

Writing 'India,' Doing Ideology

William Jones' Construction of India as an Ideological Category

Himani Bannerji

Our knowledge of [contemporary] society is to a large extent mediated to us by texts of various kinds. The result, an objectified world-in-common vested in texts, coordinates the acts, decisions, policies, and plans of actual subjects as the acts, decisions, policies, plans of large-scale organizations.¹

Introduction: A new historiography as a critique

The objectives and representational efforts of European history have come up for interrogation from some quarters in the last two decades. The reasons for this lie in a wide recognition of a constructive relationship between knowledge and power. This critical impetus seems to have come more from Foucault's "power/knowledge" formulation and other associated attempts, than as an extension of Marx's theory of ideology, which was until then the primary critical tool for establishing relations between ideas and exercises of class power, class understood mainly as an economic form. Interest in Marx's notion of ideology dropped considerably in the Anglo-American academic world after the entrance of Michel Foucault's and Antonio Gramsci's works in translation, while social movements with no direct connection with class as defined gained momentum. Political economy receded into the background and cultural theories became highly prominent in studying politics. Whereas attempts at working in Marx with Foucault and Gramsci were rarer, there was a greater success in blending Foucault with Gramsci. This was achieved particularly through a manipulation of the categories "hegemony" and

¹ Dorothy E. Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (Toronto 1990), 61.

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“common sense” in culturalist terms. An important moment of this success, at least in the English-speaking world, was Edward Said’s *Orientalism*.² But *Orientalism* was only the tip of the iceberg of critiques which addressed the power/knowledge relations of the conventional academic disciplines. History writing in particular came in for a trenchant criticism from those who sought to create new interdisciplinary histories, epistemologies and new forms of narratives — sensitive to discursive inscriptions of power or power as discourse. Other disciplines were also affected: Philip Abrams’ *Historical Sociology*³ and the writings of Philip Corrigan, Derek Sayer, Joan Scott, among others, may be remembered in this context. These were radical, Marxist, or even anti-Marxist efforts, drawing upon classical European philosophy, literary and cultural theories. Criticisms of metaphysics and foundationalism offered by Jacques Derrida or Richard Rorty, for example, provided the theoretical bases for many, in combination with Foucault’s discursive structuralism.

The new schools produced important critiques, especially thematized around ‘difference’ and ‘representation.’ They uncovered signification forms of domination in culture, showing how culture was textured with colonialism, racism, sexism and heterosexism. Of these attempts a very important one was the critique of colonial discourse popularized by Edward Said, which centred on the relationship between reification and domination in the European/colonial representation (i.e. construction) of Europe’s ‘others.’ Among these colonized ‘others,’ the representation or cultural construction of India became a central area of critique. Perhaps the most extensive of these is Ronald Inden’s *Imagining India*.⁴ Here Inden takes history (his own discipline) to task for “imagining” (i.e. representing cum constructing) India through the epistemological lens of colonialism.

I criticize the knowledge of ‘Others’ that Europeans and Americans have created during the periods of their world ascendancy. The specific object of my critique is the Indological branch of ‘orientalist discourse’ and the accounts of India that it has produced since the Enlightenment, but it also takes on the other disciplines that have had a major part in making these constructs of India — the history of religions, anthropology, economics and political philosophy.⁵

It does not take much perspicacity to realize that Inden’s orientation is sensitized by Said’s *Orientalism*, though his critique of indology, mainly based on

2 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1979).

3 Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Ithaca 1982).

4 Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford 1990).

5 *Ibid.*, 1.

the philosophy of R.G. Collingwood (1889-1943), takes him to a somewhat different political conclusion than Said's critique of orientalism.

While we need not detain ourselves with an examination of *Imagining India*, it is clear that this re-reading of Indian history derives from a general attempt to establish *representation* as a key theme in historiography. It expands 'history' to include various narrative forms, among them translation. Interpretive deconstruction becomes the current method of history writing and replaces more conventional tasks of archival retrieval, documentation and so on, with their explanatory or 'truth' claims.⁶ As a representational effort history becomes a cultural-political project. It is read as a repository of constructed content, of an accretional body of concepts and images, regarding and standing in for the object/subject under representation. This representational content is read as a gesture of power/knowledge, with embedded moral regulations and political imperatives, for all of which the word ideology, albeit in a non-Marxist sense, is sometimes loosely used. A pattern of circulation is also detected within this representational content travelling through the arteries of discursivities and intertextualities. A gathering body of themes, images, icons and narrative forms, such as travelogues or translations for example, are explored to determine what the representational terms are and how they constellate as discursive apparatuses decisive for constructing the 'other.'⁷ This discursive movement of content has come to be considered problematic in that it allows an historically specific content to take on the status of a stable, and even an essential and transcendental form of knowledge. It has been noted that through this process there was developed, over a period of time, a "conceptual economy"⁸ which has provided a foundation for proliferation of power/knowledge projects. In an essay on "Translation, Colonialism and the Rise of English," Tejaswini Niranjana points out crucial aspects of this incremental, circulatory and ideologically informing nature of colonial knowledge production in the Orientalist context of translation of Indian texts. According to her:

6 For different approaches to history writing and historiography, see E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (Middlesex 1964); E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York 1966); Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Ithaca 1982); J.W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York 1988); and the introduction to Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak (eds.), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford 1988).

7 There are numerous examples of this. To name a few, we can cite Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1979); Henry Louis Gates (ed.), "Race," *Writing and Difference* (Chicago 1985); and Mary Louis Pratt, *The Imperial Eyes* (London 1992).

8 Tejaswini Niranjana, "Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25, 15 (1990), 773.

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In the colonial context, a certain conceptual economy is created by the set of related questions which is the problematic of translation. Conventionally, translation depends on the Western philosophical notions of reality, representation and knowledge. Reality is seen as something unproblematic, “out there”; knowledge involves a representation of this reality; and representation provides direct, unmediated access to a transparent reality. These concepts render invisible what Jacques Derrida calls the logocentric metaphysics by which they are constituted.⁹

For Niranjana the problem with this “conceptual economy” is its unproblematic assertion of correspondence between reality and its re-presentation. This transparency and an “out-there-ness” of the representational content allows it to stand-in for reality. Following Jacques Derrida, she connects this “conceptual economy” to a “logocentric metaphysics” which erases the foundational dependence of putatively transcendental disciplines (such as philosophy) on mundane, historical/temporal power-informed representational practices and forms.

Assuming Derrida’s critique of metaphysics as her point of departure, Niranjana phrases this problem of power/knowledge in philosophy, history and translation in the following way:

Here I should point out that classical philosophical discourse does not merely engender a practice of translation that is then employed for the purposes of colonial domination; I contend that, simultaneously, translation in the colonial context creates and supports a conceptual economy which works into Western philosophy to function as a philosopheme, a congealed base unit which does not require further breaking down through analysis. As Derrida suggests, the concepts of “Western metaphysics” are not bound by or produced solely within the “field” of philosophy. Rather, they come out of and circulate through various discourses at different levels and in different ways, providing thereby “a conceptual network in which philosophy *itself* has been constituted.”¹⁰

If we adopt this idea of a conceptual economy of knowledge, then an inter-conceptual and inter-textual nature of knowledge production becomes visible. It becomes difficult then to speak in isolated disciplinarian terms, or solely in terms of synchronicity of representational content or modes. We can and need to speak of a whole intellectual culture, containing a foundational body of “philosophemes” as “conceptual naturals,” which are unexamined as such. But these “philosophemes” regularly serve as essential epistemes which

9 *Ibid.*, 773.

10 *Ibid.*

are axiomatic as the interpretive devices for further knowledge. Attention is drawn to this by Dorothy E. Smith, for example, in the epigram to this paper, who calls them our “terms of knowledge,” or “the lineaments of what we already know” in our new knowledge. They provide the anchor or meaning connection between our old and new learning.¹¹ Niranjana’s article shows how such a “conceptual economy” with its elementary “epistemes” is provided by the Orientalist William Jones’ translations of classical Indian texts, and how it structures representation of India for the west. She demonstrates how this content persists through intertextual naturalization underwriting a diverse body of European writings on India. She convincingly argues that this content functions as a sort of ideology, embodying the political hermeneutics of colonialism.

