

*Cadmus Britannicus:  
Between Language and  
Literature in British India*

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It is indispensable in order fully and efficiently to carry out our views as to these schools, that their masters should possess a knowledge of English in order to acquire, and of the vernaculars so as readily to convey useful knowledge to their pupils; but we are aware that it is impossible to obtain at present the services of a sufficient number of persons so qualified, and that such a class must be gradually collected and trained in a manner to which we shall hereafter allude.

*General Education in India.*

Despatch No. 49, 19 July 1854. India Office Record.

WITH ALMOST TWO decades of intensive academic work on the history of English studies as a discipline behind us, it is almost commonplace to note that the attempts to link “English” as a program of liberal education to “English” as a nationalized and racialized cultural heritage have their solidifying moments in the nineteenth-century university.<sup>1</sup> English studies, for example, has a profound relational tie to the nineteenth-century idea of the university in that English literature in particular was invested with a specifically national and imperial value, which then became the natural and self-evidently constitutive subject for the cultural mission of the university, both at “home” and in the colonies. There are similarly profound ties between English studies and the red bricks in that the investiture of English with the complementary values of literacy and the literary was mirrored by the bipartite mission of these institutions — for both did it function as a humanizing and civilizing subject on the one hand and as a mode of technical training for civil service and imperial government bureaucrats on the other. What is not

commonplace in the current critical moment, though, is to speak specifically about this dual coding of English as both cultural knowledge and common information and to speak about the role that university policy had to play in adjudicating these two values of English in relation to each other. My particular concern is the interplay between the value of literary work and literacy work with reference to the inaugural moments of English studies in higher education, specifically in British India.<sup>2</sup> This focus allows for speculation about the value of English at the time of its becoming an academic object of study and as it was constituted by intellectual guardians who had an elective affinity with the universities. Once considered as a core component of the university's task to transmit general knowledge and now often considered instead as a skill with a distinctly practical or pragmatic purpose (as communication or as the means to a certain kind of job), English studies has not actually been subject to the kind of radical reconfiguration this vision of past and present implies. Instead it has historically and continues to this day to encompass both literary and literacy training. English studies certainly has been continually negotiated in relation to the drive to humanize and civilize its subjects.<sup>3</sup> But so too has it also borne the value of the utilitarian and been intimately aligned with literacy training in its work of indoctrinating students into a particular sociolect, into what would become T.S. Eliot's "dialect of the tribe" ("Little Gidding" L. 127) and *Times Literary Supplement's* "speech of nations" ("Give and Take" 567).<sup>4</sup>

Given the equally intensive academic scrutiny of the status of the university today, it is also now axiomatic that the late twentieth-century university, and English departments in particular, are driven by the institutional demands of research specialization and thereby lack a singular paradigm of knowledge production.<sup>5</sup> And, as has been persuasively argued, universities in the late twentieth century are founded on the necessity of transmitting certain skills, on a model of utility, performance, and marketability. The university's two primary products — culture and knowledge — have been not only reevaluated, but also replaced by the performative. Knowledge in a postmodern context, according to Jean-François Lyotard, is no longer

something that is owned or interiorized, but is instead trafficked and traded in institutions that are themselves mercantile. Knowledge-cum-Information Command has given rise to the phenomenon of what Robert Reich has termed “symbolic analysis,” an employment category that groups together those who trade in symbols instead of goods and one that has constituted a new niche in the global economy within which success is dependent only on immediate access to airports and universities.<sup>6</sup> The notion that Global English also operates on the principles of Information Command can only be intelligible within the kind of conceptual frame outlined by Lyotard’s articulation of the postmodern mercantilization of knowledge, a context in which it is possible for Richard Hoggart to suggest that school masters function as “the cashiers in the new world of brain-currency,” a particularly apt metaphor for the amalgamation of economic and cultural capital (*The Uses of Literacy* 246). In this scenario, higher education, and specifically the discourses of English, are still symbolic goods, but with a decidedly different economic and socio cultural value, one not necessarily to be found within the literary but instead within literacy.

The status of English in the late twentieth century as an imagined international language is not a matter of “historical accident” in other words, for, in a variation of Lyotard’s notion of the status of truth in a postmodern episteme — truth as that which works — the spread of English has carried within it its own legitimation.<sup>7</sup> As an example, one can turn to the recently founded Global English College in Vancouver, for the work this institution is performing is in many ways the logical extension of the work done by English language and literature departments all over the world.<sup>8</sup> Global English College is almost entirely skills based—it has no allegiances to either nation or the nineteenth-century ideals of the university most lastingly articulated by John H. Newman, for whom knowledge in the university was to be an end in itself, not something that was then to be translated into use or service. Knowledge — and specifically knowledge of English — was what made men (and he does mean “men” here) better, not what allowed them to obtain the certification necessary to secure a better job. The differences between

this vision of higher education and that offered by Global English College could not be more stark — and within the outline of its institutional mission, Lyotard's analysis of higher education as a training mechanism for the institutions of late capitalism finds a prime example. The legitimating narrative of the university in this contemporary context is no longer about knowledge and it is not even about cultural literacy in a broader sense, but it is about information. Even though this narrative is perceived as endemic to the late twentieth century, it has been one of the material effects of the suturing of literacy and literary work achieved by English education in the nineteenth century. A central move in the formation of English as a discipline was the dual coding of English as that which bears both functional and aesthetic value (one still with us in the bifurcation of the study of English into composition and letters), as, in other words, "useful knowledge." The figuring of English as both functional and aesthetic was at the core of the legitimation of English as the language of higher education, even as the *sine qua non* of higher education in India, and it was coterminous with its development as a subject of and for "research" in the West.

