

Chapter III

Concept of Imperialism in V. S. Naipaul and Amitav Ghosh

The beginning of *Palace*, where the quiet and serenity of a Mandalay market and fort is broken with the thundering cannons of the British invaders, in a way represents the essence of imperialism in Ghosh that involves the greed and ruthlessness of the Europeans although they justified their imperialistic aggression as a civilizing or modernizing mission. But that the imperial masters' claim of being the representatives of a superior civilization is primarily based on their military prowess that they employ to satisfy their greed for wealth and power is best expressed by Matthew, the seven year old son of Saya John: "There's going to be a war. Father says they want all the teak in Burma. The King won't let them have it so they're going to do away with him." But a young and inexperienced Rajkumar, unaware of the workings of a band of military mercenary in pursuit of their naked greed, is unbelieving; he "gave a shout of laughter. 'A war over wood? Who's ever heard such a thing?' . . . he'd probably had a bad dream the night before" (*Palace* 15). The nightmare, however, comes true and the imperial greed, as represented by the cannons to be heard from the Mandalay fort and market, not only usurps the economic system but also the sovereignty of Burma. After sending King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat to exile in India as a punishment for refusing to hand over the great natural wealth of their country to the British voluntarily, the British embark upon a process of far-reaching consequences: the substitution of a 'glorious' history of the imperial Europe for the 'barbaric' history of the colonized. The gradual and total erasure of the history of the colonized, of their prosperity and of their rich culture is brilliantly symbolized by the transformation of the Burma Palace by the English in *Palace*.

The British occupation had changed everything: Burma had been quickly integrated into the Empire, forcibly converted into a province of British India. Courtly Mandalay was now a bustling commercial hub; resources were being exploited with an energy and efficiency hitherto undreamt of. The Mandalay palace had been refurbished to serve the conqueror's recondite pleasures: the west wing had been converted into a British Club; the Queen's Hall of Audience had now become a billiard room; the mirrored walls were lined with months-old copies of *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*; the gardens had

been dug up to make room for tennis courts and polo grounds; the exquisite little monastery in which Thebaw had spent his novitiate had become a chapel where Anglican priests administered the sacrament to British troops. (66)

Besides this description that readily reminds one of a colony of parasites, Ghosh also shows how the British ruthlessly erased every aspect of the history of the colonized, especially the ones that could remind them of their former autonomy and thus could unite them against the invading colonizer. Thus the British not only refuse any Burmese visitor in the house of the exiled Royalty, but also ensures that the King, even in his death, is unable to go back to Burma as his coffin is forcibly taken away from his family and buried with a monument built over it to banish him forever into the foreign soil. It is in this context when Beni tells Uma that the British “want to make sure that the King is forgotten. They don’t wish to be cruel; they don’t want any martyrs; all they want is that the King should be lost to memory—like an old umbrella in a dusty cupboard” (136).

But it is not only the distorted history of the colonized but also his deformed image towards which Ghosh attracts our notice. According to Ghosh, this deformed image indicates the double-edged character of imperialism as to be seen in the portrayal of the Indian soldiers as loyal puppets of the British who followed every imperialistic ventures of the British without grasping the full historical and political gravity of the situation. While the British are known to have achieved their spectacular success primarily with the help from their Indian soldiers, Ghosh also tries to present the other side of the story in the novel. As for example, when Uma asks an old soldier of the British Indian army on the Indians being used by imperialistic powers, he answers: “We never thought we were being used to conquer people. We were told that we were freeing those people from their bad kings or evil customs. We believed it because they believed it too. It took us a long time to understand that in their eyes freedom exists wherever *they* rule” (224). This indeed appears ironical that the neo-imperial invasions are carried out using this same logic of liberating the oppressed even in a post-colonial world.

If it is teak in Burma, then in *Reason* it is oil in al-Ghazira that attracts the Western greed to that prosperous kingdom where a similar episode of imperialistic aggression – a ‘bad dream’ in Rajkumar’s terms – is repeated. Once the British came to know “that al-Ghazira was just a speck of sand floating on a sea of oil” they sent a resident to the island to “make the Malik sign a treaty which would let the British dig

for oil". But Malik, as he "had seen what had happened to the princes of India and he had sworn he would never let himself be reduced to their state" (248-9) refused to sign any such treaty. He also had to face a similar fate for this resistance to the Western greed like the Royalty of Burma: as he underwent a humiliating defeat that led to his imprisonment till death in his own fort. Here too the British ensure that the people of al-Ghazira forget about him, about his resistance to the British, and the role the migrant traders like Nury or Jeevanbhai played in that resistance, especially their final attempt that killed Nury, ruined Jeevanbhai and sealed the fate of al-Ghazira. Gradually the history of the defeated is erased: the tigerish Malik is labeled as 'mad' by the Europeans while his submissive brother is presented as 'progressive'; and eventually a time comes when the inglorious ground of the final battle becomes the site chosen for the most ambitious market complex in the country to be built by a eunuch, Jabir, who betrayed the old Malik to the British in the final battle and in turn was rewarded amply by the conquerors.

Ghosh, in *Reason*, also reviews history to narrate the long-forgotten account of the rich contributions of the pre-imperial societies towards a common goal of the betterment of human civilization through the history of cotton. Cotton, as Balaram tells Alu, was gifted to the world by India whereupon it gradually became a valued product in every society it traveled to while being enriched by the contributions of these societies: thus while Indian cloth reached the graves of the Pharaohs, cloth from China reached India whereas, "even the English were handed down their word, like so much else that raised them to civilization, by the Arabs, from their *kutn*" (56). Balaram also remembers to inform Alu that the first calculating machine built by Charles Babbage in the mid-nineteenth century was actually inspired by the system of punched cards used by the Chinese since 1000 BC. This magnificent history of a shared culture starts to take an unprecedented turn when the machines in Lancashire made mass production of cloth possible thereby enslaving Africa and America to strangle "the very weavers and techniques they had crossed oceans to discover" (57).

By the time Balaram tells Alu the history of cotton we realize that this is not a history written by the Europe that customarily celebrates the Western civilization as the sole bearer of the mantle of progress and modernity and relegates the colonized to primitiveness and barbarity. Rather, this is a history that demonstrates the West's indebtedness to those very civilizations for its progress and success that it later invaded as barbaric and savage and thus in dire need of Western guidance: "It is a

gory history in parts: a story of greed and destruction. Every scrap of cloth is stained by a bloody past. But it is the only history we have and history is hope as well as despair" (57-8).

In *Antique* too Ghosh indicates the tendency of the West to monopolize history in the way Cairo/ Maşr had been denominated as Egypt by the Europe. As Ghosh informs us, Cairo/Egypt was always known as Maşr, derived from a root that means 'to settle' or 'to civilize': "It is the name by which the country has been known, in its own language, for at least a millennium, and most of the cultures and civilizations with which it has old connections have accepted its own self-definition." But Cairo too had to experience the imperialistic practice of the erasure of the history of the colonized in every aspect, starting from the place's very name: "Only Europe has always insisted on knowing the country not on its own terms, but as a dark mirror for itself", thus naming it Egypt, derived from a root that refers to the indigenous Christians in Maşr. As Ghosh goes on to add, the Oxford English Dictionary, quoting from the Bible, defines 'Egyptian darkness' as 'intense darkness'; or 'Egyptian days' as 'the two days in each month which were believed to be unlucky' (32). Ghosh next reconstructs the events leading to the destruction of the thriving and peaceful trading culture across the Indian Ocean by the Portuguese in a way inconceivable to the Indians, Arabs, Africans and Persians who engaged in the trade:

the peoples who had traditionally participated in the Indian Ocean trade were taken completely by surprise. In all the centuries in which it had flourished and grown, no state or king or ruling power had ever before tried to gain control of the Indian Ocean trade by force of arms. . . . the rulers of the Indian Ocean ports were utterly confounded by the demands and actions of the Portuguese. . . . Unable to compete in the Indian Ocean trade by purely commercial means, the Europeans were bent on taking control of it by aggression, pure and distilled, by unleashing violence on a scale unprecedented on those shores. . . . Soon, the remains of the civilization that had brought Ben Yiju to Mangalore were devoured by that unquenchable, demonic thirst that has raged ever since, for almost five hundred years, over the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf (287-8)

It is these rewritings of histories and the partial recovery of the lives marginalized by the dominant history like the migrant Jewish trader Ben Yijû, his Indian wife Ashu, and his Indian slave Bomma, that once again remind us of Balaram's words,

“history is hope as well as despair” as although the lost history is never recovered fully, we nevertheless get a glimpse of that extraordinary past. Likewise, when Ghosh travels to Mangalore in Malabar, he is aware of its past glory as “one of the premier ports of an extremely wealthy hinterland” and also of the ensuing tragedy when the wealth of Malabar was to attract the “much less welcome attention of the European maritime and colonial powers and it was in the course of the struggles that ensued that Mangalore came to lose virtually every trace of its extraordinary past”. Nevertheless, Ghosh also observes that “Mangalore does not treat its lost history as a matter of crippling melancholy” as the city has reclaimed its prosperity and ‘ancient connections’ with the Arab world in a large number of expatriates in the Persian Gulf (245).