Niranjana equates ideology with representational content, captured in their distorted and reified forms. This is also Inden’s or Said’s position, as well as that of others writing on colonial discourse. Their work uncovers the existence of ideological-representational epistemes and their ‘economy.’ Stereotypes or hypostatized negative and otherizing differences, captured in images and concepts, are deconstructively uncovered, disclosing patterns of connected discursivities. But there seems to be little attention paid to the fact that in understanding misrepresentations which are constructions of power, there is an equally urgent need to inquire into the method of their production. It is only through a combination of criticism of ideology as content along with an inquiry into its method of production that we could offer a fuller critique of domination with regard to representation and ideology. It is only then that we could properly historicize or contextualize, and deconstruct the social relations which structure these congealed discursive/cultural forms of power — which Said calls “orientalism” or Inden “the symbolic cultural constitution” of an “imagined India.” What is missing therefore in this alternative (to Marxist analysis) critical deconstruction of representation is a sustained inquiry into epistemology which results in the production of otherizing forms of knowledge.

Expanding the equation of ideology as content into an epistemological method is possible only in terms of Marx’s own conception and criticism of ideology explicitly stated in *The German Ideology* and implied and referred to in other texts. This is most elaborately discussed by Dorothy Smith, whose own feminist theorization treats ideology as fundamentally a problem of epistemological method rather than as a body of ‘false’ or distorted ideas

11 Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power*. See Chapter 2, “The Ideological Practice of Sociology” in its entirety for the reading of ideology I have evolved for this paper.

(concepts, categories or images).¹² This type of Marxist critique of ideology shows how a cultural critique primarily based on the content of representation suffers from the danger of degenerating into a descriptive compendium rather than a critical enquiry into a problem of meaning and knowledge in the context of social relations of power. Thus the possibility of developing a non-reifying, truly deconstructive analytical, i.e. altogether non-ideological type of knowledge, remains inarticulate.

A thoroughgoing critical suggestion, therefore, consists of a proposal for a critique which has two distinct yet ineluctably constitutive aspects: one of *content*, identified as conceptual/imagistic re-presentational form, and the other, the “conceptual practice” or *method of generation* of this content. This entails not only the task of replacing a ‘false’ content with a ‘true’ one, or casting a general suspicion upon it, but also shifting our gaze to the social relations of its production, until knowledge itself can be seen as a form of social relation. This amounts to devising a critical method which reveals any form of representation to be an imaged or coded, interpreted and conceptualized formal-cultural articulation of a definite set of socio-historical relations.

This inquiry, which attempts to situate the representational content, rests on reflexivity. It involves a query into how visibilities and invisibilities, silences and oclusions, inclusions and exclusions are intrinsic to certain modes of knowing, and how these modes or “conceptual practices” are encoded in substantive representational forms. This reflexivity is essential for disclosing the implicit social relations which are embedded in representations since a decontextualized knowledge-object behaves pretty much like any independent objectified construction, for example a car, which does not exhibit in its bounded being the social relations of its production, or that of capital — particularly as it enters into a relation of circulation and consumption, away from the process of its production.

This comparison between a car and a reified cultural form, such as an orientalist one, is not so unusual. It can be understood by paying heed to the unproblematized and transparent representation of the colonial creators who supply the conceptual-imagistic content regarding the colonized ‘others,’ particularly aimed at a western audience and readers. The “philosophemes” or social assumptions that vitiate this body of knowledge are, after all, not generated within the content which they inform or structure. Any criticism of this discourse needs to situate its content into its historical-social relations and uncover its epistemological method whereby it incorporates particular social relations into a cultural forms and concepts. The very characteristics of this

12 For Smith’s notion of ideology, especially as a discursive/epistemological form of “relations of ruling,” see Chapters 2 and 3, *The Conceptual Practices of Power*.

knowledge form must thus be accounted for. Otherwise we can only critique this or that constructional/representational content with regard to its truth claim, or its *stand-in* effect for the moments of the social. A simple cultural critique locks us, in the last instance, into a series of representational recursivities. There is actually no exit from these mirroring representational constructs, since one is always expecting to come up with one which is 'true,' forgetting that the social (i.e. 'reality' in a non-metaphysical sense) is always more intensive and extensive than its re-presentation or discursive form even in the most nuanced form of telling.

So far, the cultural critiques of various forms of othering, difference, etc., have treated the problem of relation between the social and its re-presentation more or less as one of content. Less sophisticated talk about 'stereotypes' and more complex or refined talk about 'inscriptions,' 'discursivities' and 'differences' have this same accent in common. Even when the critics name history, it remains as an assumption, somewhere out there, as a frame to the text under consideration. Since history is mainly entered into the production of consciousness as an accretion of images and ideas, of "philosophemes," we cannot, therefore, see it as a process of organization and mediation of social relations as forms of thought. Thus orientalism or indology is treated by Said or Inden mainly as a problem of cultural hegemony cradled within history or a temporal space marked by power. Thus promising a thoroughgoing critique of hegemony, or 'ideology,' cultural critique of colonial discourse has mostly remained at the level of collections of cultural constructs. Criticism has revealed highly sensitive aspects of the content and of hermeneutic relations among them, displaying instability and unreliability on the basis of gaps, fissures and inconsistencies. As such they decode an attribution of meanings to India or West Asia, revealing imagined geographies of power. This also translates out into a presentation of the peoples of the region as passive and reified subjects and non-agents. Lata Mani's acute observations on English representation of *sati* as a nodule of patriarchal-colonial imagination, and thus a form of displaced violence, helps to throw light on this:

Within the discourse on *sati*, women are represented in two mutually exclusive ways: either as heroines able to withstand the raging blaze of the funeral pyre, or else as pathetic victims coerced against their will into the flames. These poles preclude the possibility of a female subjectivity that is shifting, contradictory, inconsistent. Such a constrained and reductive notion of agency discursively positions women as objects to be saved — never as subjects who act, even if within extremely constraining social conditions. This representation of Indian women has been fertile ground for

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the elaboration of discourses of salvation, in context of colonialism, nationalism, and, more recently, Western feminism. For the most part, all three have constructed the Indian woman not as someone who acts, but as someone to be acted upon.¹³

There cannot be any doubt about the political nature of these constructions and the value of having a cultural critique of them. The direction of the predicative role of the cultural-moral construction of "India" as a category for ruling can never be underestimated, especially with regard to mediating knowledge relationships between the knower and the known.

But to go beyond the ideological circle and the politics of representation in ways that offer other epistemological possibilities needs an anti-ideological "conceptual practice" of power,¹⁴ which entails criticizing particular established representations with regard to a theory of reification. In other words, the cultural critique of knowledge as content must also rest upon an epistemological critique of the method of production of knowledge. My suggestion, therefore, is not to abandon a cultural critique of content, leaving Foucault and others behind, but to augment this critique with Marx's own methodological critique. This calls for a different reading of Marx than that provided by many western Marxists, or by the Soviet Academy of Social Sciences, through a slogan-like use of sentences from *The German Ideology*, such as the "ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of the ruling class." Displaying a crude form of content orientation, this approach obscures the fact that Marx's debate with Feuerbach hardly centred itself in a demand for content substitution, for 'true' or 'authentic' as opposed to 'false' ideas. In fact what disturbs Marx is what Feuerbach *had* done by substituting Hegel's notion of the Idea (or Christian notion of 'God') with that of 'Man' and 'human essence.' This was considered by Feuerbach and the Young Hegelians (early Marx included) as a paradigm shift. Marx however subsequently disputed this revolutionary claim in *The German Ideology*. Instead he argued against the very epistemology at work in Feuerbach *and* Hegel, rather than the content that resulted from it. He elaborated a counter-method to the "speculative rationalism" of Hegel and other more disguised speculative philosophers (metaphysicians) such as Feuerbach. Focussing on the central problematic of a constructive relationship between particular and general, concrete and abstract, experience and analy-

13 Lata Mani, "Cultural Theory, Colonial Texts: Reading Eyewitness Accounts of Widow Burning," in L. Grossberg et al., *Cultural Studies* (New York 1992), 397.

14 Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power*. The title of Smith's book, *The Conceptual Practices of Power*, is a code name for *doing* ideology as social relations of ruling.

sis, Marx went on to formulate a reflexive critical method. His foremost concern thus is not content or closed, discursive structures, what he calls “interpretive categories” to “trim off epochs of history” with.¹⁵ Rather he formulates an exercise in practical philosophy by discerning the main epistemological procedures or “three tricks” of “speculative philosophy” (or metaphysics). This he claims to be the working apparatus of ideology. Equating “philosophy” (metaphysics) with ideology, he calls for a materialist knowledge or a form of knowing which allows for social change. Ideology, on the other hand, is marked out by Marx as the characteristic job of intellectual disciplinarians — whose specialization and expertise consist of practices, relations and discursivities of a mental labour, decapitated from manual labour. Intellect thus severed and spherized, not surprisingly, seeks “transcendence” from the mundane, from history and everyday life, aspiring to a claim of absolute, universal, essential, once-for-all knowledge.