### I. The Two-Track System

Any genealogical tracing of the "two-track system" within English studies must necessarily cover the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy that preceded the establishment of universities in India. Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" has long been considered the text that directly caused the shift in official British educational policy in India, as then Governor-General Lord Bentinck both signed the text with his "entire concurrence" and issued a resolution shortly thereafter in March 1835, declaring that English literature and language instruction were to be implemented in India (*Sharp* 117). The "Minute" now has an originary and singular status within many historiographical accounts of the beginnings of the English education system, but it was actually one of an entire field of documents written during the height of the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy in the 1830s and how exactly the part has

come to stand for the whole is a trickier matter and needs to be interrogated.<sup>9</sup> For one, its unquestioned position as a foundational text derives partly from the conditions of its production: it came from the new president of the Committee on Public Instruction just a few weeks before Bentinck's resolution, and it came marked with Bentinck's signature. Further, it owed its status — then and now — to Macaulay's fame at the time it was first registered in the government office in Bengal in 1862 and then published shortly thereafter in England, for Macaulay was a much-consumed public figure, and particularly so after his *History of England* in 1849 and 1855.<sup>10</sup> More to the point, however, is that it exhibits all of the classic symptoms of a colonial pathology, which might also partially account for its being picked up by contemporary critics.

What Macaulay's text did do was to shift the focus slightly of the Orientalist-Anglicist debate back to the 1813 Charter Act: the first "set-aside" program for literary studies created by the colonial government. The 1813 Charter Act is taken to be more ordinary by some than by others; Gauri Viswanathan, for example, abides by this particular historical moment for the birth of English literary studies (though she does acknowledge precursors), while numerous others would place the moment, if it can be reduced to one, a bit earlier.<sup>11</sup> While the colonial government sponsored institutions of "liberal knowledge" as early as 1781, with Warren Hastings' founding of the Calcutta Madrasa, the Charter Act did much to quicken and advance the official educational mission in India, with the soon-to-be hotly contested phrasing that assigned an annual sum for the general project of promoting literary study: "a sum of not less than one lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives in India" (Sharp 22). As previous debates were more focused on the spirit rather than the letter of the law, the problem with the missing adjective modifying "literature" did not register as an issue for government officials until 2 February 1835, the date of Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education." It was Macaulay's own "adjectival insistence," as it were, that created a space for competing interpretations of the 1813

Act, and a note by H.T. Prinsep from 15 February 1835 is one example of an intentionalist interpretation of the same. Prinsep argues that the Act must be read according to the intentions of the legislature “of that day,” for the legislature “*did not* mean to refer to any other literature than native literature nor to any other learned natives than such as were eminent by their proficiency in that literature” (Sharp 118). The “spirit of the provision” was in the Orientalists’ favor, for as H. H. Wilson notes, two authors of the measure (Lord Minto and Mr. Colebrooke) were known patrons of Oriental literature (5). Without the crucial adjective modifying “literature,” then, the Orientalists and the Anglicists were left in the position of both legitimating one interpretation of the 1813 Act and making the case that one course of language study provided a quicker path to civilization than another. Thus the arguments often spun around the questions of necessity and responsibility, for these allowed both sides, as it were, to lay claim to destiny and inevitability. Consider, for example, the case presented for Oriental literatures and languages by the General Committee of Public Instruction in August 1824: “it was therefore a case of necessity, and almost all that the Government in instituting a seminary for the higher classes could give, or the people would accept through such a channel, was oriental literature, Mohammadan or Hindu” (Sharp 94).<sup>12</sup> The Act also maintained that the English were declared responsible for the “interests and happiness of the natives” and thus obliged to establish policies “as may tend to the introduction among them of *useful knowledge*, and of religious and moral improvement.” In effect, this meant that the defense of each linguistic or cultural system also hinged upon a notion of necessity and obligation, for the use value of each had to be argued.

Long before the peaks of the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy around 1835, many East India Company officials felt the need to infuse an elite native class with “useful knowledge” so that it might be employed in the British administration. For example, in an 1830 dispatch, J. S. Mill writes of “our anxious desire to have at our disposal a body of Natives, qualified by their habits and acquirements to take a larger share, and occupy higher

situations, in the civil administration of their Country" (paragraph 6). This did not, however, necessarily mean that *all* education of the natives ought to be geared toward their prospective employment; but again many government officials saw the value of mediated collaboration — an elite class of guardians and interpreters — as did Macaulay.<sup>13</sup> Economic rhetoric thus appeared long before utilitarianism entered the scene and Macaulay conducted a market analysis in his 1835 "Minute." In short, teaching the natives to speak English from its beginnings meant the empire would be staffed with inexpensive and manageable labour. Further, the circulation of capital and commodities would be facilitated and the everyday life of the European residents made less burdensome.<sup>14</sup> The Orientalists made much of the economics behind the Anglicist position, for in doing so they were able to claim that the study of Oriental languages was above or outside of the market, a claim made all the more important in the face of Macaulay's charge that these languages were not financially viable ("Minute" 242-45). As Wilson paints the project in 1835, for example, English language instruction could only promise to teach speech instead of knowledge and was at bottom a means "to provide funds for rearing clerks and copyists" (12).<sup>15</sup> The underlying premise to all of these arguments is that there is a necessary split between vocational and morality training, a "two-track" system, one that will be carried through to the founding of the universities mid-century.

