Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Something has been lost, but the representation is all we have.

— Edward Said

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This project examines various representations of India recorded in British texts produced between 1757-1857. No credence is given to the truth value of these representations; they are not studied in the hope that they may reveal "facts" about India. This study endorses Stephen Greenblatt's modest avowal that "we can be certain only that European representations of the New World (read India in this context) tell us something about the European practice of representation" (1991: 7). It is precisely this analysis of representations as representations that is considered significant here. Any discipline which is even remotely connected with culture or even aesthetics cannot afford to neglect the brute presence of the representations themselves as distinct from questions of fidelity to some represented essence.

The intention is not to collapse the distinctions between reality and representation—assuming from a post-colonial perspective that the notion of reality is essential for praxis—but to emphasise the representations as distinct entities. As Edward Said acknowledges in Orientalism, "There were—are and are—cultures and nations whose location is in the East and their lives, histories and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West" (1978:5). But the present study is not engaged with the representations themselves but with the discursive networks they formed by their interlinkages with each other, where they "refer to; reproduce, counter and build on one another" (Teltscher 1997:3). As our grasp on reality grows increasingly tenuous with each
new theoretical innovation, the assumption that representations take on a reality of their own for each interpretative community\(^1\) gains in significance.

This project is largely contained within an **Indo-British** framework and for illustrative analysis uses representations generated by the colonial encounter between India and **Britain**. However, the analysis does draw upon and benefit from theoretical considerations of the colonial paradigm as a whole. For Britain, one of the foremost powers of the colonial era, the Orient was most closely associated with India. A reference to the "inscrutable Orient" may conjure up images of Communist Chinese generals or sinister Arab chieftains in present day America. But, Britain's collective unconscious may even now respond with a vague picture of imperial splendour in India. If such is likely to be the case today, one can imagine the charge the word India and its conceptual underpinnings must have generated in an age where imperial annexations were carried on in an aura of adventure which had not yet been dimmed by the forces of bureaucratisation. It is no exaggeration to state that British writers\(^2\) at one time or another, have used in connection with India nearly all the conventional connotations associated by the "West" with the "East".

A conceptual clarification regarding the validity of this signifier-the East/Orient—is necessary at this point. Raymond Schwab begins his monumental work *The Oriental Renaissance* with the very pertinent question:

> Sometimes qualified by near or far, sometimes identified with Oceania or Africa when not associated with Russia or Spain, the concept of Orient has come full circle. Since the world is round, what can this word mean?

(1984:3)

Quite evidently, there is no geographically accurate answer to this question. Indeed, it is an irony of history that a word which carries so little actual geographical sense as "the Orient" has acquired so much ideological baggage over the centuries that clarifications are almost rendered either impossible or useless. Ludicrous as the situation is, even "Orientals"

\(^1\) The concept of interpretative communities is borrowed from Stanley Fish.

\(^2\) The term "writers here does not refer solely to those who wrote "literature" in its exclusive sense. It incorporates as many as possible of those individuals who produced textual records of the colonial project.
now perceive themselves as "Oriental" which is an evident anomaly. However, the atlas as of now is West-centred and as long as this is so, the concepts associated with the terms the "Orient" or the "East" are unlikely to shed any of their semantic ballast. Perhaps the only solution is to put forward as a prerequisite the awareness that "this word [the East] and its synonym, the Orient ... are words merely relative" (Leask, 1993: 2).

The basic aim of this analysis (theoretically structured as it is around a post-colonial perspective) is not merely to enumerate or even elaborately describe colonial representations. Still less does it intend to triumphantly expose colonial (mis-)representations and recover the "true", the "real" India. As Homi Bhabha remarks:

> The stereotype is not a simplification because it is false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that in denying the play of difference [that the negation through the other permits] constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in signification of psychic and social relations.

(1994: 75)

This study, therefore has no intention of correcting (mis) representations, even assuming that such an act was possible in absolute terms. Rather, the attempt is to see the confines within which these representational strategies operated, the forces which went into their production and the products they themselves generated in turn. The study tries to uncover and examine the areas of semantic fluidity where, (though the representations do not intersect with a "reality") at least the interpretative and representational models achieve a structural dynamism as opposed to a colonially constructed static essentialism.

This agenda may be criticised as having been over worked already. Indeed, it may be seen as a process of being "excessively preoccupied with the master's concerns" (Minh-Ha, 1995: 261). Such an argument is based on the assumption that a concentration by erstwhile colonised people on colonial strategies will lead only to an endless repetition of those very essentialising differentiations which were the foundations and justifications of colonial

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3 "Representations are not only products, but also producers, capable of decisively altering the very forces that brought them into being" (Greenblatt, 1991: 6).