Marx’s critical method is something of a back calculation, which picks up a construction or a reified content — a “ruling idea,” so to speak — and regrounds it in actual social relations. Considering knowledge as a form of social organization (as forms of intelligibility, mediation and expression), identifying the relationship between manual and mental division of labour with property and class (as an organizational rather than a solely brutal control over labour of others), he challenges the universalist/essential claims of “ruling ideas” of the “ruling classes ... represented as the only rational, universally valid ones.”¹⁶ Ideology is put forward as not only what is believed in but as a form of *doing* a certain kind of thought or belief, an active epistemological gesture, whose method of production is uncovered by the “three tricks.”¹⁷

Trick 1: Separate what people say they think from the actual circumstances in which it is said, from the actual empirical conditions of their lives, and from the actual individuals who said it.

Trick 2: Having detached the ideas, arrange them to demonstrate an order among them that accounts for what is observed. (Marx and Engels describe this as making “mystical connections.” ...)

Trick 3: Then change the ideas into a “person”; that is, set them up as distinct entities (for example, a value pattern, norm, belief system

15 Karl Marx and Frederik Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York 1973).

16 *Ibid.*, 66.

17 Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power*, 43. This is Smith’s version of Marx’s formulation.

and so forth) to which agency (or possible causal efficacy) may be attributed. And redistribute them to “reality” by attributing them to actors who can now be treated as representing the ideas.

Marx’s critique of ideology is a methodology for practical knowledge or “praxis.” It consists of un-covering *systematically* how a dissociation is produced between history/society and forms of consciousness. It directs us to look out from a representational construct, rather than solely look at it. Concrete social relations congealed within the constructed form are treated as a formalized mutuality of consciousness and the social.

Accepting the position that reifying forms of knowing which privileges *any* content as universal and essential will result into a reified content stops us from searching for a more ‘authentic’ content. When candidates for this ‘authenticity’ are paced through the anti-ideological critique it becomes a non-issue to discuss what an Arab or a hindu actually ‘is.’ Our attempts go beyond any homogenization or essentializing, and we recognize the diversity, the historicity and social nature of the content. We treat content as formalized and conceptualized expressions of their constitutive social relations of power, situated within forms of ruling and certain ways of knowing and representing. Thus knowledge exceeds the cultural end product — either of concepts or images — to be stored eventually in textual hold-alls. The issue of ‘truth’ is expanded from content, or *what* is produced, to that of its process and relations, to the *how* and *why* of its production. This Marxist anti-ideological knowledge, conventionally known as historical materialism, provides a grounded critique of idealism, or metaphysics, reaching deeper than the Derridian counter-discursivity, a particular spin-off from his version of criticism of metaphysics.¹⁸ A fuller critique of colonial discourse cannot be achieved solely through Derrida or other cultural critiques which have not been able to move out into a social and historical space outside the labyrinth of language and conceptualization.

So an anti-ideological analysis, rather than a cultural critique of representation, involves a thorough criticism of the twofold dimension of ideology — as a conceptual practice and a particular content. The concreteness, or particularity, of the content is crucial for determining the specificity of the ideological excursion under consideration. To challenge any domination, for example, the resistance must be addressed practically and specifically. This implies definite references to terms, of time, space and cultural forms. It is this which points out how abstraction or erasures of these elements are basic to

18 See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago 1978), especially “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuele Levinas.”

any relations of ruling — for example, of colonialism. Attention to content also allows us to make distinctions between different moments of ruling. Thus content, understood in terms of intertextuality, or a “conceptual economy” based on “philosophemes,” creates not only the recognized veins of intellectual disciplines, but also crumbles into a cultural commonsense which subsists as the political unconscious of any society. But having said so, one has to be equally mindful of ruling as an epistemological procedure which organizes social relations of domination. This procedure, involving how thinking is done at all, is also implied in all situations of domination without partiality to this or that project. As the content of ideology travels through various transcriptive modes through time and space, so does its method as *the method* for producing knowledge, and elaborates itself in finer and finer forms of rationalization, or technology, of production of ideas and images. Thus the relationship between content and form, between the social and the cultural, the intellectual and the political, can never be torn apart into separate realities. Niranjana’s quotation of Derrida’s remark about the circularity of “logocentric metaphysics” agrees partially with what Marx meant by ideology.¹⁹ In a manner of speaking a critique of ideology is a critique of metaphysics. It also reveals a constructive relationship between empiricism and metaphysics. A stereotype, or an otherizing cultural construct, can thus be seen as a particularist essentialism or universalization — whereby this or that feature of the empirical is fuelled with a transcending idealist drive which sends it out of the orbit of time as lived history. Thus constructs of power, even of indology or orientalism, are not necessarily ‘inventions’ or ‘lies’ within their own scope of telling, but rather an illicit expansion and universalization of lived and observed particulars. Thus the idealist/essentializing method of metaphysics dignifies an empirical bit of the concrete into a timeless verity.

According to our version of anti-ideological critique, the issue of cultural representation of India has a wider problematic than offered by critics such as Inden. A methodological critique now integrates with a cultural critique. The empirical fact that colonial history and thus representation of India were in the main produced by Europeans of a certain political and moral persuasion at a certain juncture in history, is combined with an epistemological critique. While recognizing that idealist or metaphysical epistemology — that is, ideological method — that produces reified knowledge, is not a European monopoly, we also attend to the European colonial context of the texts so produced, which hold a content appropriate to the time and design of that colonialism. We recognize that an ‘imagined,’ ‘translated,’ orientalist ‘India’ was born

19 See also Smith’s notion of circularity of ideology in *The Conceptual Practices of Power*, 93-100.

through an intellectual process, which was implicated in a particular set of socio-cultural relations existing at the time. This content or an attribution to India, produced through and as ruling independently of Indian agency, entered into European circulation both transcendently as 'knowledge,' and practically as categories for administration.²⁰ Just as 'the Orient,' 'Africa,' 'the dark continent' contributed to the colonial signification and administrative-exploitive system,²¹ so did this 'India.' This 'India' is therefore more than 'imagined,' but is rather both an epistemic and a practical form of exploitation and violence.²²

We can now begin to explore certain representative colonial texts to make our understanding more concrete. Keeping an eye on particular knowledge procedures, their inscriptions and transcriptions, their intertextual traveling paths and "conceptual economy," we can go beyond Said and other critics of colonial discourse. We can integrate a Marxist theory of ideology with a specific semiotic content. More than gesturing towards a power/knowledge relation as always already there, we concentrate on the historical dimension and its social organization and relations of knowledge. This allows for more than an exhaustive study of the metamorphosis of cultural content. We become alert to the dangers of reified knowledge *per se*, which is not provided by a simpler cultural critique of representation. It becomes apparent that not only in the context of colonialism, but in creating *all* negative 'others' (internal and external to *any* society), fixed, transcendental, homogeneous and essential verities are crafted by welding together bits of empirical observables with the method of metaphysics. The fuller critique thus advances beyond the relatively well-mapped realm of images, categories or constructs of power, and begins to consider knowledge in terms of *social relations* and modes of mediation also between the knower and the known. If "knowing" consists of "a *relation* between the knower and the known,"²³ then it follows that the *content* of that knowing is deeply informed by that relation, which also dictates and reflects the "terms" of understanding which are embedded in it. They constitute the knower's historical and social knowledge apparatus.

Clear distinctions therefore have to be made between ideology, which erases, and occludes by degrounding ideas from history and society, and knowledge procedures which allow for relational disclosures. The acknowl-

20 *Ibid.*, 61-65, 83-88.

21 Nicholas Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor 1992), 1-25. See also Abdul Jan Mohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," in Gates (ed.), "Race," *Writing and Difference*.

22 For Spivak on "epistemic violence", see "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Nelson and Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana 1988).

