founding of the Asiatic Society; Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer's was published even earlier, in 1738. Hamilton, whose high standing in the opinion of Stewart we have already seen, attacked the older view in the *Edinburgh review* on two occasions. Reviewing Wilkins's *Sanskrit grammar* in 1809 he said, "To adopt the hypothesis of the learned Bayer, we must suppose the inhabitants of Hindustan to have waited till Alexander the Great conquered Bactria, in order to Obtain appellations for the most endearing tics of nature, and to enable them to express the venerable relations of father and mother" (Hamilton 1809:372-373).[7] In his 1820 review of Bopp's *Conjugationssystem* (1816), he takes the position that Bopp's analysis has decided the issue in favor of codescent, and observes, as if he were speaking for the benefit of Dugald Stewart directly, "If there be any who can still think that such coincidences might arise from the casual intercourse of commercial relations, or from the Greek kingdom of Bactria, during the brief period of the reign of the Seleucides in that country, we cannot help thinking that these gentlemen should be prepared to show, that the much nearer vicinity and longer domination of the Macedonian and Greek empire, had produced similar effects on the languages derived from the Hebraic stem" (1820:4-35). Stewart read Hamilton's reviews but nevertheless defended Bayer against him—in effect embracing an indefensible position, then nearly a century old, at a time when Bopp was laying the foundation of Indo-European comparative philology upon the opposite view of the question.

That a chill British wind was blowing, cooling the ardor for the

[7]. Père Coeurdoux had made the same argument as early as 1768: "De plus, les Indiens avoient-ils manqué jusque-là de terms pour appeler leurs pères, leurs mères, leurs frères, et pour désigner leur pieds, leur nez, leur dents?" (Coeurdoux c.1768:661). Coeurdoux's manuscript was first published in 1808 by Anquetil; possibly Hamilton read the passage there.

new Orientalism, is apparent in the way Stewart introduces his conjecture:

> Of late years, a perfectly new subject of speculation has been opened to philologers in the Sanscrit, or sacred language of the Indian Bramins; which, in the systematical regularity of its structure, as well as in its *unfathomable antiquity*, would appear to form an exception to every other tongue known in the history of the human race. At first, it strongly excited the curiosity of learned and inquisitive men, from the hope held out by some distinguished members of the Asiatic Society, that the knowledge of it would furnish a key to immense stores of wisdom and of fancy locked up in the repositories of the Bramins. But as this hope has not hitherto been realized, a suspicion has, of late, gained ground, that these artful priests have little or nothing to communicate which is likely either to enlarge the boundaries of science, or to add to the classical treasures of imagination already in our possession. (1827:100)

The fraud of Wilford's pandit, to the recitation of which Stewart devoted a whole appendix to his section on Sanskrit, was the chief exhibit supporting the bill of indictment. It was owing to this case that Stewart authorized himself to entertain his suspicion of the productions of the artful priests of India and, by extension, of the British Orientalism that studied those productions and in his view magnified their worth.

But there is a noticeable Celtic element to the discussion as well. Stewart is very critical of the Irish researches of Charles Vallancey and his enthusiasm for the supposed primitive Gaelic poetry of Ossian. General Vallancey's researches had been encouraged by Jones and Wilford, and this attention "contributed much to procure to the dreams of the learned Irishman, the very general attention which they once drew in this island" (1827:89-90n.). Enthusiasm for a connection between Celtic and Indian antiquities had once been such that Henry Flood, Irish parliamentarian, left a bequest valued at £5,000 a year to Trinity College, Dublin, "to promote the elucidation of these problematical and interesting facts" (1827:90). But the Flood bequest was without effect, according to Stewart, who called General Vallancey's writings "a philological misadventure"—a good characterization for his own conjecture (1827:92). As to Sanskrit, he wondered aloud whether its excellencies may have been somewhat overrated by Sir William Jones from the same bias that led him to overrate so immensely the merits of those ancient compositions of the Arabs, for which he had been so harshly criticized by Mill. Stewart could recollect a time when it was as fashionable to extoll the poems of Ossian—later shown to be the fab-

rications of James Macpherson, who purported to be their translator—as it has since become to deride them. "Macpherson's translation they allowed to be as good as an English version could be; but they insisted (and who could contradict them?) that there was a richness and force in the original to which no known language but the Greek could do justice" (1827:126-127n.).