In *Tide* on the other hand the legacy of the eurocentric writing of history is shown to be inherited by a neo-imperial state government in its selective remembrance of its colonial past and the creation of a history of its own liking in the independent India on the name of environmentalism. When in the colonial days in India Sir Daniel Hamilton, a Scotsman, had a vision of building a model society— without divisions and differences —he bought islands in the Sundarbans and populated it with poor settlers from the neighboring places. The settlers came lured by the free land he offered to live in nightmarish conditions among the predators and tempests and floods. The islands that were named after colonial masters or Sir Daniel’s relatives as in Hamilton-abad, Jamespur, Annpur, Emilybari and Lusibari etc. — nevertheless continued to present a scene of death, misery and underdevelopment. However, much later, when a group of Bangladeshi refugees leave the inhuman conditions of their camps in the central India and arrives at one of the islands in the Sundarbans— Marichjhāpī — following their dream of a new life and new society, a post-colonial state government refuses to let them settle in there, as it is apprehensive of losing the grant from the Western countries that want Marichjhāpī to be turned into a reserve forest for tigers. The observation of the writers of *The Empire Writes Back* appears uncannily fitting in this context:

While the roots of contemporary environmentalism may lie in colonial damage in both settler colonies and colonies of occupation, neo-colonialism often in association with the colonial past, continues to produce clashes of interests between ‘the West and the Rest’. This is the case, for instance, in areas of land and food scarcity, where the well-being of humans and endangered species may

be at odds. . . . Ironically, as the anthropocentric Western drive responsible for so much land and species degradation yields place to more bio-centric paradigms of 'the human place in nature', formerly colonized subaltern groups are accused of insensitivity to animals and land as they are driven by economics from their own (often bio-centric) pre-colonial world views and practices into competing for survival by means of the very industrial and agricultural capitalism which dispossessed them of their original way of living.

(213-4)

However, as there follows a seemingly unending battle between the state government and the settlers in the island while it appears the popular opinion and court of law would counter government's decision, some gangsters are sent to the island. They unleash unspeakable horrors upon the settlers by burning their huts, sinking the boats, laying waste to their fields, raping women, murdering the refugees and throwing their bodies into the rivers to erase every trace of their existence in the island. Very soon people forget the episode, there are no witnesses left to tell the tale, and even those who remember parts of it refuse to discuss it. But Ghosh, as he does in all his novels, tries to reconstruct the history and brings it back in the pages of Nirmal's diary that brings back to life the settlers' dreams of a new life in Marichjhāpi, their Herculean enterprise on the island, their resistance to the attempts to evict them and above all Kusum's words in her last night on Marichjhāpi, on earth.

"the worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit here, helpless, and listen to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, was worth less than dirt or dust. 'This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals - it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world' Who are these people, I wondered, who loves animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? Do they know what is being done in their names? Where do they live, these people, do they have children, do they have mothers, fathers? . . . this whole world has become a place of animals, and our fault, our crime, was that we were just human beings, trying to live as human beings always have, from the water and the soil. No human being could think this a crime unless they have forgotten that this is how humans have always lived - by fishing, by clearing land and by planting the soil " (261-2)

Alongside the voice of the suppressed as recorded in the diary of Nirmal, what Ghosh also presents to the readers in this novel is the legend of Bon Bibi and Dokkhin Rai that has been absorbed by the people of the Sundarbans as part of their culture. But as Ghosh shows us, this legend, that reminds one of the rich cultural interaction at a point of time between the Sundarbans and the Arabia from where came the tiger-goddess Bon Bibi and her brother Shah Jongoli, was never allowed to be properly and proudly placed alongside the mainstream history of Sir Daniels and Lord Cannings in these islands that acknowledged only its European masters.

Although the loss of history causes as much pain and despair in Naipaul as in Ghosh, Naipaul attempts an altogether different analysis of and response to that loss in his novels through his characters like Salim in *Bend*, whose ruminations on an irretrievable history is representative of the emotion of a similar loss in the other characters in Naipaul:

All that I know of our history and the history of the Indian Ocean I have got from books written by Europeans. If I say that our Arabs in their time were great adventurers and writers . . . that an Indian pilot led Vasco da Gama . . . that the very word *cheque* was first used by our Persian merchants . . . it is because I have got them from European books. They formed no part of our knowledge or pride. Without Europeans, I feel, all our past would have been washed away . . . (13)

Thus to Salim the loss of the past of a whole generation happened not because their fathers or grandfathers “had forgotten or were confused”, but because “the past was simply the past” for them (12). Salim thereby negates the possibility of the disfigurement of the indigenous histories by an imperialistic Europe that he rather extols as the sole preserver of the history of the colonized. Salim thus feels no pride in being a member of a community and country whose unawareness of its history can only lead it to the path of self-destruction. To escape this eventual fate, as Salim believes, one had no other way other than trampling on this half-forgotten past— as Indar does—and join the rest of the world that is not only aware of its past but is therefore also able to envision a magnificent future for itself. However, even when the Europe—being true to its constructive culture of preserving and improving human civilization—attempts a recovery of the history of a primitive society, it might prove to be a Herculean task. As Salim finds it, even Raymond, the great European scholar, does not appear too hopeful about his project of writing a history of Africa. “Do you

think we will ever get to know the truth about what has happened in Africa in the last hundred or even fifty years? All the wars, all the rebellions, all the leaders, all the defeats?" (151).

This question forwarded by Raymond takes us to the next issue regarding the recovery of a lost history in Naipaul: is the history worthy at all to be recovered? As Raymond points out that compared to him working on the African history, when Theodor Mommsen had his monumental work on the Roman history in progress, he "had the comfort of knowing that his subject was a great one. Those of us who work in our particular field have no such assurance. . . . We have no idea where the continent is going" (158). However, Salim is also careful to note the occasional omissions in the European history in Africa they were taught in school as children: "we were taught about European expansion in our area as though it had been no more than a defeat of the Arabs and their slave-trading ways. . . . we didn't mind. History was something dead and gone . . ." (210). Likewise, the history of the liberty villages written by Raymond too represents these gaps in history to Salim as he finds nothing but reports and names quoted from the missionary archives that exclude the presence of any human interest in it. Thus in the Africa of *Bend*, a country trying to recover its forgotten history through a reluctant and unsympathetic historian, whatever recovery of the past is possible it is in the isolated examples like Salim's pitiful gift of history to Metty, who loves to hear about his past from Salim and how he had reacted on his first day at school: "He said, almost smiling, 'I cried a lot? I made a lot of noise?'" (123).

In *Enigma*, as the setting shifts from a primitive Africa to the imperial England, the sense of history too changes its form and colour. While the narrator, unlike Salim in Africa, is awed by the grandness of the imperial history of England; he nevertheless continuously juxtaposes this illustrious past with the ignominious history of his colonial birthplace to feel like an intruder upon the grandness of the former Empire. But that this former centre of Empire is also crumbling into decay is also noted by the narrator to arouse conflicting emotions in his colonial self. Thus, while the narrator finds the England he came to live in to be in a state of decay as compared to its prime in the Edwardian era, he is also conscious that "in that perfection, occurring at a time of empire, there would have been no room for me" (54-5). But the decay of the former seat of Empire – the imperial city he had always dreamt of being a part of – also finds his arrival in England as perpetually deferred because as a colonial from Trinidad

“The history I carried with me, together with the self-awareness that had come with my education and ambition, had sent me into the world with a sense of glory dead; and in England had given me the rawest stranger’s nerves” (55-6). To counter this dilemma the narrator even tries to engage himself with the historical fantasies with the help from the imperial education he had received as a colonial, and tries to imagine himself as part of the flow of history in England, “I never ceased to imagine myself a man of those bygone times, climbing up to have this confirmation that all was well with the world” (19). But when the time to recover the history for his colonial birthplace arrives, the narrator, like Salim in *Bend*, too finds that it is England that had preserved his history for him. “I was amazed, reading the documents of my island in London, by the antiquity of the place to which I belonged. . . . Seeing the island as part of the globe, seeing it sharing in the antiquity of the earth!” (171). Thus whatever recovery of the colonial’s history is possible it is because of the intervention of the imperial power; while like Salim’s half-hearted attempt at giving Metty a part of his history, the narrator of *Enigma* too tries to trace the past of Angela—a migrant devoid of a history of her own, but only as his future writing material, that he however never used.

Hall, too, projects in Willie a character who finds himself to inherit a disgraceful history, national and personal: while the only saving grace in his family history remains to be its connection with the English writer, William Somerset Maugham, who mistakenly established Willie’s father as an ascetic. Consequently, Willie not only learns to detest the ignoble history of his family and country—that appears to be unable to redeem itself without the intentional or unintentional assistance from the Europeans—but also comes to believe that history can always be rewritten. Thus later, when he finds himself being reduced into a non-entity by the imperial greatness of England, he tries to survive this by replacing his unremarkable past with an imaginary one modeled on this very imperialistic worldview. Willie thereby reintroduces his low-caste, mission-school educated mother as a descendant of the most ancient Christian community in India; his mother’s shallow and indiscreet uncle, “the firebrand of the backwards”, as a trade union leader; his faint-hearted, ascetic-by-chance father as a revered brahmin; and his grandfather, one among the innumerable secretaries working for the maharaja, as a courtier; and thus “began to re-make himself. It excited him, and began to give him a feeling of power” (60-61). Instead of the recovery of a lost history, what we thus find in this novel is a re-making of

history—one rooted in the western concepts and generated by a desire to be accepted into the European world—that the defeated gifts himself in a world of make-believe. However, if the re-making of past enables a representative of a subjugated country claim for himself a portion of the grand imperial history, it also leads to a unacknowledged feeling of competition among the other such representatives. Thus Willie, the owner of a brilliantly invented personal history, feels proud to stand “a rung or two or many rungs above” the other obscure migrants like Percy Cato. Willie believes Percy to be fumbling for a history to mask his disgraceful past when he claims his father to be a clerk although to Willie Percy’s father was possibly one of the “faceless black workers, possibly Jamaicans” (62-3).

If it is the imperial England that gives Willie the history of his liking, then it is also the omnipresence of this imperialism that does not let him forget his shameful colonial past. As for example, when Willie learns that the extravagant furniture in the governor’s house in the Portuguese African town was brought from Goa in Portuguese India two hundred and fifty years ago, he thereupon finds himself face to face with a history he does not like: “It was like being given a new glimpse of our own history . . . in certain parts of London that time would have been within reach, and romantic to re-create: in India, too . . . but here, in the governor’s house, so far from everything, so far from history, it was terrible” (201).