23 On knowing as a relation and ideology as ruling, see the introduction in Dorothy E. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Toronto 1987).

edgement that some forms of knowing contain disclosive dimensions, and others block them, renders spurious questions regarding the fallible nature of perception, while retaining the knowledge relevance of history. If we concentrate on a methodological critique, we can implicate the knower and 'what' she comes up with (as content) in that very method which is employed in producing knowledge. We cannot only 'show' the content as facts, description or information, but also unravel the knowledge-organizing social relations and cultural practices of the knower impacting on the known. Thus, rather than being only an end product, knowledge becomes material to, and a form of, social, conceptual and finally political relation and organization. This approach to knowledge spells an open endedness of content in that it is always dynamic and incomplete, but persistently reflexive. It should be contrasted to an ideological approach, which produces seamless conceptual or image objects that bind loose ends, erase contradictions which are a part and parcel of actual social relations and locations of the knower and the known. Fixed facts, concepts and images of India or of Europe, whose claim to verity relies on metaphysical notions such as 'essential,' 'typical,' 'objective' and 'universal,' are seen in the end as ideology.

What then are some of the particular knowledge-producing procedures and content which constructed 'India' for the west? How are we to understand this 'India' from an anti-ideological perspective? What follows is my example of a fuller exploration of the work of one of the earliest English writers on India, who is a scholar in his own right as well as an administrator. He represented India to the west from his vantage point of colonial relations and these representations took root and branched out as "philosophemes" of further European knowledge of India and provided the categorical bases for subsequent forms of ruling. The writer in question is William Jones, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bengal, and a co-founder with Warren Hastings of the Royal Asiatic Society (1784), a scholar of classical European and Indian languages, and a translator of Sanskrit legal texts. I chose to study this author and his authoritative texts, rather than an overall cultural compendium of images, opinions and descriptions, as the basic element of 'India' because 'India' as constructed by him occupies foundational textual and administrative spaces. His 'India' is truly a 'ruling' category in so far as it directs other texts both in terms of knowledge and in the work of administering the East India Company and the colonial empire. His texts thus hold an inscriptional status and confer the seal of truth upon others which were reproduced through their ideological pre-scriptions. This author, in short, is crucial in leaving an imprimatur on what Europe and the west came to know as 'India.'

Contexting the text

When I was at sea last August, on my voyage to this country [India], which I had so long and ardently desired to visit, I found one evening, on inspecting the observations of the day, that *India* lay before us, and *Persia* on our left, whilst a breeze from *Arabia* blew nearly on our stern It gave me inexpressible pleasure to find myself in the midst of so noble an amphitheatre, almost encircled by the vast regions of *Asia*, which has ever been esteemed the nurse of sciences, the inventress of delightful and useful arts, the scene of glorious actions, fertile in the production of human genius, abounding in natural wonders, and infinitely diversified in the forms of religion and government, in the laws, manners, customs and languages, as well as in features and complexions of men. I could not help remarking, how important and extensive a field was yet unexplored, and how many solid advantages unimproved ...²⁴

The ideological concerns and construction of ‘India’ as produced by William Jones and other Orientalists requires simultaneous probing of method and content in order to determine its ideological status. This means situating the knower, William Jones, on the deck of a ship, arriving to Calcutta not just as a visitor, but as the head of the colonial justice system and an aspiring explorer of India bent on “improving solid advantages.” It also means observing how India the known becomes Jones’ ‘India,’ a knowledge object for colonial ruling. Thus the knower and the known are contexted to history, politics and society, rather than being entities of a timeless zone of metaphysics. This situating attempt reveals the nature of European necessity for ‘understanding’ and ‘improving’ India. The timing of Jones’ knowledge enterprise makes it evident that his construction of ‘India’ happens at a very particular juncture of European history, when discursive practices rather than sole brutalities of conquest are becoming material to forms of ruling. Institutions of knowledge such as The Asiatic Society (1784) straddle at this period the double and integrated realms of reflection and ruling, thereby mediating brute force with ‘facts’ and ‘truths.’ English colonization of India becomes both a knowledge enterprise and an administration of socio-political and economic domination.²⁵ Even though Jones is mainly a humanist — a translator, linguist and a

24 “A Discourse on the Institution of a Society, for inquiring into the History, Civil and Natural, the Antiquities, Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia,” by The President [William Jones], (24 Feb. 1784) in William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (London 1799), Vol. I.

25 These knowledge activities brought about by the occasion of colonization involve putting together a stable mode of textualization, of inscription and transcription, which encode and organize administrative forms and relations of ruling in concretely ideological terms. See Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (New Delhi 1982); Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford 1969); Gauri Visvanathan, *The Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule* (New York 1989).

cultural essayist — an examination of his method and content of knowledge regarding India discloses an epistemology for a specific social ontology of power.

Jones' purpose is to re-present India, that is to create a stock of knowledge about its history, culture and society with an aim to stabilizing these representations, so that they can be seen as generally valid. For this Jones establishes a truth claim with regard to his formulations as 'essential' equivalencies for Indian reality contexted to ruling. In this the differences between Orientalists such as Jones and Utilitarians such as James Mill become subordinated to their overall colonial hegemonic project.²⁶ Though Jones' discourse of the sublime, of "Drawing Orient knowledge from its fountains/pure, through caves obstructed long, and paths/too long obscure,"²⁷ may seem an antithesis of the cold Benthamite sneering prose of Mill, yet the claim of 'discovering' an 'authentic India' dominates these colonial texts in general.²⁸

The outgrowth of this discovery of 'India,' culminating into a sort of mythology, provides the interpretive and interpellative framework for the orientalization of India, or what Inden calls the "symbolic cultural constitution" of the indological construct. The content, or the resulting stereotypes, are either exotic (as with Jones) and/or negative towards India (for both Jones and Mill).²⁹ Jones' opinions in particular are often ambiguous or contradictory, swinging between respect for and distrust of Indians and India. The admiring sentiments expressed regarding "Asiatick civilizations" in the epigram above, or throughout the first volume of his *Works*, clash remarkably

26 For similarities and differences among Orientalists and Utilitarians, see Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford 1992); Tejaswini Niranjana, *On Citing Translation* (Berkeley 1992).

27 William Jones, "A Hymn to Surya," as quoted by Tejaswini Niranjana, "Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 (15), 775.

28 This language of exploration and discovery is pervasive in the European colonial enterprise. From Columbus to William Jones to Henry Morton Stanley and beyond, this discourse helps to obscure the dimension of force, brutalities and denigrations integral to colonization. Within this overarching discursivity the notion of authenticity and exposure of the real, the true, the original, etc., find their place. The metaphor or trope of "caves" or hidden and lost knowledge is present equally ubiquitously. A modern example of this is the complex use of the cave in E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India*, charting the journey of the colonial English psyche into the cave of "India" and beyond. The aesthetic of sublime that is found in these metaphoric discursivities, present in overabundance in William Jones' poetry, is a major genre of visual depiction of India to Europe. For an excellent example, see Mildred Archer and Toby Falk, *India Revealed: The Art and Adventure of James and William Fraser, 1801-35* (London 1989).

29 See James Mill, *The History of British India* (New York 1968), Vol. I, chapter on "Manners, Morals and Customs" of Hindus, for examples of negative stereotypes, also partly shared by Jones (for example, in William Jones, *The Letters of William Jones*, II volumes, edited by Garland Cannon (Oxford 1970), 712.

with his opinion of the people of the region expressed as a negatively differentiated cultural category which he calls “the Indian.” His dislike for Indians is evident in the following lines, where he requests his friend not to be

like the deluded, besotted Indians, among whom I live, who would *receive liberty* as a curse instead of a blessing, if it were possible *to give it them*, and would reject, as a vase of poison, that, which, if they could taste and digest it, would be water of life.³⁰

An aspiration of “mastery” over a land and its people, as well as their forms of knowledge, inspires and infuses Jones’ *Works*. This becomes explicit in Sir John Shore’s (Lord Teignmoult) Introduction to Jones’ *Collected Works*. Jones, as Shore puts it, was no mere linguist and translator. Though he “eagerly embrace[d]...the opportunity of making himself master of the *Sanskrit*,” he “would have despised the reputation of a mere linguist.”³¹ His real motive, according to Shore, was the pursuit of “Knowledge and Truth” regarding Indian culture and society in service to his own country, as he aimed to create a just and benevolent rule over India, in keeping with its own nature. Since this nature was not manifest, according to Jones, it needed to be exposed or re-presented.

