READING AGAINST THE GRAIN:

TRANSLATION OF INDIA IN EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH

CENTURY FRENCH TRAVEL ACCOUNTS

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Abstract

The majority of research on colonial India, including research in Translation Studies,

tends to approach it as an Anglophone space. The history of Indo-French encounter in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has so far been left out of mainstream discourses.

This thesis addresses that neglect through an analysis of the role of language and

translation in the accounts of three francophone travellers who visited the subcontinent

between the 1750s and 1830s. Based on the premise of both travel and translation being

integral to the construction of the foreign, it presents a context-specific re (reading) of the

accounts to identify contexts and voices that challenge the largely homogenous

perception of early colonial India. The possibility of uncovering heterogeneity in colonial

discourses is explored through the twin themes of convergence and divergence—of

contexts, ideologies, interests and contingencies. What emerges is that the similarities and

differences between French and British representations in the period under discussion

needs a nuanced understanding—one that can be achieved by seeing heterogeneity within

instances of apparent conformity or resistance.

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Introduction

The process of travel writing, in representing other cultures, involves writers translating the unfamiliar into terms familiar to a home readership. In this, travellers are constantly confronted by issues of cultural conventions, social and political constraints, readers' expectations and inadequacies of their linguistic access to the Other— all of which can play a role in shaping the nature and the process of the representations. The traveller's own ideologies, sense of identity and personal ambitions also play a major role in his/her depictions of the Other. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century French travel writings by explorers, missionaries, traders, officials, military adventurers — that constitute a major part of French representation of India — can be seen as translations of India that were not immune to the above-mentioned factors.

Notwithstanding the fact that they share a lot of characteristics among themselves as well as with other colonial accounts of India, there is room to explore and analyze the differences that marked the French accounts of India as well as the specific contexts of those accounts. This in order to try and identify the individual voices of the travellers/translators that are more often than not suppressed for the benefit of a simplistic representation of the subcontinent, especially in the early days of colonial rule.

It is important to note that the majority of research on colonial India, including research in Translation Studies, approaches it as an Anglophone space (Magedera 2003, p. 67). In keeping with France's marginal status in relation with the English in India, the

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history of Indo-French encounter has been left out of mainstream discourses. As a result, while the intersecting relations between imperialism and Orientalism in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have produced theoretical frameworks for postcolonial scholars in Translation Studies, similar avenues of research involving French representations of India have not been explored. This thesis aims to address that neglect through an analysis of the role of language and translation in French travel writings of India — a hitherto unexplored area. My study examines the accounts of three francophone travellers, Anquetil-Duperron, Antoine Polier and Victor Jacquemont, who visited the subcontinent between the 1750s and 1830s. By "reading against the grain" of the predominantly British colonial discourse on India on India, it seeks to point to ways of establishing new links between travel, translation and representation in the specific case of India's encounter with France and thereby identify contexts and voices that help challenge the largely homogeneous perception of early colonial India.

Theoretical Overview

The theoretical framework for this research is drawn from scholars in Translation Studies and related disciplines, namely Comparative Literature, Anthropology and History. The approaches that perceive the role of travellers and translators in comparable terms are heterogeneous in nature—perhaps in keeping with the heterogeneity and hybridity that characterize travel writing, as well as the fact that translation as an all-encompassing activity can only be explored and understood from a myriad of perspectives.

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In my arguments establishing the validity of seeing travel and translation as comparable and connected activities I draw from anthropologist Clifford Geertz's (1973) approach of conceptualizing the production of reality—such as ethnographic writing— as an act of interpretation. I look at Susan Bassnett's (1993) analysis of travel writing and translations as context-bound and subject to issues of trust as well as the writer's own perception of themselves. Bassnett's (Bassnett & Lefevere 1998) discussion of the issue of collusion between the travel writer and the home audience is also relevant for my context. Loredana Polezzi's (2001) arguments in favour of bringing non-English travel writings into the realm of mainstream scholarly research and of paying adequate attention to actual instances of linguistic transfer are also ones that will guide my own perspective. Pollezzi's discussion of the constraints that dictate a travel writer's reception at home is important for my analysis of the three travel writers and their reflections. In addition, I consider her view of travel writing as a complex genre marked by heterogeneity (2001, p. 1)—the specific instances of which this thesis aims to underline.

Michael Cronin's study of the role of language in the representation of both the traveller and the Other (2000) is crucial to the direction of this research—both in the examination of the writings and in justifying the validity of seeing them as translations that bring together the linguistic and the non-linguistic. His view of translator/travel writer as occupying the borderline between cultures as well as his attention to the actual role of language in travel are essential to my context-driven analysis of the writings in this study.

Important impetus for this research comes from the work of two postcolonial scholars, namely, Dipesh Chakrabarty and David Spurr. Chakrabarty's call for scholars to "provincialize" (1992, p. 21) the West in order to see diversity and heterogeneity not only in the former colonies but also in the colonizing centres (p. 21) is one that is very much at the centre of my argument. Following Spurr (1993), I approach Western colonial discourse as one that is neither monolithic nor a finite set of texts (p. 1).

I develop my rationale for a (re) reading of the French travel accounts based on Polezzi's concept of plural authorship and readership that can help challenge rigid conclusions regarding Western representations of India. My discussion of the close relation between translation and the construction and transmission of knowledge—in the context of colonial history —is informed by Tejaswini Niranjana's celebrated work (1992) on the subject focusing on British translation of India.

The re-reading that this thesis proposes is also meant to point to the inherently partial nature of translation and travel writing. In this context I want to discuss Ubaldo Stecconi's (2007) analysis of the relation between translation and semiotics in which he conceptualizes translation as always being an incomplete representation of an evolving original in all its complexities.

The inclusive view of translation that this thesis adopts is justified by the fact that translation encompasses a range of activities that are culturally shaped. My elaboration of this important point is supported by Maria Tymoczko's (2006) discussion of how

translation is represented in non-Western cultures—a discussion that also sheds light on translation's ability to hide or reveal complexities of cultural encounters.

My approach in this thesis is based on a perception of translation as both the object and the tool of the analysis of the travel writings concerned. In this respect, I use theories elaborated by Doris Bachmann-Medick (2012a & 2012b) that emphasize the need to contextualize so that such a broadened view is not taken for granted.

About the Title

The idea of "reading against the grain" is not a new one in Translation Studies from the postcolonial perspective. In the context of Indian colonial history, one can mention Tejaswini Niranjana's observation that such a reading can help the translator/historian discover "areas of contradiction and silent resistance that, being made legible, can be deployed against hegemonic images of the colonized" (1992, p. 76). My title, while inspired by such a goal, also suggests the role of such a reading in unravelling conflicts and power differentials at multiple locations, not only between the colonizer and the colonized but *within* both and in a manner that is far from fixed.

Aims of this Project

Keeping in mind the gap in current research in Translation Studies, this thesis aims to use translation as a heuristic tool for exploring the role of language in French representations of India in the writings of the three travellers. It also seeks to delve into the influence of the travellers'/translators' contexts on their perception of the Other. My

analysis of specific contexts is further aimed at underlining the manners in which translation and travel writing are comparable activities — I want to specifically explore if issues of trust, conformity to dominant discourses, of constant negotiation between the self and the Other are those that characterize travel accounts as they do translations in the contexts of the travellers under discussion.

Central to the purpose of this project is the issue of heterogeneity and its presence in multiple sites in colonial India. This thesis therefore aims to point out the many manifestations of it—in contexts, interests, collaborations, conflicts and ultimately representations. A related issue that I want to address is that of the possibility of looking at the three travellers' view of India in a diachronic fashion and note if and when their perceptions of India undergo shifts.

This research does not claim to be an exhaustive study of the representation of India in the writings of the three Francophone travellers. It aims to base its analysis on a reading of relevant sections from Anquetil-Duperron's introduction to his translation of the *Zend-Avesta* (1771), Polier's biographical note in the introduction of his *Mythologie des Indous* (1809) and Jacquemont's *Correspondance* (1833). My purpose is to apply the theoretical approaches mentioned in the preceding paragraphs to highlight the role of language and translation in exploring conflicts and contradictions in Western discourses of India and also of itself.

Research on Western representation of India has not adequately looked at the scale of cultural assimilation between India and Europe that took place in the early part of colonial presence in the subcontinent. An in depth analysis of this aspect of colonial rule in the context of the French in India would necessitate looking into the resulting cultural hybridity that took place. While the life of Antoine Polier has been described as an instance of this in colonial India (Jasanoff 2005), the scope of the present research does not allow for addressing the issue of hybridity, which would no doubt be an extremely fruitful line of enquiry from the perspective of Translation Studies.

Research Methodology: A Brief Description

Talking about translation, anthropologist Talal Asad observed that, like history, it is "at once a sequence of human acts, and a narrative recounting it, both being and representation" (Asad 1995, 225). This observation is particularly relevant in the context of my thesis given that my research methodology will involve exploring both the mostly first-hand accounts of the travellers as well as taking note of the role of interlingual translations in their encounter with India. My justification for citing Asad also lies in the recognition of a need to continuously point at translation's close connection to all aspects of human existence.

Keeping this in mind, Chapter 1 brings together some of the relevant theories and concepts in Translation Studies and other related disciplines that link translation with travel and history—in particular colonial history. In the course of this, I also want to establish the validity of using translation as both a tool and an object of enquiry in this

research. My analysis here will involve a discussion of translation as a travelling concept, the perception of translation in non-Western societies as well as the importance of context-specific studies to underline how translation involves a multitude of factors in both its construction and analysis.

The importance of contextualization is taken up in Chapter 2 as the primary focus. Here, I address the circumstances of French presence in eighteenth and nineteenth-century India. My discussion involves taking into account France's attitude towards colonialism and maritime trade in the context of India— to what extent it was shaped by its political and intellectual environment and also by the emergence of British supremacy in India and in Europe. I also discuss the domestic situation in India, taking into account the dwindling power of the Mughals in Delhi and the rise of the regional rulers— a scenario in which skilled Europeans could make a fortune by lending their services to the Indian rulers or to the British. The specific contexts of Anquetil-Duperron, Polier and Jacquemont and their voyage to India are addressed in the chapter against this larger backdrop.

Chapter 3 aims to apply the theoretical framework(s) in the (re) reading of the representations of India in the travel accounts. The selection of the excerpts is determined primarily by two factors. First, these include reflections on linguistic issues on the part of the travellers, and second, they help explore certain points of "convergence" and "divergence" between the French and British in Colonial India and Europe. My use of these expressions is aimed at describing not only British and French views of India but

also interests, objectives, ideologies and contingencies that led to collaborations and conflicts between them. In this context I also look at a few noteworthy studies that help highlight some of the common features shared by Western travel accounts of the Indian subcontinent. It is important to note that while there are certainly overlaps between the perspectives of the travellers, this thesis aims to point out some of the unique characteristics present in their accounts—examine if and how comparable contexts can be managed in distinct ways by individuals. My weaving together of the excerpts with analyses based in postcolonial theories is meant to highlight the diverse ways these travellers translated the Other, and themselves. In the process I draw attention to the fact that these accounts, while they do not deny the presence of relationships of power in the colonial context, certainly problematize the dominant perception of it in colonial discourse as having an unchanging and fixed location.

Note on the Travellers

This thesis defines French linguistically. While all three travellers discussed here were francophone, not all were French nationals. Polier's non-French identity was a factor that shaped his experience of India and provides an interesting angle that further complicates the nature of colonial accounts of the subcontinent. It underscores the fact that the specificity of his experience, irrespective of his affiliation with the British, merits attention. The inclusion of Polier is also meant to draw attention to the fact that France and Britain were not the only countries represented by Europeans in India. The discussion of Jacquemont, who travelled to India much later than Anquetil-Duperron and Polier, is aimed at providing a diachronic perspective to this research. The selection of the

travellers has also been determined by the fact that the writings of all three are marked by the presence of translation in the sense of inter-linguistic transfer.

Note on Translation

All translations from French into English are entirely mine, except in the following instances:

For the translation of excerpts from Antoine Polier's personal notice in the introduction of his *Mythologie*, I have consulted Volume 7 of *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany* (1819) in which an English version of this text (translated by Horace Hayman Wilson) is available.

For the translation of excerpts from Victor Jacquemont's *Correspondances*, I have consulted one (*Letters from India*, 1834) of the many available English translations of this book.

Chapter 1. Travel, Translation and Colonial History: Some Points of View

This thesis explores the nature of French representation of India through an examination of the writings of three francophone travellers, Anquetil-Duperron, Antoine Polier and Victor Jacquemont, who visited the subcontinent during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. My point of departure in this research is based on an understanding of travel writing and translation as closely connected and often comparable activities insofar as both are central to our knowledge of the unfamiliar and of history. In this context, a brief discussion of the theoretical discourses surrounding the connection between translation, travel, and the construction and transmission of knowledge is in order since it provides the rationale for examining the travel accounts under discussion as translations of India. In this chapter, therefore, I look at some of the points of view that help delve into the idea of travel writing as a form of translation and translation as central to travel and travel writing. Translation is critical to our awareness of history both as purely textual activity and in the larger context of cultural encounters where knowledge exchange can take many forms. Given the scope of the present research, I have looked at those works that directly address the nature of relations between translation and travel and thereby point to the relevance of seeing them as interconnected and interdependent activities through history in an introspective manner.

Travel and its textual accounts have long been associated with a form of translation of the unknown into terms recognizable to a home audience. The now

well-established theoretical approaches that analyze travellers as translators/interpreters are those that help establish links between the eras of seventeenth and eighteenth-century European explorers and the production of (systematic) knowledge about the world outside that shaped the course of human history. These theoretical approaches have come not only from Translation Studies but also from older fields such as Comparative Literature, Anthropology etc. Substantial impulse to such approaches and analyses of translation as an all-encompassing theoretical model has come from the "shift towards a cultural, rather than strictly linguistic, understanding of translation processes [...]" (Polezzi in Baker & Saldanha 2011, p. 173). This translation in a global sense that travel writing carries out is one of interpretation and representation of the Other aimed at making alien places first intelligible and then familiar to the home culture and reader. It is this kind of attribution of meaning that ethnographers have called "cultural translation".

The idea of culture being similar to a text has been applied in a most effective and influential way by anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his collection of essays titled *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), where he compares culture to a language in the sense of a semiotic code. As Geertz sees it, cultural facts are like texts that demand complex interpretation. The ethnographer, by virtue of the fact that s/he interprets, is a writer of fiction and reality is a product of interpretation. The very act of creating written artefacts making use of rhetorical devices in the target language and by means of selection, editing and analysis points to the production of reality being a complex process not unlike translation (Sturge 2007, p. 6). This is, however, a context in which the translator creates both source and target texts.

Susan Bassnett, in her book *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*

(1993) observes that readings of travel accounts inspired by methodologies derived from

fields as diverse as Gender Studies, Cultural Studies and Postmodern Theory expose the

"subtexts beneath the apparently innocent details of journeys on other lands that enable

us to see clearly the ways in which travellers construct the cultures they experience" (p.

93). Such readings can help us trace the presence of cultural stereotypes, the blurring of

lines between the voice of the observer and that of the authority and often reveal travel

writers' perception of their own place in society. Further, such an inclusive analysis helps

examine how travel writers are revealed to be products of their time. In her book *Imperial*

Eyes: Travel writing and Transculturation (1992) Mary Louise Pratt explores the

connection between travel and exploration writing and European economic and political

expansion since mid-eighteenth century. Focusing on South America and Africa, she

draws attention to the role of travel books in making "imperial expansion meaningful and

desirable to citizenries of imperial countries" (p. 3). The specific relevance of Pratt's

work for this research lies in its analysis of travel writings—the shifts they undergo—as

reflecting the historical and intellectual transitions of their time (p.4).

Travel accounts are important resources for studying encounters between cultures

and for revealing the construction of cultural stereotypes and their endurance through

centuries. As Bassnett observes, travel writing and translation are not transparent

activities; both are located activities with points of origin, points of departure and

destinations (1993, p. 114). In her analysis she draws an analogy between the

traveller/mapmaker and the translator as two crucial players in the construction of

knowledge whose objectivity and impartiality are questioned. Both translators and travellers/travel writers seem to be subject to attitudes of ambiguity and suspicion. Both ask to be trusted in their (re) presentation of the source and their faithfulness to reality. The issues of visibility/invisibility that plague the translator, are the ones that challenge the mapmaker/travel writer as well. The work of both involves a process of manipulation that conditions and shapes our attitude towards other cultures. By weaving together the explicit and the implicit, translators intervene in interlingual transfers with every word they choose, just as travel writers constantly position themselves in relation to the context they describe and to their own points of origin (Bassnett 1993, p. 99). In his seminal work entitled *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said observed:

> Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself or herself vis-a-vis the Orient; *translated* into the text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice adopted, the type of structure built, the kinds of images, themes, motifs circulated in the text: all of which add up to a deliberate way of addressing the reader, containing the Orient and finally speaking on its behalf (p. 20; my emphasis).

Needless to say that travel writings have been crucial to this textual representation of the Other, as has been the use of these as objects of research into the nature of such representations.

Translation theorists have also conceptualized the role of the translator as traveller—engaged in a journey from one source to another. The era of constant movement that we live in provides the impetus to examine travel not only across space but also across time. It is important to note here that since the 1970s there has been significant research done in the history of translation —since an examination of the role of this activity in shaping our knowledge of the world in the past is crucial to a proper

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appreciation of its importance in constructing our knowledge of the world in the future. As an interdisciplinary field of study, translation today recognizes the intimate link that connects language and ways of life—a recognition that has drawn attention to its above-mentioned role in shaping history and our awareness of it through a process in which observers write their accounts based on first-hand experience which nevertheless become manifestations of their own contexts. In his book *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (2000), Michael Cronin studies the role of language in the construction of identity of both the traveller and the Other and presents the traveller as translator and the translator as traveller on a "post-Babelian planet" (p. 157). While the impulse for such an interest comes from mass emigration and post-modern nomadism of the current global context (Polezzi 2006, p. 170), it does have the effect of making the postcolonial researcher look back and re-examine historical writings such as travel accounts and reassess their contribution—both real and potential—to the construction of identity and knowledge. Cronin's work also proves relevant in the context of my research insofar as it draws attention to the translator/travel writer as straddling "the borderline between the cultures" (2000, p. 2). This approach helps better appreciate the state of constant movement and negotiation between languages and cultures that the traveller/translator is engaged in— a kind of flux that is also reflected in the continuous travel between disciplines that seems to characterize Translation Studies. Cronin also notes the link between the experiences of translation in travel writings as often bringing together the intralingal, interlingual and the intersemiotic. But this division can also be an over-simplification (2000, p. 4) of the complexities of communication in travel.

Therefore, the Jacobsonian framework is useful insofar as it helps interpret the "confusing continuum of the language phenomenon in travel" (p. 4).

At this point it may be relevant to note— recalling Clifford Geertz's view of reality as a product of interpretation and his comparison of culture to a language in the sense of a semiotic code (Geertz 1973)— some aspects of the relationship between translation and semiotics as discussed by Ubaldo Stecconi in an article entitled *Five Reasons Why Semiotics is Good for Translation Studies* (2007). As Stecconi observes, "translation is not something we do only with words but [...] also *to words and to other sign systems*" (p. 18; my emphasis). Translation can therefore be an act of creating texts out of lived experiences. Following Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of signs, Stecconi analyzes objects as having two sides—the Immediate Object or the Object as the sign (or the intepretant) represents it, and the Dynamical Object, "a natural or cultural entity, that is unknowable in its totality" (p. 19). In such an understanding, "nothing is a target text that is not interpretable as translating some original; and nothing is a target-receiver's interpretant that does not interpret some text as translating an original" (p. 20). In addition, since the sign that represents the target text is context-specific, there must be difference between the dynamical original in all its complexities and the immediate original. What follows is that a translation can never be a full representation of the original object; it always leaves something for the next signs to use. Herein lies the relevance of a postcolonial reading or re-reading of the texts under discussion in this research.

