

with coronation scenes of Rāma that were issued at various times by ruling dynasties in different parts of India. The author notes the manufacture of such religious tokens from the Calcutta mint, linking their distribution across the country from the late eighteenth century onwards with commercial networks and the revival of popular pilgrimage routes. Garg even takes notice of Muslim tokens with depictions of holy places, namely the Prophet's mosque at Medina. Company rule also makes an appearance in Indra Sengupta's article on Hindu monuments in Orissa during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While Colonial discourse forms an inevitable component of her discussion, the only texts referred to here are official documents from the Calcutta Archive.

Articles in the second part of the volume tend to privilege India's textual heritage. Patrick Olivelle's review of Sanskrit legal literature views the temple through the lens of the Dharmasūtras. His discussion of the Hindu monument as a social institution draws particular attention to the administrative and financial aspects of the religious complex. For Natalia R. Lidov it is the ceremonies of the temple that are of special interest, as revealed in her examination of the *yajña* and *pūjā* ceremonies described in Vedic and Shastric texts. In contrast, it is the popular bhakti tradition that is John Stratton Hawley's primary concern. Trawling through texts like the *Bhāgavata Mahātmya*, Hawley reconstructs the different "narratives" of the devotional movement that swept across north India in the sixteenth century, resulting in an abundance of Krishna shrines. His comparison of visual and textual representations of Krishna's *līlā* is particularly instructive. The role of monks and laypersons in the patronage of Jain temples and icons forms the core of John E. Cort's contribution. His observations are more in the nature of an ethnographic investigation, and there is little reference to Jain literary sources. The volume concludes with T. S. Rukmani's philosophical discussion of the significance of temples, and the rules and regulations governing the rites of saṃnyāsins. The primary source for his arguments are Śaṅkarācārya's commentaries on the various Upaniṣads. While each article is supplied with its own bevy of footnotes, the volume lacks an overall index.

**George Michell**

ARVIND MANDAIR:

*Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation.*

(Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture.) xviii, 516 pp. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. \$55. ISBN 978 0 231 14724 8.

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Although the years since the millennium have seen the publication of many fine scholarly works in the study of Sikhism, few if any have attempted to disrupt and broaden the conventional boundaries of the field of Sikh studies in relation to mainstream disciplines. Arvind Mandaïr's *Religion and the Specter of the West*, however, promises to do precisely that. This is because of the volume's sophistication, speaking effortlessly through and to a variety of disciplines: it is at once an historical re-reading of indigenous Sikh and Hindu responses to colonialism during the reform period (1870s–1920s), and an astute philosophical analysis of the India–West

encounter. Mandair acknowledges that such a project inevitably raises questions about the construction of various fields of study, especially the history and philosophy of religions. By analysing how certain aspects of Sikh and Hindu traditions were reinvented in terms of the category of “religion”, Mandair manages to provide fascinating insights into the operation of the concepts of religion and the secular as universals during the colonial period. His deconstructive reading of the religion–secular binary (which can be considered a vestige of colonialism) has important implications for understanding the motivations and limitations of the later Sikh ethnonationist movement, but also for recognizing their pervasive influence on modern and postmodernist scholarship. In this regard *Religion and the Specter of the West* complements but also further complicates the work done by scholars such as Vasudha Dalmia, Peter van der Veer, Harjot Oberoi and Richard King.

The book is organized into three parts, two lengthy chapters devoted to each, with a helpful introduction, preface and epilogue. Part I focuses on Indian religions and Western thought. The major contribution of this part is to bring into view the normally occluded comparative imaginary of the West. Mandair does this through a careful analysis of the continuity of ontotheology – the metaphysical thread of European identity that essentially connects Greek philosophy, Christian theology and modern secular humanism. More than anywhere else in European thought, this metaphysical continuity and its oblique influences on Indology and the discourse of religions is evident in the writings of G. W. F. Hegel. The bulk of this section unravels the intimate and startling connections between historical consciousness, secular critique and its relationship to the construction of religion as a universal, and the construction of a comparative imaginary (that is a framework for “generalized translation” between cultures), as all central to the construction of Western civilizational identity that is in due course internalized by indigenous reform movements in India and later by Indian nationalists.