Lord Bentinck, too, at one time abided by this distinction and held that English language instruction and religious and ideological conversion were not necessarily the same thing; in other words, teaching the natives to speak and write English was not tantamount to Westernization. In his "Minute on British prestige" of 5 August 1833, he writes that "Hindus may learn our language and science without changing their religion or diminishing their respect for their institutions and their parents" (Philips 867). However, in a 20 January 1835 minute on the education of East Indian colonial subjects, just four months before he was to declare that English studies would be the official curriculum and means of instruction in the colony, Governor-General Bentinck clearly stated the ideological role that

education was to play in “civilizing” the natives: “education and the knowledge imparted by it, can alone effect the moral regeneration of India” (Philips 1395). While these examples do not (nor should not) begin to elide the thesis that English studies functioned as a means toward achieving religious conversion and greater political and social control, it does, however, illustrate the extent to which alternate readings of the movements of language into the East Indian colonies are possible.

Even Mill, who promotes education as a circuitous means of religious conversion in volumes 8 and 9 of his *History of British India* (1835), makes a crucial point about British educational policy in India: the “civilizing” project that found its expression in the institutionalization of English literary studies was not the same as the more visibly economic project that found its expression in English language studies. The distinction between literature and language (literacy) is an important one, for while the project of the first, was, as Mill argues, “to inculcate principles of morality” (*History* 576), the project of the second, as it found its way into a number of English language schools, resulted in the students’ aiming “to become qualified for the duties of a copyist, or a clerk in some public or private office” (*History* 579). Though a clear division may not necessarily be established between the two, Mill’s point is well taken for its temporary separation of language and literature, of use value and of aesthetic value, one that prefigures the two-track system set down by the first universities in India a little over twenty years later.

## II. “all I want is a book”

One of the more common rhetorical conventions of nineteenth-century British colonial records relative to English education is the figuring of English as desirable because of its use value and aesthetic value; it is that which enables employment and that which enlightens and conveys a sense of cultural distinction. In other words, English is figured as the natural language for everybody because it is associated with the civilizing mission. In 1834, the year before Thomas Babington Macaulay’s notorious “Minute on Indian Education,” R. Montgomery Martin writes in his *History of the British Colonies* that the



English language and the English press of India are “now slowly but surely finding a footing, and paving the way for the final dissolution of uncontrolled despotism” (257).<sup>16</sup> Apocalyptic in sentiment, this passage looks toward an almost revelatory moment of finality, one that marks an epistemic break that divides India’s despotic past from its modern future.<sup>17</sup> While ideologically similar to a number of histories and government reports and minutes produced around the same period, Martin is unusual in that he charts and even prophecies the diffusion of the English language through channels other than the missionary and government schools: he is concerned not only with the role the press will play, that is, but also with the everyday bureaucracy of the British government in India. A demand for English language may be created by the schools and by the press, but a particular interest will be created when the business of government is conducted in English: “A demand for English tutors and secretaries is already perceptible. . . . Lord W. Bentinck has adopted it in his correspondence with Fyz Mahomed Khan, one of the native chiefs in the West, which has created a considerable sensation in Delhi. . . . Lord William’s letters in English to the native chiefs, are likely to draw their attention to the acquisition of English. As soon as the chiefs begin to study the language, or make their sons do so, the use of English will become general” (Martin 281).<sup>18</sup> This description of the ways in which the colonial government’s use of English became a public spectacle suggest an anxiety about language becoming alien at home. Moreover, these passages from Martin also attest to the self-generative and almost viral power of the English language. That is, even with its call to service in colonial correspondence, it appears to move on its own, and this viral quality both conceals and invites an inquiry into what is behind the incursion of the English language into colonial territories.

The still-unresolved question these anecdotes raise, though, is how to read the demand that is registered in them, or in Macaulay’s insistence that “the state of the market is the decisive test,” or in Alexander Bell’s claim that “some knowledge of the language is demanded by all educated populations on the globe” (Macaulay 245). Frederic Drew writes as well of the

desire, “eagerness,” and “appetite” for English language and knowledge, an inscription of demand that he uses to legitimate his advocacy of the “converting” of government to the views of the society, so that the English language and Roman alphabet might be used in schools, in his analysis the crucial site for dissemination (4, 6). A central issue both for the Orientalist-Anglicist debates at the time of the “Minute” and for any philological argument about the universal and cultural value of English is demand, which paradoxically introduces notions of consumer choice and thereby introduces notions of agency and rational subjectivity on the part of the natives into the controversy — notions that presume a fully present and unmediated subaltern speaking subject and notions upon whose elision Macaulay’s and other arguments depend. Macaulay’s text makes clear that the ideology of demand accedes to the *laissez-faire* ideology of the marketplace and that the English language, accordingly, is that which is “most useful to our native subjects” (Macaulay 242). That is, his argument for the utility of English in part depends on the presence of demand for English and on evidence of the undesirability of Arabic and Sanskrit, both of which he registers *via* a scrutiny of the system of endowments and stipends in the literary marketplace in India.

Critics now take a less dim view of this demand, for to assert that it was present, for whatever reason, is to argue against the proposition that English literary and language studies were unequivocally forced upon India. As Aijaz Ahmad points out, for example, “it is of course true, in some partial way, that English was an imposition,” but one must also account for the fact that Indian intellectuals from Rammohun Roy to Gandhi did not refuse English; in fact, “virtually all of them wanted it” (268). In this regard, letters such as Rammohun Roy’s to the Governor-General Lord Amherst on 11 December 1823, arguing that the funding for the Sanskrit College in Calcutta might better be expended on a “more liberal and enlightened system of instruction” might be read alongside those by the Governor-General himself (Sharp 101). These registers of native demand for European knowledges pass themselves off as transparent and authentic registers of the superiority of the English language and

literature, but they can only be thought as highly mediated representations of that same demand. One example is William Adam's 1835 study of the state of education in Bengal, a study that ultimately aimed to promote the colonial education project, and in which Adam reported how the boys in Moorshedabad "entreated me to represent their ardent desire to be favoured with more ample means for acquiring a knowledge of English. . . . The boys afterwards came to my lodgings of their own accord to express the same sentiments in more formal manner" (297). First-person testimonial in this instance claims the authority of experience for the official documentation of native demand for English, and Adam's careful ascribing of volition and desire on the part of the boys serves also to legitimate his role as intermediary transcriber. Another intriguing and somewhat well-circulated example of the official documentation of demand may be found in Charles Trevelyan's treatise "On the education of the people of India":<sup>19</sup>