4 The tension set up in an analysis of a poem by Wordsworth in Chapter 7 where his accepted image as a "Nature Poet" clashes with his evident relief that his daughter was born in the midst of "culture" (clearly
racism. This, it has been argued is mere pandering to the social neuroses of the theoretically self-flagellating "guilty" West. Such an argument is valid in so far as any researcher who attempts to trace (as opposed to construct) either colonial or resistance strategies (of which representation is a major one) will have to confront these questions posed by Said in *After the Last Sky*:

> Why this absence? Did we never care about ourselves? How did we register the passing of time, the product of our work, the changes in our history? While "they" were travelling and observing, writing studies and novels, what were "we" doing? (1993:96)

As of now, it has to be admitted that the possible answers to these questions still lie mainly in documentation of the local and not in speculation or interpretation based on texts emanating from the colonial metropolis.

However, there is always the possibility that we may encounter areas where apparently no self representation exists, or at the very least, is not preserved. Even more pertinent is the subtle danger that we may end up foisting our own post-colonial consciousness onto such chronologically distant voids. Even if we grant that local documentation and subsequent interpretation is the radical area, it does not necessarily follow that preceding areas have been totally and unproblematically exhausted. The bottom line on any interpretation of colonial representations may well be only the further exposure of the already exposed imperial edifice. But the newer and subtle layers of discursivity within this structure which are discovered as a result of each variation of perspective can be dismissed only at a considerably high price. The possibilities of what "we" can find out about what "they" have said about us have not been exhausted precisely because far too much of that task also, until very recently was left to "them" by "us".

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5 This argument is vividly articulated in Harish Trivedi's *Colonial Transactions* where we (the ex-colonised) are advised not to "follow the post-colonial liberal guilty West" (1993: 20) and instead to investigate the "assimilative or subversive strategies through which we coped with their Orientalisms" (1993: 20). It has to be said, however, that the very absence of a post-colonial "guilt" or the pan of the erstwhile colonised people will enable them to function from a perspective different from that of the West.
This is especially true in the case of India as is proved by frequent attempts to invest representation of India with a truth value not generally associated in contemporary theoretical parlance with the constructions of Orientalism. This tendency is well exemplified by a statement taken from John Drew's *India and the Romantic Imagination*.

The main difference between the idealisation of India and the idealisation of other cultures is that the idealisation of India happens to accord with Indian conceptions. In other cases, the projections are fanciful, in the case of India authentic.

(1987:153)

Such arguments appear to be desperate efforts to sustain the authenticity of Orientalism after it has already been demolished. The problem with Drew's theory, of course, is that the Indian conceptions with which he claims that western projections accord, are, in this context, themselves interpretations and representations transmitted through western observers.

These representations were only too often integral parts of involved strategies of control. Almost without exception, they were implicitly if not explicitly, implicated in the colonial paradigm of power and control. But even if we consider representations merely and solely as aids to strategic control, surely any attempt at unravelling these strategies must begin with the representations themselves.

The significance of these representations as cultural (and in many cases, literary) artifacts also merits consideration. The fields of culture and aesthetics were the areas where these representations attained most of their individual identity and the relative autonomy provided by these spaces needs to be taken into account. The reference to relative autonomy, emphatically does not suggest that artistic or aesthetic merit can in some way "make up" for intolerance or racism. There is no conception that "art could redeem the nightmare of history "(Grenblatt, 1991:25). However, this analysis does insist on the idea that a category of art and the aesthetic does exist and that it does function (of course, in conjunction with constructed standards) to induce often positive responses, while the opinions and ideology conveyed in the work may be resented and rejected. This conviction is a sounding board against which individual works are studied, even as the common discourse they all shared in is kept to the foreground. Differences between representations almost identical at first sight,
are often to be found in questions of genre, form, market trends and aesthetic orientations and not in conscious ideological commitments alone.

To avoid the complexity of the representations in their complete context will lead to an unacceptable essentialisation and simplification. If we adopt an attitude of total dismissiveness or hostility without scrutiny to all British representations of India, by labelling them as purely imperialist or racist, we will be simultaneously denying India's contribution as an idea at least to movements which have been rendered globally significant by the vicissitudes of history. In effect, this would amount to ignoring the value of the idea of the Orient which was at least a mental entity with solid historical consequences.

We should indeed combat theories similar to that put forward by Mannoni in *Prospero and Caliban*, which, quite apart from the fact of colonisation, saddles all colonised people with an inherent dependency complex, which makes colonisation inevitable. We can deny with all possible emphasis that an India ever existed which corresponded exactly to either James Mill's condemnations or Shelley's idealisations.

But we would have to carry this attitude to an exaggerated and undesirable allencompassing level to argue that British Romantic/Imperial representations do not affect us either as Indians or as humans because they lack "authenticity". This concept is well stressed by Frantz Fanon (who certainly cannot be accused of synchophancy to Western Imperialists) in his *Black Skin, White Masks*:

> The Negro, however sincere, is the slave of the past. None the less, I am a man and in this sense the Peleponnesian War is as much mine as the invention of the compass. (1968:225)

This is not to call for a liberal humanist Universalism. This study pays considerable attention to the constructed boundaries which erase all claims of Universalism. But it still has to be accepted here that research which seeks only to reiterate and reinforce these boundaries will do nothing but ossify existing structures. Transcendence as such is an idealistic term with few claims or chances of being accepted today. However, attempts at crossing boundaries while retaining self-identity are necessary processes even if they remain at the stage of attempts alone. In the course of this activity one may at least discover new
traversable cracks and fissures which serve to expose the myth of colonial discourse structures as impermeable monoliths.