It is to escape this terribleness of a colonial history that Willie, after a half-hearted and failed attempt at accepting his nation’s past and lead it towards a glorious future, eventually turns back to the formerly imperial centre, England in *Magic*, which he believes to be able to relieve him of the burden of his lost/unmemorable history. In *Magic* Willie too has his share of a lesson in history (from Sarojini in Berlin and later from Joseph in India just in the way Aliu was introduced by Balaram to the past glory of a shared cultural history around the globe that was disrupted by imperialism. Thus Sarojini tells Willie how the Indian history that has come down to them was actually written by Roper Lethbridge, a nineteenth-century English inspector of schools in India, to fill up the vacuum of history and to address a lack of proper educational system in India. The book written by Lethbridge, nevertheless, distorted history to quite a significant extent as it classified the Indians into warriors and servants in a false manner (Saro however does not object to the classification, she just wants to reclassify as she thinks is proper) to discourage native rebellions: but “It is how imperialisms work. It is what happens to captive people. And since in India we have

no idea of history we quickly forget our past and always believe what we are told” (7). Quite ironically though in her personal thoughts and convictions Sarojini herself represents the ‘captive’ and colonized Indians she laments: as she too is portrayed as someone who has to be taught her own history, if not by Lethbridge, then by Wolf, her German husband. As Naipaul shows, it is Wolf who tells her what to believe, starting from the nature and extent of the achievements of Gandhi in the colonial times to the guerrilla movements in the independent India. Joseph, “the cheerleader for the guerrillas”, on the other hand, presents the history of the colonized India from the conqueror’s eyes: “Here you can’t begin to understand the past, and when you get to know it you wish you didn’t” He tells Willie of the shame of defeat; and how the Muslim invaders killed everyone but spared only the serfs in the villages; how it threw the country into an eternal damnation of being a land of slaves; and how a nation full of servile people deserved nothing better than this hell: “There was no resistance. The serfs in the villages policed themselves. . . . All of them referred to themselves as slaves” (37-8). Even the accusation of cultural subordination of the colonized against the West is negated in Naipaul as he again shows in *Magic* how a nation of half-men, burdened with a history of defeat and shame, can never be able to be led into the golden domain of imperial culture and literature: and even when such an attempt is made by the generous West, what it can rather produce is a bunch of vacuous mimic men

In *Magic* thus a number of guerrilla leaders are presented as to be led into the movement following their frustration of not being able to cope with the grandness of European art and culture that invariably clashed with the inadequacy of their colonial society. The guerrilla leader Ramachandra, for example, found *The Three Musketeers*, recommended by his Anglo-Indian college teacher, a letdown even though he had shed his country clothes and rustic manners once in college. Rather, what he found reciprocating his needs were “Lenin, Marx, Trotsky, Mao. I had no trouble with them at all. I didn’t find them abstract. I gobbled them up. The only thing I could read apart from that were the Mills and Boon books . . . for the language . . . to approach girls at the college.” But as Ramachandra recounts, when this ‘Mills and Boons’ approach would only make the girls at the college “laugh . . . I became full of sexual rage. . . . It was that rage that led me to the movement” (113). Thus for Naipaul, the unthinking colonized mind not only self-destructs, being undeserving of the wealth of knowledge in the imperial education; but it also disgraces and at times disfigures this

magnificent domain of art, literature and culture as exemplified by the book of stories written by Willie. This book, that later earned him not only his freedom from the chaos in the post-independence India but also the reputation of being the “pioneer of Indian post-colonial writing”, was actually written with a content indiscriminately borrowed from the treasure of imperial literature and culture—Hemingway and Hollywood movies like *High Sierra*, *White Heat* and *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky* and with a style suggested by his English friend Roger. Likewise in *Half* the cultural subservience reaches such an extent that even though Willie’s father burns all his English literature books and tries to become a revolutionary out of the same desperation as of Ramachandra a generation later: unlike Ramachandra he is saved from a sure social and financial ruin by a respected English writer whose positive (though mistaken) portrayal of Willie’s father in a few pages of his book on India turns him into a celebrity overnight.

Bend however is quite frank in admitting the prestige an imperial education could bring the colonized. As Salim envies Indar “who had gone right through our local English-language college” (20) and consequently left for England to study; Zabeth also wants her son to be educated, to have a better life than she had in “the timeless ways of village and river” while “for Zabeth, as for many Africans of her generation, education was something only foreigners could give” (41). The Domain, the modern university in the African town with resident teachers from Europe, thus becomes a venerable institution to the people in the town that they were proud to be a part of.

The narrator of *Enigma* too initially finds his imperial education abstract and inadequate like Willie, Willie’s father and the guerrillas in *Half* and *Magic*. But his travels to America and then England directly lead him to the lands of French movies, copies of the New York Times, magical bookshops and finally make him realize the true worth of his education. Once in England, the narrator, who was till then “like a man, denied the chance of visiting famous cities, learning their street maps instead” (126), learns everything with its fullness that an abstract imperial education could not provide him with in his earlier life. Thus he looks at Salisbury that he knew “from the reproduction of the Constable painting of Salisbury Cathedral in my third-standard reader” (5); discovers hay on which characters in European books would sleep “that had never been comprehensible to me in Trinidad where grass was always freshly cut for cattle . . . never browned into hay” (10-1); presents Jack’s father-in-law as a Wordsworthian figure; while even a basement, of which he had read in books, leads

him to a thrilling experience in England: "I was like a man entering the world of a novel, a book: entering the real world" (140). So much does he feel to be overpowered by his English education, "his real world", that any difference between the England he has traveled to and the world he had read about in Trinidad baffles him, as like when he looks at the cows on the downs and finds that there is "No lowing herd winding o'er the lea here, as in Gray's elegy; no 'sober' herd lowing to meet their young . . . as in 'The Deserted Village'" (91). Likewise, a group of workmen talking loudly among themselves near his cottage appears 'frightening' to him, as "I hadn't read about working men like the ones I was now listening to : I hadn't seen films about them" (183).

The reach of imperial education is shown to be as extensive in Ghosh through the characters like Balaram in *Reason* who see the world as in the way the imperial masters want them to see; and shape their worldview modeled on what the West offers them as exemplary. Thus Balaram, for whom the western science is the epitome of human achievement, is devastated when laughed at by his idol—Madame Juliot-Curie, in a silly episode: while it is only Lombroso's *Practical Phrenology* that could give his self-worth back to him by indicating features to establish Balaram as an ideal teacher. "'Hope, Wonder, Ideality and Firmness. What could make a better teacher?'" (19). If it is the book on phrenology that becomes his only mode of observation of people around him; then it is Vallery-Radot's *Life of Pasteur* that makes him, and later Alu too, to launch an absurd fight against the 'germs'—both literal and symbolical (like Bhudeb Roy or money).

Balaram's obsession with the western science also led him to a fight with his closest friend Gopal when Balaram accused Gopal's mind of being "'nothing but a dumping-ground for the West'" and "Gopal gasped at the injustice of it. 'My mind?' He said. 'And what about yours?'—spending your life reading about Pasteur curing beer in nineteenth-century France? What about all those books you read written by crazy Europeans about the shapes of skulls . . .?'" (53-4). Like Gopal, Toru-debi too tries to free Balaram from the misleading influence of the imperial education by burning down his books although by then it is too late to evade the catastrophe where except Alu everyone is killed.

In *Palace Uma* too appears to be a helpless observer of the damaging influence of the imperial education upon the mind of the colonized as when she wonders how an otherwise good and intelligent man like Beni could be so possessed by his imperial

education to always be “haunted by the fear of being thought lacking by his British colleagues” on European art and culture. Uma is also appalled at the far-reaching influence of the imperial education in a colonized country like India where a man such as Beni had become a model for his countrymen: “Did this mean that one day all of India would become a shadow of what he had been? Millions of people trying to live their lives in conformity with incomprehensible rules?” (187).

Besides, it is not only in his following the English customs and manners and art and literature blindly that Beni displays his loyalty to his imperial education; he also wants his wife to become like him. Thus, he tells her on the very first night of their wedding of “Cambridge, about the cobbled streets and stone bridges, about concerts he’d attended” (159) and about his favourite composer, Schubert. But Uma is aghast when she realizes that “the wifely virtues she could offer him he had no use for: Cambridge had taught him to want more; to make sure that nothing was held in abeyance, to bargain for a woman’s soul with the coin of kindness and patience.” And this realization frightens Uma. “The thought of this terrified her. This was a subjection beyond decency, beyond her imagining” (153). But, on the other hand, it is this subjection based on this very imperial education that makes Beni wonder whether the King and Queen of Burma are really people of culture, “what could they possibly know of love, of any of the finer sentiments, these bloodthirsty aristocrats, these semi-literate who had never read a book in all their lives, never looked with pleasure upon a painting?” (152). Thus we know that it is not Beni but his imperial training that has taught him to look at the world in this way – to think of the conquered Royalty as ‘bloodthirsty’ and the conquerors as men of ‘finer sentiments’.

However, it is in *Antique* that the cultural subversion in the contact between the east and west is probed at the deepest level by Ghosh in the context of the Synagogue of Ben Ezra in Egypt that was not only venerated by the Jewish inhabitants of Cairo but was also treated as a site of pilgrimage; and that contained the Geniza, a chamber to store every written piece of paper in the Egyptian society. According to Ghosh, “the first detailed plan for the conquest of Egypt was conceived not by a soldier but by a philosopher, Karl Leibniz” (81). Later, the western scholars’ ‘discovery’ of the Egypt gradually led the country to evolve “into a new continent of riches for the Western scholarly and artistic imagination” (82). By the time Jacob Saphir, a scholar and collector of Judaic antiquities, discovered the treasures of the Geniza in the late nineteenth century, a whole lot of European scholars and collectors were competing

with each other to plunder the manuscripts in the Geniza. The documents were at times sold and bought on the international market; or were collected using imperial influences by private collectors; and at times ended up at the various libraries in Europe—in Paris, Frankfurt, London, Vienna, Budapest and later in America. Ghosh notes how “By the First World War, the Geniza had finally been emptied of all its documents” and also that “the irony is that for the most part they went to countries which would have long since destroyed the Geniza had it been a part of their own history.” But as Ghosh laments, “Now it was Masr, which had sustained the Geniza for almost a millennium, that was left with no trace of its riches: not a single scrap or shred of paper to remind her of that aspect of her past” (95).

