

Chapter VII

Hybridization of the Genre of Travel Writing by Naipaul and Ghosh

As Naipaul recounts in his Nobel Lecture, it was travel and travel writing that had helped him overcome his writer's block and the resultant fear that his brief career as a novelist was over:

Accident, then, rescued me. I became a traveller. I travelled in the Caribbean region and understood much more about the colonial set-up of which I had been part. I went to India, my ancestral land, for a year: it was a journey that broke my life in two. The books that I wrote about these two journeys took me to new realms of emotion, gave me a world-view I had never had, extended me technically. I was able in the fiction that then came to me to take in England as well as the Caribbean – and how hard that was to do. I was able also to take in all the racial groups of the island, which I had never before been able to do.

(Naipaul "Nobel Lecture" 12-13)

That this regard for travel/writing was never a fleeting deviation from fiction into non-fiction by an otherwise ambitious novelist for Naipaul is evident from his words quoted above, while his travel/writing has also been observed by various critics to thereupon exert a decisive influence on the content and style of his fiction. As Rob Nixon remarks, "Thus, with *The Middle Passage* Naipaul made a significant advance toward defining his literary terrain: historically, as the postcolonial era; geographically, as societies formerly under British, and to a lesser extent French and Dutch, imperial sway; and generically, so as to include travel writing" (13).

Consequently, while Naipaul's familiar practice of developing his travel books at leisure from the notes he keeps during his travels displays a mode of writing more suitable for fiction: his habit of incorporating the accounts of eye-witnesses to give credibility to his narrative is also something he borrowed from travel writing for much of his fiction. Anyway, that he has successfully hybridized the genre of travel writing is a well-accepted fact by now as are his methods of doing it— such as by incorporating fictional methods; journalistic techniques; detailed ethnographic description of the landscape, geography and people of a place; elements of historical research; autobiographical elements; and philosophical perspective in the travel narrative.

Moreover, he has transported this hybridized face of travel writing in his fictions as well, including the four novels that are being discussed here. Thus in these novels we find elements of travelogue, ethnography, journalism, autobiography and philosophical contemplations all blended in a flawless structure. Besides, it is not that only the fictional characters in his novels introduce the element of travel into the narrative; Naipaul, as it appears, has also borrowed generously from his own travels and travelogues into his fictions. The four essays in *The Return of Eva Peron* (with *The Killings of Trinidad*), for example, have provided much material for *Bend*. While the Mobutu essays, containing an extensive historical and journalistic research by Naipaul, are reflected in the portrayal of the Big Man with his cap, stick and ubiquitous portraits, the radicalization, the presidential Domain, the little green book, the cabin de luxe, the steamer; the Trinidad essay lends the murder of the white woman to the novel (Roldán-Santiago 97).

Likewise, at times even his sentiments as expressed in his travel writings are echoed in his fictions, such as his fear and contempt for the Caribbean, especially his birthplace. Thus his fear of Trinidad in *The Middle Passage*—“As soon as the Francisco Bobadilla had touched the quay, ship’s side against rubber bumpers, I began to feel all my old fear of Trinidad. I did not want to stay. I had left the security of the ship and had no assurance that I would ever leave the island again” (55)—is later reflected in *Enigma* in his unwillingness to get down at Barbados that reminds him of Trinidad: “As though there was safety in the ship; as though the next morning the ship wasn’t to set me down at my own island” (163). Even his travel books on India that find him disappointed with a country in decay and degradation are mirrored in Willie’s travels and experience in India when he comes back to his country after almost a lifetime in *Magic*.

The ethnographic details that are a remarkable feature in Naipaul’s travel writings are also present in the travel writings in his fiction; such as in Salim’s attempt at an ethnographic description of Zabeth in *Bend*: “In appearance she was not at all like the people of our region. They were small and slight and very black. Zabeth was a big woman with a coppery complexion: there were times when this copper glow, especially on her cheekbones, looked like a kind of make-up” (10). There are such details regarding other things as well in the novel, as like in the description of the African food that are sold in the food stalls in the market square in the unnamed town: “little oily heaps of fried flying ants (expensive, and sold by the spoonful) laid out on

scraps of newspaper; hairy orange-coloured caterpillars with protuberant eyes wriggling in enamel basins; fat white grubs kept moist and soft in little bags of damp earth, five or six grubs to a bag" (74); or that the local women in dugouts sell to the passengers in the steamer: "The food was mainly fish or monkey, fresh or *boucané* — smoked in the way of the country, with a thick black crust. Sometimes there was a smoked snake or a smoked small crocodile, a black hunk barely recognizable for what it had been — but with white or pale pink flesh below the charred crust" (7).