Building on the work of scholars in the philosophy and history of religions regarding the politics of religion-making in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in north India, Mandair adds to this a politics of language-making in the inventing of “mother-tongues” for indigenous Indians. He then ties these insights to postcolonial theorists’ descriptions of the West’s subject position claimed as universal and universally enforced, by detailing the actual mechanics of this self-constitution as it is repeated across time in various contexts – that is, by analysing a methodology of “generalized translation”. Adding to the work of Tomoko Masuzawa and Timothy Fitzgerald, Mandair analyses this comparative (Hegelian) imaginary of the West created through a fabricated discourse of “world religions” where the Christian West was able to define itself as unique, most civilized/evolved and sovereign. This apparition or “specter of the West”, Mandair argues, continues to be produced every time non-Westerners identify themselves or are defined under its rubric of religion – as was the case with the creation of Indian religions, which Mandair charts in detail specifically regarding the construction of Sikh-ism as a moral, modern, monotheism (ch. 3). Concomitant with this naming and making the other “religious” is a violent depoliticization that enabled Sikhs to be better controlled, leading to a “capture of their subjectivity” within a certain pacifist repetition of identity in order to maintain moral rectitude lest they be named terrorists (ch. 4). The mechanism that reproduces this spectre of the West (as best, right and true) operates not through the hard work of translation (which would actually require dialogue), but re-presentation (which imposes a hegemonic “monologue” that induces mimesis), where different cultures are brought into a single system of equivalence and exchange (p. 16). This comparative exchange through representation (of stereotypes) is what Derrida calls “generalized

translation”, a thematic which Mandair adopts given his ethical desire to return to the original difficulty of translation.

The initial comprehensive exposition and astute delineation of the question of Europe’s colonial legacy in the production of neocolonial imaginaries and new subjectivities in the first two parts, is finally turned towards possible Postcolonial Exists in the third. Here Mandair charts a seductive marriage between two types of repetition: in the “Vedic economy” of sacred sound, and Christian metaphysics of the Word. To break the chain of these repetitions that induce replication through mimesis, Mandair argues, one has to return to the original site of repression (of the non-modern) that produces a subjectivity marked by “an affect of shame”. To release this affect of shame Mandair proposes a psychoanalytic return to the site of lack, but this return would also involve “an act of rereading and reinterpretation of Sikh scripture” (p. 358) – given the reformist’s neocolonial reading being heavily compromised and transfigured into a mimete of Christianity (ch. 5). Mandair’s critique builds upon a decolonization of post-secular theory that still has a blind spot regarding religion and hence its inefficacy. Mandair initiates a re-reading of the Sikh tradition as either a way or “religion” that remains untranslatable (following Derrida), a political mysticism, or as some kind of secular form, but each form would necessitate a concomitant undecidable interdependent subjectivity open to the other as itself – which foregrounds the ethical work of translation as central to human becoming (ch. 6).

*Religion and the Specter of the West* presents a major contribution to a variety of disciplines, not just Sikh and South Asian studies: translation studies, postcolonial studies, race and ethnic studies, history of ideas, theology and religious studies for example. This *tour de force* is not ivory-towered speculation; for it is clear that Mandair is performing a self-analysis as his academic task. His cry for justice is what gives this book great insight, accuracy, credibility and ethical force. It is obvious that he has long mulled over these ideas and taken great pains to formulate them. The reader gains the distinct impression that Mandair’s personal struggle for a political voice, having been poured into an intellectual endeavour born out of social activism that spans well over a decade, has produced an immensely rich work of mature reflection and insight – one that will no doubt bear much fruit and deservedly so – for this is arguably the most theoretically incisive work in Sikh studies since the field’s inception.

**Balbinder Singh Bhogal**

ANNA SUVOROVA:

*Lyubit’ Lahor; Topofiliya Vostochnogo Goroda.*

(Love Lahore: Topophilia of the City.) 287 pp. Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura, 2009. ISBN 978 5 02 036404 2.

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Anna Suvorova has a well-earned reputation among scholars of Islamic South Asia as a researcher who has studied the Muslim culture of the Indian subcontinent in its different aspects from literature in the strict sense of the term (*Masnavi: A Study of Urdu Romance*, 2000) to more general topics such as popular Islam and the veneration of saints throughout the subcontinent (*Muslim Saints of South Asia: The Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries*, 2004). In 1995 she wrote her first “stereoscopic” description of an Indian city in her book *Nostalgia for Lucknow*, which focuses