In her book *Translating Travel* (2001) Polezzi examines the justifications behind approaching travel writing and translation as comparable activities and in the process helps shed light on how the two are integral to knowledge construction. Today, the movement of people around the globe can be seen to mirror the very process of translation itself, for translation is not just the transfer of texts between languages, it is now seen as a process of negotiation between texts and between cultures. In fact, as Polezzi further observes, travel writing is so intimately connected with the idea of mobility that "the metaphor of translation is often used as an image of travel and vice versa" (Polezzi 2001, p.1). Travel writing is a complex and heterogeneous genre, which, like travel itself, crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries, and produces texts that are marked by multiple allegiances, perspectives and combinations of fact and fiction. All travel implies some form of translation in both the linguistic and the wider cultural sense. In most cases, the traveller needs to learn the local languages in order to establish some kind of contact with the local people, although there are situations in which the existence of a support system, a "protective cocoon" (p. 77) can do away with this need for the traveller to communicate with the locals in their language. While issues of asymmetrical power relations, creation and perpetuation of cultural stereotypes continue to mark the travellers' encounter with the unfamiliar, it is in the context of colonial history that the intertwined nature of such factors becomes most apparent.

Scholars have long remarked on the etymological link between translation and travel as can be seen in the Latin roots *translatio* and *traductio*. The dictionary definitions of *translatio* include "a carrying across", "removal" or "shifting", and those of *traductio*

are "a removal" or "transfer" (Lewis 1899). Both have been seen to "imply movement, transportation, displacement" (Polezzi 2001, 79) physically and metaphorically. However, notwithstanding the connections emphasizing the metaphorical aspects of translation, there is need to examine the specific role of languages in encounters between the native and the foreign, something to which some of the major studies on the connection between travel and translation—notably M. L. Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* (1992) and James Clifford's *Routes* (1997) do not pay adequate attention—and underline the importance of asking questions related to both inter-linguistic and intercultural exchanges. This is a point that has been emphasized earlier by Cronin in his observation that the centrality of translation to travel writing is often "strangely absent" (2000, p. 102) in scholarly work on travel. The need to see travel writing and language as integrally connected stems from the fact that, at a fundamental level, linguistic transfer seems always to be the constitutive element of travel accounts; whether the traveller learns the local language or uses a translator/interpreter. Further, the nature of this transfer is dictated by the target readership. Western travelogues are written for a home readership. The decision to write back testifies to the "unbroken umbilical cord linking the traveller to his/her point of origin" (Polezzi 2001, p. 82), which also measures the traveller's achievements. Under such circumstances, the travel writer, like the Orientalist painter or the illustrator of the discovery of the new world has to "translate" what s/he has seen in order to make it acceptable and meaningful to the European audience with strategies shaped by textual and ideological constraints. This representation, depending on its degree of conformity to established norms, can contribute to the reader's perception of the travel writer/translator that is marked by ambiguity and distrust. Travel writing and

translation thus share this issue of faithfulness to the reality or original. It is important to note here that the notion of authenticity in both cases is founded on what has been described as collusion (Bassnett & Lefevere 1998, p. 39) between the reader and the writer that allows for an unchallenged acceptance of the account of the Other, and in the process ignores the presence of the role of translation and translators in cultural encounters. However, it is this very realization that also points to the possibility of reinterpretations of travel accounts and translations at different times.

Polezzi's analysis also sheds light on the issue of transposition of oral language into written text—which is often at the heart of travel writing and translation, given that the need to translate the foreignness of the languages in which the exchanges took place in an encounter is dictated by numerous constraints belonging to the "conventional and normative nature of the written text in the home culture" (2001, p.88). Here the link between translation and travel writing can once again be seen in conjunction with ethnography (Clifford 1997). In the case of both, the transcription from oral to written involves a long and complex list of operations including interlinguisic translation. In addition to switching from oral to written, this move reinscribes the message in a different context and alters its mechanism of cohesion and coherence. Polezzi, however, is careful to point out what separates travel writing and ethnography from translation, and notes that unlike the translator, the travel writer does not fear being challenged by an original. They can posit themselves as the voice of authority given the logocentric tradition of Western culture in which the validity of travel writing as "real" rests on its relation to the spoken word (that is taken to be the truth) (Polezzi 2001, p. 91).

This ambiguity between the original and its textualization is further complicated by the necessary "translation" of contextual experience into a representation that can be read retrospectively at other places and other times and once again brings to mind much of the dilemmas and doubts that surround the translator's activity. It is also noteworthy that the travel writer, although free from the authority of a source text, must nevertheless insist on other sources of authority such as testimonies of predecessors, first-hand experience, precedence set by previous popular travelogues, etc. all of which evoke the idea of translation in the sense of following in someone's tracks (Polezzi 2001, p. 96)—a point that is worth keeping in mind for the specific context of this research. Further rationale of approaching travel writing and translation as comparable activities lies in the observation that both activities share the reassuring yet unsettling process of marking and reshaping boundaries (p. 102).

Translation as a Travelling Concept: Culture as Text

One needs to mention at this juncture that at the heart of the interpretive anthropology Clifford Geertz pioneered is the notion of culture as text. This is an expanded idea of text that includes social practice, as well as the recognition of the dependence of cultures on representations in general. In her article entitled *Culture as Text:Reading and Interpreting Cultures* (2012a), Doris Bachmann-Medic observes that as a travelling concept this notion of culture as text "propagated the understanding of culture as both a constellation of texts and a semiotic fabric of symbols that becomes 'readable' in forms of cultural expression and representation" (2012a, p. 99). It is,

however, possible to keep such a concept from falling victim to "formulaic ossification" (p. 102) by means of contextualization (p. 102) revealing the interplay between texts, forms of expression and cultural encounters in specific time and space. Such an approach, which informs this research, is one that understands culture and translation as thriving on and integrally linked to textual production. This interpretation of culture is one that sees it as "a heterogeneous and open system of practical options" (Algazi 2000, quoted by Bachmann-Medick 2012a, p.104).

Admittedly, the broadening of the horizon of translation poses challenges to most of the disciplines in the humanities when translation is referred to as a category of practice, an analytical category and also as a model for conducting cultural research (Bachmann-Medick 2012b, p. 23). Here, following Edward Said, it can be argued that theories constantly travel within the humanities and social sciences (1983). This is because theories are neither stable nor fixed in a place or context. Rather, they respond "to a specific social and historical situation of which an intellectual occasion is part" (p. 237). What are accepted to be "bounded theories" are in fact "transculturally constituted, embedded and influenced fields of knowledge that constantly interact with one another" (Neumann and Nünning 2012, p. 5).

This notion of translation as a travelling concept also has to do with how translation is understood, interpreted and defined around the word. Translation negotiates difference (Hermans 2006, Intro. p. 9), which comes in many forms. This heterogeneity of difference through time and space, made glaringly obvious in an increasingly

interconnected, interdependent postcolonial world, seems impossible to fit into the purely Western categories and conventions that govern mainstream research in translation and Translation Studies. This is because the concepts of language, culture and text that constitute the basis of Western theories are themselves rooted in their own specific contexts.

Translation in Non-Western Cultures

In an article entitled *Reconceptualizing Translation Theory* (2006) Maria Tymoczko emphasizes the need to not only incorporate non-Western translation data into research but also analyze, understand and theorize them since they can help refurbish basic assumptions and structures of translation theory itself (Tymoczko 2006, p. 14). The majority of current theoretical approaches, because of their overwhelmingly Euro-centric presuppositions, are contextually narrow and need to be rethought. Getting a view of translation as incorporating a varied range of activities is useful because, just as it is only possible to define the Self when we are clear about the specificity of the Other, the features that translation share with other activities can help better understand its specific characteristics as well as varied functions. In this context, Tymoczko counters theories that perceive linguistic and cultural translation caused by population movements as a completely new phenomenon (p. 19) and argues that migration, cultural and linguistic contacts and the resulting cultural translation and hybridity are not altogether unique to current human society—an observation that informs my analysis. As she rightly observes, scholars like Toury and Lefevere took pioneering steps in broadening the theoretical basis of Translation Studies. While Toury defined translation as "any target language text

which is presented and regarded as such within the target system itself, on whatever grounds" (Toury 1980, 14, 37, 43-45), and thus allowed for the "self-representation of what translation is" (Tymoczko 2006, p. 21), Lefevere analyzed translation as "rewriting" (Lefevere 1992) and helped challenge the rigid source-target binary that formed the basis of the field for the longest time.

Tymoczko's argument has added significance for my research because she delves into some of the representations of the word "translation" in non-Western cultures and thereby points to alternative and productive ways of approaching the field. She refers specifically to the Sanskrit words *anuvad* and *rupantar* and the Chinese word *fan yi*. While *anuvad* means "coming after" or "following", *rupantar* signifies "change in form". This second meaning is important if we analyze translation as textualization of first-hand experiences — a concept that can also be understood as a kind of intersemiotic translation. This perspective, however, does not negate the presence of inter-linguistic translation, but rather sees it as shaping *as well as* being shaped by larger cultural encounters.

Interestingly, it is the Chinese expression—even though it is rooted in its own context— that helps me further articulate my own understanding of translation as an innately complex process of understanding and representation. *Fan yi* means "turning the leaf of a book" (Tymoczko 2006, p.22) and is also linked to the image of embroidery. However, while Tymoczko sees this image as representing the source text in the front and the target in the back (p. 22), in my opinion, the location of the source and target can also

be seen conversely—the source (culture/language) in the back and the target in the front. In this understanding, the interconnected threads that make up the complex maze of elements of the source culture, much like the reverse side of an embroidery (or the seamy side of a garment), get a somewhat simplified, easily definable and *finished* representation in the target culture. Not to mention that the image in the back (or the complex network of contextual factors) can often be the reverse of what is depicted in the front.

Subversion of Stereotypes: Re-reading Travel Writing and Translation

In her discussion of the role of the reader in the context of the representation of the Other in travel writing and translation, Polezzi notes that while the representation of the unknown in familiar terms is not an innocent practice, the issue of collusion between the travel writer/translator and the reader also points to the possibility of different readings (Polezzi 2001, p.85). This observation seems to be particularly relevant in the context of my research since it opens up the possibility of considering the plurality of circumstances that influence and shape our understanding of the Other and its reception across time and space. Cultural translation, whether embodied in ethnography, travel writing or interlinguistic translation, ought to be the object of conscious critical practices, an approach that might help detect not only manipulation in the service of power and identity, but also voices that do not give in to such pressures of perpetuating stereotypes. It is important to recall historian James Clifford's influential analysis of ethnographic writing in this regard. Clifford explores our increasingly connected yet heterogeneous world through travel and translation. Assuming that all broadly meaningful concepts such

as travel are translations "built on imperfect equivalences" (1997, p. 11), he underscores

the inherent incompleteness of both as a means of representing the Other. While Clifford

does not pay adequate attention to the phenomenon of linguistic transfer, preferring

instead to define translation as a "word of apparently general application used for

comparison in a strategic and contingent way" (p.19), his exploration of modernity

through the twin perspectives of travel and translation helps underscore the fact that

history has forever attempted to textualize an "unfinished series of encounters" (p. 13).

Following Bakhtin's notion of dialogism and heteroglossia, Clifford seeks to explore

texts as products of multiple voices, and questions the monophonic authority of textual

production (1986, p. 15). However, as Polezzi notes, an effective use of the Bakhtinian

concepts in the context of translation and travel writing seems to lie in the multiplicity of

readings aimed at breaking the exclusive relationship between the traveller and the home

reader (Polezzi 2001, p. 104) —an approach that points to the possibility of plural

authorship *and* readership, as well as a translation that is decentred and in motion. This

concept of textual polyphony and multiple readerships implying constant movement is

very much part of my understanding of the theoretical connection between translation and

travel. Such a stance encourages the researcher to dispense with rigid conclusions

—both in terms of disciplinary boundaries and stereotypical views of the centre or the

periphery. It also provides the impetus to adopt a flexible approach that helps see tensions

between cultures as constantly shifting and as productive sites of heterogeneous

meanings.

One can add that studies by anthropologists, ethnographers and social scientists are relevant for Translation Studies given that these help identify and understand how and where translation functions in plurilingual societies such as India. This is in order to widen the assumptions on which Translation Studies rests (Tymoczko 2006, p. 24). Incorporating knowledge from such diverse sources can also help establish links between oral knowledge and translation and help move beyond the commonly assumed fixed nature of source cultures and texts. The related issue of agency in translation can also be addressed in a wider understanding of translation, since, as Tymoczko observes, translation takes place whether we do or don't approve of the credentials of the translator. This observation becomes crucial in understanding that language and translation are inseparable from issues of identity and representation.

The linking of the figures of the traveller and the translator encompasses historical as well as phenomenological parallels. A growing number of studies connecting travel and translation are concerned with the way in which both practices have been used to construct images of the foreign especially in the context of colonial history. The role of translated texts in intellectual movements like the Renaissance, Reformation, the sixteenth and seventeenth-century scientific revolution are well recorded. Of particular importance for the current study is the central role of translation in both its narrow and broad sense in the expansion of colonialism, in the cultural encounters that took place in the process and in the construction, perpetuation and subversion of colonial rhetoric. This connection between translation and colonial history has been most notably explored by Tejaswini Niranjana in *Siting Translation* (1992) and Eric Cheyfitz in *The Poetics of*

Imperialism (1997). Both scholars have underscored translation's role as an instrument of colonial domination and a means of depriving the colonized of a voice. Cheyfitz brings into sharp focus the relation between translation and empire functioning through displacement, dispossession and usurpation (1997, p. 59-60). Niranjana defines translation as a "significant technology of colonial domination" (1992, p. 21) and underlines the links between history and translation through her exploration of the translation of Indian texts by William Jones and others on which James Mill based his *History of British India* (1817). In the context of this thesis, it is important to note that travel writing was one of the main discourses in which such translation was deployed. Central to Mill's representation of India was the notion of Indians as what Edward Said describes as "objects without history" (Niranjana 1992, p.2). On the other hand, if, as Said observed, the Orient has been "textualized" (1978, p. 166) by coherently weaving together "multiple, divergent stories and existential predicaments" (Clifford 1986, p. 12), into a body of signs, one can perhaps look for the inherent heterogeneity of both the observer and the observed in such texts. Such a perspective, based on an awareness of asymmetry and inequality between the peoples of Europe itself (Cronin 1995, p. 85), would help the researcher approach Orientalism as a topos that is neither homogeneous nor static. It is this often neglected but promising approach that inspires this research.

The relevance of choosing these particular scholars lies in their self-reflexive approaches—which at once acknowledge and question the validity of seeing translation as an activity not limited to texts. This constant self-questioning not only underscores the inherent partiality of establishing identities, be it of a people or of a discipline, it also

keeps one from arriving at conclusions unchallenged. Approaches such as these also motivate the researcher to actively look for the presence of translation and translators in the linguistic sense and make visible the activity that tends to remain hidden perhaps because of its very omnipresence.

Chapter 2. French Presence in India: The Context of the Travellers

Some Notable Works

The crucial role of translation as a constituent of French writings about India, especially by Francophone travellers who visited the region before 1947, has not yet been adequately studied. Research has been done however in the area of Indo-French encounter from historical, political, military, literary perspectives—even though these are not comparable to the body of scholarly work done on India's encounter with Britain either in volume or in extent. Major works in this context are G. B. Malleson's *History of the French in India* (1868), S. P. Sen's two-volume *The French in India* (1971), Jacques Weber's *Les établissements français en Inde au XIXe siècle: 1816–1914* (1988), to name a few. Sen's work is important for its comprehensive account of French presence in India spanning three centuries and its focus on the commercial and political contexts surrounding the fortunes of the French and their settlements in the region. Historian Jacques Weber's five-volume work examines the five *comptoirs* or trading posts in detail. One can also mention the works of Jean Biés and Christian Petr. Biés, in his book titled *Littérature française et pensée hindoue des origines à 1950* (1973), presents a critical overview of role of India in French literature. Petr's *L'Inde des romans* (1995) looks at French literary representations of India taking into account the impact of British presence on Indo-French relations. There has also been noteworthy research done into the specific context of French travellers in India such as Deleury & Latif's *Les Indes florissantes: Anthologie des voyageurs français* (1991) and Florence D'Souza's *Quand la France découvrit l'Inde: Les écrivains-voyageurs français en Inde* (1995). Both of these, as the

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titles suggest, explore the specificities that marked French travel writings on India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These analyses—through extensive use of excerpts from travel accounts, diaries and notes that are thematically arranged based on observations about religion, customs, social structure, myths, art, technology, etc.— try to bring to the fore some of the key differences between these French representations and the more often discussed and analyzed "official" Anglophone accounts that tended to justify colonial rule by portraying eighteenth-century India "as mired in the backwash of the collapse of the Mughal Empire" (Wink 1995, p.449). The excellently researched *Bibliographie des Français dans l'Inde* (1973) by Henry Scholberg and Emmanuel Divien is a particularly useful resource for its sections on travel narratives as well as for its bilingual introductory sections. Also worth mentioning is Jean-Marie Lafont's book entitled *Indika* (2000) covering the history of Indo-French relations between 1630 and 1976. In this collection of essays Lafont focuses on, among other things, the often neglected and marginalized history of Frenchmen who settled and founded families in India, and severed links with their homeland.

This research draws on recent important research by Kate Marsh and the ongoing project entitled *Peripheral Voices and European Colonialism* ("Peripheral Voices") at the University of Liverpool (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council). Marsh's book entitled *India in the French Imagination: Peripheral Voices, 1754-1815* (2009) helps underline the discursive relationship between India, Britain and France and thereby challenges the homogeneous grand narrative of India's colonial history that portrays it as an exclusively Anglophone space. Its value lies in questioning the binary-bound view of

colonial representation that Edward Said's theory of Orientalism supports. Challenging Said's canonical concept, Marsh seeks to unravel the intertwined history of India, France and Britain in the subcontinent in which France's subordinate colonial status played an important role in Francophone representations of India and French colonial aspirations in the region. The research group at Liverpool takes a comparative methodology and once again questions the colonizer-colonized binary that persists within colonial discourse analysis. The work by Muzaffar Alam and Seema Alavi entitled *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient* (2001) is another important contribution in this context. This English translation of Antoine Polier's Persian correspondences is presented with a detailed and well-researched introduction delving into the complexities of the Indo-French encounter and its integral connection to the British in India. More importantly, for the purpose of this research, Alam & Alavi's work underscores the distinct and complex nature of Indo-French cultural interaction and the resulting construction and movement of knowledge through translation.

The Context of French Presence in India

If mainstream scholarly research has relegated French writings on India to a marginal position, this is in keeping with the peripheral status of the Indo-French encounter in current British, French and Indian historiography. French accounts of India have for a long time been subsumed into the larger categories and tropes of Anglo-centric colonial representation. Research has largely undermined the heterogeneity present in these accounts and neglected to examine how they reflect, perpetuate and even subvert

some of the commonly discussed characteristics of European representations of India. A critical approach is also needed to provide insight into the complex nature of Anglo-French relations in India, especially when seen from a postcolonial perspective.