There is another description of this nature in *Half*, but this time of an African market at night that Willie chances upon once he goes out in search of an exciting night life with Álvaro — "a kind of night market, with petty stalls in low open huts, lit by a hurricane lantern, selling matches and loose cigarettes and small tins of various things . . . people . . . sitting at the roadside with candles in paper bags beside very small heaps of their own food, sticks of dried cassava, or peppers, or vegetables" (180).

In *Magic* too Willie observes the maid servant in Joseph's quarter like a traveler looking for details: "she was not sitting flat on the terrazzo floor . . . but on a narrow and very low bench, perhaps about four inches high. With clothes and flesh she overhung her little bench, almost hiding it. Her head was covered, correctly, because Willie was a visitor; and she was kneading something in a blue-rimmed enamel bowl" (36). These ethnographic descriptions are not always limited to the descriptions of people, their cultures and their customs in Naipaul: these at times cover the geographic details too, as like the description of St Kitts in *Enigma* by the narrator: "In shape it was — apart from a tail — round. It had a central mountain, forested at the top, and the slopes, covered with even sugar-cane, ran all the way down to the sea. The island was edged with a narrow asphalt road, and there were the little houses of the workers, descendants of slaves, along this road" (176).

The journalistic style is again something that is inseparable from Naipaul's travel writing and thus is incorporated in the novels seamlessly. While at times the journalistic investigation provides the background material for the novels, as like the Mobutu essays in *Bend*: sometimes it also features in the narrative. Thus we find Salim in *Bend* remarking on the absence of a proper journalistic investigation in Raymond's history of liberty villages that was written without a single interview of the local people. Salim, in fact, is quite disappointed that Raymond has only consulted and at times blindly copied reports and statistics from old missionary archives.

whereas he believes that a single conversation with Metty would have provided Raymond with a deeper insight into and credibility of the subject.

Naipaul, on the other hand, famous for his interviews and conversations with local people to achieve a journalistic style laced with the insider's view, has incorporated this practice in his fiction as well. Willie in *Magic* for example is shown not only to talk to Bhoj Narayan, Einstein, and Ramachandra in an impersonal and observant way to gather their views on the guerrilla movement, but also to record it in the novel as the objective, pithy, condensed, and factual narration suitable for a journalistic approach to any subject. This journalistic style is noticeable even in the way Willie recounts his own experiences among the guerrillas to the readers and to his sister in the form of letters, the eye-witness feel accentuating the journalistic approach even more: "At about six there was the roll call, and then for three hours they jogged and did physical exercises and sometimes practiced crawling on the ground with a gun in their hands. For breakfast they had peanuts and rice flakes. And then they were lectured on guerrilla tactics" (51). Thus, apart from the various journalistic reporting with ethnographic details in the texts as already quoted, we also have the journalistic prose style and methods as seamlessly woven into the travel accounts by the main characters in Naipaul's novels.

As already mentioned, Naipaul also employs a historical perspective to hybridize his travel narratives and thus in the travel writing in his novels too he makes use of his historical research and notes. History, in fact, does more than a hybridizing function as regards his travel writing in fictions: it also presents and justifies Naipaul's views on socio-political scenario in various countries. Thus to show that decolonization has brought more harm than good to the former colonies of Europe, Naipaul bases his novels on his extensive historical research and has his main traveling characters frequently comment on the post-colonial societies in view of their colonial/pre-colonial history.

This trait of referring to historical research that give the traveling hero the authenticity and credibility he needs, can be traced back to Naipaul's first travel book *The Middle Passage* where he had quoted from Froude and Trollope, and from Ibn Batuta's medieval travel accounts. As Nightingale comments on Naipaul's regard for history that is evident in most of his fiction and non-fiction: "To Naipaul the study of history offers more than a personal haven, a way of holding the vision of chaos at bay. It also offers to a society a means of establishing identity, through a shared heritage.

the development of mutual ideals and a sense of community” (qtd. in Roldán-Santiago 85). Thus whether it is Salim’s retrieving the history of the ancient Roman quote with the help of Father Huismans that prohibited a racial intermingling, or the historical reference to the Liberty villages; history is a powerful presence in *Bend*.