However, like the far-reaching consequences of imperial education in India as felt by Uma in *Palace*, in *Antique* too the erasure of the past in Egypt by an invading West is felt by Ghosh to be all-pervading as when his visit to the mowlid of a Jewish holy man is viewed suspiciously by the Egyptian officials. These officials in a post-colonial Egypt not only appear oblivious to the history of the rich cultural exchange between India and Masr in medieval era, but following their Western education are also shown as ashamed of their traditional views on religion. These modern men thus have come to regard the oral tales of saints and miracles as “superstitions, contrary to Islam, and they will disappear with development and progress” (340).

Ghosh also makes it clear that this disappearance of the “superstitions” has more to do with the cultural domination of Western concepts on the formerly colonized than with progress and development in the wider sense. Thus when Ghosh wants to study on a famous Egyptian saint in the libraries in America, he cannot locate the saint: “Looking through libraries, in search of material on Sidi Abu-Hasira, I wasted a great deal of time in looking under subject headings such as ‘religion’ and Judaism—but of course that tomb, and others like it, had long ago been wished away from those shelves, in the process of shaping them to suit the patterns of the Western academy.” Eventually Ghosh remembers the Egyptian officer’s words on ‘superstition’ and ‘religion’ and thus he finally finds Sidi Abu-Hasira in “the shelves marked ‘anthropology’ and ‘folklore’” (342).

However, that Ghosh himself is not free of the influences of the western representation of the orient is also admitted by him when he indicates the difference between his observation of the rural Egyptian women and how the West had introduced them to him. As Ghosh discovers, in spite of “everything he had read

about Arab traditions of shame and modesty” that guided his interaction with the local women, they were actually quite uninhibited and mingled with men with ease. Ghosh thereafter is “shame-stricken, thinking of the astonishment and laughter” that he “must have provoked, walking past them, eyes lowered, never uttering so much a word of greeting” (41). This episode in fact indicates the representation of the orient by the West in other spheres as well and with similar success; such as when describing the plunder of the Geniza, Ghosh notes how imperialistic victory and sense of superiority made a Western scholar, exporting the Geniza documents to Europe, describe “the whole population within the precincts of the Synagogue” as greedy, “scoundrel beadles whom” he has “to Baksheesh” on every occasion. But as Ghosh points out, these men and women whom the Western scholar lambasted in such a way were the very people “who had sustained the Geniza for almost a thousand years, and whose extraordinary achievement he was then engaged in appropriating.” Ghosh thus finds this Western scholar to display the imperialistic “view of the world in which the interests of the powerful defined necessity, while the demands of the poor appeared as greed” (93-4).

Ghosh also reminds us of the well-known imperialist view in this context—something echoed in Naipaul too—that it was the sheer ignorance of the custodians of the Synagogue of Ben Ezra of the worth of the Geniza documents that not only made their acquisition by the colonial powers possible but also justified such an act as the West could preserve these better. But Ghosh differs on this to point out that such a plunder could take place only because of the support from the leaders of the community, who “like the élites of so many other groups in the colonized world, evidently decided to seize the main chance at a time when the balance of power—the ships and the guns—lay overwhelmingly with England” (92).

Likewise, Ghosh also tries to present a different version of the history of the destruction of the ancient Indian Ocean trade at the hands of a few Portuguese that was thought to be a proof of a “lack, or failure, one that invited the intervention of Europe, with its increasing proficiency in war. When a defeat is as complete as was that of the trading cultures of the Indian Ocean, it is hard to allow the vanquished the dignity of nuances of choice and preference”. But Ghosh tries to present the point of view of the vanquished: “Yet it is worth allowing for the possibility that the peaceful traditions of the oceanic trade may have been, in a quiet and inarticulate way, the product of a rare cultural choice—one that may have owed a great deal to the pacifist

customs and beliefs of the Gujarati Jains and Vanias.” This cultural choice, as Ghosh rightly observes, must have bewildered the disbelieving Europeans like Tomé Pires who noted how “The heathen [of Gujarat] held that they must never kill anyone, nor must they have armed men in their company. If they were captured and [their captors] wanted to kill them all, they did not resist” (287).

Not only the traders, that the kings in the Malabar also presented a starkly different nature than the aggressively competitive Europeans is clear when Ghosh quotes Ibn Battuta on the kings in that ancient Indian province, ““there is no discord whatever between them, and the strong does not desire to seize the possessions of the weak”” (387). Besides the portrayal of rich traders and powerful kings, another figure to be transformed under European influence was that of the slave in the medieval period in the East before the Europeans changed it with the beginning of the colonial expansion in the sixteenth century.

As Ghosh elaborates upon the figure of the slave in the medieval East, we come to know that at times slavery was the way to gain entry into very prestigious sectors of army and bureaucracy; or that for the traders and merchants it was the way to find apprentices and agents who could very well be promoted to the rank of partner or shareholder later. In fact slavery would also lead to such a strong bond among the slaves and masters that at times, as among the Jewish merchants of Cairo or with some African tribes, they would gradually be included into their master’s households and were considered as a family member. In addition, slavery could also include discipleship and a spiritual metaphor in which the devotees became their “Lord’s servants and lovers” (260-1). But all these ideas and practices were lost later as the slavery, “that was part of a very flexible set of hierarchies and . . . often followed a logic completely contrary to that which modern expectations suggest” (260), became a part of the history of the defeated, left to be forgotten and lost, until they resurfaced with the tales of the likes of Bomma.

Like *Antique*, Ghosh’s other novels too portray the defeated in a different manner than as the representatives of an inadequate, thereby failed and thereupon subjugated civilization: while presenting an unflattering portrayal of the imperial masters. Thus whereas Ghosh significantly describes the defeated Malik in *Reason* as “a storm of energy . . . it was impossible even to look at the Malik for more than a minute at a time - his whole face was blood red like the setting sun” (248); he, instead of describing the Europeans as the rising sun, in fact dehumanizes them, robs them off

their names. As for example, the British residents sent to al-Ghazira as the representatives of the country's English masters are presented through the eyes of the people of the kingdom who name the residents as 'Goat's Arse'—because "whenever he spoke he made his lips into a circle of such perfection that everyone who saw him held their breath waiting for a black, wonderfully rounded goat's turd to fall out" (249); 'Thin Lips'—"a new resident known for his toughness: a thin lipped fish of a man" (252); "a new Thin Lips"—who arrives to run the 'Oiltown' after the British leave the country (254); and the 'Oilmen'—the Europeans, especially Americans, who arrive to dig for oil in the 'Oiltown', an area temporarily set up at the periphery of the city as per the treaty with the Malik

Likewise, Ghosh's description of the taking over of the city by the 'Oilmen' too includes the experiences of the defeated and gradually marginalized people of al-Ghazira as Ghosh notes how the increasing greed of the 'Oilmen' gulps the whole city, starting with a stretch of land that contained the tomb of a holy man. Besides, the land also served as a community land for the local traders and was also dear to the Malik for its bio-diversity and migratory birds. However, as Ghosh depicts the ruination of both the city and its inhabitants by the European colonizers, we also witness a sympathetic portrayal of the defeated by Ghosh in *Reason* like that of the Old Malik, living as a bed-ridden non-entity confined in his own fort. Jeevanbhai, an erstwhile thriving trader and a resourceful trouble-shooter for the Malik and who later commits suicide as a deformed person after being transformed into a degraded spy against his own people by his defeat, also evokes our sympathy.

Moreover, what Ghosh wants us to remember about him is not his degradation, but his last, though foolish, attempt at recovering his and his adoptive country's self-worth, while pondering on his past defeat with Zindi: "'We lost that battle, Zindi", he said, "and that war, too. Why did we lose?"' That a defeat, however significant, does not necessarily translate into a permanent submission into the psyche of the colonized, and that resistance is the other nature of such a person even after being crushed beyond recognition is made clear by Ghosh in the conversation between Zindi and Jeevanbhai: "'Do you think I'd win now, Zindi", he said, "if I tried?" . . . She looked at him and saw a spark of hope glinting behind the fog of years of defeat and, despite herself, she drew his face towards her and kissed him gently on his moist forehead. Then she pushed him away: "It's too late now, Jeevanbhai'" (318-9). However, beside the poignancy of defeat, Ghosh also ushers in a new hope for the defeated in the novel

as in the case of a country like Algeria. Thus Dr Mishra finds the country to have survived the barbarity of French colonialism with such a success that it “‘had literally risen from ashes”’ as “‘a testimony to the strength of the human spirit that a people who, of their meager sixteen millions, had lost one whole million, had yet gone on to face the future without bitterness”’ (376).