In her insightful study of French metropolitan representations of India in the post-Dupleix era, Kate Marsh alludes to the fast-diminishing importance of France's presence in the subcontinent in the eighteenth century while the British extended their power (Marsh 2009, p.1). The context of this reversal of fortune for the French in the face of rising influence of the British in India can be related to the larger European scenario of the time. British victory over France and Spain in the Seven Years War culminated in the Treaty of Paris of 1763 (also known as the Peace of Paris), following which French territories in India were reduced to the five *comptoirs* of Pondichéry, Karikal, Yanaon, Mahé, and Chandernagore. The post-treaty years saw France become what Marsh describes as a "peripheral" (2009, p. 1) power in India while the British increasingly occupied centre stage. The encounter between India and French in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries needs to be examined against this context—that of the latter's relation with Britain. Anglo-French antagonism, illustrated by a series of military encounters and a general state of war and hostilities, dominated the period. The French foreign policy of *revanche* in the years between 1763 and 1783—seeking to reverse the Peace of Paris by restoring pre-war commercial and colonial equilibrium— motivated the monarchy's attitude towards the British in Europe as well as in India. British dominance of Indian trade was the other rationale that provided the impetus for Anglo-French confrontations in the subcontinent. India became as much a site for exploring "British

alterity" (Marsh 2009, p. 4) and assessing French national interests, as for knowing inhabitants of the region (p. 4). There was this juxtaposition of increased knowledge about India—its geography, religion, society— and a positing of French presence as an alternative to British despotism. French cultural production during this time and the trope of India therein should be approached not only as a means of imposing the former's colonial power but also opposing the other colonial presence albeit more often than not rhetorically. Such an approach helps challenge the colonizer-colonized binary persisting in Postcolonial Studies as well as in Translation Studies in the Indian context.

It is important to note that notwithstanding the overwhelmingly Anglophone nature of postcolonial discourses surrounding India that examine the intersecting relationship between imperialism, Orientalism and Romanticism (Marsh 2009, p. 2), British rule in India was not unchallenged. Equally important is the need to refrain from drawing conclusions from individual accounts to create an idea of a homogeneous and unproblematic French national identity, given the Parisian intellectual domination of the printed word in the eighteenth-century France (p. 3). Following Marsh, I approach the travel accounts in this research not as simple portrayals of India but as dynamic, evolving and unique representations that reveal the inner working of not only the French but also the British colonial enterprise. Here, the growing importance of a textualized India was of utmost importance and, as our three travellers reveal, the role of translation (or lack thereof) in its various forms was central to this textualization.

French Trade in India

As has been the case with other European countries, France's encounter with India began with commercial interests. In 1604 King Henri IV—following the examples of the English and Dutch governments, which had already established Indian companies (Das 1992, p. 29)—sanctioned the issuing of the first charter to a French India company. The first recorded French expedition to the subcontinent took place that year followed by another in 1615 (Oaten 1991). Despite reports of the subcontinent's fabulous wealth it was only in 1664 that Jean-Baptiste Colbert revived the flagging trade with the Orient with the formation of the *Compagnie française des Indes orientales* (referred hitherto as the *Compagnie*), known as the French East India Company in English. Colbert wanted to make use of the advantages of Asian commerce for the kingdom and prevent the Dutch and the English from profiting from it alone. Thus, in March 1665, the first expedition of the *Compagnie* departed for the Indian Ocean consisting of four ships: *Aigle-Blanc, Saint-Paul, Taureau,* and the *Vierge de Bon Port*. The *Compagnie*— like its Dutch and English counterparts—had national monopoly on trade between the State and Indian traders, the right to maintain an army, negotiate treaties, exercise justice and mint money. The first *comptoirs* of the French were established at Surat in 1668, and at Masulipatam in 1669. The *comptoirs* or fortified trading posts were built on condition that they paid a portion of their profits to the local ruler. The *Compagnie*, however, very soon encountered difficulties when it incurred expenses in its attempts to create colonies in Madagascar and on the uninhabited Ile Bourbon (La Réunion). It was unable to provide its shareholders with any profits after 1680 and eventually ceded monopoly to a group of

merchants from Saint-Malo. The creation of a new *Compagnie* in 1719 was not enough to rid French trade of its problems.

Trade with India was based on importation of luxuries such as textiles, spices, incenses, coffee, tea, indigo, diamonds, etc. As Marsh points out, the *Compagnie*'s trade was only intermittently as successful as that of its European counterparts, and often ran at a deficit (2009, p. 10). To offset this loss, French currency was exported to India for the purchase of luxury goods for importation— a system that created a network between India, the sugar islands of the West Indies and the slave plantations on the African coasts; a large quantity of bullion was imported to France from the West Indies and then re-exported to India to be exchanged for textiles, which in turn were directed to the African coasts and exchanged for slaves (Das 1992, p. 33). In this arrangement, India occupied a much less important place than the French establishments in the Caribbean, of which St. Domingue was the most profitable. Nevertheless, by virtue of its connection to this network, India enjoyed special importance for a time.

The success of trade with India was further hampered by restrictions imposed on imported goods from India, as stakeholders in the French textile industry sought to protect their products against foreign competition. The commerce of India had been ruinous for the European fabric manufacturers. Despite the increasing popularity of *Indiennes* (Das 1992, p.34), Indian fabric was banned from entering France until 1759. The fate of the *Compagnie*'s commerce is discussed by Voltaire, himself a shareholder, when he notes the impact of the Seven Years War (1756-63) (Marsh 2009, p.11). In

1769, the *Compagnie*'s privileges were suspended— a decision that was not entirely a commercial, but partly a political one, influenced by the Enlightenment ideology of economic liberalism that opposed commercial monopoly and mercantilism. Also noteworthy is the strong opposition of the Physiocrats or *Économistes*—according to whom France's hope of economic recovery in the aftermath of the Seven Years War lay in agriculture rather than overseas trade and colonies. The suspension of *Compagnie* privileges meant opportunities for private traders. At the same time, despite its chequered history, maritime trade with India had its supporters in France's influential circles. As a result, in 1785, a new *Compagnie* was set up once again. It enjoyed monopoly on Indian trade until 1790, when it was abolished by the Assemblée nationale constituante in revolutionary France.

France's political influence in India was largely determined by the extent of its geographical possessions in the region. The idea of establishing an empire in India was no doubt given impetus by the political condition in India in the first half of the eighteenth century. But the role of Joseph-François Dupleix (1697-1763), the first European to take advantage of internal disputes of Indian rulers (Sen 1975, p. 27) for the *Compagnie*'s territorial expansion, was equally important in this context. French political influence reached its zenith under Dupleix's governorship. This influence, however, was a short-lived one. Dupleix's plan to intervene in local disputes to gain control of territories failed because of lack of support from Versailles while similar plans were successfully implemented by the British. By 1761 all of the French territories had been invaded by the English East India Company forces and the five *comptoirs* had

capitulated. These trading posts, together occupying approximately 56,000 hectares (Das 1992, p. 72) or 560 square kilometres, were returned to France under the agreements of the Treaty of Paris. At this stage, French presence in India was not only marginal, it also lacked territorial unity. The trading posts remained this size until 1962, when France formally ceded control and left India.

It should be noted here that territorial expansion for its own sake was against the policy of *Compagnie* representatives. In fact, Dupleix's expansionist actions had forced the company into an onerous war that had proved fatal to commercial success. (Marsh 2009, p.13), and resulted in his recall in 1754. The general reluctance on the part of the French to enter into conflicts between Indian princes and the decision to renounce plans for territorial expansion had the interesting effect of loss of prestige in the eyes of the Indian rulers. The French policy, however, did not last long and the repercussions of the Seven Years War between France and Britain were felt in India. In the aftermath of the Treaty of Paris, French foreign policy was guided by principles of conservation rather than expansion. Following France's entry into the American War of Independence in support of the American rebels, the *comptoirs* were once again occupied by the British. The Treaty of Versailles of 1783 saw no attempt on the part of the French government to improve on the Treaty of Paris. Intervention in the American War of Independence had financially ruined the French government, which was in charge of the trading posts at that time. Despite appeals from Indophiles, adventurers and soldiers who advocated a more active French presence in India, Versailles steadfastly stuck to its policy of

non-intervention. The precarious state of the *comptoirs* became axiomatic (Marsh 2009,

p. 15) during the revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. In 1801, once again, France lost the

comptoirs in India, which were returned to her as part of the Second Treaty of Paris of

1815. This time, however, the trading posts were demilitarized and left economically

dependant on the surrounding British territory—an important point to keep in mind in the

context of the French travellers in India in the nineteenth century.

The Domestic Political Situation

Also notable in this context is the constantly shifting political situation in

eighteenth-century India. While the weakened Mughal ruler was based in Delhi, regional

powers like the Nawab of Awadh, the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the ruler of

Mysore were gaining in strength. There were conflicts between the semi-independent

local princes alongside rivalries among the Europeans (English, Dutch, French). Of note

is the fact that, irrespective of the central policy of the *Compagnie*, its representatives in

India enjoyed a certain amount of freedom in this instability. The distance between

France and India was no doubt a contributing factor in this decentralized French

presence. As Marsh observes, Dupleix's expansionist policy can perhaps be seen in light

of this quasi-autonomy (2009, p. 16). Nevertheless, however anti-expansionist in its

essence, French strategy in India could not be separated from the issue of its rivalry with

Britain—which was a constant influencing factor. Plans to intervene in domestic politics

were motivated not by a desire for territorial expansion but by the practical need to limit

British power. After the departure of the Dutch, the only effective challenge to British

territorial expansion in India could be posed by France. In addition, the latter's position in

India did not befit its power in Europe. At the same time, while certain Indian princes viewed France as a political ally against the British, French commitment to expelling the British was more rhetorical than real. The official pledges of help for the regional Indian rulers in India never materialized, and developments in India often demonstrated a gap between the policy of Versailles and its implementation in the subcontinent.

French presence in India, concentrated and structured around the *comptoirs* in the first half of the eighteenth century, became more scattered after 1763. The number of French adventurers employed by the regional rulers increased in these years. The series of defeats suffered by France during the Seven Years War had also left hundreds of French nationals and Francophones on Indian soil available for private hire, and a large number of them found employment in the different Indian kingdoms and took to the profession of military adventurers. These men, organized into French brigades mainly in the states of Mysore, Hyderabad and Gwalior, were a cause for great concern to the English East India Company. Depending on their personal ideologies, these adventurers espoused royalist loyalties (such as Benoit de Boigne) or brought new ideas to India (such as François Ripaud's founding of a Jacobin club in Seringapatam in 1797) (Marsh, p. 18). It has been observed that the lack of support from Versailles led these men to enlist the help of local rulers in the mission to curb the expansion of British power in India.

The arrival of the travellers under discussion in this research can also be seen as part of the rapidly changing character of European presence in general in

eighteenth-century India. Some of these individuals decided to settle down in the subcontinent and developed vested interests in the politics of the land. Although Anglo-French rivalry came to characterize European presence in India during much of the second half of the century, an informal network of Europeans dominated by Frenchmen was in operation. These men, consisting of engineers, architects, painters, traders, surveyors, seem to have been an integral part of the support system that helped sustain and expand British influence in India under the aegis of the East India Company (Alam & Alavi 2001, p.19). Many of them went to India with the dream of making a fortune and returning home more established than they were when they left it. A large number of these Europeans worked for the local princes, often changed jobs and exchanged information with the regional rulers and the British. There were complaints made by British officers about the fact that Shuja-ud-Daula, the ruler of Awadh, maintained Frenchmen in his service, and attempts were made to put a stop "to such tribes of Frenchmen" (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 19). In fact, the company even decided to issue passports to officers traveling within India on service in order to control and monitor the movements of Frenchmen.

British fears however were not entirely unfounded as some of these men had direct contact with officials in the French trading posts and received support and letters of recommendation from the *Compagnie* representatives when seeking employment under the local rulers (Alam & Alavi 2001). But despite the British displeasure and anxiety over European—specifically French—presence, the former did not hesitate to make use of surveys, maps and other information and intelligence gathered by the latter. For the

British in those days, the pragmatics of sustaining and expanding territorial power may have dictated their tolerance for an inclusive continental presence in India (Alam & Alavi 2001). Administrative need influenced a compromise between theory and practice in Britain's relation with other Europeans in the subcontinent. A case in point was Swiss-born Colonel Polier, who supplied Hastings with information about Frenchmen residing in India. At the same time, certain British residents were displeased with Polier's role in encouraging French trading and espionage activities. Thus, for the British, the presence of its continental counterparts was a source of both suspicion and sustenance.

It is against this larger picture and grand narrative that one can fully appreciate the numerous accounts of military adventurers, independent traders, missionaries and travellers who visited India and lived there. What becomes clear through an examination of the trajectory of the Indo-French encounter is that while neither Versailles nor the successive Republican and Imperial regimes had a coherent policy regarding expansion in India, perception of French influence in that region was a constant preoccupation in colonial discourses in France, and any interpretation of French prestige increasingly involved taking into account the British factor. As the following pages suggest, the contexts of the travellers underline not only the need to question the clear delineations between the colonizer and the colonized, but also to reassess the commonly held perceptions regarding the nature of European presence in eighteenth and nineteenth-century India.

Antoine Polier

Antoine-Louis Henri de Polier was born in 1741 in Lausanne, Switzerland, and belonged to a family of French Protestants who had emigrated to that country in mid-sixteenth century because of religious persecution of Huguenots in France. The family had a military and mercenary heritage. A number of Polier's ancestors had served in wars in Europe. His grandfather, Jean-Pierre Polier, fought against the Catholics in the Swiss cantonal wars of 1712. He is also known to have been a literary talent with interest in the mystical—illustrated by his works on subjects such as the Apocalypse, the fall of Babylon, etc. (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 23). One of Polier's uncles, Paul-Philippe Polier, served the English East India Company in Madras. His great-grandfather, grandfather and great uncle were noted academics specializing in Philosophy, Greek and Hebrew (2001, p. 3). As the story of his life in India reveals, Antoine Polier inherited the combination of military talent and intellectual curiosity of his forefathers.

Polier arrived in India in 1757 in a ship called the Hardwick to join his uncle who was employed in the service of the English East India Company in the city of Madras. Soon after his arrival he found employment as a cadet and sought active service under Robert Clive against the French. A few years later, in 1761, he was transferred to Bengal where he became acquainted with the British Governor-General Warren Hastings. This was the beginning of a long friendship between the two. Polier was eventually promoted to the post of chief engineer with a commission and the rank of Lieutenant in the army. But despite this rapid rise to success, his career under the British turned out to be a

chequered one. Due to the East India Company's increasing scepticism towards non-British Europeans, specifically the French in India, he was removed from his senior position. In fact, the Company passed a decree in 1766 that no foreign soldier could rise above the rank of major (Jasanoff 2005, p. 2). It is interesting to recall here that Polier, although a Swiss national, was francophone and of French ancestry. The British, however, did not dispense with his services entirely and the exchanges continued. During these years, when his career stalled, Polier demonstrated tenacity and willingness, and managed to cling on in the face of hostility from the British. European expertise was in high demand across India in the eighteenth century—in the kingdoms of the Marathas, in Mysore and the Mughal provinces of Hyderabad and Awadh. The local rulers were looking for non-British Europeans to train armies, design fortifications, develop arsenals, and offered better salaries compared to the British and an "easy and permissive lifestyle" (Jasanoff 2005, p. 2). In 1773, Polier left the Company-controlled province of Bengal and moved to Awadh to work for its ruler as a military engineer. For the next fifteen years he made his home in Lucknow, the capital of Awadh. He also supplied the British with information about political developments in the region and assisted in the survey and trade transactions of the company. In Lucknow Polier also created a niche for himself in the local society and amassed a fortune via private trade and by assisting Shuja-ud-Daula in conflicts with other regional rulers. At the same time, he reinvented himself as a Mughal aristocrat and a collector of art and manuscripts. This dual role and this "streak of independence" (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 5) led many in the company (those opposed to Warren Hastings) to push for his resignation. He was able to resist deportation from India largely because of the contacts and solid economic stakes he had created for himself. In

1782, with the help of Hastings, he received a courtesy appointment as Lieutenant Colonel with the stipulation that he would not serve in any corps (Jasanoff 2005, p. 15). The French traveller Comte de Modave, who visited Awadh in 1774, noted that Polier had a reasonably good command over the Persian language and excellent knowledge of Urdu (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 8).

In 1788, Polier left India after 32 years. In Lucknow he had two wives, a daughter and two sons. He left his wives and one of the sons back in India in the care of his good friend Claude Martin. In 1791, Polier married Anne Rose Louis Berthoudt and settled in Lausanne. Later, in 1792, he moved to France with his European family and set up home near Avignon. Here he is reported to have hosted parties in "lavish Asian style" (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 9) and adopted ideas of the Revolution. He was pensioned on Robert Clive's fund from March 1792. In 1795 Polier was assassinated in his home by unidentified robbers. His wealth, accrued largely during his career in India, stayed with his family in Europe.

On his return to Europe, Polier had deposited a collection of his Indian manuscripts in England at the request of William Jones. The contents of the fascinating library Polier set up in Lucknow were distributed later among the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, Bibliothèque Cantonale de Lausanne, the Islamic Museum in Berlin, the British Museum, the Library of King's College at Cambridge and Eton College in London.

Polier's major work has come to us in a book entitled *Mythologie des Indous*, published in Paris in1809. It was edited by his cousin Marie Elisabeth de Polier, Canoness of the Reformed Order of the Holy Sepulchre (henceforth referred to as the Canoness). The preface of the book, dictated to the Canoness by Polier, gives details of his life in India, his contacts with the Indian elite, his search for Sanskrit scripts. The other work of equal importance is *I'jaz-i Arsalani*, a compilation of his letters written in Persian between 1773-1779. These illustrate and act as record of his correspondence with a large number of local people, with whom he communicated in the local language. The title echoes his Mughal title, *Arsalan Jang*, meaning "the lion of the battle" (Alam & Alavi, p. 9), given to him by the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam.

India in the Eighteenth Century: The Intellectual Environment

The intellectual environment in eighteenth-century urban India, one that fascinated Polier and other Europeans, has been described in remarkable detail by Alam & Alavi in the introduction to the English translation of Polier's Persian letters (2001). Maintaining large libraries of literary, scientific, and historical manuscripts was the hallmark of aristocratic life at the time. Collections included Oriental manuscripts in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, Arabic translations of Greek and Latin works, etc. Warren Hastings is described to have been delighted to find Arabic translations of about fifteen important works of Greek astronomers, scientists and mathematicians in the *Vizir*'s library in Lucknow in 1784. And such collections were found in a number of other royal libraries around the country. The interest among eighteenth-century Indian rulers in the translated books and manuscripts of neighboring cultures and of the Hellenic world is

seen by Alam & Alavi as a continuation of the Islamic intellectual legacy which combined with the earlier Hindu tradition of learning. The distinct intellectual and cultural tradition that Europeans experienced in eighteenth-century India was a result of this blending (Alam & Alavi 2001).

Cultural interaction between the Islamic Orient and the West had already taken place when Islam entered the Indo-Islamic phase. This is illustrated by the composition of major Arabic works and significant improvement upon Greco-Hellenic texts (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 33). From the twelfth century, Latin translations of Arabic scientific texts began to spread in Europe. The scientific and religious traditions of pre-Islamic India combined with the evolving Muslim tradition and resulted in the translation of Sanskrit, Turkish and Arabic texts on law, religion, science, etc. into Persian. This coming together of traditions of knowledge was also evident in the blending of Perso-Islamic medicine with Ayurveda, as well as in the translation of Hindu texts into Persian, notably *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavadgita* and the *Upanishads*.

Translation therefore played a central role in this intellectual exchange and evolution. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, northern India had a vibrant tradition of collecting religious and scientific manuscripts and engaging *pundits* and *munshis* to translate them into Persian. In fact, exchange of knowledge between Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian was considered to be crucial for greater understanding between the different religious communities. Translation and compilation of literary works, the production, buying and selling of books and the related demand and supply of paper

played a crucial role in the political and cultural life at that time. The composition of eulogizing odes and the gifting of prized manuscripts were seen as gestures of loyalty in pre-colonial India. The social significance attached to books and manuscripts is evident from the fact that during wars indigenous rulers protected their libraries, and the control of libraries heralded ultimate triumph in battles.