Besides, a recurrent concern that Naipaul’s traveling hero/narrator expresses is about the absence of a conception of history in the former colonies in comparison with the European civilization that has provide these primitive societies with the only history they today have. Salim in *Bend* thus mourns the migrations that his forefathers had undertaken at the cost of their history as he also notices that if not for the Europeans, the history of their community would have been lost long ago. Salim is also full of admiration during his travel to London for the inspiring and enterprising history that lies behind the magnificent city.

Travel, history and fiction are once again interwoven in *Half and Magic* in the incidents where Willie finds out the historical connection between his name and the visiting English writer, Maugham; or is recoiled by the traveling history from Goa to the Portuguese Africa; or when Saro, enlightened by her travel and life in Berlin, tells Willie a different history of Gandhi than the one they had at home in India; or when on his arrival in India Willie learns the colonial history of defeat from Joseph.

Enigma, although it primarily evokes the literary history of London, the novel also presents a socio-political history of the place through the eyes of the traveling narrator to a great extent. When the narrator, for example, comes upon a sign on the road from Stonehenge near Amesbury that “celebrated the antiquity of the town: with a coat of arms and a date, 979 A.D.”, he feels a powerful presence of history around him and is lost into that “uncelebrated darkness before the foundation of that town of Amesbury in 979 A.D.” The narrator thus transports himself to that ancient time when “the Roman army had left Britain. And Stonehenge had been built and had fallen into ruin, and the vast burial ground had lost its sanctity, long before the Romans had come. So that history here, where there were so many ruins and restorations, seemed to be plateau of light, with intervening troughs or disappearances into darkness” (53). The traveling narrator of *Enigma* however also notes the other histories of defeat like that of St Kitts that were not transformed into success stories later like the one in England: “No aboriginal Indians now existed in St Kitts; they had been killed off three hundred years before by the English and French; the rough carvings on those boulders were the only memorials the Indians had left” (176).

The agency of history has a second function in Naipaul's writings—the introduction of the philosophical musings that in its turn has another hybridizing effect on the travel writings in his fictions. The traveler is frequently shown in Naipaul to have gone through some deeper realizations regarding man and society during the travels that form the essence of his world view. At times Naipaul also presents his traveling protagonist to experience during the journey those events that substantiate his existing world view.

Thus as the narrator of *Enigma* presents the effect of historical awareness upon human actions in the context of the town of Amesbury, he is led into a philosophical mediation: "The historical feeling that had caused that sign to be put up had also brought about the restoration of the chapels and abbeys of Amesbury, as well as of the church that lay across the lawn from my cottage: history, like religion, or like an extension of religion, as an idea of one's own redemption and glory" (53). History, travel and a philosophical view all mingle together once again in this novel when the narrator goes back to visit his 'own island', Trinidad and finds the island completely changed from when he had left it "at the beginning of a great movement of peoples after the war, a great shaking up of the world, a great shaking up of old cultures and old ideas." But on his return home he finds that "just as my own journey had brought about a change in me and set me looking for new ideas . . . so restlessness and the need for a new idea of the self had driven many other people, including the people I thought I had, in every sense of the word, left behind" (173).

Bend too presents these philosophical musings tinged with other concerns, such as when Salim ponders on the loss of a sense of history in his migrant family and community: "All that had happened in the past was washed away; there was always only the present. It was as though, as a result of some disturbance in the heavens, the early morning light was always receding into the darkness, and men lived in a perpetual dawn" (14). Likewise, Salim also observes on the status of a migrant in the places like the Third World countries that are torn apart for internal problems:

We were simple men with civilization but without other homes. Whenever we were allowed to, we did the complicated things we had to do, like the ants. We had the occasional comfort of reward, but in good times or bad we lived with the knowledge that we were expandable, that our labour might at any moment go to waste, that we ourselves might be smashed up; and that others would

replace us. To us that was the painful part, that others would come at the better time. But we were like the ants: we kept on. (100)

However, in *Magic* Willie becomes philosophical when he observes himself to be a part of the dying empire—England, and looks at the vast treasure of knowledge that the empire can still disseminate:

it is terrible and heartbreaking that this way of seeing and understanding has come to me so late. I can't do anything with it now. A man of fifty cannot remake his life. I have heard it said that the only difference between the rich and the poor in a certain kind of economy is that the rich have money ten or fifteen or twenty years before the poor. I suppose the same is true about ways of seeing. Some people come to it too late, when their lives are already spoilt.