Palace too has a probing portrayal of the colonizer and the colonized that never fails to raise a whole lot of questions on the supposed superiority of the Europe and the essential barbarity of the native kings in the East. As when King Thebaw, defeated by the English and exiled to India as a punishment for standing up against the great imperial power, had identified his loss of a great number of valuables on the way to the ship; his enquiries about these had proved futile, as the English officers “‘had stiffened and looked offended and talked of setting up a committee of inquiry. He had realised that for all their haughty ways and grand uniforms, they were not above some common thievery”’ (50). To Queen Supayalat, however, the British colonizers are far more menacing, and are guided by nothing but their greed and barbarity in their setting up of colonies. Thus when the Burmese Royalty are left in a horrible condition in their exile that arouses the “‘looks of stunned surprise”’ even on the faces of the visiting English officers or District Collectors, “‘unable to believe that the residence of Burma’s last King had become the nucleus of a shantytown”’: the Queen feels the situation does not reflect her degradation but rather the degrading nature of the imperial masters:

Yes, look around you, look at how we live. Yes, we who ruled the richest land in Asia are now reduced to this. This is what they have done to us, this is what they will do to all of Burma. They took our kingdom, promising roads and railways and ports, but mark my words, this is how it will end. In a few decades the wealth will be gone – all the gems, the timber and the oil – and then they too will leave. In our golden Burma where no one ever went hungry and no one was too poor to write and read, all that will remain is destitution and ignorance, famine and despair. We were the first to be imprisoned in the name of their progress; millions more will follow. This is what awaits us all; this is how we will all end—as prisoners, in shantytowns born of the plague. A hundred years hence you will read the indictment of Europe’s greed in the difference between the kingdom of Siam and the state of our own enslaved realm. (88)

That the conqueror, while creating some histories and erasing some, manipulates the portrayal of itself and the defeated as well is also pointed out by Ghosh in the conversation between Uma and Dolly where Uma wants to know whether she ever feels afraid of living with the Queen, who in a ruthless ascension to power had killed almost all her husband's male relatives. But Dolly, referring to the portrait of Queen Victoria, proudly displayed at Uma's house, answers, "'Don't you sometimes wonder how many people have been killed in Queen Victoria's name? It must be millions, wouldn't you say? I think I'd be frightened to live with one of those pictures'" (114). This episode therefore indicates another crucial victory for the imperialistic power, as it successfully represents itself as the symbol of a progressive and liberal civilization, while it portrays the defeated as barbarous and primitive.

But once the mask of the benevolent conqueror is removed from the face of the imperial master by someone like Dolly, all the barbarity that it had always denied to be associated with comes out in the open. Thus Uma's horror at finding the picture of sixteen decapitated heads in the newspaper that declared these to be "the heads of Burmese rebels who fell in an encounter with Imperial troops" in Burma and were displayed at full public view to strike "terror into the hearts of those who might be rebelliously inclined" (253), is similar to what the people of the village of Kishan Singh experienced after looking at the barbaric display of the bodies of the rebels in the Mutiny in 1857. As Kishan Singh recounts later, when the villagers went to Delhi to see the spectacle that the British held to celebrate the end of Mutiny, they were horror-struck on finding the decomposing bodies "of the rebel soldiers . . . impaled on sharpened stakes. The stakes were arranged in straight lines and led all the way to the city" (429). As Ghosh recreates the end of a violent Mutiny, we find that even the last Mughal emperor and his two sons were not spared a ghastly death at the hands of the British to strike fear among the common public, "They had been pushed before the crowd and their brains had been blown out in full public view" (44).

However, although the imperial rulers appear successful to a large extent in creating the misleading personas for themselves and the colonized, the hard-hitting words of Queen Supayalat alone are enough to undone their success. As for example, when the first Princess becomes pregnant with her servant and that too out of wedlock, the District Collector tries to remind the Queen of the magnitude of the 'scandal' and the Queen lashes out:

There is no *scandal* in what my daughter has done. The *scandal* lies in what you have done to us; in the circumstances to which you have reduced us . . . We have heard so many lectures from you and your colleagues on the subject of the barbarity of the Kings of Burma and the humanity of the Angrez: we were tyrants you said, enemies of freedom, murderers. The English alone understand liberty, we were told: they do not put kings and princes to death; they rule through laws. If that is so, why has King Thebaw never been brought to trial? Where are these laws that we hear of? Is it a crime to defend your country against an invader? Would the English not do the same? (150)

Tide too appears to uphold this call for justice by the dispossessed: wronged in the name of false ideals, as in the words of the Marichjhāpi settlers, who in their refusal to leave the island as demanded by the state authority, join their voices together “*to shout, in unison, ‘Amra kara? Bastuhara. Who are we? We are the dispossessed’*”; while for Nirmal it was strange “*to hear this plaintive cry wafting across the water . . . not . . . a shout of defiance, but rather a question being addressed to the very heavens, not just for themselves, but on behalf of a bewildered humankind*” (254). Nirmal however, recognizes this plight to be caused not by the heavens, but by a despotic state government, and is struck by the injustice of the whole situation. But as to his wife Nilima these settlers appear to be a nuisance who are foolish to defy the mighty state authority. Ghosh thereby places her view on the settlers in an ironical juxtaposition with her admiration for Sir Daniel, who populated the islands of the Sundarbans inviting settlers from across the country in the colonial India following his vision of a new world. It thus appears that only the conqueror is worthy of a vision, a dream: while the defeated ones, although they could impress Nirmal with their superb organizational and enterprising abilities that had developed their colony in a very short time, are robbed of theirs.

Besides this perceptive portrayal of the colonizer and the colonized in his novels, Ghosh also presents another kind of the colonized who are shown as trying to combat their defeat and marginalization in another way—by donning the role of the mimic men, though even here Ghosh is less sarcastic and more realistic. As Anshuman A. Mondal points out, Ghosh always displays an “interest in exploring the confusions and conundrums of self-fashioning in the context of colonialism and its aftermath” while his novels never fail to “dramatise the difficulties of pinning down a coherent sense of identity for colonised peoples, who have, in their differing and multitudinous

ways, responded to the violent interventions of colonialism in their physical environment, their social being, their cultural formations and their *mentalité*” (30). Thus, whether it is Saya John or Rajkumar— who follow the imperial masters’ footsteps in clearing away the forest, importing labourers from India as a labour-contractor, becoming a shareholder in an oppressive business empire like a rubber plantation; or Beni who tries to adopt the European customs and culture with utmost sincerity but with fatal consequences—they are portrayed with an insight and realism that never fails to keep in mind the complexity of the situation that led them to such a state of being. The same is with the portrayals of Arjun—as he joins the British Indian Army and is bowled over by the glamour and power attached with it; or Hardy—who joined the Army following his dream of being called ‘Sahib’ by his father’s old colleagues and is as proud of being accepted into the fold of the elite English officers as Arjun is; or Hardy’s father’s old colleagues who flatly refused to serve under Hardy, an Indian officer, as “their relationship with their British officers was the source of their pride and prestige. To serve under Indians was a dilution of this privilege” (281).

Ghosh also presents the lamentable extent to which this subservience can go to in the episode where Alison, Saya John and Dinu desperately try to flee the Sungei Pattani that was under Japanese attack. Although they manage to reach the railway station, they are stopped by two armed Indian guards who tell them that the evacuation train is only for Europeans. It leaves Dinu in a shocked and disbelieving state: “this was an evacuation train. How can it be only be for Europeans? . . . This is impossible . . . it’s madness” (424). When Dinu confronts the station master he too expresses his inability to help Dinu as even a magistrate “with an official evacuation letter, had been turned down as “The Europeans would not let him board the ferries because of his being Chinese.” Even when Dinu urges him to realize the gravity of the situation where “It’s not just Europeans who are in danger”; the station master refuses to do so, “I do not see what is so wrong with it. After all it is common sense. They are the rulers; they are the ones who stand to lose . . . I am just doing my job.” And it is when Dinu finally loses his temper, “You bastard . . . it’s you who’re the enemy. People like you—just doing their jobs” (425). Though this shows the self-destructive servile attitude of the colonized quite vividly; it is not only the submissive, colonized people who are criticized here by Ghosh as we cannot but also remember what Lieutenant-Colonel Buckland had told Arjun about the British sense of

obligation towards the colonized, and how the British, even though unwilling to act as the Imperial master of India any more, could not leave because “‘There’s a feeling that we can’t go under duress and we can’t leave a mess behind’” (417). Undoubtedly, these words quite ironically contradict the chaos and injustice that Dinu experiences at the station.

Naipaul, however, never attempts to contradict the European perception of the East and the West in the way Ghosh does. Thus, when Said quoted the observations of Lord Cromer on the Orientals, how “‘they could not learn to walk on pavements, could not tell the truth, could not use logic; the Malaysian native was essentially lazy, just as the north European was essentially energetic and resourceful’” (*Culture* 182), he also introduced Naipaul’s observations as far as the colonizers and the colonized are concerned. In *Bend*, for example, Salim observes after he arrives at the African town that the “‘people here were *malins* the way a dog chasing a lizard was *malin*, or a cat chasing a bird. The people were *malins* because they lived with the knowledge of men as prey’” (63). He also notes the puniness of the Africans in the town, and remarks that this smallness explains “‘why the region had provided so many slaves in the old days: slave peoples are physically wretched, half men in everything except in their capacity to breed the next generation’” (85). Moreover, as if to prove Said right, Naipaul, through Salim, presents the Europeans in a surprisingly different way even when he could sense the double standard of the Europeans

But the Europeans could do one thing and say something quite different; and they could act in this way because they had an idea of what they owed to their civilization. It was their great advantage over us. The Europeans wanted gold and slaves, like everybody else; but at the same time they wanted statues put up to themselves as people who had done good things for the slaves. Being an intelligent and energetic people, and at the peak of their powers, they could express both sides of their civilization; and they got both the slaves and the statues. (19)

Besides, for Salim, the African is not only mindlessly malicious and physically insignificant as compared to the “‘intelligent and energetic’” Europeans; he is also essentially vacuous and thus always in need of the guidance of an intelligent master. Thus, as Salim observes Ildephonse, he appears to be the most efficient worker in the presence of his masters, Shoba or Mahesh; but as soon as they left “‘He went vacant. Not rude, just vacant. I noticed this alteration in the African staff in other places as

well . . . they were only acting for the people who employed them . . . their job was meaningless to them" (114).

Moreover, the Africans are not only incapable of creating a whole new world like the Europeans; but as the young Belgian in Father Huismans' school informs Salim, the Africans are also inclined to plunder what the Europeans had so magnificently created: they "come and beg to be admitted to the lycée. As soon as you take them in they start stealing. They would carry away the whole school if you let them" (67). That the Belgian is right is proved to Salim when he found out that Ferdinand had stolen the lycée ledger, a part of the town's proud, colonial history, to collect money using its subscription appeal.