This study argues that the notion of imperial edifices being either impermeable or monolithic by nature is but a convenient myth. The shades of variation found among contemporary representations clearly show that we are dealing not with a uniform monolithic structure, but rather with a collage or jigsaw puzzle where the faultlines remain visible despite the surface appearance of a wholeness. Homi Bhabha's project, which refers to the deep ambivalences locked into the apparent universal fixities of colonialist epistemology is a launching pad for pursuing this argument.

Bhabha speaks of the location of native resistance in the fissures of colonial discourse and argues that not only native resistance but creative (perhaps unconscious) ambivalences of the writers' themselves are also located in such gaps and problematic spaces. Strategic textual discourses of control cannot totally succeed in their project of glossing over history. There are bound to be, as inevitable adjuncts of discursivity itself, lacunae where more dynamic versions of the process inscribe themselves. However, remains to be seen whether these ambivalences "weakened" the colonial structure in any way. Their presence of course, is undeniable.

A picture of the imposing and mostly strategically successful imperial technique of colonial self projection which appears solidly strong and unitary is presented by Gauri Viswanathan in her Masks of Conquest. She refers to the policy of English literature being used in India to present an ideal picture of European identity as opposed to the actual imperial selves who carried on the work of colonialism. She remarks that

the English literary text, functioning as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state, becomes a mask for economic exploitation, successfully camouflaging the material and the cultural activities of the coloniser...The split between the material and the cultural practices of colonialism is

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6 This notion is clearly explicated in Bhabha's "Signs Taken For Wonders" where he remarks that "the place of difference and otherness or the space of the adversarial is never entirely on the outside or implacably oppositional. It is a pressure and a presence that acts constantly if unevenly along the entire boundary of authorisation" (1994: 109).
nowhere sharper than in the progressive refinement of the rapacious, exploitative and ruthless actor of history into the reflexive subject of literature.

(1989:20-21)

Vishwanathan’s basic argument is that English literature functions as a discourse which provides the "natives" with an ideal picture of the colonial rulers. This project takes this particular concept on board, but further argues that such an intention was not confined to literature in a narrow sense alone, but to all textual productions of the colonial discourses. Also, to render the coloniser as an idealised figure, a less-than-idealised version of the colonised had also to be produced simultaneously. This factor gives rise to the dual proposition that representations of the colony/colonised play an important role in the idealisation process which was also part of the self-justifying and self convincing strategies within the imperial centers themselves.

This analysis does attempt to examine the structurally imposing edifice of British textual representations in its deployment of representation to idealise colonial activities. But, more significantly, in a deviation from Viswanathan, the argument follows that the idealisation project was not totally successful. It searches for those ambivalences which may reveal a momentary weakening (or, at the very least, the ontological inherent instability) of the binaries which sustained colonialism. To a large extent such moments are co-opted back into the structure of the dominating discourse. But this option is neither total nor unproblematic and the gaps remain to remind us of the constructed and supplementary nature of the narrative of colonial representation. It is indeed true that many of these moments have to be teased out, (involving an occasional reading against the grain) but they nevertheless exist. They are the potential sources of a relieving conviction that no discourse of domination or oppression, however strongly built up or fortified cannot be so successful as to be unchallengeable.

"The Englishman, actively participating in the cruder realities of conquest, commercial aggrandizement and disciplinary management of natives blends into the rarefied, more exalted image of the Englishman as producer of the knowledge that empowers him to conquer, appropriate and manage in the first place" (Viswanathan. 1989:20).

The concept of supplement is adapted from Jacques Derrida’s formulation in Of Grammatology: "As substitute it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness" (1967: 145).
This is not intended to suggest a search for inherent instabilities within the "negative" representations. There will be tenuous spaces which can accommodate both the resistance of the oppressed and the internal contradictions within the oppressors themselves. These spaces ensure that neither discourse becomes monolithic, they carry the possibilities of both opposition and self-questioning within their confines. They thereby indicate that there is scope for a creative dismantling, which is not intended to serve as an apology for Empire, but to indicate that the rhetorical edifice was inherently hollow and unable on its own to withstand scrutiny. The concept is that this hollowness is not a post-colonial creation but rather an evident aspect which (though almost always unarticulated) forced the proponents of Empire to overkill and overstatement.

The years 1757 and 1857 are selected as the boundary lines in this study. The battle of Plassey (1757) which helped British territorial power to come solidly into its own in India and the 1857 revolt which hastened the end of the East India Company's direct rule are important landmarks in the history of early British colonialism in India.