The curiosity of the people is thoroughly roused, and the passion for English knowledge has penetrated the most obscure, and extended to the most remote parts of India. The steam boats, passing up and down the Ganges, are boarded by native boys, begging, not for money but for books. . . . Some gentlemen coming to Calcutta were astonished at the eagerness with which they were pressed for books by a troop of boys, who boarded the steamer from an obscure place, called Comercolly. A Plato was lying on the table, and one of the party asked a boy whether that would serve his purpose. "Oh yes," he exclaimed, "give me any book; all I want is a book." The gentleman at last hit upon the expedient of cutting up an old *Quarterly Review*, and distributing the articles among them. (167)

Homi Bhabha's "Signs Taken for Wonders" is absolutely resonant here, particularly in that the anecdote spins around a wonder and eagerness for the English book, "a Plato" — a book made English and perhaps one of the very few that could so readily epitomize classical Western knowledge and signify civility and other humanist values. It is not necessarily the case that these reports of demand are inaccurate per se, for there are a number of traces of presumably less mediated natives' "voices." What must still be recorded, however, is the mediated and ven-

triloquized quality of this desire for the book on the part of the natives, almost a given in colonial records and a critical factor when reading for traces of resistance and consent. It is not that anecdotes and texts such as Trevelyan's must be entirely disregarded, but that they must be subjected to a closer scrutiny, given that the "subaltern" as such cannot speak. This scrutiny, then, is bound to reveal instead the traces of a *colonial* desire, and whatever might be figured as action or agency is always mediated by the texts themselves, which makes the recovery project one that is inherently flawed and fated.

Critically, the reception of English in the colonies need not always be figured in terms of desire and demand, but might also be read through documented structures of resistance, such as a petition signed by 8312 educated Calcutta Muslims against the imminent educational changes made by Governor-General Bentinck, including the abolition of the Madrassa.<sup>20</sup> Colonial and even contemporary historians, however, do not necessarily register protests, and what is particularly evident in colonial educational documents and philological treatises alike is an almost self-congratulatory recording of the natives' demands for English instruction. These registers of native demand and desire for European knowledges pass themselves off as transparent and authentic registers of the superiority of the English language and literature, but they can only be thought as highly mediated *representations* of that same demand.<sup>21</sup> Further, the expression of a perhaps ventriloquized desire for English instruction is often pressed into service for the cause of a larger argument or case, in the case of Macaulay, Alexander Melville Bell, Fredric Drew, and others, to increase the amount of time and money spent on literally implementing English as a world language.

Mill presented the most commonly expressed counter-argument to Macaulay's reading of demand in his 1836 despatch to the Home Office, which was written in response to the "Minute" and later canceled by the president of the Board of Control, John Cam Hobhouse, who reacted strongly against a perceived resurgence of the Orientalists. For Mill, English was in demand because it often meant employment and thus had an immediate

economic value, not because it meant acquiring cultural value, as the Anglicists desired. From this perspective, the implementation of English education could only have a technical linguistic competence as its end, one which signaled an overtaking of cultured literacy by a specialized literacy driven by efficiency and utilitarian concerns. Orientalists, for example, pointed out the difference between the cultured and the specialized as they decried the removal of funds from Sanskrit and Arabic centers and institutions and insisted that funding for English institutions meant that the government aimed merely to train its work force. Mill even goes one step further and claims that “need” and “demand” for English studies had more to do with native colonial subjects seeking “a passport to public employment” than it did with their new belief in the inherent merits and superiority of the English language and literature: “Persons studying English from such motives are anxious to get employment with the lowest possible qualification, and, having obtained their object, seek for no further proficiency . . . [and] have no taste for our literature, no participation in our sentiments, no impression for our principles” (paragraph 14). Instead, Mill argued that the desired means of native education in the colonies was a concurrent training in aesthetics and the practical.

### III. Literacy and Literary Training

The tension between literary and literacy training is present from the early moments of the debate about English studies in India and in the university system, and it is perhaps most visible in the debate that rages in the margins of Mill’s response to Macaulay in 1836. It has its historical antecedents in the Orientalist-Anglicist debate and in part comes out of the problem of what the exact use of English was imagined to be. For one faction of the colonial administration (and this is not an isolated institution, for it has profound ties to the nascent public universities in England and to the Home government), English did in fact have a moral purpose, but for another faction it was imagined as strictly utilitarian — the coup of Macaulay was to suture these two functions, hence the vision of English studies forming a new faction of administrative clerks and workers

poorly disguised as a native “class of interpreters.” Mill’s objections to this claim are quite powerful; by the time he enters into the debate, English as a moralizing and civilizing force is an established critical discourse, but he does much to codify what is at this point the opposition. At core, Mill objects to the idea that the literary would be pressed into service merely for literacy, and to the idea that literacy would not in turn be called upon to infuse the colonial subject with the value of the literary. Its imagined “civilizing” function in this case is not just to impart both, but also to impart the ability to make distinctions between the two: between the literary and the commercial, the “higher” and the “lower,” the standard and the common. English has been figured as the “natural” language for everybody — including colonial subjects and the middle and lower classes in England — precisely because it has been associated with this civilizing mission. The history of the actual implementation of English during the colonial period, then, is also a history of its figurative reworking as simultaneously aesthetic and practical.