Such were the motives that induced him to propose to the government of this country [colonial Bengal], what he justly denominated a work of national utility and importance, the compilation of a copious digest of *Hindu* and *Mahomedan* Law, from *Sanskrit* and *Arabick* originals, with an offer of his services to supervise the compilation and with a promise to translate it. He had foreseen, previous to his departure from Europe, that without the aid of such a work, the wise and benevolent intentions of the legislature of *Great Britain*, in leaving, to a certain extent, the natives of these provinces in possession of their own laws, could not completely be fulfilled; and his experience, after a short residence in India, confirmed what his sagacity had anticipated, that without principles to refer to, in a language familiar to the judges of the courts, adjudications amongst natives must too often be subject to an uncertain and erroneous exposition, or wilful misinterpretation of their laws.³²

Such statements go to show that the act of territorial possession of India was at the same time an act of construction of authoritative knowledge, particularly ‘compiled’ and ‘selected’ as Indian Law, by the rulers. This imputation

30 Jones, *The Letters of William Jones*, Vol. II, 84.

31 Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. I, v.

32 Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. I, v-vi.

of authority and appeal to a 'real' knowledge hides the interested and immediate (as opposed to alleged 'pure' and transcendental) nature of Jones' version of India, which both encodes and administers domination by an active supersession of "native knowledge" of their own laws.

Thus Jones' translations or cultural essays, as with any ideological excursion, are structured with and motivated by extraneous knowledge imperatives, their legitimating appeal lying in a metaphysical (universalist/essentialist) mode. This epistemology, which hides the reified and tendentious nature of this knowledge, performs an inversion of subject-object relations. The erasure of history and everyday lives of colonized Indians, the very fact of domination itself, are obscured and written over. The distortion or deformation of content which this results in is part and parcel of the ideological method discussed above. As pointed out above, it functions on a double level: of abstraction or emptying out of historicity and agency, and of filling in these abstractions with empirical illustrations of their 'truth.' Performing metonymic or synecdochal gestures, that is, generalizing a part for the whole or vice versa, this epistemology lays the ground for a power/knowledge exercise which, when articulated to conquest and colonial rule, becomes 'colonial discourse.' A good example of this procedure is Jones' construction of the "submissive Indian" based on his personal contempt for the colonized and individual instances of submission or obsequiousness, while ignoring instances of resistance to British rule or his own fear of their subversiveness.³³ The application of Indian society and governments of the notion of "Oriental/Asiatic despotism," learned during his Persian studies, is another instance of this colonial discourse.³⁴ The purpose of legitimation is only

33 On this projected evil, and fear of the colonized other in their various forms, see the classic text by Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, and its critique in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York 1963). It is brought out eloquently by Michael Taussig in "Culture of Terror — Space of Death: Roger Casement's Putamayo Report and the Explanation of Torture" in Nicholas Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor 1992). Taussig says: "Hated and feared, objects to be despised, yet also objects of awe, the reified essence of evil in the very being of their bodies, these figures of the Jew, the black, the Indian, and woman herself, are clearly objects of cultural construction, the leaden keel of evil and mystery stabilizing the ship and course that is Western History." (139)

34 The discursive legacy of this has been discussed by Edward Said in *Covering Islam*. The notion of Oriental/Asiatic despotism and assumptions about Asiatic society embedded in it develop through Mill's *The History of British India*, Vols. I and II. A.C. Lyall's *Asiatic Society*, Marx's and Weber's essays on colonialism in India and Indian society, among others, and enters into later sociological and historico-political assumptions of Barrington Moore, Perry Anderson and many others. "Despotism" becomes synonymous with the "East," providing in both early and later periods of history a legitimation for colonial rule and other dominations.

ambiguously served by the irony that Jones, the Chief Justice of a colonial rule, should berate Indians for a debased and slavish mentality while using this assumption about their nature to justify colonialism. In the “Tenth Annual Discourse to Asiatic Society,” for example, Jones felt that he “could not but remark the constant effect of despotism in benumbing and debasing all those faculties which distinguish men from the herd that grazes; and to that cause he would impute the decided inferiority of most Asiatic nations, ancient and modern”³⁵

The ideological method of erasure and categorical construction in Jones’ *Works* is based on his pursuit of metaphysics. Thus the vindication of his knowledge of India lies in ‘purity’ and transcendence from history, social relations and other perceived accidentalities. This immutability providing a solid basis or authority for ruling, to be held as valid by both Europeans and Indians is central to Jones’ project of colonial rule in India. As Niranjana remarks:

The most significant nodes of William Jones’ work are (a) the need for translation by the Europeans, since the natives are unreliable interpreters of their own laws and cultures; (b) the desire to be a law-giver, to give the Indians their “own” laws; and (c) the desire to “purify” Indian culture and speak on its behalf. The interconnectedness between these obsessions are extremely complicated. They can be seen, however, as feeding into a larger discourse [of Improvement and Education] that interpellates the colonial subject.³⁶

As a representative of the system, Jones felt that India belonged to England, and in transference, to him. He imagined an India through his own interpretive schema and symbolic organization, omitting “unnecessary,” i.e. unfitting details. Thus the “purification” or “sanskritization” which he performed is itself an act of colonization.³⁷ Helped by a metaphysical method and artistic/linguistic skills, the special forte of Jones, this self-interested, particularist project of ruling achieves a transcendent and universal glow. Good examples are to be found in his emulation of vedic hymns, in which his adoption of the persona of a brahmin truth seeker keeps the crudities of the ruling project safely out of sight.

35 Tejaswini Niranjana, “Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English,” 774.

36 *Ibid.*

37 “Sanskritization” literally means purification, and “Sanskrit,” the language, literally means that which has been purified. Sanskrit, interestingly, has never been a spoken language, i.e. a vernacular, for any particular social group.

And if they [the gods] ask, "What mortal
pours the strain?"

...

Say: from the bosom of you Silver Isle [England],
"Where skies more softly smile,
"He came; and, lisp[ing] our celestial tongue,
"Though not from Brahma sprung,
"Draws Orient knowledge from its fountains
pure,
"Through caves obstructed long, and paths
too long obscure."³⁸

These Indian conceits and the pastoralism, compounded with the image of the truth seeker, add up to a richly textured colonial discourse. They allow the romantic paganism of Jones to coalesce with the metaphysical stance of a universal knower. Yet this knower is also a European to the West, a Man of Reason, with a mission to reveal the 'real India.'³⁹ This ideal knower represents the truly 'human' knower, as opposed to 'the native' or 'the debased Indian' who can never aspire to such a status. Thus Jones' quest for knowledge and 'discovery' of India is both an allegory of "Man's discovery of Truth" and a medium for colonization. The mask of the poet and metaphysician (the truth-seeker) hides the brutalities of conquest and the historical particularities and conditionalities of this so-called universal knowledge and representation.

From the point of view of production of ideology as method, this dual disappearance of social actualities of both the knower and the known is crucial, as also is their reappearance on a secondary plane of metaphysics as the universal knower and the known object, securely attached to the platform of ruling. Through this transmutation the empirical moments of what is known, i.e. what is seen, read or heard in or about India/Indians, are textually re-figured and discursively realigned. Pre-existing discourses of power now useful to the project of colonization provide what Marx called "mystical

38 "A Hymn to Surya" [the sun] quoted in Tejaswini Niranjana, "Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 (15) (1990), 775.

39 See, in this context, a short but useful discussion in Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 31-40 regarding Jones' reading of Indian history and its expression in his poetry. Majeed and others, for example V. de Sola Pinto, have situated Jones within the tradition of English romantic poetry.

connections” — i.e. through an “interpretive schema” — which the empirical becomes but an embodiment or illustration of an idea previously held. The main interpretive schema or discourse within which Jones writes ‘India’ is one of ‘civilization’ and ‘tradition,’ with implicit and explicit binaries of ‘improvement,’ ‘native savagery,’ or ‘Oriental barbarism.’ The notion of ‘tradition’ plays a particularly powerful and ambiguous role, switching from one pole of meaning to the other. It must be noted that these discourses used by Jones are already in place and used in Europe prior to colonization of India. Traditionality, or savagery, is alternately, or in conjunction, considered the ‘essential’ character of India, while reason, rationality, improvement and civilization are seen as the attributes of Europe. The metaphysical dimension of this discursivity allows for atemporality, unchangingness and repetition to be built into the very concept of knowledge. Thus immovable stereotypes mark the passage of the history of India, and Europe/England and India face each other in an essential ontology of difference. An example can be found in the common practice of equating India with ritual violence and sacrifices.⁴⁰ This is then opposed to European civilization or rule of law. Europe therefore is never equated with witch burning or other frequently held *auto-da-fé* or brutalities of punishment.⁴¹ These are never considered ‘essential’ or characteristic of European civilization, while the sporadic occurrence of *satidaha* (burning of women on their husband’s pyre) in India is seized upon as the ‘essence’ of Indian civilization and worked into the colonial justice system and the moral regulation of Indian society.