(230)

That Naipaul's writings draw extensively from the experiences of his own life is a well-established fact by now. Naipaul too admitted it in his Nobel Lecture when he remarked that he was the sum of his books, that his childhood in a colonial past full of shame and disgust is the supplier of the primary material and emotion in his writings: "When I became a writer those areas of darkness around me as a child became my subjects: The land; the aborigines; the New World; the colony; the history; India; the Muslim world, to which I also felt related; Africa; and then England, where I was doing my writing . . . my background, the source and prompting of my work . . ." (Naipaul "Nobel Lecture" 10). Thus there are abundant autobiographical elements in these novels by Naipaul, such as – the colonial traveler in the decolonizing Africa in *Bend*; in *Halt and Magic* the Hindu traveling hero Willie, born of a marriage of distrust and dislike as in the case of Naipaul's parents, goes to England on a scholarship following his desperate wish to leave his colonial past behind, thus reflecting Naipaul's actions and emotions; Willie travels to both Africa and India in search of a sense of belonging and a life of self-realization only to be disappointed by both the countries that is again based on Naipaul's personal experiences in these two countries. And like Willie, Naipaul too decides to finally come back to England as the only place in the world that could give him a kind of life he had always aspired for. Even the small but significant incidents in Naipaul's life too find their way into these novels. Thus when the Indian High Commission refused him a job, "Vidia would fictionalize this rejection in *A Bend in the River*" (French 133). Naipaul even "tried

for the first time to address or explain his own [sexual] impulses through the character of Roger" in *Magic* (French 164).

However, it is his most accomplished work, *Enigma*, that magnificently weaves fact and fiction in its complex structure. The novel, famous for both its defiance of the traditional literary boundaries and its labyrinth of real and fictitious events, is also held to be the most autobiographical among Naipaul's fictions. Here the narrator, as if on behalf of Naipaul himself, recounts his life in colonial Trinidad with a series of events and experiences that are familiar to us by now as part of the novelist's real life – his anxious arrival as a scholarship student in the England that he has known till then only through English literature; the 'debris' of the colonial past that does not allow him to arrive in the city of his dreams; the wonder and joy he experiences to find the literary England coming alive in his rural cottage as his stay there became his second childhood; his sadness at the change and decay in the land that he thought would never change from its literary essence; his failed attempts at leaving England to settle in Trinidad; and his final coming to terms with the changes in his physical, emotional and intellectual environment. *Enigma* thus remains a novel that boldly transgresses all bounds imposed on a literary genre and includes travel writing, autobiography, ethnographical description, history and a great deal of philosophical musings in its form. It is thus a truly representative work of a writer who has always maintained that for him the transgression of literary genres is both natural and necessary: "Both fiction and the travel-book form have given me my way of looking, and you will understand why for me all literary forms are equally valuable" (Naipaul "Nobel Lecture" 13).

Ghosh also echoes the exact sentiment during an interview:

What interested me first about borders was their arbitrariness, their constructedness – the ways in which they are 'naturalised' by modern political myth-making. I think this interest arose because of some kind of inborn distrust of anything that appears to be 'given' or taken-for-granted. This is why I distrust also the lines that people draw between fiction and non-fiction. I think these lines are drawn in order to manipulate our ways of thought: that is why they must be disregarded. (Ghosh Interview 9)

And like Naipaul he also admits the way travel shapes his novels: "I don't think of my journalistic writing as 'travel writing' as such; for me, travelling is always in some

way connected with my fictional work. It's a very close link, I would say" (Ghosh "Interview" 214).

Thus for a writer who does not believe in borders—both between nations and between literary forms—and who has been an extensive traveler as both a researcher and a journalist: Ghosh's novels are always fascinating examples of a hybrid text. The traveler in Ghosh always leads the reader to multiple viewpoints that are, like in Naipaul, also related to the fields of history, anthropology, political reporting, autobiography, and philosophy. For example, *Reason*, incorporating history in its traveler's tale as significantly as Naipaul, presents the history of cotton that works as a political allegory in the novel. This history, in its turn, accentuates the brutality and absurdity of the European colonialism that rewrites history by terming those very nations once considered civilized by the world as primitive. Even the biography of Pasteur—another piece of history from the Europe—comes alive as a character in this novel, and that too a traveling one, playing a critical role in determining the major characters' thoughts and actions: though it is finally thrown into fire once the travelers decide to move eastwards, away from "the West".