Plassey was not merely a British military triumph; it held emotional significance of a much greater nature. As Martin Green remarks: "Plassey began a new era for the world because it marked the triumph of Europe over India (Asia). Every European afterwards felt himself bigger" (1980: 35). It was the West's victory over Asia that was signalled, and this induced both a superiority complex as well as a "tolerance" mainly based on complacency. It was only after 1857 when the natives stopped "falling on their faces and worshipping the gun" and in a conjunction of the two motifs (superior military power and submissive native) "himself fired a gun" (Green, 1980: 80) that the rhetorical complacency set in tune after Plassey began to produce discordant notes. Jingoism and racism were, of course, always present, but as Patrick Brantliinger remarks, the pre 1857 attitude was one of a "relatively naive racism" (1988: 39). It is this naivety which vanished after 1857 when complacency was no longer a viable choice. The foundations of imperial discourse had been shaken and a harder, more uncompromising and more "scientific" racism was necessary to keep the imperial project moving.

9 The "Sepoy Mutiny" is of course the dismissive term used by the British historians. In nationalist accounts, the reference is to the "First war of Indian Independence."
It is possible to find traces of a modest epistemological break in the colonial discourse on India which distinguishes the pre 1857 representations and responses from the post "Mutiny" pronouncements. We may identify a "discontinuity" in the Foucaultian sense, as reflected in the question:

How is that at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge there are these sudden take offs, these hastenings of evolution, these transformations which fail to correspond to the calm, continuist image that is normally accredited?

(Foucault, 1984:54)

Such a hastening of evolution can be seen in the increasingly racist and strident representations of India after 1857. This is not to deny either that there were versions of these traits in earlier periods or that there was a type of linear advance in attitudes and their expressions. Rather, attention is called to both "the sharp lines of discursive discontinuity and the longer lines of continuity in non-discursive practices" and to how these can result in obtaining "a more flexible grid of interpretation with which to approach relations of knowledge and power (my emphasis)." While praxis, concrete action, does progress in a reasonably continuist schema, the discourses which engender them show a distinct discontinuity as "modifications in the rules of formation of statements which are accepted as scientifically true" (Foucault, 1984:54).

During the early stages of imperial annexation which are covered by this study, the full force of racism and officialdom had not yet totally crystallised into a well established and scientifically bolstered ideology of Empire. The texts produced in this period admit of illuminating contradictions and (as befits the productions of a formative period) are full of varied and individualistic responses to India. It was the period of "the Nabob" as opposed to the "Sahib" who dominated the later periods. The individual perceptions of scholarly

" Editorial comment of Paul Rabinow in his "Introduction" to The Foucault Reader (1984: 9).

The distinction between Nabobs and Sahibs is based partly on the concepts illustrated by Michael Edwardes in The Nabobs at Home (1957) and The Sahibs and the Lotos (1968). But while Edwardes places the transformation of the Nabob into the Sahib around the time of Warren Hastings's impeachment, this study regards the Sahibs as coming into their own only after the 1857 revolt. The terms Nabobs and Sahibs are used here as a "shorthand" to convey entire mindsets towards India. The Nabobs, represent the ostentatious pre Mutiny period, where their attitudes to India though complex enough were not often tinged with hate. The later Sahibs despite their paternalism also had the wariness of the native induced by the hate and revenge filled Mutiny epoch.
Orientalists, hard headed imperialists, Utilitarian reformers, Romantic visionaries and Evangelical missionaries all entered into the construction of a complex network of British attitudes to India. All these perspectives were to a great extent, subsumed in self righteous anger after the 1857 revolt. Richard Frere wrote in 1868. "You can have little idea how much India is altered. The sympathy which Englishmen felt for the natives has changed to a general feeling of repugnance-instead of a general feeling of content with their Indian lot" (quoted in Stanford, 1968: 21).

This analysis does not agree that the "repugnance" mentioned above did not exist before and appeared as a direct effect of 1857. But, it does take into consideration the prominent rhetorical shift which allowed such feelings to be more openly articulated after 1857. The change of the discursive framework has been employed as the basis of value judgements by some critics:

Compared with the men who were to follow them, those terrible Christian heroes of the Victorian era, preoccupied with the state of their souls and almost bent under the weight of their righteousness, the men who built the empire are much more attractive.

(Edwardes. 1968: 237)

This analysis does not consciously attempt such value judgements, but the fact that the Nabob did differ from the Sahib is part of the premises of the study.

The commercial profit motif, so essential to any colonial enterprise occupies a center stage position during this early period as well as in the later heyday of the Raj. However, especially during the earlier phase, the theme of profit coexisted with an equally romantic conception of India as a succession of exotic pageants. There also existed the trope of India as the Promised Land, as the goal of a successful spiritual Odyssey. At the same time the notion of the Empire as "civilising mission" which necessarily presented India as the negative pole of a benighted/enlightened binarism was also making its presence felt. Besides these, we cannot overlook those who urged expansion for the sole sake of imperial grandeur.

12 The word "colonial" is deliberately used here instead of "imperial". This indicates that while spokesmen of imperial grandeur often urged imperialism for imperialism's sake even at the cost of financial setback, the actual physical act of colonisation was securely tied to economic considerations.
and the Utilitarians who saw India as a convenient laboratory to try out their doctrines of reform.