In her “English in a Literate Society,” Viswanathan marks a typographical confusion or confounding (a “discursive shift” as she calls it) between literacy and the literary, one which speaks to this kind of collapse. This collapse is all the more apparent in the case of English studies in India in that the ideological work of the colonial education project is to produce technically serviceable and culturally enlightened subjects:

Likewise I have at times seen “literary education” quietly slip into “literacy education” in the hands of unsuspecting printers, but it occurs to me now that the error may have far more to say to the Indian educational scene than the corrected version. For, after all, the history of modern Indian education can be said to have evolved between these two poles, the conflation of “literary” and “literacy” being one of the ideological achievements of a discipline functioning as the carrier of both secular and religious culture.

(36)

The transcription error, or the typographical mistake, is thus not unimportant, for it is through these accidents that the relations that bind the “literary” to “literacy” are revealed. A critical example for Viswanathan’s argument in a different context

about the ideological preeminence of the civilizing mission of education is Bengal Civil Service Officer Charles Trevelyan, known particularly for his influential 1838 tract *On the Education of the People of India*.

In a letter to Governor-General Bentinck (9 April 1834) on the subject of national education in India, Trevelyan basks in an early victory for the Anglicists and makes an explicit connection between language and morality: "it cannot be concealed that the English system has become the dominant one . . . [and that] India is on the eve of a great moral change . . . [Lord Bentinck will] become the regenerator of more than 100 millions of your fellow creatures in all their successive generations" (Philips 1239). Despite his overwhelming insistence on the moral and intellectual enlightenment that English literature is sure to provide, however, Trevelyan will soon thereafter hint at both its intrinsic economic value and on the need to constitute and control this value in his tract on education. In this 1838 piece *On the Education of the People of India*, Trevelyan tries carefully to relegate the mercenary motives behind English language instruction to a time before the rule of Governor-General Bentinck. English was formerly prevalent, he admits, yet it was thrown over to what he terms "menial servants and dependents" and caught up by greed and concern for profits (*EPI* 114). For Trevelyan, then, Bentinck's decision to implement English as the language of government and diplomacy salvaged the language and restored it to its proper supremacy and position as the transmitter and medium for corrective, Western knowledges.

Despite his insistence on the suppression and even erasure of economic concerns, however, Trevelyan cannot entirely deny that above all else, instructing the natives in English is good business for both sides: he notes, for example, that "A liberal English education is the surest road to promotion. It is by far the best education the natives can get; and the Government must always select the best instructed persons that are to be had, for the public service" (*EPI* 169). English-educated natives, then, mean skilled and inexpensive labour for the colonial administration and a relatively secured and well-paid native

clerical work force. This admission, interestingly enough, comes in a footnote, as Trevelyan uses the text to force a physical and perhaps cognitive separation between morality and economic practicality, between the values transmitted by a literary education and those transmitted by an education that ends with literacy. This separation cannot stand, for even as the British produced a desire for their literature on the part of the natives, they produced an even greater desire for the economic privileges that English literacy might guarantee. In effect, the attribution of the project of British education in India to the desire to institute a curative morality (achieved through the literary) and the attribution of this same project to a desire wholly to produce better and cheaper workers for the colonial, bureaucratic machine (achieved through ensuring literacy) amount to two equally insufficient and not mutually exclusive narratives. Neither of the two narratives can stand as an answer to the question of what lies behind the incursion of English into India. Despite attempts to hold them as separate, the literary and literacy continue to overlap and mutually constitute one another.

The crucial test case here is Sir Charles Wood's 19 July 1854 Despatch, which provided for a "bifurcation" between literary and vocational education, in addition to forming a public Department of Education for each presidency, mandating the establishment of universities, removing education expenditure limits, introducing grants-in-aid for private institutions, and considering the extension of vernacular education.<sup>22</sup> This bifurcation between the literary and the vocational was designed to take shape in the high schools, where there were to be two tracks — "one leading to the Entrance Examination of the Universities, the other of a more practical character, intended to fit youths for commercial or other non-literary pursuits."<sup>23</sup> Both tracks, however, are written under the sign of the useful, for what the colonial government could and should strive for over all else, Wood argues, is the "conferring upon the natives of India those vast moral and material blessings which flow from the general diffusion of useful knowledge" (*GEI* 944-45). In this respect, the English language is to function not only as the master code or "key" to European literature, knowledge, and



culture, but also as a code in itself, upon whose deciphering a general technical, transmittable literacy depends (*GEI* 966).

#### IV. The Study of English

While scholarly research on the English language through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries was quite often marked by philosophical and metaphysical speculation and aimed at an audience of cultural elites, the practical manuals devoted to English grammar beginning in the later eighteenth century took a decidedly practical and even populist turn.<sup>24</sup> The titles alone of such manuals convey a sense of the intended audience — they are often couched as “introductions,” as is Bishop Lowth’s *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) — and are also quite often designed for individual instruction and for use in the schools. These practical manuals of English grammar are thus intended for young men not of the aristocracy, children, schoolmasters and perhaps even women (as “home educators”) more so than for a scholarly audience, and are noticeably without the aura of research and the kind of philosophical contemplation that can be found in the works of William Warburton, David Booth, or Henry Kett.<sup>25</sup> What these manuals do provide, however, is food for thought on the issue of utility, because they in particular frame English in terms of the useful and the practical *and* in terms of the aesthetic. Frederic Drew’s emphasis in his 1875 *The Possibility of Applying the Roman Alphabet generally to the Languages of India*, for example, is on the alphabet and language most suited for “public use” because the key arenas targeted for the implementation of the Roman alphabet are the schools, law proceedings, every branch of administration, and the postal service. This interest in language systems that are both serviceable and civilized can also be read from the work of the self-fashioned “Cadmus Britannicus,” Simon Brodley, who notably intertwines his praise for the beauties of the English character and the English language with a valorization of its utility: “no Characters can be invented more beautiful and pleasing to the Eye, and that may be read with more Ease, than the Roman and Italian Letters.