Reason at times also reads like a detective story with Jyoti on a thrilling pursuance of Alu across a whole continent, so very close at capturing him yet missing him by a hair's breadth. All these aspects of the novel thus made Hawley to view it "as an early example of this novelist's tendency to push against the limits of a particular genre" as in *Reason* he finds "a detective story, a story of exile, a travelogue, a women's rights tract, a Marxist protest, a plea for humanistic camaraderie, etc.". The narrative technique is also found by Hawley to produce as hybrid an effect in its inclusion of the methods like magic realism—as in Alu being trapped under the collapsed Star and rescued later—although the critic notes that "they are more generally straightforward and realistic. He does tend, though, to juggle a lot of characters, time zones, and locales in the telling of his tale" (54).

History, however, is awarded the status of a central character in all four novels of Ghosh. *Antique* has this sweep of history in the lives and trades of the faceless slave and his master in the medieval Egypt, while their travels across countries leave traces behind that Ghosh were to pick up later. Ghosh also records in the novel the history of Egypt and Mangalore, and the tale of the ancient Indian Ocean trade, an instance of an exemplary intercontinental relationship that the imperial history changed forever. *Palace* too has a grand sweep of history that connects Burma and India with British

imperialism acting as a common thread between them. Thus in this novel we find the accounts of the independence struggle in both the countries: the violence and turbulence during the time that threatened to sever the ties between the two nations; the great exodus of Indians from Burma in the ‘Forgotten Long March’ of 1941; and the post-colonial situation in Burma. However, what Ghosh says in the context of his use of history in *Palace* is applicable in the context of all his novels:

My fundamental interest is in people – in individuals and their specific predicaments. If history is of interest to me it is because it provides instances of unusual and extraordinary predicaments. For instance, take Arjun at the battle of Jitra (*The Glass Palace*): his life is brought to crisis by a historical circumstance. He shares this circumstance with many others, but he responds to it in a fashion that is particular to himself. This crisis is more dramatic than any I could have thought up on my own, and that is why it is so rewarding to look at history carefully. (Ghosh Interview 6)

Tide also displays a similar involvement with history from the novelist’s part as it presents the mutable course of history in a land with a contrasted past and present. Thus the history of the Sundarbans is recorded as inspiring when Sir Daniel buys islands there and tries to populate it; though years later history tells a different story when a group of settlers tries to populate one of the islands in the Sundarbans and are crushed

Besides history, if Naipaul is aided by his ethnographic observations in his hybridization of the travelers’ tales; then it is anthropology that Ghosh admits to have helped him in providing the necessary support in producing fiction:

In some ways, my training as an anthropologist was of great help to me as a writer. I spent a year living in a small village in Egypt, and during this time I kept an exhaustive diary, in which I made extensive notes about my conversations with people, and the things I saw around me. Not only did this teach me to observe what I was seeing; it also taught me how to translate raw experience on to the page. It was in a way, the best kind of training a novelist could have and . . . Much of my writing has been influenced by this training.

(Ghosh Interview 6-7)

As Ghosh admits of anthropology playing a crucial role in his writing; the novel that has been shaped by it the most is undoubtedly *Antique* as the ‘exhaustive’ diary that Ghosh used to keep during his training as an anthropologist in the Egyptian village is

the one that resulted in this novel. The novel's primary account of the medieval trader Ben Yiju and his slave Bomma is the one that was conceived by Ghosh during his research as an anthropologist in Egypt while his experience as a traveler in Egypt formed the rest part of the novel, as is evident from what Ghosh says in the prologue to the novel, on how he had ended up in Egypt from the University of Oxford:

I was expected to do research leading towards a doctorate in social anthropology. I had never heard of the Cairo Geniza before that day, but within a few months I was in Tunisia, learning Arabic. At about the same time the next year, in 1980, I was in Egypt, installed in a village called Lataifa. ... I knew nothing then about the Slave of MS H.6 except that he had given me a right to be there, a sense of entitlement. (19)

The novel thus appears to disregard successfully the lines drawn between genres, as it commendably blends history, anthropology, autobiography, socio-political commentary, travel narrative, and fiction in its form.

As regards the autobiographical elements in the travel writings in Ghosh's novels, *Antique* displays it in the narrator's vivid recollection of his childhood encounter with the shadow of a race riot in Bangladesh that he finds to be haunting him relentlessly. Thus even after years, certain question by the curious Egyptians are enough to revive the horrors of the past episode though he cannot share those memories with his friends in Egypt as "I could not have expected them to understand an Indian's terror of symbols" (210).