Some years ago Hans Aarsleff wrote a fascinating book, *The study of language in England, 1780-1860* (1967), which posed the question of why, given the head start British scholars had in the comparative study of Indo-European languages through their access to Sanskrit, the study of language in England followed other paths less productive for knowledge while the Germans dominated the development of Indo-European philology. The answer he gave had to do with the dominance in Britain of Horne Tooke's system of etymology and its connections with the British tradition of associationist psychology, which was resistant to the system of Bopp, upon which the comparative philology of Indo-European languages was constructed. There is certainly something in this argument (Stewart himself cites Horne Tooke approvingly), and Aarsleff's book brings this British linguistic tradition, connected especially to early-nineteenth-century studies of Anglo-Saxon, out of the shade into which it was cast by the success of comparative philology. But the exemplary tale of Dugald Stewart's conjecture, equal in futility and opposite in direction to the conjectures of Wilford, seems to say that the study of Sanskrit by Britons was stultified by forces that lay outside the study of language itself and had rather to do with the emerging culture of Indophobia. Indeed, as Wilson and other returned Orientalists were to find, English universities did not foster the study of Sanskrit.

For James Mill, the writings of Sir William Jones were emblematic of all that separated Orientalism from his own position, Utilitarianism, and accordingly he held Jones up before the world as a negative example. It has been of inestimable benefit to the reputation of Jones in the present day to have been attacked by so unsympathetic a figure as James Mill. But an effect Of the attack has been to obscure the common ground between them. Neither Jones nor any of the British Orientalists had any doubt as to the present superiority of European civilization to that of India, and Asia generally, in every respect except perhaps in poetry, where the higher development of the imaginative powers in Asia could be a source for the reinvigoration of the poetry of the West. For

Jones, Europe was a sovereign princess of transcendent majesty and Asia a handmaiden, possessing a beauty of her own, although a lesser one (Jones 1807, 3:12). The mathematics and astronomy of India or indeed any other part of Asia had nothing new to teach the Europe of Newton. On this Jones and Mill were agreed. Both were trying to find India's place within a developing idea of modernism. What divided them was the valuation of the past achievements of India.

But having said that, it is possible to misapprehend the relation between the two in the other direction, as a difference of mere detail upon a common ground. For what profoundly separated Jones and Mill, and the Oriental renaissance from British Indophobia, was the power of the idea of ancient wisdom in the one, and of progress or future wisdom in the other. The Oriental renaissance depended upon the conviction that a numinous truth was captured in the Veda, that this wisdom was mankind's original religion and the source of civilization. As opposed to that, it was the formation of an idea of progress unqualified by the idea of ancient wisdom that sustained Mill and gave him the theoretical grounding for an aggressive policy of modernization. With the idea that the primitive condition of humankind was rude, ignorant, and barbarous, Mill quashed the ancient wisdom idea and forced new, harsh readings of India's past upon the scholarly product of Orientalism.

Hitherto the British empire in India had no higher purpose than to yield profits to the shareholders of the East India Company. Grant put forward a nobler purpose, the moral uplift of the Indians; Mill promoted the civilizing project of liberating the Indians from their own past, to use the language of Majeed's recent study of Mill (Majeed 1992). The appeal of such justifications of empire was irresistible. The price of having thus provided the Indian empire with a moral basis, however, was the systematic denigration of Indians and Indian civilization. Love of the English language and the arts and sciences of which it was the repository was made into the negation of Indian civilization. The price, in short, was Indophobia.

Indomania did not die out completely in Britain but became, so to say, recessive, finding a place under the aspect of eccentricity. Unitarianism, spiritualism, Theosophy, vegetarianism, pacifism . . . there remained, and remain, aspects of British culture, marginal to be sure but nevertheless indelibly British, through which Indomania was reproduced in some fashion. It is not an accident that the young Gandhi, trying to find some point of attachment in England, where he had gone to study law, found the vegetarians congenial and discovered his voice

in their meetings, and it was in Britain that he came to appreciate the *Bhagavad Gita* of his own country, in the mirror, as it were, of British Indomania. Had he lived in the twentieth century, J. Z. Holwell would certainly have been one of Gandhi's British followers.

It is worth saying again: Indophobia did not spring up naturally from the soil of Britain, it was deliberately built. India was very different from Britain, to be sure, but Britons did not believe they were "every way. different" from the Indians until Grant taught them to think so.