Profit, Romantic Pageantry, Philosophical Idealisation, Utilitarianism. Evangelicalism and Total **Imperialism**—these concepts are in no way monolithic or hermetic. Many subdivisions and gradations are possible within each category. As parts of an interlinked group, these concepts cover the gamut of the images of India recorded by early imperial Britain. All these concepts contributed significantly to the construction of the British colonial **archive**. They merit equal consideration without any hierarchical privileging of one over the other. The political and ideological discourses underlying the texts which illustrate the concepts are considered in their corporate selves. However, a basic intention of this project is to foreground the individual material texts without either blurring the text-context distinction or losing sight of the importance of context. An analysis based on a reading and an interpretative technique contained within individual texts is followed, but as a matter of course it constantly enters the larger social text. It is perhaps a sign of the "excessive" nature of the post-colonial theoretical scenario that so much of justification appears necessary for a project which does not intend to outrightly condemn all offshoots of the imperial enterprise as solely and totally imperialistic. A firm conviction that any more rigidity conferred upon obviously constructed national boundaries (and therefore by implication, on national attitudes) will lead only to a dead end for analysis forms the final ideological foundation of this project.

B

This section discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the project and briefly surveys the work already done in this area. The trope propounded in Frederick Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* of the theorisation of the "simultaneous Utopian and ideological dimensions of culture" (1981:9) is prominent in this analysis. Jameson urges a search

The concept of "excess" has been aggressively employed as positive empowerment by Bill Ashcroft in the essay "Excess: Post-colonialism and the Verandahs of Meaning". The adjectives he applies to post-colonial criticism are "too much, too long, too paranoid ... too ... excessive" (1994: 33). Excess is here visualised as an indication of post-colonial exuberance.
through and beyond the demonstration of the instrumental function of a given cultural object, to project its simultaneously Utopian power as the symbolic affirmation of a specific historical and class form of a collective unity.

(1981:291)

Jameson is, of course, arguing from a Marxist perspective which is not adopted in this study. But the basic concept that the work of culture/art though definitely ideological and overdetermined could still retain a "desire-to-Utopia"\(^{14}\) in its very existence is accepted as being of primary significance.

This analysis, at many junctures disagrees with many specific arguments of individual post-colonial critics. But their works have been invaluable in providing both a starting point and scope for an occasional oppositional stance. In this project Frantz Fanon is taken as the ideal example of the earlier generation of post-colonial critics, who, while maintaining a high level of intellectual subtlety, still insisted on linking their theories to practical everyday manifestations of the process of decolonisation. Evidently, he sought to dismantle and set aside the European intellectual traditions\(^{15}\) in which it is possible to see later theorists such as Gayathri Spivak and Homi Bhabha as deeply imbricated.

In fact Fanon goes so far as to urge the colonised people to forget Europe altogether, to ignore it and get on with their lives. This is indeed, a tempting suggestion—since we cannot contemplate oriental aggression to seek retrospective vengeance— it seems exceedingly sensible to ignore Europe, to stop imitating Europe and to carve out new paths. Fanon views the energy and enthusiasm spent on justifications, denunciations and exclamations against Europe as so much waste. The more strident and more situated within European boundaries these processes are, the more easily are they co-opted by the system, reducing their radical potential and even giving the colonialist a complacent delusion of liberalism. Fanon remarks:

\(^{14}\) The neologism "desire-to-Utopia" is formed on the same pattern as the "will-to-power".

\(^{15}\) "Leave this Europe, where they are never done talking of Man yet murder men wherever they find them. Look at them today swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration. We have better things to do than follow that Europe" (Fanon 1977: 251).
Stinging denunciations, the exposing of distressing conditions and passions which find their outlet in expression are in fact assimilated by the occupying power in a cathartic process. To aid such processes is in a certain sense to avoid their dramatisation and to clear the atmosphere.

(1977:251)

Indeed the colonial powers have easily managed to pat themselves on the back for having "brought about," by their own liberal efforts, the natives' progress to a stage where they can actually articulate protest. This rhetoric is exemplified by Macaulay in his 1837 statement that the day of a separation between England and India "would be the proudest day in English History." (quoted in Bearce, 1961: 163) for England would then have succeeded in raising India to the level of being able to handle self government. Of course, this rhetoric is bolstered by the conviction that there were still "miles to go" before this liberal goal would be attained and that any immediate talk of Indian freedom would be drastically premature.

Given the way in which the most vehement, the most anguished protests are treated by the imperial powers as an ideal reason to smile paternally, it is certainly tempting to follow Fanon's advice and stop squandering time and energy on such a process. It does seem sensible to suggest that once the actual colonial presence is got rid of, the earlier colonised people should get on with their lives without being intimidated by Europe's shadow over their shoulders till all eternity.

However, even of economic realities did not make such a stance isolationist and virtually impossible, the very nature of the colonial paradigm itself impels us to go back ceaselessly over its records. These have been so subtly disseminated and internalised that an analytic dismantling becomes almost an individual necessity for each aware member of a colonised race. The colonial relation did not confine itself to economics, it insisted on imposing itself on the cultures, and traditions and even the thoughts of those it ruled over.16

The miasma of colonially inflicted "absolute truths" has penetrated deep into the "native" psyche, rendering either a complex mimicry or an analytical deconstructive stance towards colonial verities essential for a recovery of self respect. The attempt to mimic

16 As Fanon points out in The Wretched of the Earth colonialism is never contented with possessing economic control. "It turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (1977: 169).
Europe, would obviously reduce the "Third World" to a mere echo, an unsubstantial shadow. The path consistent with dignity would be that of continually exposing the colonial paradigm, while not allowing it to dictate the terms of existence any longer.