From the mid-eighteenth century, the East India Company officials came into contact with the local scholars and translators as well as with the book bazaar (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 36). As the Company gained in influence and became the centre of political power, the regional rulers and patrons were absorbed into its folds (p. 36). As a result, local scholars flocked to the British and other Europeans for sustenance. In this new scenario, while the scholars and translators remained the same, the intentions of the new patrons were different from the previous ones. Native texts needed to be translated for a variety of reasons including the reinforcement of colonial power as well as rediscovery of Indian's intellectual past (not so much the maintenance of social harmony). Learning Indian languages, especially Sanskrit, became part of a Company official's responsibilities. For example, Charles Wilkins, a Company civil servant and the first European to have gained in-depth knowledge of Sanskrit, studied the language with Hindu scholars on leave of absence from his other duties. As a patron of *pundits* in Northern India, Warren Hastings established long-lasting contacts with a number of Hindi scholars. Hastings also knew Persian and Urdu, as did William Jones. The British quest for indigenous texts and knowledge of India accelerated in the last three decades of the eighteenth century as the Company's political presence spread. Impetus to knowing

the country also came from a need to ensure regular collection of revenue in India at a time when the Company's expanding power was accompanied by financial crisis both at home and in the subcontinent. One interesting point to note here is that alongside their dependence on native scholars and translators, the British also doubted their trustworthiness— a fact that led to the need for Company officials to learn Indian languages.

The British failed to see the Indian intellectual tradition as one that brought together the riches of Hindu and Islamic knowledge. Englishmen like Hastings, Wilkins and Jones were trained in European classical thought and saw the relation between Sanskrit and the local languages of India as comparable to the one between Greek, Latin and contemporary European languages. Guided by this perception, their quest for knowledge of India was no doubt somewhat restricted insofar as it was indifferent to the vernaculars (Alam & Alavi, p. 39). Their intellectual gaze also saw indigenous learning in a compartmentalized fashion based on religion (Hindu or Islamic) and undermined the rich Indo-Islamic legacy that made up Indian intellectual fabric in the eighteenth century.

In this context, individuals like Polier added a non-sectarian dimension to this environment. He "was probably the most vigorous collector" (Jasanoff 2005, p. 14) in the Oriental book bazaar. He sought out manuscripts of Indian texts in both Sanskrit and Persian. Much like the Mughal literary repositories, Polier's collection included a mix of books on Islamic theology, Persian translations of Greco-Hellenic manuscripts, as well as Arabic texts. His catalogue reveals a worldview in which Indian intellectual tradition was

much more inclusive than the typical colonial representation would have us believe. However, as Alam & Alavi note, despite his inclusive approach to Indian intellectual tradition, later, under the influence of British Orientalist William Jones, Polier concentrated on Sanskrit and translating the *Mahabharata* (2001, p. 64). While it is debatable whether this necessarily reflects a departure from Polier's earlier perception, it is nevertheless important to note the pressures, influences, interests and dilemmas that surrounded his stay in India. Most noteworthy in this is the network of information between the British and other Europeans like Polier that functioned as support system for the East India Company in India and refutes any idea of an "unadulterated Britishness within Britain's colonial success" (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 18) in the subcontinent.

The curiosity of Europeans like Polier should also be seen in the context of the intellectual environment in Europe at the time. These individuals grew up in the age of Enlightenment and many of them were "Orientalists in the traditional sense of the word" (Jasanoff 2005, p. 14) in the sense that they approached India with a broad interest in the human and natural sciences—they were amateur students of Indian languages, history, religion, medicine, the arts, etc.

Polier's closeness to Persian, the language of court in Mughal India, can be also explained by the specific linguistic and cultural setting which he experienced in India. In the Delhi-Awadh region he embraced the prevalent language and culture of the imperial court. His European background made him give importance to court culture, and this coincided with the prevailing Mughal courtly life (Alam & Alavi, p. 69). His political and

trading contacts and associates were a mix of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. His lucrative commercial activities in north India and privileged life in the Mughal Indian society depended on adapting to the local cultural and linguistic milieu. Polier lived like a Mughal noble and owned considerable property in Agra, Lucknow and Faizabad. His eulogizing of the local Mugal rulers, as illustrated in his letters, was no doubt dictated by a need to safeguard his interest in these regions. However, Alam & Alavi also suggest that Polier identified with the Indo-Persian values and aesthetics with which he became familiar. The Persian letters give an indication of his preference for household items and luxury goods associated with the upper classes of the Indian urban society of the time, which were very much influenced by Indo-Persian culture. As the next chapter will demonstrate, a study of Polier's writings as well as his life in India—seen in conjunction with issues of translation— gives us invaluable insight into the conflicting influences and interests that shape human representations of Self and the Other, especially in the context of colonialism.

A. H. Anquetil-Duperron

Of the three travellers discussed in this thesis, it was not Polier but Anquetil-Duperron, known as the pioneer in the scholarship of Zoroastrian manuscripts of the *Zend-Avesta*, who was the first to travel to India. Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron was born in Paris in 1731 in a petit-bourgeois family of Jansenist persuasion (Stuurman 2007, p. 257). Jansenism was a Roman Catholic reform movement based on the writings of Dutch theologician Otto Jansen. Although never formally enrolled in the movement, Anquetil found it congenial to his own ascetic temperament and "nursed Jansenist

sympathies to the end of his life" (Sarton 1937, p. 198). It is worth noting that his close and only friend later in life was the famous Orientalist Silvestre De Sacy (I758-1838), also a Jansenist sympathizer (1937, p.198). At the time of the French Revolution and the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme* in 1789, Anquetil voiced support for the abolition of slavery and freedom for the Jansenist Church.

Initially preparing for a religious career, Anquetil studied Hebrew at the Sorbonne, but later turned to Arabic and Persian while completing his education at the Jansenist seminaries in the Dutch Republic. Once back in Paris, he abandoned his theological studies and devoted himself to Oriental philology. He obtained a stipend to study the Oriental manuscripts in the Bibliothèque du roi. Here, during a visit to one of his teachers in 1754, Anquetil saw a copy of some pages of an ancient manuscript written in Avestan, the language of Zoroastrian scripture. It was then that he decided to travel to India and collect and translate the *Zend-Avesta*, something no other European had achieved until that time. In addition, Anquetil intended to study Sanskrit during his stay in the subcontinent.

In 1755, Anquetil-Duperron sailed for Surat—an important centre for the Parsi (Zoroastrian) community in western India. Here he hoped to enlist the help of scholars of ancient Persian. Anquetil's voyage was a long, arduous one and coincided with the Seven Years War (1756-63) between France and England, which, as we have already noted, had serious repercussions for the French in India. Anquetil enlisted in the army of the *Compagnie* to be able to pay for the expenses of his trip. He reached Pondicherry, the

main seat of the *Compagnie*, in August of 1755. Although the final destination was Surat,

he set himself to studying Persian and other Indian languages as soon as he arrived in

India (Sarton 1937, 199). Later, on his way to his final destination, he also stopped at

Chandernagore, the French *comptoir* in Bengal and learned the local language. Anquetil's

writings give the reader a clear idea of the complex nature of the enterprise he had

undertaken—it was not simply a philological task, but at times required tact and

diplomacy, pitting Indians against one another to obtain manuscripts, asking assistance of

the Dutch and even the English at the height of Anglo-French rivalry. As Sarton notes,

Surat in those days was a hotbed of intrigues between Europeans and the locals, company

officials and merchants, and between religious groups (1937, p. 200). Anquetil's relations

with the Parsi community, whose help he needed to translate the *Zend-Avesta*, was a

strained one. The community was divided into two factions, one protected by the French

and the other by the Dutch. Their politics was thus entangled with the political scene in

Europe. Ultimately he was able to collect more than a hundred manuscripts (1937, p.

202) representing many languages of India. After finishing the translation of the *Zend*,

Anquetil intended to stay on in India and study Sanskrit; he had in fact collected

fragments of Vedic texts and three Sanskrit dictionaries (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 430,

492-93). However, the French debacle in India made him change plans and return home.

Given the plight of the French in India, Anquetil had to travel on a British ship via

England. This seemed to him to be the safest way to travel home with his manuscripts

intact. On his arrival in Portsmouth in November of 1761, when England and France

were still at war, he was promptly taken in by the British authorities as prisoner of war,

while his manuscripts remained with the customs office (Stuurman 2007, p. 261). Before he was extradited to France, Anquetil visited Oxford, where he met British Orientalists, and inspected the *Zend-Avesta* kept in the Bodleian library. Later, having recovered his manuscripts from the British, he finally embarked for France in March 1762 and reached Paris a few days later. On his return he deposited the documents collected from Surat at the Bibliothèque du roi and read many memoirs before the Academie des inscriptions. His account of the voyage to India, first published in 1771 in Anquetil's *Zend-Avesta: Ouvrage de Zoroastre*—(republished in 1997 as *Voyage en Inde, 1754-1762: Relation de voyage en préliminaire à la traduction du Zend-Avesta*. ed. Deloche, Filliozat & Filliozat)— presents us with a vivid description of his travels through the length of which he was chronically short of money, plagued by illness and often caught up in Anglo-French hostilities.

Studying Sanskrit occupied much of Anquetil's time after the publication of the *Zend-Avesta* translation and throughout the years of the Revolution. In 1775, he had received from India a Persian translation of fifty *Upanishads* (completed in 1657 for the eldest son of the Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan). Anquetil completed a French translation of these in 1787. However, that version did not satisfy him, and he prepared a new one into Latin, which he thought was more suitable than French for the purpose. The Latin version was completed in 1796 and published at Strasbourg in 1801-02 (Sarton 1937, p. 208).

Anquetil had to face endless hostilities almost until the end of his life from scholars and rivals in Europe, some of whom claimed that the manuscripts he collected in India were of dubious authenticity and not ancient as they were presented to be. The most violent attack, however, came from William Jones, the most celebrated Orientalist of all time. Jones' main argument was that Zoroaster, hailed as one of the most enlightened philosophers in antiquity, could not have written "such dreary stuff as was contained in Anquetil's book" (Waley 1952, p. 32). In response Anquetil wrote that indeed his translation did not correspond to the widely held notions about Zoroaster, but "should that fear prevent me from submitting my translation to the learned world?" (p. 32).

In the latter part of his life Anquetil wrote a number of theological and political pamphlets. Like many liberals, he had initially welcomed the Revolution, but the cruelty and bloodbath that he witnessed in its aftermath changed his mind. Shortly before his death in 1805, refusing to swear the required oath of allegiance to Napoleon Bonaparte, he resigned from the Institut national.

Figure 1. Page from *Catalogue des livres de* **A.H Anquetil-Duperron (1805)**

Victor Jacquemont

In the aftermath of the Revolution and the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, many of the French educated elite found themselves at odds with a society that had given up the ideals of political action and returned to official Catholicism (Kramer 1992, p.789). Victor Jacquemont belonged to this generation of men and women who came of age in the first half of the nineteenth century—in a volatile ideological and socio-political time in France's history.

Jacquemont was the third son of Rose Laisné Jacquemont and the French philosopher Venceslas Jacquemont. Venceslas was a strong supporter of the Revolution— he served in various government posts and knew many in the circle of *Idéologues* that included liberal critics of Napoleon notably Destutt de Tracy. Young Jacquemont grew up in an intellectual environment in which the importance of liberal political theory, materialist philosophy and natural science was paramount. Jacquemont's anti-Bonapartist stance was further fuelled by first-hand knowledge of Napoleon's repression of political dissent when his father was imprisoned in 1808 on charges of conspiracy (Kramer 1992, p. 790).

Jacquemont was educated at École Polytechnique and Collège de France, studied science and medicine, wrote scientific papers and became acquainted with prominent French liberals of the time. Notable among his friends were authors Stendhal, Prosper Mérimee and political figures Victor de Tracy and Lafayette. Jacquemont was on his way

to a promising career in medicine and science, until he fell into severe depression because of a failed love affair. In 1826-27, to seek diversion, he travelled to the United States and Haiti— a voyage that prepared him for the journey to the Indian subcontinent that he undertook at the request of the French Museum of Natural History.

Jacquemont was entrusted with the task of carrying out a scientific survey of India and providing information on the flora, fauna, climate and geography of the region. He accepted the proposal and reached Calcutta after a voyage of more than eight months. He eventually travelled across the country, to Benaras and Delhi, further north to the Himalayas, Kashmir and Tibet, west to Punjab and Lahore as well as Bombay. He prepared vast collections of specimens to send to France, wrote detailed letters to family and friends in Europe and kept journals for future publication. After travelling in India for more than four years, he fell ill in Bombay, where he passed away in 1832 at the age of 31.

Jacquemont's letters were published in various French editions between the 1830s and 1860s. These provide a fascinating account of his encounter with India and reveal the evolution and emergence of his European identity through an experience of the subcontinent. In his letters to friends and family— compiled and published after his death as *Correspondance de Victor Jacquemont avec sa famille et plusieurs de ses amis pendant son voyage dans l'Inde (1828- 1832)*—he expressed an overwhelming feeling of isolation in a foreign land, even though he was travelling through heavily populated parts of the country. In fact, as Kramer notes (1992, p.795), for Jacquemont the contrast

between France and India was most striking in the differences he noted between the two peoples. His detailed account of the people, their habits and lifestyle as he understood them reveals his struggle with issues of identity and self not only in relation to India but also to Britain. This struggle often finds expression in his reflections about languages. Jacquemont's perception of the religion and politics of India was also coloured by his own upbringing and education in which the positive rationalist legacies of French Enlightenment and Revolution were championed. Travelling around India for the purpose of systematically categorizing plants and insects, he found little value in the spiritual preoccupations of Hinduism. It is worth asking what role his knowledge of Sanskrit, or lack thereof, played in his view of Hinduism when his access to knowledge depended less on observations and more on the intricacies of human thinking expressed through language.

Travelling in British India

Jacquemont travelled to India at a time when the French *comptoirs* were isolated posts surrounded by British territory or native principalities. He identified entirely with the English rulers and their civilizing laws aimed at controlling "violence, brigands and the petty disputes of local leaders" (Kramer 1992, p. 805). He regarded the July Revolution in France (1830) as evidence that France and England were the two leaders of modern civilization (p. 806). Jacquemont's liking for the British was reciprocated. His scientific knowledge endeared him to the Company officials and also made him welcome in the courts of the local rulers—some of these having been allies of the British. The rulers of Punjab and Kashmir treated him with favour because of his knowledge of other European nations and administrations. During this time the Frenchman seems to have

learned to value the connection between knowledge and power, and realized that his European knowledge gave him a status in Asia that he could not acquire in France (Kramer 1992, p. 808-809). In a letter to Victor de Tracy, he expresses his anxiety at spending time travelling while his friends were moving ahead in their careers in France. But he also saw the time spent in India as worthwhile and felt confident of eventual recognition in France, a recognition that came to him posthumously.

Much like the writings of his eighteenth-century predecessors, Victor Jacquemont's travel accounts reflect the specific contexts of his socio-political, intellectual and cultural surroundings, both at home and abroad. As my analysis in the following chapter reveals, his representation of India, at times diametrically opposite and standing in stark contrast to those of Polier and Anquetil-Duperron, is more complex than a superficial examination would suggest. It calls for a nuanced analysis of travel writings and also of translation, especially when they involve understanding the foreign and the unknown. Once again, language seems to play a crucial role in such a situation.

Chapter 3. France and Britain in India: Points of Convergence and Divergence

In his book *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (2000), Michael

Cronin notes that critical writing on travel and tourism has largely neglected the

relationship of the traveller to language (Cronin 2000, p. 1-2), that the crucial role of

language and translation is conspicuously absent from major scholarly work on travel

(p. 102). It is the awareness of this neglect that provides the impetus for this chapter. As

the writings of Anquetil-Duperron, Antoine Polier and Victor Jacquemont reveal,

linguistic knowledge and translation played a central role not only in their representation

of India, but also their relation to the British.

In the same book, Cronin comments on the "paradoxical" (p. 99) nature of

translation; while effective understanding and translation requires extensive travelling

into the other culture and even long periods of residence, "travel must not, however,

become exile" (p. 99). There must be proximity without fusion. Further, while the

translator must become "the Other while remaining the One" (p. 100), this One is a

fragmented Self. If translation is a journey, then the routes that translators take to

understand the source and arrive at the target are varied. It is the "cumulative 'traces' of

the target language choices that generate the identity of the translation" (Cronin 2000, p.

105). Such observations are crucial given that translation through travel writings has

always been central to our representation of the Other. Our exploration of this

representation, to be a productive one, should not only take into account

translators/travellers as situated in contexts of culture, gender, history, language and race,

but also realize that they are not reducible to these contexts. My examination of the writings of the three travellers is guided by these observations. The primary goal in this chapter is to underscore the role of language and translation in bringing to light some of the largely neglected aspects of colonialism in India. More specifically, I want to discuss the contexts of collaboration, collusion, and conflict between the British and other Europeans —referred to in the chapter title as points of convergence and divergence—as represented in these accounts. The writings examined consist of not only descriptions of travel but also observations and personal points of view on shared realities in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe and India. They reveal the diverse ideologies, ambitions, allegiances, expediencies that influenced these travellers' knowledge of the Other. In addition, my analysis is aimed at taking note of some of the typical doubts and fears that plague travellers and translators. In the process I also want to demonstrate that the varied writings of these three travellers help challenge the idea of a homogeneous representation not only of India but also of France and Britain as colonial powers.

In his book *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (1996), David Spurr identifies certain basic rhetorical features of European colonial discourse and the way in which such discourse has been deployed (p. 1). Drawing on British, French and American non-fictional writings in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Spurr seeks to explore the ways in which the Western writer constructs a coherent representation out of the "incomprehensible realities confronted in the non-Western world" (p. 3). The justification for invoking Spurr lies in his ability to draw attention to not only the common features

that unite distinct entities but also to the need to explore how Western colonial discourse tends to obliterate the voices of dissention, unlikely collusions and conflicts. The text, he observes, speaks ambiguously. In it, the voice of the author, the cultural ideology and institutional authority find expression. This ambiguity joins with the "logical incoherence" (p. 11) of colonial discourse to produce a rhetoric characterized by constant crisis—one that gets suppressed so that coherence and homogeneity can dominate Western discourses of the Other and ignore all that is at odds with it. This crisis took on a particularly complex form in eighteenth-century India where the colonizer-colonized relationship was fragmented by multiple and interdependent European countries, in which the centre-periphery idea, another binary at the service of obliterating heterogeneity, gets compromised. Lisa Lowe, in her work titled *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (1991) questions the tendency to totalize Orientalism as a "monolithic discourse that uniformly constructs the Orient as the Other of the Occident" (p. 5) and argues for a conception of Orientalism as marked by contradiction and heterogeneity. In her reading of Orientalist discourses Lowe gives particular attention to the junctures at which narratives of differences—of race, class, nationality, gender— complicate and interrogate the narrative of Orientalism. An examination of such sites can reveal the points in which Orientalism is vulnerable and challenged.

The theoretical approach for this research owes much to historian Dipesh Chakrabarty's call for taking note of the heterogeneity that characterizes not only the former colonies but also the colonizing centres— to make legible within European history the "repression and violence that are as instrumental in the victory of the modern

as is the persuasive power of its rhetorical strategies" (Chakrabarty 1992, p. 21). At the same time, I want to underline, following Homi Bhabha, that resistance in colonial discourse is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention; it can be the effect of an ambivalence produced within dominating discourses (Bhabha 1994, p. 157-8). But before embarking on an analysis of the intertwined nature of collaborations and conflicts in Western colonial discourses about India, as manifested in the accounts of the three travellers, it might be useful to take note of some of the typical features such writings share.