Palace too has its share of autobiographical elements as the writer admits in the *Author's Notes* in the novel that the agony and tragedy of the battle of Jitra where Arjun and Kishan Singh along with other rebel soldiers of the British Indian army are perished is inspired from the stories he had learnt from his father, who was an officer of the British Indian army during the independence movement in India. Besides, the story of Rajkumar and his timber trade is also modeled upon Ghosh's relatives in Burma: "The seed of this book was brought to India long before my own lifetime by my father and my uncle, the late Jagat Chandra Datta of Rangoon and Moulmein -- 'The Prince' as he was known to his relatives" (549).

Like in Naipaul, in Ghosh too the travelers are frequently found to deviate into the realms of philosophy besides the social, political, or cultural observations that are common to the travelers in both these novelists. But unlike in Naipaul, the effects of the philosophical insights on the travelers in Ghosh are much more intense and crucial

for the course of the storyline. Thus we have Alu thinking for four days “about cleanliness and dirt and the Infinitely Small” (235) under the collapsed Star with death inches away in *Reason*. And when he is finally taken out, he is a totally changed man, smiling and talking on how to make the world a better place for men and why the great humanitarian scientist Pasteur failed in his war against fatal diseases:

Purity was what he [Pasteur] had wanted, purity and cleanliness – not just in his home, or in a laboratory or a university, but in the whole world of living men. It was that which spurred him on his greatest hunt, the chase in which he drove the enemy of purity, the quintessence of dirt, the demon which keeps the world from cleanliness, out of its lairs of darkness and gave it a name – the Infinitely Small, the Germ. (280)

It is following this realization that Alu starts his symbolic war against money that soon takes all their lives into a whirl to change it forever.

Arjun’s revelatory insight into his life as a colonial soldier, hiding under its sovereignty an existence and identity that are completely manufactured by the great imperial power, is as fatal. The shock and humiliation of this revelation pushes him to such an extent where his death seems to Dinu as a suicide. In *Tide* too the effect of travel invariably leads the traveler to a philosophical viewpoint whereupon the traveler frequently modifies her/his way of looking at the world and at her/himself. Nirmal, for example, with his unfulfilled dream of a life to spend in fighting for the weak and oppressed, is someone who finds that man is not in control of the universe, that nature has its own course of life, detached and superior from that of man, and that success and failure do not count in the incomprehensible world of nature:

To me, a townsman, the tide country’s jungle was an emptiness, a place where time stood still; I saw now that this was an illusion, that exactly the opposite was true. What was happening here, I realized, was that the wheel of time was spinning too fast to be seen. In other places it took decades, even centuries for a river to change course; it took an epoch for an island to appear. But here, in the tide country, transformation is the rule of life: rivers stray from week to week, and islands are made and unmade in days. In other places forests take a denuded island in ten to fifteen years. Could it be that the very rhythms of the earth were quickened here so that they unfolded at an accelerated pace?

(224)

Ghosh thus in a way remains true to his words when he says that he does not believe in the categorization of the literary genres. Not only are his novels an amalgamation of various other genres like travel writing, anthropology, history, autobiography, or philosophy; his novels are also at times based on his non-fiction, especially his journalistic pieces. *Antique*, for example, is based on the prose piece ‘The Imam and the Indian’ about which Ghosh remarked, “I did not know it then, but the writing of this signaled the gestation of another project – my third book, *In An Antique Land*” (qtd. in Hawley 36). Moreover, while referring to his piece “An Egyptian in Baghdad” Ghosh again informs us that “this piece was to become the basis of the epilogue of *In An Antique Land*” (qtd. in Hawley 38).

Palace too has generously borrowed from the three pieces of Ghosh’s travel writing—or ‘journalistic pieces’ as he would call them—namely ‘Dancing in Cambodia’, ‘Stories in Stone’ and ‘At Large in Burma’ published together in *Dancing in Cambodia At Large in Burma*. This travel book by Ghosh tells us about the visit by King Sisowath of Cambodia to Marseilles in 1906; Ghosh’s visit to Cambodia in search of Pol Pot’s sister-in-law, a famous dancer; Ghosh’s visit to Angkor Wat, the twelfth century Cambodian temple; and Ghosh’s three meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi along with his reflection on the unfortunate history of Burma under the despotic rule of General Ne Win. As Hawley remarks, “Taken together, the three essays in this little book can be seen as the reporter’s notebook, the anthropologist’s series of observations, the historian’s musings, that issue forth as *The Glass Palace* three years later” (30).