This project's interest to continue dealing with the colonial paradigm is not intended to effect a dismantling—which will circularly lead back to the liberal humanist claim that the Indian, for example is "as good as" the Englishman. That is a position within which the basic framework of colonial binaries is accepted. And, it is also true that synthesis or compromise almost always means accepting dominant values at the cost of repressing or negating subaltern traditions. Hence, there is no demand made here that one puts history aside and try to be "objective". As Fanon points out: "For the native, objectivity is always directed against him" (1977:61).

The attempt made in this analysis is not, therefore, to achieve a fabled objectivity. However, it does operate on the premise that the rifts in the colonial discourse—which will circularly lead back to the liberal humanist claim that the Indian, for example is "as good as" the Englishman. That is a position within which the basic framework of colonial binaries is accepted. And, it is also true that synthesis or compromise almost always means accepting dominant values at the cost of repressing or negating subaltern traditions. Hence, there is no demand made here that one puts history aside and try to be "objective". As Fanon points out: "For the native, objectivity is always directed against him" (1977:61).

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In the context of such an analysis, Edward Said's seminal project in *Orientalism* is of paramount importance. Said's argument that the Orient was a constructed (and not a "natural") entity, as well as his insistence on representations as representations are especially significant (1978: 5, 272). This study acknowledges that Said is on firm ground when he points out the compact body of Orientalist thought that governs what can be said about the Orient. But there seems to be a touch of overkill in the generalising statement that:

Every European, in what he could say about the orient was consequently a racist, an imperialist and almost totally ethnocentric.

(1978:204)

This amounts to submitting to Orientalism completely, making escape or overcoming impossible, even unthinkable. Said, in fact refers to "the internal consistency of Orientalism" (1978: 5) and the "sheer knitted together strength of Orientalism (1978: 6). This concept of an impermeable Orientalist structure has been demolished by critics like Homi Bhabha, who have shown it to be a very fissured terrain indeed. The "strength" is certainly there, it is the "knitted together" part that is problematic.

Said himself makes the point that the individual does have a role, dominated as one is by Orientalism, the surrender is not always necessarily uniform. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said enunciates this concept with great precision:

I do not believe that authors are *mechanically* determined by ideology, class or economic history, but authors are, I also believe very much in the history of their societies, *shaping and shaped* by that history and their social experiences in different measure.

(my emphases; 1986: xxiv)

The concept of over determination can of course be accepted, but it is also necessary to keep in mind Said's caution against "mechanical" determinism. In *Orientalism* itself, Said emphasises the agency of the individual and refers to the Orientalist paradigm itself as "a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the great empires" (1978: 15). The emphasis is on "dynamic" as opposed to inert or static

17 "I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body
predetermination. The gross political reality is now clearly evident, attention has to be paid to the details, which are "profoundly worked over and modulated" (Said, 1978: 15).

This analysis is keenly interested in the moments "before the labels take over." The two-fold idea is to show that the imperial discourse was fractured not only by outside resistance, but from within too and also to show that there were moments which, if they were (though, they could not be) traced back and developed fully could have produced a rather different scenario from the existing one. These are not 'Utopian' moments and often they contribute subtly and dangerously to the structure. Of course, if they had been developed—but then they were not.

This perspective is accepted in the present project; the representations are analysed in their own right, leaving the vexed question of correspondence to reality temporarily aside. This shelving is meant to assist concentration on the readily available entities—the representations.

This project tacitly accepts Stephen Greenblatt's formulation of representation in Marvellous Possessions where he argues that it would be a "theoretical mistake and a practical blunder to collapse the distinction between representation and reality, but at the same time we cannot keep them isolated from one another. They are locked together in an uneasy marriage in a world without ecstatic union or divorce" (1991:7).

This perspective is accepted in the present project; the representations are analysed in their own right, leaving the vexed question of correspondence to reality temporarily aside.

17 The phrase "before the labels take over" is taken from Said's description in Orientalism of Marx's reaction to imperialism in India. While arguing that in the final analysis even Marx prefers to stand safely in an "Orientalised Orient," Said points out "that Marx was still able to sense some fellow feeling, to identify even a little with poor Asia suggests that something happened before the labels took over. It is as if the individual mind could find a pre-collective, pre-official individuality in Asia—find and give in to its pressure upon his emotions, feelings, senses—only to give it up when he confronted a more formidable censor in the very vocabulary he found himself forced to employ" (1978: 255).
This shelving is meant to assist concentration on the readily available entities-the representations.