Thus we can see that an ideological formulation of content is not necessarily ‘a lie,’ or ‘wholly arbitrary’ in any ordinary sense, but rather an illicit and essential extension of the empirical or the particular into a universal. As noted earlier, this is a matter of fuelling an empirical moment with a metaphysical conceptual dynamic which interpellates the empirical into conceptual frames which are far wider than their immediate scope. The reading of India, therefore, takes place in an European discourse of knowledge belonging to early bourgeois society. Indian colonization as a knowledge project for ruling is thus situated within the European renaissance and enlightenment notions of reason and humanism, which are introjected into the construction

40 This view of India as a land of ritual violence is as old as Herodotus. Rich examples can be drawn from British writings on *satidaha*. See Lata Mani, “Cultural Theory, Colonial Texts: Reading Eyewitness Accounts of Widow Burning” or Sumanta Bannerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Calcutta 1989).

41 This, for example, is outlined by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (New York 1979), and numerous studies on the evolution of European criminal laws, studies on the European counter-reformation and the Inquisition, especially historical works on the treatment of witches and heretics.

of India in the shape of metaphors, allegories and images as well as morally regulatory views. Details of Indian life, history and culture are fitted into an over-arching elite code of European 'civilization,' marked by a deep sense of superiority over 'others.' This epistemological manoeuvre implies interpellative and interpretive processes which render invisible and unnamable actual social relations, values and contradictions in existence in India. In this colonial knowledge universe we are, as Dorothy Smith points out, in a blind alley of "... phenomena the only practical universe of exploration, or substrate of which is the social organization and relation of sociological [read: colonial/ideological] discourse itself."⁴² However, we need to explore this formative and knowledge phenomenon in greater detail, if we want to understand more concretely how the full scope of ideology embraces both form and content.

'India': a knowledge of power

By India...I mean that whole extent of country, in which the primitive religion and that language of the *Hindus* prevail, at this day with more or less their ancient priority, and in which the *Nagari* letters are still used with more or less deviation from their original forms.⁴³

Anyone familiar with the *Works* of William Jones will recognize in the above lines some key words in his vocabulary which serve as governing categories for his voluminous opus on India. As stated above, these keywords constellate into a sort of knowledge paradigm, a discursive organization and interpretation of culture and language. They also ambiguously shade off into value judgement while also speaking of languages. The keywords, predictably, are "purity"/"original forms"/"ancientness." They are paired with notions such as "primitiveness" of religion (inclusive of language and culture) and "deviation" from their "original forms." This discursivity is in keeping with Jones' preoccupation with the ancientness of India and of retrieving or rescuing it from history and re-presenting it in its essential form. This is how he attempts "to know India better than any other European ever knew it,"⁴⁴ and to represent it for his readers who are, implicitly, Europeans. There is also an assumption here of a transparent relationship between reality and its representation as displayed by all aspects of Jones' construction of India.

42 Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power*, 33.

43 Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. I:23.

44 Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 24.

Emphasis on this discourse of purity and its perversion (read as corruption produced through socio-historical changes), helps us to read Jones' *Works* in terms of value judgements regarding what Jones thought India once was and what it had degenerated into in his time. This cultural-moral judgement entailed an assessment of what Jones called "the manners," and James Mill, the "Cultures, Morals and Customs" of "the Hindoos." Jones contrasted these changing "manners" to the immutable "moral" truths enshrined in scriptural-legal texts, such as Manu's *Dharmashastra*. His struggles could be seen as a way to control this chaos of "manners" and to keep out history with the fence of edited and anthologized texts. He states as much in his prefaces to the legal digests of muslim and hindu law — *Al Sirajyyah* and *Institutes of Hindu Law*.

Jones' intense awareness of the destabilizing effects of history and changing social/cultural relations and forms is best displayed in his legal project. A self-conscious decision of textual fixation of law is taken in face of recognition of the power of changing manners and customs. As he puts it in the preface to *Institutes of Hindu Law*:

It is a maxim in the science of legislation and government, that laws are of no avail without manners, or, to explain the sentence more fully, that the best intended legislative provisions would have no beneficial effect even at first, and none at all in a short course of time, unless they were congenial to the disposition and habits, to the religious prejudices, and approved immemorial usages, of the people, for whom they were enacted...⁴⁵

And because he is so aware of these customs and prejudices, the fixation of pieces of texts of ancient hindu law become a fetish object for him. In fact Jones learns Sanskrit only to assure himself that the *real law* from the ancient texts was being instituted by the Company and crown courts. His fears of corruption and deviation are enhanced by his perception of deceitfulness in "the natives," showing the chronic insecurity of a ruler who is dependent on local experts for gaining access to knowledge necessary for ruling. His vehemence against "the imposition" by pandits and maulavis is matched by his rhetoric of moral "purity" in the exigencies of ruling. As he puts it: "It is of utmost importance that the stream of hindu Law should be pure; for we are entirely at the power of the native lawyers, through our ignorance of *Sanscrit*."⁴⁶ This also made him argue for the learning of Persian by the servants of the Company, as Persian was the court or official language in

45 Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. III:53.

46 Jones, *The Letters of William Jones*, Vol. II, 666.

northern and eastern India since pre-colonial times and their ignorance formed a barrier to their trade and advancement activities, as they could not make any local transactions in writing:

the servants of the company received letters which they could not read, and were ambitious of gaining titles of which they could not comprehend the meaning; it was found highly dangerous to employ the natives as interpreters, upon whose fidelity they could not depend; and it was at last discovered, that they must apply themselves to the study of the Persian language....⁴⁷

If this need for languages was present among the English traders even in pre-colonial days, it became more acute, according to Jones, in the era when the East India Company assumed the task of ruling India and evolving a justice system. Jones' metaphysical and moral drive for "purity" was concretized through a 'fixed text,' a core of legal references intended for English judges and administrators, in order to discipline the natives. Texts and facts, representation and reality, were mediated and constructed through anthologization and inscription of moral codes, of legal and social conduct. This was a totalizing enterprise, as ruling discourse has to be, and it covered all aspects of 'native' realities. Even the essays on botany written by Jones exemplify a homology to his ruling project. In "Plants of India," for instance, he emphasized the same inscriptive injunctions which we find in his works of law and culture. Here too he valorized ancient languages on account of their purity and transcendental hold on 'truth.' His suspicion regarding the vulgar and the vernacular, about fluctuations in popular cultural idioms, organize his essays on plants. An example of this is the following advice to botanists on Indian flora:

Now the first step, in compiling a treatise on the plants of *India*, should be to write their names in *Roman* letters, according to the most accurate orthography, and in *Sanscrit* preferably to any vulgar dialect; because a learned language is fixed in books, while popular idioms are in constant fluctuation, and will not, perhaps be understood a century hence by the inhabitants of these Indian territories, whom future botanists may consult on the common appellations of trees and flowers⁴⁸

The same ambitions characterize his taxonomy of India's plants as of its scriptural laws, and create a template of ideal reality against which all actuality is to be measured.

47 Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. II:126-27.

48 *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 2.

Rejection of history and social change marks Jones' political conservatism. The creation of transcendental verities through recovering the "original" India amount to no more than that. These constructs seemingly militate against his actual experience of living there, but are in fact motivated by what he perceives as the "debasedness" of Indians in his time. This 'degeneration' of the people is comparable to the vernacular corruption of the original and pure Sanskrit. In this respect Jones shared much with James Mill, both dispensing with experience as a source of 'truth,' while constructing their "truth about India" against the backdrop of their unstated experience, or view of contemporary Indian society.

Jones was close to the conservative thinker Edmund Burke in recognizing the importance of "prejudices." He supported the establishment of a supreme court in India to protect the British subjects and rule the "natives," with the provision "that the natives of the more important provinces be indulged in their own prejudices, civil and religious, and supported to enjoy their own customs unmolested."⁴⁹ But this indulgence had its limit, in his canonical version of elite hindu and muslim laws. Through these compilations colonial rule could claim a legitimacy in local terms even when the actuality was composed of social relations of colonialism and in reality supported prejudices of the Europeans. The legal attempt was meant to remove shadows of usurpation and force from the colonial rule.