Western Travel Accounts of India: Some Common Features

In Chapter II of the *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (2002), titled "*India/Calcutta: City of Palaces and Dreadful Night*" (p. 191), Kate Teltscher explores some of the English conventions for representing India in the nineteenth century. As she observes, seventeenth and eighteenth-century accounts of merchants, captains, diplomats and accompanying chaplains that dominated writings about the subcontinent tended to focus on the possibilities of trade and represented India as a land of fertility and wealth (Teltscher 2002, p. 191). Noteworthy in this context is the fact that this convention was not unique to English writings about India; it was one that travelled linguistic and cultural boundaries in Europe through translation. It might be helpful to recall here that trade was the primary reason for travelling to India for almost all Europeans in the period mentioned. In fact, as Teltscher points out, until the mid-eighteenth century it is more accurate to talk of a European rather than English (or British) tradition of representing India (p. 191). Travel accounts written in other countries were frequently translated into

English. François Bernier's *Mughal History* (1656-68) and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's *Six Voyages* (1675) were two well-known works that were translated in 1671-2 and 1677 respectively. Another important source of information about India were missionary letters, for example, the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (1702-76). These writings established many of the commonplaces that circulated in travelogues, for instance, the view of India as an archaic unchanging land where Hindu widows followed (or were subjected to) the rite of *sati* or self-immolation.

By the mid-eighteenth century, coinciding with the expansion of British influence and territorial control over India and the near-disappearance of French presence, a more distinct British tradition of writing about India emerged. In this new context travel writing played its part in "promoting the idea of British rule and also articulating its attendant anxieties (p. 192). Teltscher notes the writings of Jemima Kindersley's *Letters* (1777), William Hodges' *Travels in India* (1793) as examples of those that sought to promote the new set of stereotypes designed to justify British territorial expansion. These accounts portrayed the incompetence of the Mughal ruler or the "benign nature of the British rule" (p. 192), or the inherent submissive nature of Indians. The defeat of Tipu Sultan (who fought in alliance with the French) in 1799 heralded the beginning of a still more assured British presence in India, and a more confident rhetoric of British supremacy emerged. By the mid-nineteenth century, most of the subcontinent came to be controlled by the British and travel writers became engaged in documenting the people, the flora and fauna of the newly conquered territories in a systemic fashion.

ZEND-AVESTA,

OUVRAGE

DE ZOROASTRE,

CONTENANT les Idées Théologiques, Phyfiques & Morales de ce Légiflateur, les Cérémonies du Culte Religieux qu'il a établi, & plufieurs traits importans relatifs à l'ancienne Hiftoire des Perfes :

Traduit en François fur l'Original Zend, avec des Remarques ; & accompagné de plufieurs Traités propres à éclaircir les Matieres qui en font l'objet.

Par M. ANQUETIL DU PERRON, de l'Académie Royale des Infcriptions & Belles-Lettres, & Interprete du Roi pour les Langues Orientales.

TOME PREMIER.

PREMIERE PARTIE,

Qui comprend L'INTRODUCTION AU ZEND-AVESTA, formée principalement de LA RELATION DU VOYAGE DU TRADUCTEUR AUX INDES ORIENTALES, fuivie du PLAN DE L'OUVRAGE ; & un APPENDIX fur les Monnoyes & Poids de l'Inde, fur quelques objets d'Hiftoire Naturelle & de Commerce, & fur les Manufcrits Orientaux du Traducteur :

Ornée de Planches gravées en taille douce.

A PARIS,

Chez N. M. TILLIARD, Libraire, Quai des Auguftins, à S. Benoît.

M. DCC. LXXI.

Avec Approbation & Privilege du Roi.

Anquetil-Duperron's Voyage to India

> Writing is, for the polyglot, a process of undoing the illusory stability of fixed identities, bursting open the bubble of ontological security that comes from familiarity with one linguistic site. The polyglot exposes this false security.
>
> Rosi Braidotti,
> *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994)

Citing the above quote, Michael Cronin underlines a crucial feature of the traveller's/translator's activity—that of maintaining balance between mobility and coherence (Cronin 2000, p. 104). Braidotti's observation, although made in the context of globalization and migration in the current time, nevertheless points to the possibility of using translation as a heuristic tool to interrogate assumptions of fixed identities in human history. In the context of this research, this possibility is reinforced by perceiving the process of globalization as not a new one, even if its scale and media-driven character are recent phenomena. The translating agent straddles the frontier between cultures (Cronin 2000, p. 102), and as I argue in the next few pages, in the case of the travellers examined, expressions of this precarious existence that make way into their writings alongside observations of their surroundings, can reveal the dialogic nature of the process through which they come to interpret and represent the Other. In addition, their writings underline the fact that travel and translation are negotiated activities, and it is this knowledge that makes the questioning of fixed identities a valid one. Rather than focusing exclusively on their observations about India, my purpose here is to also examine some of their other reflections that shed light on the conflicts and contradictions that shaped their writings.

Anquetil-Duperron was an exception to the many Europeans who visited India for trade purposes; he travelled to the region with the intention of collecting and translating ancient Zoroastrian texts into French—travel for him was a precondition for translation.

Until the seventeenth century, knowledge of the ancient Persians and their religion had been limited to the account given by Herodotus (Sarton 1937, p. 193). In 1700, Oxford Orientalist Thomas Hyde published his *Historia religionis veterum Persarum*, a work that seemed to contain the final word on the subject (p.194). In his introduction to the translation of *Zend-Avesta* Anquetil expresses his scepticism about the Englishman's work and his frustration with the European reader's unquestioning acceptance of it:

> Le reste de l'Europe s'en rapportoit au Docteur Hyde sans songer à apprendre des langues dont les Sçavans ne connoissoient à peine les noms. Cet assoupissement général sur un objet aussi intéressant m'étonna et je conçus dès-lors l'idée du voyage que j'ai fait dans l'Inde (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 74).[1]

The above quote illustrates an important element in Anquetil's perception of European scholarship about the Orient— that much of the perpetuating ignorance, even among scholars, had its roots in the absence of linguistic knowledge. His comments here also manifest the somewhat derogatory attitude towards English scholars. As we will see later, the mutual animosity between Anquetil and the Oxford scholars forms an interesting part of eighteenth-century Orientalist discourse about India.

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[1] The rest of Europe referred to Dr. Hyde without thinking of learning the languages, of which the *savants* hardly knew the names. This general apathy about an object so interesting astonished me and from that time I planned the idea of the voyage to India.

In 1723, a copy of the main book of the Parsis, the *Vendidad Sada* was obtained by Englishman George Bowcher, a merchant in Surat, and brought to Bodleian Library of Oxford. In 1754, young Anquetil came across a few lines traced from this text in the Bibliothèque du roi in Paris. At that time he was also convinced that the key to all European culture was to be found in early Indo-European texts. Through the translation of the *Zend* into a modern European language, he would be able to "transform everything then known about the most formative period in Western History" (Pagden 2008, p. 276). His stay in India coincided with the Seven Years War between England and France that resulted in the collapse of French colonial ambitions in India. In his introduction, Anquetil notes his disappointment with the colonial enterprise when he discovers that his ship was carrying ex-convicts on their way to becoming colonists (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 81-82). His criticism of the colonists finds expression in his writings when he notes the *oisiveté* (idleness) of the French in Pondicherry (Anquetil-Duperron1997, p. 90). As Stuurman notes, the greediness and arrogance of the Europeans made a lasting impression on him and the memory of this experience shaped his later writings (2007, p. 260).

Anquetil's view of colonialism was no doubt coloured by his own experience of Europeans in India and his reception among them. His presence in India, motivated by neither trade nor colonial ambitions, was perceived with suspicion even by the French. On a number of occasions, he expresses his frustration at the lack of cooperation from his countrymen and his feeling of alienation at their contempt and disregard for his project.

His own people seemed to be standing in the way of his acquisition of meaningful

knowledge of the Parsis. In the introduction to the *Zend-Avesta*, he notes the difficulties

he faced in obtaining the Zoroastrian manuscripts and the lack of support from M. Le

Verrier, chief of the *comptoir* at Surat:

> Tant que M. Le Verrier resta à Surate, il ne me fut pas possible de tirer des
> Docteurs Parses autre chose, que le Vendidad Zend et Pehlvi et quelques
> éclaircissements généraux sur leur religion (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 340).[2]

Referring to the mistreatment he received in Bengal and in Surat, he further observes:

> J'étois alors dans une situation la plus triste, exposé aux traitemens que j'avois
> éprouvé dans le Bengale (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 340).[3]

In the same section he mentions the hatred and refusal of support on the part of the

French for his project (p. 340).

The relation with the Parsi community in Surat was not an easy one either. His

teacher, the Parsi high priest Dastoor Darab was initially unwilling to share the precious

manuscripts in his possession. This reluctance may have had something to do with

Anquetil's inability to make timely payments (Stuurman 2007, p.261). During this time,

help came from the head of the Dutch trading post, Taillefer, through whom Anquetil was

able to borrow a good manuscript of the *Zend-Avesta*. Surat at that time was

characterized by unlikely collusions and animosities among the various nationalities and

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[2] As long as M. Le Verrier remained in Surat, it was not possible for me to obtain
anything from the Parsi Dustoors except the *Zend* and *Pehlvi Vendidad* and some general
explanations of their religion.

[3] I was then in a very sad state, and exposed to the same treatments that I had experienced
in Bengal.

religious groups. Antagonism among Europeans was reflected in the French and Dutch support of rival Parsi communities. In order to obtain his manuscripts, Anquetil took advantage of such divisions, played one Parsi community against the other and even enlisted the support of France's European rivals. At the same time, the two Parsi parties, one pro-Dutch and the other pro-French, were aware of the possibilities for exploitation such opportunity presented. In return for teaching Anquetil ancient Persian and letting him copy their manuscripts, they were determined to extract from him every penny they could (Waley 1952, p. 26). Of note in this context is Anquetil's contact with the English in India, whose help and hospitality are mentioned in his writing. For example, he requested Englishman Erskine, a member of the council of Surat and fluent in Moorish, to send him some "Sanskrit, Sindee, and Patani books if they fell in his hands" (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 358) and also used the influence of Mr. Spencer to obtain the only copy of the Persian epic poem *Borzu Nama* in Surat (p. 358). Interestingly, in 1759, Anquetil was attacked by an irate husband of a young woman to whom he taught French. In the struggle that ensued, he was severely injured and ended up killing his assailant, and accepted British protection in the following months. In his introduction to the translation of the *Zend-Avesta* he expresses his appreciation for the hospitality he received from the English councils of Surat and Bombay in 1759.

While Anquetil-Duperron's travel account—through its negative depiction of the European colonists, and its description of discord among the French—refutes the standard view of Western representation of India, there are also instances of some colonial commonplaces (Stuurman 2007, p. 258) in his writing. Like many others, he

believes that hot climate is conducive to idleness (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p.167), and

Orientals are characterized by effeminacy and debauchery (p. 272). Here, his

observations seem to follow Montesquieu's hypothesis that climate plays a significant

role in shaping human nature. But Anquetil also observes that there are exceptions to this:

« il se rencontre quelquefois de ces génies mâles que le climat n'a pu dompter » (p.168)[4].

A particularly striking example of the traveller's dilemma relates to his description of

Hindu women—a common topic in the larger depiction of India as the land of the bizarre

(Cohn 1998, p.11) in Western travel accounts of the time. It helps shed light on the

multitude of factors that influence the traveller's /translators' use of stereotypes in

representing the Other. The analysis of it, however, needs a bit more contextualization.

Scholars of Western colonial discourse have noted the prominence of women in

depictions of India in eighteenth-century Western writings (Marsh 2009, p. 43). In her

book *The Rhetoric of English in India* (2005), Sara Suleri observes that the "feminization

of the colonized subcontinent remains the most sustained metaphor shared by imperialist

narratives"(p. 16) in a number of fields and in both fictional and factual accounts (Marsh

2009, p. 32). Edward Said pointed out the Orientalist's job of interpreting the Orient for

his compatriots: "[…] standing before a distant, barely intelligible civilization or cultural

monument, the Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically

portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object" (1978, p. 222). This

responsibility often coincided with the translator's/travel writer's own hope of

recognition at home. The travel writer, when making the unfamiliar intelligible to the

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[4] Sometimes one comes across men that the climate has not broken.

home audience, takes recourse to known tropes and stereotypes to create a representation that is relatable to the reader. Inclusion of stereotypes satisfies the readers' set expectations about the Other, who, despite cultural, linguistic and geographical distance, can be summed up by the home reader through some of the expected depictions. While translators appeal to the authority of the original to justify their translation choices, travellers ask to be trusted in their representation of the source by including stereotypes established by predecessors. In both cases, the prevailing norm seems to wield much power over the representation of the unfamiliar. The much-circulated idea of India as a site of sexual availability made inclusions of depictions of *bayadères* or Hindu female dancers obligatory in travelogues (Marsh 2009, p. 43). Anquetil fulfils the reader's expectation in this context. Following the example of his predecessors, such as botanist and horticulturalist Pierre Poivre (1719-86) who travelled to India between 1745-47, he reports of his encounter with *bayadères* in Surat. His description of the dancers, apparently aimed to titillate the reader (Marsh 2009, p. 44), seems to follow the pattern that Poivre had established. Poivre's suggestion of the dancers' lasciviousness (Marsh 2009, p. 44) is echoed by Anquetil when the he claims, "Ce qu'on peut imaginer de plus lascif dans les postures et dans les gestes, accompagne alors leurs danses"[5] (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 363). As Marsh observes, the use of the verb "pouvoir" (to be able) seems to be aimed at inviting the viewer to delight in erotic fantasies about the dance (2009, p. 44). Another integral part of this representation of India as a land of incomprehensible strangeness —one that went hand in hand with the depiction of its women—was the mandatory description of a *sati*, and even though the textual details

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[5] What one can imagine as the most lascivious in postures and gestures accompanies their dances.

varied, the basic form and content of the scene were more or less the same (Cohn 1998 p.

11). The main elements in the depiction were the woman throwing herself into the flames

as they consume her husband's body, while a crowd watches the spectacle complete with

"musicians creating a cacophony with drums, cymbals, and horns" (Cohn 1998 p. 11).

The observation of *sati* appears to have been something of a spectator sport for

Europeans. Thomas Bowery, a merchant in the service of the East India Company, while

travelling on the west coast of India in the late 17th century, was asked by his interpreter

and travelling companion if he wished to see "a handsome young widow burned […] I

stayed out for curiosity's sake to see the truth of such an action I had often heard of […]"

(Bowery 1905, p. 37 quoted in Cohn 1998, p. 11). Bowery accompanied a crowd to the

site of the *sati*. In the preface to *Travels in India*, published in 1704, English painter

William Hodges noted that even though there was a great deal of interest in India "which

has been the theater of scenes highly important to this country...," and there have been

published accounts of "the Laws and the Religion of the Hindoo tribes; as well as well-

digested details of the transaction of the Mogul Government, yet of the face of the

country, of its art and natural productions, little has yet been said" (Hodges 1794: iii-iv,

quoted in Cohn 1998, p. 18). Hodges' account, alongside the descriptions of his travel

through the cities of Madras, Calcutta, Benaras and discussions of the landscape and

political and military events of the time, also records the *sati* of a young Indian woman

with an engraving of the procession of a Hindoo woman to the funeral pyre of her

husband. Therefore, given that descriptions of *sati* was "almost *de rigueur*" (Banerjee

2003, p. 1) in European travelogues of India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,

Anquetil describes a woman throwing herself on her husband's funeral pyre (Anquetil-

Duperron 1997, p. 268). What is of particular interest here is his later inclusion of the following note in the margin of his manuscript:

> J'ai ajouté ce trait pour me délivrer des mille et une questions qu'on me faisait sur les usages du pays; en cela j'ai manqué à la vérité. Le voyageur de retour a tout vu, assure tout, de peur d'affaiblir son témoignage dans ce qu'il sait de réellement vrai (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 268).[6]

The inclusion of such stereotypes is motivated by the hope of acceptance and recognition at home. As we see in course of this research, the promise of future recognition in Europe motivated all three travellers and made them pay attention to the existing tropes/commonplaces and ideologies associated with India. Moreover, as the above discussion illustrates, the obligation of conformity can necessitate blending fact with fiction. In his introduction to the translation of the *Zend-Avesta* Anquetil at one point notes how his mind is « [...] toujours occupé de l'incertitude du succès de mes recherches, et de la manière dont elles seroient reçues en Europe »[7]. It is worth noting here that Anquetil's patron, the Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélemy assured him that the translation of the *Zend* would be sufficient to get the former recognition in Europe (Schwab & Modi 1934, p. 85). He was promised membership of the Académie des belles lettres if he succeeded in his mission. Such motivation also intersects with the tension between issues of visibility/invisibility that influence both the traveller and the translator. While a depiction that is totally familiar to the reader threatens the traveller's distinct

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[6] I added this detail to free myself from the thousand and one questions that everyone was asking me about the customs of the country. In this I was untruthful. The traveller on his return assures that he has seen everything lest his eyewitness account is weakened in what he knows to be really true.

[7] [...] always occupied with the uncertainty of the success of my research, and how they would be received in Europe.

voice, one that does not conform to existing norms risks total rejection and therefore complete oblivion. As in Anquetil's case, reflections by the traveller often underline the power of such stereotypes and established norms over depictions of the Other. More interestingly, they shed light on his/her inner struggles; the specific approaches and stances in these reflections also problematize our perception of the metropolitan travel writer.

This example also points to the inherently partial nature of the traveller's account that dominant discourses tend to undermine for the benefit of a complete and definitive image of the Other. It displays a mixture of colonial stereotypes, open-minded curiosity as well as a critique of European prejudice—a mixture that reflects the traveller's intellectual background in which influences of Jansenism, scepticism and humanism (Stuurman 2007, p. 259) combined and conflicted. Among the books Anquetil took with him to India were a Hebrew bible, Charron's *Traité de la sagesse* and Montaigne's *Essais* (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 76). He was familiar with the philosophy of natural law and seems to have "absorbed bits and pieces of Buffon and Montesquieu" (Stuurman 2007, p.259). Interestingly, while these diverse interests relate to his specific intellectual and cultural context, they also have much to do with the nature of travel writing in general at the time. Commenting on eighteenth and nineteenth-century European travel writings about Egypt, Ethiopia, India, and Mexico, Nigel Leask (2002) notes that one of the attractions of this type of writing in the period lies in the "uninhibited energy" (p. 1-2) with which it ranges across modern disciplinary boundaries. Travel writers covered topics

as diverse as botany and zoology alongside politics and history, shared observations of the manners and customs of the people along with descriptions of ancient monuments (p. 2). Edward Said, in an article about Anquetil's biographer Raymond Schwab (1976), notes the former's "disconcerting appetite for all ideas and faiths, *regardless of contradiction*" (Said 1976, p. 156; my emphasis). What fascinated Schwab about men like Anquetil was that "they have none of the finish of the major literary or cultural figures, no easily discernible shape to their careers [...], no fully appreciated role in the larger movements of ideas they serve. Rather they are like fragments contributing [...] to an imaginary manuscript whose will they obey" (Said 1976, p. 158).

Proximity Without Fusion

Anquetil's travel account not only reveals the heterogeneous nature of colonial presence in India in eighteenth-century India, it also sheds light on the traveller/translator's perilous task of understanding the other without losing the Self. What comes across is what Cronin described as a "fragmented" Self resulting from conflicting influences and ideologies that interact with the pragmatics of survival and personal ambition (Cronin 2000, p. 100).