However, as compared to the Africans, Father Huismans elicits an admiring portrayal from Salim, as deserving for a person who was impressive even in his incompleteness, "even in ordinary trousers and shirt there was something about him of the man apart. He had the 'unfinished' face which I have noticed that certain Europeans — but never Arabs or Persians or Indians — have. In these faces there is a babylike quality. . . . It might be that these people were born prematurely" (68). Even though Salim does not fail to notice Father Huismans' indifference to the state of Africa as his sole passion remained to collect African masks and artifacts with religious value, Salim comes to regard him with deep respect, "I began to think of him as a pure man. His presence in our town comforted me. His attitudes, his interests, his knowledge, added something to the place, made it less barren" (70)

The same is with Raymond, 'the Big Man's white man', who, despite losing his favour with the President, remains a lone, heroic figure - unread of, unappreciated, yet stoically fighting the chaos in the land of bush before being claimed by it. As in Salim's words, "Raymond showed no uncertainty. And he was loyal -- to the President, to himself, his ideas and his work, his past. My admiration for him grew. I didn't want to see him humiliated. I admired his code and wished that when my own time came I might be able to stick to something like it" (223).

Besides this 'pure' and 'scholarly' face of civilization—that however cannot survive the African barbarism, as Father Huismans is brutally murdered and Raymond is unceremoniously dismissed—there is also the combative aspect of the European civilization that Salim finds to be the only one thing that is capable to arouse awe among the barbaric Africans. The effect of the European soldiers upon the Africans is made clear to us in the conversation between Metty and Ferdinand on the white

soldiers that the Big Man brings in to keep the unruly natives under control: "You should have seen them. . . . They just raced to the barracks and they were pointing their guns at everybody. I never saw soldiers like that before" (88).

As compared to these Europeans, matchless in heart, mind and body; the Africans in the novel appear so wretched as to admit this wretchedness themselves. Thus when Salim learns that Metty has married an African girl, he cries in disgust: "what have you done? Don't you think it's disgusting to have a little African child running about in somebody's yard, with its *toto* swinging from side to side? . . . Aren't you ashamed? . . . We sent you to school, we had the mullahs teach you. And now you do this." And Metty too agrees with him, "I will leave her, *patron*. She's an animal. . . . And I am very ashamed. She's only an African woman. I will leave her" (122).

Salim seems to have every right to reproach Metty as he himself had always been very careful of not doing any such thing "which, when reported back, would wound other members of the family. I had, specifically, not to be seen with African women. And I was proud that, difficult though it was, I never gave cause for offence" (44-5). Salim's inherited aversion to mingling with the Africans in a way reflects the imperial world view that appears to dominate the continent. This world view is also exhibited in the ancient Roman words that Salim, with the help of Father Huismans, discovers to proclaim that "the great Roman god might not approve of a settlement in Africa, of a mingling of peoples there, of treaties of union between Africans and Romans" (70). Although the Europeans later altered the Roman words to make them state that an intermingling of Africans and Romans was permitted by the Heaven: as if to prove the Roman god right the monument where the changed version was engraved was destroyed by the Africans in a frenzy of decolonization. Even Metty, frequently detested by Salim because of his and his family's attempts to be regarded not as slaves but as members of their master's family, also fatally betrays Salim at the end in spite of the 'protection and affection' he received from his master. It is thus a prevailing sense of degradation and disintegration that makes Salim and other non-Africans want to escape the wretched country to go to a flawless society as Nazruddin did. While this ideal society is always the West for them, even in there Nazruddin is shown to be led onto trouble, but quite significantly, not by Europeans but by other non-European migrants from former colonies.

It is Indar, however, who speaks as the representative of the defeated in Naipaul, although even in his defeat he presents himself to be different from the physically,

morally and intellectually inferior Africans to realize the true extent and damage of defeat and the true worth of and dignity in victory. As he justifies his decision to side with the Europe against his birthplace to Salim: “‘We’ve been choosing the wrong side. I’m tired of being on the losing side. I don’t want to pass. I know exactly who I am and where I stand in the world. But now I want to win and win and win’” (180).

Thus the Africa that Salim, Indar, Yvette, or Nazruddin desperately want to flee is a quickly disintegrating country populated by decolonized slaves who slip into their former roles when threatened like Metty; the corrupt and the impostors like the government officials or the Youth League members; the wretched but silently menacing figures like the settlers in the town coming from the bush; or the parasitic usurpers, like Théotime, living off the achievements of the Europeans or other foreigners. Even the arrivistes like the new African tenant in Raymond’s Domain house who, because “‘Africans didn’t understand large-scale agriculture’” had planted maize and cassava, like many other Africans, in front of the once famous house to make it look like full of garden shrubs (305). And as Salim finds, all these people are led by those native despots who are devoid of any face like the President—the son of a ‘hotel maid mother’ and referred to only as ‘the Big Man’—as they are nothing but mimic men trying to don the imperial master’s guise.

Enigma continues the same kind of portrayal though here we have the English society being observed by a migrant from a former colony, who is eager to be accepted into the greater civilization. This migrant narrator, however, always feels like an intruder and that too an unworthy one, who never ceases to believe his good fortune to be able to live among the former Imperial masters. The narrator, a representative of an inferior society, thus presents himself as a person who is dismissive of his country’s past, present or any possible future glory and achievement; is awed by the magnificence of the former imperial society; and is embittered by his colonial past that never allows him to finally arrive in England. The English, on the other hand, are portrayed either with a frank admiration; or in a negative-negated mode where the narrator, after he finds some shortcomings in the England or its people he encounters, follows the negative portrayal with a second observation that negates the first one and thereby reinstates the land and its people to their perfection.

Thus the narrator, while he finds ‘pathos’ in the ugliness of the dairyman and his wife, is rather sympathetic even when he learns of their dubious past in town that had made them run to the countryside to save themselves. “‘What terrors must there have

been in the town for them!" Likewise, even after taken aback by the aggressive unruliness of the dairyman's elder son, the narrator does not fail to learn that he is also very good with birds; while after the dairyman and his family destroy the beautiful garden in front of the cottage, the narrator excuses them on the ground that they did not do it to offend anyone but out of ignorance and a freedom that they felt to allow them to live the way they liked to in the countryside. Even when the narrator is shocked by the way the dairyman and his sons mutilate a beautiful pony to let it die, he is ready to believe that they did it not out of cruelty but out of a casualness of a man who, though is "capable of tenderness" as in his looking after the cows, can accept the fate of a cow to be sent to slaughterhouse with detachment (37).

Thus Brenda and Les, the couple whom the narrator initially describes as irresponsible, unrefined and inconsiderate, are also elevated to the stature of a tragic pair of lovers later in the novel. Even the private house in Gloucester that seemed to the narrator to be one of "mean houses" in a "small, mean, common town" later seems "welcoming" to him where he could feel protected (183). Similarly, although the dampness in the English cottage made the narrator ill, he "couldn't say then, and can't say now, that I minded" as his life in England after all gifted him the most precious time of his life while the illness after all might have been inherited or developed in Trinidad (95).

When it comes to the English servants, the narrator at first finds it disappointing that the persons like the Phillipses, Brenda or Les, "so passionate, so concerned with their individuality . . . should be prepared in another corner of their hearts or souls or minds to go down several notches and be servants." But then he negates it with a later view that it was his "own special prejudice . . . raw nerves" inherited from his colonial experience "where servitude was a more desperate condition" that made him think so (70).

Moreover, some of the character portrayals in this novel are suggestive enough to remind one of similar portrayals in other novels by the writer; such as the hunchback Indian clerk in the Indian House whose "terrified eyes", "hunched gaits", "prepared cringe" and smallness that were discovered by Indar as "natural" features of the man (173) in *Bend* can be compared with the narrator's portrayal of Jack's father-in-law, almost a stranger to him, in *Enigma*. Although the old man is one of those very few characters with physical defects in the novel, the narrator believes that defect not to be natural but one that might have been caused by an accident. The narrator also

observes with admiration that “more amazing were his eyes, the eyes of this bent man: they were bright and alive and mischievous . . . those eyes were a wonder and a reassurance: that in spite of the accident that had permanently damaged his spine, the personality of the man remained sound” (21). The same is with the portrayal of the authoritarian, stern, and irritable Mr Phillips who is a changed man in the company of his landlord and master. Thus when the narrator once comes across Mr Phillips in a car, his “friendly, happy smile . . . told me that the occasion was special and his passenger was special (204), and that he was “in the company of his master, more like an impresario, like a man who was fully himself, had a proper idea of his duties and worth” (229). This immediately reminds us of Ildephonse in *Bend*, whose liveliness in the company of his masters and the vacant look in their absence was ridiculed by Salim as a proof of the African’s vacuousness.

Even the gardener in the manor, a respectfully called ‘Mr Pitton’ by the narrator, is a man who is not only sincere, resourceful, and impeccably dressed in formal clothes in spite of the nature of his work, but can also teach a nice turn of language to the narrator. The narrator thus cannot but compare Mr Pitton to the gardeners in his colonial town, who “would be less a gardener, really less a man with knowledge about soils and plants and fertilizers than a man who was, more simply, a worker in a garden, a weeder and a waterer, a barefoot man, trousers rolled up to mid-shin” (245). And thus just as Salim and Metty had agreed on the disgustingness of the Africans in *Bend*, in this novel Alan and the narrator agree on the past glory of the empire that can still be felt in the manor and in the figure of the landlord. Both Alan and the narrator want to be a part of the manor “to be in the presence of my landlord, to study his speech and mannerisms, the mannerisms of a more gracious age, the age before the deluge — the age when houses like my landlord’s were still important, not only socially but also in the making of literary and artistic reputations” (316).