And as to Writing, our English Writing-Masters (who are the best Pen-men in the World) have brought that noble Art to the Summit of Perfection; so that, in my opinion, for Public Use neither of them can be amended or altered for the better" (iii). For Brodley — and Sir William Jones and John Gilchrist cannot be far from our minds here — English and the Roman alphabet suture perfectly the modern ethos of rational progress and development and the organicism of "ease," a suturing captured in his aestheticization of their "Natural Order" (Brodley 34). These entanglements of the aesthetic and a kind of natural fitness for the public sphere are not anomalous, for creating a desire for English meant first endowing it with the value of the literary *and* the utilitarian.

As a disciplinary study that came to embody both language and literature, English was figured as the medium by which students might attain both "discipline" and "knowledge," as that which would fulfill the functions of both literacy training, with its emphasis on regulation and standardization, *and* literary training, with its emphasis on cultural knowledge and cultural value. For a final example, witness Orientalist scholar David Allen in 1853 on the issue of what is most likely to turn the educational tide in India completely in the direction of English: "The vernacular languages of India contain but little science or literature of any value; and *something more than these languages contain is required* for mental discipline and practical knowledge, in the course of education" (273). For Allen, and for numerous others like him, English was to be precisely that "something more" — it was, in other words, to take on the burden of both instituting discipline and communicating knowledge. In its two component parts of literature and language, English was to bear a communicative value well beyond that of common expression. It was to be the repository of ideas and knowledge and it was seen as the natural and inherent container of knowledge as well — and this latter point is resonant of Arnold's claim both that literature embodies the greatest pronouncements of science *and* of all the humanities and that literature was not just ornamental, but also a way of being in and understanding the world (*Literature and Science*).

The study of English is made up of two component parts — the literary and the linguistic — and it is not the case at all, as one might suppose, that the formal, scientific investigation of language belongs neither to literary or linguistic culture, for those two cultures are sutured within the process of study that is made explicitly scientific. A split between language and literature is set up, whereby each kind of training provides for a different means of perpetuating the system of social distinctions, but the two are fused in a study that promises “diligence” and “honour” — values of both literacy and literary training. The whole notion of “study,” too, has at least two-sides relative to the production and consumption of knowledge: knowledge as an autonomous (disinterested, even transcendent) pursuit, the ultimate end of which is “good taste” and knowledge as a directed (practical, technical) pursuit, the ultimate end of which is “good sense.” What this means essentially is that the radical schism premised by the historical explanation that literary studies retreats into “high” culture and the grand narratives of humanism and a supposedly “Arnoldian” culture, while the study of language simply becomes technical, mechanical, and scientized, cannot hold. In other words, the suturing of these two cultures has been such that what we know as the two governing ideas of English studies in the nineteenth century — that of knowledge and that of information, or even culture and competence — cannot be so neatly or easily divided.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Here are a few representative works (earliest first):

George Sampson. *English for the English: A Chapter on National Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1922.

Brian Doyle. “The Hidden History of English Studies.” *Re-reading English*. Ed. Peter Widdowson. New York: Methuen, 1982. 17-31.

———. *English and Englishness*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Chris Baldick. *The Social Mission of English Criticism: 1848-1932*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

Terry Eagleton. *The Function of Criticism: From the Spectator to Post-Structuralism*. London: Verso, 1984.

Franklin Court. *Institutionalizing English Literature: The Culture and Politics of Literary Study 1750-1900*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992.

- 2 Value is a contested term here. For Frow, for example, meaning and value are contingent on historical and cultural circumstances, and value becomes the locus of conflicts about authenticity, authorship, and legitimation.
- 3 The canonical study of this subject is Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest*.
- 4 This is one of the ways in which the academy maintains an inherently conservative bent, despite how much it has been modeled in terms of progressive and evolutionary moves away from prior methodological traditions and narratives of literary history. The tacit assumption of the profession in general is that more traditional notions of performance and "correct" modes of writing still have an elemental role to play in the assessment of the integral worth and value of academic productions. Along these same lines, perhaps what will be the most lasting contribution of John Guillory's work in *Cultural Capital* will have been to point out that this singular sociolect is still very much the regulating norm (and one of the chief factors in the attribution of canonical value), and that adding different texts and authors onto a master list does nothing to change the premises on which that list is founded. Also, Leavis makes the claim that English studies is literary, but not exclusively so, for it has also a "liaison function" with history, religion, and other disciplines. The implication here is that the "one culture" is not as singular as this phrase suggests (158).
- 5 A few representative works that take up this argument from a number of different perspectives are as follows (earliest first):
- Arnold Nash. *The University and the Modern World: An Essay in the Philosophy of University Education*. New York: Macmillan, 1944.
- Magali Sarfatti Larson. *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1977.
- Jean-François Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.
- Arthur Levine, ed. *Higher Learning in America, 1980-2000*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.
- David Damrosch. *We Scholars: Changing the Culture of the University*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.
- Louis Menand. "The Demise of Disciplinary Authority." *What's Happened to the Humanities?* Ed. Alvin Kernan. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. 201-19.
- 6 The larger context here is the Bourdieuan notion that educational institutions serve as systems of certification, and for a prime example of this, one can look back to the Indian civil service and competitive examinations as a moment in which the links between educational institutions and the governing elite were forged. For Reich's discussion of symbolic analysts, one of what he calls the "three jobs of the future," see 177-78, 225-40. This job category involves all of the "problem-solving, problem-identifying, and strategic-brokering activities," and it even includes university professors, joined with art directors, writers, journalists, musicians, and advertising execs in the manipulation "of sounds, words, pictures [which] serve to entertain their recipients, or cause them to reflect more deeply on their lives or on the human condition" (177-78).
- 7 For just one suggestion that the movements of English as a truly international language have been a result of "historical accident," see Widdowson (13).
- 8 Global English College (English Language Centre, Vancouver, B.C.). The posted advertisement notes that "English is a Global Language. . . . At GEC you will feel comfortable in the friendly, global community that we represent here. We welcome you to contribute to our cultural understanding of your part of the world." Available: <<http://www.cimltd.com/gec/index.html>> (Nov. 1997).