Anquetil's project of learning ancient Persian and translating the *Zend-Avesta* continued despite the multitude of obstacles in the form of political unrest, intrigues of his Parsi associates and his own ill health throughout the length of his stay in India. His guiding principle seems to have been the need to have first-hand knowledge of the language and culture of a people for any meaningful translation of their texts. As he notes

in this account, knowledge of the language and books of the Parsis had familiarized him with some of the religious ceremonies of the Zoroastrians. But his curiosity was not satisfied. He wished to enter their temple and attend their service, although he believed that, given the strictness of the religion, the possibilities of achieving this were remote (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 373). The Frenchman, however, had impressed his Parsi teacher Dustoor Darab with his single-minded dedication for learning, like that of a proselyte (p. 373), and convinced him to allow an entry into the temple. This in spite of the fact that Anquetil frequently voiced his criticism of what he found to be unreasonable in the Zoroastrian religion. The visit to the temple is described in vivid detail. For fear of being recognized as a foreigner, Anquetil dressed as a Parsi, and went accompanied by an attendant who made sure to stand at a distance. The description underlines the emergence of his sense of a distinct identity even as he tries to blend in with the devotees in the temple:

> Lorsque je fus en présence du Feu [...] que je regardois avec les simples Parses par le grillage qui fermoit la chapelle du côté du Nord, Darab me demanda si je ne lui ferois pas quelque petite offrande. En qualité de chrétien, lui dis-je, je ne puis faire ce que vous me demandez (p.373).[8]

Later, he adds:

> La position étoit délicate : j'étois seul, sans autre arme que mon sabre et un pistolet de poche; et si les dévots qui faisoient leurs prières [...], m'avoient soupçonné pour ce que j'étois, je pouvois en un moment être sacrifie au zèle de la maison du Feu (p. 373-374).[9]

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[8] When I was in presence of the [sacred] fire, which I saw with the lay Parsis across the rails enclosing the chapel on the north side, Darab asked me if I would make some offering to it. I said I could not, as a Christian, comply with his request.

[9] The position was delicate: I was alone, without any arms except my sabre and a pocket-pistol; and if the bigots, who performed their prayers [...] had suspected who I was, I could have at once fallen victim to their zeal.

As Cronin observes, fidelity has been a conventional benchmark throughout translation history for evaluating the quality and legitimacy of translation (Cronin 2002, p. 101). The issue gets particularly complicated when the cultures and languages of the translator and the translated are separated by great distance. Anquetil's access to the knowledge of the Zoroastrians depended on his Parsi teacher, the mediator between him and the source text and culture. The account of his struggles to translate the Zoroastrian scripts gives the reader a sense of the translator's difficult task of travelling between the source and the target, between maintaining his sense of Self while reading the Other. But the issue of trust is present here at two levels. Anquetil's fidelity to the source texts is dependent on his teacher's faithfulness/trustworthiness. It is in this context that we can fully appreciate his almost frantic attempt to take note of all he sees in the temple, without the mediation of his teacher. He suspects his teacher of holding back information. The distrust is justified when he finds manuscripts that the teacher had always denied having:

> [...] mais je passai outre, et je trouvai dans un coin [...] ses livres Zends, Pehlvis et Persans et entre autres, des manuscrits qu'il m'avoit assuré ne pas avoir. Je sçavois que sa Bibliothèque étoit au Derimher, et c'étoit une des raisons qui m'avoient engagé à chercher le moyen d'entrer dans ce Temple (Anquetil-Duperron, 1997, p. 375).[10]

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[10] [...] but I disregarded [him] and found in a corner [...] his *Zend*, Pehlvi and Persian books, and among others, some manuscripts, which he had assured me he did not have. I knew that his library was in the Deremeher, and this was one of the reasons why I wanted to enter this temple.

Critique of Western Knowledge

It is worth noting however that despite the many features that his writing shared

with the typical contemporary Western representations of the Other—including the

juxtaposition of elements from a range of interests and disciplines—in the amalgam of

ideas in his writings there are those that stand out for their critique of the established

norms of the day. In this context it is important to take into account his later writings as

well. The greediness, arrogance and the ignorance of the European colonists that he notes

in his introduction to *Zend-Avesta*, left a lasting impression on him (Stuurman 2007, p.

260). In fact, the anti-colonial sentiments expressed in his later publications seem to have

stemmed from his first-hand knowledge of colonial administration as he saw it in India.

In his introduction to the translation of the *Zend* he comments on the enormity of

European ignorance of the world, the inadequacy of a knowledge that does not consult

original texts, but remains content with referring to secondary sources:

> Un Tartare s'exposeroit à ne prendre qu'une connaissance imparfaite de la
> Religion Chrétienne, si, passant même dans les Royaumes Chrétiens les plus
> instruits, ils se contentoit d'entrer dans les Eglises, de questionner le Sacristain ou
> le Portier d'un Couvent. C'est pourtant ce à quoi se bornent dans l'Inde les
> recherches de la plupart des voyageurs (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 141).[11]

In this context, Anquetil, unlike most of his European contemporaries, appears to place

the European observer in a stance of reciprocity (Despland 1994, p. 7). He was fiercely

critical of travellers who voiced their own prejudices under the guise of unbiased

observation. In his introduction to the *Zend-Avesta* he proposed the foundation of a

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[11] A Tartar would acquire only an imperfect knowledge of Christianity if, even while
staying in the most cultivated Christian kingdoms, he remained content with entering into
churches and interrogating the choirboy or the doorman of a cloister. And yet, that is
what most European visitors in India limit their investigations to.

"travelling academy" (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 67) made up of eighty members who would cover far-flung parts of Africa, Asia, the Americas, etc. Convinced that the key to knowing a culture lies in learning the local languages, he suggests that the scholars would learn the vernaculars, the ancient sacred languages and note their interaction with local languages; they would also study religious history based on ancient sacred texts. Attention to the links between human histories of conquest, migration, settlements, customs, politics, proficiency in the sciences and the arts is deemed crucial in this process. In this he seems to once again echo Montesquieu (Stuurman 2007, p.263). Taking note of conquests and migration is important given that these lead to mixing of religious traditions. The assimilation of two cultures and peoples results in a third people that shares some traits from the first two; such knowledge, as he sees it, would help trace the development of human spirit. It is worth noting however that while both Anquetil's and Montesquieu's projects were expressions of Enlightenment philosophy, the former's inclusive humanism clashed with Montesquieu's notion of a fundamental political divide between Europe and Asia and of the superiority of Western liberty to Eastern despotism (Whelan 2001, p. 621). One may recall that in his most significant work titled *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), in which he explained the birth and development of different political systems around the world, Montesquieu saw the best example of a balanced government in the British constitutional monarchy. In 1778, Anquetil published a critique of Montesquieu's theory of Oriental despotism in a treatise entitled *Législation Orientale*. The arguments in this text seem to provide a framework for his travel experiences in India (Stuurman 2007, p.268). Here, he sought to challenge the idea of despotism as it was perceived to prevail in Turkey, Persia and India. While the details of his argument

are not relevant for our purpose, it is interesting to note that Anquetil, in his attack, cites

writers who adopted and extended Montesquieu's influential concept—among these

Colonel Alexander Dow, author of *A History of Hindostan* and an employee of the East

India Company. In this context, his insistence on the role of unbiased translation is

interesting. For example, he sought to demonstrate that contrary to the assertions of

François Bernier and Montesquieu whose concept of oriental despotism was based in part

on the notion of absence of private property, individual inheritable property was

respected in Hindustan. He attempts to illustrate his point by including the translation of a

Mughal commercial document (Stuurman 2007, p.269). He also observes that the

representation of Asiatic rulers as despotic is directly linked to Europe's commercial

interest and greed for "unlimited profiteering" (Anquetil-Duperron 1778, p. 31-32); that

"When Asian rulers make [the colonists] pay taxes like everyone else, [the latter] loudly

complain about Asiatic 'despotism'." (1778, p. 31-32).

Anquetil's position regarding colonial ventures was however far more conflicted

than the above account would have us believe. His portrayal of India as a site of British

oppression had its own philosophical implications (Marsh 2009, p. 136-137). In 1771, he

suggested that the French were perceived differently by Indians, and argued that a horror

like the "Black Hole" of Calcutta—an incident in which British prisoners of war were

held captive by the troops of the ruler of Bengal, Siraj ud-Daula — could never happen to

the French. In 1798 Anquetil wrote *L'Inde en rapport avec l'Europe* (1798). Here, in

contrast to his earlier position, he voices his support for colonies that are advantageous to

both Europe and India, i.e., "simple commercial establishments," and not great territorial

possessions (Anquetil-Duperron 1798, 1: 27-28). Interestingly, this work was dedicated to the memory of Dupleix, under whose governorship and expansionist policies French presence in India had reached its zenith.

Anquetil-Duperron and William Jones

The collusions and conflicts that characterized the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Western intellectual discourses about India and the Orient—the examination of which help refute the perception of a homogeneous Orientalism—are best illustrated in William Jones' attack on Anquetil's work. The two Orientalists had no doubt much in common; notwithstanding their rivalry, they stood at the same methodological crossroads (Bruce Lincoln 2002, quoted in Stuurman 2007, p. 266). Through their study of Asiatic languages they laid the groundwork for the comparative study of languages and civilizations. Anquetil, like Jones, moved from a Christian theological discourse on the genealogy of religious truth to a study of comparative history of peoples (Stuurman 2007, p. 266). His stance of reciprocity towards other cultures noted earlier points to his idea of a common origin linking languages, religions and cultures— an idea that has much in common with Jones' hypothesis that languages must have sprung from the same source. However, what separated the two was that Anquetil's point of departure for studying India and the Orient were Persian sources, instead of the customary Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic canons (Stuurman 2007, p.266). In this, he stood in contrast with Jones, whose discovery of philological similarities between Sanskrit, Persian, Greek and Latin (Bruce Lincoln 2002, p. 1) was part of a larger theory about the genealogy of religions based on a "Christianized Deism" (Stuurman 2007, p. 266). Further, while the intellectual

enquiries of both men were rooted in the persistent European quest for the origin of things, Jones' was also related to the colonial agenda of giving Indians a history (Cohn 1996, p. 54).

It is worth recalling that it was a copied segment of the Ancient Zoroastrian text kept at the Bodelian that had motivated young Anquetil to travel to India and decipher the unknown script. This was a script that the Oxford Orientalist Thomas Hyde had not been able to decipher. In an interesting article entitled *Anquetil-Duperron and Sir William Jones* (1952), Orientalist Arthur Waley describes the discord between Jones and Anquetil around the latter's translation of the *Zend-Avesta* and points out some interesting aspects of the latter's relation with the English. As we have already noted, the Frenchman was in close contact with the British during the latter half of his stay in India. Upon the collapse of French positions in India, he decided to return home in 1761. This was the height of the Seven Years War, and his only option of a safe route back home, after being refused passage by the Swedes, the Dutch, and the Portuguese (Anquetil-Duperron 1997, p. 430-31), was passage aboard the H. M. S. Bristol of the Royal Navy via England. During his detention in England, Anquetil visited Oxford. There, his request to take *Vendidad* to his inn for inspection was rejected by the keeper of the Bodleian. Later, after examining the manuscript in the bitterly cold library, he criticized the staff for labelling the treasure wrongly; displaying such ignorance that *Vendidad* seemed to refer to the name of the author rather than the book (Waley 1952, p. 28). Anquetil also disagreed with scholars Hunt and Swinton about the Zoroastrian texts. His derogatory comments about English Orientalist scholarship provoked a sustained attack on his work by William Jones that

reveals the nature of hostility among competing Orientalists. Anquetil mentions that his pointing out of a few errors to septuagenarian Oxford scholar Hunt led to an exchange of sharp words disguised as pleasantries (Cannon 2006, p. 42). His translation of the *Zend-Avesta* was deemed to be erroneous—he had mistaken a relatively modern form of Persian for the sacred language (Sarton 1937, p. 205). Garland Cannon puts forward the possibility that Anquetil was duped by his Parsi teachers and observes that "everything pointed to an unreliable translation of modern forgeries" (Cannon 2006, p. 44). Jones also found in Anquetil's translation "a farrago of puerile fables, tedious formulae, wearisome repetitions and grotesque prescriptions" (Cannon 2006, p. 42) that Zoroaster could not have composed. In his defence of the Oxford Orientalists he attacked the Frenchman's conceit, errors and style.

It is worth asking if Jones's attack, written anonymously in French, was provoked simply by issues surrounding the quality of the translation in question. Anquetil's derogation of England in the introduction of the *Zend-Avesta* translation perhaps did not belong in scholarship (Cannon 2006, p. 42). It has also been noted that while the Frenchman was arrogant and self-absorbed (Cannon 2006, p. 42) in his lengthy introduction to the translation, Jones' attack in turn was motivated by a need to display his own prowess in the French language (Cannon 2006, p. 43).

Anquetil's "absurd pretentions to [E]astern literature" (Jones 1771 quoted in Cannon 2006, p. 43-44) was treated with adequate disdain by the English press and scholarly circles. In fact, he had antagonists across Europe— Chardin, John Richardson,

Christoph Meiners, the Abbe Flexier De Reval, Diderot, Grimm and Voltaire. While the

Zend-Avesta eventually received wide recognition in France and among Oriental scholars

in the West, the opposition Anquetil faced in influential intellectual circles demonstrates

that the quarrels surrounding it had become part and parcel of the ideological struggles of

the time (Sarton 1937, 204).

MYTHOLOGIE
DES INDOUS;

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t r a v a i l l é e

p a r

M^dme. la Ch^nsse. de Polier,

sur des Manuscrits authentiques apportés de l'Inde

p a r

feu Mr. le Colonel de Polier,

Membre de la Société Asiatique de Calcutta.

Tome premier.

A ROUDOLSTADT,
à la librairie de la cour, et
A PARIS,
chés F. Schoell, Libraire. Rue des Fossés
St. Germain l'Auxerrois No. 29.
1 8 0 0.

Polier's Travels in India

While the impetus for Anquetil-Duperron's voyage to India came from his overarching goal of translating from the source even in the face of adversity, Antoine Polier's life in India and his account of it seem to exemplify a story of travel and translation for the sake of survival. In both cases, however, the inner workings of eighteenth-century colonial presence in India come to the fore, as does the concept of translation as not only a linguistic but a lived experience. Moreover, the idea of translation for survival, which no doubt conjures a particular kind of image of those in the periphery trying to survive in the centre in the postcolonial context, gets problematized when applied to the setting of European presence in colonial India.

The most important single resource that provides insight into Antoine Polier's life in India is the personal notice that he dictated to his cousin, the Canoness Polier. Here he gives an account of his travel in the region, punctuated by the patronage of three officers of the English East India Company— Robert Clive, Warren Hastings and Eyre Coote. This biographical text was later included by the Canoness in the preface to Polier's *Mythologie des Indous* (1809), which was published after the latter's death. The Canoness herself had literary talent and ambitions; she knew German and French, and published a number of translations. Her own comments in the preface of the *Mythologie* give us an indication of her interest in the origin of Western philosophy, which may be found in Asia (Preface xxvxi). It is very likely therefore that she may have put her own linguistic and literary skill to use while editing Polier's account. The other equally

important primary resource for Polier's life in India is his collection of letters written in Persian, the *I'jaz-i Arsalani*, which presents a vivid picture of his life in Lucknow.

We have already alluded to what Alam & Alavi describe as the "continental underbelly" (2001, p. 18) of the British in India, which refutes any idea of their colonial success in eighteenth-century India as having been uniform and unadulterated. Antoine Polier's career and life in India is a prime example of this collusion among Europeans in India. While Polier worked through a series of English patrons, the English in turn used his expertise and contacts to strengthen their position. It has been observed that unlike the British Sanskritists who compartmentalized learning into linguistically defined Hindu and Islamic categories, Polier's approach was non-sectarian. Polier, however, was not unique in this respect; French astronomer Guillaume Le Gentil, who represented French interest in India and was also employed in the service of Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula, was equally interested in the Hindu and Islamic intellectual traditions. He passed on his findings to likeminded people in Britain and France. Interestingly, Le Gentil maintained close contact with Anquetil-Duperron, whose antagonism to the English has already been noted. Polier, on the other hand, thrived under English patronage and built a successful life in India through the exchange of knowledge and information with his European and Indian contacts. His loyalty to the British was evident in his writings and communications. In his Persian letters his professional and linguistic identification with the English seems to be absolute (Alam & Alavi p. 27). He spoke and wrote the English language, besides Sanskrit and Urdu. In fact, he refers to himself as an *angrez* or Englishman in a letter to the ruler of Awadh, Shuja-ud-daula:

> [...] O Lord, I have travelled a long distance and have lived here on the
> instructions of Nawab Imad-ud-Daula Governor Hastings for five months,
> but I am still deprived of your kind attention. All the other Englishmen
> who came here have been fortunate enough to be blessed with your
> favours, but you do not enquire about my welfare. My English
> comportement [...] does not bear with this [...]
> > *I'jaz-i Arsalani.* Translated from Persian by Alam & Alavi (2001, p. 28).

In Polier we see an amalgam of interests, loyalties and sympathies; he collected
manuscripts in both Persian and Sanskrit and, much like Anquetil, expressed an
awareness of the partial nature of Western knowledge about India. Polier, however,
includes himself in the ignorant majority. Further, unlike in the case of Anquetil, his
motivation to know India better comes from loyalty to the English. The following
quotation from the introduction to his *Mythologie* is revealing in this context:

> The benevolent disposition of Mr. Hastings, the innocent instrument of my
> misfortunes, made him anxious to promote and improve my interests in some
> other way; and by his means I procured the commission of lieutenant colonel [...]
> In this situation I proceeded with the historical memoirs I had communicated
> to General Coote, and endeavoured particularly to complete a satisfactory
> account of the nation of the Sikhs. In the course of my enquiries I was frequently
> led into subjects relating to the history and mythology of the Hindus, and was
> surprised to find that I was entirely ignorant of the peculiar notions of the class of
> people with whom I had so long and so intimately been connected; an ignorance
> however very common amongst Europeans resident in India [...] (Polier, 1809, p.
> xiii, Translation from *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany* 1819, p. 468).

Here, Polier not only refers to his close relation to the English and the knowledge
that he shares with them, he also comments on the need to understand the intertwined
history of the religions and cultures of India for a proper understanding of its people.
Later in the text he elaborates on this point and notes the usefulness of learning Sanskrit
since it is almost impossible to understand the language of the Pundits given their
tendency to intersperse their explanations with terms of Sanskrit origin (Polier, 1809, p.

xiii). While he sought out Sanskrit texts, he also collected manuscripts representing an eclectic mix of Islamic, Greco-Hellenic, Arabic and Persian traditions (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 51)—much in the style of the Mughal repositories. This inclusive approach can be linked to a number of factors, including the nature of Indo-European contact during Polier's time in India. It was with the rapid expansion of the East India Company's territories in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that the British became increasingly aware of the "bewildering variety of peoples and religious practices in the subcontinent" (Cohn 2007, P. 13). Knowledge-gathering for the British, pioneered by Englishmen like Hastings, Jones and Wilkins, was not as compartmentalized along linguistic and religious lines in the eighteenth century as it would eventually become. Seen from this perspective, Polier's perception may have had a lot in common with the general colonial approach of the day.

However, as with other aspects of his life, Polier's relation to knowledge seems to have been marked by complexity and ambivalence. In the Delhi-Awadh-Lucknow region he imbibed the prevalent language and culture of Imperial court. His political and commercial contacts were a mix of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. It has been argued that his image of local people was influenced by their relationship to power rather than social and religious affiliations (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 61). Polier's letters and comments illustrate that while he was sceptical of the rigid social categories in India that often stood in the way of expediency, behind his apparently all-embracing view of India lay an awareness of hierarchies based on caste and religion:

> [...] a lucky chance made me acquainted with a man with all the necessary qualities to compensate for my deficiencies in Sanscrit, and help fulfil my desire

of having indepth knowledge of the fundamentals of Hindu mythologies in their origin. This was Ramchand, who had been preceptor to the celebrated Sir William Jones, and was then residing at Sultanpur near Lucknow. He had travelled over the greater part of India, and particularly the [N]orthern and [W]estern provinces: he was a follower of the Sikh faith and a Cshettrya by birth [...] (Polier 1809, p. xiv-xv).

Later, he adds:

[...] he had also two Brahmins belonging to his household, who were always at hand to be consulted on knotty points, and with whose aid he was quite competent to convey to me the information I was ardently desirous of obtaining (Polier 1809, p. xv).