However, it is in regard to the landlord that the narrator finds it most difficult to arrive at a particular observation, as his observation of the reclusive master proves as elusive as those by a man trapped into the labyrinth of time as for him the present appearance of a man is tinged with the expectations and imaginations of an enthralled observer. Thus when the narrator accidentally comes across the landlord, out in the open in a solitary reposing moment “in the ruin of his garden. . . . Semi-nude” (233), he recoils in shock at the ordinariness of the man and blames the Phillipses for leading him to such a shocking encounter. Likewise, it is this desire to not see certain things

that characterizes the narrator's portrayals in this novel as he, in spite of a colonial past, has only a few lines of casual observations on the horrors of imperialism in the land he was born into, "No aboriginal Indians now existed in St. Kitts: they had been killed off three hundred years before by English and French, the rough carvings on those boulders were the only memorials the Indians left" . and immediately adds that "the memory had really ceased to humiliate" (176). Thus it is a carefully nurtured relationship of the narrator with the imperial country that explains his objects and methods of observation in this novel, as explained by himself in regard to the landlord of the manor:

I never saw my landlord. His wish to be unseen by me was matched by my wish not to be seen by him. A remnant of my old colonial-racial 'nerves': but I was also nervous of undoing the magic of the place. If I had seen my landlord, heard his voice, heard his conversation, seen his face and expression, been constrained to make conversation back, to be polite, the impression would have been ineffaceable. He would have been endowed with a 'character', with vanities, irritations, absurdities: and this would have led me to make judgements--the judgements that, undoing acceptance, can also undo a relationship. (209)

Hull too never attempts to "undo" the relationship that the colonized shares with the imperial centre. The Indians are presented here to live in the way the imperial masters prescribe for them-- by getting an English education that they cannot comprehend, or as being taught that Indian casteism is lamentable but for a missionary chopping down the statue of Buddha is admirable; being led to believe that the glory of the Indian kingdoms is insignificant when compared to the imperial glory of Europe, or by accepting that the birth of a socio-political and historical awareness among the Indians owe more to the Europe than to the native political leaders. India was thus a nation of half-men, one half tied down by the colonial experience and the other half aspiring to rise up to the glory of Europe; while once the civilizing presence of the Empire is withdrawn the people in the former colonies like India or Africa recede backwards to fade into oblivion like Willie's father in India, or Graça and Ana in Africa. Even those who try to leave their colonial past and place behind are portrayed as living half-lives, trying to maneuver between the unshakable past and an elusive future like Willie, Percy and Marcus. They are shown to manufacture new identities for themselves in England following their dreams of being

successfully absorbed into the folds of the great empire. For Willie this dream is to become a successful English writer; for Percy it is to become rich on the wealth of England; and for Marcus it is to be socially so integrated into the English society as to have purely white grandchildren and a bank account in the most reputed bank in England.

The English, on the other hand, are portrayed quite in the opposite way by Naipaul— as a guiding force and mentor like Roger is to Willie; as elegant like Perdita; as people who can afford to be self-pitying like Roger's editor; or even as impostors like Richard and Peter who feed off the gullible and vain women from former colonies as these women still treasure white men as something to show off in their social circle. And there are also those descendants of former imperial masters in like Ana or the other estate owners—though considered second-rank Portuguese now because of mixed breeding and thereby losing pure racial identity—in the Portuguese African town like the Correias—“proud of their aristocratic name”; Ricardo who disowned his only daughter for marrying an African boy; and the Noronhas—“our blue-bloods, pure Portuguese” (161-3). But the Africa that comes out in this novel is not unlike the one in *Bend*: it is the same menacing, doomed, barbarous, inherently corrupt and retrogressive as ever.

Magic takes over from *Halt* to continue the portrayal of the former colonizers and the formerly colonized—still trapped together in a post-colonial world—in India and in England in the same vein. Thus the decolonized India that Willie travels to for participating in the social revolutions there through guerrilla movements is not at all flattering. Starting from the very airport at arrival he finds an India that is still pulled back by its poverty, obsolete methods of living, a lack of proper education and genuine socio-political awareness. Whether it is the guerrillas or their intellectual supporters like Joseph, it is a country full of ignorant people who, like Willie's father decades ago, look at the world through their faulty, shallow and personal issues thus bypassing the greater world outside. Here Willie meets guerrillas like Bhoj Narayan—to whom the feudal lords in villages, and not the English rulers of India, are responsible for economic breakdown of India; Ramachandra who became a guerrilla as he could not fit into the urban world that he had aspired to as a village boy; and Einstein—“a legendary guerrilla leader”, who considered himself a genius on the scale of Einstein and when the world thought otherwise, he “returned to his village, dropped all the trappings of education (trousers, shirt tucked in, shoes and socks), and

dreamed of destroying the world” (80). Besides these Willie also finds some other revolutionaries who are carrying their own demons—childhood abuse, a cheating wife etc.—within themselves and have joined the movement to recover their self-worth. And as for the hapless villagers, ‘liberated’ by these guerrillas, they appear to Willie as servile and vacuous as if it was their original and unchanging nature.

As compared to the disorder, disgrace and ordeal of the guerrilla life, Willie is surprised to find freedom and protection in the British-era police headquarter and jail that still follow English system of extending better facility to its political prisoners. In fact, his stint in jail with its sensible superintendent remains the only thing Willie could survive on before his sister’s ‘international connections’ send him to England. But the England Willie finds upon his return after almost eighteen years is no good either, though here it is mostly the outsiders and the global economic forces that are disfiguring the city beyond recognition while gradually destroying it. Thus Peter, the banker who had used pages from *The Graphic*, a famous Victorian magazine and a symbol of Imperial glory, as the wallpaper in the bathroom in his palatial house, is shown to be as responsible for robbing England of its past glory as are the former servant class people who now live in slums on government charity and would commit crimes rather than work as servants. To make the scene worse, Willie finds that there are people from all over the world flocking to England either to acquire knowledge that they cannot comprehend—like the man from Pakistan or the one from China, or to acquire money like the Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Indians in Cricklewood who would have “gobbled up” half the country if had not stopped by creating a green belt around the slum-like place that leaves Willie in shock, “I never knew London was like this. It’s not out of central easting” (223).

The marriage of Marcus’ son with a white woman—thus fulfilling Marcus’ lifelong ambition to be integrated into the English society—is also viewed by Willie as another level of comic degradation where the thoughtlessly ambitious outsiders and the decaying insiders (the white bride belongs to a family of past glory and present ruin) are pulling it into. Thus while Willie finds an India doomed to self-destruction because of its ignorant and servile populace; he finds England in decay because of its contact with the outside world that has robbed it off of its grandeur and achievement. This once again makes him feel only disrespect and contempt for the former colonies like India and Africa that by being dismissive of the glory of their imperial rulers,

who still remain a crucial part of the colonies' past, are also denying themselves a future.

However, if it is a tenderness that Willie feels towards an infected imperial centre, then in *Bend* it is an unmistakable awe that Salim feels for the technological superiority of the West as compared to the rest of the world as expressed by him when he tries to put on the role of a teacher to tell Ferdinand how the Europeans are producing miracles into the field of science. But when he smells a hint of disrespect in Ferdinand's voice, Salim is piqued by it: "Ferdinand said, 'Who are they?' . . . I thought: 'He's just out of the bush . . . and already we're getting this political nonsense.' I didn't give the answer I thought he was expecting. I didn't say 'The white men.' Though with half of myself I felt like saying it, to put him in his place" (49). Salim's effusion in this regard in fact elevates the Europeans to the level of gods:

They! When we wanted to speak politically, when we wanted to abuse or praise politically, we said 'the Americans', 'the Europeans', 'the white people', 'the Belgians'. When we wanted to speak of the doers and makers and the inventors, we all -- whatever our race -- said 'they'. We separated these men from their groups and countries and in this way attached them to ourselves. The 'they' we spoke of in this way were very far away, so far away as to be hardly white. They were impartial, up in the clouds, like good gods. We waited for their blessings . . . (49-50)

On the other hand, this is the same kind of awe and admiration for the scientific and military progress that Ghosh repeatedly criticizes in his novels. As for example in *Antique* when Ghosh, otherwise considered as childlike and gullible by the villagers of Lataifa, becomes highly respected among them, especially its youth, because his opinion on the quality of a newly bought diesel water-pump that was made in India becomes crucial: Ghosh wonders on the power that machines--and thus the West has over a person's world view:

I stayed up a long time that night, marveling at the respect the water-pump had earned me; I tried to imagine where I would have stood in Jabir's eyes if mine had been a country that exported machines that were even bigger, better and more impressive--cars and tractors perhaps, not to speak of ships and planes and tanks. I began to wonder how Lataifa would have looked if I had had the

privilege of floating through it, protected by the delegated power of technology, of looking out untroubled through a sheet of clear glass. (74)

Ghosh's observation in this regard takes a new turn in his exchange with the Imam who has discarded his lifework based on his knowledge of traditional herbs and medicines to learn the modern techniques like giving injections to regain his prestige among the people of the community who think that he is a relic of the past. Thus when an expression of cultural differences like burning the dead is introduced to the Imam, he immediately brings the West to mediate over it on the ground of its superiority in science and technology, and asks Ghosh, "'You've been to Europe: you've seen how advanced they are. Now tell me: have you ever seen them burning their dead?'" And when Ghosh informs him that the Europeans do burn their dead, the Imam dismisses him as a liar, "'They don't burn their dead in the West. They're not an ignorant people. They're advanced, they're educated, they have science, they have guns and tanks and bombs'". The argument very soon goes out of control as even Ghosh, in a moment of fury, joins the Imam into believing that only a country with guns, tanks and bombs can be called superior to those that do not have these. Thus in response to the Imam's claim that Egypt is "second only to the West" in the military aspect, Ghosh claims that India's achievement can never be matched by Egypt as "'in my country we've even had a nuclear explosion. You won't be able to match that even in a hundred years'". However, quite soon Ghosh realizes the absurdity and pity of the disconcerting argument between "Imam and I, delegates from two superseded civilizations, vying with each other to establish a prior claim to the technology of modern violence. . . . We were both travelling, he and I, we were travelling in the West".