Greenblatt's emphasis on those moments which indicate the uncertainty in the colonial edifice is significant. "In a dark time, the awareness of a contradiction is carried precisely in the small textual resistances-a kind of imagined possibility, a dream of equity" (1991: 65). These textual resistances do not, in most cases have a redeeming function, but they do serve as unravelling entities within the colonial paradigm. It is precisely these textual resistances/defences that are focussed on in this analysis. Greenblatt is dealing with the rhetoric associated with Columbus' discovery of America, but some of his formulations are quite applicable to the Indo-British colonial framework also. He refers to the "fantastic representation of authoritative certainty in the face of spectacular ignorance" (1991: 90). This description can easily be applied to many assertions of the British colonisers in India and it is in opposition to these complacent "verities" that textual resistances have to be sought for.

Rana Kabbani, in Imperial Fictions has documented the trope of exotic eastern pageantry. The notion of the seductive and often dangerous power of the East (dealt with by Kabbani in the context of Arabia) provides the basis for obsessive accounts of voluptuous pageantry as seen, for example in the anthropological writings of Richard Burton. As Said points out in Orientalism: "The Orient was almost a European invention and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1978: 1). This concept is graphically presented by Kabbani also. The specific example used is Egypt, but India could easily be substituted in this particular formulation.

For Antony, the East arrived in Cleopatra's barge. It was a mixture of new delights: the pomp of pageant, the smell of perfume and incense, the luxurious brocades that shimmered in the sun and most notably, the woman herself-queen, love object, mistresses and despot- was the East, the Orient created for the Western gaze. (my emphasis; 1988:22)

Such pageantry in India was regarded on some rare occasions (rare in the pre-1857 period) as too outlandish and even repellent. But, in general terms, there was a prominent aspect of awed fascination with the unknown Other as against a consciously acquired and nurtured contempt displayed by the later Raj writers.
Several documentary and informative works-Raymond Schwab's *The Oriental Renaissance*, Michael Edwardes *British India: 1772-1947*, and *Glorious Sahibs*, Robert Sencourt's *India in English Literature*, Martin Green's *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* and Hugh Ridley's *Images of Imperial Rule* have proved extremely useful in laying the foundations of this analysis. Schwab's *The Oriental Renaissance*, especially, is an important source text. However, Schwab clearly places British imperialism in a relation of secondary importance to that of Europe as a whole. The present study primarily focuses on British Orientalism even as it makes use of Schwab's insights.

Michael H. Fishers *The Politics of the British Annexation of India 1757-1857* and Eric Stakes' *The English Utilitarians and India* provide a historical perspective for this study. George Bearce, in *British attitudes to India, 1784-1858* surveys the period stressing the texts less than their underlying discourses. This project foregrounds the individual material text for analysis. K.K. Dyson's *A Various Universe* and Dodwell's *Nabobs of Madras* have functioned as signposts leading up to important records.

The theme of a spiritual Utopia in India is developed by John Drew in *India and the Romantic Imagination* where he asserts that "In matters pertaining to India, the Bhagavat Gita is to be preferred to the Mutiny records as a Bible" (1987-294). He proceeds to extract every possible ounce of spiritual idealisation that can be found in British representations of India, to such an extent that India finally becomes only an image, a mere shadowy background for Western philosophical self realisation:

> The Indian setting of Shelly's *Prometheus Unbound*, faintly discernible as an ultimate veil, serves to indicate that what might pass for an Indian influence is a recognition within the Imagination of India as an appropriate image for that mystical imageless state for which the Imagination is itself but an image.  

(1987:281)

This is carrying idealisation too far indeed. Starting from a philosophical concept, Drew proceeds to deny any existence whatsoever to India by itself, which becomes merely a rhetorical figure in the Western Romantic Imagination. In fact Drew falls straight into the trap Said cautions us about in *Orientalism* of concluding that "the Orient" was "essentially an idea or a Western creation with no corresponding reality" (1978: 5). In the present study,
spiritualisation of India is but one trope among many others equally significant and has no claims to exclusive authenticity. Also, Drew's work is mainly concerned with tracing subtle hints of an "Indian influence" on "major" Romantic writers. This analysis considers the major Romantics, in detail but highlights the Indian dimension in "popular" writers—Southey, Moore and Scott for example also.

Patrick Brantlinger in *Rule of Darkness* examines the presence of empire in relation to Victorian literature. The main motifs of imperialism analysed by Brantlinger, such as the civilising mission, a racially motivated concept of the survival of the fittest and imperialism as a set of attitudes governing all aspects of culture is similar in many ways to the use made in the Romantic period of the imperial theme. This analysis intersects Brantlinger's project when he claims that "it is worthwhile noting that even at the height of the rule of darkness, alternative, anti-imperialistic visions of our common life together were available" (1988:16). Of course, they generally stayed at the level of vision. Brantlinger provides specific examples—Hobson, William Morris and Olive Scheiner—of individuals, who he argues, held this alternative vision aloft. This study does not go so far in as much as no one person is exempted from the discourse of imperialism and presented as the proud torch bearer of a new paradigm. But, within the imperial discourse itself, the project searches for signs of the germination of a different (not necessarily "positive") vision from the dominating one.