Polier's mention of his preceptor's religion and caste is significant in this context for two reasons. First, while he trusted the non-Hindu Ramchand's knowledge, this trust was influenced by the fact that the English also consulted him. Second, he was also aware that the Hindu Brahmins were considered to have the exclusive right to teach Sanskrit. The summaries of Hindu texts that he prepared with Ramchand's help (in fact, as Polier explains, Ramchand dictated them to him) were therefore verified by the socially approved authorities, "who bore testimony to the accuracy and fidelity of what Ramchand had dictated" (Polier 1809, p. xv).

The above comments also need to be seen in the light of William Jones' influence on Polier. The fact that the Sikh instructor had the approval of Jones weighed heavily in the former's favour. If Anquetil-Duperron and William Jones are seen to represent rival schools of Oriental knowledge, then clearly Antoine Polier attached himself to the latter. In fact, when Polier obtained a manuscript of the *Vedas* through the mediation of another of his European associates Dom Pedro da Silva, he passed on a copy to Jones and handed

over another to the British Museum. His absolute respect for Jones is evident in a letter

he addressed to Joseph Banks at the British Museum:

> I lost no time in sending them to Sir William Jones, the only European scholar
> knowing the language in India at that time. I have no doubt that the Asiatic
> Society reports will soon convey to the public the opinion entertained of the
> *Vedas* by a man who is far above my feeble praise [...] (Polier 1809, p. xxiii,
> Translation from *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany* 1819, p. 470-71).

In a postscript, Polier adds that he is donating the copy on condition that Sir Jones and

Mr. Wilkins are allowed to have them for literary purposes at any time (Polier 1809, p.

xxiv-xxv).

Apart from Polier's obvious regard for the English, what is striking in this letter is

his emphasis on the authenticity of the manuscript. In his letter to the British Museum he

seeks to refute the widely-held view in Europe that no such Hindu manuscript existed

(Polier 1809, p. xx) and also that the Brahmins of India were reluctant to share their

sacred books and ancient knowledge. "[...] on the contrary", he wrote, "I have always

found them ready to impart a knowledge of these matters to anyone who expresses a

desire to receive it, not for the purpose of turning their peculiar notions into ridicule, but

with the more rational design of learning their real and original nature" (Polier 1809, p.

xxi). These observations, however relevant in the context of the contents of his letter,

may have had implications for his life in Europe after India. It makes the reader wonder

if, despite his obvious allegiance to the English, Polier is looking to make visible his own

distinct European contribution to knowledge about India—the legitimacy of which was

founded on his intimate linguistic and cultural knowledge of the country. It helps to recall

that Polier, throughout his career in the service of the English, had to remain outside the Company hierarchy because of his foreign origin.

It is important to note here that the British Orientalist understanding of Indian society— often used as a rationale for company rule—regarded the Mughal emperor as despotic— a point noted by Anquetil-Duperron. This image, designed to be seen as the antithesis of the benevolent British, was reinforced in the nineteenth century often through translation of select passages from Persian manuscripts (Alam & Alavi 2001, p.65). Polier had quite a different view of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam, whom he described as a humane and benevolent ruler, even if not perfect (p. 67). Such compliments, if motivated in part by a need to safeguard his own interests, seem to have been also rooted in his identification with the Indo-Persian ethos. The many expressions of politeness present in his Persian letters testify to his familiarity with Mughal values and tradition (p.69). It is in this context that I want to take a closer look at the hybrid nature of Polier's life in India, as it unfolded during his days in Lucknow, India's art capital in the eighteenth century.

Life in Lucknow

Polier spent fifteen years of his thirty-year stay in India in Lucknow, the capital of Awadh located in Northern India. It was here that he developed an interest in collecting manuscripts and paintings. Here he met British painters John Zoffany and William Hodges and also came to know Indian painter Mehrchand who enjoyed Polier's patronage. Mehrchand prepared artworks for him that had a distinct European artistic

influence (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 9). Here Polier became interested in the Hindu religion and dispatched volumes of the *Vedas* he had acquired in India to William Jones. Interestingly, the notes that he wrote in French for a book on Hindu Mythology, prepared during his stay in Awadh, earned him membership of the Asiatic Society founded by William Jones. His interest in translation also becomes evident during these years. He arranged for a part of the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata* to be translated into Persian for the British Orientalist Richard Johnson who also lived in Lucknow.

In her captivating article entitled *Chameleon Capital* (2005), Maya Jasanoff describes Polier's social circle in Lucknow as one consisting of "social climbers" and "border crossers" (p.3)—descriptions that resonate with ideas associated with travel and migration in our time. Polier's life in India was marked by a series of reinventions of himself, but none was more spectacular than the one in Lucknow. Here he made his fortune, established himself as an aristocrat and made sure that his impressive collection of manuscripts and arts earned him prominence among both Europeans and Mughals. It is here that we find a clearer idea of the inner workings of European presence in India, one that does not get visibility in dominant colonial discourses.

Polier's presence in Lucknow was by no means an accident. The city in those days was a "melting pot" (Jasanoff 2005, p. 55) of cultures, languages, races and religions. Its excesses evoked the most intense admiration or hatred — it was seen as a symbol of all that was refined and sophisticated, debauched and corrupt. The ruler, Asaf ud-Daula, while not the greatest of administrators, was a connoisseur of the arts, and

attracted the best of talents from Delhi, whose days of cultural glory were fast becoming a thing of the past. Lucknow's dynamic cultural character emerged from a blending of Hindu and Islamic traditions, to which were added European elements. The coming together of cultural and linguistic traditions manifested itself in the arts—in poetry, architecture, paintings and music of the city. In a way, Polier's all-embracing approach to Indian cultural and linguistic tradition was a reflection of what Lucknow symbolized—a uniquely creative environment rooted in hybridity. Here rigid divisions of language, race and religion ceased to exist and cultural lines became blurred. The prized manuscripts and paintings that Polier collected and exchanged came from Lucknow's thriving art bazaar. His collection, bought with the fortune he made through his various contacts, was the key to social recognition. But while he may have been one of the keenest of collectors, he was by no means the only one. Lucknow's art market attracted many more Europeans including English East India Company servants. Mary Louise Pratt coined the term "contact zone" (1992) to refer to the space of imperial encounters where trajectories of peoples geographically and historically separated intersect (p. 8). The concept of the "contact zone" helps shift the point of view and provides a perspective in which the colonial frontier is not with respect to Europe only (p. 8). In addition, the idea of "contact" emphasizes the "interactive and improvisational" (p. 8) aspect of imperial encounters. Pratt's concept helps understand the context of eighteen-century Lucknow as such a locus of cultural assimilation bringing together India and competing Europeans— where metropolitan travellers like Polier reinvented themselves.

If Orientalism means both the pursuit of knowledge sparked by curiosity and the urge to know the Other for gaining authority over it, then Polier may have been an Orientalist in both senses— he was both curious and an integral part of British imperial designs. But most importantly, his collection, like his linguistic acquisition, was the means to a comfortable life in India. In this, he treaded a fine line between cultures and languages, all the while seeking to leave a mark in the midst of conflicting ideologies and powerful influences, much like a translator. While he studied Sanskrit and dug out copies of the *Vedas*, he spent his everyday life in Lucknow and lived the life of a Mughal aristocrat with his Indian wives and children. His adoption of Mughal lifestyle and etiquette was a reflection of the contingencies of this life. At the same time, there was nothing unusual about European men living with one or more Indian mistresses in eighteenth century India. European society in Lucknow in the late eighteenth century was much less segregated than in East India Company towns like Bombay, Calcutta or Madras. As William Dalrymple points out, "the scale of cohabitation, intermarriage, and cultural assimilation during the earlier period of the East India Company, is clearly still not understood, even by scholars" (2005, p. 446), and presents yet another aspect of colonial India that eludes mainstream discourses. Polier seems to have been a devoted father. His Persian letters are quite revealing in this context. On one occasion he writes to his eldest son Anthony asking him to make sure to go horse riding and visit Captain Martin (another European expatriate who made his fortune in Lucknow). He obviously wished his son to be familiar with European society and customs—a wish that he communicated in his family language, Persian. Polier's relationships across cultural, religious and ethnic lines were intertwined with and inseparable from his private life. His

life in Awadh encapsulates the contradictions and heterogeneities that characterized much of colonial India. Unlike his British associates, he was not an imperialist. His exclusion from the East India Company hierarchy made him search for alternate routes to fame and fortune (Jasanoff 2005, p.19). Culturally diverse Lucknow was the perfect setting for his hybrid existence: one in which he could be both a European and a Mughal.

Polier's career in India seems to have evolved in response to the changes around him and the pragmatics of surviving in a foreign land. His protestant upbringing predisposed him to loyalty toward the English. It may also be useful to recall that he came from a family that had lived as part of a minority in Catholic France. His acceptance of service in the company and identification with the English may have been influenced considerably by the eighteenth century French intellectual and political environment in which minority protestants faced unprecedented violence and torture. But his own experience of North Indian society steeped in Indo-Persian cultural and literary tradition also shaped his social life. His identification with the British furthered private trade and other transactions with the local rulers. This is obvious when we take note of the selective nature of his overarching English identity. For example, as Alam & Alavi point out, while Polier often referred to other Frenchmen with whom he was on good terms as English, Frenchman René Madec is not included in that group, since he was not in Polier's camp (2001, p. 30). At the same time, this linguistic and religious identity with the English needs to be seen alongside his assertion of a very distinct European Self — one that he shared with Frenchmen in company service. For many of these men, the British Empire was seen as a tolerable substitute for a French one. What is also

noteworthy in this complex network of identities is that Polier tended to identify with the English mostly in his correspondences with the Indian rulers and local people, while in his English letters to William Jones and Warren Hastings he makes a distinction between the English and Europeans and identifies with the latter (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 30). It has been observed that his adoption of English identity was basically for the consumption of the indigenous rulers and the local populace. On the other hand, the tendency to equate all Europeans with Englishmen was commonplace in eighteenth-century India, even though certain Persian writings from that period do indicate that there was at least some awareness in India of the separate, culturally and linguistically distinct European groups living in the region (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 32).

Life After India

The years in India saw Polier transition from a military career in the service of the English East India Company to the privileged life of a Mughal aristocrat who nevertheless moved across religious, racial and linguistic divides. With the advent of William Jones and the growing influence of the English, the relative status of Indo-Persian and Sanskrit tradition shifted. We have already noted that Jones, like fellow Englishmen Hastings and Wilkins, belonged to "the Oxonian élite of the eighteenth century" (Alam & Alavi 2001, p. 39) steeped in classical thought and scripture. The nature of their intellectual intervention—characterized by increased focus on Sanskrit scholarship—was influenced by their own education dominated by Greek and Latin. Further rationale for this attention to Sanskrit texts came from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century conception that Europe would undergo a second renaissance

through the study of Sanskrit and the *Vedas* (Schwab 1984). Polier's move to Sanskrit scholarship in the last phase of his stay in India can perhaps be seen against this background.

On his return to Europe in 1788, Polier consolidated the change he was undergoing in the last years of his stay in India (Subrahmanyan 2000, p. 60). His move to France, partially motivated by the belief that the Revolution would usher in a new era of tolerance for Protestants, also had to do with his attempt to "relocate himself in the intellectual map of Europe" (p. 60). Yet in this new Polier we find remnants of his previous life. His cousin noted that even though Polier was inspired by the revolutionary doctrines of liberty and equality, he could never divest himself of his fondness for Asiatic pomp and splendour (Polier, 1809, xxxvii). Like a Lucknow aristocrat, in Avignon he kept a house and a table open for all, and it was his display of wealth that attracted the attention of the robbers who assassinated him. Explaining why she was entrusted (by Polier) with the responsibility of compiling and publishing the contents of the Sanskrit manuscripts, the Canoness wrote that the Colonel had expressed his incompetence to do the job; that after his long sojourn in the East, he had lost the ability to express himself easily in French or English (Polier 1809, p. xxix).

Seen from the postcolonial perspective, Polier's life in Lucknow draws attention to translation's all-pervasive and all-encompassing presence in a society marked by hybridity. As I see it, it also helps see translation as a "supple and creative channel" (Robinson 1997, p. 84) of self-transformation. This is not to deny the power differentials

that mark colonial and postcolonial societies, but rather to recognize that cultural

hybridity can be the site of creativity notwithstanding and because of such forces. Despite

Polier's own admission of linguistic incompetence, one wonders if his inability to

translate in the traditional sense had to do with the fact that translation for him was not

based on stable differences but a mundane and crucial fact of life.

CORRESPONDANCE INÉDITE

DE

VICTOR JACQUEMONT

AVEC SA FAMILLE ET SES AMIS

1824 — 1832

PRÉCÉDÉE D'UNE NOTICE BIOGRAPHIQUE PAR V. JACQUEMONT NEVEU

ET D'UNE INTRODUCTION

PAR

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

De l'Académie française

TOME PREMIER

Jacquemont and India

> [...] adieu pour la dernière fois avant que d'entrer dans le désert! Le désert!
> c'est un des districts les plus peuplés de l'Inde que je vais d'abord traverser; mais
> qu'importent les hommes quand ils sont tellement différents de nous?
> (Jacquemont 1877, p. 1:329) [12]

In his article entitled *Victor Jacquemont and Flora Tristan: Travel, Identity and the French Generation of 1820* (1992), Lloyd Kramer explores how the two young members of the French generation of the 1820s "developed strong cultural identities through a disorienting plunge into non-European cultures, and [how] both drew upon their encounters with other cultures to formulate strong personal ambitions"(p. 792). Kramer's examination of the interaction between the social, cultural and personal is a particularly useful one that informs my analysis of Victor Jacquemont's representation of India. As he sees it, Jacquemont's isolation of travel "produced a new pride in European culture" (p. 792), and it is my argument that the linguistic challenges he faced in India played a major role in this.

Victor Jacquemont was in many ways a typical European traveller of his day; he belonged to an era in European travel increasingly characterized by the West's "intellectual conquest of most of the rest of the world" (Bridges 2002, p. 57) through systematic observation based on science. At the same time, in his writings he refers to many of the cultural themes and stereotypes that made their way into the majority of

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[12] [...] goodbye for the last time before I enter the desert! The desert! It is one of the most populated districts in India that I will first travel across, but what do people matter when they are so different from us?

Western travel accounts of India. European response to non-European societies has always included observations about those aspects of daily life that represent some of the clearest signs of cultural difference—climate, racial differences (often related to climate), food, language, etc. (Kramer 1992, p. 794). Jacquemont fulfils this expectation when he writes about the physical dangers of India's climate, which, in his opinion, have been exaggerated by Europeans, even though the climate and geography on the subcontinent compares poorly with those at home. It is interesting to note that this sceptical attitude towards standard European accounts of India is soon replaced by a confession that the excessive heat of summer had destroyed his European energy:

> [...] si vous pouviez me voir aujourd'hui, vous me reconnaîtriez à peine, et me prendriez peut-être pour un indolent Asiatique (Jacquemont, *1843*, p. 95).[13]

The observations on climate, no doubt related to his physical discomfort and expressed in a vocabulary that was typical of the Western perception of its Oriental Other, seems eventually to colour his perception of the Indian landscape—and in such cases his scientific objectivity takes a secondary position. One interesting point to note here is the constant comparison with home, a typical feature of travelogues, and also of translations insofar as it can be seen as one of the ways the translator tries to make sense of the unfamiliar. Commenting on the mountains in India, Jacquemont writes that he does not like the Himalayas as he likes the Alps. Even though it is easy to find plants similar to those in the Alps, their distribution does not have the same grace (Jacquemont 1843, p. 250). Here one can see the juxtaposition of observations by Jacquemont's questioning mind alongside emotional and material influences of his own context. What comes forth

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[13] [...] if you could see me today, you would hardly recognize me, and would perhaps mistake me for an indolent Asiatic.

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is a constant to and fro between attempts at objectivity and the eventual failure to frame the similarities or differences of India in relation to his European sensitivity. If the inadequacy of the translation to its original is seen as one of the most formidable truisms that the translator has to contend with (Cronin 2000, p. 63), it is also true of the traveller's task. At the same time, the loss that results from this failure is a profitable (Cronin 2000, p. 63) and productive one inasmuch as it helps shed light on the vulnerability of the translator/ traveller in a foreign language or culture. The inability to come to terms with the original reveals the partial nature of the traveller/translator's perspective, and leaves hope for later generations to find new meaning in old texts and cultures.

One standard feature of Western travel writings about India has been the portrayal of its society as an unchanging and hierarchy-bound rigid one. It is, however, also important to note that the perception of the social structure for the travel writer varies according to his/her context. It has been observed that travel writings, much like translations, reveal as much about the Self as about the Other (Bassnett, 1993, p. 94). Victor Jacquemont's view of the social order in India is revealing in this respect since it also seems to reflect his perception of the social structure in early nineteenth-century France. Jacquemont believed that non-European societies lacked liberty because they had no middle class of independent workers and businessmen (Kramer 1992, p. 799). All the talk in Europe about the poor supporting the rich was in a metaphorical sense; in India it was literal:

> Instead of workers and eaters or governed and governors, the subtle
> distinctions of European politics, there are only the carried and the carriers
> in India. [...] Between the hammer and the anvil, between contempt and servile
> respect, there is no neutral situation possible. You do not thrash people for not

calling you "your lordship, your highness, your majesty". [N]ow it is the rule in India for the natives never to address the smallest English gentleman but by these titles, the same which they give to their rajahs, their nawaubs, and the emperor of Delhi (Jacquemont 1834, p. 1: 212-213).

However, he soon identifies himself with the "carried" class, which at that time included his British acquaintances in India. Much like the British, he insists that his assistants address him as "your majesty". At the same time, even if he regarded the caste system as an unjust institution (Kramer 1992, p. 800) that destroyed ambitions of improvement among the lower classes, his own experience of the increasingly mobile society of nineteenth-century Europe gave him a different perspective on social structures. Whereas Europeans sought obsessively to become professionals and rise beyond the social status of their fathers, Indians happily accepted their inherited social positions as destiny. They were neither embarrassed nor angry about a status that would cause rebellion and conflicts in Europe. The new social order in post-1789 France, despite the increased affluence it ushered in, created more people unhappy with their fate than ever before (Jacquemont 1841, p. 3: 526-27). In his view India is the Utopia of social order for the aristocracy (Jacquemont 1834, p. 1: 195), a reflection that is perhaps a commentary on his own view of the anxiety-ridden French society following the demise of the old regime.

Unlike his two predecessors that we have discussed, Jacquemont visited India when the British had emerged as the only colonial power of importance in the subcontinent and were no longer subject to the uncertainties of the eighteenth century. For Frenchmen travelling to India in those days, British protection was even more crucial

than it had been during Anquetil's and Polier's visit. The British, on their part, extended

their support to Jacquemont, recognizing the value of his scientific mission to their own

goal of accumulating knowledge about India. This is illustrated in the following Minutes

of the Committee of Correspondence of the Royal Asiatic Society, 19th June 1828:

> It was resolved:
> That this Committee, having been informed of the scientific object for which
> Monsieur Victor Jacquemont, travelling naturalist to the Royal Museum of
> Natural History of Paris, is sent by that institution to India, is of opinion that the
> attainment of that object is of the greatest importance to natural history; and
> therefore recommend to the Council to assist him by every means in its power in
> the prosecution of his scientific inquiries in India, and that C.Moreau, Esq., be
> requested to communicate this resolution to the Directors of the Royal Museum of
> Natural History at Paris (Jacquemont 1834, p. I: vii-viii).

Following the recommendations of the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society,

Jacquemont was furnished with letters of introduction to the literary societies in

India—documents that would help him immensely during his stay in the country. In a

letter to the President of the Asiatic Society, he expresses his gratitude for this support: "I

shall endeavour worthily to justify this favour, by arduously employing the advantages I

shall derive from it" (Jacquemont, 1834, I: ix), he writes, adding that the reception he

received from the Asiatic Society was ample proof for him that knowledge of science

belonged to all countries. By promoting the general interests of science, he would in

effect be providing testimony of the noble cause in which the Society was engaged.