Javed Majeed, in *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism*, also speaks of Jones' literary and legal works in terms of creating a legitimating indigenous idiom for ruling.⁵⁰ He shows how Jones' translations and compilations of *Digests* of hindu and muslim laws gradually led to appropriation of power over the local societies, and to the supersession of indigenous agencies for self-rule. According to Majeed:

for Jones the apparent monopoly of a form of indigenous knowledge by certain classes could only be broken through translation. This would mean that *the British would be as conversant in their traditions as they were*, and that their idioms would be *desacralized* through the very act of translation.⁵¹

The power/knowledge character of the Orientalist construction of India produced a seeming paradoxical relation of repression and dependence

49 *Ibid.*, Vol. III:5.

50 Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*.

51 *Ibid.*, 20 (emphasis mine).

between the colonial elite and “the authority of the sacerdotal classes.”⁵² But actually the project had two stages. Initially indispensable, the Indian scholars were slated for elimination once the English translations and compilations were concluded. As Majeed puts it:

The position of Muslim law officers remained intact until 1817, [when regulation 17] empowered Nizamat Adalat, the central criminal court of Calcutta, to overrule the fatwas of the law officers in all cases. With this Muslim Law lost its status as the criminal law of the land, although it was not until 1864, after the Indian Penal Code was promulgated in 1862, that the institution of law officers and their fatwas was abolished.⁵³

Thus, legitimating colonial rule in an Indian idiom did nothing to undercut power relations between England and India. If anything, this peculiar form secured legitimation much more effectively in the first stages of English rule than an imposition of British law could have done. The self-assigned creators and keepers of ‘truth’ about India were doing the work of ruling effectively. What Majeed has forgotten to add with regard to English appropriation of Indian traditions, and Lata Mani and Bernard Cohn remind us, is that these same “desacralization” procedures which translated Indian texts also conferred on the colonial authorities the power to decide and name what these so-called “native traditions” were.⁵⁴ They invented “traditions” as they needed them.⁵⁵

The results of these inventions were deeply consequential for Indian society. Majeed himself refers to this in an undeveloped fashion when he remarks on Jones’ “mistaken attempts” to compile *one* uniform code of Hindu and Muslim law. This one “true” version of social morality for each community, he feels, “reinforced conservatism,” leading to centralization of legal power in the name of an ideal order, distinct from actual practice:⁵⁶ “In fact, the insistence on certainty and uniformity, and the attempt to codify traditions, actually meant that sometimes Anglo-Hindu law was more orthodox than the Shastras.”⁵⁷ Majeed’s perception is similar to Charles Bayly’s, who in *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* speaks of rigidification of caste

52 *Ibid.*, 20.

53 *Ibid.*

54 See Eric Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1984), especially the Introduction.

55 Bernard Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.

56 Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 28.

57 *Ibid.*, 27.

through colonial modes of standardization of knowledge of Indian societies into “rank and grade Indian social orders.”⁵⁸ This colonialist knowledge project increased the social importance of local elite, brahmin pandits and muslim maulavis on whom the rulers depended, and “[the] scene was set for the emergence of a more stratified and rigid system of caste, and a more homogeneous religious practice *within all the main communities*.”⁵⁹ That this natural fit between the administrative requirements and standardization of social knowledge was produced through the mechanism of an ideological epistemology is hard to ignore.

Jones’ own location as a knower within relations of ruling, of Britain over India and Asia, is evident in the following example from “The Second Anniversary Discourse (1785) for the Asiatic Society.” Here the relative inequality of Europe and Asia in the scale of power and culture are clearly marked out. For Jones,

Whoever travels in Asia, especially if he be conversant with the literature of the countries through which he passes, must naturally remark the superiority of European talent; the observation indeed is as old as Alexander; and, though, we cannot agree with the sage preceptor of the ambitious prince, that ‘the Asiaticks were born to be slaves’, yet the Athenian poet seems to be perfectly in the right, when he represents Europe as a sovereign princess and Asia as her handmaid.⁶⁰

This statement provides a visual icon encoding a relationship of dominance and servitude between Europe and Asia (Britannia and India), made seductive by an ambience of grandeur and beauty supplied by Jones’ romanticism. It is then qualified and underscored by his position as the representative of the region: “... but, if the mistress be transcendently majestic, it cannot be denied that the attendant has many beauties, and some advantages peculiar to itself [sic].”⁶¹

These sentiments and images are not, of course, unique to Jones. They are an intrinsic part of a representational apparatus created in the process of European colonization. English patriotic poems or songs such as James Thompson’s “Rule, Britannia, rule the waves” and innumerable engravings and etchings of the time show the trinity of Europe or Britannia, a bejewelled white upper class woman, often a Queen, and her two dark and dusky atten-

58 *Ibid.*, 28.

59 *Ibid.* (emphasis mine).

60 Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol I, 10.

61 *Ibid.*

dants — Africa and Asia. This colonial iconography is the result of a mediation between written political allegories and a convention in art.⁶² This patronizing though romantic attitude is paraphrased by Jones in a more prosaic fashion when he reminds the all-European members of the Asiatic Society not to be too arrogant and dismissive towards Indians or Asians: "...although we must be conscious of our superior advancement in kinds of useful knowledge, yet we ought not therefore to contemn the people of Asia"⁶³

The general style of colonial discourse adopted by William Jones (and other Orientalists) deserves a specific discussion. It possesses a peculiarly complex character which expresses domination through classical and Orientalist scholarship, Burkeian conservative politics, and a romantic aesthetic. Thus Jones is not to be confused with a "liberal imperialist"⁶⁴ like Mill and other utilitarians. Though he served the interest of the British empire he did this differently in his style or discourse. Majeed draws our attention to this aspect of Jones' works.

What has been ignored is the fact that Jones's attempt to define an idiom in which cultures could be compared and contrasted was in part a response to the need for such an idiom that the cultures of the heterogeneous British empire could be compared, the nature of the British rule overseas determined, and the empire unified by the same ethos. For Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, the comparison and contrast of cultures was essential for their formulation of a programme of reform which would be relevant to both Indian and British society, but their approach to this issue was to be very different from Jones's.⁶⁵

If Jones was not interested in 'improving' India/Indians in ways utterly alien to them, how did he carry out the task of construction of a cultural identity for the country and its peoples? How did he construct the necessary difference between Europe and India? The 'difference' (between Europeans and Indian 'others') was produced through a mixture of arrogance and fascination rooted in an organicist conservative and romantic imagination. He surmised that debased Indians had the possibility of a cultural/moral rejuvenation if, and only if, led by enlightened European guides and rulers like himself. In order to do this Jones played the insider, and manipulated some of the signifi-

62 Much, for example, has been written on Manet's "Olympia attended by a black maid," onto whom the European male gaze has shifted the white woman's burden of an unregulated sexuality.

63 Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol I, 10.

64 Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 40-43.

65 *Ibid.*, 16.

cational systems from classical Sanskrit literature. He therefore donned the exotic mask of an Indian. As Lawrence of Arabia played an Arab, Jones of India played 'Brahmin' and 'pagan' to claim a representational status. Thus his poetic persona embodies cultural essences that were fabricated by Jones himself. His reforms, unlike those of the Utilitarians, do not use the discourse of 'rationality' as much as that of purification and retrieval. Many of his poems are hymns to vedic deities, where the benevolent character and intention of the British rule speak an Indian idiom⁶⁶ to authentically represent India to the west (at this point Indians were not widely trained in English). The poems accomplish the moral imperatives of British rule in India, and it becomes the ideal condition within which 'the hindu' or 'India' can return to its pristine glory. This "Hymn to Laxmi," for example, shows such a view:

Oh! bid the patient Hindu rise and live
 His erring mind, that Wizard lore beguiles
 Clouded by priestly wiles,
 To senseless nature bows for nature's God.
 Now, stretch'd o'er ocean's vast from happier isles
 He sees the wand of empire, not the rod;
 Ah, may those beauties, that western skies illumine,
 Disperse the unhappy gloom!⁶⁷

Another poem, the "Hymn to Ganga," is a perfect example of cultural appropriation. It indicates a ruler's right to arrogate the culture of the colonized unto himself. Here Jones represents 'India' as an 'ideal Indian,' in accordance to a cultural synthesis that he has put together. The poem is

feigned to have been the work of a BRAHMEN, in an early age of HINDU antiquity, who, by a prophetic spirit, discerns the equity of BRITISH government, and concludes with a prayer for its peaceful duration under good laws well administered.⁶⁸

This naturalized Indian Jones, or the imagined "Brahmen," ends by pronouncing a benediction for British rule in India and prays for its long life.

66 *Ibid.*, 22.