- 9 As the editors of the *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta* put it, "the dictum that India owes Western education to Macaulay requires a good deal of qualification" (14). One example of a historiographic note that treats Macaulay as the singular event "A" that results in effect "B," English education, is Anderson (90-91). For a pivotal shift of the field of focus, see Viswanathan.
- 10 Sir George Trevelyan presumably copied it, or received it from someone who copied it from the Bengal government office and then sent it off to a London magazine. The best-seller status of the *History* created a need and a market for this kind of discourse.
- 11 See, for example, Richardson.
- 12 At one point in his influential *Orientalism*, Said argues that the study of Oriental languages is intimately aligned with "policy objectives" and propaganda and that the "acquired foreign language is therefore made part of a subtle assault upon populations, just as the study of a foreign region like the Orient is turned into a program for control by divination" (292-93). It is worth further mention that the ideologies of the two "camps," be they Orientalists/Anglicists or academic/administrative Orientalisms, were not necessarily separate and distinct (see Jenny Sharpe for a reading of Said's *Orientalism* on these latter distinctions and for a reading of the extent to which "benevolence" and philanthropy were equally complicit with the colonizing mission). One example of a fraught Orientalist position, one that reveals the internal contradictions in advocating both the implementation of English in India and the education and training of civil service officers in "Oriental" knowledges, is this: in an 1833 letter addressed to the proprietors of East India Company stock, J. B. Gilchrist, an East India Company stockholder himself, advocates "the propriety of diffusing a knowledge and cultivation of our own mother-tongue, by ample encouragement and patronage to every Hindoostanee" (*Rhapsody* 16), yet he also insists that no one "should be allowed to depart for the Indian peninsula, before proving, by a public examination, that he can read, write, cast up accounts . . . with a reasonable colloquial knowledge of the most useful language of Hindoostan" (*Rhapsody* 10). For Gilchrist and others behind the increasingly ubiquitous grammars for Arabic, Sanskrit and the vernacular languages of India (especially William Jones), these grammars were not only aimed at providing an "insider's" ethnographic view into native cultures, but were also presumably intended to facilitate cross-cultural communication and to propose that the burden of adaptation fall upon the shoulders of the English. A closer scrutiny of some of these grammars, however, reveals what one might expect in such circumstances: that the West/East hierarchy was never disbanded by this "bending" on the part of the English; rather, they were reconstituted and reinforced. Gilchrist's grammar, for example, while it attempts to instruct its readers in certain fundamental grammatical principles, contains as its core phrase after phrase on such topics as "dining," "sleeping," "walking" etc. — phrases one would use to correct and order one's servants, complete with reprimands and insults. Interestingly enough for the connection between common languages and military and governmental control, one of the central epigraphs of this text asks "what spell have arms, with useless tongues when led?"
- 13 Macaulay draws a number of connections between education and economics, and between the process of "civilization" and the process of opening new markets, with his famous edict in the 10 July 1833 speech "On the Government of India" in the House of Commons: "to trade with civilized men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages" (141). As Macaulay notes in his *History of England*, the trade balance was asked as a result of the English desire for eastern fabrics and other goods, and English fabrics went unconsumed both in England and in India. "Much English drapery lay in our warehouses till it was devoured by the moths" (476), he claims, and plenty of "good cloth" was sent

"half round the world to be eaten by white ants" (481). The approach to the problem of education also aims to rectify, if not to create, a balance in import-export trade, both to teach the natives to consume English commodities and to instill in them the need to consume English knowledges. Once these were constructed as a desirable and necessary commodity in themselves, the English would then be able to step in and fulfill the demand. In this instance, then, an English education functions as a service that insures a proper circulation of capital on two levels: so-termed civilized natives would acquire a taste for English commodities, and the schooling system itself would serve as a serviceable industry as it collected tuition and stipends and promoted the consumption of English-language books, newspapers, and so forth. For a reading of the first passage from Macaulay's speech on government and the context of slave rebellions in Jamaica, see Sharpe.