John Barrell's *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism*, Nigel Leask's *Anxieties of Empire: British Romantic writers and the East* and Kate Teltcher's *India Inscribed—* recent works which testify to a renewed interest in the area— are either less concerned with the specific Indian situation (as against the Orient as a whole) or deal with European imperialism in general (and not just with the British aspect). The present project is contained to a great extent within the Indo-British framework though attention is paid to the imperial paradigm as a whole when necessary. An important concept borrowed from Barrell is his formulation of the This/That and the Other triad which allowed 'The Other' itself to be subdivided into a not-so-other "That" and an Absolute Other both opposed to the Self as "This" Barrell points out that this method worked so as to set the whole of the colonising race, irrespective of class or gender differences (This vs That ) in opposition to the Orient as the Absolute Other. Also, within the Empire itself, the "Otherness" of the Other is graded so as to play off Muslim against Hindu or Sikh against
Muslim. This trope provides a vivid perspective for understanding the occasional sudden shifts between avowed Otherness and near acceptance seen in many textual representations of India.

Nigel Leask and Kate Teltcher, to a large extent cover the same area included in this study, in so far as they regard the Imperial discourse as cracked from the inside and seek to analyse these cracked spaces. But as Leask's title *Anxieties of Empire* indicates, he deals almost exclusively with the effect that the fear of corruption (physical, mental or moral) emanating from the Orient had on the imperial edifice. These fears, though significant, did not, in the final analysis lead to any serious thought on not retaining the Empire. Besides, the stress on anxieties leads Leask to totally ignore the many moments of complacence in the texts he is analysing. This analysis, while it examines the fissures in the imperial discourse, does so with the conviction that the anxieties and even the alternative visions were mainly rhetorical (the value of rhetoric as rhetoric is acknowledged) and not possessed of practical power to shake the complacency of Empire.

This project lays no claim to exhaustiveness, considering the immense amount of extant material. However, a conscious attempt has been made to maintain an eclectic attitude with regard to the texts selected for analysis.

Some of the scholarly essays of Sir William Jones and other Orientalists, published in the *Asiatic Researches* are included, as also are the Parliamentary Speeches (the language is often unparliamentary!) of Edmund Burke which relate to Indian affairs. James Mill's monumental *History of British India* and other Histories by Robert Orme, Alexander Dow and William Robertson are examined. The published letters, journals and memoirs of Eliza Fay, Emily Eden and James Forbes among others, are taken up for analysis. The Indian motif in the "major" Romantic poets-Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats—is

1 For example, Charles Wilkins, Colebrooke and H.H. Wilson.
dealt with individually. Detailed analysis is undertaken of full scale "Indian" works such as Robert Southey's *The Curse of Kehama*, Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* and Sir Walter Scott's *The Surgeon's Daughter*. It needs to be repeated that the above list is in no way exhaustive since an Oriental/Indian element pervaded literally most aspects of discourse in the given period. However, it is hoped that the wide range of disciplines from which the materials for analysis have been selected confers on these primary sources a representative character, sufficient for working purposes at least.

This study consists of six chapters apart from the Introduction and Conclusion. After the Introduction, Chapter 2 deals with the historical background and surveys the various attitudes and their intersections, which are illustrated by the representations in the texts discussed in the later chapters.

Chapter 3 primarily considers the essays of Sir William Jones and the speeches of Edmund Burke certain essays and dissertations by other Orientalists who were contemporaries of Burke and Jones are also examined. Chapter 4 deals with representative texts selected from the many Histories of India produced during the period. The most prominent text is James Mill's *History of British India* written from a Utilitarian perspective. As a counterpoint, the Histories by Dow, Robertson and Orme, all conservative writers, are analysed.

In Chapter 5, the genres of travel writing, letters, Journals and Memoirs are dealt with. This in many ways, is the most inclusive chapter, since efforts have been made to include as much of the voluminous available material as possible. These supposedly "amateur" productions are analysed with the same rigour that is applied to the more "scholarly" texts and this often yields up surprisingly relevant results.

Chapter 6 analyses a few full-scale works on India. The dominant motif of India in these works, the interpretations placed by the writers on their Indian material and the reception accorded to these oriental works are taken into consideration.

Chapter 7 undertakes an intensive study of the "major" poets of the period. The Indian motifs in their works as well as traces of an Indian "influence" are isolated and analysed. Not just their poetry, but occasional prose pieces and published correspondence and Notebooks
are used for analysis. Of course, the span of attention paid to each of these poets varies with the magnitude or otherwise of the Indian dimension in their works. For example, Wordsworth, though definitely affected by the imperial programme has very little to say about India as such. Shelley, on the other hand shows such an attraction to the trope of India that he has been referred to as "completely Indian" by Edgar Quinet (quoted in Schwab, 1984: 63).

Section A of the Conclusion briefly recapitulates the arguments in the earlier chapters with emphasis on the ambivalences discovered in the analysed texts. In Section B, the effect of this ambivalence is tackled. Gaps, silences, ambivalences—these have been traced in all the texts examined. But their effect it is tentatively argued was not always to "weaken" the structure. The colonial edifice did fail to be monolithic, but what exactly did that failure imply? There is an attempt to answer this question or at least problematise the issue throughout the thesis.