67 Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol II, 365.

68 *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, 383.

Nor frown, dread Goddess, on a peerless race,
 With lib'ral heart of material grace,
 Wafted from colder isles remote:
 As they preserve our laws, and bid our terror cease,
 So be their darling laws preserved in wealth, in joy, in peace!⁶⁹

This indigenous idiom and persona adopted by Jones, and other orientalist, are not to be confused with an act of surrender by the Europeans to Indian culture, but rather understood as a gesture of incorporation. Jones and his colleagues felt the same right to Indian cultural goods, as to commercial goods and revenue, while simultaneously forging a tool of legitimation. This allowed a control over the colonized in what appeared to be on their own moral and cultural terms. *This model of ruling*, as noticed by many scholars, came from the English perception of the cultural modalities of the Mughal empire. It minimized the fact of the colonial nature of British rule and made it appear organic to the local societies.⁷⁰ And most significantly, the conceptual-imagistic concreteness called 'India' that emerged through these interpretive-constitutive processes of multiple relations of ruling, came to be accepted by the west (and in a certain sense, even by Indians themselves) as the 'real India.'⁷¹

This totalizing aspiration of *Orientalist knowledge of India* is necessarily dependent on flexibility, inasmuch as it has to deal with a non-unified actuality. Thus it resorts to notions of typicality as well as exceptionality and diversity in order to maintain its typologies and essentialist stance. From this point of view, it has been served well by the concept of tradition, which automatically entails the notion of its violation. Through this reading device contem-

69 *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, 392

70 Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 25; Bernard Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India".

71 Making India "traditional," while reifying or inventing traditions, put in place an interpretive framework which has lasted from Orientalism to the current phase of international development. It should be obvious by now that Jones considered the colonial project as *one of ruling India* for her own good, as a gesture of rescuing and restoring. Thus, he considered the task of the East India Company's servants to be twofold: intellectual-moral, and legal/administrative. He was not alone in this understanding, but his predecessors and colleagues, such as Warren Hastings, Halhed, C.T. Colebrook, H.H. Wilson, all conformed to this vision and task. Learning languages, translating, selecting, compiling and canonizing texts, fixing and constructing characteristic traditions — in short, projecting the real "genius" of the country — were their full-time occupation. The purpose was to create a representational apparatus of India which would provide a controlled and predictable (for the colonizers) ground for ruling.

porary indigenous discussions and debates on social conduct and laws of inheritance, property and family pushed aside as deviation from the ancient codification as 'tradition,' thereby rendering existing indigenous discursivities static and 'un-Indian.' Through this process colonial rule became the saviour of India and the Orientalists, its spokespersons, while representations created by them re-presented Indian reality. This gave the real historical agency to the rulers themselves, who, like Jones, saw the restoration of the "original India" as their historic task. Thus the rulers stole from the 'natives' their history, and interposed themselves between a people and their cultural-political past and future, making decisions as to how to rule them, supposedly, in their own idiom.

The enormous power involved in this definitive, antiquarian textualization for contemporary ruling becomes evident in its gigantic proportions if we hypothetically put Europe in India's place. The arrogance and absurdity of ruling a country on the basis of scriptural/legal texts produced hundreds of years ago becomes evident if we propose that Europe be conquered by India or China, and it rules present-day Europe on the basis of an archivally researched, selected and canonized version of Greek laws from the days of Plato and Aristotle. Furthermore, this process renders the interim period of development in European thought, between antiquity and now, as accidental and inessential excrescences with regard to Europe's true essence. This is precisely what Jones and others tried to do in India, with a considerable degree of success in constructing mythologies which were also ideologies of 'India,' hinduism and Islam.

Politically speaking, the Orientalist conservatism has to be contexted to the French revolution. It has much of the romantic, organicist conservatism of Edmund Burke. Jones befriended Burke, until the impeachment of Bengal's Governor-General, Warren Hastings, who was Jones' administrative superior, patron and collaborator in Asiatic research in India. Orientalists such as Jones were also the heirs of European renaissance and enlightenment. They were humanist scholars, educated in European classics and classical languages, and admirers of Greco-Roman antiquities. This expertise and orientation was combined with a mercantilist and physiocratic view of India's economic 'improvement.'⁷² All this underpinned their political vision, and many, including Jones, advocated 'enlightened despotism' for India and contrasted it to 'Asiatic despotism.' In short, these men inherited and developed personal and political history and an intellectual framework before coming to India. These interpretive devices and frameworks are what they built on both in terms of form and content in their ideological project when they sought to

72 Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal* (New Delhi 1981).

know and represent India. As such, they relied on a common content for constructing 'Asiatic others' prevalent in Europe throughout the post-crusade era, but there were also other stereotypes or perceptions applicable to groups which lent themselves to use in the colonial situation. Constructions or stereotypes of the peasant and rural societies within Europe, the Arab or the Moor, European women and lower classes, for example, have much in common, both in method and content, with those of the later 'Asiatic,' 'Oriental' or 'Indian.' Geopolitical mythologies regarding the East, used liberally in literature, for example in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* or Dr. Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas, the Prince of Abyssinia*, in the plays of Dryden or Aphra Behn, traveller's narratives, and so on, had existed for a long time before the Company rule in India. Upon scrutiny it becomes clear that the Orientalist "symbolic, cultural constitution" of India draws on these pre-existing conceptual content and cultural forms rather than fully inventing brand new ones.

If Renaissance humanism, values of enlightenment, along with classical antiquarianism, are left unexplored as sources for cultural construction and ideology in the colonial context, the value-laden nature of the term 'civilization' as applied to India would make no sense. The invention of Greece and Rome and the classical past which went with it, along with the invention of 'traditions' which are signifiers of "European civilization," must all be looked into as sources for constructing 'India' and its 'traditions.' The concept of 'civilization,' for example, becomes a heavy burden, not only because it ceases to signal a process of becoming, an ideal for all societies, but instead provides a typological standard already arrived at by Europeans, by which 'others' must be measured.⁷³ This led to India being evaluated through European, especially Greco-Roman icons and standards, and occupying an ambiguous position of antiquity on the one hand, and being classed as inferior (to Europe), on the other. This ambiguity of 'India' resonates with the shifting horizon of 'European civilization' and its continued bifurcation into Apollonian Greece and Dionysian Asia.

A shifting boundary between Greece and Asia, indicated for example by the alternating status of Egypt, Turkey or Macedonia, contains the elements of Orientalism or Eurocentrism.⁷⁴ The humanist fabrication of the Apollonian Greece stands face to face with changing perceptions of Asia Minor and Egypt, characterized alternately as sources of rational, universal thought, and of mystery religions or occultism and Dionysian irrationalism. The same

73 Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London 1983).

74 See Martin Bernal, "Black Athena: Hostilities to Egypt in the Eighteenth Century" in Sandra Harding (ed.), *The "Racial" Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future* (Bloomington 1993).

ambiguity and shift between admiration and denigration is also to be found in the Orientalist perception of India. The same historiography as found in Europe, with its notions of ages and stages, is applied to it. A history of decline is also perceived here, evolving to decay, from the golden age to the contemporary era. In Europe itself this historiography had invented time and traditions which went into the construction of the European 'middle ages' (the middle of what?) or the 'dark ages' (contrasted to 'enlightened'), of 'renaissance' and 'enlightenment.' The same perspective, with its curious mixture of romanticism and rationalism, of neo-classical aesthetic and the sublime, was brought to bear on India and produced representational images and knowledge. European paintings, etchings or verbal descriptions of the time produce 'India' through these same modalities.

Conclusion

This paper considers the issue of representation specifically in the colonial context, with regard to a fuller understanding of the concept of ideology, encompassing both the content and the form or method of production of knowledge. The elaborated theorization is then sought to be made apprehensible through a discussion of William Jones' *Works* in terms of production of ideology. No doubt more could be said of them, as his opus is voluminous, but the paper concentrates instead on uncovering how historical and social relations of his ruling enterprise informed the (ac)claimed metaphysical disinterestedness of his work. This essay should also go a little way toward understanding how ideological knowledges arise which are not only current in their own time, but persist through time into further stages and modes of power. The method of metaphysics, constructively applied to historical moments, as Jones does to his encounter with India in the last years of the eighteenth century, flies the produced 'knowledge' way beyond the confines of its locale and its time, and settles into the status of truth and fact. So it is that Jones' 'India' became the lens through which not only his contemporary colonizing Europeans but many future nationalist Indians saw their country and themselves.

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