- 14 The notion that a common language was above all else beneficial for commerce had its own currency at the time; for example, Henry Brougham, in an analysis of the relations between a colony and its "mother country," claims that an important circumstance of colonial relations is "the similarity of language, origin, and manners." This linguistic similarity, with which he is most concerned, will then promote "the interchange of the inhabitants, the circulation of capital, and the relations of commerce" (100-01). While a similarity of origins and of manners is necessary in order to secure the "filial" relations between a colony and its "parent country," for Brougham it is a common tongue above all else that insures the circulation of (cultural) capital, without which one cannot even speak of colonial relations and connections.
- 15 Wilson goes on to insist that the natives be taught "knowledge, not speech." Macaulay did respond to Wilson's letter, so if read in its historical context, Macaulay's "Minute" appears as a contribution to an ongoing debate, and less like the lone manifesto it is often taken to be.
- 16 This rhetoric of prophecy and proclamation is not limited to the futures of English. In his impeachment of Warren Hastings before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, for example, Edmund Burke predicted that "the Indian vocabulary will by degrees become familiar to your lordships as we develop the modes and customs of the country" (780). Known for an extensive vocabulary of Anglo-Indian terms and phrases, Burke nevertheless at one point claimed that the writings and reports of East India Company officials were confoundingly obscure and indecipherable, even for a bureaucratic audience. On this issue of a "pure" English syntax as the only "properly" legible mode of writing, also see Sir George O. Trevelyan's claim that "Anglo-Indians are naturally enough wont to interlard their conversation with native words. . . . The habit is so universal that a Governor-General fresh from home complained in a published order that he could not understand the reports of his own officials" (22).
- 17 Macaulay's claim in his "Minute" that the education of the natives in the English language and literature was the only path to modernization was thus far from being an anomaly or the first argument along those lines.
- 18 The notion of a "trickle down" education system will at least partially form the basis of Macaulay's claim that the colonial administration form an elite class of interpreters, "English in all but blood" and responsible for operating as liaisons between the British and native populations. By virtue of their elite cultural position, this educated class of interpreters would help both to preserve and to disseminate European knowledges. What often goes unremarked about this still controversial and inflammatory aspect of Macaulay's argument is that a resolution of sorts of the Orientalist-Anglicist debate depended upon finding a means to unite the two systems. Otherwise, the Anglicists were susceptible to the charge that the traces of despotism might never be erased as long as the

natives were unable to look critically upon their own religious and cultural traditions and practices. Without a class of interpreters to translate between European and "Oriental" knowledges, the Anglicists would not be able either to mount a sufficient critique of the latter system or to make comparisons between the two so that the merits of one might be exposed and the flaws of the other condemned. See, for example, the Orientalist J. B. Gilchrist, an East India Company stockholder and author of *Dialogues: English and Hindoostanee*, in which he prophesies as follows: "everywhere the same craving for instruction in a better system is to be perceived and the abolition of the exclusive privileges which the Persian language has in the courts and the affairs of court will . . . firmly establish our language, our learning and ultimately our religion in India" (1239). Mass literacy in English and moral correctness were thus agreed upon as ends — what was debated was the means to these ends.

- 19 For example, Sarkar quotes part of this anecdote (65); and it also functions as an illustration for Niranjana.
- 20 This moment of resistance is recorded in Mill's cancelled despatch, and he notes that the petition "distinctly stated that the general opinion ascribed the measure against which they petitioned, to views of proselytism."
- 21 A crucial point along these lines — one illustrated by Sybille Küster's study of colonial education policy in Zimbabwe — is that a Gramscian theory of education, as that which functions by achieving the consent of both the so-called organic intellectuals and of the dominated classes, is not universally applicable to all scenes of colonial education.
- 22 *General Education in India*, Despatch No. 49. The Despatch also advocates instruction in Eastern learning, and a slightly different kind of two-track system in that it suggests two standards: one for "common degrees" and one for "honours." See James (44-45). The standards required for the ordinary degree "should be such as to *command respect*, without discouraging the efforts of deserving students" (45; emphasis added), which oddly presages the legitimation narrative *par excellence* of the late twentieth century: excellence. Also a standard of achievement and value without value, "respect" rings as hollow as "excellence" and functions similarly as an index of success, of a job well done and a service well rendered. "Respect," too, can be linked to "status," which the university is proclaimed to lack, at least in that the status comes not from the disinterested pursuit of learning, nor from the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. The university is thus figured as hollow and without value, and instead constructed as a means to government or other public employment. Bill Readings' work on "excellence" as the legitimation of the contemporary university is operating in the background here.
- 23 This tension between schooling for the elite and training for administrative or government service was present in early English educational efforts in Malaya as well. In 1904, R. J. Wilkinson, newly appointed Inspector of Schools for the Federated Malay States suggested "the establishment at a suitable locality in the Federated Malay States of a residential school for the education of Malays of good family, and for the training of Malay boys for admission to certain branches of the Government service" (Wilkinson to Resident-General, Feb. 24, 1904, ctd. in Roff 100-13). Instead of beginning with the two tracks (administrative-vocational and liberal), the new residential school opened in January of 1905 in Kuala Kangsar on the model of English public schools. Thus by the time Wilkinson was reappointed as District Officer in Batang Padang (also in Perak) in 1906, the new school was in service for the traditional and ruling elite and eventually came to be seen as the "Malay Eton."
- 24 For a discussion of the dynamic contradictions of literacy and language as print culture shifts from a narrowly elite audience to a more widely literate, bourgeois audience, and from a presumption of linguistic heterogeneity to one of

linguistic homogeneity, see Godzich, esp. 7-8. On the general rise in literacy in the nineteenth century, see Altick, who writes of the influence wielded by politics, economics, technological developments in print culture, and the changing structure of communications, most notably that of the penny post. By the time this generic form matures in the nineteenth century, after the moment of public education has begun and the philological association is an established academic structure, it picks up the tone and attitude of retrospection and mutates into the form of an instructive "history." One might even say that they are made over for a more adult, literate, bourgeois audience.

- <sup>25</sup> See Barrell on the visible manifestations of a split between a practical manual and a scholarly treatise: "the removal of controversy from works of practical grammar, while it still has a flourishing life in more expensive works of theoretical linguistics read only by the polite, had the fortunate effect of representing custom, the practice of the polite, as nature, as not open to question" (142). Also see Kett.

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