Ghosh also notes with sadness that although the West had "its libraries, its museums, its theatres" too, these remained insignificant to the world when compared to Western achievement in science and technology: "in the end, for millions and millions of people on the landmasses around us, the West meant only this – science and tanks and guns and bombs". Moreover, the full extent of this lamentable situation is clear to Ghosh when he realizes that this obsession with science and technology has not only affected the present relationship between two "superseded" countries that once shared a rich history of commercial and cultural exchange; but it has also made him a "conspirator in the betrayal of the history that had led me to Nashawy; a witness

to the extermination of a world of accommodations that I had believed to be still alive and, in some tiny measure, still retrievable” (235-7).

The admiration for the Western progress in science and technology appears as misleading in *Reason*, at times acquiring a comic undertone as in where Balaram's argument leads the Rationalists to decide that they will begin all their meetings and letters to home with salutations and prayers to Cosmic Boson while his suggestion that Cosmic Fermion should also be hailed is rejected on the ground of its being from Italy. It is the same mistaken zeal for Western science that makes Balaram migrate to Lalpukur from Calcutta after a silly encounter with the Western scientists he worshipped: leads him to phrenology, another pseudo-science from the West; and sets him on the path of his mission against germs as based on the life and work of Pasteur that in turn eventually brings about the destruction of his school and family.

Balaram's acquiring a copy of Lombroso's *Practical Phrenology* on being spurned by the paragons of modern Western science also raises the issue of 'transculturation' that Pratt employs to indicate the way in which the colonized / subordinated / marginalized appropriates the materials received from the metropolitan/imperial centre, frequently transforming the material into something that appears indigenous. Transculturation is thus a way of protest, of talking back to the master in his own language and also something unavoidable in the contact zone, where the dominating and the dominated meet. As Said too points out, "Those people compelled by the system to play subordinate or imprisoning roles within it emerge as conscious antagonists, disrupting it, proposing claims, advancing arguments" that prove to be disruptive for the very system (*Culture* 406). Thus when Balaram buys a copy of *Practical Phrenology*, another imperialistic knowledge system, to keep it side by side with the biography of Pasteur, it becomes a moment of disruption for the Western science as it had been trying to disown phrenology as a form of 'pseudo-science'. Moreover, when Balaram, inspired by the biography of Pasteur, embarks upon a mission to keep Lalpukur free of germs but miserably fails in it; it proves yet again that Pasteur's achievement served the rich brewers of beer and producers of silk in Europe more and the poor people less unlike the claims made in his biography.

The phenomenon of transculturation is yet again presented by Ghosh in *Antique* when during a visit to Mangalore to follow the trail of Bomma, Ghosh comes into contact with a small group of fishermen known as 'Magavira', or 'Mogêra', one of the many marginalized groups in a society dominated by mainstream Hinduism. Ghosh

observes that the community had not only built a temple that had the essence of both a classical Hindu temple and a traditional Bhuta-shrine; they had also published an illustrated pamphlet as the history of the community: "She opened it reverently . . . her face lit by a smile of intense pride: it was a short history of the village, financed and published by community subscription." Quite significantly, Ghosh also notes that "it was a clear indication that this community, so long relegated to the peripheries of the Hindu order, had now resolved to . . . break into the Sanskritic fold. Having transformed its social and economic position it was now laying claim to the future, in the best tradition of liberalism, by discovering a History to replace the past" (273).

Tide also presents one such instance where the unwillingness of the marginalized cultural and religious groups in the Sundarbans to remain in the periphery is displayed in the appearance of the oral narrative of Bon Bibi, a legend that had always been passed on from mouth to mouth, in the form of a book—*Bon Bibir Karamoti or that Bon Bibi Johuranama* that surprises Nirmal by its syncretism, "the pages opened to the right, as in Arabic. . . . Yet the prosody was that of much of Bangla folklore" (247). Even the settlers, hopeful of a new home in Marichjhāpi, can also be considered as another example in this regard as they envision the very imperial dream of Sir Daniel of creating a new world in the Sundarbans; while it is the suppression of their vision that questions the imperial foundations of the revered dream and actions of Sir Daniel most seriously.

Palace too shows the seed of resistance to be coming into life from inside the very system that tried to exterminate it. Thus the very British Indian army that had served the empire most loyally and efficiently and expanded and secured the rule of the British in the Indian subcontinent was also the one to appear as the most serious threat to the British rule in India. Moreover, as it is presented in the novel, the guiding principles of the British in the Indian military academy also become an eye-opener for the British Indian soldiers. As Hardy points out to Arjun, the prominently placed inscription at the Military Academy that said "*The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every time*" was not what they as Indian soldiers were following: "'Where is this country? The fact is that you and I don't have a country. . . . And why is that that when we took our oath it wasn't to a country but to the King Emperor—to defend the Empire?'" (330).

And quite ironically it also appears that a number of the anti-British nationalist groups fighting for Indian freedom were helped by the retired soldiers of the British

Indian army now settled in Europe, thus using the money and military skill against the very imperial system that provided these to them. However, that a resistance is not always offered to the system from the inside in a deliberate way; but that at times it can also be an unintentional one is clear in the case of Beni, who both in his desperate attempts to Anglicize himself and in his miserable failure in it proves the absurdity of such an undertaking that had otherwise been declared by the West as the only way for the colonized to improve himself. The symbolic resistance to a life of cultural subservience is offered by Beni in his death: when he, faced with the failure in both his professional and personal life, significantly takes the rowing boat "that had once belonged to Mr Gibb, the rowing legend" to a turbulent sea and drowns with it (173).

It also makes way for another ironical observation in the fact that the death of a Europeanized Beni not only liberates Uma; but the substantial pension she receives from the British government as his widow also makes it possible for her to extensively travel into Europe to realize the true nature of imperialism and thereby choose a life of resistance to the British Empire in India. Ghosh also deals with the controversial aspects of transculturation as in when Dinu, after an argument with Uma on the evils of empire, observes, "'Here you are, so full of indignation about the British. And yet you use the English language more often than not'", and Uma points out, "'Many great Jewish writers write in German. Do you think that prevents them from recognizing the truth?'" (295). The issue of a continuous resistance from the part of the subjugated is yet again symbolically presented in the episode in the Morningside estate when Matthew shows Uma the one rubber tree that would not produce any rubber as he believed "it's fighting back"

This is my little empire, Uma. I made it. I took it from the jungle and moulded it into what I wanted it to be. Now that it's mine I take good care of it. There's law, there's order, everything is well run. Looking at it, you would think everything here is tame, domesticated, that all the parts have been fitted carefully together. But it's when you try to make the whole machine work that you discover that every bit of it is fighting back. (233)

In Naipaul, however, the concept of transculturation is severely mocked at; as Naipaul shows that the transformation of the metropolitan material at the hands of the marginalized group is primarily an expression of its ignorance and incapacity to realize the material in its pure form: although it may be viewed as a rebellion against the metropolitan centre. Thus the Big Man in *Bend* primarily remains a mimic man, a

product of a self-destructive process of decolonization that has left Africa as a land with the distorted reflections of the great European civilization in the figures of these native despots who can only ape the ways of the imperial rulers but can never evolve into one of these. Likewise, the guerrillas in *Magic*, who like Willie's father wage a war against the system of English education, do so not because of any greater social or political drive: but because they lack the ability to internalize the greatness of the system. Similarly, the book by Willie that is considered as a pioneer in post-colonial literature, is not presented as an example of transculturation where the ex-colonized has successfully appropriated the English language to create original literature based on his colonial experience: it is rather a book that was mindlessly modeled on the European art and culture, its writer intending to hide his shameful colonial past behind the false and misleading stories.

Nevertheless, there are a few subversive moments in Naipaul too, as for example in the narrator's realization in *Enigma* of the falsehood in the imperial education once he fails to employ the imperial world view in spite of internalizing it sincerely. As the narrator realizes later, the concept of a writer as someone who possessed "sensitivity" and who "recorded or displayed an inner development" actually belongs to the aesthetic movement of the nineteenth century England: "ideas bred essentially out of empire, wealth and imperial security" of the Bloomsbury that were transmitted to his colonial mind. "To be that kind of writer (as I interpreted it) I had to be false: I had to pretend to be other than I was, other than what a man of my background could be. Concealing this colonial-Hindu self below the writing personality, I did both my material and myself much damage" (159). The narrator also admits to have subverted the precepts of the English literature while trying to enter its realm with his colonial life: "I think I transferred the Dickens characters to people I knew. Though . . . I knew that Dickens was all English, yet my Dickens cast . . . was multi-racial. That ability to project what I read on to Trinidad . . . diminished as I grew older. When I was surrounded by the reality, English literature ceased to be universal" (186).

Besides this disillusionment with the element of the 'universal' in English literature, the narrator cannot but also look back at his colonial education prescribed by an imperial system as to be traumatic: "The education that had made me had always been like a competition, a race, in which the fear of failure was like the fear of extinction. I had never, as a child, felt free. . . . My abstract learning had been clearly bought!" (165).

Nevertheless, although Naipaul portrays a colonized/decolonized figure to be perennially ignorant, menacing, and self-destructive, there are a few characters in these novels who seem to rise above such a portrayal to acquire a life and mind of their own and thereby offer a unique resistance to their oppressor. In *Half*, for example we have the unnamed daughter of Júlio the carpenter. Intelligent and inquisitive, she is eventually lost into the degradation of the decolonizing Africa; though the message she leaves for her masters before disappearing never loses its poignancy: "I may come back one day, and sooner than you think. And I'll not be staying in the quarters then" (221).