Further, he sees himself as a collaborator of the colonists and adds that he would be

willing to communicate his finding to the Asiatic Society on a regular basis if it would

help the latter in the verification of information about the geography of parts of India that

the British had so far been unable to obtain (Jacquemont 1834, I: x).

This affinity with the British is also evident elsewhere in his writings on India. He was not only fluent in English, his knowledge of the subcontinent seems to have been influenced by British accounts. Writing about his travel plans in India and his hopes of exploring parts of Afghanistan, he notes: "The information I have received in London compels me to renounce this hope; the accounts agree too generally in proving to me the habitual state of anarchy and brigandage among the Afghans", and later, "Sir J. Malcolm, whose high office in the part of the British empire bordering on these countries, must give him better information of their internal condition than anyone else can possess, would perhaps favour me with his opinion respecting the hopes first entertained of the possibility of visiting them" (Jacquemont 1834, p. 1:xviii).

Jacquemont's relation to the British was therefore based on mutual need. Collaboration made practical sense, since, notwithstanding their uncontested influence, the British were still wary of any European presence in India. For Jacquemont, as for the other two travellers we have discussed, personal ambition intersected with this relation. His scientific findings needed the English seal of approval not only for security in India but also for future recognition in Europe. Further, As Kramer notes, Jacquemont's specialized knowledge "opened doors to the palaces of English governors and Indian rajahs" (Kramer 1992, p. 809). As for the British, extending help to him was also a strategic move. The Frenchman's scientific knowledge made him an invaluable asset to the English. In addition, what could be more reliable than a Frenchman's account of the benevolent nature of British rule? Knowledge and power in this context went hand in

hand for both, and, as we see next, for Jacquemont linguistic issues emerge as critical

factors in this respect.

Challenge of Language

> I have an excellent Persian grammar, and a tolerably good vocabulary of that
> language, with which therefore I have begun. The Hindostanee will come
> afterwards; it is already half known by a person who understands Persian. With
> what I shall have learned from books by the time I reach India, I flatter myself
> that I shall need no very long time to be able to speak it fluently, though
> incorrectly (Jacquemont 1834, p. 1:11).

If the above quote very rightly makes the reader hopeful about Jacquemont's mastery of

Indian languages, his subsequent observations will no doubt crush any such expectation.

One of the most interesting and relevant aspects of his travel account for the purpose of

this research relates to his changing attitude toward the languages of India. As Kramer

notes, perhaps the loneliness Jacquemont experienced in India reflected his problems

with Indian languages (Kramer 1992, p. 796). While he was surprised to find that so few

English officials knew the vernaculars of India, he also expressed his own difficulties in

learning them. He assumed that knowledge of the local languages would provide the best

access to the people of the country, whom he found hard to fathom. "Je cherche à

pénétrer leur existence, leurs sentiments, leurs idées. Je m'imbibe de l'Inde, au lieu d'y

mettre le bout du doigt comme font beaucoup d'Anglais qui prétendent l'étudier"

(Jacquemont 1843, p. 1:171)[14]. One can speculate whether the fact of his being

surrounded and protected by the English contacts and his knowledge of their language

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[14] I want to penetrate their existence, their feelings, their ideas. I am immersing myself in
India instead of dipping the tip of the finger as many Englishmen pretending to study it
do.

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eventually took away Jacquemont's motivation to learn the languages of the land. It helps to recall Loredana Polezzi's observation that often the existence of a support system, for example made up of expatriates, can eliminate the traveller's need to learn the languages in a foreign country (2001, p. 77). But his knowledge of English was by no means unique; many continental Europeans travelling in India, like Antoine Polier, were fluent in the language. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Jacquemont wrote the above letter on board the ship *Zelée* travelling between Madeira and Teneriffe en route to India (Jacquemont 1834. p. 1: 7), when he had yet to experience the daily challenge of communicating with the locals. In addition, he himself admitted to having no delusions about attaining anything beyond a working but fluent knowledge of Persian and Hindostanee. Later, in India, Jacquemont almost predictably cites William Jones' "excellent" Persian grammar as a resource. But what separates Jacquemont from Jones (even if this comparison is deemed unfair given Jones' in depth knowledge of Indian culture and languages) is the latter's progressive indifference to the value of linguistic access—an attitude that can perhaps be related to the state of French influence in India at the time. Jones' motivation to study Sanskrit partially derived from the need to have direct access to the Indian texts. His distrust of Indian translators (Teltscher 1995, p. 196) was related to imperial ambitions. As he saw it, the local interpreters and scholars, by giving inaccurate accounts, were subverting British authority (1995, p.197). Jacquemont's lack of interest, after the initial fervour, may have had to do with a realization of the futility of such knowledge in view of France's negligible presence in India. His contempt for French ambitions in the subcontinent is quite obvious when he observes: "Our microscopical establishments in India are always ridiculous, and a

humiliating anomaly in the event of war" (Jacquemont 1834, p. 2: 135). Further, as he

sees it, India would never make intellectual progress without a massive infusion of

European knowledge and education (Kramer 1992, p. 808), which had already started

entering India through English schools. Commenting on his attempts to study

Hindostanee, one of the major vernaculars in North India that incorporates vocabulary

from Persian, Arabic as well as Sanskrit, he observes that it is "nothing but a sort of

compromise between the language of the conquerors of India and that of the conquered—

a contemptible shapeless medley of Persian and Sanskrit" (1834, p. 1: 89)—an astute

observation regarding the origin of languages that was nevertheless coloured by his own

challenges in learning it. He regretted having to devote so much time to study it, but

needed to learn it in order to be able to speak to the people without the help of

interpreters (p. 1: 89), a need that was motivated by the pragmatics of everyday

communication during his scientific excursions around the country. His difficulty was

manifold; he found the system of writing hard to read and the guttural and nasal sounds

hard to form. "When, by hard study, you have mastered these difficulties, you have

acquired after all, only a contemptible patois without any literature"(p. 1: 90). Writing to

his father in 1831, Jacquemont once again expresses his frustration, "you wish me to

become somewhat of a Sans[k]rit scholar. You think that being in possession of a great

number of the roots of that language, its study would be easy to me" (p.1: 355). One

wonders if Jacquemont was in fact fulfilling his father's fantasy when he was reluctantly

devoting time to learning the languages of India; whether his father's wish for the son

was influenced by the scholarship of Orientalists like William Jones, and the wave of

indomania that followed. In a letter to his father Jacquemont writes:

> Vous me demandez si j'ai cueilli les belles roses blanches des environs de Delhi. [...] Je suis encore à les chercher sans les avoir aperçues. Malte-Brun, je le vois, s'est permis quelque licence de voyageur. Les plus belles roses du monde sont celles de Paris (Jacquemont 1843, p. 1:370).[15]

The above comment also reveals the traveller's persistent urge to refer to previous accounts— whether to check their veracity or to establish the legitimacy of his own version. Jacquemont, however, seems also to justify his feelings of loneliness and disappointment in these lines. He did not share the Orientalist view that knowledge of Indian languages could be a means of reinvigorating Europe's own cultural tradition (Teltscher 1995, p. 204). For this young scientist, learning Sanskrit, whose "syntax is horribly difficult" (1834, p. 1:355), would lead to nothing but the knowledge itself (p. 1:355), and Hindostanee, a particularly difficult language, would be of no use to him in Europe (p. 1: 104).

Jacquemont's progressive dislike of Indian languages and literature, and his perception of these as referring mainly to theology and mysticism strengthened his own sense of himself as a nineteenth century European with a civilizing mission. As his accounts reveal, his initial reservations about the English were gradually replaced by identification with the latter in an unfamiliar land. But this identification, although at times total, was interspersed with the emergence of a sense of his own French identity and superiority. Writing to his friend Victor de Tracy in 1829, he expresses his feeling of loneliness in India and how different his friendship with Victor feels when compared to

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[15] You ask me if I have gathered the beautiful white roses of the environs of Delhi? [...] I am still in search of them, without having seen any. Malte-Brun seems to have allowed himself some traveller's license. The finest roses in the world are those of Paris.

friendship among the English: "How little", he writes, "when compared to ours, is that friendship which unites the men of this country" (p.1: 95-96). Although he was grateful for their hospitality and protection, and held them in high esteem, he could not but note the coldness, and the dull insipid conversations that characterized the English (p.1: 96). This difference for Jacquemont went even deeper. The Revolution had promoted a culture of scientific inquiry in France that was yet to take place in England. At one point he expresses his scepticism of English scientific findings in India (p.1: 147). With his superior findings of geology, he expects to produce something better than "ordinary descriptions" and "primitive information" (p.1: 328). Interestingly, this disdain for the English in turn reveals Jacquemont's perception of how the English regard him when he writes:

> "Chez eux, on ne s'attend guère qu'à trouver du plomb dans la tête d'un homme qui va cassant les pierres sur sa route" (Jacquemont 1843, p. 88).[16]

The English held him in high esteem because of his knowledge of Shakespeare, Byron and Scott but they thought it strange that the Frenchman should ask questions about their internal administration or trade. They did not realize that Jacquemont humoured them only to gain information (Jacquemont 1846, p.1: 88-89). If it was his knowledge of their language and culture that brought Jacquemont close to the English, he could use this knowledge also to establish his own (and France's) intellectual superiority to Britain. His thoughts in this regard encapsulate the close relation of language to issues of power, identity and knowledge, especially in the context of colonial studies. They also reveal the Frenchman's confidence in his mastery of English as opposed to knowledge of Sanskrit

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[16] In their case, one would hardly expect to find anything but lead inside the head of a man who goes breaking stones in his path.

(or the other languages of India). He observes that given the sorry state of scientific knowledge in England, a book on the geology of the Himalaya would sell much better there than in France. But success depended on translating it into English, a task Jacquemont would undertake himself. He would need to translate it with some changes, "de manière à ce que le livre anglais ne puisse être considéré comme une simple traduction" (Jacquemont 1843, 1:345) [17]. There is more than a hint of irony when he adds—reflecting on his experience with Indian languages— that writing in a foreign language would perhaps be pleasurable for a change.

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[17] so that the English book might not be considered a mere translation.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined the nature of French representation of India through an examination of the writings of three francophone travellers, namely Anquetil-Duperron, Antoine Polier and Victor Jacquemont, who visited the subcontinent between the 1750s and the 1830s. My objective has been to explore the role of language and translation in textualizing India; keeping this in mind, translation has been used as a heuristic device to unravel some of the key factors that influenced these writings. By reading against the grain of the predominantly Anglo-centric colonial discourse on India—one to which Translation Studies has hitherto limited its attention—I have pointed to ways of establishing new links between travel, translation and representation in the specific context of India's encounter with France. In the process, this research has brought into focus the presence of individual voices that problematize our perception of India's colonial history and give us a nuanced view of Western representation of the subcontinent.

The goal of using translation as a means of delving into the many facets of these travelogues depended on approaching travel/travel writing and translation as comparable activities. An expanded view of translation has helped explore these writings as first-hand accounts that nevertheless underscore the centrality of language and linguistic transfer in the interpretation of reality and its textualization or re-textualization. The understanding of translation as a travelling concept (Said, 1983) that can respond to specific human

contexts has also helped broaden my horizon and appreciate where and how translation functions in plurilingual societies such as India.

While my research has been based on the premise of this connection between travel writing and translation, the value of contextualizing individual experiences in establishing such a link has proved to be crucial. The travellers and their accounts were influenced by conflicts and constraints that were both internal and external. The examination of the networks between Europeans, the Indian rulers and the East India Company officials underscores the fact that British success in India in the early days of colonization was not self-sufficient. While the Company representatives were suspicious of other Europeans, they were also dependent on the latter's collaboration. I have demonstrated that the background of the travellers, their ideologies and ambitions intersected with the context of Anglo-French relations in the subcontinent—including France's marginal status in India—and in Europe.

At the same time, this research points to the fact that travellers/translators are not defined solely by contexts. The analysis of Anquetil-Duperron's writings has helped illustrate the interaction between contingencies and deliberate choices that shape both travel and translation. The critical issues of visibility and invisibility, conformity and resistance have emerged as major factors in this respect. This interaction between the external and internal, the general and the specific, finds expression in the many ways language has figured in the travel accounts. As I have argued and demonstrated through my exploration of the accounts of the travellers, issues of linguistic access and translation

played a crucial role in shaping their knowledge of India. Antoine Polier's life in India and his writings draw attention to his distinctly inclusive approach to India, and to the fact that fluency in languages can contribute to the understanding of cultures as products of human interaction and forever evolving. As Jacquemont's writings illustrate, the traveller's/translator's lack of fluency in the language of the Other can be a determining factor in the manner in which cultures are interpreted. The analyses of the travellers' reflections on linguistic issues have also revealed that these are at once varied and comparable. In the case of all three, the relation to language is manifested in observations regarding personal goals and ambitions, which are at times related to issues of conformity and resistance. An awareness of the insufficiency of Western knowledge about India seems to be a recurring theme as well. However, the travellers differ in the ways they address this issue and in this difference we get an idea of how they view their own role in society. Further, as we see in the case of Victor Jacquemont—who gradually came to regard the mastery of Indian languages as a useless pursuit for his future career—this relation to language can change over time to colour the individual's perception of the Other. For Antoine Polier, linguistic knowledge was also a way of fashioning a career and an identity in India—a way of resisting the limitations of his context. As a Swiss national (although of French ancestry) he was in many ways an outsider to both the British and the French circles—but the demands of this very peripheral existence made for an extraordinary life characterized by fluency across cultural, linguistic, racial and religious frontiers. Anquetil-Duperron's long and self-absorbed introduction to the translation of the *Zend-Avesta*, where he discusses the significance of linguistic knowledge in accessing original sources, is particularly revealing in this respect. In his

view, it is the lack of such knowledge that is at the root of the West's general ignorance of the rest of the world. Interestingly, in his proposal for a travelling academy that would engage in a systematic study of cultures and languages, he seems to perceive his own role in addressing this deficiency in European scholarship as that of a pioneer.

In the case of all three travellers, attention to issues of language and translation also helps shed light on their perception of Britain and the larger Orientalist discourse about India at the time. Anquetil-Duperron's description of a *sati* and his admission that, even though he never saw the event, he included it in his account illustrates how a stereotypical representation can also contain the possibility of its subversion. Polier's life presents yet another example in which the distinct voice of the traveller/translator comes to light— in this instance defined by a hybridity that challenges the commonly-held perception of not only Indo-European encounters, but also of Anglo-French relations in eighteenth-century India.

The issue of heterogeneity, or lack thereof in the study of colonial discourses on India has been central to my argument. As a complex and heterogeneous genre that crosses boundaries, cultures and languages (Polezzi 2001, p.1), travel writing presents an ideal site for exploring the divergent voices and representations that often get subsumed within dominant discourses. As a corollary to this, I have challenged the idea of a fixed and unchanging culture or its monolithic representation in Western accounts of India on several levels. Anquetil-Duperron's idea of tracing the development "l'esprit de l'homme" (1997, p. 65) through a methodical study of conquests and migrations speaks

to an awareness of the evolution of civilizations. His refutation of the Western image of the Mughal rulers of India as despotic is another example in this respect. At the same time, such stances are not fixed either. The traveller's view of the Other, mediated by circumstances of a particular time—undergoes its own evolution. The example of Polier's move from Indo-Persian literature to Sanskrit, influenced by William Jones, helped further this argument.

My search for heterogeneity of representation has also revealed collaborations and conflicts among Europeans in unexpected places. The attention to points of convergence and divergence is based on an awareness of the self-contradictory and ambiguous nature of colonialism. The little-known continental network that facilitated British success in early colonial India also contributed to and depended on knowledge construction and knowledge movement through translation. As I see it, the idea of convergence takes on a much richer meaning than merely of shared views between likeminded or rival entities. Such a perception can lead to a particularly fruitful exploration of the multitude of agents including teachers, patrons, collectors, traders, and, most importantly, Indian and European translators/interpreters who helped in the creation and transmission of this knowledge, and often turned out to be unwitting collaborators in colonial designs. The role of translation in this context helps reveal the intertwined nature of issues—such as power, knowledge, identity, survival — that the simplified and finished representations in dominant discourses tend to ignore.

A related and equally important factor that comes to light is the fact that the issue of collusion with power that is at the centre of our understanding of translation, travel writing and empire, especially in the context of postcolonial studies (and rightfully so) also needs a more nuanced approach. There are times when individual voices, inconsistent in their dissent or loyalty, do not necessarily serve any all-pervasive homogeneous discourse. Such uncategorizable voices get swallowed up or obliterated by dominant representations. A reading of the kind that I have attempted helps problematize the mostly unquestioned coherence of those discourses by bringing to light the ambivalences and contradictions at both the centre and the periphery.

The goal of identifying the specific nature of French representation of India should involve examining both the writings and the processes they involved. At one level, the accounts of the three travellers appear to be marked by the same commonplaces and strategies found in general European travelogues of the period, including those in English. It is, however, important to refrain from taking them as similar representations based on the presence of certain stereotypes only. The change in Polier's attitude towards Indian knowledge tradition— even though it has to be seen in the light of being influenced by his British patrons— also manifests the processes representations can undergo. Anquetil's struggle with issues of conformity is also revealing in this context, as is his support for overseas commercial establishments later in his life. Further, if the French perception of India seems to at times coincide with that of the British, we have to recall that a distinctly English tradition of representing the subcontinent had yet to emerge in the eighteenth century. In fact, much of the conventions to be found in later

British travel literature came from translation of French and other European travelogues into English. At the same time, it seems obvious that the nature of French representation of India cannot be separated from the context of Anglo-French relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. What emerges is that travel writing, like translation, plays a role in marking and reshaping frontiers (Polezzi 2001, p. 102), perpetuating and challenging ideologies. Daniel Simeoni observed that "the translating agent straddles the borderline between cultures. Although various pressures associated with practice force him/her to 'stay home'- on the target side - s/he cannot afford to ignore the source field a long time without being at risk" (Simeoni 1995, p. 453). This thesis has revealed that the manners in which the translator/traveller negotiates the borderline can be as varied as the contexts that shape them. Further, the moments of conflict and ambivalence that can be read into the accounts represent the precarious and paradoxical nature of Western representations of the world outside.

Travel writing involves transposition of oral language into written text —an activity that is subject to the context of the target culture (Polezzi 2001, p. 88). My examination of Antoine Polier's personal notice, published posthumously in his *Mythologie des Indous*, presented a particularly interesting (and somewhat unexpected) instance of this, and could inform future research into travel writings and translation in the context of India. The fact that Polier dictated this text to his cousin, the Canoness, after his arrival back in Europe introduces the issue of elapsed time between first-hand experience and its textualization. Further, translation here is present not only in the recounting of a life steeped in Indian culture—the memory of which may have undergone

its own changes over time—but also in its textualization by the Canoness, who had her own literary skills and ambition.

Finally, the individual lives and texts that I have analysed help see both travel writing and translation as inherently partial. It is in this idea of an incomplete and unfixed representation that I have sought to situate the varied experiences of these travellers, one that a rereading facilitates and is facilitated by. Anquetil-Duperron, Antoine Polier and Victor Jacquemont were among many Europeans who visited India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Between 1757 and 1815 alone, at least 135 French travel accounts of India were published (D'Souza 1995, p. 11)—there were numerous others recorded by soldiers, traders and officers that remain to be explored. My examination of these three travellers is ultimately intended to point to the possibility of further research in the area that could bring new perspectives to discussions around colonial India from the perspective of Translation Studies. If the accounts that I have studied are partial and fragments of bigger stories, so is my context-specific reading of them. It is in this partial nature of reading and representation that I find the justification for re-reading the colonial discourse on India.

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